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**Mission Statement**  
Blue Ridge will be a competitive, quality provider of energy and other services, maintaining its history of integrity and adapting to the challenges of a changing world. While exercising leadership in the community, the organization's focus will be on exceeding customer expectations.

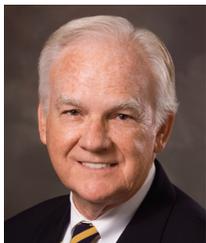
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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## A spike in commercial and industrial growth

A QUICK SURVEY would reveal that there's quite a bit of activity related to industrial and commercial growth on the Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative system. By my own count, at least a dozen startups of either new electrical loads or expansions of existing loads are in various stages of development.



These projects represent excellent news for the cooperative's service area for a number of reasons I could cite:

- ▶ The addition of hundreds of new, good-paying jobs
- ▶ The environmentally friendly profiles of all these plants and commercial establishments
- ▶ The introduction of sizable capital valuations to local tax rolls
- ▶ The stimulation of the region's commerce

### Added kilowatt-hour sales

From our vantage point here at Blue Ridge, these commercial and industrial concerns couldn't be more welcome. The added volume of kilowatt-hour sales to these large-power members will surely produce a greater return on our massive investments in electric-distribution facilities. Correspondingly, greater sales to these C&I accounts will help the cooperative hold down both the frequency and size of any future retail rate increases for residential members.

I'd also hasten to point out that these signs of progress aren't occurring in a vacuum. At the heart of each of these success stories, you'd uncover ample evidence of patient hard work



DENISE MCCORMICK

by the county economic-development agency. The 12 projects I referenced earlier are divided among Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties. I take my hat off to these agency officials for their strenuous efforts in successfully marketing their counties to these firms.

### Cooperative support

What's more, the cooperative is partnering with our local economic-development offices in their recruitment programs. Our employee team works actively to support all these folks as they endeavor to improve the economic conditions in their respective counties.

While we're doing all that, we're also making necessary upgrades to our power-delivery network to ensure quality service for any new plant or other establishment. Whether it's powering a modest home or a huge industrial complex, Blue Ridge majors on service reliability. As a member-owned utility, we can do no less.

**Charles E. Dalton**  
*President and CEO*

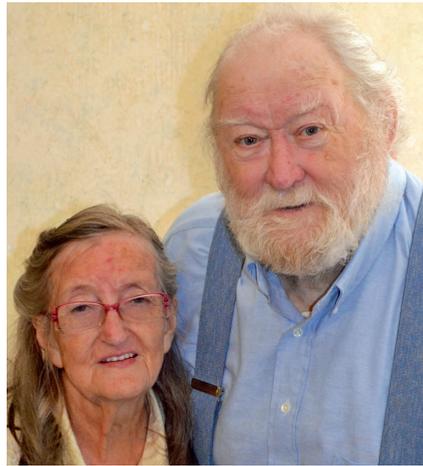
## Dear Mildred

It all started with *Co-op News* . . .

**THIS IS THE** story about Mildred and Ed (William) Harris, a loving couple together for 60 years. What makes this story special to us, is that they met through an unconventional means—a pen-pal column that was part of *Co-op News*, the predecessor to *South Carolina Living*.

“Dares sometimes make us do things we wouldn’t normally do,” begins Mildred Harris of Liberty, S.C. Mildred’s family in Dacusville had seen the pen pal section in the magazine and told her about it. She continues, “When I mentioned it at school, some of the other girls dared me to put my name in. There were three of us that sent in our information, but I’m the only one that ended up marrying my pen pal.”

Ed Harris grew up in the Flat Rock Community, joined the Army, and was sent the pen pal list from the magazine by his mother, Nettie Mae Harris. He wrote five girls and then



**Congratulations to Ed and Mildred Harris on their 60th anniversary. We are proud to have a connection to these “pen-pal partners.”**

visited them when he was home. Visit number five led him to Pumpkintown to the girl he would marry. From a letter in 1954 to a wedding in 1956, this story has a happy ending.

Sixty years later they have

6 children, 8 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren. Ed is a retired Church of God of Prophecy minister, and Mildred retired from J. P. Stevens after 30 years. They are two of the original members of the Helping Hands of Clemson organization. Being avid gardeners, they have shared the bounty from their garden with many through this connection, and still had plenty for their neighbors and family.

What is their secret to 60+ years of staying together? Ed says, “She carries the pocketbook. But in all seriousness, you have to work together, and pull together if you want to make a go of it.” Mildred adds, “We turned everything over to God when we married.”

While most of us communicate through emails, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, this is a great reminder that handwritten letters have a charm of their own. It certainly worked for these Blue Ridge Co-op members!

## Bringing home the GOLD

**WHEN ALL THE** entries were in, the judges for the “Spotlight on Excellence” awards, sponsored by the Council of Rural Electric Communicators and NRECA, awarded the 2016 Gold Award for “Best Event” to Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative’s “75 Bolts of Brightness.”

Winning this award is just one additional benefit to the successful event that Blue Ridge hosted as part of its 75th Anniversary celebration. Denise McCormick, Blue Ridge Manager of Marketing, is particularly proud of this presentation. “We worked hard to put together an event that would recognize that person in the community who deserves a public thanks. It was our goal to spotlight someone who is not an agency leader, an elected official, or a paid provider.

Rather, we were looking for the kind of individual who simply sees a need and then steps up.” With the help of the co-op membership, 75 members were singled out for their selfless giving to others and recognized at an event in their honor with a donation in their name given to the charity or organization of their choosing.

President and CEO, Charles Dalton confirms the success of this event. “We have probably received more letters of thanks and appreciation from these recipients and those that benefitted from the donations, than we have from anything we’ve ever done. I think the real difference was that our members searched their local communities for deserving people and they in turn designated their

donations to organizations close to their heart. As one of the judges noted, ‘This event celebrated the winners, though this term really references the doers and those in the community are really the winners.’ I congratulate Denise McCormick for having the original idea for this celebration.”

