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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.

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Jim Lovinggood

This organization is an
equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Planning for the year

DURING THE FOURTH
quarter of 2023, my staff and I devoted time to the cooperative's 2024 Work Plan and Budget. This document is our roadmap for

continuing the high level of service we are known for. Relying on engineering studies, recent growth trends and many other business-related factors, we arrived at some solid financial estimates for this year.

The budgeting process was more challenging this time. Like all other businesses and families, Blue Ridge has faced increases in what we pay for materials and services. That reality has put upward pressure on the cooperative's retail electricity rates. We've always made it our practice to hold the line as best we can on what we charge for electric service, and for years we have absorbed more of these cost increases than we have passed on. The time is approaching for us to implement changes in how our rates are structured. You can be certain that as we study our rate design, changes will be made at the lowest level possible for maintaining a sound financial footing.

Once the budgetary forecasts were established for 2024, a narrative was prepared to provide commentary to accompany those forecasts. This produced more than a few positive reactions in my mind. For one, it reminded me of the effective work practices that have been in place at Blue Ridge for many years.

As an example, 25 years ago we established the co-op's in-house member service center. Every month, these folks answer between 10,000 and 13,000 telephone calls. They also process numerous emails and texts. This service center is a primary point of contact for many of our members. My conversations

with members often reveal their sincere appreciation for the ability to talk to a person, rather than having to negotiate a telephone menu.

Another service initiated several decades ago is round-the-clock dispatching. We have employees in our dispatch center answering after-hours calls and other contacts and, when necessary, dispatching crews to address power outages and other emergency situations. Once again, I've been told by members how grateful they are for that direct, convenient access to our overnight dispatchers.

If you've driven through our service area, it's obvious Blue Ridge is experiencing impressive growth. In 2023, the co-op added 1,499 net new members to our system—a new record! Furthermore, we ended the year with 72,316 total member accounts receiving service. Our response to that growth is to strive to stay ahead of it, which can result in ever-improving service reliability.

Finally, I'd mention our Upcountry Fiber initiative. In fewer than three years, Upcountry Fiber has extended quality, high-speed internet service to about 17,000 customers.

Those are but a few of the accomplishments that make me proud of the service we offer you, our members. It's on that note that I'll end this report, but not before I issue you a cordial invitation to join us on April 10 or 11 for Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative's 83rd Annual Meeting of Members. I hope to see you there.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
President and CEO

Quite a celebration

Sen. Thomas Alexander receives service award during Co-op Day at the State House

ON FEB. 8, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative took part in Co-op Day at the State House. Employees, board members and guests from each of South Carolina's electric cooperatives flooded the halls of the State House in support of their cooperatives. Outside, cooperative trucks of all varieties parked along the perimeter of the State House, calling attention to the value our cooperatives bring to the state. Visiting with their local legislative delegation, many co-op representatives had an opportunity to share the importance of the work of the cooperative in their local communities as well as see the decision-making process at work.

On this special Co-op Day, District 1 (Oconee-Pickens) Senator Thomas Alexander was presented with the first-ever Electric Cooperative Outstanding Public Service Award. His response to the award was filled with appreciation to the co-op organization.

"I'm grateful to work with the co-ops throughout the state and all they mean to our communities, especially BREC," Alexander said. "They are such a great example of taking care of the needs of the citizens they serve and being a part of the overall community. To be recognized by such a distinguished organization is very touching, humbling and certainly appreciated. Any success I have or have had is a result of the citizens in Senate District 1 who have supported me—my success is their success. First and foremost, I'm thankful to the good Lord and the people for allowing me the opportunity to serve in the Senate."

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative is certainly fortunate to have a supportive group of legislators representing our area of South Carolina. We appreciate

Co-op employees, leaders and board members celebrated with Senator Thomas Alexander, recipient of the Electric Cooperative Outstanding Public Service Award, on the steps of the State House during Co-op Day in Columbia. Jim Lovinggood, Blue Ridge President and CEO, proudly presented the award.

TRAVIS BELL



ZACHARY HINTON

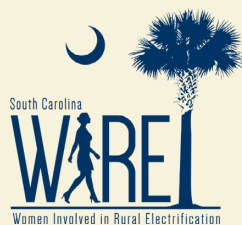
Matthew Owens and Justin Sutherland were the two linemen representing Blue Ridge at Co-op Day. They were greeted by Senator Alexander and showed him all the features of this bucket truck. With each co-op supplying trucks and linemen, there was little doubt that the co-ops were in town.

their effort in assuring that legislation concerning our industry is considered a high priority for them.

Apply for Opportunity Scholarship by June 1

NOT EVERYONE'S PURSUIT of a bachelor's degree takes a direct path from high school to four years on a college campus. The Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship is for women whose academic journeys have taken worthwhile detours, like marriage and family.

Applications for one-time award are now open for female members of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative whose pursuit of a college degree has been interrupted or delayed. Sponsored by Women Involved in Rural Electrification (WIRE)—a service organization associated with South Carolina's electric cooperatives—the \$2,500 scholarship is based on need and personal goals. The scholarship will be awarded based on the information provided in the application.



Applicants for the program must:

- ▶ be a member of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative or another South Carolina electric cooperative;
- ▶ have graduated from high school or earned a GED at least 10 years ago;
- ▶ obtain acceptance into an accredited college or university;
- ▶ demonstrate financial need.

Recipients will receive scholarships for the fall 2024 or spring 2025 semester, with funds paid directly to the college or university.

Apply online for the 2024 Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship by June 1 at ecsc.org/wire.

Paper forms are available at the Blue Ridge main office. Mail to: Peggy Dantzer, The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, 808 Knox Abbott Drive, Cayce, S.C. 29033. Send email inquiries to Peggy.Dantzer@ecsc.org.