



CONNECTIONS

March 29, 2021

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

from Richard G. Johnstone Jr. | President & CEO



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Goodbye, with a Grateful Heart

Life is filled with seasons. And it's now time for me to move into the next season of my life, after a glorious summertime of growth and teamwork and success and service, a summertime that's lasted for 36 wonderful years with the VMD Association.

I have been blessed to do what I love, with and for people I respect and admire, in a business that's all about helping others ... and getting paid to do so. I feel like my career is captured in the title of a song by the late folk singer John Prine, who asked, "How lucky can one man get?"

I've been incredibly fortunate to have my passion and my career be one and the same.

During my 36 years with the Association there have been more meetings, trips, columns written, pages proofed, lineworker rodeos held, local co-op annual meetings attended, budgets developed, people from all walks of life met, and friendships made ... than I could have imagined possible when I accepted the offer in early 1985 to become editor of what was then called *Rural Living* magazine. I had found my dream job.

So when I became Executive Vice President in 1999, I couldn't help but think of the Robert Browning quote, "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a Heaven for?" Had my reach gone too far beyond my grasp, in this new position that would also be responsible for overseeing safety training, educational services, and governmental affairs?

Thanks to an incredibly talented staff, and wonderfully supportive member systems, my concerns quickly turned into excitement, as the 21st century began and new challenges emerged in the energy industry, challenges that made the Association's services more needed and vital than ever.

And over the last 22 years as EVP and now CEO, teamwork between the Association staff and our member systems has resulted in creation of a scholarship foundation that's helped over 800 deserving young people from all 15 member systems; growth of the lineworker rodeo — started by CVEC and coordinated by the Association



Richard Johnstone, early 1999.

since 2008 — into one of the largest, most successful regional utility rodeos in the country; and construction of a multiuse, state-of-the-art training center that will serve the Association member systems well for many decades.

Our advocacy efforts on behalf of our member systems are stronger than ever. Circulation of our print magazine is now almost 600,000, with a digital edition that leaves us well-positioned for future changes in the publishing industry.

And perhaps the best news of all is that my successor, Brian Mosier, will do an outstanding job, by continuing the many successes we've enjoyed, and building on them in new and dynamic ways. I am convinced that the Association's — and our member systems' — best days lie ahead.

As I say goodbye, I do so with a grateful heart. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity of a lifetime, which gave me a lifetime of opportunities to work with and for some of the finest people in this world.

Indeed, how lucky can one man get?

To keep in touch with Richard, please contact him at 804-363-2938 or richardjohnstonejr@gmail.com.



NOVEC 'HELPS' Area Shelters Serving Victims of Abuse

Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative and its employee-led nonprofit organization, NOVEC Hands Engaged in Local Public Service (NOVEC HELPS), donated \$6,000 recently to six area shelters that help victims of domestic abuse and \$1,000 to the House of Mercy in Manassas to help provide diapers for more than 300 low-income families.

"It's important to us to leverage our connections in the community," states Heather Anderson, NOVEC system engineering manager and NOVEC HELPS activities coordinator. "We want to give in a way that helps families."

Donations to Domestic Shelters

The six social welfare agencies that received \$1,000 each say domestic violence increased tremendously during the pandemic. "The COVID-19 pandemic has created what can only be described as a silent, parallel pandemic," states Carly Stoliker, development manager for the Loudoun Abused Women's



Shelter. "We saw the need for emergency shelter almost triple. ... Even though we are seeing a possible end to the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence will continue, silently, as it always has. The only upside is that COVID has garnered more attention to this other very pertinent issue we are facing as a community. It has been inspiring to see local businesses like NOVEC stand up to fill the gaps where funding was lacking."

Tammy Torres, assistant director of Empowerhouse, says people who come to the 40-bed shelter in Fredericksburg

(Continued on page 2)

NOVEC HELPS (continued)

“already have the struggle of leaving an abusive relationship and environment, so we are trying to relieve them of other worries by providing resources where we can. The support offered by NOVEC and other community members is invaluable and so appreciated.”

Torres says Empowerhouse also helps homebound families. “Most families with little to no income are not sure how they will put the next meal on the table. The youth look forward to the deliveries of food, activities, toys, snacks, and toiletries. They are often waiting at the window waving and smiling as the advocate arrives and drops off these items at their doors.”

Dollars for Diapers

Jessica Root, House of Mercy executive director, says requests for assistance to the food pantry have grown exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic. “The number of people we served rose about 800%. We helped more than 20,000 individuals last year alone.”

Root notes that diapers and wipes cut into a family’s budget. “If we are able to help our clients in that way, they are able to save or use those funds for other important things.”

— Report by Priscilla Knight, Senior Communications Specialist, Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative.

POWERFUL CAREERS

Two Long-Time Stalwarts Retiring from VMD Association

The VMD Association is saying a fond farewell and a hearty thank-you to two mainstays, who have been at the center of much of the Association’s success during the last quarter-century.

Both *Cooperative Living* Production Manager Janet Bailey and Coordinator of Safety Services John McBennett are concluding long, distinguished careers within days of each other. Janet’s last day was March 18, while John’s will be on March 31.

Janet’s tenure matches the second-longest consecutive years of service in the Association’s 76-year history, as her 30 years are exceeded only by retiring CEO Richard Johnstone’s total of 36 years. Janet began with the Association in 1991 as a graphic artist. Her significant design skills and her deep knowledge of both long-run and specialty printing processes made her a tremendously valuable employee for the entirety of her tenure. She is also known as the professional who pulled together the magazine’s local co-op pages, making those pages sparkle while never missing a deadline.

She was renowned also for her cooperative spirit and was often first in line to help other departments with whatever project needed attention, frequently stepping in at deadline to provide just what was needed to complete the task. At various times Janet lent a helping hand with the Gaff-n-Go Lineworker’s Rodeo, the annual Legislative Day, and at Association quarterly and annual meetings. During construction of the Clover Power Station in the 1990s, she assisted ODEC staff by coordinating a variety of brochures, handouts, and promotional items. And Janet was instrumental in helping the communications department successfully navigate the added workload following the loss last year of long-time editor Bill Sherrod.

Richard Johnstone congratulates John McBennett in 2019 for 25 years of exceptional service.



Richard Johnstone presents Janet Bailey with the High Voltage Award for exceptional achievement during 2019.

John’s tenure with the VMD Association began as a part-time administrative aide in 1994, whose array of organizational, administrative and computer skills became quickly obvious, prompting Association management to bring him on-board full-time within a year or so. John’s career was spent in the Safety & Training Services Department, where among his many duties he organized curricula for the array of training the Association provides to apprentice lineworkers, system operators and substation professionals. John also managed the daily visit schedules for the Association’s team of full- and part-time safety instructors. And he was a central figure in the growth and development of the Gaff-n-Go Lineworker’s Rodeo, filling an array of duties both for the competitive events and for affiliated activities like the vendor expo, the grilling competition and the registration process.

And like Janet, John’s cooperative spirit was evident as he generously shared his talents — principally his computer and organizational skills — with other departments, perhaps most prominently in developing an electronic system to assist the VMD Education Scholarship Foundation Board with its annual process of selecting deserving young people for scholarships, based on listed criteria.

To both Janet and John, all of us on the Association staff — and those within the broader VMD cooperative family — wish both of these outstanding professionals, and wonderful individuals, long and happy retirements, filled with good health and happiness!

— Report by Richard G. Johnstone, Jr., President & CEO, VMDAEC.

COOPERATIVE PEOPLE

REC Names Manager of Communications and Public Relations

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative has promoted Casey Hollins to Manager of Communications and Public Relations. Casey oversees the communications and public relations department, maintaining the management of all internal and external communications, public relations activities for community engagement and member awareness of the REC brand.

Further, Casey is responsible for developing and implementing the Cooperative’s annual communications plan, preparing the strategic action plan and budget for the communications and public relations department, as well as representing REC through active participation in community and professional organizations. She is the Cooperative’s spokesperson.

“Casey is a nationally recognized, versatile energy industry professional,” said David Koogler, senior vice president of member services and external affairs. “For over 12 years, she has been an integral member of REC’s award-winning communications and public relations department. Her dedication and hard work have been crucial to the Cooperative’s success.”

She is a Certified Cooperative Communicator through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and holds

“Casey is a nationally recognized, versatile energy industry professional.”

– David Koogler, Senior VP of Member Services and External Affairs



Casey Hollins

a bachelor’s degree in English and creative writing from Hollins University. She began her REC career in 2008 as the communications specialist, and after 10 years was promoted to Director of Communications and Public Relations, where she served the Cooperative from 2018-2021.

In addition, Casey has served on different professional boards, including the Ragan Communications Leadership Council and the Certified Cooperative Communicators Board and committees supporting the Cooperative Communicators Association (CCA). She is a graduate of the Fredericksburg Leadership Class of 2019, and she earned her Leadership Development Certificate through the REC Leadership Class of 2018 partnership with the University of Richmond. She resides in Louisa County with her husband and three sons.

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

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

REC Cares: Cooperative Provides Over 1,000 Meals to Hospital Staff

In the year since the COVID-19 pandemic shook up life as we know it, doctors, nurses, first responders, hospital staff and health professionals around the world have shown great tenacity and dedication to battling the virus.

By the end of February, over 500,000 Americans had lost their lives to COVID-19. In Virginia, there have been 449,000 confirmed cases, over 22,500 hospitalizations and well over 6,500 deaths.

Without a solid “end” in sight, and with vaccination centers popping up, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative took action to support medical professionals. Throughout February, REC donated over 1,000 meals to 11 hospitals across the Cooperative’s service area.

“Working with other businesses, like REC, to make those donations is incredibly satisfying,” said Johnny Garver, Jr.,



University of Virginia Health System meal delivery.

co-owner of Pronto! Pasta, who delivered 80 meals to the University of Virginia Health System. “We’ve provided meals to the COVID-19 unit throughout the pandemic, but partnering with REC to give back to the community was a joyful experience.”

(Continued on page 4)

REC Cares
(continued from page 3)

“This project impacted the community two-fold: by supporting locally operated restaurants and by providing meals to those who are working to keep our communities safe,” said Olivia Landry, owner of Jordan Springs Market, who provided meals to Winchester Medical Center. “During this pandemic, it’s incredibly important that we take care of each other, and this spoke to that on many levels.”

In addition to the meals, REC donated large and small hand sanitizers and gift cards to Costco and B.J.’s Warehouse for staff to get snacks and supplies.

“The delivery was really fantastic,” said Jennifer Michaelis, co-owner of DeFazio’s Catering, who delivered to Memorial Regional Hospital in



Henrico Doctors Hospital meal delivery.

Mechanicsville. “They were so appreciative and couldn’t stop saying thank you. You could really see how thankful they were.”

Echoing Michaelis, Landry said, “The look on the nurses’ faces when we dropped off the food was just incredible, it meant a lot to all of us involved.”

Hospitals delivered to:

- Spotsylvania Medical Center
- Memorial Regional Hospital
- Henrico Doctors Hospital
- Mary Washington Hospital
- Winchester Medical Center
- Warren Memorial Hospital
- Martha Jefferson Hospital
- University of Virginia Health System
- Novant Health UVA Medical Center
- Stafford Hospital

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



Winchester Medical Center meal delivery.

Congratulations to VMDAEC’s Phil Jarvis, Blaine Salmans, JT Jacobs, Gregg MacDonald and Jim Robertson for successfully completing UAS Part 107 (drone pilot) certification through the Federal Aviation Administration!



P.O. Box 2340
Glen Allen, VA 23058-2340