



Roanoke Electric **FLASHES**

Get ready for the Big Four!

By Curtis Wynn, *President and CEO*

Last year was a year of great strides towards our quest in responding to your call for Roanoke EC to serve you at the highest level possible. At that time, we laid the foundation with a strategy execution process outlined to produce measurable targets in areas that you told us that you were concerned about.

These included our performance in reliability, cost, safety, member satisfaction and

Community Solar

Let there be solar! A lot has happened in North Carolina relating to solar energy over the past few years. It's not unusual to travel down certain highways near our service territory and see acres of land covered in solar panels. After receiving several inquiries from members with considerable interest in embracing renewable energy, your cooperative decided



Curtis Wynn

energy options, REC realized that there were certain barriers unique to our region that made it challenging for members to enter into the renewable energy realm. Home location, renting versus owning and expensive installation costs proved to be major obstacles for those seeking access into the solar market.

A community solar farm ultimately eliminates those barriers and opens up renewable energy as an option for everyone. The "community" aspect of the program helps ensure that the benefits of renewable energy go to those who need the power—all of you.

How will this work? The community solar farm will be located on a half-acre of land next to the cooperative's headquarters in Aulander, and it will host 320 panels available for purchase by REC members. Panels will be available for members to purchase as early as February and the plan is to allow members to purchase panels on a first come, first served basis until all panels have been purchased.

THE CALL 2018 ROANOKE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

communications and member engagement. Each quarter, we heightened our level of transparency with regular updates about the work we planned to do.

Since then, your cooperative has continued to hit the ground running by rolling out several initiatives focused on exact targets that we're aiming to reach. From those initiatives came four major projects we plan to complete in the next three to four years – known as the Big Four. The Big Four projects are *Community Solar*, *Roanoke Connect*, *Upgrade to Save*, and *Bright Savings*.

to bring a community-shared solar farm to your community.

Why a community shared solar farm? We believe that the community solar farm will offer many advantages. The leading motivation behind this *Community Solar* project is the educational aspect it will bring to our member community. Foremost, this project will be a valuable educational tool for members to see the challenges and opportunities of incorporating solar energy.

Despite our members' willingness to embrace renewable

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The Big Four (continued from page 17) ...

Whether it's solar, wind or water, we are committed to making sure all forms of affordable electricity are available to our members, and to being the trusted source of information from which you can draw to make informed, energy-related decisions.

Sign up to receive more information at www.roanokeelectric.com/CommunitySolar.

Roanoke Connect

Did someone say broadband? Rain or shine, your cooperative knows that each time you flip the switch, you expect for the lights to come on. Fortunately, REC's *Roanoke Connect* project is a \$4 million fiber project on tap set to improve systems that relate to the amount of outages you experience and improve our outage response time.

This effort will ensure that all twelve substations can communicate with each other, allowing us to do a better job of predicting and managing outages and protecting our substations and metering equipment from vandalism and theft. We'll also become more proactive in communicating with individual members regarding their usage.

A secondary benefit of bringing this optical fiber medium to the area is the opportunity to bring broadband technology to our rural area. Once the miles of optic fiber are installed, other companies – including internet service providers (ISPs)—will be able to subscribe to the fiber we may not be using and offer high-speed internet access to members like you. Therefore, although REC will not provide the service, we will provide access to the fiber-optic infrastructure that will enable technology service providers and ISPs to provide the broadband services.

REC will also lease the broadband services to other businesses, including local schools.

To stay updated on REC's Roanoke Connect project, visit www.roanokeelectric.com/Connect.

Upgrade to Save

Upgrade your home and lower your monthly electric bill. Last year, REC was announced among one of the first to receive a \$6 million loan from the Rural Utilities Service to finance improvements to utility consumers' homes and businesses. REC will use its \$6 million loan to launch its *Upgrade to Save* program.

Through this program, your cooperative will be able to make investments that cut waste, reduce costs, support our local economy, and improve the quality and comfort of your homes and businesses.

How? REC is ultimately offering to make investments in energy efficiency that allow members like you to save money on your bills without making any



up-front payments or incurring any new consumer debt obligation. That's right! You pay nothing upfront to improve your home. In turn, members who choose to participate in this program will agree to pay a voluntary tariff (loan repayment) on their bill that assures both immediate savings for them and full cost recovery for the utility.

Now REC can open access to low cost money for all cost-effective energy efficiency improvements sought by members with sound bill payment history, regardless of income, credit score, or status as renters or homeowners.

Visit www.roanokeelectric.com/UpgradeToSave for more information.

Bright Savings

We're making your outdoor lighting experience more energy efficient. Last fall, we launched our *Bright Savings* program and began to deploy more energy efficient outdoor lights to your homes and businesses. As your cooperative, our efforts are aimed at bringing affordable electricity at the highest level to you and other members. Therefore, we're installing Light Emitting Diode (LED) lights at the homes of all of our members to reduce both corporate and individual expenses – leaving you with more money in your pocket!

To learn more about LED lighting benefits and our progress on the Bright Savings project, please visit www.roanokeelectric.com/BrightSavings.

As we continue responding to your call to serve, we'd like to keep you updated every step of the way. To learn more about the Big Four and all of our other efforts, visit www.roanokeelectric.com/TheCall2018.

Bright Ideas equal bright futures in the classroom

Students will get a chance to use their very own listening center, grow and cultivate four-season vegetable gardens, build an eco-friendly outdoor classroom, and even compose their own music, thanks to the bright ideas of six local educators.

Six teachers from the Gates, Northampton, Halifax and Hertford counties received grants to fund innovative projects in their classrooms. Roanoke EC awarded grants totaling \$8,000 to the local teachers with projects in the areas of math, science, music and more. These grants are expected to affect more than 600 students.

“We are very proud of our Bright Ideas grant winners, and it is our pleasure to recognize their outstanding efforts at the awards banquet,” said Marshall Cherry, chief operating officer for Roanoke Electric Cooperative. “These teachers are bringing innovative, hands-on learning experiences to their students, and we’re excited about the learning opportunities these students will have because of the dedication of their teachers.”

Bright Ideas education grants, sponsored by Roanoke EC and North Carolina’s electric cooperatives, provide resources to Tar Heel teachers for innovative, hands-on, classroom projects that would not otherwise be funded. Since the program’s inception in 1994, Roanoke EC has contributed more than \$150,000 to local teachers. Overall, the Bright Ideas program has provided more than \$9.1 million for 8,800 projects benefitting more than 1.6 million students in our state.



Roanoke EC awarded Bright Ideas education grants to six teachers in the cooperative’s service area.

The year 2014 marked North Carolina’s electric cooperatives’ 20th year of supporting teachers and students with Bright Ideas grants. Roanoke EC and electric cooperatives statewide have allocated a total of nearly \$600,000 to give to educators in 2014.

Bright Ideas grant applications are collected each year through mid-September, and winning proposals are selected in a competitive evaluation process by a panel of judges. The application process will reopen for interested teachers in April 2015.

For more information about this grant program, visit www.roanokeelectric.com/BrightIdeas or the Bright Ideas website at www.ncbrightideas.com. Become a fan of “Bright Ideas Education” on Facebook to receive regularly updated news about the program.

Congratulations to our 2014 Bright Ideas grant recipients!

Grant Recipient	School	Project Name	County	Amount Awarded
Susan Parker	Buckland Elementary	<i>Good Vibrations</i>	Gates	\$1,593
Emily Starr	Gaston College Preparatory	<i>Growing Mathematicians and Scientists in the Garden</i>	Northampton	\$1,500
Lori Lories	Gatesville Elementary	<i>Number Cruncher: Tools for 21st Century Learners</i>	Gates	\$ 812
Hugh Davis	CS Brown High School	<i>Outdoor Classroom</i>	Hertford	\$1,000
Denise Hackenburg	Roanoke Rapids High School Singers & Songwriters of Generations Y & Z	<i>Singers & Songwriters of Generations Y & Z</i>	Halifax	\$1,595
Mary Hobbs	TS Cooper Elementary	<i>TS Cooper’s Living Lab</i>	Gates	\$1,500

Granny squares of love:

Meeting people's needs where they are

Some among us perform dual roles in serving the community. Such is the case with Roanoke Electric Cooperative employee Rita New, a night-shift dispatcher in the Rich Square office providing nighttime dispatch services to four electric cooperatives in eastern North Carolina. She heads a volunteer, non-profit organization called Granny Squares of Love (GSOL).

New explained her motivation for starting GSOL. "I had a dream that I was in a room with women crocheting blankets for those in need, and the name Granny Squares of Love came to me," she said. This vision gave way to the non-profit organization GSOL, which New began in 2011.

Ladies from across the United States donate squares, yarn and hooks to crochet afghans, blankets, hats and scarves for those in need. There are other ways to help, too. "Even if people don't crochet, if they can thread a needle, they can do a square," New said. GSOL also accepts leftover yarn for their projects. "We participate in the annual Cultural Arts Festival every summer in Jackson."

GSOL's headquarters is in Jackson, with chapters in different towns. "We have six people serving in Ahoskie, from six to 12 in Jackson, and 10 in Roanoke Rapids," she said. Each chapter has an area of expertise. The Jackson chapter specializes in crocheting baby blankets, while the Roanoke Rapids chapter crochets afghans for nursing home residents. Finally, the Ahoskie chapter makes blankets for the homeless and victims of natural disasters.

"At Granny Squares of Love, we make afghans and blankets for the homeless population too," she said. "We also make blankets for new mothers in need and those suffering from natural disasters." For example, the organization made and donated blankets to the victims of the flood that ravaged Bertie County in the fall of 2010.

"We became aware of the homeless population in Ahoskie a few years ago," New said. GSOL rented hotel rooms for the homeless during the winter of 2013, when temperatures were extremely cold. New said staff transported the homeless. "We meet people's needs where they are."

"We will have a permanent shelter in Ahoskie by January," she said. "An individual has stepped up and will do what is needed. Area churches will provide support, too." Hertford County does not have a homeless shelter, whereas both Northampton and Halifax counties do have these facilities.

GSOL offers free beginners' crochet classes for those who want to help, according to the organization's website. The website posts some of the artistic, crocheted creations that keep the needy warm.

People who are interested in crocheting or delivering items can contact Rita New at (252) 285-1859 or by email at grannysol@gmail.com. People interested in donating crocheted squares can mail them to this address: Granny Squares of Love, P.O. Box 64, Jackson, NC 27845.

GSOL recruits in various ways, including word-of-mouth, flyers, and the organization's website, www.grannysol.wordpress.com. GSOL also meets monthly at Pizza Inn in Ahoskie.

"Rita exemplifies exactly what cooperative works to do on a daily basis," said Marshall Cherry, Chief Operating Officer. "We are very proud of the work she is doing to enhance the quality of life in our region."

—Cheryl Deloatch



Rita New shows one of the blankets GSOL created.

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REC office closed

REC's office will be closed on Thursday, January 1, for the New Year's holiday and on Monday, January 19, in observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday.