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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.

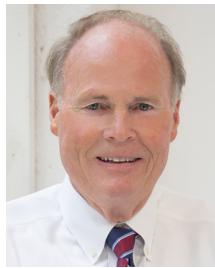
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This organization is an  
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“I’d like  
to thank  
the state  
and other  
agencies for  
making these  
resources  
available  
to South  
Carolinians.”

## Prepare now for hurricane season

**AS WE MOVE** into August, the height of hurricane season is upon us. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) defines the season as running from June 1 through Nov. 30, based on historical weather patterns and data. In May, the federal agency published its outlook for the season, predicting three to five major hurricanes with a category 3, 4 or 5 designation with a 70% confidence rating.

After more than 40 years in this industry, I can say that hurricane season, particularly in late summer and early fall, seems to last a lifetime. I’m sure many of you would agree with me that it feels as if Hurricane Helene happened just yesterday.

Blue Ridge Electric was the only electric co-op in the state to pre-stage ahead of the most destructive storm our system has ever encountered in its 84-year history. For those in the mountains and Upstate, the storm was something none of us had ever experienced before.

That’s why it’s important to prepare now for any potential tropical storm or hurricane before it impacts our area. As we learned from Helene, the impacts of tropical storms and hurricanes can reach far beyond the coast.

With that said, I’d encourage you to do two things to prepare.

First, go online to [hurricane.sc](http://hurricane.sc). This is the South Carolina Emergency Management Division’s (SCEMD) one-stop shop for all things hurricane-related. You’ll be able to find watches and warnings for tropical storms, hurricanes and extreme winds, as well as other important contacts and resources.

Second, download the SC Emergency Manager app to your phone. This official app allows you to build and customize a personal emergency plan ahead of a disaster. You can also document storm damage through this and receive emergency alerts from the state about extreme weather.

I’d like to thank the state and other volunteer agencies for making this resource available to all South Carolinians. These are critical tools to help keep you and your family safe ahead of what could be another active hurricane season.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
President and CEO

### Restoration rip-off

**AFTER MAJOR STORMS** or disasters, scammers may contact unsuspecting members and offer to restore power quickly or in a preferential order if you make an immediate payment.

Don’t fall for a power restoration rip-off. Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will never request or require payment to restore power after a storm. If post-storm repairs to customer-owned equipment are necessary, we will advise you to work with a licensed contractor. If any charges are applicable, you will be billed through your account.

# Museums, monuments and more

## BREC sends local students to experience Washington

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

**MAGGIE BLANKENSHIP HAD** been dreaming about Washington Youth Tour for three years, ever since her older sister, Abbie, returned home from her Youth Tour experience with exciting stories of monuments, museums and making friends.

The trip—a five-day, all-expenses-paid annual journey to the nation’s capital and surrounding landmarks—didn’t disappoint.

“When I finally got the chance to apply, I knew I had to do it,” says Blankenship, a rising junior at Pendleton High School. “Seeing the Capitol and all the intricate details of these historic buildings left my jaw dropped.”

Blankenship, along with Ava Alexander from Seneca High School and David Montes from West-Oak High, were sponsored by Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative. They joined 68 other high school students representing South Carolina’s electric cooperatives on visits to historic and educational sites such as George Washington’s Mount Vernon, Fort McHenry in Baltimore and the Smithsonian museums in Washington.

For Alexander, one of the most powerful experiences was visiting the Holocaust Memorial Museum.

“I read every single piece of information, so it took me a while,” says Alexander. “Seeing the exhibit of the victims’ shoes and photographs of survivors made it even more impactful.”

A particular highlight for Blankenship was seeing the Iwo Jima monument.

“It made me feel reverent and patriotic,” Blankenship says. “The statue and the story behind it reminded me how proud I am of our country.”

The trip was also an opportunity for the students to interact with peers from other parts of South Carolina and the 43 other



PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER

Blue Ridge Electric student delegates (from left) David Montes, Maggie Blankenship and Ava Alexander visited Capitol Hill, where they were welcomed into the office of U.S. Rep. Shari Biggs and heard from U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and Sen. Tim Scott on the Capitol steps.



The People’s House, one of Washington’s newest museums, gave Alexander an interactive journey through the history and legacy of the White House.



Blankenship sits behind a replica of the U.S. president’s resolute desk at The People’s House in Washington, D.C.

cooperative-sponsored state delegations that converged on Washington that week.

“I would never have been able to experience these tours on my own,” Alexander says. “Going with the group expanded my understanding and gave me a deeper appreciation of our history.”

Blankenship wants to make sure others at her school don’t miss out on future Washington Youth Tour trips.

“I’m really excited to tell my friends about about all the different things we did,” she says. “Many people at school don’t know about this opportunity. It’s an amazing trip you won’t experience it unless you apply.”



Montes joined other South Carolina Youth Tourists in unrolling the Great Garrison Flag at Fort McHenry.