

Watch Out for Scammers

Unfortunately, in today's world, scams are inevitable. Scammers can threaten you with everything from legal action involving the IRS to turning off power to your home.

Utility scams often involve an individual or group posing as an employee of your electric cooperative. The scammer may use threatening language to frighten you into offering your credit card or bank account information. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

Understand the threats posed and your best course of action:

- If someone calls your home or cellphone demanding you pay your electric bill immediately, gather as much information as you can from that individual, hang-up the phone and contact the local authorities. Scammers often use threats and urgency to pressure you into giving them your bank account number or loading a pre-paid credit or debit card. If you have any doubt about your utility bill, contact our member payment center either in person or over the phone.
- If someone comes to your home claiming to be an employee of Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) that needs to collect money or inspect parts of your property, call us to verify they are, in fact, an employee. If they are not verified, call local authorities for assistance. Do not let the individual into your home.

There are other types of scams consumers should watch out for:

- Government agencies like the IRS will never call to inform you that you have unpaid taxes or other liens against you. You will always receive this type of information in the mail. If someone calls claiming to be the IRS, hang-up immediately.
- If you receive an email from an unknown sender; an email riddled with spelling errors and typos; or an email threatening action unless a sum of money is paid, do not click any links provided within the email, and do not respond to the email. Just delete the email, or send it to your spam folder.
- If someone calls your home claiming to have discovered a virus on your computer, hang-up. This caller intends to access personal information you may be keeping on your computer.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative wants to make sure you avoid any types of scams that could put you or your financial information in

jeopardy. If you have any questions or would like more information about how you can protect yourself from scammers, call us or visit our website www.vec.org.



VEC College Scholarship Deadline is March 8th

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 2019.

The scholarships honor J.W. Lillard and Willis A Shadow, two community leaders who spearheaded efforts to bring electric power to Decatur and Meigs County in the 1930s, forming the organization that would become Volunteer Energy Cooperative. Mr. Shadow and Mr. Lillard were instrumental in improving the lives and livelihoods of thousands of residents through electric power.

Four awards of \$500 per semester each (renewable for up to four semesters) will be presented to spring 2019 high school graduates whose parents or guardians are VEC 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 8, 2019.



We're Thankful for Your Membership

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

In the spirit of this quote by author William Arthur Ward, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for your membership in our electric cooperative. Because of your connection to Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC), we can make our community a better place.

I generally use my column to provide updates on new projects and developments and report out on the progress of ongoing initiatives. We share these updates so that all of our consumer-members have a window into our priorities, progress, and challenges. However, as a new year begins, I think it's equally important to let you and other consumer-members of VEC know just what an impact you have on our cooperative and the greater community, likely in ways you may not even realize.

As part of the cooperative business model, one of our core principles is "Concern for Community." While our priority is always to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy, we view our role in the community as a catalyst for good.

We work closely with our local schools to provide safety demonstrations, award college scholarships and support STEM programs. VEC also participates in an annual Youth Tour where we take our community's brightest young people to Washington, D.C. for a weeklong immersion to experience democracy in action. The trip is inspirational for many students, and we are both humbled and honored to be a part of this leadership development journey. Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of you! You empower the cooperative through your membership and your participation in and support of these programs.

When you attend cooperative events, alert us to problems, provide suggestions online, or share concerns with VEC employees you help us improve operations and thereby better serve the larger cooperative membership.

Because members of our community locally govern us, we can get a firsthand perspective on community priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments, such as



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative

RESOLVE TO SAVE ENERGY

Make a home energy resolution and reap the benefits all year long!

Three easy ways to save energy:

1
Install a programmable thermostat.
You could save an estimated \$180 annually!

2
Ditch incandescents.
Did you know incandescent bulbs release 90% of their energy as heat? Use LEDs instead.

3
Reduce energy used for water heating.
Lower your water heater's temp and consider installing low-flow showerheads.

Source: energy.gov



The VECustomers Share program funded \$25,100 in community service grants in November. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$6.5 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 Lynn Crawford presents a grant check to Karen Hacker the Secretary-Treasurer of American Legion Ladies Auxiliary Unit 257. Pictured from left to right: Terry McKittrick - American Legion Communications, Karen Hacker - American Legion Secretary-Treasurer, Lynn Crawford - VECustomers Share Board Member, and Martha Durichuck - American Legion President.

Organizations receiving grants in November

Operation Reach	\$2,000	Meigs North Elementary PTO	\$700
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America	\$1,847	Decatur Civitan Club	\$600
Hamilton County STARS	\$1,500	Tennessee Flash Senior Olympc Basketball	\$500
South Cumberland Beta Club	\$1,300	Bradley Bears Baseball Team Boosters	\$500
Cumberland County High School (CCHS) Volleyball Boosters	\$1,253	B.A.S.I.C. of TN Inc.	\$500
Monterey High School Library - Reader's Choice Club	\$1,250	McClendon-Garrison American Legion Post 203	\$500
Fentress County Food Bank	\$1,000	First Baptist Church - Sewing Ladies	\$500
McMinn County Foster Care	\$1,000	Canine Connection	\$500
Pine Haven Yearbook Club	\$1,000	West Polk Empty Stocking	\$500
Polk County High School (PCHS) Wrestling	\$1,000	Boots N Roses Dance Club	\$500
Veterans Museum of White Co.	\$750	City of Crossville, Parks and Recreation	\$500
American Heritage Girls Troop TN0111	\$750	Jr. Beta Club - Stone Elementary School	\$450
My Brothers Keeper of SE TN, Inc.	\$750	Ella's Friends Inc.	\$400
Kiwanis Club of Spring City	\$750	Homestead Fitness Club	\$400
HOSA - Health Occupations Students of America - Meigs High School	\$700	Walker Valley Dance Team	\$300
		Oak Grove STEM Club	\$300
		Rhea County Sack Pack Program	\$250
		Delta Kappa Gamma Society	\$250
		Crossville Public Housing Resident Association	\$100

VEC Receives 2018 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER Initiative Grant

Over the summer of 2018, Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) applied for several grants to aid in the cost of construction for its commercial broadband pilot. While some of the grants applied for are still outstanding, we are pleased to announce that VEC is one of the recipients of the 2018 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER Initiative Grant. ARC has awarded 35 grants totaling \$26.5 million, of which VEC will receive \$1.5 million to put toward its commercial broadband effort. This money will be split between VEC and its strategic partners, with \$1 million going to aid in the cost of construction, including smart grid enhancements, and another \$500,000 going toward grid virtualization and entrepreneurial development.

VEC will match the \$1 million portion of the grant with an additional \$1 million, and the \$2 million total will be utilized to run fiber to the Birchwood Community of Hamilton and Meigs counties. Thanks to the ARC grant, 731 homes will gain access to gigabit internet service. The broadband service expansion will include areas surrounding Highway 60, between Highway 58 and the Tennessee River. To see details of the area to be covered in graphic form, please visit www.vec-twinlakes.com. The fiber areas affected will be the zones labeled Georgetown, Blythe Ferry, and Parker Loop. Construction in these areas began during the winter months of late 2018.

The VEC broadband pilot began in December 2017, and currently provides internet, television, and telephone access to 137 homes on Bigsby Creek Road and inside Camelot subdivision, to 228 homes on No Pone Road and Van Davis Road, and soon to an additional 251 homes across the No Pone and Van Davis communities.



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high-speed broadband, community solar programs, equipment and technology upgrades, and electric vehicle programs.

We are thankful that our cooperative board members carve out time to attend valuable training sessions, participate in planning meetings and keep abreast of industry trends. This investment in time results in better-informed advisers that serve the cooperative's interests in a way that our consumer-members expect and deserve.

On a more personal note, we appreciate the countless acts of kindness our linemen and other employees receive when they are working in severe weather and dangerous conditions. Our employees are thankful for your patience and consideration when we are trying to restore power during challenging situations and prolonged periods.

VEC was initially established 83 years ago to bring electricity to our area when no one else would. The cooperative is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. Together, let's continue making our corner of the world a better place. We can't do it without you, and for that, we're thankful for your membership.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

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

2.107¢

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