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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



## New year, new program

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!** I hope you and your family had an enjoyable holiday season and are eager for all that's ahead in 2026. Here at the co-op,

we expect to see the continued trend of significant residential growth as more people move to our area. I'll have more concrete numbers to share with you in the coming months about our growth in 2025 to put this in perspective.

Outside of continuing our Upcountry Fiber buildout and system infrastructure upgrades, we're unveiling a home energy-efficiency and financial assistance program designed to help members in need of assistance this year and in the future. I'm grateful to share that co-op employees developed this program that we're calling Watts of Love.

From linemen to dispatchers to call center representatives, our organization has embraced an internal drive to help members where they are. Employees are donating money from each pay period to support Watts of Love. Beyond their financial contributions, workers from various departments have provided expert feedback on how this program can be successful.

This seed money from employees offers members critical types of support. The first is power bill assistance, which provides short-term financial relief to help members manage their utility bills during times of hardship.

The second type of support comes in the form of home upgrade assistance. Potential upgrades with this grant money include programmable thermostats, new windows, mini-split units and home insulation.

Program applications are accepted year-round and can be found online at [blueridge.coop/watts-of-love](http://blueridge.coop/watts-of-love) or at co-op offices in Pickens and Westminster.

When we began having discussions about how to celebrate our 85th anniversary with the community, the co-op wanted to find a more permanent and constant way to help members that need it. This program achieves just that.

One of the seven core cooperative principles is "concern for community," and that is a guiding light here at Blue Ridge. We had a mission to bring power to rural South Carolina 85 years ago, and we have a mission to build on that foundation by serving our community in new and meaningful ways.

If you have questions about Watts of Love or know someone who might benefit from this assistance, please contact our offices.

**Additional financial resources can be found online at [blueridge.coop/financial-assistance](http://blueridge.coop/financial-assistance).**

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
President and CEO

### SCAM TIP

#### Bill relief disbelief

Scammers often exploit high winter bills by offering fake discount or relief programs to unsuspecting members. They may ask for upfront payments or personal details to lower your rate.

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative never demands gift cards, wire transfers or payment through apps like PayPal or Venmo. Real savings programs won't pressure you for immediate action. To verify offers directly, call (800) 240-3400. Do not call any phone numbers provided in a suspicious email or text.



PHOTOS FROM BREC ARCHIVES

Ballenger pictured with Trustee Mendel Stone at the grand opening for Upcountry Fiber's Seneca office in 2024.

## A co-op legend

### Terry Ballenger reflects on a 55-year career at Blue Ridge Electric

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR

**TERRY BALLENGER** has called it a career. Ballenger retired as Senior Vice President of Communications at the end of December, notching over 55 years of service to Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative.

Ballenger is one of the only employees to have worked for all three co-op presidents, witnessing societal, regional and company shifts across five decades.

From authoring storm outage reports for media members on a typewriter to diligently hand-recording board meeting reports to lobbying for co-ops across the state in Columbia, Ballenger has done—and seen—it all. Before he cleaned out his office, Ballenger reflected on his remarkable career in the following interview.

**Q: What led you to Blue Ridge?**

TB: I grew up in Easley, across the street from A.J. Hurt, who was our first CEO. His oldest son was about two years younger than me. I got to know the family well because we'd spend time at each other's homes. Both of my older

brothers had summer jobs at the co-op, so I thought I'd try the same thing. I did that for seven summers from high school through college. I graduated from the University of Georgia, and I told Mr. Hurt I'd like to come work here as a staff assistant, but that if I felt the call to seminary after one year, I would leave. That never happened, and I stayed here. I'm glad I did. It's been a wonderful experience.

**Q: Who influenced you the most in your career?**

TB: I could point to several people. We had an engineer that worked here for a long time named Red Hinton. Just a prince of a fellow. He was honest, compassionate and a very talented man. He stood up for us in a lot of situations. Wayne Turner, too. He oversaw the warehouses. He was a super guy. We lived by the Golden Rule and told the truth about our work.

[Cont. on page 12A](#)



A young Terry Ballenger pictured in the 1970s.

Cont. from page 5

**Q: What's something you value about Blue Ridge?**

TB: The co-op has maintained a high standard through the years and hires quality, honest people. I see that still happening today. I like the people who work here. In 55 years, I can't recall having an argument or a rough conversation with anybody. It's a stable environment.

**Q: Can you point to a few changes that have improved the co-op over the years?**

TB: Technology. Our engineering folks stay on the cutting edge of it, and it's been a real plus. Another change has been on the broadband (Upcountry Fiber) front. I tip my hat to Jim Lovinggood every day for that. He had the vision of what that could mean to us, and it's going to bring a lot of great things in the years to come. I'm just gratified with what's happened already, and I think the best is yet to come as far as broadband is concerned.

Something that hasn't changed is our employees' pride in delivering quality service. I think we go above and beyond in that category. We take it hard when there's an outage. We try our best to get it on as fast as we can. Everybody's intent on doing their job to try to give the best possible service to folks. I like the fact that we haven't changed in how involved we are in the community.

**Q: Your favorite Blue Ridge Fest performance?**

TB: As far as doing a good show? Jay and the Americans, with "This Magic Moment." The people responded to them. Gosh, there were so many. Those guys stood out. The Drifters were good. They even sang "White Christmas" in the middle of the summer. Ben E. King was so good. I worked backstage quite a bit, and they were good folks. Very down to earth.



PHOTOS FROM BREC ARCHIVES

Ballenger is interviewed by a reporter with WYFF-4 during an ice storm in February 1985.

**Q: Besides Hurricane Helene, what's another storm that sticks out to you?**

TB: The blizzard of March 1993. We got hit hard.

**Q: What kept you at Blue Ridge?**

TB: I just enjoyed it. I liked where I lived, and I grew up in Easley. The atmosphere here, you can't beat it. People are kind to each other. They enjoy a good joke. People will sympathize with you when you're grieving or down about something. It is a thoughtful group of people, and I wouldn't trade anything for the experience. It's just been outstanding.

**Q: How important was it to have your wife's support?**

TB: I don't think I could have survived if it wasn't for Greer. She's been very supportive. I think she's ready to have me home with her full-time now, so hopefully I'll live a few years longer so she can have her wish.

**Q: How do you want people to remember you?**

TB: Well, I don't know. Maybe a straight arrow, but with a good sense of humor. In some ways, this organization's my baby. I want to see it grow and prosper, doing well after I'm gone. I hope it'll be one of the strongest businesses in the whole Upstate. I just have a lot of confidence in what's coming in the years ahead. I hope to live and see some of it.



Greer and Terry Ballenger have been married for over 50 years, meeting at a crusade back in the 1970s.

# Our Progress, Your Connection

Here's how far we've come – together

In 2025, we made major strides in expanding our fiber network – reaching new neighborhoods, supporting local businesses, and building a stronger foundation for the moments that matter. We're excited to continue expanding access to high-quality fiber service our communities deserve, because every connection helps strengthen the place we all call home.

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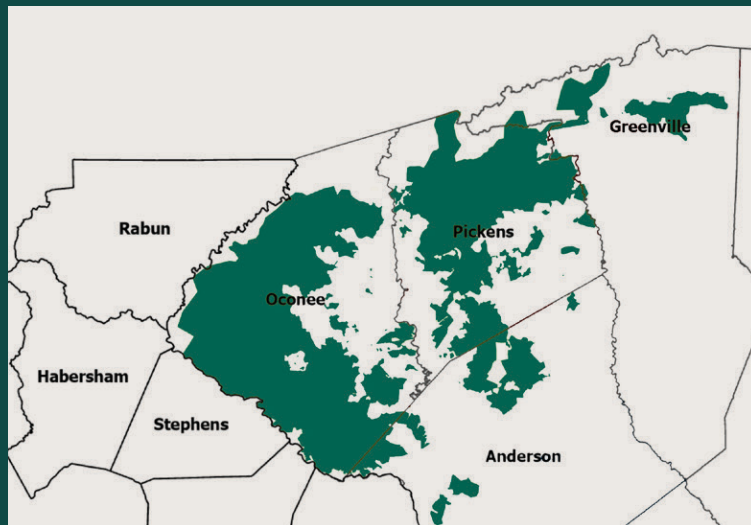
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## New year resolution

Let Clemson Rural Health help you improve your health

**IF YOUR** New Year's resolution is to be a healthier you this year, you don't have to do it alone.

Blue Ridge Electric members have affordable access to Clemson University's statewide health service delivery and prevention efforts that improve health outcomes of thousands of South Carolinians.

The Clemson Health Clinic at Walhalla is operated by Clemson Rural Health, which works to transform health outcomes in rural and underserved communities through reducing premature mortality, decreasing preventable hospitalizations and improving the quality of life for patients. This clinic, which opened in October 2022, offers primary healthcare services and health education, including in-person healthy cooking demonstrations and classes.

Integrating food nutrition with primary care offers patients a holistic approach to improving their health, a primary driver behind Clemson Rural Health's practices. Clemson Rural Health offers competitive rates and bills most major insurances. You can even meet with a registered dietitian in-person or via telehealth without a waitlist.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Clemson Rural Health's Walhalla team includes (left to right) Kelli Cavender, Marly Young, Christina Smith, Elizabeth McCall, Krystal Wilson, Elizabeth Garcia and Jennilee Hill.

“Our team is dedicated to helping rural communities feel better, and the results speak for themselves,” says Dr. Ron Gimbel, director of Clemson Rural Health. “Whether you're a co-op member or just interested in our services, Clemson Rural Health is here to help you get healthier. Consider taking a healthier first step into the new year with us in Walhalla.”

No matter if you're focused on better blood sugar control or building healthier meals, Clemson Rural Health has the resources to help you in the new year and beyond.

### Clemson Rural Health Clinic at Walhalla

- ▶ 200 Booker Drive, Walhalla, SC 29691
- ▶ (864) 656-3076
- ▶ [ClemsonRuralHealth@clemson.edu](mailto:ClemsonRuralHealth@clemson.edu)
- ▶ Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Scan the QR Code to see the Upstate Mobile Health Clinic's schedule.



Brooke Brittain, associate director of Food and Nutrition Security at Clemson Rural Health, leads a nutrition class for the public.



### Clemson Health Clinic at Walhalla

The Clemson Health Clinic at Walhalla is conveniently located downtown at 200 Booker Drive, next to the Oconee County Magistrate's Office.