

Safety is a Team Sport

by Julie Jones

Last year I interviewed several linemen from across our service area and asked them four questions about safety. Last month I wrote about the question "What does safety mean to you?"

This was answered universally as "Safety means going home at night." The second question I asked them was "Is safety a team effort?" While the responses varied somewhat they basically all came down to this, "Yes, working safe requires everyone."

Working as a team starts when everyone gets to work in the morning. Jamestown Area Manager Louie DeLorenzo said, "What we do is dangerous," and he reminds them each day to "follow the rules." Everybody has a responsibility to take care of themselves, according to DeLorenzo, but it's easier with the whole team on the same page.

In addition to the Area Managers daily encouraging safe behavior, Safety Superintendent Ty Ratcliff texts each lineman every morning with a safety tip. "A good safety record doesn't come by accident, stay safe," was a recent text by Ratcliff.

*"This is a team effort. I am my brother's keeper."
Scottie Peels Benton
Lineman*

A daily safety practice at all the service centers is the Job Briefing form each line crew fills out for every job and trouble call. This briefing has them note the location, the address, the weather conditions, the job type, the protective gear needed and potential assessed hazards. This form requires all crewmen to evaluate the job and sign indicating they understand the work procedures and their roles in that particular job. As Benton Service Area line foreman Scottie Peels stated, "This is a team effort. I am my brother's keeper. Using the Job Briefing helps everyone work safer and on the same page."

"Safety is a culture," per John Selvidge Cleveland Service Area manager. It starts at the top, it includes those who work inside and outside, and the team drives the passion and enthusiasm for safe habits.

Cleveland Lineman Don McCoy stated, "We need everyone on the team to be involved and when you work with safe people you are encouraged to work even safer."

To be safe, means to go home at night. This is for everyone, the whole VEC team, all the time.



Deadline for Lillard-Shadow Scholarship is March 4

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) wants to reward students who have used their time and talents to benefit their local communities. VEC's Lillard-Shadow scholarship program rewards academic and community service achievements by awarding four \$2,000 scholarships to students who will graduate from high schools in VEC's service area in the spring of 2018. Four awards of \$500 per semester each (renewable for up to four semesters) will be presented to high school graduates whose parents or guardians are VEC electric customers. Applications will be judged by an independent panel based on each student's community service activities and citizenship - 40%; written communication skills - 20 %; financial need - 25%; and academic achievement - 15%.

Scholarship applications are available at any VEC Customer Service Center or from high school counselors in the VEC service area. Applications are also available online at www.vec.org.

All application materials must be completed and delivered to VEC's Corporate Office in Decatur no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 4, 2018.



Co-ops Build Up Tennessee

In November of last year, the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association (TECA) held its annual meeting. I, along with most of our directors, attended that event in Nashville. The theme of the meeting was "Build Up," and many of the presentations focused on the tremendous impact that co-ops have on our state.

Electric co-ops serve more than 2.5 million Tennesseans, 71 percent of the state and 84 of the state's 95 counties. Co-ops keep the lights on 99.96 percent of the time and provide career opportunities to more than 2,400 Tennesseans. Co-ops pay some \$63 million in taxes and have awarded more than \$39 million in USDA loans and grants to recruit and retain rural jobs.

Despite the impressive statistics and the positive impact of co-ops, many hurdles remain for our rural and suburban communities.

During his remarks at the meeting, David Callis, the general manager of TECA, said the following, "I'll leave you with this challenge: Think carefully about your co-op and your co-op members. What are their needs? What are their expectations? What opportunities exist for your co-op to take action to improve everyday life for your members? We have an important role to play, and together co-ops can build up Tennessee."

This is a serious challenge, and it is something that our board and our staff consider each day. We love the communities we serve, and we take our responsibility to improve everyday life for our members seriously.

We believe that there is a role for Volunteer Energy Cooperative that goes far beyond simply keeping the lights on. That is why we are working with local economic development groups to help recruit jobs and investments to our service areas. We work to prepare the next generation of leaders through our youth leadership and Washington Youth Tour programs. And, we are in the middle of a pilot for broadband service that will extend high-speed internet service throughout our service area.

I appreciate the impact that co-ops have had. Our employees and retirees can be proud of the role that Volunteer Energy Cooperative played in developing this region over the years. However, we should not be content to stop where we are. Our communities have tremendous potential, and I think our best days lie ahead.



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative

The VECustomers Share program funded \$27,600 in community service grants in January. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$6.1 million in grants has been awarded. The deadline for grant applications is the last working 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.



VECustomers Share Board Member Bill Blackwell presents a grant check to Jan Martin, President of the Benton Food Fund Booster Club. The club gave 200 bags of food to the elderly of Benton this past Christmas.

Organizations receiving grants in January

Crossville Cumberland County Crime Stoppers	\$2,500	CLUB 21-Polk County High School	\$750
Fair Park Senior Center	\$1,750	Maple Grove Team Kids	\$700
Meigs County Ministries	\$1,500	Unaka District-Great Smoky Mountain Council, Boy Scouts of America	\$650
Manna House Ministries	\$1,500	Pickett County Extension	\$600
Midway Middle School Bullying Prevention and Character Education Program	\$1,500	Spring City Middle-Washington, DC Boosters	\$520
Happy Hearts Seniors	\$1,250	Polk County Ramp Festival	\$500
Midway High School Band Boosters	\$1,250	YMCA YCAP	\$500
Fairview Independent Baptist Church Youth Group	\$1,075	Stone Elementary Jr Beta Club	\$500
Byrdstown Senior Center	\$1,075	Hiwassee Long Beards	\$500
Hamilton County S.T.A.R.S. (Special Tactics and Res)	\$1,000	Midway Middle School Baseball	\$500
Valley View Cubs Crew PTO	\$1,000	Greater Cleveland Concert Band	\$500
Meigs Middle 8th Grade College Readiness Program	\$1,000	Stone Memorial High School Drama Club	\$500
Maple Grove Community Senior Adults	\$980	Monterey Jr. High School Softball	\$500
Friends of Monterey Branch Library	\$875	Family Promise of Bradley County	\$500
Monterey High School Senior Trip-Class of 2018	\$790	Monterey High School National Honor Society	\$385
		Spring City Middle School Golf Boosters	\$250
		Toys for Children	\$200

Making a Difference, One Grant at a Time

by Julie Jones

Working as a communications coordinator for Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC), I speak to co-op members daily. The questions are as varied as our services, and range from “how can I sign up for service” to “why do my lights blink?” One question that is asked frequently is “what happens to the money rounded up on my bill?” VECustomers Shares is a grant program that is funded through the rounding up of member’s bills to the nearest dollar. The most an individual member would pay within a years’ time is \$11.88 and in 2017 our members averaged \$5.43 each for the year.

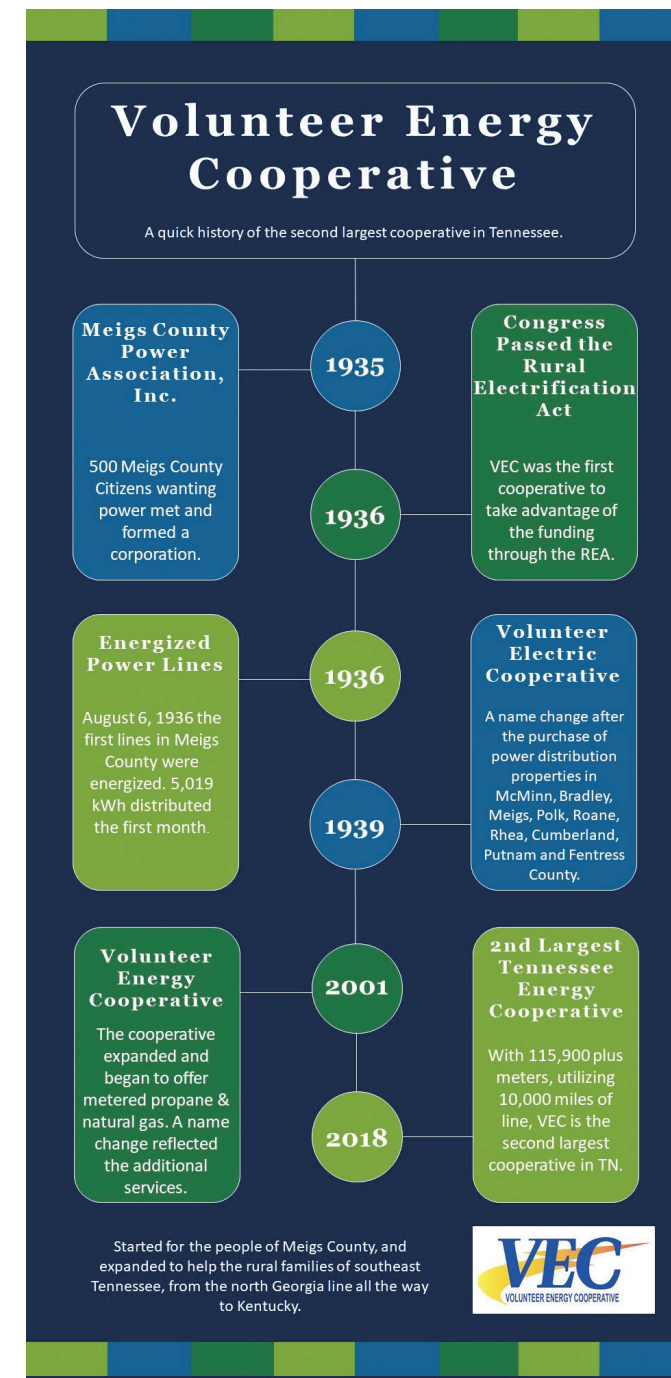
In return for the rounded up change from our members, we are able to contribute to organizations across our 17 county service area. Each month the VECustomers Share Board meets and distributes the funds collected in the previous month. Every service area is represented by a board member and the funding is split according to the numbers of members in that area. Sometimes one county’s board member will give to another board member’s county for an exceptional request. In November of 2016, all the board members gave their portion of Shares to help the victims of the tornadoes in Polk and McMinn counties.



One of the programs receiving a grant from VECustomers Share is *For the Children Quilting Ministry*. Founded by Marilyn Christenson in 2006, this program provides colorful handmade quilts to children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse. Many of the children come from situations where methamphetamine was present so they are not allowed to take anything with them. Denise Melton Director of House of Hope Cumberland County stated, “The children love the quilts. They love picking out something that is their very own. They do not have anything when they are removed and the quilts are theirs.” House of Hope is one of three different organizations that receive the quilts to distribute.

For the Children Quilting Ministry uses volunteers to hand stitch each quilt. They have 22-24 volunteers who sew in their homes. They meet once a month to discuss the projects and needs. Dianne Hodge is the current organizer of the program and is assisted by Carol Baker and Robin Bellanti. Hodge stated, “We want to make a difference. When those children are removed and they have nothing and we can give them a quilt. It’s something they can wrap up in, like giving them a hug.” *For the Children Quilting Ministry* does not receive funding from state or federal agencies, they are supported solely by donations and grants. The material, especially the batting, can be very expensive but the gift of a hug to an abused child is priceless.

Thank you, Volunteer Energy Cooperative members for donating your change to VECustomers Shares. Together we make a difference.



Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) Serving Rural Tennesseans Since 1935

We may have changed names, we may have added different services, but our mission has stayed the same. To provide our customers reliable safe and efficient services in a courteous and timely manner at a competitive cost.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective February 1, 2018

1.998¢

For the most current FCA information, visit www.vec.org
Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.

MARCH 2018