**Tip of the Month**

**Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month**

The average household owns 24 electronic products, which account for roughly 12% of home energy use. When shopping for electronics, consider purchasing ENERGY STAR®-certified products, which can be 70% more efficient than conventional models.

*Source: www.energystar.gov*

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**Power On: October is National Co-op Month**

As an electric cooperative, our top priority is always to provide reliable, affordable energy to you, the consumer-members we serve. Because we are a co-op, our mission is to enrich the lives of our members and serve the long-term interests of our community—and this mission has never been more critical than in recent months. One of the seven principles that guides all co-ops is “cooperation among consumers.” To me, this principle is the essential DNA of Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC), and it sets us apart from other electric utilities.

October is National Co-op Month, and electric cooperatives across the country are highlighting the many ways we "Power On." Keeping this theme in mind, I recognize the essential role we play in serving our community.

Who could have imagined in March that COVID-19 would amount to a test of our community and our nation? The changing circumstances due to the pandemic have created both challenges and opportunities. Over the past several months, we’ve all been challenged to operate differently, and VEC has stepped up to help our members and strengthen the safety net for our more vulnerable neighbors.

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**Cybersecurity Awareness Month**

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) is proud to announce its commitment to National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, held annually in October. This year’s Cybersecurity Awareness Month theme is “Do Your Part. #BeCyberSmart,” aimed to empower individuals and organizations to own their role in protecting their part of cyberspace.

“By increasing awareness and enhancing understanding of basic cybersecurity practices, we can all work together to combat cyberthreats,” said President and CEO Rody Blevins. “The human element is often-times the biggest cybersecurity risk. Each of us has a critical role to play to ensure the security of our personal and professional data.”

National Cybersecurity Awareness Month is spearheaded by the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The message of this year’s theme, “If you Connect it, Protect it,” dives into the importance of keeping connected devices safe and secure from outside influence. With more people spending time at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever before, connected devices are an integral part of how we communicate and access services essential to our well-being. Data collected from these devices can include highly-specific information about a person or business, which can be exploited by bad actors for criminal gain.

Cybersecurity Awareness Month aims to shed light on these security vulnerabilities, while offering guidance surrounding simple security measures to limit the susceptibility of threats for common devices.

Now in its 17th year, Cybersecurity Awareness Month continues to build momentum and impact with the ultimate goal of providing everyone with the information they need to stay safer and more secure online. VEC is proud to support this far-reaching online safety awareness and education initiative.

For more information about Cybersecurity Awareness Month and how to participate, visit staysafeonline.org/cybersecurity-awareness-month. You can also follow and use the official hashtag #BeCyberSmart on social media channels.

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**Rain or shine, day or night, we’re here for you. October is National Co-op Month. #PowerOn**

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**Then. Now. Always. We’re proud to power your life. October is National Co-op Month. #PowerOn**

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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 $5.50 each yearly.

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 August, VEC Customers Share Grants totaled $32,500.

The Caring Place is a non-profit organization in Bradley County, Tennessee. Their mission is to provide access to the basic resources and opportunities for families in need. Each month the Caring Place serves over 1300 individual households with food, clothing and or social services. They have 150 volunteer positions and currently have 134 active volunteers. In addition to providing food at The Caring Place, during the school year, they provide food-insecure school-aged students with a Sac Pac each week. They also offer free social work to help connect individuals to available and appropriate community services. Their Getting Ahead Program is a small group experience that allows individuals the change to work and learn together to create an effective path out of poverty.

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As an essential service, and to ensure reliability of your supply, we modified our operations to safeguard business continuity. Our employees began working on staggered schedules to maintain separation. Some staff worked remotely. In the office, we limited and modified meetings and gatherings to allow for safe separation. We also adjusted our walk-in availability to ensure the health and safety of our employees and our valued members. We think these measures were the prudent course of action for the times.

For our members impacted by COVID-19 who needed help with their electric bills, we waived late fees and worked with those hardest hit to make special payment arrangements. We also offered payment assistance through our Project Deserve program, a fund made possible through your kind donations.

In addition to Project Deserve, VEC Customers Share Program donated all of April and May’s funds to area food banks. In partnership with Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the Share’s program donated $53,865, and TVA gave $34,180. In total, our food banks received $88,045 to help with the increased need due to Covid-19.

I tell you about all of these efforts not to boast about VEC but to explain how much we care about this community—because we live here too.

We’ve seen other local businesses rising to meet similar challenges during this time, because that’s what communities do. While the difficulties caused by COVID-19 have been daunting, I’m encouraged to see how everyone is pulling together.

In 1935, VEC was built by the community to serve the community, and that’s what we’ll continue to do – Power On.

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Organizations receiving grants in August

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Rena’s Math &amp; Science Club</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hwy 58 Volunteer Fire Dept Inc.</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>We Care Safe Haven Home</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monterey High School Readers Choice Club</td>
<td>$1,850</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Caring Place</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fentress County Food Bank</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Smoky Mountain Council - Boy Scouts of America</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monterey Anglers Booster Club</td>
<td>$1,150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys &amp; Girls Club of the Ocoee Region Andor Program Bradley Co.</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk High School Cross Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>GROW</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCHRA/AASA of Cumberland County</td>
<td>$925</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midway Quarterback Club</td>
<td>$900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospice of Cumberland County</td>
<td>$875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield Glade Lions Club</td>
<td>$875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midway High School Baseball Boosters</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Neigs North Elementary PTO                         $800
Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization             $800
Christian Counseling Center of Cumberland         $750
Character Counts Community Initiative              $700
Mountain Valley Blue Star Mothers TMI             $700
Imagination Library - Neigs County Chapter         $700
Miracle Lake Inc.                                  $700
The Avalon Center Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Program $625
Martin Junior Beta Club                            $625
Stone Memorial Wrestling Booster Club              $600
York Institute Golf Program                        $550
Mega County High School Golf Boosters              $400
STARTS (Support The ARTS)                         $375
Tennessee Club Lamb Producers                      $300
Jones Chapel (UMC) Celebrate Recovery              $200
Ministry                                           $200
US History Club - National History Day Club       $150