



**santee.org**

P.O. Box 548  
Kingstree, SC 29556  
(843) 355-6187  
(800) 922-1604

Georgetown (843) 546-4521

Lake City (843) 374-3000

Hemingway (843) 558-3313

Manning (803) 473-4036

**TO REPORT AN OUTAGE**  
1-888-239-2300

Robert G. Ardis III  
*President & CEO*

**TRUSTEES**

Billy L. Morris, Jr.,  
*Chairman, District 6*  
Allen Nesmith,  
*Vice Chairman, District 4*  
Bill Floyd,  
*Second Vice Chairman, District 8*  
Donald E. Coker,  
*Secretary/Treasurer, District 3*  
Andy D. McKnight  
*Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, District 5*  
Dudley Musier, *District 2*  
Walter L. Sanders, *District 1*  
Harry Walters, *District 9*

**SANTEE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE NEWS**  
Joanna Arnsmeier, *Editor*  
jarnsmeyer@santee.org

**FIND US ON**



**SANTEE ELECTRIC IS AN EQUAL  
OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND  
EMPLOYER.**



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



# Hemingway, Manning offices to close

## Rising costs lead to office closings

**HERE AT SANTEE ELECTRIC,** our core function is to provide safe, reliable electricity at the lowest possible cost. My topic for this month's column is what your cooperative is doing to manage costs for you.

It is no secret that the cost of everything is rising. Just as everything you buy today is more expensive than it was five years ago, the poles, crossarms, wires and transformers we need to build and maintain our system have gone up significantly in price, in some cases doubling in the past five years. On top of that, the price of wholesale power that South Carolina's electric cooperatives purchase from Santee Cooper and Duke has gone up and will continue to go up significantly.

At SEC, we are doing all we can to avoid passing these costs along to our members, and we have been successful so far. Our new rate structure has gone a long way toward incentivizing off-peak energy use. It has enabled many of our ratepayers to save while saving the cooperative on the power we purchase.

Santee Electric must cut the costs it can manage, too, though. One opportunity to manage those costs is to reduce the number of offices we own and maintain. For many years, SEC has operated five different offices across our four counties. However, fewer of our ratepayers use those offices. Due to many appealing automated payment alternatives, we have seen the number of in-person transactions reduced by 50% over the past 10 years, and the trend suggests this will be cut in half again over the next 10 years.

In short, because so many people have embraced SmartHub, bank draft

and other forms of automated payment and service order options, we no longer have the level of in-person interaction to justify the cost of maintaining five offices. With the introduction of the Vanilla Direct payment option—available at more than 100 retail locations such as Dollar General, CVS and Walmart in our territory—this trend is only likely to increase.

For these reasons, Santee Electric will close its Hemingway and Manning offices permanently on Dec. 20 of this year. These two locations were chosen because they see significantly fewer in-person transactions than our other two branch locations. Our members can still conduct business in person at our Lake City and Georgetown branches and our Kingstree headquarters. Of course, all business can be conducted in an automated fashion or over the phone. If you prefer, we can do anything you need over the phone or via email.

We did not make this decision lightly. Although this change will have no impact on the majority of our members, we are well aware that those members accustomed to stopping by the Hemingway or Manning offices to drop off their payments will see a change. We have many other options for you, most of which cost less than the drive to the local office. Thank you for your understanding and know that your cooperative's employees are doing all we can to manage your costs.

**ROBERT G. ARDIS III**  
President and Chief Executive Officer



McGee received some higher learning from a lineman in the bucket of a boom truck during the visit to Newberry Electric Cooperative.

## Summer experience meaningful for McGee

### Cooperative Youth Summit encourages civic engagement

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

**THERE'S A LOT** that Chloe McGee would like to do again after her experience at Cooperative Youth Summit—a ride in the bucket of a boom truck, sitting in Gov. Henry McMaster's chair and collaborating with new friends to find their way out of an escape room. However, it was doing something for others that the Williamsburg Academy sophomore is intent on repeating.

In July, McGee and 44 other students from across the state partnered with the state chapter of Women Involved in Rural Electrification (WIRE), a co-op affiliated service organization, in stuffing bags of essential items such as hygiene products for temporarily homeless youth.

"I understand the struggles that come with having a troubled childhood, so it really hit home to help kids who don't have much," says McGee. "I haven't been able to help the community in that way before, but I would love to help again."

Cooperative Youth Summit—an education initiative sponsored each year by Santee Electric and South Carolina's other electric cooperative—is a four-day exploration of South Carolina's state capital, civic engagement and the cooperative business model. In addition to the service project with WIRE, the student delegates visited Gov. Henry McMaster's office and had the opportunity to ask questions about current events, as well as state and national politics, with South



PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER

▲ Local high school student Chloe McGee represented Santee Electric at Cooperative Youth Summit.

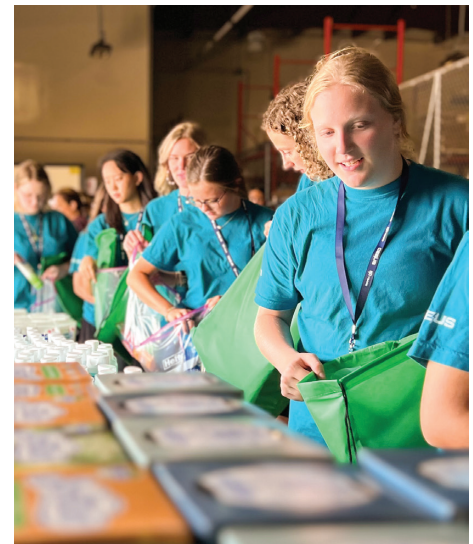
Carolina legislators Rep. Micah Caskey and Sen. Mike Fanning.

A visit to Newberry Electric gave the students a glimpse of how an electric cooperative operates. Many of them were also lifted above the co-op in a bucket truck.

"I got to learn a lot about the energy in my town," says McGee. "What's behind it, the people's jobs and how dangerous the work is."

The students were also a part of Soda Pop Co-op, a student-run, mobile market selling snacks and drinks with a board of trustees and staff.

Throughout the week, Cooperative Youth Summit also students participated in a public speaking competition, in which teams developed presentations related to current political and cultural issues, such as banning TikTok and subsidizing electric vehicles.



During her visit to Newberry Electric, McGee (far right) helped stuff bags of essential items that will be given to temporarily homeless youth through a co-op affiliated program called Kid's Closet.

### Bright Ideas applications due Sept. 23

**TEACHERS IN** Williamsburg, Georgetown, Clarendon and Florence counties—don't forget to submit your applications for a Bright Ideas grant!

Bright Ideas grants are intended to fund projects outside normal school funding parameters and are available to all disciplines in grades K-12. A school may submit multiple applications, but a teacher is limited to one application per school year. Grants are awarded for up to \$1,000 each. The Bright Ideas Grant is a fantastic opportunity to bring creative and engaging projects to your school, so take advantage of it!

For more information about the Bright Ideas grant program and the application, visit [santee.org/bright-ideas](http://santee.org/bright-ideas). Completed applications are due by Monday, Sept. 23.

