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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.

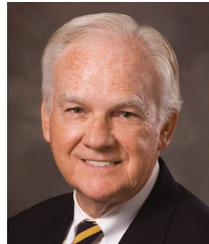
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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## The value of volunteerism

**ONE QUALITY THAT'S** prevalent throughout the Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative workforce is that of



volunteerism. You'll often find cooperative employees involved in church, civic, and community pursuits in their spare time and from which they receive no financial or other incentives. The sense of satisfaction derived from helping worthy

persons or causes is their only reward. That impulse to give of one's self is apparent each year when summer is winding down and local United Way campaigns are getting under way. Blue Ridge employees always rally in big numbers to give generously to those drives conducted in support of dozens of benevolence agencies that serve struggling individuals and families.

### Natural inclination

Of course, our employees are paid for the hours they devote to their jobs at the cooperative. At the same time, that volunteer reflex unquestionably adds value to the services they're rendering on behalf of this utility and our members. Their natural inclination is to go the extra mile to ensure that member needs are met.

I see this mindset at work as the cooperative prepares for, and then conducts, its annual meeting of members. That is the number-one event on the Blue Ridge calendar. Consequently, no stone is left unturned in making the meeting all it can be for the many members who attend. Such an outcome wouldn't be possible, except for the coordinated efforts of our employees.

When it comes to volunteerism,

there's no better example of that human attribute than our yearly charity fund-raiser, Blue Ridge Fest. That's an occasion when the members of our workforce truly donate their time and energy toward producing what has become a major success. In its first 19 years, Blue Ridge Fest has produced \$2,270,000 in net proceeds that have been distributed among scores of local charitable organizations.

### Three outstanding acts

Speaking of Blue Ridge Fest, we've already secured three outstanding entertainment acts for the 2017 Beach Night show and dance. The incomparable Little Anthony and the Imperials will headline the evening. Preceding them on the stage will be The Contours, with their monster hit: "Do You Love Me?" Opening the show will be the popular, high-energy group, Jim Quick and Coastline.

Before long, you'll again have opportunities to observe our employees as they demonstrate their volunteer spirit. The cooperative's annual meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 20, while Friday, April 28, is the date for Blue Ridge Fest 2017. Details for each of these happenings will be featured in upcoming editions of *South Carolina Living*.

Volunteerism is a firmly entrenched American value. That value is alive and well at Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative.

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

## Paving the way for economic development



**IN MID-JANUARY**, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative hosted an economic-development summit for local officials. Invitees included county council members, economic-development directors, administrators, and other officials from Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties. In all, 35 of those officials were present for the conference.

Blue Ridge President and CEO Charles Dalton emphasized the importance of co-op involvement in improving the quality of life through better and more jobs in our area. In welcoming the group, Dalton said the intent of the summit was to broaden the vision for economic development within the three-county region. He called attention to the many attributes Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens had to offer. Dalton noted, however, that “human capital is a necessity if all the proper elements are to be included in the mix for facilitating a favorable economic outcome.”

The keynote address for the event was delivered by S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt. Other presenters included Dr. Ronnie Booth, president of Tri-County Technical College; John Lummus, CEO of Upstate Alliance; James Chavez, CEO

**Sharing their expertise with local participants at the Co-op-hosted Economic Development Summit were James Chavez, S.C. Power Team; Dr. Ronnie Booth, TCTC; Didi Caldwell, Global Location Strategies; S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt; John Lummus, Upstate Alliance; and Blue Ridge President and CEO Charles E. Dalton.**

of the S.C. Power Team; and Didi Caldwell, founding principal of Global Location Strategies.

Dr. Booth devoted his presentation to workforce development. He pointed to the innovative programs Tri-County Tech had implemented toward equipping area residents with the skills needed to compete for, and to obtain, good-paying jobs. Such training is essential for meeting the manpower needs for prospective industries.

Both Lummus and Chavez highlighted the resources and initiatives their respective

**County officials from Oconee, Pickens and Anderson counties had an opportunity to exchange greetings and ideas prior to the start of the summit.**



organizations are bringing to the table to help foster successful industry-recruitment efforts. Caldwell took time on the program to discuss the parameters for selecting sites for industrial development. She spotlighted the multiple infrastructure improvements that might be required, as well as other factors such as access to quality roadways, the availability of rail service, and the like.

During his remarks, Secretary Hitt called attention to the coming of BMW and the impact it had upon the state. “Today, South Carolina has 35,000 jobs that are related to the auto industry. We’re also number one among the 50 states when it comes to the exporting of automobiles to other countries. Additionally, our state is the top manufacturer of vehicle tires in America,” he added.

Hitt went on to observe that it took community involvement to make the job-creation process successful. “The definition of an industrial site is one that has been developed, with all the necessary infrastructure, and is then ready to market to potential clients. Various parties on the local level have to come together to make that a reality,” Hitt noted.

While offering some closing observations, President Dalton said, “We believe only good can come from getting all of you county leaders together, and it’s the cooperative’s goal to assist you as you work to improve the quality of life for area residents and businesses.”