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**SANTEE ELECTRIC  
 COOPERATIVE NEWS**

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# There will be an Annual Meeting!



**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**—How about a fall Annual Meeting?

In my April *South Carolina Living* column, I shared the sad news that it was necessary for us to postpone our 2020 Annual Meeting of the Membership of SEC indefinitely due to COVID-19

concerns. While those concerns remain, we now have a plan to make it possible to “meet”—but there will be a LOT of big changes.

First, while SEC typically has a spring meeting, the 2020 Annual Meeting will be held in the fall—on **Tuesday, Oct. 27.**

Next, **the meeting will take place at our headquarters (424 Sumter Highway)—**not at Kingstree High School.

Another big change is that we will have **drive-thru registration.** We will have signs, cones, and other methods of guiding thousands of cars through our campus here at HQ, and you’ll register under the shed where our linemen normally park the big trucks. Great news—you never have to get out of your car!

The last major change is that the business meeting itself (at 6:30 that evening) will be a virtual meeting. With current health concerns, we can’t have thousands of people packed into a building for a traditional meeting, so we will live-stream the business meeting—and the prize drawings!—on social media that evening.

A couple of minor changes, too.

We plan to have registration from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (as opposed to the normal 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.). We want to

make sure this new process doesn’t do anything to hurt our chances of making quorum, so we are going to have a longer registration window.

We are also planning to have paper ballots. We need you to adopt updated bylaws and also vote on a state referendum question (both of which I will detail in next month’s issue), but we do not want to expose you to the risk of touching a voting machine or tablet that has been touched by many hands before you. Therefore, one of our employees (wearing a mask and gloves, of course)

will hand you a paper ballot and a pencil when you register. You keep the pencil and drop the ballot in the box as your gift ticket.

Speaking of gifts, we have had these awesome cast iron frying pans (commemorating our 80th Annual Meeting) ready to give to you since the original meeting date. So don’t forget to come get yours on Oct. 27! You will also still get the traditional \$15 bill credit and will be registered for a chance to win something from our selection of grand prizes, including a vehicle.

Be on the lookout for next month’s issue of *South Carolina Living*, which will have your registration ticket and a lot more details about this unusual—but I think it’s going to be great!—Annual Meeting process. Happy Fall, y’all!

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

The 2020 Annual Meeting will be held Tuesday, Oct. 27

## Cooking provides a new path for WIRE scholar

**FOR LANA COLOMBO**, cooking serves a lot of purposes. It's a way to bring joy to others. It reminds her of a happy time from a past that has more than its share of tragedy. And it is providing a way to move on from that bitter history.

Colombo, a member of Santee Electric Cooperative, is one of this year's recipients of the Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship, a \$2,500 grant given annually to women returning to school to earn college degrees. The scholarship is sponsored by Women Involved in Rural Electrification (WIRE), a service organization associated with Santee Electric and South Carolina's electric cooperatives.

"Scholarships to me were like getting a ride to Mars. I never in a million years thought that I would get one," says Colombo. "[This scholarship] just proves to me that I can do what I said I was going to do. It lets me know that I can get more scholarships and it's motivation for me to keep going."

Orphaned by the time she was 13, Colombo was in and out of foster homes and lived on the street for three years. However, she found respite in the New Orleans kitchen of her adopted family.

"My mom would make dinner every night and I would watch," Colombo says. "She'd have the onions, bell pepper, and the garlic sautéing then hand me the wooden spoon and tell me not to let it burn. That was my only interaction with any



Lana Colombo has lived on the streets, lost her first home to Hurricane Katrina, and spent 11 years in prison. Now the Jenny Ballard Scholarship recipient is a top student at the Culinary Institute of Charleston.

type of mom."

In 2005, Colombo was a young mother herself, and working to buy her own home. But Hurricane Katrina flooded that home, leaving her and her daughter on their roof for three days before they were rescued.

Colombo was displaced to a motel in Jacksonville, Florida, where she befriended some other Katrina refugees. One night, while Colombo pumped gas, one of her friends robbed the station. They were quickly apprehended by local law enforcement and Colombo was pressured to plead guilty to armed robbery despite her claims that she didn't know her friend's intent. She would serve 11 years in prison and she was released last summer.

Four years ago, she received a letter from a retired college professor in Summerton

that changed her life. Jake Halford connected with Colombo through a prison pen pal ministry. He recognized her intelligence and determination in the first few letters they exchanged. Having read the MacGyver-like tales about dishes she made for fellow inmates from limited prison resources, Halford paid for Colombo to take a culinary correspondence course.

"She came out of that course saying that's what she wanted to do," says Halford, who brought Colombo to South Carolina upon her release and continues to support her transition. "And she has done everything she said she was going to do."

Colombo currently works both in a Publix bakery and a Cracker Barrel and maintains a 4.0 GPA at Trident Technical College's Culinary Institute of Charleston. She plans to pursue bachelor's and master's degrees, work on a cruise ship, and eventually open her own bakery.

