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FOR ALL YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE NEEDS

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AUTOMATED OUTAGE REPORTING
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PICKENS

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Pickens, SC 29671

OCONEE

P.O. Box 329
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Westminster, SC 29693

MISSION STATEMENT

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

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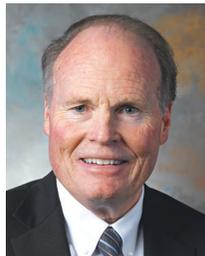
Jim Lovinggood

This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

A quality standby-generator program



WHEN THIS YEAR'S calendar reached April 1, you could almost hear a collective sigh of relief at Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative. The winter season was behind us, and we had finished those cold months without experiencing a damaging storm emergency. Little did we know.

Early on April 13, a strong weather system crossed the Blue Ridge service area, spawning three separate tornados and an accompanying array of extremely bad weather. In multiple locations across five counties, more than 36,000 of our 67,000-plus members lost power. The epicenter of the destruction occurred in and around the city of Seneca. There, a powerful EF-3 tornado, with wind speeds measuring 160 mph, made a direct hit on a transmission line, severely damaging four steel poles. That line is the power source for seven of the co-op's substations.

In response, Blue Ridge roused every resource at our disposal to attack the widespread devastation. That included bringing in 300 extra linemen from outside our service area to assist with repairs. Transmission-line specialists and a fleet of heavy equipment were also called upon to address replacement of the downed high-voltage facilities.

Tremendous effort

Long story short, all the trouble was cleared up within 66 hours (2.75 days). Believe me, that result represented a tremendous effort on the part of all who had a hand in bringing this challenge under control. A power outage is always difficult; however, the added threat posed by COVID 19 brought new problems. Additional crews were harder to find, work in the field was more difficult due to added distancing restrictions and the constant stress of providing a safe environment was ever present.

Truthfully, the entire cooperative

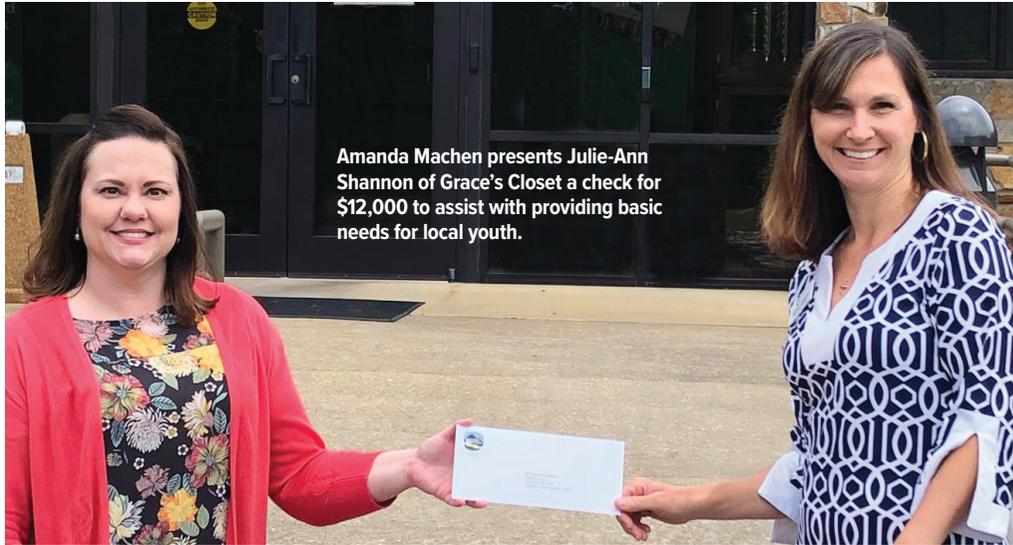
workforce takes absolutely no pleasure in seeing any of our members experience a power outage. Consequently, we keep dispatchers by the telephone around the clock and maintenance crews always at the ready, in the event a service interruption does occur. In addition, our daily operation is largely focused on a construction work plan that's building more strength and reliability into the Blue Ridge system of power lines.

Blue Ridge Energy Services

For several years now, the cooperative's Energy Services group has been in the business of equipping member homes with uninterrupted electric service. We proudly market Generac units, recognized as America's best-selling brand of home backup generators. They run on either natural gas or propane and can restore power within seconds after an outage occurs. Whether the member is at home or away, the generator is quick to get up to speed in its production of electricity. Once the Blue Ridge repair crew has restored service, the self-regulating generator then ceases its operation.

Before the next unexpected storm, I encourage you to contact our Blue Ridge Energy Services professionals. They offer a free onsite consultation, a yearly maintenance plan, 24-hour storm response and warranty work by a certified Generac technician. What's more, the cooperative makes available an attractive mechanism for members to pay for their generator installation over five years at a low 6% interest rate. This is just one way we're working to be your trusted energy experts.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
President and CEO



Amanda Machen presents Julie-Ann Shannon of Grace's Closet a check for \$12,000 to assist with providing basic needs for local youth.

AMY CHILDRESS

Broadband remains a possibility

LAST YEAR MANY of you participated in a survey regarding the possibility of Blue Ridge providing high-speed internet service to rural areas. As expected, the survey response was overwhelming with more than 84% supporting the concept. One of our commitments at that time was to keep you informed as we moved through the many phases of studying the feasibility of this service.

We continue our ongoing study regarding that possibility and have identified several challenges in order to provide broadband to our membership.

One of the larger challenges is legislative action required by the state's General Assembly. This legislation was already facing an uphill battle this year due to the opposition of the large telecommunication companies. Now, given the limited legislative year created by the pandemic, it is not likely to be acted on by this legislature this year. If not, we'll start our efforts again when the General Assembly convenes in January 2021.

Now more than ever, we understand that high-speed internet service in the rural areas is not just a luxury but is an essential service. If this pandemic has taught us anything it has thoroughly revealed the need for our children to stay connected to their schools and for adults to work at home.

Charities receive generous donations from Blue Ridge Fest

ALTHOUGH BLUE RIDGE FEST was canceled due to the restrictions brought on by COVID-19, the sponsors and employees never lost sight of the purpose behind this annual event. Now in its 23rd year, Blue Ridge Fest has given almost \$3 million to more than 80 local charities serving clients in Upstate South Carolina.

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative President and CEO Jim Lovinggood announced the cancellation in mid-March when it became apparent that the threat posed by the coronavirus would not allow people to gather in large crowds.

"Our employee committee had chosen 12 charities last fall to be the recipients of our Fest proceeds, and we were all determined not to let them down," he says.

Sponsors were contacted, and they overwhelmingly agreed that helping

local people through the rough times was a priority for them. Each charity has received a check for \$12,000, thanks to the generosity of those that support this event, along with the contributions of co-op employees.

Lovinggood adds, "This year was very different—no classic cars, music, food or crowds. However, it reaffirms that people support this event for the satisfaction of knowing that someone who needs help will be the beneficiary. We look forward to being able to properly thank our sponsors when we can invite them to join our charities and employees for a celebration event."

The entertainers scheduled for this year have already committed to be a part of the 2021 Blue Ridge Fest. So plan now to join us next year as Ronnie Milsap, Restless Heart, and the Tams take the stage for a night of great entertainment.

