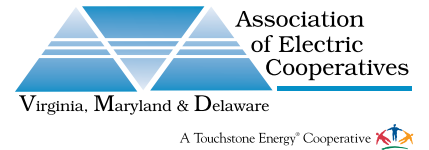


CONNECTIONS

December 21, 2020

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

from Richard G. Johnstone Jr. | President & CEO



COOPERATIVE BROADBAND



FIRST IN THE NATION!

RURALBAND
• CONNECTING PEOPLE

BARC Connects

firefly
FIBER BROADBAND
Powered by CVER



Choptank Electric Cooperative

EMPOWER
BROADBAND
Powered by MEC

Virginia & Maryland Cooperatives Form Broadband Association

Recognizing the benefits of collaboration, as well as the growing workload required to support a common agenda, five Cooperatives in Virginia and Maryland officially organized the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Broadband Cooperatives on Thursday, Dec. 17, 2020, in a virtual inaugural meeting conducted from Glen Allen, Va. The founding Class A Members are BARC Electric Cooperative (BARC Connects), Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (Firefly Fiber Broadband), Choptank Electric Cooperative (Choptank Fiber, LLC), Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative (EMPOWER Broadband) and Prince George Electric Cooperative (RURALBAND).

"This association is the first of its kind in the nation," said VMDABC Board Chairman Casey Logan, CEO of Prince George Electric Cooperative and its broadband subsidiary, RURALBAND. "This is truly a historic day. Much like the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives was created 76 years ago during the formative years of rural electrification, today's formal organization of a broadband association will improve the quality of life for our members."

"This association will be solely focused on bringing first-in-class fiber broadband to unserved areas," Casey noted. "I hope all cooperatives with any level of interest in broadband will join this association, and work with us as we once again strive to bring a much-needed service to our rural service areas."

Modeled after the structure of VMDAEC, VMDABC will offer multiple classes of membership, including co-op affiliates offering retail fiber, co-ops pursuing middle mile or "backbone" fiber, other broadband entities, and vendors. "Broadband access is something our members desperately need, as many rural areas are once again being left behind,"

"This association will be solely focused on bringing first-in-class fiber broadband to unserved areas."

– Casey Logan

CEO, Prince George Electric Cooperative

said John C. Lee, Jr., CEO of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative and EMPOWER Broadband. "Generations of future Virginians and Marylanders will have opportunities to learn, to work, to communicate, and to enjoy benefits long available to those in cities and suburbs, thanks to the efforts of our group of broadband cooperatives."

"This is a great opportunity at a great time, to address the growing need for a singular, unifying voice to speak for cooperative broadband interests," said VMDAEC COO Brian Mosier. "We look forward to assisting these broadband cooperatives in areas including legislative advocacy, communications, and marketing."

VMDAEC CEO Richard Johnstone added, "We are hoping and intending for this broadband association to help bring unserved areas in our three states into the digital age, much as our electric cooperative members brought their communities into the electric age in the 1930s and '40s."

VMDAEC will provide management and technical support to VMDABC through a management services agreement, and VMDABC will have separate legislative representation in the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies.

– Report by Andrew Vehorn, Vice President of Government Relations, VMDAEC.

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

Co-ops Respond to Season's First Winter Storm

Winter Storm Gail brought an unwelcomed end to an already-difficult year, knocking out power for about 30,000 electric cooperative members last week, mostly in an area just east of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

VMDAEC coordinated the deployment of more than 50 mutual-aid workers to help restore power after Gail iced lines and blew down trees, primarily in the service territories of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative and Central Virginia Electric Cooperative.

At the peak, more than 21,000 REC members were without power around 10 p.m. on Dec. 16. Assistance was provided by crew members from Shenandoah Valley (18), Northern Neck (4), Prince George (6) and Choptank (10) electric cooperatives, as well as C.W. Wright and Lee Electrical contractor crews.

Working nonstop for more than two days, crews repaired downed lines and set more than 40 poles damaged by freezing rain, sleet and snow.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAPPAHANNOCK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE.

CVEC hosted lineworkers from Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative (6) and Southside Electric Cooperative (8), along with a contract crew, in restoring power to about 4,500 members. Much of the damage was centered in Fluvanna and Albemarle counties.

The Association's mutual assistance program once again proved effective in coordinating relief efforts, demonstrating the power of one of the core cooperative principles, Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

– Report compiled by Steven Johnson and Jim Robertson, VMDAEC.

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Lineworkers Honored for Overseas Work

Team members of United We Light: Project Bolivia received official recognition from the Virginia General Assembly at a Dec. 8 ceremony at Northern Neck Electric Cooperative.

Del. Margaret Ransone presented Craig Loving of NNEC with a resolution passed by the legislature praising the work of the crew that lit the Bolivian countryside in September 2019.

Loving was one of the volunteers from eight cooperatives in Virginia and Maryland who electrified five settlements in Bolivia for the first time. His colleagues joined him as part of the virtual event.

Ransone, who sponsored the resolution and whose district includes the Northern Neck, praised the selflessness of the United We Light crew members. "When you left your homes to go into Bolivia and help those communities in great need, it was certainly an act of goodwill and kindness. It was a great honor for me, personally, to recognize you," she said.

Del. Kirk Cox, who also attended the socially distanced ceremony at NNEC's warehouse, said he was impressed that lineworkers endured three plane trips and a laborious bus ride to work at a 13,000-foot elevation and raise 13 miles of line by hand. "For our country, going through COVID and the political divisions, this is what America is all about," he said. "They're what makes America special. They're so hard-working; their jobs are so essential to us."

The Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives sponsored the project, its first overseas electrification project, with support from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's international arm, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corp. and the National Cooperative Services Corp.

Brad Hicks, president and CEO of NNEC, noted that concern for community is a fundamental principle of the cooperative movement.



From left, Del. Kirk Cox, NNEC lineworker Craig Loving, Del. Margaret Ransone and NNEC President and CEO Brad Hicks.

"Providing power to unserved areas of the world takes a tremendous amount of coordination and commitment. This is what cooperatives do best," he said.

The lineworkers included:

- Bernie Hastings, A&N Electric Cooperative;
- Cody Minter, BARC Electric Cooperative;
- Jason Purvis, Josh Golladay and Allan Thacker, Central Virginia Electric Cooperative;
- Mike Johnson, Choptank Electric Cooperative;
- Craig Loving, Northern Neck Electric Cooperative;
- Dillon Sheads, Patrick Ambrose, Cody Lockhart and Brian (Jake) Michael, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative;
- Roger Pace, Mike Alexander and J.T. Jacobs, Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative; and
- Scott Diggs, Southside Electric Cooperative.

Also part of United We Light were John Medved, Bolivia team leader and director of safety and compliance at REC; videographer Ryan White of REC; and Alan Scruggs, vice president of safety and training services at VMDAEC.

– Report by Steven Johnson, Editor, Cooperative Living.

THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE

Cooperative Spirit Warms Homes and Hearts

Last month, RECORE Director of Operations Glen Presson got a call that would end the year on a warm note. The caller, Lynwood Greene, an Army veteran, was worried beyond belief about his wife and her dialysis treatments. As if 2020 hadn't been hard enough, the approaching winter season had Lynwood feeling an enormous pressure mounting: If the power went out in rural Southampton, his wife Vanessa, may not survive.



Lynwood and Vanessa Greene with their new whole-home generator from RECORE.

On daily dialysis, Vanessa was forced to do her treatments at home due to the pandemic. Her husband was eager to learn the detail of treatments and ways to mitigate any potential problems. He's been her caregiver and does her daily treatments. As if the pandemic was not already causing enough anxiety, the possibility of winter storms and power outages could interrupt Vanessa's treatment schedule. The complexities of dialysis are delicate, and a power interruption could have fatal consequences.

Lynwood researched options like standby generators. A longtime member of Community Electric Cooperative, Lynwood contacted his co-op and inquired about a whole-home generator, which has a complex and lengthy installation process. The pandemic created additional challenges affecting supply, lengthening that process.

That's when Glen stepped in. He contacted a RECORE customer, Mrs. Bailey, who had been waiting for her own generator to arrive and was scheduled for installation. Her late husband had always hooked up a portable generator, but that task became too overwhelming for her to continue. She believed her husband would have wanted to help someone in need, as did she, so Mrs. Bailey gave up her spot in line to the Greenes.

Glen went a little further in his service. Since the Greenes were planning to pay cash for their system, his RECORE team connected them with a representative from Electel Cooperative Federal Credit Union who was able to provide financing within 24 hours. Amerigas, Briggs & Stratton and Southampton County all joined in prioritizing installation and setup for the Greenes. A project that usually takes 18 weeks was completed in just 21 days.

"We have had the unique privilege in providing services to amazing customers like the Bailey and Greene families, and I am humbled by the generosity that Mrs. Bailey showed to her neighbor," says RECORE CEO Steve Harmon. He went on to say that it was because of "loyal and knowledgeable employees like Glen Presson that situations like the Greene family faced have such inspiring outcomes."

RECORE specializes in standby emergency power generation and has several solutions available to make energy supply resilient. "After all, it is our specialty to create customized solutions for our customers," says Glen.

This holiday season just got a little warmer.

— Report by Jessica Parr, Communications Manager, Community Electric Cooperative.

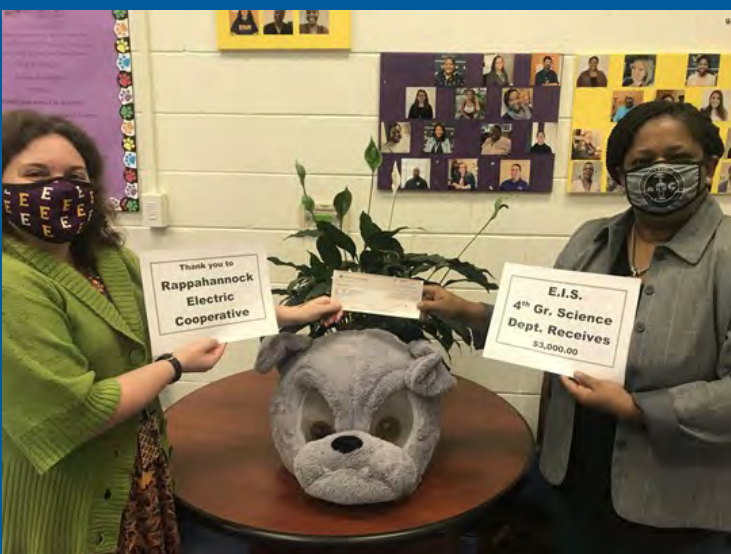
REC Brightens Future for Local Students

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative is a strong advocate for STEM education activities and programs. To help the fourth grade students of Essex Intermediate School learn about electricity, REC sponsored the purchase of a science kit for each student.

To help students interactively learn about electricity for their science SOL, each fourth grade student will receive a Magnetism Kit and an Electric Circuit Board Kit.

"REC is making the future brighter for our scholars and we thank the Cooperative for the partnership in moving our students forward on the path of excellence," says Ms. Calhoun, principal of Essex Intermediate School.

— Report by Rachel Conrad, Communications Specialist, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative.



Ms. Calhoun, right, thanks REC for helping brighten her students' futures.

COOPERATIVE TRAINING

New Year, New Training!

VMDAEC is implementing a MemberClicks database with a member directory and online registration for all Association events, among many other exciting features.

The first training opportunity for 2021, a Contemporary Leadership & Management (CLM) class, is scheduled for Jan. 13-14. Below are details on this dynamic class.

Technology Innovation & Engagement

Understanding and using new technologies to help you and your teams become more innovative, focused and effective. Engagement is perhaps the most important aspect for work. It is the thing that we ask all our employees to do, and all too frequently, it is the team spirit that carries the team to success. Understanding the relationship between the tools we ask our employees to use and their engagement with the organization is vital for a cohesive and results-oriented team.

2021 VMDAEC Training Schedule

Technology Innovation & Engagement

Jan. 13-14 | Virtual

Personality in Leadership

Feb. 4-5 | Virtual

Emotional Intelligence

March 11-12 | Virtual

Plan, Do, Check, Then Act

April 19-20 | Virtual

Interpersonal Skills Development

June 10 | Glen Allen, Va.

Business Writing

July 20 | Glen Allen, Va.

Communications in Leadership

Oct. 6 | Glen Allen, Va.

Failure Modes & Effects Analysis

Nov. 3 | Glen Allen, Va.

COOPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Wrapping Up 2020 in Co-op Style!

Cooperative Living magazine hosted its annual Facebook Live event last Thursday evening. “2020: It’s a Wrap” featured games and prizes. The lucky winners were:

Doris Acker;

C. Ellen Faulkner, Gladys, Va., SEC member;

Kelly Bennett Upton, REC member;

Kellie Butler, Culpeper, Va., REC member;

Courtney Griffin, Broadway, Va., SVEC member;

Sherry Whittaker Parke, Bowling Green, Va., REC member; Thank you to all of our participants!

Brittani Conley, Dyke, Va., REC member;

Leona Stoltzfus, Chestertown, Md., Choptank member;

Rasheeda Hargrove, Brodnax, Va., SEC member;

Lumina Shifflett, Hot Springs, Va., BARC member;

Lindsey N. Smith, Prince George County, Va., PGEC member;

Layla Griffin;

Janine Griffin, Broadway, Va., SVEC member; and

Karen Rambo, Falls Church, Va., REC member.



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