

# CHELCO NEWS

POWERED *by* YOU

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A Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative 

## Annual Meeting to be held in person... FINALLY!



CHELCO offers bucket truck rides for kids at the Annual Meeting each year.

CHELCO's in-person Annual Meeting is back! After a two-year pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we'll be hosting our first in-person meeting since 2019 on April 9 at Freeport High School.

### Prizes, Scholarships and More!

The fun starts early! Join us starting at 9 a.m. for a morning of fun activities for the whole family, including bucket truck rides for the kids; a safety fair featuring McGruff the Crime Dog from the Walton County Sheriff's office; live entertainment from local musician Todd Sparks; great prizes; a drawing for six \$1,000 scholarships; results of the Board of Trustees election; updates on the co-op; and so much more!

**ATTENTION:**  
There will be a  
**\$10 bill credit for  
each member in  
attendance!\***

Members who attend the Annual Meeting will be eligible for the prize drawing, which includes a \$1,000 Airbnb gift card, a 6-in-1 stand kitchen mixer, prizes for the kids and gift cards to local businesses. Additionally those who voted in the Board of Trustees election will be eligible for a drawing for four \$100 bill credits and a Skylight digital picture frame.

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\*Limit one bill credit per household

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## Baldwin Avenue campus closing

CHELCO's headquarters is moving to 655 U.S. Hwy. 331 N. in DeFuniak Springs. Our campus on Baldwin Avenue will be closing its doors **March 18**, and all member services will take place at our new campus. Visit [CHELCO.com](https://www.chelco.com) or follow us on Facebook, @MyCHELCO, for updates.



## CEO Insights: Addressing FP&L rates, bills and more

Lately I have been watching the Winter Olympics. The talented athletes and their abilities amaze me. When I lived in the Midwest, I used to snow ski every now and again. The idea that someone would jump and twist three times in the air, then land on skis... let's just say I haven't done that on purpose.

The athletes invest in themselves over years and years. The focus, stamina and dedication required to be an Olympic athlete reminds me of CHELCO. We have been a top performing cooperative for years. We know that because, like Olympic athletes, we are ranked against hundreds of our peers and we consistently land in the top percentages in member satisfaction, cost control, rates, service reliability, safety and more.

The reason for writing about CHELCO's performance and philosophy this month is that we have been contacted by our members and others in the community regarding a rate increase at Florida Power and Light (FP&L). Why or how their rate increase came to be is something I cannot answer, but there is misinformation and concern about CHELCO that I would like to clarify.

Frequently asked questions:

### **Is CHELCO for sale or being bought out by FP&L?**

No, CHELCO is a member-owned electric cooperative. We are governed by a board of trustees who are elected by members to represent their district. Every CHELCO member has the ability to vote for those leaders. According to CHELCO bylaws, an entire membership vote would be required to disband the cooperative. The board and management at CHELCO have no intention to recommend selling the co-op.

### **Did CHELCO also recently have a rate increase or is one planned for this year? If not, why is my bill higher than normal this month?**

No distribution rate increase in 2021 or 2022 for CHELCO members. In fact, in 2021 we had a rate **decrease**. If CHELCO bills are higher this month, a reminder that bills in colder months like January and February are typically higher due to heating costs.

### **Does CHELCO plan to take any steps regarding the FP&L rate increase for concerned citizens?**

No, the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) regulates utilities and their rates. CHELCO has no legal standing in this matter. All we can do is continue to operate our co-op efficiently and offer rates that are substantially lower than FP&L.

### **Can I have CHELCO service if I am currently served by FP&L?**

In very rare instances if a location is near our infrastructure and no duplication of service is required, we MAY be able to serve that home or business. But, again, it is unlikely.

This year CHELCO received a score of 89 (of 100) in member satisfaction. That 'gold medal' score consistently stays high, and we are very proud of it, especially in light of it being a COVID pandemic year. It definitely reflects our commitment to our members, even in tough times. As a cooperative, we are fortunate that our primary goal is not to maximize shareholder profit but to serve our members.

**Steve Rhodes,**  
Chief Executive Officer



## Youth Tour students visit Tallahassee



Students from local high schools visited Tallahassee for the Florida Electric Cooperatives Association Youth Tour, the first one held since 2020.

In February, 22 students from local high schools visited Tallahassee for CHELCO's Youth Tour program, hosted by the Florida Electric Cooperatives Association (FECA).

Along with four chaperones from CHELCO, the students visited the Challenger Learning Center, several museums, the State Capitol building and the Florida Supreme Court.

Typically, Youth Tour is available to high school juniors whose parents are CHELCO members. However, because of the cancellation of the 2021 Youth Tour due to COVID-19, CHELCO made the 2022 Youth Tour available to seniors as well.

Youth Tour chaperone, and former Youth Tour student herself, Bonnie Whitfield, said that she was excited to return to Youth Tour after missing out in 2021.

"To the best of my knowledge, last year was the first time Youth Tour

had ever been cancelled," Whitfield said. "This is one of my favorite programs we participate in each year, and it's always a great learning experience for the students and the chaperones, too."

Of the 22 students who attended Youth Tour, four will be selected to attend the weeklong Washington, D.C. Youth Tour in June, hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (NRECA).

Youth Tour was established in 1957 when a few students from Texas visited Washington, D.C., to work in Senator Lyndon B. Johnson's office over the summer. The program gained traction, and in 1964 the NRECA began to coordinate the program, with around 400 students participating the first year. Today, anywhere from 1,500 to 2,000 students and chaperones participate in the Washington Youth Tour each year.

## Time to update your contact information?

It's important to make sure CHELCO has your most recent contact information for many reasons. We may need to reach you for:

- **Outage Information**
- **Capital Credits**
- **Beat the Peak alerts**
- **Storm restoration updates**
- **Work happening in your area**
- **Other important reminders**

To update your contact information, visit the member portal on [CHELCO.com](https://CHELCO.com), call us at (850) 892-2111, download the CHELCO Connect app or email [memberservices@chelco.com](mailto:memberservices@chelco.com).

## Recipe of the Month



**Sweet & Tangy Coleslaw**

Visit [CHELCO.com/recipes](https://CHELCO.com/recipes) to learn this recipe!

CHELCO is governed by a nine-member board of trustees: Lee Perry, District 1; Terry Pilcher, District 2; Reese Harrison, District 3; Brady Bearden, Vice President, District 4; Ronald Jones, District 5; Gerald Edmondson, President, District 6; Bert Prutzman, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, District 7; Gayle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer, District 8; Dwayne Davis, District 9.

## Annual Meeting to be held in person (from p. 1)

### Trustee Election

The 2022 CHELCO Board of Trustees election packets will be mailed to members this month. Included in this packet are the certification card and a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope to make voting convenient. Additionally, you will receive a Notice of CHELCO's Annual Meeting, which will include

information and bios on each candidate running for the Board of Trustees and in-depth voting instructions.

For more information on the Board of Trustees election, the Annual Meeting and more, visit our website, CHELCO.com, or follow us on Facebook, @MyCHELCO.

## Hit a power pole? Stay in the car!

**DOWNED POWER LINES ACCIDENTS INVOLVING MOTOR VEHICLES**  
Follow these rules to stay safe around downed power lines.

**IF YOU'RE INSIDE THE VEHICLE**

- STEP 1** If you can safely drive out from under the power line or away from the source of electricity, do so based on the length of time you (about 45-75) before escaping.
- STEP 2** If you can't drive the vehicle: If a fire starts, the vehicle is inoperable or there are obstacles, stay where you are until help arrives. Unless there is a credible emergency, if the vehicle is on fire, for example, never leave when you see a fire.

**IF YOU'RE OUTSIDE THE VEHICLE**

- STEP 1** Stay at least three car lengths (about 45-75) away.
- STEP 2** Get away from the vehicle to avoid where they are.
- STEP 3** Call 911 and ensure no other bystanders move to within 40 ft. of the vehicle.

**STEP 3** If you **absolutely must get out** of the vehicle, don't touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time with any part of your body or clothing. Carefully follow the steps to the right of this box to exit the car and to move to a safe distance.

- With the door open, prepare to jump. Stand up, elbows tucked into your stomach and your hands held close to your chest.
- Jump out and away from the vehicle, taking care to land with your feet together and touching. Don't stumble.
- Hop away with your feet touching. Don't stop until you're at least three car lengths away from the vehicle (about 40 ft.).
- Call 911 and ensure that no bystanders move to within 40 ft. of the vehicle.
- Once away from the car, never attempt to get back in or even touch the vehicle.

**Always assume that a downed power line is live and extremely dangerous.**

**40 ft.**

If your car comes in contact with a utility pole, there is a chance that power lines may have fallen due to the collision. To play it safe, stay in the car and call 9-1-1 for help. Fallen power lines can sometimes be difficult to see, and they may even be energizing your car. If you step out of the car, you could become the electricity's path to the ground and be electrocuted.

Only if the accident has caused a fire or there is another immediate threat to your safety should you exit the car. If you must do so, open the

door without touching any metal parts of the door frame and hop out and away from the vehicle with both feet so no part of your body touches the car and the ground at the same time. The graphic shown above demonstrates how you should prepare for the jump to limit your risk of electrocution. Slowly shuffle away with your feet always touching the ground until you are 30 or more feet away from the vehicle. Once you are safe, dial 9-1-1 to report the accident and inform bystanders to keep their distance from the car.

To find unclaimed capital credits, visit CHELCO.com/capital-credits.

## Connections Corner

The Co-op Connections discount program is another benefit of being a CHELCO member. Local businesses, participating pharmacies and thousands nationally offer discounts to co-op members. Don't forget to download the Co-op Connections app!

This month, we highlight and thank the following businesses:

### 4C BBQ

1045 US Hwy. 331 S.  
DeFuniak Springs  
(850) 687-3161  
2 free drinks with \$20 purchase

### Bank of England Mortgage

348 Miracle Strip Pkwy. SW  
Fort Walton Beach  
(850) 865-7907 or 590-8992  
\$500 toward closing costs over \$150,000

### Circle S. Produce

12216 Hwy. 90 W  
DeFuniak Springs  
(850) 585-9671 or 368-3203  
\$5 off purchase of \$25 or more on Wednesday.

For more information, visit CHELCO.com, email [energyservices@chelco.com](mailto:energyservices@chelco.com) or call CHELCO's Energy Services Department at (850) 307-1122.

## 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.

**Sullivan - 9000078659**