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## ONLINE NOW

If you are experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19, visit [CHELCO.com](http://CHELCO.com) for payment options.

## We're here to help

If you are struggling financially due to COVID-19, check out our payment options page on [CHELCO.com](http://CHELCO.com) or call (850) 892-2111.

## CHELCO supports local restaurants

Amid the coronavirus's severe impact on our economy, CHELCO began an employee-led fundraiser in late March to help support locally-owned restaurants that may be struggling due to restrictions on their industry. Through weekly fundraisers, CHELCO, Southland Utility Services (a CHELCO subsidiary) and their employees have contributed over \$14,000 as of May 22.

Understandably, many industries have been greatly impacted due to the coronavirus, and CHELCO's support has helped keep business flowing for more than 30 local restaurants in our communities. Several of them have expressed their thanks on social media.

"(Thank you to) CHELCO for contacting us at H&M about catering hot dogs for them," H&M Hot Dogs posted on Facebook. "We most definitely appreciate you folks for using us to get your employees fed for a day and hope to be able to do it again sometime!"

That Pizza Place filled one of their largest orders ever when CHELCO contacted them to provide lunch, and their staff rose to the occasion.

"I have to say a huge thank you to CHELCO for supporting us," That Pizza Place wrote in a Facebook post. "86 pizzas and 24 salads first thing this morning. My crew did a great job."

In addition to providing lunches to employees, CHELCO launched a "Jeans Friday" fundraiser to give directly to restaurants in our area. Employees may wear jeans on Fridays when they donate \$5, and every dollar donated is given to locally-owned restaurants. CHELCO and Southland have each agreed to match the weekly funds raised by employees.

"I am deeply moved by the generosity of CHELCO employees during this time," CEO Steve Rhodes said. "I am honored to be part of this local support movement."



CHELCO Project Analyst Brittany Augustine helps deliver food to Senior Lineman Jason Price in the field



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative



# CHELCO awards six scholarships to member dependents

This year, CHELCO doubled its number of scholarship recipients from previous years, and six CHELCO member dependents will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to help pay for college tuition in the 2020-21 school year.

The winners were drawn at our 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting on April 18. More than 50 students applied for the scholarship, with the requirement of at least a 2.5 GPA to qualify.

CHELCO began its scholarship program in 2015 to help students who are members or member dependents with college tuition and expenses.

This year, our scholarship winners are: Emily Adams, Abeka Academy; William Anderson, Northwest Florida State College; Trenton Dell, Paxton High School; Craig "Patrick" Jackson, Rocky Bayou Christian School; Victoria Sherwin, Niceville High School; and Annabel Slaughter, Collegiate High School at Northwest Florida State College.

Emily Adams graduated from Abeka Academy, and she plans to attend the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville and study Missions with Aviation.

William Anderson currently attends Northwest Florida State College and is pursuing his Chemical Engineering degree.

Trenton Dell graduated from Paxton High School and plans to attend Tom P. Haney Technical Center in August. He graduated high school with his Electrical Wiring Certificate and will pursue an HVAC Certification.

Patrick Jackson graduated from Rocky Bayou Christian School and plans to attend Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach and major in Civil Engineering.

Victoria Sherwin graduated from Niceville High School, and she plans to attend Oklahoma State University and major in Biochemistry.

Annabel Slaughter graduated from the Collegiate High School at Northwest Florida State College. She plans to major in Psychology at the University of Central Florida.

Congratulations to all the winners of the 2020 CHELCO Scholarship, and the best of luck to each of them in their collegiate careers and beyond!



**Emily Adams**  
Abeka Academy



**William Anderson**  
Northwest Florida State College



**Craig "Patrick" Jackson**  
Rocky Bayou Christian School



**Victoria Sherwin**  
Niceville High School



**Annabel Slaughter**  
Collegiate High School

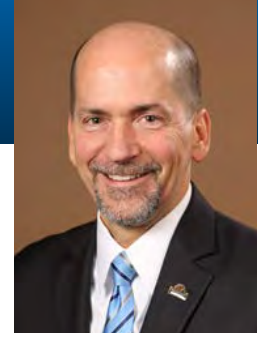


**Trenton Dell**  
Paxton High School

## CHELCO - There's an app for that.

The CHELCO Connect app offers many useful features. Members can track and report outages, pay their monthly bills, contact CHELCO, monitor usage, report light outages and more! To use the app features, you must have an online account at CHELCO.com. Your username and password are the same as your online account. If you need help setting up the app, give us a call!

This newsletter is published monthly to provide information on news, events, services, energy advice and safety tips to the member-owners of CHELCO. Comments and questions should be directed to [communications@chelco.com](mailto:communications@chelco.com) or (850) 892-2111.



## As offices reopen in June, health remains our priority

I'm sure you all will agree that the last several weeks have been interesting, unsettling and at times challenging and tragic. I've never seen anything like it during my 32 years in the electric utility business, or more generally, in my lifetime on this planet. There has been plenty of heartache and sorrow for multitudes of Americans whose family members were struck down by the virus. Unfortunately, the death toll continues to rise as I write this piece.

I've felt it in my family, too. My wife's stepfather, Pastor Jerry Ashley, passed away from causes unrelated to the coronavirus, but the aftermath of his death was disrupted by the health crisis we are all facing at this time. Like so many other families with a loved one that has passed away in recent weeks, my wife, her mother and the rest of us were unable to say our proper goodbyes and achieve some sort of closure by going through the traditional farewell process - visitation at the funeral home, a memorial service, and a final goodbye. All of these things will happen at some point, but for now we are on a waiting list. A waiting list. Just three months ago who would have imagined something like this could happen?

I know some of you may have your own sorrowful stories. If so, please take solace in knowing that there are people out there that understand and care. I know because I run into them all the time.

Moving on to the business of the cooperative, on March 19 we closed our lobbies and campuses to the public with a tentative reopening date of May 11. Closing the doors was not an easy decision to make, and I appreciate all of our members for understanding that as

an essential business with the responsibility to keep the lights on, we had to make some significant and sudden changes to protect our employees, our members and the general public.

Closing our lobbies and implementing social distancing and other protective measures and practices designed to keep everyone safe was fairly simple from an operational standpoint. Opening back up is going to be much more challenging. How do we do it safely? That's a question that is always on my mind.

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**Opening back up is going to be much more challenging. How do we do it safely? That's a question that is always on my mind.**

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After closely monitoring our governor's reopening discussions and ultimate guidelines, and following suit with other businesses, we postponed our public reopen date. We made this decision because, after careful consideration, we decided the best way to safely reopen would be to do so in small incremental steps. Phases 1 and 2 focus on bringing employees back to the office who have been working at home and restructuring our public facing spaces to keep both employees and members healthy. Phase 1 was launched on May 18. As I write this, Phase 2 is currently planned for June 1 but may change due to health conditions related to the pandemic. Phase 3, the opening of our lobbies to the public, will take place sometime later in June. The exact date

is unknown at this time. Again, we will monitor the pandemic and make a final decision at the right time.

Visiting CHELCO's lobbies will be different from what you remember. The number of people in our lobbies will be limited and social distancing will be required. Additionally, our in-home visits will be limited to essential services only for the immediate future. You may notice our linemen traveling together will continue to wear masks. They also have worksite signs asking members to stay 6 feet back for everyone's protection.

Our area's economy greatly depends on tourism and retail businesses, and these industries came to a screeching halt in the past couple months. We know our members may be facing financial challenges, and we understand you may have trouble paying the electric bill during this critical time. We are here to help. Please call the office to discuss payment options.

While our offices will be open for business, members are still strongly encouraged to continue to utilize our alternative methods of payment. As during the crisis, our online portal, CHELCO Connect App, kiosks, drop boxes, automatic bank draft, phone and mail-in payments are still available to members.

Just like all life-altering events, this pandemic has changed us as human beings and has changed our company. We will likely look back and find some of the changes were actually for the better. We are not out of the woods yet, but it feels like we may be headed in the right direction. Let's hope so.

**Stay safe out there!**



## Give with Members Helping Members

If you are in a position to give to those who are struggling financially, Members Helping Members may be a way you can help a CHELCO member in need. Members Helping Members is an option for our members to donate \$2 or more on a one-time or recurring basis to help families who are struggling to pay their electric bill. During this especially difficult time, as many families are struggling financially due to the impact of the coronavirus, this program is more important than ever.

The support is granted to members on a one-time basis and is not a subsidy.



Members Helping Members is needs-based and is administered by the Walton-Okaloosa Council on Aging. Members can participate in Members Helping Members by filling out the online form at CHELCO.com or by calling us at (850) 892-2111.



**IS \$25 YOURS?**

If the account number below matches yours, sign this page and mail it with your bill to CHELCO or drop it off at any office. You'll win a \$25 credit on your next bill.

**Henderson - 990034209**

## Thank you for your patience during Santa Rosa Beach wildfire

To our members affected by the devastating Santa Rosa Beach fire in May, our hearts go out to you. During some major events, we are sometimes asked to de-energize our lines, and at approximately 8 p.m. on May 6, the South Walton Fire Department requested we de-energize our lines for safety reasons. We thank you all for your patience and understanding as we worked to support the brave men and women fighting the fire.

For real time updates on outages, please follow our Facebook page, or visit CHELCO.com and view our outage tracker.



**Chocowatchee Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

Published by Communications Department | May 6 at 7:37 PM

Update (10:00): After de-energizing our lines south of 98 between Thompson Road and Hwy 393 as requested by the Fire Department, we now have more than 1450 members out of power. Crews continue to standby. Our thoughts go out to all the residents and businesses in the path of the fire, as well as the first responders fighting the fire and assisting with community safety.

Update (8:30): The Fire Department has asked us to de-energize our lines south of Hwy 98 in Santa Rosa Beach. We have multiple crews activated and standing by ready to start repairs on damaged equipment as soon as we can safely access it.



### TIP OF THE MONTH

When the weather is nice, put your grill to use! During summer months, cooking outdoors is a great way to save energy and eliminate unwanted heat from cooking indoors.