

Along these LINES

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023

Passion Project

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program sees expansion in Louisiana Page 12

ALSO INSIDE >>

Manager's Message Page 4

DEMCO Youth Programs Pages 5, 20-21

Dolly Parton reads "Coat of Many Colors" during a ceremony in February 2018 in the Great Hall. PHOTO BY SHAWN MILLER



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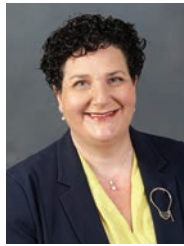


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Let Your Voices Be Heard

Electric cooperatives are not against renewable energy and cleaner fuels; however, the Environmental Protection Agency recently proposed to impose seemingly unworkable regulations on new and existing power plants. We are simply asking policymakers to consider the timelines to accomplish these initiatives.



Addie Armato

EPA's proposal appears to undermine the Louisiana electric cooperatives' mission of providing affordable, reliable power to the communities and consumer members we serve. This proposal would require using carbon capture and hydrogen technologies that are not yet commercially viable in an unreasonably expedited timeframe. Doing so will most likely force the premature closure of currently available power plants while also making it harder to permit, site, and build critical new power plants. And all of this is being done without concern for the growing demand for electricity.

Electric cooperatives are built by and belong to the communities they serve. The families and businesses served by our

Louisiana electric cooperatives are direct stakeholders and the sole owners of the cooperative. And the fundamental expectation of our member-owners is that the lights stay on at a cost they can afford. However, recent threats to the grid serve as a dire warning that America's ability to keep the lights on is in jeopardy.

Louisiana electric cooperatives believe these policies could undermine decades of work to reliably keep the lights on across the nation and could lead to life-threatening blackouts. These regulations, as currently proposed, do not work for our electric co-ops, our communities, or our nation's economy.

We ask you to join our Voices for Cooperative Power network using this QR code and let your voices be heard!



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Passion Project

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program sees expansion in Louisiana
Page 12

Local Pages 4, 5, 8, 17, 20, 21
In the Kitchen 10



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Mission

DEMCO is focused on enhancing the quality of life for members by providing safe, reliable and competitively priced energy services.

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DEMCO is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Member-Owned Cooperative

As a member-owned cooperative, DEMCO invests time and money in the communities we serve. Concern for Community is one of our seven cooperative principles, and we demonstrate it in many ways.

In this issue, you will learn more about our youth programs. Investing in youth supports our commitment to co-op members, education and the communities we serve.

DEMCO Essay Contest/Youth Tour

Six high school juniors won the 2023 DEMCO essay contest. Their prize was a trip to Washington, D.C., to attend the weeklong youth tour event. On page 5, they share impressions about their experience.

If you have an 11th-grade student who would like to participate in the essay contest for a chance to be a part of next year's trip, visit DEMCO.org/Essay.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

In 2021, DEMCO became a sponsor of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Funded through the Sharing Success Match Grant with Co-Bank and local partnership with Volunteers of America, children younger than 5 years old in St. Helena and West Feliciana who enroll in the free program, receive a book each month.

On pages 12 through 15, learn more about the great news for Louisiana as our Legislature recently adopted this great program to promote literacy in the state. If you reside in either of these parishes and want more information on the program, visit DEMCO.org/DPIL.

Youth Cooperative Ambassador Program

Launched in 2022, the Youth Cooperative Ambassador Program is for ninth- and 10th-grade students in DEMCO's seven-parish service area. Students are inspired to learn and develop personal strengths and leadership skills as they learn about the cooperative business model and career paths. See pages 20 through 21 for information about this program as it is accepting applications through November 17, and visit DEMCO.org/YCAP.

DEMCO's bucket truck demonstrations, safety magic show and fire in the wire safety demonstration, as well as our scholarship programs reach children of all ages.

Enrichment programs and scholarships target the next generation of leaders. We know that when we invest in youth, we invest in our future.



TAKING ON D.C.

DEMCO member-students essay contest winners travel to Washington, D.C., for Youth Tour 2023

The 2023 winners of the DEMCO Essay Contest enjoyed a week of activities in Washington, D.C. at the annual Rural Electric Youth Tour.

Activities included visits to historical buildings and landmarks, including the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, Supreme Court, National Archives and Arlington Cemetery.

DEMCO student ambassadors joined about 1,500 Youth Tour participants from 43 states representing America's 900-plus electric cooperatives.

"Youth Tour provides so many learning opportunities for participating students to gain a better understanding of electric cooperatives as well as insight into how their national government operates," DEMCO CEO and General Manager Randy Pierce says. "It's a wonderful annual event that demonstrates DEMCO's commitment to youth programs in the communities we serve."

Students came away with cherished memories of the places and people they encountered.

"The DEMCO Youth Tour experience was a collage of awe-inspiring moments, heartfelt laughs, delicious food, newfound friendships, and excited dashes to see and witness everything," youth tour participant Eni Nwabueze says. "Seeped through it all was a sense of being welcome and cared for that I will always cherish. Every second of the trip felt worthwhile, even the long bus rides, and I am truly grateful for all of the happy memories I was given."

Student Julia Hebert also came away from



DEMCO contest winners, from left, Amelia Williams, Julia Hebert, Lillie Lynch, Maggie Tullier, Austin Wiltz and Eni Nwabueze visit the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEMCO

the experience with only praise.

"My youth tour experience was a phenomenally amazing once-in-a-lifetime experience that has left me with friends that I'll never forget," Julia says. "Thank you DEMCO for providing such an incredible opportunity to make lifelong friends and experience the beauty of our country's history!"

Youth tour brings people together, but it

also helps expand students' knowledge on the nation's history.

"Being able to learn about our nation's history with such amazing people is an experience I will never forget," Lillie Lynch says.

Maggie Tullier adds, "I had so much fun getting to tour the Capitol of our great country. Youth Tour was a once in a lifetime experience for sure." ■

ALEC Presents Safety Awards

Co-ops recognized for working safely



ALEC Safety Coordinator Ricky Melancon, left, and Director of Loss Control Aaron Graham, right, present Beauregard Electric Cooperative Inc. Vice President of Operations and Construction Services Scott Deshotel with a Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program banner and certificate of safety achievement.

Every year, the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives Awards and Safety banquet culminates with recognition of our Louisiana electric cooperatives and their safety achievements.

ALEC provides many services to our member cooperatives, but one of our most touted services is our safety and training programs. Our cooperative employees work in an extremely dangerous environment daily, sometimes in extreme weather conditions. Therefore, ALEC aims to train them to do their jobs safely. Safety is paramount for all electric cooperative employees.

ALEC member cooperatives can participate in the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program. Participation requires a rigorous safety inspection every three years by a certified team of Loss Control professionals. This team

inspects everything from plant and equipment to employee procedures. Cooperatives completing the assessments are scored and given a list of areas they can work to improve. This year's recipients were Beauregard Electric Cooperative, Claiborne Electric Cooperative and ALEC.

ALEC member cooperatives that worked without a lost-time accident are given a plaque to recognize their achievement. This year's recipients were:

- Claiborne Electric: 560,649 hours without lost time since June 2019.
- Jeff Davis Electric: 646,290 hours without lost time since January 2017.
- South Louisiana Electric: 4,410,737 hours without lost time since December 1996.

The traveling statewide safety award is always the last presentation of the evening. A unique formula is used to



Ricky, left, and Aaron, right, present Claiborne Electric Cooperative Inc. District 8 Board Member Lane Davidson with a RESAP banner and certificate of safety achievement.



From left, ALEC CEO Addie Armato, Ricky, Communications and Marketing Specialist Conley Bourgeois, Aaron and Administrative Assistant Rhianna Garon receive a RESAP banner and certificate of safety achievement.



Ricky, left, and Aaron, right, present an award to Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative Chief Operating Officer Eric Gautreaux, CEO Michael Heinen and Director of Safety Ben Hetzel for no lost-time accidents since January 2017.

determine the winner of the statewide trophy using the incidence plus severity rate. This rate incorporates employees' incidents, incident severity, man-hours worked, vehicle accidents and miles driven.

Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative received the prestigious statewide safety award this year. The cooperative's employees have

worked 646,290 hours since January 2017 without a lost-time accident. This is the first time Jeff Davis Electric has won the award.

"Jeff Davis Electric would like to thank all its employees and board members for their hard work and dedication to working safely. No one person won this award. It was won collectively among all the

employees," says JDEC Director of Safety Ben Hetzel.

At the awards ceremony, Beauregard received its permanent trophy for winning the statewide title in 2022.

ALEC commends our Louisiana electric cooperatives for their achievements and continued commitment to safety. ■



Ricky, left, and Aaron, right, present an award to Lane for no lost-time accidents at Claiborne Electric Cooperative since June 2019.



Ricky and Aaron present an award to SLECA Director Roger Dale DeHart, SLECA Finance and Corporate Services Manager Ben Adams, Purchasing Manager Jordy Bourg, Operations Superintendent Shannon Soudelier, SLECA Director Trevor Benoit, General Manager Matt Peters and Assistant General Manager Brett Ledet for no lost-time since December 1996.

\$125K in Scholarships Awarded to 50 Members

DEMCO awarded 50 scholarships totaling \$125,000 to co-op members May 13 during its 2023 annual membership meeting.

For this year's drawing, DEMCO received 224 applications from members in its seven-parish service area: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Livingston, St. Helena, Tangipahoa and West Feliciana.

"The DEMCO Scholarship program is one of the many benefits of DEMCO co-op membership and one of the ways we show our commitment to community," CEO and General Manager Randy Pierce says.

To receive the award, winners must meet all eligibility requirements for the 2023-24 academic year, for each of the two consecutive semesters.

DEMCO scholarship funds are not taken from operating funds. Due to legislative changes in 1993, rather than forwarding unclaimed deposits to the state's general treasury fund, DEMCO retains the monies in a general scholarship fund to assist co-op member-students within the DEMCO service area. ■

MyDEMCO Registered Member Accounts

Congratulations to DEMCO members **M. Gonzales, T. Brown, C. Cardenas, T. Anthony.**

Winners of the random drawing receive a \$50 gift card in the mail!



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A Long Week to

Delicious

Tamales are worth the wait

By Cheré Coen

Rhonda Remedies Gauthier, of Zwolle, grew up on a Sabine Parish farm where all the ingredients for creating tamales were at her fingertips. The women in her family spent days preparing the items necessary for the dish.

“We had the animals. We had the shucks. We had the corn. We grew the peppers,” Rhonda says. “I grew up making tamales. Tamales are in my blood.”

The trademark Louisiana foodway of the Sabina River region dates back as far as Rhonda’s ancestry, predating the arrivals of

the French and Spanish.

“My family are Choctaw, Apache and descendants from the people from the Spanish fort at Los Adaes,” she says. “Tamales go back centuries. Native Americans were making tamales before the Europeans got here.”

The Spanish introduced pork to the indigenous diet, but earlier Native Americans used vegetables, fish and wild animals in their tamales, says Rhonda, an anthropologist who worked in different departments at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches until her retirement six years ago. In July, she was inducted into the Hall of Master Folk Artists at the 43rd Annual Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival.

Rhonda remembers her mother spending weeks cooking the ingredients in a giant cast iron pot, from the two days of making the masa, or dough, to two days of cooking the meat. Both are eventually placed inside corn shucks to steam.

“It was a whole-week thing,” she says, adding that her mother and other family members would make 100 to 200 dozen by hand. “It was a long week when making tamales.”

Rhonda’s father worked for the school board. He retired, but he wasn’t happy not working so he joined up at a local saw mill. Mill men visited the family’s home during the week to buy tamales, and Rhonda’s mother donated the proceeds to the local Catholic church on Sundays.



47th Zwolle Tamale Fiesta October 12-14

The Zwolle Tamale Fiesta is held annually on the second full weekend of October at the Zwolle Festival Grounds. The event features live music, children’s activities, parades, arts and crafts and, of course, tamales.



Making tamales from scratch takes days.



Rhonda Remedies Gauthier has been making tamales since she was very young. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RHONDA REMEDIES GAUTHIER

Today, Rhonda, 69, only makes tamales for family, although her freezer is never without a stash. She sometimes recruits family members like an assembly line to create 20 to 40 dozen. She insists tamale-making was easier on the farm where extended family lived nearby and could be enlisted to help.

“It takes time,” she says. “It takes people.”

The Tamale-Making Process

When making tamales during her childhood, Rhonda’s father started a fire to burn hardwoods, then used the ash for lye. In the meantime, they husked the corn over a washtub and soaked the husks until they were pliable.

The lye was placed into a large pot of water and boiled, then strained until the water was clear. Some prefer to put the lye in tea bags, Rhonda says. Then the corn was placed into the lye water and boiled. It eventually becomes hominy.

“You boil it until you can pick it up with a spoon or fingernail,” Rhonda says. “You wash it and rub it in your hands until you get the kinks out.”

Hominy can be bought from grocery stores. Rhonda cautions store-bought hominy will not taste as fresh “but it makes a good tamale,” she says.

Overnight, the hominy’s moisture evaporates as it becomes firm enough to grind.

“We had a hand grinder growing up,”

Rhonda says. “But sometimes Mom would go to the Zwolle ag center and used their large grinder. She could grind a whole No. 3 washtub of hominy, then clean up and leave a few dollars.”

The resulting dough, known as masa, can be enhanced with lard and juices derived from cooking the meat.

“My grandma says the masa is the most important part of the tamales,” Rhonda says. “You can use bagged masa, but it’s not the same.”

Next comes the meat of choice. Rhonda’s father raised hogs to be sold and butchered, and they used the pork as their meat filling.

“The best meat is the jaw meat from the head of the pig,” she says. “People wouldn’t want the head, so Mom would make tamales from the head meat.”

The meat was boiled and cooled overnight in a refrigerator. By the next morning, a nice layer of lard formed on top, and that was used in making masa. The meat was ground and cooked with seasonings such as garlic powder, black pepper and dried cayenne peppers that were also boiled and ground. Today, Rhonda uses a coffee grinder to grind her peppers.

“The flavor of the meat comes from the peppers that you have and how you prepare them,” she says.

Once the meat is cool, she adds a layer of masa to the corn husks, then a

layer of meat. The husk is folded over the concoction and placed into a large pot for steaming. Once the tamales are firm and hot, they can be enjoyed.

“It’s a simple food, but the technique and preparation is what gives it its flavor,” Rhonda says. ■

To read more about

the history of Louisiana tamales, visit the Northwestern State University Louisiana Regional Folklife Program’s website www.nsula.edu/regionalfolklife/Tamales/default.htm.



ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY CHARLOTTELAKE



Passion PROJECT



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program sees expansion in Louisiana

By Jen Calhoun and Drew Woolley

Kristen Jett likes to eavesdrop when her 7-year-old daughter reads to her little brother, Hayden. Every so often, Hallie pauses to offer a lesson, and it makes Kristen smile.

"Hey look, Bubba," Hallie says. "See that? 'Bubble' rhymes with 'rubble.'"

It's a sound that never gets old for Kristen.

"It makes me happy," she says. "Now that Hallie's in second grade, she's able to read pretty much anything, so it's fun to watch her teach Hayden, who's 4."

Hallie was about her brother's age when she first started receiving books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a program that sends free books to children from birth to 5 years old, no matter the family's income.

Now that she's 7, the second grader has aged out of the program. But she still gets a kick out of the books Hayden receives in the mail.

"Both of my kids are really great about reading and learning, and both of them get so excited when they get a book," says Kristen, whose address makes her eligible for the Imagination Library program through East Feliciana Parish. "Just opening the package makes them happy."

Inspiring Lifelong Readers

Kristen's son is one of more than 2 million children enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

The programs, established and maintained locally, are available in all 50 states, including 15 statewide programs—with more starting every year. In fact, Louisiana lawmakers recently

committed to establishing a statewide Imagination Library program to bring books to more children.

"Simply getting books into the home changes the trajectory of children, families and communities," says Nora Briggs, executive director of The Dollywood Foundation, which launched the first program nearly 30 years ago. "Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is an accomplished, simple and effective way to make communities better places to live by supporting and nurturing a love of books, shared family time and early learning."

While the goal is to inspire a lifetime love of reading and give children opportunities to succeed, research shows an even greater impact. The program has increased kindergarten readiness, significantly improved reading and math skills and overall academic performance for participants. The establishment of reading routines has been found to bring about increased stability, emotional well-being and an improved family atmosphere, according to summaries of research distributed by The Imagination Library.

On a Mission

Dolly started the book-gifting program in Sevier County, Tennessee, in 1995, as a tribute to her father, Robert Lee Parton Sr., who never attended school but worked as a sharecropper and went on to farm his own acreage. Despite his lack of education, he had a knack for turning a profit.

"He was the smartest man I have ever known, but I know in my heart his inability to read probably kept him from fulfilling all of his dreams," Dolly says.

Now, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has gifted more than

200 million books to children in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Republic of Ireland. More than 24 million books were gifted in 2022—a nearly 12% increase over 2021.

And while the program started small, Dolly’s ambitions grew as other organizations and volunteer groups implemented the Imagination Library concept in their communities.

“Inspiring kids to love to read became my mission,” she says.

Positive Partnerships

The Feliciana Bank and Trust Co., in partnership with Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge, started a local Imagination Library program in Norwood. The bank pays all the community expenses, says Jaye Bunch, bank president. It’s been one of the best investments they’ve ever made.

“The more we learned about it, the more we liked it,” he says. “But nobody around here was doing it, so we figured we’d give it a shot.”

Volunteers of America is also partnered with DEMCO, Louisiana’s largest electric cooperative, to bring Imagination Library to the parishes of St. Helena and West Feliciana. The cooperative became involved in 2020 as part of an effort to offer support for the children in the community from infancy all the way to college scholarship programs.

“We already had programs that we felt were very successful, but the areas we had gaps in were really in early childhood development,” says Chanon Martin, community relations specialist.

Imagination Library proved the perfect solution to give children a head start on reading while also creating moments for their families to be together. DEMCO now sponsors the program in two parishes in its service area with the help of a matching grant from CoBank.

“We feel like the gift of books to children is one of the best things you can do early on for them,” Chanon says. “It supports the children academically, socially and emotionally. It also empowers families to read together, talk together and have conversations.”

Organizations such as United Way of Southeast Louisiana have also started programs.

“We have Imagination Library in four of our seven parishes, including Tangipahoa,” says Cammie Proctor, vice president of resources development for the chapter.

Continues on page 15



How many books have been distributed by Imagination Library?

Since inception, including 2023:



206,335,359

United States



3,063,925

Canada



5,434,925

United Kingdom



856,182

Australia



283,061

Republic of Ireland

Source: imaginationlibrary.com

IMAGES COURTESY OF DOLLY PARTON IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Dolly's Daddy

Robert Lee Parton never learned to read or write—not because he didn't want to, but because he needed to work to help his family survive. His parents raised 15 children in the mountains of East Tennessee, where food was scarce and the one-room schoolhouse was often more than a mile away, Dolly wrote in her 2020 memoir, "Songteller: My Life in Lyrics."

As an adult raising 12 children, Robert planted tobacco in the rugged and rocky hills of East Tennessee but often took on construction jobs to make ends meet. Money was always tight. When Dolly was born, he paid the doctor with a sack of cornmeal instead of cash.

"He was such a smart person. I always thought that if Daddy had an education, there's no telling what he could have been," Dolly wrote. "Because he knew how to barter, he knew how to bargain. He knew how to make everything work, and he knew how to count money. He knew exactly what everything was worth, how much he was going to make from that tobacco crop, what he could trade, and how he could make it all work."

While he was embarrassed about his lack of literacy skills for most of his life, Robert took pride in Dolly's efforts with the Imagination Library. "I got him involved helping me with [the Imagination Library], and he felt so great about that," she wrote. "I told him, 'Daddy, there are probably millions of people in this world who don't know how to read and write, who didn't get the opportunity. Don't be ashamed of that. Let's do something special.'"

Check [imaginationlibrary.com/check-availability](https://www.imaginationlibrary.com/check-availability) to see if there is a program in your community. If not, register to be notified when one starts.

CHECK IT OUT!

Imagination Library gave away more than 24 million books in 2022, including Braille and bilingual books. It's the equivalent of mailing one book every 1.3 seconds.



Sobering Statistics

For anyone reading this article, it might be hard to imagine that people in our own country have serious trouble reading and writing. But the lack of literacy skills is still a problem, at least in the U.S.

According to 2022 data distributed by the National Center for Education Statistics—the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education—about 43 million United States adults have low literacy skills. The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies defines literacy as “the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

79% of adults in the United States have **medium to high English literacy skills.**

One in Five United States adults have low literacy skills.



Continued from page 13

“We’re working to expand that as much as we can. It’s so important. The earlier we can get books into the hands of children, the better off they’ll be.”

Working on a Dream

In addition to local program startups, Gov. John Bel Edwards signed a bill establishing Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library of Louisiana in June—committing a 50% dollar match to help local communities. The goal of the statewide program is to expand programs across the state and ensure availability in all parishes. DEMCO and the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives were some of the bill’s strongest supporters. For Chanon, it’s a natural extension of the cooperative mission.

“We always want to have that connection to our community,” she says. “That human connection. This is another way we have that. Empowering our families to have that family time, to see our children be successful and better prepared earlier in life, makes our communities much stronger through educational experiences.”

With the help of the statewide initiative and more electric co-ops across the country promoting Imagination Library on their websites, in their lobbies and at events every day, the children of Louisiana will add to a growing global community. The importance of that work isn’t lost on Dolly.

“Our place in all of this is pretty simple,” she says. “We want to inspire a love of books. Kids are pretty simple in that they will do what they love to do, and we want to inspire children to love books and reading.” ■

STATEWIDE NEWS



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives CEO Addie Armato, DEMCO Board President and ALEC Board Member Danny Berthelot, and Washington-St. Tammany General Manager Dane Hocott present checks to National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Board of Directors President Tony Anderson, who put forward the idea for the Cooperative Family Fund to the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corp. CFC helped the fund become certified as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit.



Offering a Helping Hand

The Cooperative Family Fund provides support for children of electric cooperative employees when they experience the loss of a parent while actively employed at a cooperative.

This support actively demonstrates the value our cooperative network places on cooperative families at the time of their greatest need.

Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, DEMCO and Washington-St. Tammany donated \$1,000 each to the fund in July at ALEC's annual meeting.

2023 ALTEC Scholarship Recipients

Eight students were awarded college scholarships at the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives annual meeting.

- Brennan Smith at Beauregard Electric Cooperative Inc. and Allijeh Berra at South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association (sponsored by Tempest Energy).
- Auto Daniel Breaux at Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative (sponsored by Altec Capital).
- Katlind McReynolds at Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative (sponsored by Altec Sentry).
- Macy Daigre at DEMCO (sponsored by JJ Kane).
- Damondrick Blackburn at SLECA (sponsored by Altec).
- Noah Serac at WSTE (sponsored by Altec Work Truck).
- Emily Tucker at DEMCO (sponsored by Osmose).



Teach Your Children Well

By Miranda Boutelle

Q: How can I encourage my children to use less electricity at home?

A: When I was a child I dreamed of one day having a home where I could pay my own electric bill—said no one ever.

While it's not the most fun way to spend money, people typically want to live in a home with electricity. Educating children on energy use and costs can help engage them with your family's goal to use less electricity. They can be electric conservation champions if you ask for help.

There are several ways you can teach children to use less electricity.

Show them how to read the electric bill. Focus on what you can control: kilowatt-hour use. If they are old enough, teach them how to do the math. You can calculate kWh use by multiplying wattage by hours used and dividing by 1,000. Multiply this by the kWh rate found on your electric bill to estimate how much you spend on power for each household appliance.

For example, a space heater that uses 1,500 watts and is on for four hours a day for a month uses 180 kWh. With an average kWh rate of 13.7 cents in the United States, the space heater costs about \$25 a month to operate.

For reference, using the DEMCO rate of 10.7 cents per kWh, the cost is \$19.

To find household appliance wattage, look for the amount



Include your children in discussions about what temperature to set the thermostat to balance comfort with energy savings.

PHOTO BY MIKE TEEGARDEN

stamped on the bottom, back or nameplate. If the nameplate does not include wattage, figure it out by multiplying the voltage by the amperage.

To teach children the impact of saving energy, have them help you conserve with the household's biggest energy-consuming appliances: heating and cooling. Teach children to dress appropriately for the seasons, even when they are indoors, which allows you to set the thermostat to balance comfort and savings.

The second-highest use of electricity is typically the electric water heater. Use a shower timer so older children can monitor how long they are in the shower. Teach them to wash clothes with cold water.

Other ways to save include turning off the lights when you leave the room. The more we switch to LED lighting, the less savings associated. Even little changes can add up throughout the year. If

your child needs a night light to sleep, make sure it's an

LED bulb.

Powering down gaming stations and computers is another way to save.

In the kitchen, keep the refrigerator door shut. Teach children to take a quick peek and shut the door while they think about their snack options.

After teaching your children about electric bills and showing them how to save electricity, make a game out of your family's energy conservation. Challenge the family to use less energy than last month or the same month last year. Use the savings to reward them with a treat or let the winner pick the game night activity. ■

Attention 9th & 10th grade students

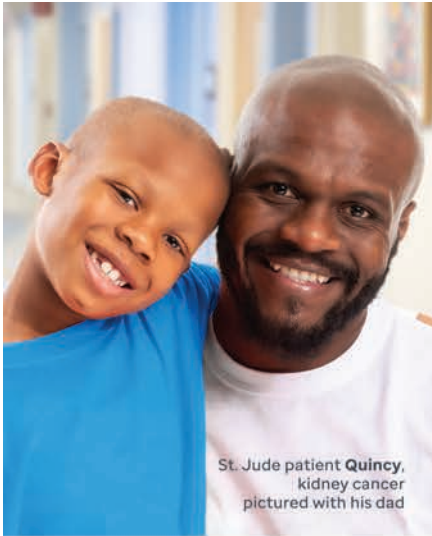
Youth Cooperative Ambassador Program

DEMCO is now accepting applications to its Youth Cooperative Ambassador Program (YCAP), an all-expense-paid leadership and educational program for 9th and 10th-grade students.

This program aims to foster positive ideas and values about cooperatives, cooperative governance, cooperative careers and the seven cooperative business principles. High school freshmen and sophomores will gain a thorough understanding of cooperatives while developing their leadership skills in a fun, interactive and challenging way through the 3rd annual Youth Cooperative Ambassador Program.



For more information, eligibility requirements and to apply by November 17, visit DEMCO.org/YCAP.



St. Jude patient Quincy, kidney cancer pictured with his dad

Quincy's family never gave up hope. **And neither did we.**

After doctors determined Quincy had a type of kidney cancer called Wilms tumor, he underwent surgery and chemotherapy. "Quincy was so strong throughout everything, and that helped me strengthen myself." St. Jude has helped push the childhood cancer survival rate from 20% when we opened to 80% today. We won't stop until no child dies from cancer.

Learn more at stjude.org



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DEMCO Honors Youth Cooperative Ambassadors

Banquet celebrates the Class of 2022 and 2023

DEMCO honored 12 high school students May 9 for completing the Youth Cooperative Ambassador Program. All students attended the banquet and received awards to commemorate the accomplishment.

The Class of 2023 YCAP student ambassadors are Amiyah Chaney, Central High School; Amari Langley, University View Academy; Mackenzie Langley, Northeast High School; Sophia Macias, Episcopal School; and Nathan Martin, Ponchatoula High School.

The Class of 2022 YCAP ambassadors include Shawn Comminey II, Dutchtown High School; DeVone Holiday Jr., St. Helena College and Career Academy; Yu'Toria Jones, Zachary High School; Aaron Kelly, Central High School; Brennan Michelli, Central High School; London Sanford, Northeast High School; and Abrielle Steele, Live Oak High.

"This youth program for ninth- and 10th-grade DEMCO students is one more way that DEMCO invests in the youth of our community," says David Latona, vice president of communications and governmental affairs. "We truly power the communities we serve, and the ambassadors will learn that through their participation in this program."

DEMCO student ambassadors studied the history of rural electrification, the unique business model of cooperatives, cooperative governance and the seven cooperative business principles. Each class completed a community service project as part of the program, demonstrating its understanding of the cooperative principle Concern for Community.



DEMCO recognized Youth Cooperative ambassadors during a May 9 banquet. ABOVE: The Class of 2023, from left, are Nathan Martin, Amiyah Chaney, Amari Langley, Mackenzie Langley and Sophia Macias. LEFT: The Class of 2022, from left, are Aaron Kelley, DeVone Holiday Jr., Abrielle Steele, Yu'Toria Jones, Shawn Comminey II, London Sanford and Brennan Michelli. PHOTOS BY TERESA ALVAREZ

"Workshops, seminars, peer group activities, and a community service project help enhance leadership, problem-solving skills and interpersonal relationships," DEMCO Community Relations Specialist Chanon Martin adds.

Applications for this all-expense-paid leadership and educational program are available in the fall to eligible ninth- and 10th-grade DEMCO students. For more information, visit www.DEMCO.org/Community/YCAP. ■

Pictured, from left, are Dennis Lott, Mackenzie Langley, Abrielle Steele, Amiyah Chaney, Amari Langley, Sophia Macias, Leslie Falks and Shawn Comminey II. PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES MACIAS



Youth Program Lends Helping Hands

DEMCO youth cooperative ambassadors volunteer at the Livingston Council on Aging

DEMCO youth cooperative ambassadors gathered May 31 at the Livingston Council on Aging to serve lunch and distribute emergency response kits to 150 senior citizens. Each kit included a document protector, pill case, portable phone charger, whistle and battery-operated lantern with extra batteries.

DEMCO board directors Dennis Lott and Leslie Falks, representing Livingston parish districts 7 and 8, participated in the event. Dennis cooked jambalaya and white beans for guests.

The YCAP Class of 2023 participated in a workday April 29, to package 250 kits for the Livingston Council on Aging and surrounding centers in the parish. Participating students were Amiyah Chaney, Central High School; Amari Langley, University View Academy; Mackenzie Langley, Northeast High School; Sophia Macias, Episcopal School; and Nathan Martin, Ponchatoula High School.

Class of 2022 YCAP ambassadors also prepared 250 emergency

response bags as their service project last year, distributing the bags to the Council on Aging in Central and St. Helena. Participating students were Aaron Kelly, Central High School; Abrielle Steele, Live Oak High School; Brennan Michelli, Central High School; DeVone Holiday Jr., St. Helena College and Career Academy; London Sanford, Northeast High School; Shawn Comminey II, Dutchtown High School; and Yu'Toria Jones, Zachary High School.

“DEMCO student ambassadors learn the history of rural electrification, the unique business model of cooperatives, cooperative governance and the seven cooperative business principles,” Community Relations Specialist Chanon Martin says. “The program concludes with a community service to demonstrate Concern for Community, which is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles.”

DEMCO accepts applications to the program in the fall. For more information, visit www.DEMCO.org/Community/YCAP. ■

DEMCO powers 114,420-plus meters that serve more than half a million people in a seven-parish service area of Southeast Louisiana: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Livingston, St. Helena, Tangipahoa and West Feliciana.

STATEWIDE NEWS



DEMCO, Jeff Davis, Beauregard, Washington-St. Tammany and South Louisiana Electric cooperatives sent high school delegates to Washington, D.C., for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Tour. This week-long trip includes sightseeing, meetings with Louisiana Legislators, learning about the cooperative business model and making friends from across the country. "I am honored to have had the opportunity to watch each delegate flourish during this trip. It was an amazing experience for all," Youth Tour Director Conley Bourgeois says.

Trip of a Lifetime



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: U.S. Reps. Clay Higgins and Steve Scalise discuss their roles with the delegates. Congresswoman Julia Letlow meets with Youth Tour delegates. Delegates visit the Lincoln Memorial, White House, Mount Vernon, Washington Monument and more.



COLOR FOR SAFETY

Initiative reminds Louisiana co-op crews to reach for glove bags first

By Derrill Holly

A creative new safety initiative at some of Louisiana's electric cooperatives reminds lineworkers and other operations personnel to think of their families and protect themselves at work.

During a National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Certified Loss Control Professional training conference last year, Ricky Melancon, safety coordinator for the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, was inspired to create the new program after Justin Snyder, the loss control and training director of the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, showed him a photo.

"A lineworker's gear bag had been decorated with messages from his children," Ricky says. "He saw those messages whenever he reached for his rubber gloves.

"It really pulled on my heartstrings because it was a reminder to never turn a blind eye to actions that can help to keep crews safe. That's what we need crew leaders and every member of their team to think about every time they start a job."

Ricky spent 14 years as a lineworker at Winnsboro-based Northeast Louisiana Power Cooperative before taking a post with the statewide. He described the sketch to ALEC leadership and used it to push for a new initiative called Color for Safety.

It began in April with a contest encouraging operations personnel to let loved ones decorate or post messages on the bags holding the employees' personal protection gear, which is used when there is a risk of electrical contact. There were about 25 entries.

"Three of the bags were selected as winners, and their owners were honored at ALEC's annual meeting in July," Ricky says. "We're still promoting the initiative and are hoping for more participation next year."



ABOVE: The Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives encourages operations personnel to customize their gear bags with safety messages and art from their loved ones. BELOW: From left, Ricky Cummings, DEMCO; Ricky Melancon, ALEC; and Jacob Overhultz, DEMCO; accept DEMCO crew leader Cade Felps' Color for Safety award.

ALEC managers are convinced that getting operations personnel to focus on family reinforces their individual commitments to get home safely. The drawings, paintings and personal messages reinforce that theme.

"Your family cares about you, so you never want to let them down," Ricky says. "When you show your workers that you really care, you give them value. They feel like their safety is important to management, and they don't want to let them down, either."

Cade Felps, a 10-year journeyman lineworker and a crew leader with Baton Rouge-based DEMCO, was the winner of the 2023 Color for Safety competition, with an illustration he drew of a crew member. It depicts the lineworker with his newborn child cradled at his waist in his glove bag.

Ricky and other ALEC safety personnel continue to promote participation during visits to member co-ops. The initiative includes everyone issued rubber gloves as personal protective equipment. ALEC encourages all lineworkers, meter technicians and vegetation management personnel to participate.

"We're trained from the day we get hired that our lives depend on rubber gloves as our first line of defense against electrical contact injuries," Ricky says. "None of us should ever start a job without reaching for



our glove bags first."

Ricky says ALEC and co-op managers embrace the initiative because they understand the harsh reality that electrical contacts can lead to injuries or death. ALEC's safety team members are seeing more and more decorated bags when they meet with crews at jobsites for field inspections or conduct safety presentations at co-op offices.

"The payoff is when crews don't make contact injuring themselves and affecting their quality of life or possibly losing a life," Ricky says. "Everybody out there is working for their families and loved ones because they value you, and the choices you make at work affect them.

"Crew leaders are accountable for safety, and that's a key metric of their overall performance," "When we care about people, they work better and safer. That helps everybody head home safely at the end of a shift." ■

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