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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.



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## Thunderstorm season with a vengeance



**THE LATTER PART** of June produced a weather pattern the likes of which, in my lifetime, we hadn't seen around here before. Starting on Saturday, June 23, Blue Ridge experienced five consecutive evenings of violent thunderstorms that swept

across the cooperative's service territory. What's more, all the storms followed a very similar geographical track. Consequently, sizable numbers of our members lost power on more than one of those stormy afternoons.

Our employees threw themselves at the emergency with their usual vigor. However, the wave after wave of storm damage eventually stretched them beyond their physical limits. Fortunately, we were able to issue a call for assistance that brought a host of helpers from some of our fellow cooperatives—Walton EMC of Monroe, Jackson EMC of Jefferson, and Snapping Shoals EMC of Covington—each sent large teams of linemen to our aid. They were joined by additional linemen crews from Berkeley Electric and Aiken Electric in South Carolina.

### Skilled, quality people

There's one thing you can count on when you invite workers from other electric cooperatives to come to your side: They're going to be skilled, quality people. That proved to be the case again this time, and our out-of-area visitors truly gave a wonderful account of themselves. These men put forth the kind of selfless efforts that would surely have warmed the hearts of their own members back home. They were joined by a good number of contractor

employees who were also a tremendous help.

When assessing the level of destruction the Blue Ridge system sustained, the statistics are nothing short of jaw-dropping. During the period, the cooperative recorded 16,823 individual outages. That's equivalent to almost 25 percent of our total membership!

The dozens of broken wood poles were another unfortunate feature of the emergency. Included on the 7,000-mile Blue Ridge network of power lines are more than 110,000 of these poles. A broken pole ensures that the outage-repair time at that particular location will take about four times longer to correct.

### Jerking us around

In the final analysis, Mother Nature did a very impressive job of jerking us around. At the same time, our employees responded in their usual professional way. On top of that, the cooperative's many members who were inconvenienced demonstrated admirable patience in the face of doing without what is an essential service.

There are multitudes of reasons I'm thankful to be working for Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative. At the top of that list is the undeniable fact that we're privileged to be serving some of the finest people in the world! You can be certain that reality is foremost in our employees' minds as we strive to deliver the reliable service we passionately believe you deserve.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President and CEO

## Your energy expert

A RECENT SURVEY by The National Survey on the Cooperative Difference provided Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative with a great deal of information about our membership. Thanks to the willingness of a number of you to share your observations about our work and your relationship with us, we were able to pinpoint some areas that need a fresh focus.

One of those areas stemmed from a question on the survey: “If you had a question about renewable energy, where would you turn?” Your responses indicated that a small majority (55 percent) would call Blue Ridge. However, many of you stated you’d go to the internet, a family member, or a contractor to get the information you needed regarding an energy question. That’s what we want to change!

Our goal is to be YOUR Energy Expert—that person or persons you contact when you have a question about your energy needs, now and in the future. To make sure you understand how serious we are about this matter, we’ve put a group of employees together that work as a team. The team’s purpose is to help you make decisions about your energy needs with a fresh focus on renewables, such as community solar,

battery storage, and geothermal heat pump units.

Blue Ridge President and CEO Jim Lovinggood talks about this new initiative: “While the co-op has been a part of our local communities for 78 years, it’s more important than ever that we’re recognized as the people to approach when there’s an energy-related question. With new companies and promotions showing up practically every day on the internet, it’s difficult to know whom you can trust. We’re going to make that easy for you...just call Blue Ridge with your questions.”

Blue Ridge Energy Services is here for you! Look for information about new programs and opportunities in *South Carolina Living*, on our web page, [blueridge.coop](http://blueridge.coop), or on our Facebook page.



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## Washington Youth Tour ambassadors experience trip of a lifetime

**EVERY JUNE**, several rising seniors represent Blue Ridge Electric on the Washington Youth Tour. This year our four representatives were: Alden Richardson and Dawson Gilstrap from Pickens High School and Mackenzie Hopkins and Isaac Buckner from Walhalla High School. Pictured here during their visit to Capitol Hill, the students also had the opportunity to tour historical monuments, such as Mount Vernon, the Smithsonian, the World War II Memorial and many more.

While visiting the White House, they were honored when U. S. Senator Lindsey Graham and U. S. Senator Tim Scott met to talk with them on the steps of the White House. They were able to ask questions about United States government and important issues that are impacting today's society. The trip helps students to also get a

better understanding of how important cooperatives are and how they operate as a business.

Each of these outstanding students have thanked Blue Ridge for this memorable opportunity. All of them came back with new knowledge and new friends, here at home and across the nation. Mackenzie Hopkins on her return wrote, "The Washington Youth Tour was the experience of a lifetime. I had the opportunity to meet students from all parts of South Carolina and across the country while touring our nation's capital. My favorite part of this experience was the behind the scenes look at the Capitol given to us by Representative Duncan's staff."

For Issac Buckner being a part of the Washington Youth Tour was a "life-changing experience". He writes, "The trip to Washington has certainly inspired

me to lead and serve in my community." Alden Richardson expressed his thanks and concluded, "Going to Capitol Hill, meeting the senators, and listening to their encouraging words made a lasting impression upon me. To know we are the future leaders of our state is inspiring."

Like the other representatives, Dawson Gilstrap made new friends and summed up his trip this way. "There were plenty of sights to see and many unique opportunities to learn about our nation's capital. I had a wonderful time and felt truly blessed to be a part of the Washington Youth Tour."

If you have a child who is a junior in high school this year, remember they are eligible to apply for this amazing trip through your local Blue Ridge office. Applications will be available in the fall on our website, [blueridge.coop](http://blueridge.coop)



Representatives from Blue Ridge Electric Co-op visited Capitol Hill during their visit to Washington. They are (l to r), Alden Richardson, Dawson Gilstrap, Mackenzie Hopkins and Issac Buckner.

DANNY PECK



## Thank you to our sponsors

Each year Blue Ridge Fest starts anew, hoping to raise enough money to make a difference in the lives of people that live here in Upstate South Carolina. Combining good music and classic cars with a lot of hard work from Blue Ridge employees and some faithful volunteers has produced \$2.7 million for Fest recipients. However, another important part of our success, year after year, is the continued support from our sponsors; many who have seen the value in what we do and have donated their financial or in-kind gift since we started this event 21 years ago. To all these companies and individuals, we owe our gratitude. If and when you see them, we hope you'll thank them as well.

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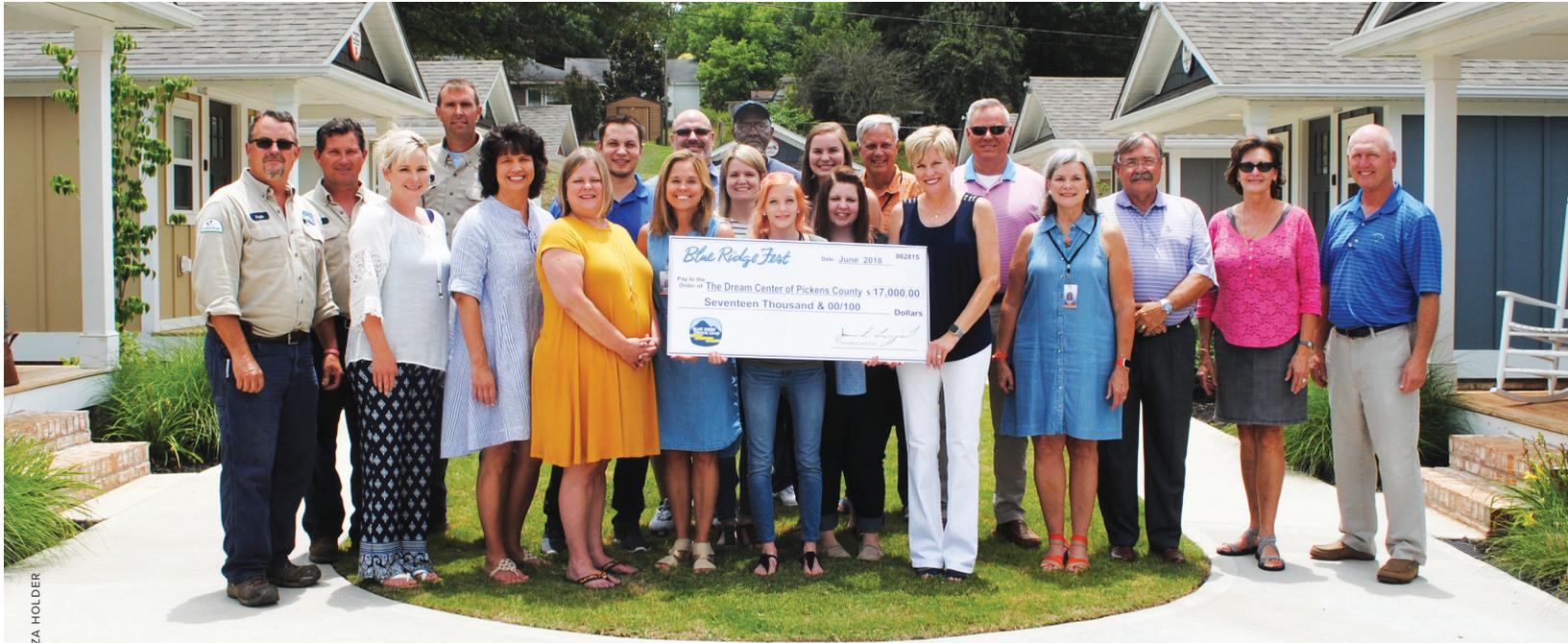
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LIZA HOLDER

## Charities benefit from Blue Ridge Fest

**WHEN ALL IS** said and done, giving to help another person just makes you feel good. In late June, the money raised at the 2018 Blue Ridge Fest was given to charities that were pre-selected by an employee committee.

Committee chairman Zach Hinton saw the work that went into selecting these 12 organizations from almost 100 applications. “Every application that comes in is reviewed, and the needs are overwhelming. We wish we could help every one of them, but we try to focus on agencies that help people with basic needs—food, shelter, medical care, and other short-term assistance.”

This year the charities that were selected included: A Call to Action, Anderson Free Clinic, Center for Developmental Services, Collins Children’s Home, The Dream Center of Pickens County, Fair Play Camp School, Feed a Hungry Child, Hospice of the Upstate, The Lachlan McIntosh Tannery Foundation, Miracle Hill Children’s Home, North Greenville Crisis Ministry, and Samaritan Health Clinic of Pickens County.

Knowing how important sponsors

are to the success of Blue Ridge Fest, each sponsor is invited to join Blue Ridge employees at one of the check presentations to meet the people that are the face of the charity. Liza Holder works closely with Fest sponsors and the charities during this process. She explains, “It’s so rewarding for our sponsors to see first-hand what Blue Ridge Fest does in the local communities. These agencies are the ‘boots on the ground’ for Blue Ridge Fest, our employees and our sponsors. They take what we give them and use that donation to help thousands of individuals and families.”

Planning for 2019 Blue Ridge Fest has already begun, spurred on by the thanks of people like Chris Wilson, representing The Dream Center in Pickens County. In her note of thanks she writes, “The Dream Center is so grateful for every person that gives of their time or money to support Blue Ridge Fest. This generous grant goes a long way to provide individuals and families in need a hand up in a time of crisis. Because of this support, we will be able to accept

Blue Ridge Electric employees Bryan Roper, Mark McCall, Carla Stone, Kevin Lewis and Michelle Watson presented a check for \$17,000 from the 21st Annual Blue Ridge Fest to The Dream Center of Pickens County. Accepting the check on behalf of the organization are Founders Chris and Jim Wilson in addition to several volunteers. Also in attendance were **Blue Ridge Fest sponsors:** Mike Metz of Design South Professionals and Carol Adams of Case Interior Design. Senator Rex Rice also joined in the presentation. Pictured from left to right: **Front Row:** Bryan Roper, Carla Stone, Michelle Watson, Angela Dalton, Shannon Leatherwood, Hope Owen, Shelby Dickard, Chris Wilson, Bobbie Metz, Mike Metz, Carol Adams and Senator Rex Rice **Second Row:** Mark McCall, Kevin Lewis, Stephen Estrada, Joey Turner, Hannah Smoak, Herb Bowen, Tatum Rea, Jeff Furst and Jim Wilson

families with children into our homeless shelter program, The Opportunity Village, in the near future. Blue Ridge Fest exemplifies how people can come together to make a big impact on needs in our community while providing the opportunity for sponsors, employees, and volunteers to each be Difference Makers. Thank you for allowing us to be a recipient of such incredible generosity.” Make your plans to be part of this group next year on Friday, May 3 at our annual “Great Times for Great Causes” event.

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