

Membership MATTERS



Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation: **Members Helping Members**

Due to the generosity of Blue Ridge Electric members participating in Operation Round Up® and Operation Round Up PLUS®, hundreds of local residents are receiving crisis heating assistance and benefitting from community improvement grants awarded by the Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation.

Since the Foundation was formed in 2007, more than 2,600 families have received assistance worth more than \$292,700 to help with electric bills and 81 different grants totaling \$273,808 have funded community improvement programs and services.



The funds flow through to the cooperative's nonprofit Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation, and it is the Foundation's advisory committee made up of cooperative members who recommend how and where funding will be awarded with final approval and input from the board of directors of Blue Ridge Electric.

"Through the Foundation's funding, we believe it's important to help our communities and members in two ways in order to significantly impact the local quality of life," said Doug Johnson, chief executive officer of Blue Ridge Electric. "First, by providing much-needed crisis assistance for those who find themselves in a difficult financial situation where a hand up can make a huge difference and secondly, by supporting the longer-term efforts of organizations that help sustain and build local communities for the benefit of all those who live there."

For an average of 50 cents a month, you can join thousands of other Blue Ridge members making a difference by contributing to Operation Round Up. Many members asked how they could do more. This led to the creation of Operation Round Up PLUS, which enables members to donate as much as they choose on their monthly electric bill. Participation is voluntary and can be suspended upon request at any time. To join Operation Round Up or Operation Round Up PLUS, call your local Blue Ridge Electric office or visit www.BlueRidgeEMC.com.

For a limited time, new participants will receive a four-pack of energy saving compact fluorescent light bulbs!

*Spreading
Hope
in Our
Communities*



THE *Perspective*

Subsidiary Update

As a member-owner of Blue Ridge Electric, you are also an owner of the cooperative's propane and heating fuels subsidiary, Blue Ridge Energies, LLC. I believe it's important to periodically provide our members with an update about your subsidiary which offers propane, heating fuels, gas logs and other hearth products to residential and commercial customers in Caldwell, Watauga, Ashe, Alleghany, Avery, and Catawba counties.

In addition to a community benefit of employing nearly 40 people and providing valuable energy products and services to local residents and businesses, Blue Ridge Energies also directly benefits the members of Blue Ridge Electric. The subsidiary provides a benefit to members by helping contain costs. The subsidiary offsets some of the operating costs of the cooperative by paying for any services it utilizes from Blue Ridge Electric. For example, the subsidiary pays for the space it leases for its showrooms in the cooperative's district offices. Blue Ridge Energies also pays for its portion of the use of certain cooperative employees such as our human resources and safety managers.

In 2009, the subsidiary's financial benefit to the cooperative through cost-sharing and net income was \$1.4 million. This helps your cooperative operate more efficiently and hold down costs for members. Blue Ridge Energies is also financially stable, funding its annual growth rate without any long term debt.

Blue Ridge Energies directly benefits cooperative members in another important way. Each year for the past three years, Blue Ridge Electric has contributed \$25,000 of the subsidiary's earnings to the Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation. Funds from the Members Foundation are distributed through local helping agencies to help members in need of crisis assistance to pay their heating bills. Foundation funds are also awarded in the form of grants to nonprofit agencies and programs

that contribute to improving the quality of life in the cooperative's service area.

In addition to these direct member benefits, Blue Ridge Energies also strives to benefit everyone it serves by placing the same emphasis on customer care as its parent company. Employees of Blue Ridge Energies are some of the most customer-focused, knowledgeable and friendly staff found anywhere. This is evident as Blue Ridge Energies customers consistently give the company nearly perfect scores on customer satisfaction.

Your subsidiary is also focused on customer care by adding more products and services to its offerings. After the severe and damaging winter weather this area experienced in 2009 and early 2010, interest in standby emergency generators in mountain counties led Blue Ridge Energies to begin offering a new backup generator program.

Blue Ridge Energies is also modernizing its website and making it more customer friendly and easier to use. Customers may now log on to www.BlueRidgeEnergies.com to pay online, place an order, or view their account history. Helping our customers manage their fuel costs is another way the subsidiary provides value as it offers a senior citizens discount, Refer a Friend program, and budget billing.

Providing value in today's economy is more important than ever and the successes of your subsidiary indicates it is accomplishing that goal for the benefit of members, its customers and local communities. Blue Ridge Energies was created out of a need to help meet the heating fuels needs of northwest North Carolina but also to benefit members by enhancing operating efficiencies for the cooperative. I'm proud to say that the employees of Blue Ridge Energies are doing an outstanding job in achieving our Energies vision and the future looks bright for our subsidiary!

An Editorial by
Chief Executive Officer Doug Johnson



Ashe District Open House Held

On July 20, approximately 60 guests attended a ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the "official" opening of the new Ashe district office located at 2375 N.C. Highway 163 in West Jefferson.

Following the ribbon cutting, guests were treated to tours of the facility.

Throughout the day, every member coming through the door was treated to cookies and bottled water as well as tours upon request.

"It is such a pleasure to work in this environment," said Gwynita Steele, Ashe district manager. "Employees are energized in this new space and I know it will only improve our service to our members."



More News

Landscaping: A Beautiful Way to Save Energy



You've upgraded your appliances, insulation, and lighting to help lower your monthly electric bill. What else can you do? The U.S. Department of Energy claims landscaping with energy efficiency in mind, on average, could save enough energy to recoup your investment in less than eight years.

Climate Clarity - Climate determines the direction your landscaping planning should take. The Southeast offers a hot and humid climate, so summer breezes are welcome. Residents in these areas should make the most of summer shade, but use trees that will eventually lose leaves (deciduous) to let winter sun shine through.

Simple Shading - You might be protected from the hot summer sun in your home, but your electric bill isn't. Solar heat absorbed through windows and your roof causes your air conditioner to work harder.

Shading a home with trees could drop the surrounding air temperature by as much as 9 degrees Fahrenheit. It gets better closer to the ground — since cool air sinks down, the air under trees may be up to 25 degrees cooler than the air over the driveway.

Different trees serve unique purposes. To block summer solar heat but let the winter sun through, use deciduous trees. Evergreen trees and shrubs are ideal to provide continuous shade and block heavy winds.

Shading takes time. For example, a 6-foot to 8-foot deciduous trees planted near a home will begin shading windows in a year. Depending on the species and the home, the tree will shade the roof in 5 to 10 years.

Windbreaks - Shrubs and trees create windbreaks—essentially walls to keep the wind chill away from a home. Why is that important? Wind speed lowers outside air temperatures. A windbreak reduces wind speed nearby, saving your home from higher heating costs.

It's best to block wind with a combination of trees and shrubs. Evergreens are ideal and when combined with a wall or fence,++ these windbreaks can deflect or even lift wind over a home.

Ready, Set, GROW! Remember, your landscaping plan depends on your climate and how your home is situated. Find out more about your climate, microclimates, shading dos and don'ts, and windbreaks at www.energysavers.gov. To learn more ways to save energy around your home, visit www.TogetherWeSave.com.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

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.

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Members Only NEWS ~For Members of Blue Ridge Electric



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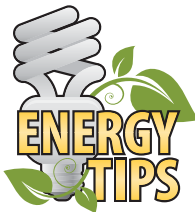
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www.BlueRidgeEMC.com

Attaching Signs to Utility Poles Presents Safety Hazards

Although seemingly innocent enough, putting signs or other items on utility poles creates serious safety hazards. Staples, nails, and tacks used to hang items — as well as the items themselves — pose dangers to our line technicians who must climb poles when either restoring power following storms or while performing routine maintenance to ensure system reliability.

Posters or other objects (birdhouses, balloons, flags, and even basketball nets) can create dangerous obstacles. Also, the nails and tacks left behind from signs can snag utility workers' boots or puncture safety clothing, making line technicians vulnerable to slipping or even electrocution.

Thank you for helping ensure the safety of our line technicians and avoiding damage to our poles by refraining from posting anything on utility poles.



Use the moisture sensor feature on your clothes dryer if it has one. This option shuts down the dryer when clothes are dry. In addition, clean the lint filter after each load. This improves air circulation and increases the dryer's efficiency.



Also, properly hooking up your clothes dryer can help save on energy costs. The outdoor dryer exhaust door should close when the dryer is off. Check to make sure the dryer vent hose is tightly connected to the dryer and also to the inside wall fitting. The vent hose should not be kinked or clogged.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy and Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives