

You can do it all!

- Check your account balance
- Pay your electric bill
- Check current and planned outages
- Save money on your electric bill
- Find out about family-friendly events
- Get info on VEC products & services

Hot Water for a Lifetime

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) members/customers who build all-electric new homes and sign up for an energy right@ new home inspection may qualify for a \$50 credit on their VEC electric bill. Add a qualifying lifetime warranty water heater and you may qualify for an additional \$100 electric bill credit.

The offer is good for one qualifying lifetime water heater per home. The maximum credit a home can qualify for is \$150. Call your local VEC Customer Service Center for the qualifications and details.

NOTICE OF ELECTION

In compliance with the bylaws of Volunteer Energy Cooperative, Article IV, Directors; Section 4.05, Notice of Directors to be Elected, I hereby give written notice that the following Directors' terms will expire this year:

- District No. 10 – White, Putnam, and Overton counties
- District No. 11 – Fentress, Morgan, and Scott counties
- District No. 12 – Pickett County

As set for the in Article IV, Section 4.06, in order for a member to become a qualified candidate for Director, he/she shall file with the Secretary of the Cooperative or with his/her duly appointed candidate, signed by him/her and not less than fifty other members in good standing whose premises served by the Cooperative are located in the directorate district of the candidate.

Qualifying petitions and other information pertaining to the elections can be obtained on or after May 31, 2007 by contacting Patty Hurley, Vice President of Marketing and Economic Development, P.O. Box 277, Decatur, TN 37322, or by calling 423-334-7050. Qualifying petitions must be filed with the Secretary of the Cooperative or his designee by 5 p.m. EDT, June 12, 2007.

Sammy Norton
Secretary-Treasurer

Powerlines is produced by the Volunteer Energy Cooperative's Marketing & Economic Development Department as a service to customers. Comments and suggestions can be e-mailed to vec@vec.org or mailed to VEC Marketing & Economic Development Department, P.O. Box 277, Decatur, TN 37322.



State Rep. Kevin Brooks of Cleveland, left, meets with VEC President/CEO Rody Blevins, center, and Kenneth Vaden, who represents White and Putnam counties on the VEC Board of Directors.

Lawmakers Need to Hear Voice of Cooperative Members

By Rody Blevins President/CEO

Nearly 1,000 rural electric cooperatives like Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) serve 40 million member/owners across the United States of America. In Tennessee, 23 electric cooperatives serve more than 1 million homes, farms, schools, churches, hospitals, and other important facilities.

About one-third of the state's entire population receives electric service through an electric cooperative. Numbers like those carry political weight – and protecting the interests of electric cooperative members requires that we use that weight from time to time. Electric cooperatives exist today because federal and state legislation made them possible.

If we do not stay involved in the political process our rights and benefits as electric cooperative members/owners are at risk.

Members of VEC's board of directors and management recently returned from Nashville where we, along with electric cooperative representatives from across the state, met with state senators and representatives to discuss pending legislation that could have a tremendous impact on electric cooperative members.

Two bills that could translate into higher electric rates for cooperative members have been introduced in Tennessee's 105th General Assembly and VEC has joined other cooperatives in denouncing them. Cable television operators are pushing lawmakers to dictate how much cooperatives or municipal electric systems can charge the cable TV companies to attach their cables to poles owned by the electric systems.

Lawmakers have rejected these attempts in the past, but undeterred, cable companies keep pushing each new assembly with new bills.

The legislation is wrong for several reasons. First and foremost, lowering pole attachment rates for cable television companies means one thing – higher profits for cable TV companies. These higher profits would come directly out of the pockets of rural electric customers, many of whom don't even have access to cable television.

Our pole attachment rates are reasonable and in line with the rates that are charged across the country. Pole attachment rates have not increased at the same pace that pole ownership costs have increased over the past 15 years. Cable TV rates, however, have increased at twice the rate of inflation.

We see no reason why VEC members should be asked to pay higher rates so that cable TV companies can enjoy even higher profits.

VEC and other electric cooperatives are also asking lawmakers to help us develop ways to cut down on the theft of copper wire that has plagued the electric industry. A bill that has been proposed would require scrap metal dealers to keep records of copper purchases and sellers. We support this bill because it would help prevent losses that ultimately drive up electric rates for our members/customers.

We are also supporting bills in the 105th General Assembly that will update and enhance safety standards, and bills to encourage the increased use of renewable energy sources.

Sometimes it is easy to get lost in the maze of political rhetoric, the difficulties of legislative language, and the intricacies of the system. Many times it seems it might be easier to just turn our backs on the system and pretend that what goes on in Nashville or in Washington doesn't affect our everyday lives. But it does affect us.

When legislative action affects electric cooperative members and the rates we pay, VEC will continue to join with other cooperatives to make sure our voice – and your voice – is heard.

Don't Let Thunderstorms Come as a Shock to You

As temperatures start rising, so do the chances of thunderstorms. And when thunderstorms hit, lightning can be a serious threat to personal safety. It can also cause power outages and create serious problems for your electronic equipment and electric appliances.

The best atmospheric scientists in the world cannot determine exactly when or where lightning will strike, but there is one thing we can be certain of – it will strike. And when it comes to thunderstorms and lightning, the best defense is to be prepared.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) offers Midland weather radios at all its customer service centers. The Midland weather radios offered by VEC can be set to monitor several different counties and provide an alert when threatening weather is approaching. They have a battery backup and also operate on your regular household current.

Lightning, high winds and heavy rains can also cause electrical spikes. You can also protect your home's appliances and your sensitive electronic equipment by signing up for VEC's Surge Sentry program. With Surge Sentry's warranty-backed protection, you will have one less thing to worry about during threatening weather.

For more information on the Surge Sentry program you can contact your local VEC Customer Service Center or visit www.vec.org.

Lightning has been known to strike more than 10 miles from the storm in an area of clear sky above. So just looking up at the sky may not provide a true indication of whether or not a threat exists.

It's also important to prepare a thunderstorm/power outage kit that includes:

- Canned/package food
- A manual can opener
- Fresh water (bottled)
- Blankets
- Battery-operated radio
- Flashlight with fresh batteries
- Extra batteries

It's also important to prepare now by making sure VEC has your correct phone number on file. This insures an outage at your home can be restored in the most efficient way.

During a thunderstorm:

- Do not take a shower or bath. Water and copper tubing are excellent conductors of electricity.
- Stay away from windows. A central location in the house in an area away from doors and windows is the safest.
- If you power goes out, immediately report it to VEC and then avoid using the phone. (Phone lines may also conduct electricity.)
- Never touch downed power lines. Dial 911 or VEC immediately to ensure that the line is turned off so repairs can be made.

During a power outage:

- Report the outage immediately to VEC.
- Unplug major appliances to prevent a system overload when power is restored. Gradually plug in and turn on appliances after power is restored.
- Avoid opening your refrigerator and/or freezer. The appliance when keep food fresher longer if the door is kept shut.
- Use battery powered flashlights rather than candles whenever possible to avoid the threat of fire.



VEC Customers *Share*

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

By allowing their electric bills to be rounded up to the next dollar Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) customers funded \$33,500 in community service grants in February. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, a total of \$2,131,801 in grants has been awarded. The deadline for grant applications is the last day of each month. For additional information, contact the office of Marketing and Economic Development, at 423-334-7051. Applications are also available online, at www.vec.org.

Organizations receiving grants in February include:

Habitat For Humanity of Cleveland - \$2,500; Imagination Library of Rhea County - \$2,400; Pickett County Rescue Squad - \$2,000; Grassy Cove Community Center, Crossville, - \$2,000; Make-A-Wish Foundation of East Tennessee - \$2,000; Riceville Volunteer Fire Department - \$1,500; KIDS on the Rise, Crossville, - \$1,500; McMinn County Living Heritage Museum - \$1,300; Roane County Heritage Commission - \$1,000; Midway Quarterback Club - \$1,000; VFW Post 6277, Monterey, - \$1,000; Half Moon Music Festival, Ten Mile, - \$1,000; Meigs County FFA Chapter - \$1,000; Cleveland/Bradley County Chamber of Commerce Foundation for Tennessee Scholars Program - \$1,000; York Institute Choir Boosters - \$1,000; Ooltewah High School Boys Soccer Club - \$1,000; East Jamestown Volunteer Fire Department - \$1,000; The Samaritan Center, Ooltewah, - \$1,000; United Polk County Anti-Drug Coalition - \$1,000; Fentress County Children's Center of the Cumberland - \$1,000; Meigs County Middle School PTO - \$1,000; Fairfield Glade Fire Department - \$900; Stone Elementary School PTO/Student Council, Crossville, - \$500; Monterey Softball Booster Club - \$500; Crossville Housing Authority - \$500; American Legion Post 11, Athens, - \$450; Spring City 8th Grade Washington, D.C. Trip - \$450; Boys Scouts of America Cub Pack 3239 of Grandview - \$350; Circle of Friends, Grandview, \$300; Polk County K-8 D.A.R.E. Club - \$250; Oak Grove Baptist Youth Mission Team - \$250; Royal Ambassadors Youth Group of Old Fort - \$250; South Polk County Elementary School PTO - \$250; Girl Scout Troop 97 of Calhoun - \$250; Pickett County High School Fellowship of Christian Athletes - \$100..



VECcustomers Share Board Member Carlton Norris, left, presents a grant check for \$1,000 to Susan Distefano, director of programs and services for The Samaritan Center.

Two Monterey High School Juniors Attend Youth Leadership Summit



Jacob Stubbs, far left, was a member of the team that won this year's Energy Bowl competition at the TECA Youth Leadership Summit in Nashville.

Elizabeth Sampley and Jacob Stubbs, both juniors at Monterey High School, were among 44 high school juniors from across the state who attended the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association's (TECA) annual Youth Leadership Summit March 12-14 in downtown Nashville.

Sampley and Stubbs were sponsored for the summit by Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC).

"VEC and Monterey High School officials selected Sampley and Stubbs based on their demonstrated leadership abilities," said VEC Communications Coordinator Robert McCarty, who chaperoned and helped lead summit activities. "The goal is to help these young leaders develop creative problem solving skills, network with other young leaders from across the state, and to cultivate their team building skills so they can use them to benefit their schools and communities."

"The annual summit also gives students an opportunity to learn about electric cooperatives, how they operate and how they affect their lives," said TECA Youth Services Coordinator Joe Jackson. "It also gives them an opportunity to see, in person, the legislative process in Tennessee's state capital."

The summit was headquartered at Nashville's Millennium Maxwell House Hotel.

The summit kicked-off Monday, March 12 with "get-acquainted" and leadership activities led by cooperative employees and special guests, including 2006 Miss Tennessee Blaire Pancake and University of Tennessee Extension Specialist Amy Gallimore.

In preparation for their visit to the Legislative Plaza Tuesday morning, students heard from TECA Director of Government and Public Affairs David Callis, as well as, Donna Morgan administrator of the Legislative Internship Program and several legislative interns.

The students toured the Capitol Building, had a photo made with Gov. Phil Bredesen and were able to sit in on Senate and House committee meetings at Legislative Plaza, afford-

ing them the opportunity to see state government in action. Elizabeth and Jacob also met with State Rep. Charles Curtiss. Participants took a guided tour of Nashville, attended a Nashville Predators hockey game, and capped off a busy Tuesday with an ice cream social. On Wednesday, students participated in team building and leadership activities led by cooperative employees. Students also competed in an Energy Battle competition. Teams competed against each other by answering trivia questions about electric cooperatives and the state. Jacob was a member of the winning team.

"It is encouraging to see this high caliber of future leaders in our service area," said VEC President/CEO Rody Blevins.



Jacob Stubbs and Elizabeth Sampley of Monterey High School were Volunteer Energy Cooperative's representatives at the 2007 Youth Leadership Summit held in Nashville.



State Rep. Charles Curtiss, far left, met with VEC participants Jacob Stubbs and Elizabeth Sampley along with VEC's Robert McCarty.

"We want them to be able to appreciate their electric cooperative and understand why it was so important to form electric cooperatives in the first place, Blevins added. "These students' grandparents may remember what it was like to live without electricity. But these young people have had modern conveniences all their lives."

The summit was hosted by TECA and funded in part by the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, a not-for-profit cooperative financing institute that provides an independent source of financing to member cooperatives nationwide.

Elizabeth Sampley is the daughter of John and Connie Sampley of Monterey and Jacob Stubbs is the son of Sheila Stubbs and Dean Stubbs of Cookeville.

Tays attend Young Leaders Conference

Statewide event stresses 'Communicating Leadership in America'

Sam and Beth Tays of Cookeville were among outstanding Tennesseans selected to attend the 2007 Young Leaders Conference Feb. 23 and 24 in Nashville.

The conference at the Music City Sheraton attracted 263 attendees, including young leader participants as well as board and staff members from the event's sponsoring organizations — the Tennessee Council of Cooperatives (TCC) and Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R). Sam and Beth represented Volunteer Energy Cooperative.

The theme for the two-day conference was "Communicating Leadership in America." Included were program segments that focused on cooperative education and leadership initiatives — from a cleverly structured "Jeopardy"-style game to a fiery challenge from an imposing keynote speaker whose specialty is motivating co-op members to become leaders in their organizations.

Former National Football League All-Pro defensive tackle Dave Rowe, now manager of member and public relations with Randolph Electric Membership Corporation in Asheboro, N.C., stressed that cooperatives are still "people-helping-people" businesses.

"We need people like you to step forward and say, 'Hey, I'd like to be a part of that!' Give something back to your community," said Rowe, who is familiar to southern football fans as an analyst on Lincoln Financial Sports' Southeastern Conference football telecasts. "In a cooperative, every member has a say in the operation of the business, and your selection to attend this conference says your voice is that of a leader. I urge you to go home and get to work."



Sam and Beth Tays of Putnam County represented Volunteer Energy Cooperative at this year's Young Leaders Conference in Nashville.

Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association's Joe Jackson, who serves as Tennessee Council of Cooperative's vice president for education, also urged participants to assume leadership roles with their local co-ops.

"You are our members, our owners, and our cooperatives exist to serve you," Jackson said. "The challenge now is for you, as leaders in your communities, to put your abilities to work at home by serving on co-op committees and assuming leadership responsibilities wherever you can."

The conference program also featured discussions of farm-based issues, including a general session on misconceptions of agriculture. Ag enhancements, animal identification, agri-tourism, value-added initiatives, current ag issues, and the Tennessee Beef Alliance were discussed in detail in break-out sessions.

The Tennessee Council of Cooperatives, which is observing its 25th anniversary this year, is comprised of 93 organizations that serve farmers and rural residents across the state. Membership in the council includes electric, telephone, farm supply, dairy, tobacco, artificial insemination, and financial cooperatives as well as the Tennessee Farm Bureau.