

# CHELCO NEWS

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# CHELCO



A Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative 

## Annual Meeting returns to in-person format



CHELCO's six scholarship winners were drawn at the 2022 Annual Meeting.

After two years of virtual annual meetings, CHELCO returned the event to its in-person format on April 9 at Freeport High School. Hundreds of CHELCO members joined us for a day of family fun, entertainment, prize and scholarship giveaways and updates on our co-op.

During the meeting, CEO Steve Rhodes discussed CHELCO's growth and excellent performance in 2021, and in the best news of the day, he announced there would be no distribution rate increase for 2022.

"CHELCO has been one of the fastest-growing cooperatives in the nation over the past few years," Rhodes said. "Because of our effectiveness at controlling costs last year, and over the past several years, we are in a very strong financial position."

Board President Gerald Edmondson said that he is thankful for the hard work of the board, leadership and all employees to keep CHELCO in a strong position.

"I am proud to serve as the board president and represent CHELCO's membership," Edmondson said. "It is my opinion, as one of your representatives on the board, that CHELCO is a well-managed and financially strong cooperative, and I believe CHELCO is managing our resources in the most efficient manner."

Also during the meeting, the Board of Trustees election results were announced. District 2 Trustee Terry Pilcher and District 6 Trustee Gerald Edmondson each ran unopposed and were re-elected to the board for three-year terms, and incumbent

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## Did you know...

You're not only part of the CHELCO family, you're also part of a much larger cooperative family. Co-ops power 56% of the nation's landmass, serve 42 million people across more than 25,000 counties and deliver approximately 12% of all U.S. electricity.



## CEO Insights: Preparation is key before hurricane season

In the electric co-op world, we continuously plan for things well in advance. Take our new headquarters building, for instance. We had been working on some form of facilities renovation plan for nearly a decade before we recently opened the doors at our new location. Additionally, our rapid growth in membership is expected to continue well into the future, and we are frequently reimagining what a CHELCO membership of 70,000, 80,000 or even 100,000 will look like and how we will evolve to meet their needs.

Speaking of being prepared, one of the things we at CHELCO are constantly working on is our hurricane preparedness plan. While hurricane season officially begins June 1 and runs through Nov. 30, we review our course of action throughout the year. Each of our 160-plus employees has a role in hurricane response efforts, so it's important to reaffirm our duties often.

Each year, we update our hurricane response plan with lessons we've learned from the past year, incorporating things that worked well and adjusting things that need improvement. Our hurricane response team meets in May to make sure our plan is ready to go by June 1, and each department holds additional meetings with staff to prepare them for their duties. We make agreements with local establishments for food and lodging, and we also keep in close contact with our statewide and cooperative network to collaborate on storm response if the need arises.

While we are prepared for hurricane season, I encourage you and your family to begin planning soon too. It doesn't take much to make sure your essentials are covered, and there are many resources available to assist with your disaster preparations. A personal favorite of mine is Ready.gov, which has seemingly endless resources on planning for disasters

and emergencies, including hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, flooding and winter weather. The site also offers tips on creating an emergency supply kit and things to consider when making a family disaster plan. Another helpful tool is our Storm Center page on CHELCO.com. This page offers many resources and guides, including a checklist of things to do before, during, and after the storm, as well as additional links to outside resources, such as local emergency management organizations.

As we all know, preparation is essential for a successful business model. I'm proud of our efforts to keep our hurricane readiness actions sharp and ready to go. As I usually say around this time of year, I sincerely hope that all of our disaster preparations go unused this hurricane season. However, you can rest assured that we are ready if a storm comes our way.

**Steve Rhodes,**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Annual Meeting returns to in-person format (cont. from p. 1)

District 4 Trustee Brady Bearden defeated challenger Joe Proffitt. Immediately following the meeting, the Board of Trustees met in their organizational meeting, and officers remained the same:

**President** - Gerald Edmondson  
**Vice President** - Brady Bearden  
**Secretary/Treasurer** - Gayle Hughes  
**Asst. Sec./Treasurer** - Bert Prutzman

Also at the meeting, CHELCO drew six winners of the \$1,000 CHELCO Scholarship:

Hannah Blanton (*Niceville H.S.*)  
Emily Casey (*Walton H.S.*)  
Brooke Lewis (*Niceville H.S.*)  
Jake Powell (*Walton H.S.*)  
Brandilyn Ring (*Rocky Bayou*)  
Ty Sheriff (*South Walton H.S.*)

If you were unable to join us in person, a recording of the 2022 CHELCO Annual Meeting is available online at CHELCO.com/Annual-Meeting, or on CHELCO's YouTube channel, @MyCHELCO.



Board President Gerald Edmondson addresses a crowd of over 400.

## Whitfield wins Spotlight on Excellence Award



**Above:** Bonnie Whitfield won a Spotlight on Excellence Award for this photo she took in 2021 of two linemen performing demanding work on power lines.

CHELCO Communications and Community Affairs Supervisor Bonnie Whitfield was recently announced as a Spotlight on Excellence Award winner in the category of Best Photo for 2021. Each year, the National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (NRECA) facilitates the Spotlight on Excellence Awards in 18 different categories to honor the excellent work done by co-ops and their employees around the country. This marks the second consecutive year that CHELCO has received a Spotlight on Excellence Award.



**Bonnie Whitfield**

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

When you cook with your oven or stove in the summertime, you're not only using energy to cook, it's also likely that your air conditioner will be doing extra work to keep it cool inside. Grilling out instead is highly practical to help you decrease your energy consumption over the summer and lower your monthly electric bills. Plus, there are few traditions like a summer cookout!



## ACRE advocates for co-ops nationwide

Did you know that there is a grassroots political action committee (PAC) that supports and advocates for electric co-ops around the country? Co-ops just like CHELCO have the support of the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) to help implement policies that are beneficial to cooperatives and their members.

ACRE contributions for candidates are backed by over 36,000 eligible members across 47 states with an average contribution of \$65, making it truly a grassroots PAC.

For more information, and to learn how you can get involved to make sure your co-op is fairly represented in office, visit [electric.coop/acre](http://electric.coop/acre).

## Recipe of the Month



**Potato Salad**

With summer approaching, there's no better time for Potato Salad! Learn this recipe and more at [CHELCO.com/recipes](http://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.

## May is safety month at the co-op



Each May, we emphasize the importance of safety at the cooperative. While our employees have to put safety first in every aspect of their daily jobs, we also encourage our members to be safe around electrical equipment.

### Around power lines

The best way to be safe around power lines is to avoid being near them if possible. This is especially true for downed power lines. If you see a downed power line, stay away and call 911 immediately.

If your car comes into contact with a power line, the best thing to do is to stay inside the vehicle and call 911. If a fire or other immediate threat forces you to exit the vehicle, be sure to jump out and away from the vehicle as to not touch the ground and your vehicle at the same time, and carefully shuffle your feet until you are 30 or more feet away.

### Underground

While we see overhead powerlines every day, it's important to remember that there is also

high-voltage equipment located underground, too. If you need to dig for a project, call 811 first. Our subsidiary, Southland Utility Services, will locate and identify any underground equipment so you can complete your project safely.

### Around the house

While it's important to be safe around electric distribution equipment, you're more likely to encounter electrical hazards in and around your home.

The most common electrical safety issue is overloading outlets. Make sure to never plug a power strip into another power strip, as this can overload your outlet if you aren't careful. If you find you are using too many power strips, it may be time to consider installing additional outlets in your home.

Light bulb technology has advanced significantly in recent years. However, it's still important to read the labels and make sure you use bulbs that match the fixture's recommended wattage.

## 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:

**C&C Construction of NWFL**  
690 E Hwy. 90, Bonifay  
(850) 547-1001  
\$50 off any roof purchase

**Triangle Chevrolet**  
475 E US Hwy. 90  
DeFuniak Springs  
(850) 892-2151  
Free detail with purchase of a front end alignment

**April's Cleaning Service**  
54 Nanjuly Lane  
DeFuniak Springs  
850-892-0500  
10% off a general or deep house cleaning

For more information, visit [CHELCO.com](http://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.

**Caddell - 205185200**

Visit [CHELCO.com/Annual-Meeting](http://CHELCO.com/Annual-Meeting) to view the 2022 Annual Meeting.