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**SANTEE ELECTRIC  
 COOPERATIVE NEWS**

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## Save the last dog for me



**BELIEVE IT OR NOT,** August marks three years since I was blessed to begin this job at Santee Electric. That

makes this time of year very special for me, but summer, in general, has always been a great season in my eyes.

As I am writing this, Independence Day is just two days away. I love Fourth of July gatherings! Fireworks are always so much fun, and there is no better way to cook a hot dog than over an open fire. We usually have a couple of bonfires at my house each year. My pecan trees are just starting to give a hint of what kind of crop I can expect in the fall. They also, of course, provide an endless supply of limbs to be collected and burned—and I believe that hot dogs and marshmallows are just as critical to burning pecan limbs as matches are!

My wife makes an amazing strawberry pie, and that always makes me think of summer. It's a great, cool dessert on a hot day, and fresh strawberries are always better this time of year. We have this old refurbished picnic table that sits in our backyard. When we finished replacing all of the wood on the old metal frame, my wife, children and I each put a painted handprint on the table

top. It's great to see how much bigger my kids' hands are than their prints from the time we worked on that project.

Yep, a roasted hot dog and a slice of strawberry pie on the old picnic table sound just about perfect right now. Let's not forget the Citronella candles, of course. Mosquitoes, as you know, are the state bird of South Carolina!

I also recall catching my first spottail in the surf in Pawleys Island one summer around this time of year. I know—folks from Louisiana and Florida call them redfish, and scientists say they are red drum, but you and I know them for what they really are!

So, forgive the oppressive heat of the dog days of summer, and try to tolerate the evening thunderstorms. Take a moment to enjoy a leisurely cookout, a splash in your favorite body of water, an ice cold beverage of your choice, and an evening fishing trip. We have tons of hours of daylight right now! If you happen to find yourself with one extra hot dog at your campfire, I'll take one with mustard and chili, please!

Have a great summer!

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



MARY GRACE MCGEE

### Capping a 52-year career

Benton Blakely retired recently after dedicating 52 years of his life to the cooperative. He began his career at Santee Electric in 1966 at age 20 as a stores and material specialist. Blakely became the warehouse supervisor in 1978 and served as purchasing manager at the time of retirement. Here, Rob Ardis presents Blakely a plaque at his retirement party on May 31. Congratulations to Blakely on an impressive 52-year career!