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**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.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
 Joel Spencer Dalton, Jr., *Chairman*  
 Len D. Talley, *Vice-Chairman*  
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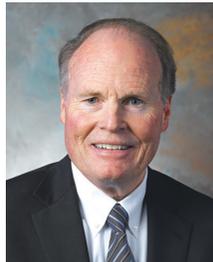
**PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
 Jim Lovinggood

This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## Upcountry Fiber makes its debut



**A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO** in my report to you, I shared that Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative had embarked upon its initial broadband pilot program. That undertaking was a gratifying success. Now, I'm pleased to announce that we're making strides toward bringing high-speed internet to greater numbers of our members.

Blue Ridge is working in partnership with Abbeville-based West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative and its subsidiary, WCFIBER, to make this service a reality. Our utilities have also selected a name for this service: "Upcountry Fiber." You'll be hearing plenty more about Upcountry Fiber in the months and years to come.

### Systematic installations

For the remainder of 2021, crews will work systematically and simultaneously to install fiber cable in these three specific areas:

- ▶ Within a geographic footprint that includes many Blue Ridge Electric members served by our Corinth substation. Corinth provides power to sections of easternmost Oconee County, situated generally along both sides of Highway 123.
- ▶ Communities positioned mainly between the Pickens County municipalities of Central and Liberty.
- ▶ Southwestern Oconee County, where the cooperative's Port Bass substation serves a substantial portion of the region that covers territory along the I-85 corridor and points north.



Meanwhile, WCFIBER representatives are signing up folks in these areas and making the internet connections to their locations. By the time 2022 rolls around, we estimate that 4,500 customers will have been connected to the Upcountry Fiber system. That represents some very good news.

Our focus is also on Anderson County and northern Greenville County. Those locations will eventually receive excellent service, as our installation work continues to expand.

### The word is quality

Quality is a word that should always describe Upcountry Fiber. I firmly believe that because we intend to connect the fiber cable itself directly to every home, industry, school, church, business and fire department that requests it. Moreover, our northwestern portion of South Carolina will be home to some of the best broadband service to be found anywhere in America.

The future of our Upcountry Fiber initiative certainly appears to be full of potential and promise. Personally, I'm looking forward to the journey!

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President and CEO

## Successful Annual Meeting enjoyed by all

**ALTHOUGH TEMPERATURES WERE COOL** and the wind gusted at times, Blue Ridge members enjoyed the privileges of membership from the comfort of their automobiles once again.

The 2021 Blue Ridge Annual Meeting of members saw more than 6,800 members participate in the drive-thru registration available for two days at the Pickens and Oconee offices. Registered members had the opportunity to vote and collect a door prize and goody bag. Additionally, each member was entered into a prize drawing for several items and a number of gift cards.

The official ballot count certified that incumbent trustee Frank Looper defeated challenger Jason Ambrose Dennis with a vote tally of 3,230 to 2,706 for one of the Pickens County board seats. Re-elected without opposition to new three-year terms were incumbent directors Mendel Stone of Oconee County and Pickens County's Jimmy Lee Dodgens.

Immediately after registration closed at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 22, Blue Ridge President and CEO Jim Lovinggood



Wilson Elrod of Pickens proudly accepts his Annual Meeting gifts—a Lodge cast iron grill pan and a goody bag.

delivered his yearly management report by way of the internet. That report is still available for viewing at the cooperative's website,

**blueridge.coop**. One of the highlights of the report was the news of Upcountry Fiber and the importance of the broadband project to our service area.

While the pandemic continues to restrict our face-to-face meetings, all Blue Ridge employees enjoyed the time they had to visit with members. In the words of CEO Jim Lovinggood at the end of his report, "I know I speak for every individual on our Blue Ridge employee team when I say it's a pleasure to serve you."



▲ The winning ticket for the grand prize, a 2013 Chevy Silverado pickup, belonged to Mrs. Luther Parker of Seneca. Sam McMillan presented her with the keys to the truck.



◀ Rob Sewrey was waiting to register and vote at 7 a.m. at the Oconee office.



Drive-thru registration and voting encourages family participation!

## Clemson Extension's Rural Health and Nutrition Team offers programs in Oconee

A new health resource has made its way to Oconee and Pickens counties through the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service. Currently, the Rural Health and Nutrition program team is focusing on providing communities with free diabetes education and support programs, in response to a high prevalence of diabetes in these counties.

The **Health Extension for Diabetes** program is a free diabetes self-management education and support group. It includes seven educational sessions and seven support sessions for participants to learn more about diabetes and the necessary skills and support needed to successfully self-manage their diabetes.

Classes are delivered by Health Extension Agent, Kadalynn Jones, with Clemson Cooperative Extension Service. Class sign-ups are open three weeks after the start date to allow for late sign-ups



## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences

and registrations. Classes are held multiple times throughout the year, so contact the extension office to find a date/time that suits your schedule.

*The next class will be June 21, noon to 1 p.m. Register by 11 a.m. on June 12.*

**Know Diabetes By Heart** is a free, one-hour education session to help participants better understand the link between diabetes and heart disease. This program is offered online or can be delivered in-person.

*The next online session is scheduled for June 24, 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.*

If you would like more information about these programs, phone the Oconee County Extension Office at (864) 638-5889, or email Kadalynn Jones at [kadalynn@clemson.edu](mailto:kadalynn@clemson.edu).