Candidates Vying for VEC Board Positions

The following candidates have qualified to run for positions on the Volunteer Energy Cooperative board of directors in districts where the current directors’ terms of office are expiring.

Voting ballots for the District 2 and District 8 elections will be mailed August 21. The election in District 6 is not contested.

**District 2 – Bradley County**

**John Buchanan**
John Buchanan is running to represent Bradley County on the Volunteer Energy Cooperative board of directors. John has been an insurance agent for Bradley County Farm Bureau for 21 years. He is a member of the Cleveland and Hiwassee Masonic Lodge and attends the First United Methodist Church in Cleveland.

John is married to Ginger, and they have two daughters, Maggie and Anna. He graduated from Meigs County High and received a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture from the University of Tennessee Knoxville.

**David Cross**
David Cross is running to represent Bradley County on the Volunteer Energy Cooperative board of directors. David is the pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston. He is a bi-vocational pastor and owns Electronic Solutions.

David has served as the Chaplin for the city of Cleveland, on the board of directors for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, and the Automotive Advisory board for Cleveland High School. He graduated from Ringgold High School and has a bachelor’s degree in Theology. David is married to Karen, and they have one daughter Alycia.

**Scott Humbert**
Scott Humbert is the incumbent board of director representative for Bradley County. Scott graduated from Bradley Central High School. He received a Bachelor of Secondary Education with an emphasis in Biology and a Master of Science in Secondary Education Administration. Scott retired after 42 years as the Chief of Operations and Technology Director for Bradley County Schools.

Scott served as the secretary on the board of directors for the Cleveland/Bradley County Teachers Federal Credit Union. He also served on the board of Directors of Farmers Union Mutual Insurance.

Scott and his wife Deborah have three children, Jason, Sarah, and Geoffrey. They attend Broadstreet United Methodist Church.

**District 6 – Bledsoe & Rhea County**

**Jerry Henley**
Jerry Henley is the incumbent Volunteer Energy Cooperative board of directors’ member representing District 6, which includes Bledsoe and Rhea counties. He is a Spring City resident and a graduate of Spring City High School. He attended Tennessee Technological University.

Jerry is retired from Southeast Bank and Trust and served as mayor of Spring City. He also has served as the president of the Spring City Kiwanis Club and president of the Spring City Chamber of Commerce. Jerry is a member of the Spring City United Methodist Church. He and his wife, Rayna, have two children, Penne Baugh and Jeri Allen.

**Kenneth Carey, Jr.**
Kenneth Carey Jr. is a farmer and small-business owner. He graduated from Cumberland County High School, attended Chattanooga State Community College for an associate degree in Fire Science, and the University of Tennessee for a Certified Public Administrator degree.

Kenneth is married to Lynn Alice and has two children, Kendra Simonds and Andy Carey. He is a member of Bowman Baptist Church. He served for 12 years on the Cumberland County Commission and eight years as the Cumberland County Mayor.

Kenneth is a board member with the Farm Bureau and the Cumberland Farmers Co-op. He is a member of the Crossville Rotary, Crossville Masonic Lodge, and the Alhambra Shriners Club. Kenneth worked with the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency from 2010 -2018, and he volunteers with the Cumberland County Fire Department.

Kenneth has received the Cumberland County Farm Bureau Service Award, Cumberland County Soil Conservation District – Outstanding Conservation Farmer, Cumberland County Fire Department 40 Years of Service award, and the State of Tennessee – Fire Educator of the Year.

**Laney Colvard**
Laney Colvard is the incumbent VEC board of directors’ member representing District 8, which covers west Cumberland County. He is the VEC board of directors’ chairman. The Crossville resident graduated from Bledsoe County High School and earned his Bachelor of Science and Law degrees from the University of Tennessee. He and his wife, Charlotte, have one child, Lana and two grandchildren, Kayla and Landon.

Laney is a practicing attorney. He served as the Cumberland County Attorney for 10 years, the Crossville City Attorney for 14 years, Crossville Charter Review Committee in 2013, and a charter member of Hikers, Inc. board of directors. He served as a board member of Cumberland Good Samaritan for 15 years. He attends Cumberland Homestead Baptist Church.

**District 8 – Cumberland County West**

**Laney Colvard**
Laney Colvard is the incumbent VEC board of directors’ member representing District 8, which covers west Cumberland County. He is the VEC board of directors’ chairman. The Crossville resident graduated from Bledsoe County High School and earned his Bachelor of Science and Law degrees from the University of Tennessee. He and his wife, Charlotte, have one child, Lana and two grandchildren, Kayla and Landon.

Laney is a practicing attorney. He served as the Cumberland County Attorney for 10 years, the Crossville City Attorney for 14 years, Crossville Charter Review Committee in 2013, and a charter member of Hikers, Inc. board of directors. He served as a board member of Cumberland Good Samaritan for 15 years. He attends Cumberland Homestead Baptist Church.

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Kenneth has received the Cumberland County Farm Bureau Service Award, Cumberland County Soil Conservation District – Outstanding Conservation Farmer, Cumberland County Fire Department 40 Years of Service award, and the State of Tennessee – Fire Educator of the Year.

VEC and Broadband

I am frequently asked when broadband internet access will become available to VEC members. Similar to electricity in the 1930s, high-speed internet has transformed from a luxury to necessity. The lack of service availability has a financial impact on our communities, but it also creates barriers to education and access to online medicine.

VEC began researching solutions for broadband access in 2015. Opening a discussion with Twin Lakes Telephone Cooperative, we researched ways to provide internet service to our members. After a productive conversation with Twin Lakes, VEC initiated a cost of service study.

In the spring of 2017, the Tennessee State Legislature passed the Broadband Accessibility Act (BAA), allowing electric cooperatives to provide commercial broadband internet service. The VEC board of directors approved a pilot in the Hopewell community of Bradley County that initially included 140 homes.

In the fall of 2018, VEC received two grants, one from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and another from the State of Tennessee BAA. By 2019, VEC began the installation of fiber optics in the Birchwood community of Hamilton and Meigs counties and the Spring Creek community of McMinn County.

To date, VEC has applied on nine different grant opportunities representing 14 VEC communities, including parts of Cumberland County, Meigs County and Roane County. We continue to work with our partners Twin Lakes Telephone Cooperative and Ben Lomand Connect to secure more coverage for the Cumberland County area.

We plan to participate in the Federal Communications Commission Rural Development Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Reverse Auction later this year. If we are successful with the RDOF auction, we will be able to expand in several counties within the VEC service areas.

Currently, we have three grant applications that are pending, and we plan to apply for the BAA grant again in the fall. We are optimistic that the outstanding grant applications (for the Cumberland Cove community of Cumberland and Putnam counties, Ten Mile and South Roane, and South Meigs) will be awarded, allowing expansion of service to those areas.

VEC is dedicated to providing broadband access to members living in unserved areas. We are committed to level the playing field for the rural communities in our service areas by partnering to provide gigabit internet access.
**VEC Customers Shares is a grant program funded through the rounding up of member’s bills to the nearest dollar. The most an individual member would pay within a year is $11.88. Our members usually average around 50 cents each year.**

In return for the rounded up change from our members, we contribute to organizations across our 17 county service area. Each month the VEC Customers Share Board meets and distributes the funds collected in the previous month. A board member represents every service area. In June, VEC Customers Share Grants totaled $22,000.

Mended Hearts Chapter 127 is one of the organizations receiving a grant this month. Blanche Smith, Mended Hearts 127 president, works with other members to raise funds. They give away 12 AEDs to local organizations this month. The VEC Customers Share Board meets and distributes the funds collected in the previous month. Each member would pay within a year is $11.88. Our members usually average around $5.50 each yearly.

We place the highest level of importance on the applicant’s commitment to community service.

### Organizations receiving grants in June

- **Pickett County High School Baseball** $2,000
- **Challenge Magnet Central High School** $2,000
- **Meigs County Ministry** $1,500
- **The Salvation Army of Cleveland, TN** $1,500
- **Monterey Lions Club, Inc.** $1,000
- **Creative Compass, Inc.** $1,000
- **Cumberland Homesteads Tower Association** $1,000
- **The Art Guild at Fairfield Glade** $1,000
- **Luminary-Frostbite Volunteer Fire Depart., Inc.** $1,000
- **United Way of McMinn and Meigs Counties** $1,000
- **Rhea County Health Council - Give a Kid a Chance** $1,000
- **Senior Citizens of Cumberland County** $1,000
- **Mended Hearts Chapter 127** $1,000
- **Roane County Youth Leadership** $600
- **Polk County Youth Football** $500
- **Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization** $500
- **Midway Quarterback Club** $500
- **McMinn County Living Heritage Museum** $500
- **Polk County Education Foundation** $500
- **Clear View Ministries** $500
- **Covenant Youth Group** $500
- **Midway High School Baseball Boosters** $400
- **Monterey Depot Historical Society** $400
- **Katelyn Carpenter** $600
- **Maggie Thompson** $600
- **Mended Hearts Inc.** $600
- **John Melhorn** $600

### Volunteer Energy Announces Scholarship Recipients

Volunteer Energy Cooperative has announced four recipients of the Lillard-Shadow Scholarships for 2020.

- **Austin Waters**, son of William and Barbara Waters, is a 2020 graduate of Alvin C. York Institute and the winner of the Jamestown Service Area Lillard-Shadow Scholarship. He plans to attend Tennessee Tech in Cookeville and will be pursuing a degree in Computer Science. Austin graduated with a 4.0 GPA. Austin was involved with the TN American Legion Boys State, the Fentress County Youth Fair Board, York Institute Interact Club (President), National Honor Society, and Student Council. He participated in multiple community service projects, including collecting items for the troops and making food and toiletry packages for students in need.

- **Maggie Thompson**, daughter of Paul and Angela Thompson, is a 2020 graduate of Walker Valley High School. She plans to attend Cleveland State Community College and pursue an accounting or business degree. Maggie graduated with a 4.0 and was ranked 14th in her graduating class. Maggie volunteered at Camp Living Stones, was a bell ringer of the Salvation Army, volunteered to clean and work in the nursery of Bellefont Baptist Church. As a member of the Anchor Club, she visited Brookdale Nursing Home residents and helped as needed.

- **Katelyn Carpenter**, daughter of Alan and Maggie Carpenter. She graduated with a 3.9 and was ranked 20th in her class. Katelyn will be pursuing a degree in Environmental Engineering with a Soil Science Concentration. She is very involved in her community. Katelyn also participated in the VEC Nursing Home Supply Drive by donating several pairs of slippers and boxed food. She worked with her church to provide food care packages weekly to food-insecure children at an elementary school. Katelyn also joins members of her church monthly to plan, prepare, and serve a meal at Bread of Life Soup Kitchen.

- **John Melhorn**, son of William and Barbara Waters, is a 2020 graduate of Alvin C. York Institute and the winner of the Jamestown Service Area Lillard-Shadow Scholarship recipient, Katelyn Carpenter, plans to attend Tennessee Tech in Cookeville. Katelyn is the daughter of Alan and Maggie Carpenter. She graduated with a 3.9 and was ranked 20th in her class. Katelyn will be pursuing a degree in Environmental Engineering with a Soil Science Concentration. She is very involved in her community. Katelyn also participated in the VEC Nursing Home Supply Drive by donating several pairs of slippers and boxed food. She worked with her church to provide food care packages weekly to food-insecure children at an elementary school. Katelyn also joins members of her church monthly to plan, prepare, and serve a meal at Bread of Life Soup Kitchen.

When Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) was formed back in 1971, the goals were not only to provide electricity to our area residents, but also to give back. Our founders set rules for the company that we still honor today. In addition to establishing VEC as a not-for-profit, consumer-owned cooperative, VEC was designed to be committed to promoting and contributing to the communities in which we serve.

One way that we honor that commitment to our community is through our Lillard-Shadow Scholarship program. Our scholarship program is different from many other scholarship programs. While academic achievements and the financial needs of our applicants are considered, we place the highest level of importance on the applicant’s commitment to community service.

The purpose of the scholarship is to identify those gifted students who have demonstrated their commitment to the community and the differences they help pursue their educational goals. The long-term goal is to encourage them to return home after their studies and join in the task of building a stronger community. The Lillard-Shadow Scholarship program is one of our youth outreach programs that share the same goal.

In this issue of Powerlines we are highlighting our 2020 scholarship winners. The four winners – one from each of our service districts – are outstanding examples of what is right with students these days. But the winners are far from the only impressive applications assessed during our evaluation process. Our independent panel of judges reviewed over 70 applications from students who are not only excelling in the classroom but are making a difference by volunteering hours of their time to help build their communities.