



santee.org

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SANTEE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEWS
 Joanna Arnsmeier, *Editor*
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FIND US ON



SANTEE ELECTRIC IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Get to know Stephanie

I WANT TO WRAP UP our 2024 *South Carolina Living* issues by introducing an awesome employee. Stephanie Fajardo

Hernandez has been a tremendous addition to our team since she arrived in 2019.

Stephanie was born in Colima, a beautiful city on the Pacific coast of Mexico. She moved to Florence County when she was two and attended J.C. Lynch Elementary and Ronald E. McNair Middle School before graduating from Lake City High School. From there, she went to Florence Darlington Technical College and obtained a degree in marketing and accounting.

We were fortunate to snag Stephanie for a cashier position in SEC's Lake City office in 2019. Stephanie has worked as a Member Service Representative, Billing Representative and currently works as an Accounting Analyst—Payroll. She is currently attending Francis Marion University and is a double major in accounting and finance. When she completes her degree work at the end of this school year, she will become our Payroll Accountant.

Family is important to Stephanie. Her father and mother, Omar and Maria, are major influences in her life. "They have always been incredibly encouraging and have instilled a positive work ethic in my siblings and me," she says.

Stephanie's brother, Irvin, is the proud owner of an inflatable business, and her sister, Melanie, works for Waccamaw EOC as a family service worker for Head Start. Stephanie loves to spend time with her niece, Dalila, who has just turned 4!

When I ask Stephanie what she likes to do in her free time, she immediately names Huntington Beach State Park. "I love to sit on the dock and watch the sun set over the trees." She also loves family time and points out that she's pretty good on the volleyball court when the family

plays. Stephanie loves to cook traditional Mexican dishes, and she says her best dish is pozole, a traditional Mexican dish with pork and hominy in it.

When I ask Stephanie the best part of her job, she says, "It's the relief I hear in our Spanish-speaking members' voices when they get me on the phone and realize I can communicate with them." Stephanie spoke Spanish first, but she was fluent in English by the time she was 4 or 5. When I ask how she picked it up so fast, she gives credit to her cousins and her favorite childhood TV show, *Power Rangers*. She says the Pink Power Ranger was her favorite!

When asked about the toughest part of the job, "It is probably change," she says. "Everyone finds change challenging, but we must never stop learning throughout our careers."

I also ask what she likes about SEC, in general. "It's a great place to work and excel," she says. "I applied for the cashiering position because I knew that I wanted to work in the accounting department. SEC has allowed me to live that 'dream' that will soon become a reality. "I am extremely grateful for my work family because they are always there to lend a hand and offer words of encouragement."

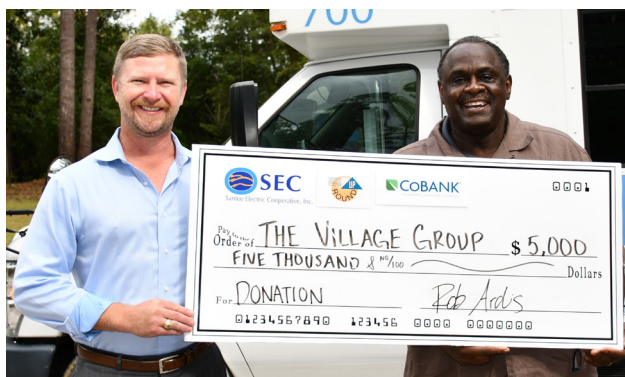
I wrap up by asking if there is anything she wants our readers to know. "We are always there to help," she replies, adding, "Nunca dejes de perseguir tus sueños! Never stop pursuing your dreams!"



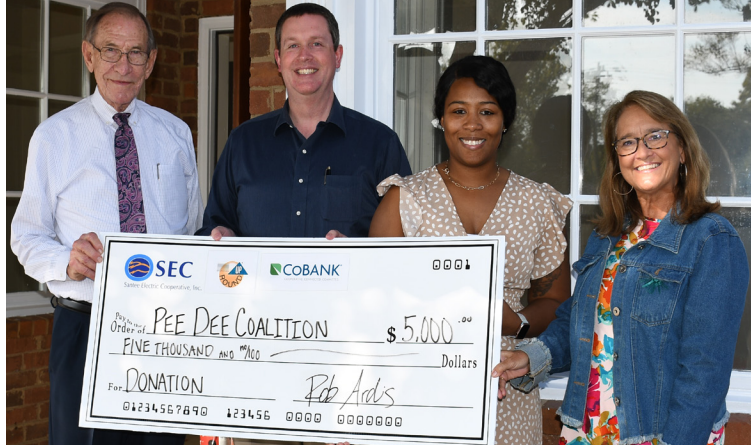
Stephanie Fajardo Hernandez

PHOTO BY JOANNA ARNSMEIER

ROBERT G. ARDIS III
 President and Chief Executive Officer



Kevin Myers, SEC Manager of Marketing (left) presents Ray Funnye, The Village Group Executive Director, with the \$5,000 donation from the SEC Round Up fund and CoBank.



PHOTOS BY JOANNA ARNSMEYER

The grant for Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault will support the new Durant Children's Center Satellite. Pictured at the check presentation are (left to right) Henry Poston, Pee Dee Coalition Board Member, Ronald Carter, SEC Manager of Economic Development and Government Affairs, Courtney Matthews, 3rd Circuit Project Coordinator/Family Advocate at the Durant Children's Center and Dr. Elizabeth Morphis, Durant Children's Home Medical Director.

Giving back to the community

Operation Round Up, CoBank partner to share success

SANTEE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE was proud to make donations to three charitable foundations—McLeod Health Foundation, Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault and The Village Group—through the co-op's Round Up fund and CoBank's Sharing Success program.

McLeod Health Foundation received \$5,000 from SEC through the Round Up fund, which CoBank matched for a total of \$10,000.

The grant for McLeod Health Foundation is for the Compassionate Care Initiative, a life-changing service for patients whose hospital admission exacerbates their financial struggles. This grant will also go towards medical equipment (telemetry monitors) for the surgical unit. McLeod Health serves Clarendon,

Williamsburg and Sumter counties.

"We are thankful for Santee Electric's commitment to community and for recognizing the ongoing needs of the patients we serve," says Rachel Gainey, CEO of McLeod Health Clarendon.

Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault received \$2,500 from SEC through the Round Up fund, which CoBank matched for a total of \$5,000. Pee Dee Coalition is dedicated to the reduction of sexual assault, family violence and child abuse and to meeting the needs of victims.

The grant for Pee Dee Coalition will support the new Durant Children's Center Satellite, a comprehensive multidisciplinary child abuse assessment and treatment center. This grant will also add support for the local crisis center for domestic and sexual assault victim advocacy, community education, a 24-hour telephone helpline and training for professionals.

The Village Group received \$2,500 from SEC through the Round Up fund, which CoBank matched for a total of \$5,000.

The grant for The Village Group will support Plantersville Summer Academy (a program The Village Group offers). The grant will support more than 200 underserved students attending Plantersville Summer Academy. This program is designed to provide academic enrichment and support to the students, and the funds will allow for that to continue.

CoBank is a national cooperative bank with a Sharing Success program, a fund that matches the contributions of up to \$10,000 from Santee Electric to organizations. Santee Electric Cooperative has participated in the Sharing Success program for 12 years.

"CoBank has been a valuable lending partner of Santee Electric for many years, and the Sharing Success program they offer is one of the great benefits they provide," says Jay Kirby, vice president of Public Affairs. "It helps us to give back to the charities that work hard in our communities."

Santee Electric's Round Up Fund comes from Operation Round Up. Each month, Santee Electric "rounds up" the electric bills of participating consumers to the next highest dollar. Donations are tax-deductible.

If you participate in Operation Round-Up, then you played a role in these donations!

If you don't, and would like to, you can sign up online at santee.org/ORU or by calling 1 (800) 922-1604.



Carrie Anna Strange (left), director of Communications & Public Information at McLeod Health Clarendon, shows McLeod Health Clarendon CEO Rachel Gainey how the telemetry monitors the grant is helping to purchase works.

Happy Holidays!

SEC's offices will be closed on the following days in observance of the following holidays:

- ▶ **Thanksgiving:** Nov. 28 and 29
- ▶ **Christmas:** Dec. 24 and 25
- ▶ **New Year's:** Jan. 1, 2025

Andrews teen answers call to help local children

McKenzie's service project earns co-ops' Bennett Scholarship

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

CLAIRE MCKENZIE, A 17-YEAR-OLD from Andrews, had heard about the lack of essential items accessible to foster children in her community from her mother's friend Betc Copeland, an employee of Williamsburg County Department of Social Services.

"She had been telling us about how much stuff those children needed," says McKenzie. "When I was given the opportunity to help, that was the first thing I thought of."

This summer, 100 foster children in Williamsburg County got some things they desperately needed, and McKenzie received a \$5,000 scholarship for her leading role in that effort.

McKenzie's service project, "Essential Supplies for Foster Children," provided 100 bags of essential items and 109 gift cards to restaurants for children placed in foster care in Williamsburg County. The bags contained items such as a toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant and were handed out to children who may be waiting for a host family.

McKenzie was among a group of high school students from across the state who completed service projects that exemplify the cooperative principle of "concern for community." Her project was selected from among those to earn the \$5,000 R.D. Bennett Community Service Scholarship, presented by The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina. McKenzie completed her project after representing Santee Electric Cooperative on the co-ops' annual Washington Youth Tour program, which sends rising high school seniors to Washington, D.C. for a week each summer.

"The most rewarding thing about this project was witnessing the generosity of others,"

—CLAIRE MCKENZIE



PHOTO BY CHASE TOLER

2024 Bennett Scholar Community Service Scholarship winner Claire McKenzie of Andrews.

The Williamsburg Academy senior raised \$1,500 to fund the project.

"You really have to drill people, sometimes," says McKenzie. "We posted on Facebook, and a lot of friends and people from my church made donations, but it wasn't enough. We went to a lot of small businesses and big corporations in our town. You can't give up."

That persistence not only benefited Williamsburg County's foster children, but McKenzie as well.

"The most rewarding thing about this project was witnessing the generosity of others," McKenzie says. "There were so many people, companies and groups that donated to help make this project a success."

The R.D. Bennett Community Service Scholarship is named for Robert D. Bennett, the first general manager and executive vice president of The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina. Bennett strongly believed that electric cooperatives should support their local communities—providing a better quality of life for their members. His spirit of community service is reflected in this scholarship opportunity.

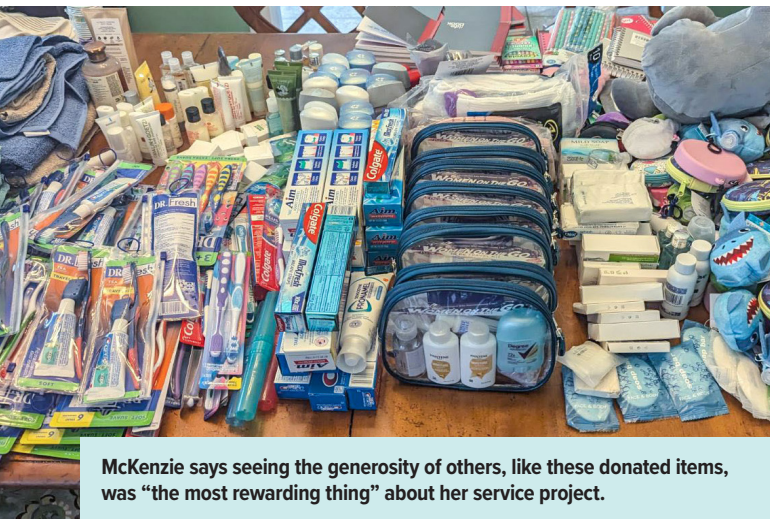


PHOTO BY CLAIRE MCKENZIE

McKenzie says seeing the generosity of others, like these donated items, was "the most rewarding thing" about her service project.

Want the opportunity to serve your community and win a scholarship? Santee Electric will be taking Washington Youth Tour applications from high school juniors in their service area in January. But you can fill out an interest form now at ecsc.org/youth.

2025 Nominating Committee Information

SANTEE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE will hold its 2025 Drive-Thru Annual Meeting on April 15, 2025, at SEC Headquarters, 424 Sumter Hwy, Kingstree, SC 29556.

Nominating Committee to meet

In accordance with Article IV, Section 3 of the co-op's bylaws, excerpted below, the member-owners listed at the right have been duly appointed to the Nominating Committee. The committee will meet December 18, 2024, at SEC's headquarters for the purpose of nominating trustees for Districts 2, 4, and 7.

Nominations by petition

Article IV, Section 3 also gives member-owners the right to nominate board candidates by petition. At least one percent of the co-op's membership, acting together, can nominate a fellow member. Petitions must be filed with the cooperative at least 80 days prior to the annual meeting.

Applicable bylaws

Article III: Meeting of Members

SECTION 1: ANNUAL MEETING. The annual meeting of members shall be held on such day in each year, beginning with the year 1952, and at such place within a county served by the Cooperative as shall be fixed and determined by the Board of Trustees, and as shall be designated in the notice of the meeting for the purpose of electing trustees, passing upon reports for the previous fiscal year and transacting such other business as may come before the meeting. Failure to hold the annual meeting at the designated time shall not work a forfeiture and dissolution of the Cooperative.

Article IV: Trustees

SECTION 3. NOMINATIONS. It shall be the duty of the Board of Trustees to appoint, not less than one-hundred-and-seventy (170) days or more than one-hundred-and-ninety (190) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which Trustees are to be elected, a committee on nominations consisting of not less than five (5) nor more than eleven (11) members who shall be selected from different sections of the project area so as to ensure equitable representation. No member of the Board of Trustees may serve on such committee. Incumbent Trustees seeking reelection shall not directly or indirectly influence the nomination or credentials process. Said Trustees shall recuse themselves from participation in appointing members to such committee(s), and Cooperative members from their Trustee Districts shall be selected without their input or participation. Trustees may not appoint, direct or cause a family member to become a member of such committee(s). For purposes of this Section, "family member" includes a spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent, grandchild and a member of the individual's immediate family. The committee on nominations shall prepare and post at the principal office of the Cooperative at least one hundred (100) days before the meeting a list of nominations for Trustees, but 1% or more of the members of the Cooperative, acting together, may make additional nominations in writing over their signatures, listing their nominee(s) in like manner and filing the same with the Cooperative, not less than eighty (80) days prior to the meeting and the Secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted. The Board of Trustees shall, by policy, adopt a process allowing petition signatures to be collected electronically according to procedures or standards approved by the Board. The Secretary shall mail with the notice of the meeting a list of the number of Trustees, shown by District, to be elected and the names and addresses of the candidates nominated for each District, specifying separately the nominations made by petition, if any. The names are to be arranged by Districts and in alphabetical order, except that incumbents shall be placed first on the list so arranged. At the meeting of members, the Secretary of the Cooperative shall place in nomination the names of the official candidates for each District. Election of Trustees shall be by ballots. The ballots shall list the candidates selected by the Nominating Committee and by petition. The names shall be arranged by Districts and in alphabetical order, except that the incumbents shall be placed first in order on such ballot. Each member of the Cooperative present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote for one (1) candidate for each District for which a Trustee is to be elected at that particular meeting. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes for each District at this meeting shall be considered elected as Trustee. In the event that the number of candidates seeking election does not exceed the number of Trustees required in a particular District, balloting may be dispensed with in respect to that District and, if there are no objections, the nominee may be elected by acclamation.

Nominating Committee appointments for 2025 Annual Meeting

Angela Bartell
306 Scotland Road
Lake City, SC 29560

Wanda J. Johnson
1438 Lake Shore Drive
Manning, SC 29102

Gwenevere Moody
2256 White Oak Road
Kingstree, SC 29556

Olin Dukes
365 McCollough Loop
Kingstree, SC 29556

Frankie M. Davis
296 Walnut Avenue
Georgetown, SC 29440

Kasey Feagin
4803 Pine Oak Road
Effingham, SC 29541

Clifford Gamble
1389 Edwin Road
Salters, SC 29590

Penny S. Gamble
2212 Santee Road
Andrews, SC 29510



PHOTO BY JOANNA ARNEMEYER

SEC is proud of our lineworkers for embracing the spirit of cooperation among cooperatives, which is one of our core values. These crews went to assist Edisto Electric Cooperative, then some traveled to help Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative. Pictured are (left to right) Causey Ellis, Jeff Brand, Jamie Johnson, Dustin Shady, Tyler Poston, Jason Floyd, Corbett Collins, Bill Price, Dwaine Floyd and Abbi Davis.



PHOTO BY TYLER POSTON

Broken crossarms were found across SEC's system.

Hurricane Helene

HURRICANE HELENE IMPACTED Santee Electric's territory in late September. During the hurricane, 17,545 SEC members were without power due to damages such as broken poles, trees on lines, broken crossarms and more. However, the dedicated team at SEC worked tirelessly and restored power to all members within an impressive three-day timeframe, a fantastic achievement.

SEC's service territory was fortunate compared to other parts of South Carolina. Once power was restored to all SEC members, the co-op demonstrated its commitment to community support by extending a helping hand to sister co-ops in the state. Some of SEC's crews and personnel went to assist Edisto Electric Cooperative, Coastal Electric Cooperative and Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative with their power restoration efforts. This collaborative effort exemplifies the strong sense of community and cooperation among cooperatives and underscores the resilience and dedication of those working in the aftermath of natural disasters.

In addition to returning reliable power to our members, safety is our top concern. We encourage you to drive slowly any time you encounter our crews, stay away from downed powerlines and be on guard against scams now and in the future.



PHOTO BY CHRISTIE DYSON

Lineman Harry Dukes works in the aftermath of Helene.



PICTURE BY WADE CHASE

Dozens of trees fell on lines in the aftermath of Helene.



PHOTO BY CHRIS FRYE

Tyler Johanning, Scott Lee, Chad Miles, Wade Chase and Duane Nelson (left to right) assisted Coastal Electric Cooperative, then some traveled to help Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative.

HEMINGWAY, MANNING OFFICES TO CLOSE DEC. 20

TO REDUCE COSTS, Santee Electric Cooperative is permanently closing its Hemingway and Manning branch offices on Dec. 20.

Closing these offices aims to combat increasing costs for Santee Electric's members. The goal is to keep rates as low as possible. There has been a significant decline in in-person transactions over the past decade, particularly at the Hemingway and Manning branch offices. As a result, the decision to close these offices is deemed the most cost-effective.

Our members can still conduct business at our other three locations: the Georgetown branch office, the Lake City branch office and the corporate headquarters in Kingstree. Members can continue to make payments using various options, including the SmartHub App, the online portal, in-person at the open branch offices, automated pay-by-phone and at over 100 retail locations through VanillaDirect Pay, a new in-person payment option. Members can also initiate new services over the phone, online, or in person at the remaining offices.

For more information about Santee Electric's payment options, visit santee.org/billing.

Chance to win a \$50 bill credit

EXCITING NEWS! You now have the chance to win a \$50 bill credit if you use VanillaDirect Pay. With three monthly winners from September to December, this is an opportunity not to be missed.

Convenience is key, and VanillaDirect Pay allows you to pay your energy bills at a variety of retail locations, including popular stores such as Dollar General, CVS, Walgreens, Walmart and more. To get started, just check the back of your bill print or your SmartHub account for your unique VanillaDirect barcode.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to simplify your bill payments and potentially win a \$50 bill credit. Visit santee.org/billing for a full list of available locations.

SAVING TIPS



Do not use all of your high-use appliances at the same time (water heater, HVAC, and clothes dryer) during the peak hours. Or, use them before or after the peak hours.



Manually adjust your thermostat so your HVAC runs less during peak hours. Pre-cooling or pre-heating your home before the peak hours (when energy is 6.5 cents/kWh) will help. A programmable/smart thermostat can do this for you.



Limit hot water use during the peak hours. Consider placing a timer switch on your water heater that helps shift your energy usage off peak hours when energy costs less (6.5 cents/kWh). That way, you can still use hot water during the peak, but the water heater is not running.



WINTER PEAK HOURS

November 1- March 31
6 a.m. - 9 a.m.

santee.org/rate-structure