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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.

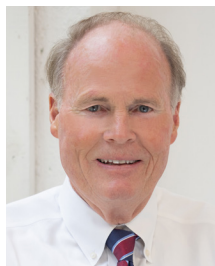
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This organization is an
equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



“Over the next year we will celebrate this anniversary with the public and our co-op family.”

Built on service, wired to deliver

YOUR ELECTRIC CO-OP TURNED 85 years old on Aug. 14. It was that day more than 85 years ago that Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative was chartered. The history for all electric co-ops truly traces back to May 11, 1935, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order to establish the Rural Electrification Administration, when less than three out of 100 residents in rural South Carolina had central-station electricity.

We energized our first 1,680 members the following January, on 486 miles of power line.

Since then, we've donated more than \$3 million to local charities, driven economic development to create stable, quality jobs and provided reliable high-speed internet to 25,000 customers in our service territory. Our co-op has navigated through a global pandemic, overcome devastating hurricanes such as Helene and unforgiving ice storms that have left tens of thousands in the dark for days at a time.

In 2020, we served 67,589 meters, and we continue to grow. Today, we serve over 74,000 meters and maintain 7,500 miles of power lines. That distance can be matched by driving into Canada's Yukon territory and back to our headquarters in Pickens.

Over the next year, we will celebrate this anniversary with the public and our co-op family. Our commitment to the community remains strong, as we will reinvest in our local public schools and launch an energy efficiency grant program to help residential members. We will share stories of employees who make the co-op what it is today, and other memories along the way. There's an abundance of them.

There will be much more to come over the year. For now, I encourage you to follow our monthly e-newsletter and social media channels to see what's ahead, which could include trivia questions to win co-op items.

I'd like to close this month's column with a list of thank-yous. First and foremost, thank you to our loyal membership. Whether you recall when we first set poles outside your home or are new to the area, we're grateful to energize your homes and businesses. Your support is critical to our operation.

Local elected officials, community leaders and other co-ops have supported us through natural disasters and in hard times. I will always appreciate that.

To the former and current co-op employees—you are the reason we are still here today. Your commitment and your family's support are why we go into the office and do our job with pride. The co-op has been my life, and each of you has contributed in your own unique way.

As we move into this time of celebration, know that our commitment isn't wavering.

We were built on service. We remain wired to deliver.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
President and CEO

BREC sends local teens to Cooperative Youth Summit

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

THERE WERE A LOT of reasons for Jonathan Stewart to sign up for Cooperative Youth Summit, but the teenager from Salem had just one thing in mind.

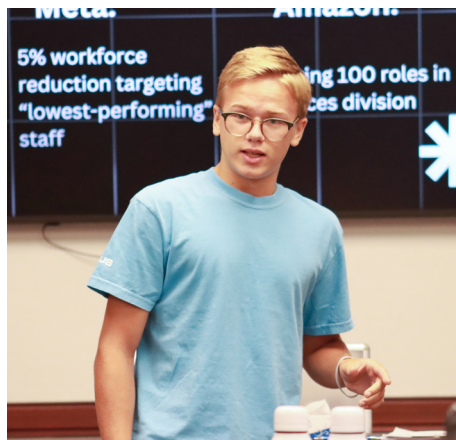
“I came for the presentation competition,” says Stewart, a student at Kingdom Life Home Academy. “I told myself, I’m winning that \$1,000.”

Stewart and the three other members of his competition group won the Orator’s Arena and a \$1,000 prize each with their presentation about the risks of artificial intelligence.

“It really challenged us to do our own research and write it up in a compelling way,” says Stewart. “I had a lot of fun with that.”

Stewart, along with Matthew Morris of Seneca, were sponsored by Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative on the weeklong trip for high schoolers to the state capital in July.

Cooperative Youth Summit is an exploration of the state’s capital, civic engagement and the cooperative business model sponsored by Blue Ridge Electric and the state’s electric cooperatives. The program’s objective is to develop students to be leaders



Jonathan Stewart of Salem won \$1,000 in the Orator’s Arena public speaking competition during Cooperative Youth Summit.



PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER

Morris and Stewart visited the governor’s office and spoke with members of Gov. Henry McMaster’s staff.

in their community and to learn about the role co-ops play in those communities.

Guided by former television personality and co-op executive Lou Green, a total of 51 students representing South Carolina’s electric cooperatives worked in teams throughout the week to develop presentations related to current political and cultural debates such as regulating artificial intelligence and subsidizing electric vehicles. Each group took a stance on the issues in front of their peers and a panel of independent judges.

Cooperative Youth Summit students also learned about how government works from John Frick, vice president of government relations at The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina. Frick challenged them to “keep the republic,” referencing Benjamin Franklin’s iconic response to a colonial woman inquiring whether her new nation was a monarchy or a republic. Franklin answered, “a republic madam, if you can keep it.”

S.C. State Rep. Micah Caskey answered questions from the students and encouraged them to consider public service in the future.

“I want to be a lawyer, so learning about politics and law was a huge benefit,” says Morris, a homeschooler. “I think it’s important that there are opportunities like this out there, and this is a good one to

sign up for.”

The students also visited South Carolina State Museum and were exposed to the importance of safety around electricity at the West Columbia facility for CEEUS, the materials supplier for the state’s electric cooperatives. They also met with some of Gov. Henry McMaster’s top advisers in his office at the State House.

WANT TO GO NEXT SUMMER? High school sophomores and juniors interested in participating in Cooperative Youth Summit or Washington Youth Tour in 2026 are encouraged to visit ecsc.org/youth.



Matthew Morris and the other 50 Cooperative Youth Summit students helped the South Carolina WIRE chapter pack 500 bags of essentials for deserving children as part of their Kids Closet initiative. WIRE is a statewide community service organization of the state’s electric cooperatives.