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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.



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## Looking to the future

**THE ELECTRIC UTILITY** industry has changed more in the last 10 years than ever before. As we look to the future, I see more change on the horizon at a rapid pace. As uncontrollable pressure on Blue Ridge Electric's wholesale power and material costs puts additional pressure on retail rates, it is the co-op's duty to put our members in the best position to adapt to these changes. We believe the best way to combat this evolving landscape is to give you, the member, more opportunities to manage your energy use and ultimately control your power bill.

The electric utility industry is seeing an unprecedented rise in material costs. A combination of post-pandemic supply chain issues and new competition for raw materials that go into power line infrastructure are the leading causes of these cost increases. For example, core steel used in transformers that power our homes and businesses on our system has more than doubled in price due to the significant increase in demands for the same materials by the electric vehicle industry, which is also core to their vehicle batteries. These demands, coupled with inflation, have made operating and maintaining our distribution system more expensive.

As South Carolina continues to grow, the demand for electricity does as well. Our state is at a critical point and our current power supply is not built to withstand the burden of continued growth. As with most supply and demand scenarios, as power demand grows and supply constraints continue, the cost of power for all of us has and will continue to increase. As a distribution co-op that buys its power wholesale, Blue Ridge finds itself having to react to these cost increases.

Material, labor, and power costs are not unique to Blue Ridge. The electric utility industry as a whole—particularly in South Carolina—is wrestling with these same challenges. The co-op has plans to roll out a new retail rate in the fall of this year to allow our members to mitigate these external pressures. By incentivizing our members to use power strategically throughout the day, the co-op can positively influence its cost of power, and the members can do the same. With some small diligence in shifting our electric use, we can work together to react productively to these changes in our industry.

Please stay tuned for more information on these new residential and general service rate structures in the coming months. I ask you, our members, to keep an open mind and reach out to us with questions when we begin to discuss these new changes. The more education that occurs, the more successful this new concept will be, benefiting us all.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
President and CEO

# Career days

## BREC employees share job experiences with local students

**WHAT DO YOU** want to be when you grow up?

How many times were you asked that question as a child? Years ago, answers were limited to a small range of jobs and professions. But times have changed. Now, there are so many specialties within most career fields, students have almost limitless opportunities.

For years, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative has participated in career day activities with local schools. In early March, our employees were invited to the STEAM night for all Oconee County elementary school children. BREC Marketing Specialist Ashley Dickson and linemen Luke Burton and Garrett Smith attended. Dickson gave the students replica hardhats, which they wore as they climbed through a co-op bucket truck and inspected the bucket.

Another career day in March saw Blue Ridge representatives at Youth Leadership Academy in Pickens. Tonya Wilson, leadership teacher at the Academy, explains the importance of career day at her school.

“Our students are in a leadership class for each grade level and complete different types of career research, from career clusters to learning about what courses to take in high school to achieve their career goals,” Wilson says. “As a finalization of our unit, we

love to invite our community members for a career fair where students can visit with them and have conversations about their career experiences. Students love meeting new people, seeing career displays and discovering what their future holds. Because of the wonderful people and companies that participate, we are able to give our students insight about career opportunities in our area and around the world.”

Students in grades sixth through eighth had an opportunity to talk with a BREC lineman, inspect safety equipment and learn about the various jobs that are available at the co-op. Dustin Ahrens, mapping supervisor, showed students how Blue Ridge’s mapping system records every location and device associated with that location.

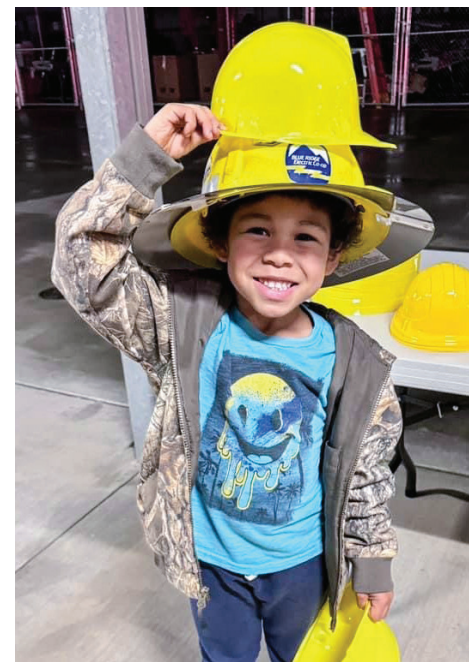
Senior Vice-President Denise McCormick says it’s important to meet students early in their decision-making process.

“If a student sees something that interests them in our organization, there’s a chance they will focus on job skills for that position and may someday come to work for us,” McCormick says. “Like most companies, we are always interested in a person that knows us and our culture. While it may seem that we’re doing a service for the school, they in turn are letting students be introduced to the co-op.”



PHOTOS BY ASHLEY DICKSON

Mapping Supervisor Dustin Ahrens (center) shows middle schoolers at Youth Leadership Academy how to search for their homes with the mapping system. They also had the opportunity to try on the safety equipment linemen wear.



Harlee Crow was excited to try on a lineman’s hardhat at the STEAM event. His mother says he talked about the hardhat all during dinner.

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