



Roanoke Electric **FLASHES**

Annual meeting message focused on serving members more efficiently



Roanoke Electric Cooperative's (REC) 72nd annual meeting and member appreciation day was held Saturday, October 15, at Hertford County High School in Ahoskie 112573001. More than 500 came out for what has historically been the most important event of the year for the electric co-op.

Members enjoyed a catered lunch by Gardner's Barbeque of Rocky Mount, REC's version of the TV show "The Price is Right," prize drawings, and entertainment. Area businesses showcased their specialties and the "Kidz Carnival" was enjoyed by the young and "young at heart." Also, Happy Faces by Tudi painted the children happy one face at a time.

The business meeting and elections results for directors began at 1 p.m. The cooperative's general counsel, attorney Everette Winslow of Winslow-Wetsch of Raleigh, presided over the program. Allen Speller, chairman of the board of directors,

welcomed everyone and thanked Dr. John H. Fahey, superintendent of Hertford County Schools, for allowing the use of the facility.

Address engages members and requests participation

In his "State of the Co-op" address, Curtis Wynn, president and CEO, stated that his message will focus on four very important areas:

- The value of cooperative membership
- The importance of improved communications between you and your cooperative
- Political issues your cooperative faces, and
- Conserving energy through the Together We Save/Going Green initiatives

"One of the seven cooperative principles is Members' Economic Participation. Members contribute equally to, and democratically control the belongings of their cooperative," said Wynn. "Capital credits are the excess funds we make, called margins, that are credited to members based on their electricity purchase. The cooperative uses margins as working capital for a period of time, and then pay them back to you."

Wynn said many of you received a capital credits check earlier this year as part of a nearly \$750,000 payment to the membership. This capital credit check reflects your portion of the margins made and invested over past years. Unlike investor-owned utilities, such as Dominion Power that pay dividends to their stockholders, REC and other cooperatives return their margins to the members—those who use the service and provided an important investment.

There are two ways to pay capital credits, explained Wynn: general retirements or payments to the estate of deceased members at a

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REC annual meeting (continued from page 21...)

discounted rate. Wynn reported that over the past 12 years, REC has returned more than \$6.7 million to you, the members, in capital credits.

Wynn said each year we see several checks that we write and mail returned to us. The two primary reasons these checks come back are: 1) when members leave or move for whatever reason, they don't leave a forwarding address with the cooperative or 2) in the unfortunate event that a member dies; their families don't come to the office and claim their capital credits. Don't let this happen to you or anyone you know. Spread the word about how capital credits work, he urged.

Communication is key

Wynn said our cooperative family's mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity, while enhancing the quality of life in the diverse communities we serve. We are constantly striving to meet and exceed member expectations by delivering exceptional customer service. Providing members with up-to-date accurate information is part of our mission of providing good value and quality. The question is, how do we know if and when we are accomplishing our goal? It all boils down to good communications, which is why we are implementing a new Strategic Communications Plan.

We do not want to make assumptions about how you rate our service, said Wynn. Therefore, we have begun to ask you to tell us how we are doing through surveys. With your candid feedback, we can better understand what you think about our service and what you expect, and we are able to make better informed decisions, said Wynn.

"Let me give you examples of how we've responded to your feedback," said Wynn. "We discovered that a growing number of members prefer to use the Internet to find information and to conduct business. In response, we have implemented a new state-of-the-art website where members can:

- read their monthly newsletter
- review and make bill payments
- make changes to their accounts
- determine the expected length of an outage
- check the cooperative's bylaws
- apply for service (access is available 24/7)

At the same time, said Wynn, we will never get away from allowing those members to be able to speak to a live person. Actually, our website and other technology gives us more time to pay close attention to those who wish to speak with a live customer service representative. Wynn said this is one of many examples of how we've asked, you've told us and we've responded to make sure we are living up to our mission. This will never change!



One of several happy prize winners at the Roanoke EC annual meeting.

Further, said Wynn, pending climate change legislation and the potential cost of new energy laws continues to be a major concern. As reported to you in the past, Roanoke Electric Cooperative's management staff and its board stay completely engaged with our state and federal lawmakers to protect your interests in Raleigh and Washington, D.C.

We have no choice but to have candid "straight talk" with you about how congress and the Environmental Protection Agency can change and implement laws that cause your utility bills to skyrocket. We still believe strongly that is what will happen if they don't use cautious and balanced solutions to protect our environment, said Wynn.

Wynn said this year we want to take our efforts to a new level; which is why we recently started a new initiative called Cooperative Owners for Political Action (COPA). This initiative will broaden our political action efforts and make our voices even stronger.

After showing a short video about COPA, Wynn said employees, staff and the board of directors are asked each year to contribute to our political action committees (PACs)—the Rural Electrification Action Program (REAP) and the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE). We use the funds we collect to help elect or re-elect elected officials who are supportive of the issues that affect our members. This year with our expanded ACRE program, we are also asking you to get involved financially through the new COPA Program. Members are encouraged to call the office at (252) 209-2236 for more information or to sign up for COPA.

Lastly, said Wynn, over the past several months, your directors have hosted "Together We Save" community forums in their respective districts. At each forum, we've engaged in candid conversations about the electric utility industry, pending legislations and how it can impact your household budgets. We've shared a number of energy saving tips that can convert your home from a typical home to a more efficient home and more importantly, we've shared information about programs to help make your home more energy efficient. The great news is that these programs are available to you at little to virtually no cost, said Wynn.

Wynn closed by challenging all members to get involved today and reminding them that Roanoke Electric Cooperative is "Your Co-op" and we need the strength of "your collective voices" to continue providing you affordable service at a reasonable cost.

Scenes from the annual meeting...

clockwise: The Weldon STEM High School band entertained the crowd. REC staff conducted "Together We Save" forums for members. REC members registered for the meeting.



Operation Round Up...small change changes lives!

With Operation Round Up, your spare change can help to make a tremendous difference in the lives of those who need help within our community. Help us to help others by participating in our Operation Round Up program. By signing up, your electric bill is 'rounded up' to the next highest whole dollar amount. For instance, if your actual electric bill is \$83.87, it will be rounded up to \$84. The additional 13 cents provides monetary assistance for various charitable and non-profit organizations.

Average contributions are only about \$6 per year and never exceed 99 cents in a single month. Individually, the amount contributed to Operation Round Up may not seem significant 6273001, but put this change together and it can go a long way in making a difference within our community.

For the fourth quarter of 2011, the Roanoke Electric Care Trust board (RECT) met on October 19 and funded six area organizations totaling \$8,520. Organizations who received grants during this funding cycle include:

- ❑ Concerned Citizens of Tillery, \$1,500
- ❑ Rich Square Volunteer Fire Department, \$1,120
- ❑ Bertie County Cooperative Extension 4-H, \$1,400
- ❑ Bertie STEM High School, \$1,500
- ❑ Blue Jay Volunteer Fire Department, \$1,500
- ❑ R.L. Vann Community Resource Center, Inc., \$1,500



The cooperative thanks all members for lending a helping hand by rounding up their electric bill. To participate in Operation Round Up, call (252) 209-2236 or visit www.roanokeelectric.com/roundup. The RECT board's next quarterly meeting will be held on January 19, 2012. Applications are due in the cooperative's office by 5 p.m. on Thursday, January 6, 2012.

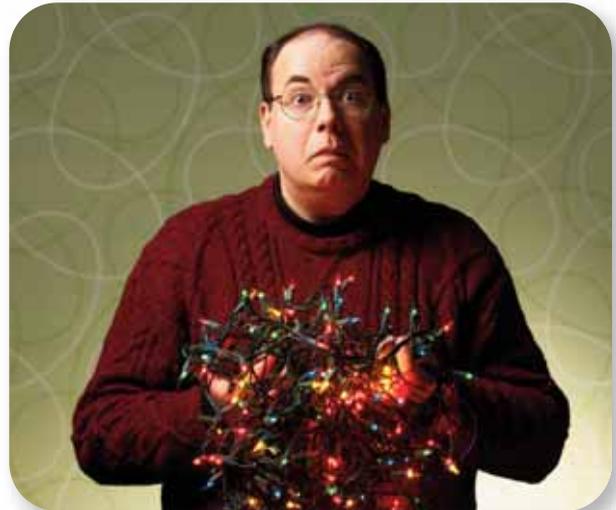
Outdoor holiday decorating: What's safe?

For many of us, putting up holiday decorations can sometimes turn into a friendly competition among neighbors. Determined to have the best looking house in the neighborhood, some people are willing to hang miles of icicle lights and plug in scores of inflatable snowmen just to out-do the neighbors. However festive, these embellishments also add electrical strain to your home.

Safety tips

Safety must be a priority when decorating for the holidays. Follow these tips:

- ❑ Only use outdoor lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with safety standards. Be sure to check to see if the lights you're using are certified for outdoor use.
- ❑ Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage.
- ❑ Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tracks when hanging lights.
- ❑ Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets.
- ❑ Always replace burned-out bulbs promptly with the same wattage bulbs.
- ❑ Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- ❑ Stay away from power or feeder lines leading from utility poles into older homes.



- ❑ Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold and installed permanently to household circuits by a qualified electrician.
- ❑ Use caution when removing outdoor holiday lights. Never pull or tug on lights. They could unravel and inadvertently wrap around power lines.

Plan accordingly this season to guarantee a merry and safe holiday!

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Visit our web site at:

www.roanokeelectric.com

Office closed for holiday

Roanoke Electric Cooperative offices will be closed Monday and Tuesday, December 26 and 27, and Monday, January 2, 2012, in honor of the Christmas holiday and New Year's Day. For emergencies, please contact us at (800) 358-9437.

