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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.

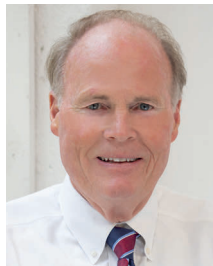
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This organization is an  
equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## Employee Days of Giving

**LATER THIS FALL,**  
Blue Ridge Electric  
Cooperative  
employees will  
come together for

our annual Employee Days of Giving Campaign, held throughout October. Every year, our employees choose to give back to the communities we serve. This year, we're hoping to surpass \$200,000 in cumulative giving since 2024.

At both of our offices, employees will hear a presentation on the nonprofits selected by an employee committee, then decide how they want to participate. Whether it's a one-time gift or contributing 12 hours of their own "fair share" pay toward their chosen causes, it's entirely a personal decision whether to give. We've even had employees do double their "fair share" and given back more. All Blue Ridge employees simply choose to because I believe that's who we are as a co-op.

The nonprofits receiving support this year will be announced once the campaign gets underway, but I can tell you they'll reflect what it has always been about—neighbors taking care of neighbors. Past recipients have included organizations serving veterans, survivors of domestic violence, people with disabilities and families in crisis right here in our service area.

Outside of Employee Days of Giving, the Upcountry Fiber Foundation



**View 2025  
Upcountry Fiber  
Foundation annual  
report**

continues to make a meaningful impact since its inception four years ago. In August, we announced the foundation donated \$15,000 spread across The Dream Center, Global Eco Adventures and the Westminster Senior Center. Those three nonprofits represent exactly what the foundation was built to support, from teaching kitchens to environmental education to a welcom-

ing space for seniors. I'm proud of what the Upcountry Fiber Foundation does in our communities, and the \$217,000 it has given to various Upstate nonprofits since 2022.

As I prepare to conclude my career at the co-op, I find myself reflecting on a variety of things: two historic storms in a 16-month period and unparalleled growth since 2020. But I keep coming back to the people who make Blue Ridge so special. I want to thank our employees for what they do, not only for their service to our members, but also outside of these office walls in how they give back to others. It's easy to talk about it. Our employees live it every day. Seeing this campaign succeed has been one of the highlights of my time in leadership, and I have no doubt it will continue after I retire.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
President and CEO

### Public auction Oct. 10

**BLUE RIDGE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** will hold a public auction on Saturday, Oct. 10, starting at 10 a.m. at 734 West Main Street in Pickens. A preview is scheduled for Friday, Oct. 9, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Items to be sold include:

- ▶ Vehicles
- ▶ Truck toolboxes
- ▶ Miscellaneous supplies
- ▶ Computer products and accessories

For more information, contact David J. Meares, SCAL 620, at (864) 444-1322 or visit SoldDJM.com.

## ‘So much more’ than a tour

Blue Ridge Electric sends local students on summer experiences

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

**WHEN BAILEY EZELL** signed up for Washington Youth Tour, she expected another trip built around monuments and museums. What she got was “so much more than that.”

Ezell, a senior at Pendleton High School, joined Hannah Kate DeWease and Marley Hayes, both of Pickens High School, as Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative’s delegates on a weeklong trip to the nation’s capital in June sponsored by South Carolina’s electric cooperatives. They joined 64 other high schoolers from across South Carolina, visiting Mount Vernon, Arlington National Cemetery, the Pentagon 9/11 Memorial and the Smithsonian museums. They also toured the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Museum of the Marine Corps and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

“It’s not just about touring,” says Ezell. “It’s about building relationships and learning things that go beyond sitting in a classroom.”

One of the week’s highlights was the day on Capitol Hill, where the students toured the Capitol. They also visited congressional offices, met staff and heard from Sen. Tim Scott and the late Sen. Lindsey Graham on the Capitol steps.

“I just thought it was a fantastic opportunity to get a more in-depth look at our nation’s capital and what goes on there,” says DeWease. “I really want to get an internship and work in Washington.”

A second co-op summer leadership program offered students a closer look at how electric cooperatives work at the state level.

In July, two other Blue Ridge Electric delegates—David Stewart, who is homeschooled, and Luke McLane of West Oak High School—joined 38 other teens for Cooperative Youth Summit in Columbia. That experience included a tour of South Carolina ETV studios, a visit with Gov. Henry McMaster and education in electrical safety and equipment at CEEUS, the co-ops’ materials supplier. The highlight was the group’s day at the S.C. State House, where John Frick, CEO of the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, talked with the students about the purpose of government, explained what lobbyists do under the dome and led them through a hands-on exercise in legislative dealmaking.



Blue Ridge Electric sponsored Hannah Kate DeWease, Bailey Ezell and Marley Hayes on Washington Youth Tour in June.

CANTON DURHAM



David Stewart took a ride in a co-op bucket truck during Cooperative Youth Summit’s visit to CEEUS in West Columbia.



Luke McLane makes his case during the Orators’ Arena, Cooperative Youth Summit’s public speaking competition.

PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER