

# Membership MATTERS



*Deadline is September 30*

## Educator Grants Available Through Blue Ridge Electric

Teachers and principals are encouraged to apply now for Bright Ideas grants totaling \$17,000 being awarded by Blue Ridge Electric in conjunction with North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation for the 2010-2011 school year.

Bright Ideas grants provide educators with funding of up to \$1,500 per grant for innovative classroom projects that benefit students and would not otherwise be covered by the school budget. Bright Ideas has financed a variety of hands-on projects, including activities in music, art, history, language, reading, science, math, and information technology. Proposals can come from any area of the curriculum.

Blue Ridge Electric is in its seventeenth year of providing Bright Ideas grants as part of its support of youth and education in the communities it serves. To date, the cooperative has awarded more than \$285,000 to 361 classrooms, which has benefited more than 80,000 local students. Bright Ideas reflects Blue Ridge Electric's commitment to community and support of local education.

The application deadline for Bright Ideas grants is September 30. Projects must directly benefit students, provide ongoing benefits, and use innovative teaching methods.

Applications and full details of the Bright Ideas program can be found at [BlueRidgeEMC.com](http://BlueRidgeEMC.com) or [NCBrightIdeas.com](http://NCBrightIdeas.com). All applications must be submitted on-line at either of these websites.

For more information, please contact Grey Scheer, director of community relations, at [gscheer@blueridgeemc.com](mailto:gscheer@blueridgeemc.com).



**BRIGHT  
IDEAS**



## Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Blue Ridge Electric has been working to implement measures to meet the State's Renewable Energy and Energy Portfolio Standard (REPS) enacted by the General Assembly in 2007. The law requires utilities to incorporate renewable energy and energy efficiency into our wholesale power supplies — 10 percent for cooperatives, and 12.5 percent for larger investor-owned utilities, by the year 2018.

The law also allows us to meet the requirements through our wholesale power provider, Duke Energy-Carolinas. We have recently negotiated with Duke to include our REPS requirements as part of their overall REPS compliance plan.

While Duke will help us to manage our state REPS requirements, we will continue to offer GreenSmart advice to our members. Blue Ridge Electric has always encouraged good stewardship of energy resources and I'm pleased that we've been able to offer the following programs with good participation by our members:

- **Energy Efficient Lighting:** Replacing traditional incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) is one of the easiest and most economical changes every consumer can make. CFLs use 75 percent less energy, put out less heat, and last 10 times longer than traditional light bulbs. To make it even more affordable for members, we offer low cost CFLs in our district offices, decorative CFLs online over our web site through the EFI store, our online energy conservation partner. We've also distributed thousands of free CFLs to assist in this effort.
- **Water Heating Efficiency Programs:** Water heating reflects a large portion of an electric bill. Furthermore, electric water heaters are used by the majority of residential members in North Carolina, so efficiency in this area that can provide value through energy and power bill savings. We offer water heating kits at discounted prices in our district offices. Items in these kits improve water

heating efficiency and reduce water consumption.

- **MyUsage.com:** this online electricity usage monitoring tool is available due to smart meter technology which will be fully implemented across our service area by the end of the year when we finish installations and activation in Watauga district. This tool enables members to monitor usage daily and has proved to create greater awareness and understanding to help consumers lower their electricity use and become more energy efficient.

Our goal is to do our part for a cleaner environment and a sustainable energy future while providing members with the best value for their money. However, achieving the REPS standards will be expensive for all utilities and their consumers. From that standpoint, we're pleased legislators included cost caps to help protect consumers from extreme increases on their power bills. For residential consumers, the annual cost cap is \$10 through 2012 and gradually increases up to \$34 per year in 2015. Currently, Blue Ridge residential members are paying 32 cents each month to cover the costs incurred so far from compliance with REPS.

As a cooperative, our goal is to provide electricity at the lowest possible cost. We understand the downturn in our local economy has made it difficult for many of our members. That's why we are working with Duke to achieve the most economical approach to meeting the REPS law. Plus, we will continue to provide an increased effort to assist you with managing your monthly electricity usage.

As a member-owned electric cooperative, our responsibility is to ensure that electricity is delivered to our members in a highly reliable manner, at the most affordable price possible. We are also committed to being good environmental stewards and offering programs to our members that encourage you to join in this effort.

An Editorial by  
Chief Executive Officer Doug Johnson



## Board Update

During Blue Ridge Electric's recent Annual Membership Meeting held Saturday, June 12, at Ashe County High School, four directors were re-elected by the membership to serve on the board of directors. Elected to three-year terms were: **Jeff Joines**, of Caldwell district; **James Burl (J.B.) Lawrence Jr.**, of Watauga district; **Bradley McNeill** of Ashe district; and **Bryan Edwards** of Alleghany district.

At the board's regularly scheduled meeting in June, they also re-elected board officers: **Kenneth Greene**, president; **Jeff Joines**, vice president; **Joy Coffey**, secretary-treasurer; and **Charity Gambill-Gwyn**, assistant secretary-treasurer.

## More News

### Foundation Advisory Committee Awards Grants

Twice each year, Blue Ridge Electric's Members Foundation Advisory Committee, made up entirely of members, reviews applications and awards grants to deserving organizations. The board of directors recently approved the following grant recommendations by the committee.

**Alleghany County:**

**Alleghany Memorial Hospital (\$4,000):** Funds will be used for full or partial discounts to patients who cannot afford needed treatment through The Charity Care Program.

**Solid Rock Food Closet (\$5,000):** Funding for free food on an as-needed basis for low-income residents of Alleghany County.

**Ashe County:**

**Ashe County Sharing Center (\$5,000):** Funds will be used for emergency food for low income families and individuals.

**Caldwell County:**

**Helping Hands Clinic (\$5,000):** These funds will allow uninsured residents to receive important, sometimes life-saving prescription medications.

**Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) of Caldwell County (\$10,000):** The CAC serves victims of child abuse. *This money will be matched by the Governor's Crime Commission which will open a local CAC in Caldwell County.*

**Watauga County:**

**Sugar Grove Development Day School (\$2,500):** Funds will be used to replace items lost as a result of ice storm damages which were not covered by their insurance policy.

**Western Youth Network (WYN) (\$1,500):** Funds will be used for scholarships for underprivileged youth wishing to participate in WYN's Summer Program.

**Multi-County:**

**Appalachian Senior Programs (\$5,000):** Funds will support the overall program. This program recruits, trains and supervises income-limited, older volunteers who provide respite and personal care services to older adults in a five-county area. These companions serve older adults who do not qualify for existing services but are at risk of being institutionalized.

The committee also reserved \$11,000 of available funds to assure funding balances would be sustained for helping members and families with their electric bills.

Despite record need and usage of Foundation funds for electric bills, 100 percent of all qualified requests for electric bill assistance is being awarded.



*Thanks to Operation Round Up® contributors who make this funding possible.*

## New Technology Being Installed in Watauga County

Specialized Technical Services (Team STS), a contractor for Blue Ridge Electric, is currently installing automated smart meters in the cooperative's Watauga County service area.

The automated metering infrastructure (AMI) being installed across the Blue Ridge Electric system holds many benefits for both members and the cooperative. In addition to providing a powerful tool that helps the cooperative further improve and monitor the reliable flow of electricity to members, AMI brings the latest technology to the metering and electric system as a whole. With AMI, energy usage and load information is communicated over the power lines to the cooperative with precise accuracy. This will offer members detailed information about their home or business energy usage, which could be used to help better control energy costs and improve efficiency.

# Membership MATTERS



## Members Only NEWS ~For Members of Blue Ridge Electric

### CORPORATE OFFICE

PO Box 112 • Lenoir, NC 28645

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Doug Johnson

EDITOR  
Renée R. Whitener

PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR  
Susan Simmons

### DISTRICT OFFICES

Caldwell (828) 754-9071

Watauga (828) 264-8894

Ashe (336) 246-7138

Alleghany (336) 372-4646

Wilkes (800) 451-5474

PowerLine® (800) 448-2383

(PowerLine® is an automated account information and outage reporting system.)

Toll Free 1 (800) 451-5474  
(for members outside the service area)

To report an outage at any time,  
call one of the numbers listed above.

### OFFICE HOURS

8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday

Night deposit available.

Visit us on the Web:

[www.BlueRidgeEMC.com](http://www.BlueRidgeEMC.com)

## Save by Changing Air Filters

The most expensive dirt in the world may lurk in your home's heating and cooling system. If neglected, dust collecting on the equipment's air filter could increase your energy bills by hundreds of dollars every year and result in costly repair or replacement costs.

Dirty filters cause a system to work harder and break down faster. That's because unfiltered dust and grime work into critical parts, creating friction that causes unnecessary wear and, eventually, failure.

Dust trapped in a heating and cooling system air filter can lead to problems, including:

- Reduced air flow in the home
- Up to 15 percent higher operating costs
- Costly duct cleaning or replacement
- Lowered system efficiency

General recommendations are to change filters monthly when a system is in regular use or according to your manufacturer's suggestion. Discuss cleaning the unit and ductwork with your heating and cooling service professional.

While most types of filters must be replaced, a few filters are reusable. They're available in a variety of types and efficiencies, rated by a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV). MERV, a method developed by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, tests filter effectiveness. The higher the MERV number, the higher the filter's effectiveness at keeping dust out of your system.

To learn more about saving energy around your home, visit [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).

Sources: High Performance HVAC, U.S. Department of Energy

Written by John Bruce, who writes on energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va. based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.