

CHELCO NEWS

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A Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative 

Linemen bring power to Guatemalan village



DeFuniak Springs to Tampa, Tampa to Miami, Miami to Guatemala, and back. That's all it takes to change a village's way of life forever.

Three CHELCO linemen recently teamed up with 11 others from co-ops throughout the state of Florida for the Powering Guatemala Project. The project came at minimal cost to the participating cooperatives due to generous donations from vendors and business partners.

The group of 14 embarked on an unforgettable journey to a small village in Guatemala outside of the city of Jalapa. Consisting of just over 20 homes, Guishoro is home to some of the world's most genuine, appreciative and good-hearted people, according to Ricky Brassell, Jason Price and Derek Tabor. The team arrived in Guatemala Nov. 30 and began building the electric distribution infrastructure in the village.

"It was very humbling to be a part of this project," Price said. "So often we take things in our lives for granted, and one of those things is electricity. To be able to help change their everyday lives by giving them access to electricity is an incredible feeling and an incredible feat, and it's something we'll all remember for the rest of our lives."

In addition to bringing electricity to the village, they also brought friendship.

"I met several new 'amigos' that I will keep in touch with," Price said. "Many of the locals, including my new friends Roni Castillo and Mynor Vargas, were instrumental in our project. Roni's mom's house was the first one I helped wire for electricity. I told him I knew 'muy poquito Espanol,' (very little Spanish) but enough to get me in and out of trouble. We had some great conversations, and I learned a great deal from him."

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Save the Date!

Make sure to mark your calendars for the 2023 CHELCO Annual Meeting, scheduled for April 15 at Freeport High School. In addition to the business meeting, we'll be having breakfast, coffee, live entertainment, door prizes, scholarship giveaways and a prize drawing of over \$5,000 in prizes. We hope to see you there!



CEO Insights: Purposeful planning - A look at the next 3 years

There are so many quotes about planning that I find it difficult to open with just one. Here are a few of my favorites.

"A goal without a plan is just a wish." – *Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." – *Benjamin Franklin*

And, my personal favorite, **"We plan our work, and we work our plan."** – *Napoleon Hill*

All of these quotes underscore the value of planning ahead. Unironically, each quote is attributed to highly successful individuals who excelled in their respective fields. In other words, they didn't just talk the talk.

It's one thing to be inspired by great leaders of the past, but it's another to act upon it. In recent columns, you may have seen my comments on our three-year strategic plan to guide us through 2025. As of Jan. 1, that plan is in full effect, and we have five primary initiatives that will be the driving force in most of our decisions for the next three years.

The following initiatives have each been assigned to a task force made up of individuals with diverse job backgrounds and life experiences to ensure we don't miss anything important when identifying challenges and solutions. Let's take a look at our strategic initiatives for the years ahead.

Enhance Employee and Public Safety Programs

Safety is always the top priority, so this initiative is listed first intentionally. In our strategic planning process, we found that we

have a good track record with safety, but we can do even more to bolster it. This initiative will drive us to do everything we can to educate our employees and the general public about safety, especially regarding electricity distribution.

Leverage Technology to Increase the Efficiency and Security of the Cooperative's Resources

The main goal of this initiative is to utilize technology to enable proactive management and response of the electric system, resulting in improved reliability and member satisfaction. In today's rapidly-evolving world of technology, it's crucial to stay ahead of the curve. While new and emerging technology allows us to enhance our service capabilities, we must also remain vigilant to outside threats posed by malicious individuals and groups. Security - both cyber and physical - remains a priority at CHELCO, and we are committed to using technology to protect and improve our co-op.

Innovate to Meet the Changing Needs of a Diverse Membership

Technology isn't the only thing that's evolving. Today's membership has different expectations than it did 50, 20 or even five years ago. The expectation of safe, reliable and affordable electricity is constant, but there are new factors that today's consumer expects from the companies they do business with. Over the next three years, we will provide new and convenient ways for members to connect with us, adding more options for two-way communication, bill payments and more.

Attract and Cultivate a Highly Skilled, Engaged and Diverse Workforce

We are only as valuable and successful as the people who make up our workforce. We have a great group of employees who truly care about you and strive daily to provide top-notch service. However, as many employees near their retirement dates, we must continue to find the best person for each role at our co-op and keep them here. Our HR team does an excellent job of recruiting and communicating job openings, but as the workforce continues to evolve, so must we.

Effectively Manage Cooperative Resources in an Era of High Inflation and Persistent Supply Chain Issues

The past year provided many challenges to all businesses and individuals, few more prevalent than supply chain issues and material shortages. We know these problems won't be resolved overnight, and experts anticipate several years of continued delays in production and shipment. Taking that into account, we created an entire initiative dedicated to managing our resources efficiently in hopes that our members will not be impacted by these issues.

The road ahead

As we embark on the implementation of our three-year strategic plan, I'm reminded of one more quote, this one by Dwight Eisenhower: "Good planning without good working is nothing." And so our work begins.

Steve Rhodes,
Chief Executive Officer

Linemen bring power to Guatemala (from p. 1)

In planning ahead, Brassell decided to bring a container of Tony Chachere's seasoning on the trip, and he enjoyed sharing it with the locals, along with Jolly Ranchers and peppermints.

"I had a great time meeting the people of Guatemala," Brassell said. "Our new friend Mynor told me he thought I was Chuck Norris when we first met, and we all got a 'kick' out of that."

Tabor said that he enjoyed the camaraderie of the Florida crew with the locals and the opportunity to make an impact.



Jason (right) with his new friend Roni.

"It was incredible to be a part of this journey, and I appreciate those that organized it so that we could bring



CHELCO Lineman Derek Tabor carries a ladder on the jobsite in Guishoro.



Ricky Brassell proudly showing off his Tony Chachere's seasoning.

power to those who have never had it," Tabor said.

CHELCO CEO Steve Rhodes was the statewide champion for this project from the beginning. In fact, he flew to Guatemala as part of the inaugural group to attend the lighting of the village ceremony.

All of them agree that it was a life-changing and unforgettable experience to meet the people of Guishoro and help change their lives forever.

Trustee election applications due Feb. 2

CHELCO's Board of Trustees elections are near. If you are eligible and interested in running, applications are available at CHELCO offices and online at CHELCO.com/trustees-and-elections.

This year, Districts 3, 5 and 8 are up for election. Each trustee represents a geographical area of CHELCO's service territory, and candidates must be a member in good standing and live in their district for at least one year before running.

Applications are due to CHELCO by 4 p.m. Feb. 2. Your district number can be found on your bill to see if you are eligible to run this year.

Recipe of the Month



Pepper Steak

Start the new year off right with a delicious pepper steak recipe! Learn this recipe and more at CHELCO.com/recipes.

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.

Matthew Mitchell wins GEM of the Year Award



Safety Officer Matthew Mitchell was recently announced as CHELCO's GEM (Going the Extra Mile) of the Year Award winner for 2022.

Each year, CHELCO employees may nominate coworkers who have gone above and beyond in their jobs for this award. Throughout the year, these employees are recognized quarterly, and of all the quarterly winners, one GEM of the Year is selected.

Mitchell is CHELCO's Safety Officer, and he has routinely demonstrated excellent service to our employees, members and the community in his efforts to improve safety.

"The GEM of the Year Award is among the highest honors a

CHELCO employee can receive," said CEO Steve Rhodes. "This award is given to an employee who does far more than what is asked of them. This is a well-deserved award, and the entire co-op appreciates the work Matthew does every day."

Mitchell said that he didn't expect to receive a quarterly GEM Award, much less the GEM of the Year.

"This was a big surprise to me, but I'm thankful to be recognized for the work that I do," Mitchell said. "We say it a lot, but safety is the top priority, and I'm thankful that I am able to contribute to our co-op's safety culture in my job."

Congratulations, Matthew! We appreciate all you do for CHELCO!



For unclaimed capital credits, visit [CHELCO.com/capital-credits](https://www.chelco.com/capital-credits).

Scholarship applications now available

CHELCO Scholarship applications are now open for any CHELCO member or member dependent who will attend college or trade school in the 2023-24 school year. Applicants must have a GPA of at least 2.5 and be in good standing with their school. Applications will be accepted until March 24. Visit [CHELCO.com/scholarships](https://www.chelco.com/scholarships) for more information and to apply today!

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Make sure all the doors and windows in your home are properly sealed to prevent cold air from entering your home and allowing warm air inside to escape. Weatherstripping and caulk can go a long ways toward saving money and energy this winter, but it's good to make sure your home is properly sealed year-round for maximum efficiency!



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