

A regular update for leaders, members and friends of
the VA-MD-DE Association of Electric Cooperatives

from Richard G. Johnstone Jr. | President & CEO



CO-OP LEADERSHIP

REC's Hewa Appointed to Key National Role

A host of top-level leaders from across the power sector were named as executive officers for the U.S. Energy Storage Association.

The ESA announced the elections of its executive committee officers as well as a new board appointment. These leaders will serve one-year terms.

Elected as ESA board chair is John D. Hewa, who is chief operating officer of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative. He succeeds Troy Miller, of GE Renewable Energy, and will serve as a new board member.



CO-OP FULFILLING UNMET NEEDS

Free Hot Spots and Phone and Internet Service in Underserved Areas

Firefly Fiber Broadband, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative, is offering free wireless internet access to Nelson County residents for work and school needs at several locations across the county. "Firefly recognizes that the need for internet access is even greater than ever while schools are out and so many professionals are working from home," says Firefly President and CEO Gary Wood. "We have the ability to help our community by offering free wireless internet hot spots and we are committed to doing so during this challenging time."

Currently offering free internet at the CVEC Headquarters in Colleen, Va., and in partnership with Nelson County, Firefly set up hot spots at Rockfish Valley Community Center in Afton and the Faber Fire Department in Faber. Announcements about additional free wireless hot spots will be issued soon, including other locations in Nelson, Albemarle, Fluvanna and Appomattox counties. Updates can be found at fireflyva.com/free-wifi.

Firefly is quickly approaching 2,500 customers since beginning installations in December 2018. The CVEC subsidiary is swiftly working towards the goal of offering affordable, reliable and lightning-fast internet to all 37,000 CVEC members in 14 counties by 2023. In addition, Firefly will offer internet and phone service to areas outside of the CVEC service area in the coming years.

The broadband co-op subsidiary is now also offering residential and business internet access to Nelson County residents on Central Virginia Network, the former Nelson County open access network that was built and owned by the Nelson County Broadband Authority. In January 2020, ownership of that network was transferred to Central Virginia Services, Inc. and is now operated as CVN. "We are excited that Firefly is now offering service to Nelson County residents off of this publicly funded open access network. Unlike wireless or satellite providers, Firefly uses fiber to the premise to deliver affordable and reliable high-speed internet," says Wood.



Firefly uses laser light transmitted through glass fiber-optic cable to deliver high-speed internet and phone services. This prevents slowdowns due to weather or a high number of users online at one time. In addition, Firefly does not impose data caps or require a contract for residential service. CVN's recent announcement to increase bandwidth and lower wholesale pricing allows Firefly to offer competitive pricing and data packages with symmetrical upload and download speeds. Households in Nelson County can now have gigabit speed internet for under \$80 a month, rivaling quality and speeds found in larger cities such as New York City and Washington, D.C. More information about Firefly's offerings can be found at fireflyva.com.

—Report submitted by Melissa Gay, Communications and Member Services Manager, Central Virginia Electric Cooperative.

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Mecklenburg Electric Outlines Emergency Pandemic Plan

Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative officials, like other electric co-ops, are closely monitoring evolving information on the COVID-19 pandemic from the Virginia Health Department, Centers for Disease Control and the National Safety Council. The co-op is working in coordination with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in taking measures for the protection of its employees as well as its members. Since MEC employees are clearly defined as essential personnel under the Commonwealth of Virginia’s “Shelter in Place” order, the cooperative has been operating for several weeks under its emergency pandemic plan. The plan incorporates measures to ensure that the business’ critical operations continue without interruption to provide reliable electric power and other services to the area. The measures help maintain a dependable workforce with the goal of keeping key service personnel — such as line workers and member support representatives — healthy and available to meet the needs of its members.

MEC’s emergency pandemic plan calls for the closing of its district offices and cooperative facilities to all traffic except MEC employees until further notice. It also limits the number of personnel in the building at any given time by separating the workforce into two teams, which helps mitigate employees’ exposure potential. Personal protection masks are provided at each district for employees who wish to wear them as a precautionary measure. Crews working outdoors are traveling separately, have access to both masks and rubber gloves, and are practicing social distancing.

Additional measures implemented include, but are not limited to:

- Doubled the cleaning services at our facilities with emphasis on disinfectant-wipe downs on door knobs, push-bars and other areas that receive heavy hand contact.
- Canceled all business travel outside of our service territory.
- Positioned bottles of disinfecting hand cleaner throughout our facilities and strongly encourage regular use by employees.
- Mandated that if any employee has someone in the home who is sick or running a fever, they notify their

supervisor and stay home until the person who is sick has met COVID-19 protocols — no exceptions here.

- No gathering or meeting of more than five employees and only then if absolutely necessary. We recognize that crews working outdoors will be working in the general vicinity of each other; and even then, we ask them to please keep their distance whenever possible.
- All incoming mail and packages are quarantined for five days before distribution and opening.
- Limited interoffice travel and interaction among the districts and the EMPOWER Headquarters in Bracey to unavoidable only.
- Closed all our facilities to the public...only employees are permitted to enter.
- Whenever possible, employees are asked to bring their lunches and limit interaction with others at restaurants or food service establishments at lunchtime.
- Employees working outside the office have been instructed to limit any interaction with others while in the field, and if approached by a Member or other individual, to politely and respectfully let them know that they must keep a safe distance and then encourage the individual to contact the office by phone...and we’ll assist them then.
- To keep the risk of spread to a minimum, we are asking that our outside employees avoid coming into the buildings whenever possible and conduct workday and project meetings outside and with appropriate distancing.
- Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, if employees are not well ... they must STAY at HOME!!

“Our employees have been doing a commendable job of taking these measures seriously and following the precautionary guidelines. They recognize that we are all in this together, and we are all depending on each other to do the right thing to avoid exposure to the virus. As always they’re taking good care of each other,” states John C. Lee, Jr., president and CEO of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative.

—Report submitted by Debbie Blue Winn, Member and Public Relations Specialist, Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative.

Magazine Staff
Recognized for
Excellence in Writing

Cooperative Living staffers Laura Emery and Steven Johnson have each received an Award of Excellence in the 26th annual Communicators Award competition for writing/feature articles. Laura won for her January 2020 cover story, “Aiming High,” about the first female electric cooperative lineworker in Virginia. Steve won for “On the Outside, Looking In,” the February cover story on the history of segregated education in Virginia. The Communicators Award program is sanctioned and judged by the Academy of Interactive & Visual Arts, which received about 6,000 entries this year. The winning stories will be part of an interactive winners’ gallery.



Steven Johnson



Laura Emery



Meteorologists continue to see developments in what could be the first tropical storm in the Atlantic for the 2020 hurricane season. A broad area of low pressure is expected to develop over the weekend near the north end of the Bahamas and east of Florida, according to the National Hurricane Center. The National Hurricane Center says there’s a 70% chance a disturbance could become a depression or Subtropical Storm Arthur in the next 5 days.

ONLINE TRAINING

Surviving the Times

May 2020 Webinar Series

MAY 19
10:00

Stay Motivated: Tips for Leveraging Your Superpower - It's easy enough to set a goal. But when it comes to habit changes like improving your diet, exercising more or trying harder to meet new people, sustaining change can feel impossible. This session will teach the three-part theory of human motivation. You'll identify your motivational style (e.g., your "superpower!") and learn strategies that will keep you motivated so you can achieve any goal. – *Facilitator: Optima EAP*

MAY 27
2:00

Strategies for Stress Relief - Everyone is stressed. The responsibilities of modern living can be overwhelming. But is it possible to learn techniques and strategies to manage and relieve stress? Yes! In this session, we will talk about the symptoms of stress, how they manifest in day-to-day life and ways to effectively manage stress. The goal of this session is to help every participant develop a willingness to employ at least one new strategy toward feeling less-stressed. – *Facilitator: Optima EAP*

To register: Email your selections to Brandon Burton, Director of Continuing Education at VMDAEC at bburton@vmdaec.com. Co-ops will be billed following the webinar.

60-75
MINUTES
EACH

\$50
EACH

ENGAGEMENT VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Positive Reader Engagement

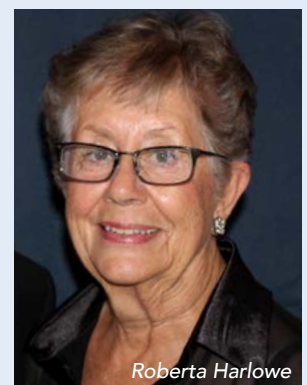
Followers of *Cooperative Living's* social media channels continue to react to posts with positivity and encouragement. Several great photos were received in response to the Mother's Day photo contest. The winner of this year's contest and a \$25 Amazon gift card was Leona Stultzfus. Click inside the frame to the right to watch the video or visit the [Cooperative Living Facebook](#) page.



PERSONALS – NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS OF THE VMD COOPERATIVE FAMILY

Wishes for a Speedy Recovery

Long-time Central Virginia Electric Cooperative Board Member Roberta Harlowe is recuperating at home after recent surgery. Please send well-wishes and notes of encouragement to her at 507 Edd Ridge Lane, Troy, VA 22974-9724. Roberta is well-known to all in the VMD Association, having served for many years as the Chairperson of the VMD Education Scholarship Foundation and the Educational Services Committee. She was recognized for her exceptional leadership in 2018 with the Association's highest honor, the VMD Leadership Award. Prayers and best wishes to Roberta for healing and recuperation!



Roberta Harlowe

Condolences for a Dedicated Co-op Leader



Richard Oliver

With great sadness, we recently learned of the passing of former Rappahannock Electric Cooperative Director Richard C. Oliver. Richard was elected to REC's board of directors in 1996, representing Region VII, the counties of Orange and Albemarle, where he served until 2017. He was a dedicated leader of REC's Board for many years, having served as chairman. He was also a director with VMDAEC during his board tenure at REC. He had retired from teaching and administration in the Fairfax County school system and operated the family-owned Five Oaks Farm in Orange County. Richard also helped establish a scholarship fund in honor of his mother, Gertrude Winston, that annually supports students whose parents are REC members. Additionally, Richard was the 2017 recipient of the Association's highest honor, the VMD Leadership Award. Please join us in offering our deepest sympathy and condolences to Richard's family and friends and our co-op family at REC. Arrangements have not been finalized. Please contact Whitney Watts at wwatts@myrec.coop with any inquiries or to send condolences to the Oliver family.

How are *YOU*
reading your
CONNECTIONS
newsletter?

Go paperless and join
our email list today.
Contact Phyllis Long at
plong@vmdaec.com.

