



Roanoke Electric **FLASHES**

'We look back, as we continue to move forward'

By Curtis Wynn
President and CEO

On behalf of our board and staff, I'd like to thank you for another year of service provided to you in the year 2010.

As we all set the stage for another banner year of service in 2011, I am mindful of a term originated in West African culture labeled "Sankofa." This term simply means, "We must look back so we can move forward." The official symbol of this term is that of a bird turning its head and body backwards to look at its tail.

This couldn't be more evident, as 2010's accomplishments built the foundation and bridge that will set the standard of excellence in 2011. I can proudly say that Roanoke Electric Cooperative lived up to its mission to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity, while enhancing quality of life in the diverse communities it serves in 2010.

In the year 2011, we will continue to strive for nothing short of this in establishing a high level of service to you.

2010 Accomplishments

The year 2010 was a busy year for staff as we settled in the new facility while promoting programs to serve your needs in this era of rising wholesale power costs. We appreciate all of your support in our grassroots efforts over the past year to communicate the need for a balanced approach toward

addressing climate change legislation. You've responded well to our calls to action to contact your legislators through the "Our Energy, Our Future" and "Find a Balanced Solution" campaigns.

In addressing the challenges of the local economy and the need for economic development, Roanoke Electric helped lead the effort to recruit a new employer to our area. REC helped Empire Foods receive a zero-interest loan from the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. This was instrumental in convincing them to locate their new food-processing facility to Halifax County. The 200 jobs it is estimated to bring to our community over the next five years will be a boost.

To better serve you, system improvements were completed via the most recent four-year Work Plan. This work mainly included replacing older deteriorated copper lines with newer aluminum lines, which enhances overall system reliability.

In an effort to reduce controllable expenses, the cooperative's workforce was decreased by 20 percent through a special early retirement offering. The reduction in staff will capitalize on the implementation of many technological advances over the years, and will result in a much leaner organization operating at a lower overall cost.

The "Kilowatcher" pay-as-you-

go program completed its second full year of existence. This program facilitates member access to affordable

and most importantly manageable electricity, and it has lowered the co-op's bad debt write-offs. Approximately 600 members have taken advantage of this program and the number is increasing daily.

We improved a number of internal processes that resulted in a more efficient operation and cost savings. They included implementing a job-flow tracking system; performing contingency analysis on several of our substations to avoid costly extended outages; and better utilizing computer systems and programs to provide better service to our members.

Another significant step included the creation and adoption of a Strategic Communications Plan to integrate all the organization's programs, public education and advocacy efforts. By planning a long-term strategy for the co-op's efforts, we have positioned the co-op to be more proactive and strategic, rather than consistently reacting to the existing environment. The strategic plan will help the co-op deploy resources



Curtis Wynn

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Lt. Governor discusses economic needs with community leaders, business owners

While visiting Roanoke Electric Cooperative on November 16, 2010, N.C. Lieutenant Governor Walter Dalton spoke to community leaders regarding economic development initiatives across the state and locally.

His passion for rural America was apparent, as he has served as legal counsel for electric cooperatives for years. He emphasized the need for education and innovation for N.C. citizens. Dalton stressed the need for collaboration between small businesses and communities to foster a strong successful future for North Carolinians.

Dalton recalls not only his very first economic meeting but the first question he asked. He asked the

gentleman beside him, “What can we do to make your small business stronger?” The gentleman answered, “What can you do to make my community stronger?” Although North Carolina is a growing state, Dalton stated this was an area of the state losing population and residents were concerned about their young people leaving. A decrease in population hurts small businesses and communities. Further, he stated, our economy is riding on the backs of small businesses.

Another issue small businesses face during these economic times is getting loans from banks. Dalton stated he keeps hearing the same story about owners maxing out every credit card they could find



Lt. Governor Walter Dalton visited Roanoke Electric in November and talked with community leaders about economic initiatives. Credit: Roanoke-Chowan News-Herald.

just to keep employees working. He explained that during this economic and credit crisis, his administration proposed the Small Business

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more effectively and strategically by highlighting synergies and shared opportunities in various programs and work areas.

Roanoke Electric offers a variety of energy efficiency and conservation programs to its members. These programs help the co-op manage customer demand in an efficient, cost-effective manner. The programs help members save money on their energy bills by making their homes and businesses more energy efficient. Learn more at www.roanokeelectric.com/togetherwesave.

Moving forward in 2011

We will continue to develop and maintain programs that will assist in recruiting more businesses to Roanoke Electric Cooperative's service territory and ultimately increase electric sales. This goal will be accomplished through the following tasks:

- Utilize REDLG funding for

viable, job creating projects that have adequate security/collateral

- Establish and promote a revolving loan fund utilizing proceeds from the grant portion of USDA REDLG funds and other sources that may become available
- More aggressively promote The Rural Center's microenterprise loan and capital access programs
- Continue to partner with area economic development directors and chambers of commerce to promote economic growth in the region

The co-op also plans to begin executing initiatives identified in the Strategic Communications Plan completed in 2010.

Other projects on the horizon are:

- Increased usage of the company's software system to better manage billing and payment posting functions

- Improving the pre-screening process for members seeking assistance from the cooperative's energy efficiency offerings
- Incorporate a new satisfaction survey module to ensure Roanoke stands out among cooperatives that are "best in class"
- Improving accounting procedures to cut costs and update personnel information

We are also looking at providing more options for the "Kilowatcher pay-as-you-go metering program to offer one-time payment posting and automatic service reconnection in an attempt to better serve our members.

We will continue to live up to the co-op's mission of providing safe, reliable, and affordable electricity, while enhancing the quality of life in the diverse communities we serve. We look forward to another great year in 2011.

Lt. Gov. Dalton talks

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Assistance Fund to help owners get back on their feet. It is not a hand-out; it is a low-interest loan and there is a great history of payback with this program. The state money will be further leveraged through funding from Golden LEAF.

Dalton encouraged the crowd that we will get through these hard times, but it's going to take time and all of us working together.

After that, the floor was opened for local leaders from each county

to share their issues with Dalton. Some of the priorities noted by community leaders were education, Medicaid, and infrastructure grants, particularly the Clean Water Trust Fund and Parks and Recreation Fund.

Another concern, shared by Marshall Cherry, Roanoke Electric's Vice-President of Member Services and Marketing, was the looming cost associated with climate change legislation. Roanoke

Electric and other North Carolina utilities are complying with state law to increase the renewable portion of their overall power generation. Cherry sought the lieutenant governor's influence to find a balanced approach at the federal level to devising new regulations for carbon emissions in order to limit the impact on the business community as well as residential end consumers.

Building communities one small business at a time

No loan is too small for small businesses these days. More small business owners and entrepreneurs are turning to microlending organizations that dole out smaller loans. If you are looking for start-up or working capital, then microenterprise might be your best bet.

The Roanoke Center, in partnership with The North Carolina Rural Center of Raleigh, provides a variety of services to business owners and entrepreneurs. The microenterprise loan program is one of them.

What does the microenterprise loan program do? It provides technical assistance that walks you through the process of writing a business plan. The program provides counseling, to help you manage your debt, and understand and use financial planning software. It offers networking programs where you can build relationships with other business people.

How much money can be borrowed? Loan amounts vary from \$500 to \$25,000. In addition to start-up or expansion, loan proceeds can be used to purchase equipment, machinery,

supplies, or inventory. Interest rates are fixed and you do not need to have a lot of collateral or excellent credit in order to apply. You can qualify for a smaller loan fairly easily, and once it has been repaid, apply for a larger loan. This helps to build your business credit and insures that you don't over-extend yourself.

Access to capital has consistently been identified as one of the key elements necessary to stimulate economic growth. "Many individuals in rural communities lack the collateral necessary to secure bank loans and also lack social or personal ties with bankers or investors," said Diana Mitchell, director of community development. "The main thing to remember is that, if you are really serious about starting or sustaining your business; there are resources available to help you, so don't give up."



The Roanoke Center hosts workshops on savings, credit and other financial health matters to help individuals make sound decisions with their money. The Center's staff meet with entrepreneurs to develop business plans, meet lending requests, and develop new ways to secure capital resulting in more loans made and jobs created or retained. For more information on the microenterprise loan program and The Roanoke Center's services, contact Diana Mitchell at (252) 539-4601.

Preparing for Ole' Man Winter



Snowfall, ice and freezing temperatures wreak havoc for North Carolinians. Be prepared and follow a few simple safety tips to prepare the outside of your home and to stay safe and warm inside during the winter months.

Ice and snow are heavy enough to pull down power lines and cause outages. Before a winter storm hits, keep the following safety precaution in mind:

- ❑ Make sure to have a fire extinguisher nearby when using alternative heat sources.
- ❑ Always keep extra blankets on hand and dress in multiple layers to stay warm.
- ❑ Have several flashlights, plenty of batteries, matches and a first aid kit.
- ❑ Stock a few days' supply of water, medication and food that

- does not need to be cooked or refrigerated such as bread, crackers, cereal, canned foods, and dried fruits. Remember baby food and formula if you have young children.
- ❑ Keep a close watch of your home's temperature during an outage. Infants and persons over the age of 65 are particularly sensitive to the cold.
- ❑ Seal air leaks. Common places with air leaks include fireplaces, electrical outlets and door and window frames. Verify all cracks around windows and doors are weather stripped and caulked to avoid energy and heat loss.
- ❑ Clean gutters of buildup and fall leaves to prevent ice damage and dams.

- ❑ Trim limbs that hang over the house.
- ❑ Inspect the furnace as early as possible so it will be ready when needed.
- ❑ Check the furnace filters every month, but be sure to change them at the beginning of each season or as needed.
- ❑ Keep your vehicle's gas tank full in case of emergency travel.

Apply in January for sports camp scholarships

North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives, including Roanoke Electric, are providing all-expenses-paid scholarships for 27 deserving young women to attend the Kellie Harper Basketball Camp at NC State in Raleigh and

27 young men to attend the Roy Williams Basketball Camp at UNC in Chapel Hill this summer.

Both camps will be held during June and each camper will work to develop

fundamental skills that will help the young athletes excel both on and off the court.

Roanoke Electric is looking for rising sixth through eighth graders to apply to both camps. REC will begin accepting applications on January 3. The deadline to apply is March 31.

Applicants will be judged on their academics, extra-



Roanoke Electric's 2010 scholarship winners Imane Shoullars, Chelsea Brown and Nathan Jerrigan pose with coaches Kellie Harper and Roy Williams.

curricular activities and an accompanying essay. Students can download an application at www.roanokeelectric.com/sportscamps.

For further information, please contact Robin Phillips at (252) 209-2259 or email rphillips@roanokeelectric.com.

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