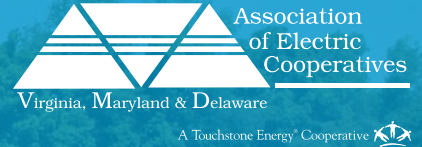


A regular update for leaders, members and friends of
the VA-MD-DE Association of Electric Cooperatives

from Richard G. Johnstone Jr. | President & CEO



BARC Named Top Innovative Company

BARC ranked No. 7 in the Most Innovative Company North America category



BARC Electric Cooperative has been named to Fast Company's prestigious annual list of the World's Most Innovative Companies for 2021.

The list honors businesses that have not only found a way to be resilient in the past year, but also turned those challenges into impact-making processes. These companies did more than survive, they thrived — making an impact on their industries and culture as a whole. This year's MIC list features 463 businesses from 29 countries.

"To even be recognized on the national stage, let alone rank seventh, is an extraordinary honor for our cooperative," says BARC CEO Mike Keyser. "Innovation is truly in our DNA at BARC. For Fast Company to see that and consider us worthy of this distinguished list validates the determination of all our staff who are constantly striving to improve the quality of life in our community."

BARC's naming to Fast Company's annual list of the World's Most Innovative Companies was based on its accomplishments from the past 18 months. In 2020, BARC launched SolarizeBARC, a comprehensive set of affordable solar energy solutions for its customers, including rooftop solar, community solar and utility-scale solar, as well as EV-charging and battery-storage solutions. Through this program, BARC's electric consumers have the flexibility to have all or a part of their energy mix come from renewable sources, with onsite solutions, subscription to a central solar garden maintained by the cooperative, or in the form of renewable energy credits. SolarizeBARC is the cornerstone of BARC's Sustainability Plan, also adopted in 2020, which is the first and only voluntary carbon-neutral public commitment of any utility in the Commonwealth of Virginia. By 2035, BARC has committed to 100% carbon-neutral energy sales.

In 2020, BARC continued its commitment to provide world-class broadband service through expansion of its award-winning fiber-to-the-home project, bringing high-speed Internet, telephone and TV services to the Shenandoah Valley and Appalachia region of Virginia. To date, BARC has brought broadband over its all-fiber network to more than 2,500 previously unserved homes and businesses in the region, including all 13 public schools in Rockbridge County, the City of Lexington and City of Buena Vista. BARC is building 500 miles of fiber in 2021 and bridging the digital



divide by connecting thousands of consumers per year as its network expands.

BARC was a pioneer in the rural broadband movement. BARC's CEO was part of a very small group of leaders advocating for electric cooperative access to FCC funding. BARC is showing others in the industry that a business case for high-speed Internet services exists in rural areas, and that rural consumers deserve access to the same broadband speeds as urban areas.

Fast Company's editors and writers sought out the most groundbreaking businesses across the globe and industries, and considered the impact of each company on both industry and the larger culture.

The World's Most Innovative Companies is Fast Company's signature franchise and one of its most highly anticipated editorial efforts of the year. It provides both a snapshot and a road map for the future of innovation across the most dynamic sectors of the economy.

"In a year of unprecedented challenges, the companies on this list exhibit fearlessness, ingenuity, and creativity in the face of crisis," says Fast Company Deputy Editor David Lidsky, who oversaw the issue with Senior Editor Amy Farley.

To coincide with the issue launch, Fast Company will host its first-ever Most Innovative Companies Summit on March 9 and 10. This virtual, multiday summit will celebrate the Most Innovative Companies in business, provide an early look at major business trends, and offer the inspiration and practical insights on what it takes to innovate in 2021. Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies issue (March/April 2021) is available online, as well as in app form via iTunes and on newsstands beginning March 16, 2021. The hashtag is #FCMostInnovative.

— Report by Tish Blackwell, Communications Specialist, BARC Electric Cooperative.

COOPERATIVE BROADBAND

Meet the Newest Broadband Contender on the Eastern Shore

Choptank Fiber, a wholly owned broadband subsidiary of Choptank Electric Cooperative, was introduced to the Maryland General Assembly's Eastern Shore Delegation on Friday, Feb. 12. The new broadband provider boasts true gigabit speed with no data caps and plans to begin hook-ups as early as this summer to selected areas.

Choptank Fiber's goal is to install broadband, one community at a time, by reinvesting monthly subscription revenue into developing the infrastructure for the next community, until the entirety of the rural Eastern Shore is served.

"We are excited to begin installations this coming summer for the many members who are without adequate internet access," said Mike Malandro, president and CEO of Choptank Electric Cooperative. "Our plan is to reach our membership on the Eastern Shore in a 10-year period, but we are also aggressively pursuing grant funds at the federal and state levels to accelerate our deployment."



The business plan is finalized, and Choptank Electric Cooperative is now reviewing existing fiber infrastructure and developing the technical specifications necessary to deliver broadband service.

"The Board is proud to undertake this long-term project on behalf of the membership" said Jeff Rathell, chairman of the board and Talbot County representative. "We know how important broadband is, not only to our members, but to the entire Eastern Shore."

Learn more about Choptank Fiber at choptankfiber.com.

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

Co-ops, IOU Partner to Bring Broadband to Louisa County

Efforts to provide broadband internet service in Louisa County took a leap forward when officials announced a recently proposed partnership with the energy utilities serving the community. Bob Babyok, chairman of the Louisa County Board of Supervisors, announced that Louisa County is finalizing a partnership with Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, Firefly Fiber Broadband (a wholly owned subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative) and Dominion Energy Virginia to ensure high-speed internet access is available to every home and business in the county.

The partnership includes a significant capital investment from all parties to ensure its success. In September 2020, the Louisa County Board of Supervisors unanimously earmarked \$15 million to incentivize the deployment of end-user fiber on a countywide basis. The funds will be used to prepare for construction and offset other project-related costs. Serving as the cornerstone of the proposed partnership, REC will own the fiber network constructed in the majority of the county, and is providing use of its infrastructure, including poles, to make the Louisa County broadband initiative a reality. Initial phases of the project are slated for early 2021.

Firefly will be the internet service provider for the partnership and will ensure the availability of fiber broadband on a county-wide basis. Firefly will oversee construction of the REC-owned fiber in the REC service territory and then be responsible for network operation and fiber maintenance. As it moves forward with efforts to modernize Virginia's energy grid, Dominion Energy is working to provide "middle-mile" fiber-optic cable infrastructure that can also be used to bridge the digital gap and reduce broadband deployment costs in Louisa County. Firefly will lease the middle-mile fiber installed by Dominion Energy in the company's electric service area in Louisa County.

"This historic partnership is a long-awaited and extraordinary benefit for Louisa's citizens," said Duane Adams, Louisa Board vice chairman and board representative to the Louisa Broadband Authority. "Fiber-based broadband will bring improved education tools, new job opportunities, access to



telemedicine, and the potential to attract new businesses. We want every resident and business to have access to reliable, quality internet, and today is the day that the bridge over the digital divide in Louisa County begins to take shape."

Under the agreement, the parties will undertake a phased approach that will result in a petition to the State Corporation Commission for regulatory approval later in 2021. The first step in this partnership will be to complete engineering studies to determine the most efficient deployment plan and finalize funding requirements. An estimated 50% of the county will have access by the end of 2023, 75% by the end of 2024. Project completion is slated for the end of 2025.

For more information about the fiber construction project, frequently asked questions, and a map of the project area, visit fireflyva.com/partners.

"Since Firefly was established, providing a desperately needed service to unserved and underserved areas of Central Virginia has been our primary objective," added Gary Wood, president and CEO of CVEC and Firefly. "This partnership approach developed with Louisa County assures every home and business gets world class broadband access, and the approach developed here can be replicated in other localities."

"REC is excited to be part of the solution, especially within our 22-county service area," added John Hewa, president and CEO of REC. "We are very proud of this partnership with Louisa County, Firefly and Dominion Energy, and even more proud to be a critical part of the efforts to bring high-speed internet to our member-owners."

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

POWERFUL CAREERS

REC Names Director of Energy Solutions and Clean Energy



Joyce Bodoh

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative has promoted Joyce Bodoh to serve as the Cooperative’s new director of energy solutions and clean energy. In this role, Joyce will oversee clean energy programs, energy efficiency and energy solutions for REC member-owners.

REC continues to recognize members’ expectations that the Cooperative serve as an energy expert and provide solutions that meet their needs. Contributing factors include a fast transition in the electric grid; the increasing role of distributed energy resources such as solar and battery storage systems; the growth in the electrification of transportation; and other strategic electrification initiatives. Joyce will lead those initiatives as well as addressing demand-side management programs, sustainability, end-use energy services and innovative programs that advance the electric grid while meeting members’ needs.

“In recent years, Joyce has been instrumental in the creation and implementation of multiple energy solutions across the Cooperative, including REC’s demand-response programs, EV pilot rates, and sustainability initiatives,” said Peter Muhoro, vice president of strategy and technology. “In her new position, she will help lead REC to integrate technologies that continue to impact the grid in a very fast evolving industry.”

Joyce holds bachelor’s degrees in history and leadership and management from the University of Mary Washington and a master’s in business administration from the College of William and Mary. She resides in Fredericksburg, Va., with her husband and three daughters.

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

PERSONALS – NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS OF THE VMD COOPERATIVE FAMILY

Condolences

We are sad to report the recent passing of Nannie Sue Bacon Dawson, sister of Frank Bacon, long-time board chair at Southside Electric Cooperative and VMD board member and past chair. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Frank at 2978 Bacon Fork Road, Kenbridge, VA 23944. In lieu of flowers, please consider memorial donations to:

Antioch United Methodist Church
2075 Bacon Fork Road
Kenbridge, VA 23944



Nannie Sue Bacon Dawson

SOCIAL MEDIA

Young Co-op Member Pays It Forward

Thanks to a shared Cooperative Living Facebook post by Del. Lashrecse Aird last month, 14-year-old Eric Edwards’ act of kindness following the Southside Virginia ice storm received some deserved attention.

“It’s been really rough here with all the power outages,” said Eric’s mother, Tammy, a Southside Electric Cooperative member. “But instead of complaining, Eric mentioned to me that he wanted to go cut some trees and clear the roads a little better so he could help the lineworkers maneuver down the back roads and help other residents clean their driveways up. He said he’d split it all himself, too.”

Eric had seen on Facebook where his neighbors were in need of wood to keep their homes warm. He asked his mother if they could deliver wood to those in need. Early the next morning, Eric and his two proud parents got to work cutting up fallen trees for more than six hours. Although some offered, he accepted no money but was smiling from ear to ear.



COOPERATIVE TECHNOLOGY



Following VMDAEC’s recent purchase of a Mavic Enterprise drone, five Association personnel participated in a training event. Sentinel Robotic Solutions (SRS) provided comprehensive classroom and hands-on instruction specific to the purchased drone and in preparation for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Part 107 exam. Training included three full days of classroom material followed by one day of flying and a final day of practice exams.

Founded in 2012, SRS was established as an Unmanned Systems Consulting Partnership and has worked with U.S. military operations, NASA missions, unmanned systems manufacturing companies, and both private and government operations.

As a Gold Associate Member of VMDAEC, SRS is proud to be working with the Training Center and Electric Cooperatives. “We look forward to continuing to support the Association by increasing its fleet of vehicles and trained pilots,” says John Robinson, SRS chief operating officer.

Association staff look forward to implementing drone technology in the field for training purposes, system inspections, public relations activities and for a new perspective in digital versions of *Cooperative Living* magazine.

SRS Lead Flight Technician Jason Taylor explains: “Drones have become an everyday tool in the lineman’s toolbox. Flight training provides successful missions that result in improved visibility and safety for the linemen.”



SRS Lead Flight Technician Jason Taylor demonstrates operation of a Mavic Mini drone during last week’s class at the VMDAEC Training Center.

“The training that was received has paid off!” says Ernie Young, retired director of operational and construction services for Rappahannock Electric Cooperative. “A problem on one of our line circuits was located using the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) and video that it recorded. Our new pilot was able to carry out the mission safely and successfully due to the training SRS provided.”

VMDAEC’s Phil Jarvis, Blaine Salmans, JT Jacobs, Gregg MacDonald and Jim Robertson are scheduled to take the FAA exam this month.

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



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