

# Roanoke Electric FLASHES

Serving 14,400 Members

"Owned by those we serve"

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## Maintaining our Customer-Focused Perspective

By Curtis Wynn

*Executive Vice President and CEO*

In the 21st century, your world is bigger no matter where you live.

Rural communities like ours are now linked to the global economy through the Internet, through giant chain retail stores, cell phones and email and a myriad of automated on-line and phone systems intended to make life easier for both consumers and businesses.

And while all of these new technologies and innovations are helpful, all too often Americans feel swallowed up. Reduced to a faceless credit card or phone number. Just another account number.

It's called big business and it's what makes the world turn today. Gone are those mom and pop shops where store owners knew your name and knew that your father was a cotton farmer or that your son was in tenth grade and turning out to be a great quarterback for his high school football team. These shop keepers cared about you – not just as a consumer, but as a person.

Roanoke Electric Cooperative, like all cooperatives, still operates on those mom and pop principles

of caring for our customers. And while we use the most innovative technology available to bring power to you, we recognize that it's the little things that count for our members.

Our employees are your neighbors. They go to your church. They see you at the grocery store. Their children play on the same little league team as your children. And they are here to help you.

This warm family approach is what sets REC apart. It's what makes a cooperative special. And it's what lets you know that as a member – YOU are special.

That's why we contribute thousands of dollars each year to your local schools, athletic organizations, non-profits, youth programs, and give out a scholarship for high-school seniors. This money goes to people and places you know.

### 2006 Accomplishments

To me, being one of the best utilities in the industry means having a relentless focus on what we do well. It means listening to our members. And it means getting power to you efficiently and at the lowest possible costs.

It also means keeping up with



growth in our region and offering up-to-date services. That calls for major investments of time and money by your co-op. In 2006 we focused on the following:

- Continuing to closely monitor and manage system growth with the multi-million-dollar entertainment complex, Carolina Crossroads in Roanoke Rapids, and the Innsbrook subdivision in Bertie County.

- Planning and managing resources to provide power to these two major developments.

- Implementing new billing and reporting systems for our customer service staff so that we can access your bills much more quickly and create comparative reports to help you manage your usage.

- Training and developing an effective team of dedicated employees who come to work every day with the purpose of earning the right to serve you.

*continued on page 22*

## Letter from the CEO (continued) ...

### Looking at 2007

In addition to continuing to manage growth and investments in 2007, we are working to ensure that your costs, as well as our own, are kept at a minimum. Unfortunately, REC's cost to distribute power to you have skyrocketed.

Power for the electric grid that lights, heats, and cools your home comes from some of the most advanced gas, coal-fired, hydro and renewable resource power plants in North America. Getting that power to you costs millions of dollars in operational and investment costs.

To ensure that this power continues to get to you, Roanoke Electric is currently doing a comprehensive study of our rates to confirm our suspicion that a rate adjustment is needed. Once the study is completed, we will know exactly where we stand with our rates. With the right information in front of us, we can properly adjust our rates to allow us to meet our financial obligations and create the least impact on our members as possible.

No one likes a power cost adjustment. There are, however, utility companies across the United States, that have already had to raise their own rates by sometimes as much as 20% and have done it two and sometimes three times in a very short time. We are not alone in our challenges to maintain our power costs and rates.

Only with adequate resources are we able to maintain the level of service that you deserve. Your cooperative family makes the following pledges in 2007 to our members. Roanoke Electric will:

- Continue to be an excellent energy source.
- Offer programs that help customers save money and energy.
- Remain committed to reliability and plan to invest on utility infrastructure in our service territory.

With these things in mind, we stand ready to usher in a new year as your electric service provider. As the year progresses we will continue to keep you posted on our activities, accomplishments and our challenges. But, in the meantime, we wish you a Happy New Year!

## ACES high: How to play a winning hand in today's job market

*Self sufficiency.* It's more than a buzz word in the non-profit realm. It's the main component of what we call the American Dream. And it's what Roanoke Electric's subsidiary Roanoke Economic Development, Inc. and its partners see as the key to making that dream a reality for area residents.

How? Through the ACE program – Achieving Career Excellence.

Born out of a statewide drive known as the Women's Economic Equity Initiative, ACE helps provide training for women and men that make them marketable to employers in our region.

One big-name future employer that has created a huge media buzz is Carolina Crossroads, the multi-million-dollar entertainment complex currently being built in Roanoke Rapids.

"As the entertainment industry booms in our area, more service sector opportunities will be available to our citizens," said Jennifer Mayle, Work First Manager with Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce. "We expect expansion in all our hospitality and service fields, such as retail sales and

service, foodservice, guest services, and tourism to name a few."

Developers of the ACE project plan to take advantage of this growth by preparing potential employees through short-term training and support. The project kicked off with a focus group working to figure out what kinds of obstacles prevent women from moving forward in the workforce.

"Over the next three years, our plan is to put 200 participants through specialized training," said Diana Mitchell, Director for The Roanoke Center (TRC).

Project coordinators are speaking with area businesses to find out what the current employment needs are and what they think those needs will be in the future. Based on this information, ACE will tailor its training programs to ensure their participants have the right sets of skills to meet those needs.

ACE will offer three major components:

- job training and program support,
- people and personal skills and development training, and
- job placement assistance when the program is completed.



Jennifer Mayle, Work First Manager with the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce, and Curtis Wynn, CEO of Roanoke Electric, discuss strategies for making the ACE program work.

"The ACE project is designed to bring diverse resources, gifts and talents to citizens in our five-county region," said Mitchell. "Our common interests bind us together for the good of all while challenging us to think about the best interest of our communities."

The ACE program is supported by grants from Z. Smith Reynolds and the N.C. Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Development. For information, visit: [www.roanokecenter.org](http://www.roanokecenter.org) or contact Stephanie Duffey at (252) 539-3039.



## ***Congratulations to our Bright Ideas Winners!***

*Teachers awarded 2006 grants were (left to right): Connie Burgess and Lisa Ward, Gates County High; Korey Lawlis and Christy Stevens, Gatesville Elementary; Barbara Best Toti, GCHS; Emily Smith, Weldon High; Pamela Flack, Chaloner Middle; Terri Harris, Gaston Junior High; Katrina Cobb, Colerain Elementary; and Jennifer Smyth, Hertford County High. Not pictured: Courtney Barker, Northampton County High-West.*

Area teachers who received 2006 Bright Ideas grants were honored at a banquet at the City Hotel and Bistro in Greenville. Nationally-known special guest speaker Erin Gruwell, an English teacher from a volatile inner-city school in Long Beach, Calif., served as the keynote speaker at the event.

Gruwell's work with what some school administrators called "throw-away kids" is the basis for a new major motion Paramount picture starring Academy-award winning actress Hillary Swank. The film will be released this month. Gruwell's students

faced poverty, gang violence, daily run-ins with drugs, murders, and other violent crimes. Gruwell lead her students to create journals about the hatred and violence that plagued their lives. The students began to call themselves "Freedom Writers" and the freedom writings have been collected and published in a book of essays that has taken the media by storm.

Bright Ideas teachers received copies of the "The Freedom Writers" as part of their grant awards and met with Gruwell and one of her students.

## **High School Juniors: apply now for youth leadership tour to D.C.**

Do you know a high-school student who might like a one-week, all-expenses-paid trip to a national youth leadership tour in Washington D.C., this summer?

High school juniors are invited to apply for the exciting Roanoke Electric-sponsored 2007 Rural Electric Youth Tour.

All high school juniors in Bertie, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, and Northampton counties are eligible to apply.

The Tour is an annual event coordinated by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives.

Some 1,500 high school students from 40 states will gather in D.C. from June 9-15. Participants visit the historical sites they have studied about, learn about the rural electrification program and see U.S. Government in action. It is an excellent achievement to add to college applications!

North Carolina has participated in the Youth Tour since 1967, and

since then, about 1,000 young people have experienced this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Although learning is a major aspect of the trip, the fun of getting to know other teens from across the state and the nation is important. Many life-long friendships have been created on the Youth Tour. You can log on to [www.youthtour.coop](http://www.youthtour.coop) to learn more about what the trip has to offer.

Beginning January 8, applications may be downloaded from the REC website at [www.roanokeelectric.com](http://www.roanokeelectric.com). Also, students may contact their school guidance counselors for application information. The deadline to apply is Friday, March 2.

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If you have any questions or need more information, please call Angela Perez at (252) 539-3028 or email [aperez@roanokeelectric.com](mailto:aperez@roanokeelectric.com).

## Ways to CUT your heating costs and still stay warm

Heating costs can account for 25-50% of a home's total energy expense, so efficiency experts offer these tips to control heating costs:

- Have a qualified heating contractor inspect and service your system to ensure it is safe and working at peak efficiency.
- If you have a forced-air heating system, clean or replace the filter monthly and keep heat vents open and unobstructed by furniture.
- Set the thermostat at 68 degrees or the lowest temperature you find comfortable. For every degree you lower the setting, you can see a difference of up to 3% in energy costs. Setting it lower at night is not recommended for heat pump systems unless you have a programmable thermostat.
- If you have a gas or oil furnace, consider adding a high-efficiency heat pump. It could save you up to 60% on heating costs and keep you cool next summer.
- Trim or remove grass, weeds and leaves from around the outdoor unit of your heating or cooling system. When airflow is blocked, it puts a strain on the system and lowers efficiency.
- Check the insulation in your attic, ceilings, exterior and basement walls and floors.
- Install rubber gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on exterior walls.
- When the fireplace is not in use, keep the flue damper tightly closed.

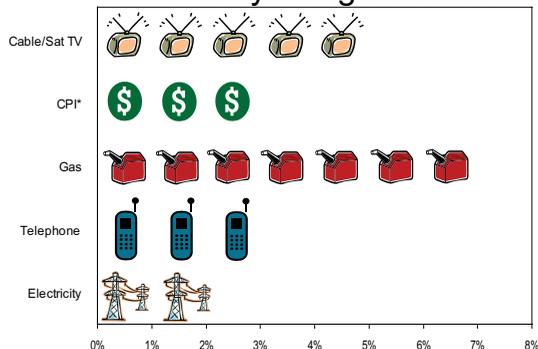


- Keep blinds of sun-exposed windows open in the daytime and closed at night.
- Set ceiling fans to run clockwise to draw the air up and keep warm air circulating.

## Electricity still a great value

Believe it or not, the national cost of electricity today, when adjusted for inflation, is less than what it was in 1980. Very few commodities are still such a good value. "Compared to other consumer products and services, electricity is a bargain," said Marshall Cherry, Vice President of Member Services and Marketing. "As the demand for energy continues to rise and the costs of fuels increase, your electric cooperative is committed to providing safe and affordable electricity at the lowest possible cost." Roanoke Electric Cooperative is committed to keeping electricity a value we can all fit into our budgets.

### Electricity is a good value



CPI: Overall Consumer Price Index for U.S. urban areas. Source: NRECA & Bureau of Labor Statistics (1995-2005). Annual Cost increases: a 10-year annual compound growth rate.

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