

June 27, 2019

Co-op Annual Meetings

MEC Celebrates 'Driven by Responsibility' at 80th Annual Meeting

Even the threat of bad weather couldn't keep a crowd of more than **550 people** from attending **Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative's annual membership meeting June 19 in Chase City**. This year's meeting theme was "**Driven by Responsibility**," and participants enjoyed heaping plates of **pork barbeque, barbecued chicken, baked beans and cole slaw** served by friendly MEC staffers.



More than 550 people attend Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative's 80th annual membership meeting to enjoy a meal, visit information booths and receive an update on the organization's operations.

Booths set up around the cooperative's pavilion provided information to members and guests about **broadband, energy efficiency** and cooperative **operations**. There were plenty of activities and giveaways as everyone enjoyed the good food and **fellowship**.

After calling the meeting to order, **Board Chairman David Jones** talked about the organization's ongoing commitment to serve its member-consumers stating, "That responsibility begins with the **strategic** direction provided to your cooperative by the **eleven-member board of directors** here on this stage, elected by you, to represent the membership in every decision." He continued, "We are driven by the responsibility to serve you and we are very proud to do so."

Board Secretary-Treasurer Stan Duffer reported on another **successful financial year**, noting that MEC returned more than **\$904,000 in capital credits** to members in 2018. He reviewed MEC's sources of revenue chart, which showed 70 percent of electricity was purchased residentially. Stan also informed the crowd that purchased power represented 65 percent of MEC's expenses in 2018.

John Lee, MEC president and CEO, thanked everyone for coming out even with the impending bad weather. He explained that this year's theme, "Driven by Responsibility," represents the tremendous responsibility that has been entrusted to MEC. "We are **driven** to meet our members' **expectations** by the **confidence** and **faith** they place in us to get the job done," he said.

John explained that from an operations standpoint, 2018 was a very challenging year because of inclement weather. "There are no walls within Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative," he said. "Our entire organization works in finely tuned unison to ensure power is available to you. That unity is never stronger, nor more evident, than when your cooperative moves into disaster recovery mode."

He also noted extraordinary events of the year, such as record **kilowatt-hour sales** and the start of **EMPOWER Broadband**. John continued, "The interest that EMPOWER Broadband has generated is phenomenal and as we seek out additional grants and financial assistance opportunities, and grow the business, the availability of EMPOWER Broadband's services will expand into more and more areas. Building out this network is a tremendous undertaking and will take time ... but once again, as in the 1930s, we are **committed to bringing you something no one else would.**"

John closed his comments by letting the crowd know, "It is our responsibility and our pledge to you, as it has been since 1938, to serve you ... and on behalf of all your cooperative employees, thanks for the privilege of being part of this cooperative's extraordinary legacy."



John C. Lee Jr., president and CEO of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative, presents his report focused on the theme, "Driven by Responsibility." Afterward, he recognized retired and active military personnel in attendance, followed by a video honoring the sacrifices made 75 years ago on D-Day.



Elected for new three-year terms are Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative directors Fletcher B. "Bob" Jones, David C. Hall, Brandon G. Hudson and Angela B. Wilson.

Guest speaker **Marcus Harris**, president and CEO of **Old Dominion Electric Cooperative**, complimented the choice for the annual meeting theme as ODEC is driven by responsibility to meet the electricity needs of the 1.4 million members that its member cooperatives serve. He spoke to the crowd about ODEC's commitment to the **Clover Power Station** and the new **Wildcat Point** generating facility that recently came online.

John recognized all the retired and active military personnel in attendance and followed that with a video honoring the sacrifices made on D-Day.

Cooperative attorney **Warren Matthews** conducted the election of directors. **Four** MEC directors were **re-elected** for three-year terms: **David C. Hall** of **Hurt**, **Brandon G. Hudson** of **Virgilina**, **Fletcher B. "Bob" Jones** of **Palmer Springs** and **Angela B. Wilson** of **Emporia**.

Congratulations to **John**, **MEC's board of directors** and **staff** for an outstanding annual meeting and year!

-Report by Brian Mosier, VMD Association Chief Operating Officer.

CVEC Annual Meeting Focuses on Commitment to Its Communities

Central Virginia Electric Cooperative mixed the **familiar** and the **new** during its annual meeting **June 19** at **Nelson County High School**.

The familiar: Well-known incumbent directors **Frank H. Baber III**, **Roberta I. Harlowe** and **Henry Chiles** were reelected to the CVEC Board.

The new: Some **125** contractor trucks are stringing **15-20 miles** of fiber optic line per week to bring improved co-op communications and broadband access to CVEC's **37,000 members by 2023**. "We're going to be in everybody's yard sometime in the next five years," said President and CEO **Gary Wood**.

The **Firefly** update was one of the **highlights** of CVEC's 82nd annual meeting, as more than **100 members** and **guests** snacked on **ice cream** and other **goodies** before reviewing the cooperative's accomplishments under the theme of **"Renewed Commitment to Our Communities."**

Gary emphasized that the fiber service is more than a matter of enabling members in underserved areas to stream online programming. It's an essential part of upgrading and improving service reliability and facilitating communications in the field, he noted.

"It's going to help everyone because we are going to every pole to inspect it as part of the fiber optic system line," he explained. "That way, we will be identifying poles that might not be as sound, and by strengthening those poles, they can withstand more storm damage," he said.



Central Virginia Electric Cooperative's annual meeting gifts to its members line a table also filled with trophies won by Nelson County High School teams.



CVEC President and CEO Gary Wood makes a point about broadband deployment during the co-op's annual meeting.

About **700 members** served by the **Appomattox** substation are on **Firefly**, while in a part of **Nelson County**, **almost 50 percent** are signing up for broadband even before they see it in action or hear about it from neighbors, Gary said. "That tells us what the need really is out there."

The annual meeting came the same day that CVEC announced that it had received, with Appomattox County, **\$600,000 in grant funds** from the **Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission** to begin installing fiber in **Pamplin** in **spring 2020** to enhance its **smart grid system** and provide **high-speed internet** to members. (See related story in this issue.)

"We've really had the teamwork that we need from the state, federal and local levels," Gary said.

In addition, as part of its renewed commitment to members, CVEC continues to **upgrade** its **transmission and distribution system** to prevent power outages or repair them quickly when they do occur. Gary said 2018 marked the co-op's **second-best year** ever in **system reliability**.

"It's evident that these investments are paying off for our members," he said.

Other commitments to members included retiring about **\$1 million** in capital credits and maintaining a **diverse fuel portfolio** to guard against price spikes in any one area. Gary said the **Solar Share** program, which includes 10 megawatts of generation from solar farms in **Fluvanna** and **Louisa** counties, has really taken off in the last year.

CVEC is one of just **4 co-ops nationally** to set aside **40 percent** of its solar for subscription by members so they can share in the renewable energy offering. Solar Share is **82 percent** subscribed, Gary said.



2018 was a favorable year for Central Virginia Electric Cooperative and its members, Board Chairman H.T. Brown Jr. reports.

Board Chairman H.T. Brown Jr. affirmed that 2018 was "a favorable year" for CVEC and its members. He also pointed out that CVEC has been a **major contributor** in making possible the new **Electric Cooperative Training Center**, adjacent to the co-op's office in **Palmyra**.

"It will have a big impact on our cooperative. ... Central Virginia is delighted to have this literally in our backyard," he said.

For 2018, CVEC added **419 new accounts** and **25 miles** of distribution line, **Roberta Harlowe** said in her **treasurer's report**. Kilowatt-hour sales were up 1.8 percent from 2017 on an income of **\$94.8 million**, she added, with the co-op's margin near the **\$3 million** mark.

All three incumbent board members were reelected. **Henry Chiles**, representing the **west district**, has been on the board since **1977**, while **Roberta Harlowe** of the **east district** and **Frank Baber** of the **south district**, have served since **1983** and **2013**, respectively.

Four young co-op members who were awarded **\$1,000 college scholarships** from the **VMD Education Scholarship Foundation** were recognized for their achievements.

They were **Chasen Coleman** of **Appomattox County High School**, **Laurynn Hackett** of **Cornerstone Christian Academy**, **Henry Thompson** of **Albemarle High School** and **Katie Coleman** of **Nelson County High School**. Recognized but not in attendance were **Wyatt Yoder** and **Caitlyn Amos**, both of **Buckingham County High School**, and **Chloe Hellerman** of **Nelson County High School**.

Cleo Hill of **Nelson County High School** sang the **national anthem** while the **co-op's participants** in the annual **Gaff-n-Go Lineman's Rodeo** received **recognition**. At the end of the meeting, which was available at home via **Livestream**, members received a quality gift ranging from a hedge trimmer to a hot air popcorn popper.

Congratulations to **Central Virginia Electric Cooperative** on a successful annual meeting!

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

Future Co-op Leaders

Electric Co-op Youths Find D.C. Is Trip of a Lifetime

From pandas to politicians, **high schoolers** from electric cooperative **service territories** in **Virginia**, **Maryland** and **Delaware** got a thorough immersion in **Washington, D.C.'s** government, culture and sights during the **2019 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour**.

Some **54 students** from the **three-state area** visited **monuments**, met with their **elected officials** and staff members, and enjoyed camaraderie among their peers during the annual event, which ran from **June 16 to 20**.



Storm clouds are on the horizon as VMD Youth Tour participants visit Capitol Hill. (Jay Diem photo)

“We had an **exceptional** group of young people on this year’s tour,” said **Andrew Vehorn**, vice president of governmental affairs at the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives and Youth Tour Director.

“They were **enthusiastic** and **energetic**, and even though we did our best to tire them out, they enjoyed experiences that will serve them and their cooperative communities well into the future,” Andrew said.



From left, Alyssa Stadler, Gabbey Miner, chaperone Cynthia Hasley, Sara Radford and Sarah Marks spell out “VOTE” as part of Youth Tour, which they attended as the Prince George Electric Cooperative delegation.

This year’s delegation from Virginia, Maryland and Delaware consisted of **rising juniors** and **seniors** from **12 cooperatives**. Earlier this year, each cooperative selected its representatives for the **all-expense-paid** trip on the basis of **applications**, **interviews** and **supporting materials**.

In all, about **1,800 students** from **43 states** converged on Washington for the tour, which officially started in **1958** at the suggestion of then-**Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson**. The **National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)** oversees the tour in the belief that co-op youths should experience the **nation’s capital** up close and learn about the **political process**.

“During its long history, Youth Tour has brought **50,000 students** from **rural America** to **Washington**. It has proven to be a tremendous way of exposing our youngest members to

the **foundations** that our **country** and our **cooperative family** were built upon,” said **Richard G. Johnstone Jr.**, president and CEO of the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives.

The VMD delegation covered a lot of ground between its arrival on Sunday, **June 16**, and its departure on Thursday, **June 20**. The first day of activities produced a visit to the **Jefferson Memorial** and a **night cruise** on the **Potomac River**.

Students also spent a day exploring the **National Mall**, visiting the **Lincoln Memorial**, the **World War II Memorial**, the **African-American History Museum** and other attractions. A baseball game between the Washington Nationals and the Philadelphia Phillies was rained out, but youths got a chance to eat at the **Nationals ballpark** before returning to their hotel.

“We walked so much inside the museum and walked so much outside to see the different monuments that when we got to the game, they were glad to sit down,” said **Jay Garner**, public relations manager at **Northern Neck Electric Cooperative** and one of **almost 20 chaperones** on the tour.

The tour also visited **Arlington National Cemetery**, the **National Zoo**, the **Pentagon**, as well as **Capitol Hill**, where senators, representatives and their staffs met constituents who are soon to be of voting age. They also saw a performance of “**Hello, Dolly!**” at the **John F. Kennedy Center** for the Performing Arts and swapped state pins with others on the tour.



Students from the VMD delegation line up on the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the White House.

For many students and chaperones, the tour was a first-time visit to Washington. “I’m just like the kids. I’m learning things, all bright-eyed,” said **Dustin Francis**, a chaperone and community relations coordinator at **Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative**.

Others said they had been to Washington before, though they had not packed as much action into one visit.

“The whole trip was amazing!” said **Sarah Marks**, one of four representatives from **Prince George Electric Cooperative** and a student at **Prince George High School**. “The schedule was full of a bunch of wonderful activities. Although I have been to D.C. many times, there was something each day that we did that I had never done before.”

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

Co-op Recognitions

NOVEC Recognizes Successful Legislative Efforts

A job well done: **NOVEC** recently recognized the work of **several co-op advocates** who were instrumental in a **successful 2019 General Assembly session**.

Association Counsel **Sam Brumberg** and Vice President of Governmental Affairs **Andrew Vehorn** of the **Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives** received certificates of appreciation along with **Howard Spinner**, NOVEC manager of regulatory affairs; **Chuck Duvall**, president of Lindl Corp.; and **Tripp Perrin**, vice president of Lindl Corp. Chuck and Tripp are NOVEC lobbyists.

In particular, these five were recognized for their work to secure a **Generation Rate Adjustment Clause (G-RAC)** for **NOVEC** and **other cooperatives responsible for their own power supply**.

The awards were handed out at NOVEC's annual **ACRE dinner** in May at Evergreen Country Club in Haymarket.

Stan C. Feuerberg, president and CEO of **NOVEC**, complimented the work of the lobbyists.



NOVEC President and CEO Stan Feuerberg (c) is flanked (from left) by Tripp Perrin, Howard Spinner, Andrew Vehorn and Chuck Duvall.



Andrew Vehorn (l) and Sam Brumberg of the VMD Association lobbying team display their certificates.

“Achieving passage of the generation rate adjustment clause was no small task,” Stan said. “It took the entire lobbying team, **VMDAEC’s** and **NOVEC’s**, to get it done. They all deserved special ‘pats on the backs’ for their efforts.”

Congratulations to all on a job well done that will benefit co-ops and their members!

-Report by Priscilla Knight, NOVEC Senior Communications Specialist.

Co-ops in the News

CVCEC Receives \$600,000 in Grants for Broadband in Pamplin

The county of **Appomattox** and **Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (CVCEC)** have received **\$600,000** in grant funds from the **Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (TRRC)** for **rural broadband** investments.

CVCEC will begin installation of fiber in **Pamplin** in spring **2020**, providing communications for a smart grid system and delivering high-speed internet to its members. CVCEC was awarded nearly **\$1 million** in grant funds from TRRC last June and completed construction for members served by the Appomattox substation in April 2019.

“Partnerships with our state and local governments are crucial to the success of building broadband networks in extremely rural areas. We are all reaching for the same outcome: closing the digital divide between urban and rural areas,” said CVCEC President and CEO **Gary Wood**.

CVCEC has committed to a **five-year plan** to install more than **4,500 miles** of fiber-optic cable in the **14 counties** it serves, providing broadband internet to all of its **37,000 members**. The fiber network will use laser beams and glass fibers to move data at speeds of up to **1 gigabit** per second, delivering world-class communications to members served by the **Pamplin** substation, one of four substations in **Appomattox County**.

“Broadband access has become as essential to being economically competitive in the 21st century as electrification was in the 20th,” noted **Delegate Kathy J. Byron**, chairman of the **Tobacco Commission’s Research and Development Committee**.

“The extension of broadband to rural areas that are currently underserved has been a focus of my work on the Broadband Advisory Council and the Tobacco Commission. Persistence has paid off, and I am grateful to my colleagues on the Tobacco Commission for committing resources to the CVCEC projects and others like it.”

The **fiber-optic network** will be installed on and adjacent to **existing overhead and underground** electric distribution lines, utilizing the existing infrastructure. CVEC will install and own the fiber-optic cable and offer **retail internet** and **phone services** to its members through **Firefly Fiber Broadband**, its wholly owned subsidiary.

Cooperative members will be able to purchase **high-speed internet** of 100 megabits per second at \$49.99 per month or 1 gigabit per second for \$79.99 per month.

-Report by Melissa Gay, Central Virginia Electric Cooperative Communications & Member Services Manager.

Help Us Keep You Informed!



If you have story ideas, news or information of interest and benefit to other members of the electric cooperative community in our three-state area, please contact:

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