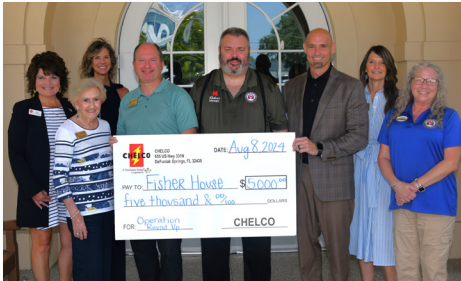


CHELCO NEWS

POWERED *by* YOU

OCTOBER 2025 | VOL. 30, NO. 10

Operation Round Up: A half-million dollar impact in our local communities



\$5,000 - Fisher House of the Emerald Coast
August 2024

When Palmetto Electric Cooperative in South Carolina first launched Operation Round Up in 1989, they likely never imagined the lasting impact it would have. What began as a simple way for members to round their bills up to the next whole dollar to support local charities has since grown into a cornerstone initiative adopted by nearly 400 electric co-ops nationwide.



\$400 - 30A Tiny Libraries
June 2023

Thirty years later, CHELCO introduced its own Operation Round Up program, officially launching in 2019. Since then, nearly 30,000 members have chosen to participate, helping local nonprofits make a real difference in our communities.

Thanks to this generosity, we are proud to share that CHELCO's

Operation Round Up has now provided more than **\$500,000** in funding through **over 200 grants** to nonprofits across our service area.



\$2,950 - Pleasant Ridge Christian Academy
August 2024

These grants have supported a wide range of causes, including:

- **Caring and Sharing**, which offers community support programs.
- **Food for Thought Outreach**, providing meals to children and families.
- **Boys & Girls Clubs**, supporting local students with after-school and summer programs.
- **E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center**, advancing environmental education.
- **Healing Tools for Warriors**, serving our veterans.
- And many more local organizations making an impact every day.

This milestone would not be possible without the generosity of our participating members who choose to round up their bills each month in support of worthy causes.

If you manage a nonprofit and are interested in applying for a grant, or if you're a member who would like to join in supporting the program, visit **CHELCO.com/operation-round-up**.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Inside

Page 2
CEO Insights: October is Co-op Month – Stronger Together

Page 3
Hot-Line Tags – An Important Safety Protocol

Page 4
CHELCO launches PayGo program for members

ANNOUNCEMENT

CHELCO is partnering with Walton High School to host its **Fall 2025 Member Appreciation Night at a Walton Braves Football game on Oct. 31.**

All members will get in **free** upon proof of membership (*provide address to CHELCO staff at gate*).

More information about this event can be found on **page 3**.



 VISIT **CHELCO.COM**
TO LEARN MORE



CEO Insights: October is Co-op Month – Stronger Together

Several years ago, I watched a video of a motivational speaker that I have never forgotten. The speaker held a phone book in his hand and began tearing out pages one by one. “See how easily these are torn out,” he said. He then tried to rip the entire phone book in half but failed. “My point is that we are much stronger together than we are alone,” he explained.

It was a simple illustration, but it made a lasting impression. As I watched, I immediately thought of the cooperative business model and how fortunate we are that togetherness is at the heart of being a co-op.

This month, we join cooperatives nationwide in celebrating **National Co-op Month**. It’s an opportunity to raise awareness of a trusted, proven way to do business and to strengthen communities. To mark the occasion, I’d like to share some of the ways CHELCO serves our members—and why we are strongest when we work together.

Not-for-Profit

CHELCO exists not to make a profit, but to serve you, our members. Our rates are designed to cover the cost of delivering safe, reliable energy to homes, businesses, and critical services like hospitals and schools. They are structured to ensure fairness and to minimize subsidies between rate classes.

What sets us apart from investor-owned utilities is that we don’t build rates around profit margins. Any revenue collected beyond the cost of serving you (margin) is returned through capital credit retirements, which are approved annually by our Board of Trustees and distributed on a 20-year cycle.

For example, in 2024 our Board approved a \$1.5 million retirement. If you were a member in 2004, you

received a check or bill credit reflecting your share of CHELCO’s margin that year. Think of it as your ownership stake in the cooperative. You can learn more about this process at CHELCO.com/capital-credits.

The Seven Cooperative Principles

Another foundation of being a co-op is our commitment to the Seven Cooperative Principles:

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Members’ Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training and Information
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern for Community

Other businesses may practice some of these, but cooperatives are unique because we are guided by all seven—every day, in every decision.

For example, “Democratic Member Control” comes alive each year during our trustee elections. Members nominate candidates, and members vote. Trustees govern on your behalf, and I’m grateful to work with a Board that represents our membership so well.

We also see “Cooperation Among Cooperatives” in action during hurricane recovery and other collaborative efforts. While we’ve been spared in recent years,

CHELCO has supported fellow co-ops after devastating storms, and we know that if the roles had been reversed, we’d have the full support of our fellow electric co-ops. This mutual aid is one of many reasons I’m proud to be part of a cooperative family.

My favorite principle, however, is “Concern for Community.” It defines who we are. Investor-owned utilities once deemed rural America too unprofitable to serve. But communities came together, forming cooperatives to do what was right for their neighbors. Today, CHELCO honors that legacy by investing in our communities—through donations, volunteerism, and simply going above and beyond in our daily work.

Forward Together

Looking ahead, electric cooperatives and other utilities face many challenges. However, CHELCO will continue to be a good steward of your resources, protecting our ability to keep power reliable and affordable for years to come.

Whatever changes may come, we’ll move forward *together*—just as we have for more than 85 years—striving to be the *phone book*, not just the *pages*.

Steve Rhodes,
Chief Executive Officer



Hot-Line Tags – An Important Safety Protocol



CHELCO lineworkers and contractors perform regular maintenance and upgrades on power lines to keep the system safe and reliable. Hot line tags ensure that anyone working on the lines are protected from high-voltage electricity in the event of a “fault” on the lines.

When lineworkers are in the field, safety is never left to chance. One of the most important tools crews rely on is called a hot-line tag. This precaution is placed on reclosers and is designed to shut off power if there’s a disturbance on the line.

Normally, if something briefly touches a power line—like a tree limb or an animal—the system will attempt to “blink” the lights a few times to allow the fault to clear on its own and keep power flowing. But when a hot-line tag is in place, that blinking process is disabled. Even a small contact will cause the line to shut off completely. This extra step ensures that if the disturbance were a person working on the line, electricity would not

be re-energized until the system is confirmed safe.

For members, that can sometimes mean unexpected outages in areas where crews are working. We know this can be frustrating, since these events would normally cause only a quick blink. The good news is that once the line is visibly confirmed clear, power can be restored quickly. It may be an occasional inconvenience, but one that keeps lineworkers safe as they build a stronger, more reliable system.

Visit CHELCO.com to update your contact information so we can keep you informed on outages and scheduled maintenance in your area.

Rhodes Appointed President of NCSC Board



CHELCO CEO Steve Rhodes was recently appointed President of the National Cooperative Services Corporation (NCSC) Board of Directors.

NCSC is a privately-funded, member-owned cooperative that provides specialized financing services to electric cooperatives and telecommunications providers. NCSC is an affiliate of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) and is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors representing five geographically defined districts.

Youth Tour around the corner

Big opportunities are just around the corner! CHelco’s Youth Tour program is coming up, giving high school juniors the chance to win an unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C. to explore our nation’s capital, meet students from across the country, and see democracy in action. Applications will be sent to local schools in early November, so if you’re a CHelco member in 11th grade, be sure to keep an eye out and visit CHELCO.com/Youth-Tour for more information!

Join us Oct. 31 at Walton Braves football game



Walton
MEMBER APPRECIATION

WALTON BRAVES VS. MACLAY | **Senior Night OCT. FRIDAY • 7PM 31ST**

GIVEAWAYS & A CHANCE TO WIN A \$100 BILL CREDIT | **FREE ENTRY FOR CHELCO MEMBERS**

WALTON HIGH SCHOOL • 449 WALTON ROAD DEFUNIAK SPRINGS, FL 32433

CHELCO launches PayGo program for members

Register for 'Special Needs' Shelter Status



A Touchstone Energy
Cooperative

PAY WHERE YOU SHOP

Thanks to CheckOut by PayGo, CHELCO members can pay their bills at various convenient locations. Before, you had to deal with mailing in your payment or standing in line at a payment location. Now you can pay where you shop, and it's as easy as 123. Scan the QR code to learn more or visit chelco.com/CheckOut-PayGo



**FAST-EASY BILL PAY NOW
AVAILABLE AT SELECT
RETAILERS NEAR YOU**

CHELCO is excited to announce the launch of PayGo, a new program that allows members to pay their electric bills at select local retailers.

This initiative adds another layer of convenience for our members by making payments possible while shopping at participating stores. With PayGo, members can handle their electric bill transactions at the checkout counter, making it easier than ever to pay your way.

How does it work?

To use PayGo, scan the QR code above or visit **[CHELCO.com/CheckOut-PayGo](https://chelco.com/CheckOut-PayGo)**. There, you will input your CHELCO account number, and it will provide a barcode associated with your account.

Any time you visit participating retailers and wish to pay on your CHELCO bill, simply scan the barcode and choose how much you'd like to pay. There is a flat \$1.50 convenience fee per transaction.

Where can I pay?

PayGo is available at several retailers:

- **Dollar General & DG Market**
- **CVS**
- **Walgreens**
- **Walmart**
- **Family Dollar**
- **7-Eleven**

To find the nearest one to you, use the map feature on the PayGo website. There, you'll find a full list of all participating retailers.

By adding PayGo, CHELCO expands its commitment to making payments as simple and convenient as possible. With multiple options now available, members can select the method that best suits their needs.

Visit **[CHELCO.com/ways-pay](https://chelco.com/ways-pay)** to learn more about all the convenient ways you can pay your electric bill.

PayGo

The Florida Department of Health, in coordination with its county health departments and each local emergency management agency in the state, developed a registry for persons with special needs to register with their local emergency management agency to receive assistance during a disaster. The statewide registry provides first responders with valuable information to prepare for disasters or other emergencies. To complete the form, visit <https://snr.flhealthresponse.com> or scan the QR code below.

Completing the Florida Special Needs Registry does not automatically qualify the individual for a special needs shelter, nor does CHELCO receive any information from this form. For more information on your local options, please visit www.FloridaDisaster.org/planprepare/shelters.



\$25 BILL CREDIT

If the account number below matches yours, call (850) 892-2111 to redeem a \$25 bill credit on your next power bill!

#900078774 - BENTZ

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