

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 PEOPLE

Josh Pretlow Succeeds LeClairRyan as VMDAEC General Counsel

The new general counsel for the VMD Association is a familiar face to electric cooperatives.

Joshua “Pret” Pretlow Jr., the longtime general counsel for Community Electric Cooperative, has accepted an offer to become the Association’s general counsel, effective July 1.

The position of in-house general counsel was created at the October 2019 meeting of the Association’s board of directors to succeed the decades-long relationship the Association maintained with the firm of LeClairRyan, which has since dissolved.

“We’re pleased to welcome ‘Pret’ to succeed LeClairRyan. He brings a wealth of legal knowledge and experience that will provide significant benefits for our members,” said Richard G. Johnstone Jr., president and CEO of the VMD Association. “His service as general counsel to Community Electric Cooperative for 46 years is among the longest, most distinguished on record for an attorney at any of our 15 member cooperatives.”

“Pret” is a lifelong resident of the City of Suffolk, where he has practiced law since graduating from the University of Richmond’s T. C. Williams School of Law in 1972. He earned his undergraduate degree at UR as well.

He has been general counsel for Community Electric Cooperative since 1974, and during his decades of service there, played an integral role as a legal resource to other cooperative attorneys. In 2014, his service to other VMD cooperatives, and his impressive record of community involvement, was recognized by the VMD Association, which presented him with its Distinguished Service Award.



“Pret” has served in leadership roles with many civic organizations, including being a charter member and past president of the North Suffolk Rotary Club; past president and current member of the Chuckatuck Ruritan Club; and a member of the Nansemond Masonic Lodge #77 (past Master). “Pret” has also served the Circuit Court of the City of Suffolk as a Commissioner of Accounts and as a General District Court substitute judge.

He is a member of Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church and is an Eagle Scout.

Please join us in welcoming “Pret” to the VMD Association.

— Report by Steven Johnson, Editor, Cooperative Living.

CO-OP FRIENDS

Power Line Worker School Gets Recognition

The Power Line Working Training School, backed by VMD cooperatives, continues to get good press. A recent article in the Kenbridge-Victoria Dispatch, which focuses on Lunenburg County, gave a nice writeup about the school and its many successes.

“Ask a handful of seniors what they are planning to do after graduation, and at least one will likely tell you they are planning to enroll in Southside Virginia Community College’s (SVCC) Power Line Worker program,” the article stated. You can read the full article [here](https://www.kenbridgevictoriadispatch.com/2020/06/24/power-line-students-climb-to-success).

You’ll also find a Power Line Worker program success story in the July issue of *Cooperative Living*, to be delivered to your mailbox soon.

The first of its kind in the Commonwealth, the pre-apprentice school was launched through a public-private partnership among Virginia’s Electric Cooperatives, SVCC, the Virginia Community College System, the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education and the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative. It has sent more than 250 graduates into the trade.

— Report by Jim Robertson, Creative Services Specialist, VMDAEC.

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY



Choptank Electric Members’ Pennies at Work

Choptank Electric Cooperative’s Operation Round Up program proactively supported local communities on Maryland’s Eastern Shore during the COVID-19 pandemic in April and May.

The total amount donated through Operation Round Up for food support exceeded \$15,000, with all donations to local food pantries in Kent, Caroline, Talbot, Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset and Worcester counties. Also included were private charities like St. Vincent de Paul and Chesapeake Culinary Center/Friends of the Grape Inc.

“When this pandemic began, we had to cancel our April board meeting, but we just did not want to sit back and do nothing,” said Tom Terry, vice chair of the Choptank Electric Trust Board. “After I contacted board members, it was decided that due to the special circumstances, we could not follow the usual application process.” The board decided to proactively join forces with the MD Food Bank of the Eastern Shore and other local volunteer groups to support and ensure food distribution.

“The trust board took the initiative to help those in desperate need and we are proud of the outcome,” said Jeff Rathell, Board Chairman of Choptank Electric Cooperative. “The members of the trust board exemplify the priorities of Choptank Electric and its commitment to our local communities.”

The donated funds are expected to feed over 5,000 families. With an average family size of four, more than 20,000 people on the Eastern Shore will now have a level of food security while the economy gets back on track. Care Packs of Talbot



Choptank Electric Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

County is just one of many food bank-supported locations that received funds from the Operation Round Up program to support their increase in needs during the COVID-19 crisis. “We were serving around 200-350 families a week, and now we are serving around 500 families a week,” said Emily Moody, co-founder and one of the volunteer coordinators for Care Packs of Talbot County.

“The members of the trust board exemplify the priorities of Choptank Electric and its commitment to our local communities.”

— Jeff Rathell, Board Chairman, Choptank Electric Cooperative

The Operation Round Up program — operating as the nonprofit Choptank Electric Trust, Inc. — began in 2004 as an easy way for members to make a difference in their community. Funded by contributions from participating co-op members by “rounding up” their monthly electric bills, the average member donates roughly \$6 per year.

“I want to thank every member who participates in Operation Round Up,” said Mike Malandro, president and CEO of Choptank Electric. “With your generous donations every month, the trust board supports many families and organizations here on the Eastern Shore. At 95% participation, Choptank Electric Co-op members are a very generous group of people.”

— Report by Beth Hallett, Manager of Marketing and Communications, Choptank Electric Cooperative.

PERSONALS – NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS OF THE VMD COOPERATIVE FAMILY

Condolences

We are saddened to report the passing earlier this week of Ray Whitelock, husband of long-time NOVEC employee Becky Whitelock, who retired several years ago. Expressions of sympathy may be addressed to Mrs. Becky Whitelock, 13513 Ryton Ridge Lane, Gainesville, VA 20155 or emailed to Beckywhitelock40@gmail.com

CO-OPS ADAPT FOR **ANNUAL MEETINGS**



MEC Hosts Modified Annual Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative’s usually well-attended annual meeting was held with limited attendance on June 17. It was the first co-op in the VMD Association to host an annual meeting this year, and helped set the stage for others to follow. MEC discouraged members from coming to protect them from possible exposure to the virus. Social distancing guidelines were posted throughout the annual meeting grounds, and cooperative employees wore face coverings. The condensed, 15-minute meeting was digitally recorded for members to view on Facebook and the cooperative’s website.

The event, which is mandated by the cooperative’s bylaws to occur every year on the third Wednesday in June, met the most basic requirements for an official meeting, as MEC officials wore masks and actively discouraged attendance.

Director Michael McDowell delivered the invocation with Board Chairman David J. Jones presiding. David advised all members to read the financial report and CEO report in *Cooperative Living* magazine in lieu of the usual meeting.

The cooperative had 25,674 members as of May 31 and received more than 3,100 proxies, far more than needed for a quorum.



Secretary/Treasurer D. Stanley Duffer said MEC remains in a strong financial position. He said the cooperative had operating revenues of \$72.1 million in 2019 with \$71.8 million in the cost of electric service, a difference of \$316,377 which will be considered as capital credits for members. The overwhelming majority of revenues come from residential service, he noted.

Reelected for 3-year terms as directors were Peggy Lee of Freeman, a retired executive director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Brunswick County Farm Service Agency; Donnie Moore of Chatham, who owns and operates Moore Farms in Pittsylvania County; Frank Myers of Gasburg, president of Gasburg Land and Timber Co. and Gasburg Timber Corp.; and Michael McDowell of Vernon Hill, who owns and operates Locust Level Farm.

The cooperative appreciates its members’ understanding of the unusual circumstances surrounding the 2020 meeting and hopes to see everyone in 2021.

— Report by Steven Johnson, Editor, *Cooperative Living*.

REC Receives Tree Line USA Designation for 18th Year



For the 18th year in a row, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative has received the Tree Line USA designation from the Arbor Day Foundation. This designation recognizes utilities that demonstrate best practices in protecting and enhancing forestry.

The REC vegetation management team has been targeting tree-related outages, clearing more than 2,200 miles of right-of-way in 2019. While working to reduce the potential for tree-related outages so that member-owners have reliable electric service, REC contractors use specialized equipment to work safely and to protect the health of the trees they trim.



“Our dedicated team of certified arborists and foresters understand the difference they can make to keep electricity flowing to member-owners,” said Cindy Musick, REC director of vegetation management. “Just as important, though, they also understand our role in protecting the environment and leaving as many healthy trees as possible.”

— Report by Casey Hollins, Director of Communications and Public Relations, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative.

CO-OP TRAINING

Training Opportunity: Customer Service

Description: This workshop is designed to help you improve your customer service (both internally and externally). We will explore our customer service readiness and attitudes by using activities and group interactions focused on the concept of continuous improvement; leading to fewer customer complaints and better resolution to customer (member) concerns.

Who: ALL are welcome!

When: July 21 and 22

Time: 7/21 – 1 - 4 p.m., 7/22 – 9 a.m. - noon (with breaks)

Via: Zoom

Facilitator: Sam Bruce, Sapient Business Solutions and University of Richmond

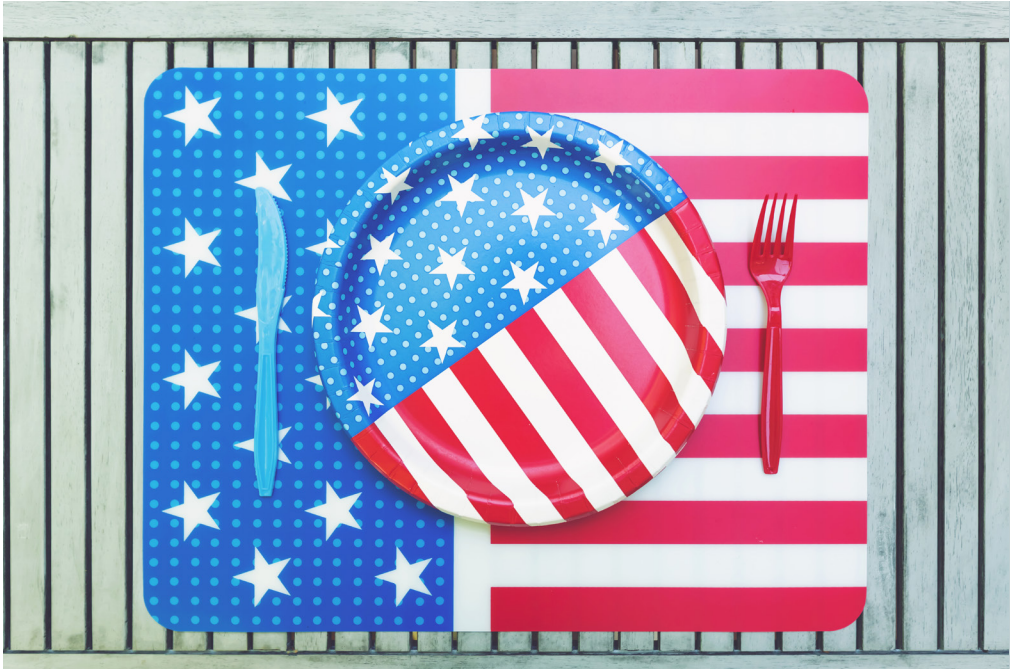
CPE: 6 credits

Cost: \$325 (four or more from one co-op, \$300 each) (your co-op will be billed following the class)

To register: Email Brandon Burton at bburton@vmdaec.com with names and email addresses of all participants.

Deadline to Register: July 17, 2020*

**please follow your co-op’s protocol prior to registering*



Wishing you a
safe and happy
Independence
Day!



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