



**Berkeley Electric
 Cooperative**
 Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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 Call: 1-888-253-4232

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 Hours: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

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 North 7200, US-17
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 (843) 884-7525
 AWMemberRequests@bec.coop

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 2 Springhall Road
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 Johns Island, SC 29455
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MIKE FULLER
 President & CEO

Powering hope, safety

IT'S EASY TO look at your local utility as just another business that is in your life because of simple necessity. However, working with electric cooperatives my entire career has given me a different perspective; at their heart, electric cooperatives are about community. Ever since the first members of Berkeley Electric came together to form an electric cooperative, our goal has been to serve our community's needs. For the most part, those needs are for safe, reliable and affordable power.

Today, I'd like to also take a different perspective on two of those watchwords—safe and powers—and share how that led to one of our most recent community partnerships with Eden House, a home to help women impacted by human trafficking.

Eden House is a joint project between Reality Church in Goose Creek and the nonprofit Formation Project. Led locally by Pastor Ric Edgar, the idea for the project was sparked by former NFL quarterback Tim Tebow's own organization that rescues children from human trafficking and his statement that "you don't have to go very far to find this issue in your backyard."

Unfortunately, this is true with state law enforcement agencies reporting nearly 400 human trafficking victims statewide, with about 50 cases in Berkeley and Charleston counties as of 2024. Eden House will be able to help six victims at a time take their lives back by providing a safe refuge and empowering them to re-enter the job market and restart their lives.

Eden House itself was built in the 1960s and was part of the property the church purchased to build a chapel. The decision to renovate the house before completing the chapel is supported by the church members. Pastor



BEC donated a new electric water heater to help create a safe haven for victims of human trafficking.

Edgar has pledged that the church will not be built until the renovations are complete and the Formation Project has housed the first group of women on site.

For this to happen, however, Reality Church is asking for help from the community, which is where Berkeley Electric comes in. The cooperative donated a new water heater and paid for it to be installed at Eden House, a \$1,500 value.

At Berkeley Electric Cooperative, serving our community has always meant more than keeping the lights on. It means standing alongside our neighbors and responding to needs as they arise—whether that need is safe, reliable electricity or the power that comes from safety, dignity and a fresh start. No matter the form it takes, our commitment remains the same: to serve our communities with care, compassion and dedication to both safety and power for all.

Sincerely,

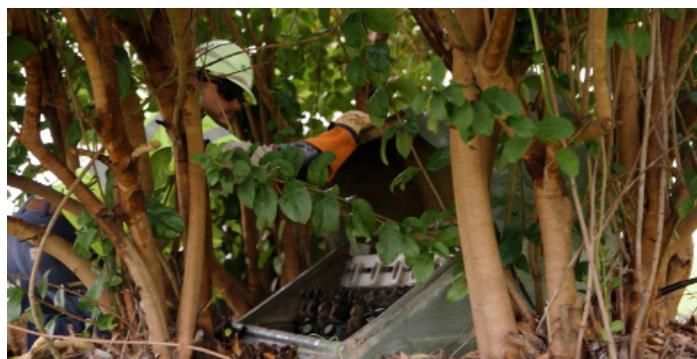
Employees take part in Day of Caring



PEYTON DRESS

BERKELEY ELECTRIC EMPLOYEES braved the swamp to help replace large sections of boardwalk at Cypress Gardens as part of Trident United Way's Day of Caring. The volunteers focused on replacing older sections of boardwalk that have seen increased wear-and-tear from the cooperative's Bright Ideas 5K held at the park each spring. The 5K raises money to fund grants for K-12 teachers and will be held on Saturday, April 25 this year. Sign up online at berkeleyelectric.coop to participate in this unique, road-to-trail race.

Help us clear the zone



ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT, such as a padmount transformer, has a required minimum clearance zone around it to ensure safety. Never play, plant, or build structures near electrical equipment. It endangers your and our crews' safety and can cause outages and delays when restoring power. Help us by maintaining a 4-foot clearance around the sides and back of padmount transformers, as well as a 10-foot clearance on the front side where the cabinet door opens. For more information, visit the Vegetation Management page under "My Energy" on our website at berkeleyelectric.coop.

REEL STEEL JO

APRIL 14

CANAL LAKES FISH CAMP • 6:00 AM - 2:00 PM

WE WANT TO SHOW OUR VETERANS OUR APPRECIATION WITH AN

ALL-EXPENSES PAID, GUIDED FISHING TRIP

VETERANS

APPLY ONLINE AT:

BERKELEYELECTRIC.COOP

Scan Me



Sam Gourdin
Trustee, District 4

Winter's worst brings out our best

IT SEEMS WE HAVE finally made it through our long winter of discontent and can look forward to a glorious spring warmed by the Lowcountry sun. While it is natural for us to want to quickly move on from the memory of winter, it is still possible to find a silver lining on the cold, gray clouds that brought snow, ice and weeks of freezing winds to our state. It is the realization that despite widespread outages, South Carolina co-ops worked together ceaselessly to restore power to not only their own members, but also to other members across the state.

When Winter Storm Fern blasted through the Upstate, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative in Pickens quickly felt its effects as heavy ice and wind pushed their outage count from 3,000 to more than 20,000 in just 90 minutes. At the peak, BREC had around 27,000 members without power, which quickly overwhelmed the co-op's in-house crews.



Strong winds and heavy ice left tens of thousands of Blue Ridge Electric members without power in the wake of Winter Storm Fren.



BEC linemen and operations crews spent a week helping restore thousands of outages in the Upstate.

BERKELEY ELECTRIC

Thanks to foresight, planning and the cooperative principle fostering mutual aid, that situation didn't last long, and soon there were more than 1,600 personnel in the field, including more than 60 BEC linemen and operations crews. Our crews spent a week working along contractors and crews from eight other South Carolina cooperatives before returning home just in time for the Lowcountry to see snow for the second year in a row, courtesy of a "bomb cyclone" named Winter Storm Gianna. Despite the gusty winds and additional load on the system, there were no major weather-related outages.

That doesn't mean we escaped unscathed, however. In January, Berkeley Electric received its largest wholesale power bill to the tune of \$44 million. It comes as no surprise that we also set a new peak usage load of about 1 gigawatt, surpassing our previous high of 970 megawatts set last year.

Unfortunately, that means many of you may also be noticing your home's power bills increased as well. So, even though the weather outside is warming up, some members will still see the effect of last month's cold weather, especially those on traditional monthly billing.

As we leave the frost behind and embrace the welcome warmth of the season, it's clear that the resilience of our cooperative is measured by more than just restored power—it's found in the shared commitment to seeing one another through the toughest storms. Berkeley Electric remains dedicated to helping you manage these costs and preparing our system for whatever the next season may bring.

Sincerely,

BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE	NOV. 2024	NOV. 2025
Total kWh sold	382,267,723	422,691,400
No. meters served	131,788	137,267
Avg. residential kWh/meter	892	875
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$137.05	\$160.65
Miles of line	6482	6610
Avg. daily high temperature	73	69
Avg. daily low temperature	54	53



PHOTOS BY PEYTON DRIES

Berkeley Electric's annual Bright Ideas 5K raises funds for local teacher grants.

Chicken coops, gardens and more

What can Charleston-area teachers do with funds raised by the co-op?

BY KOMLAVI ADISSEM KADISSEM | POST AND COURIER

BERKELEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE has raised and awarded over \$200,000 to Charleston-area teachers for projects and learning experiences for their students, from planting gardens and building chicken coops to giving students access to sensory equipment and laundry machines.

The milestone comes as the co-op's Bright Ideas Education Grant program enters its fifth year and officials prepare for the annual 5K race at Cypress Gardens. The program provides educators up to \$1,500 to support "innovative and effective classroom education curricula" not covered by regular school funding, according to the program's website. The grant application states teachers at schools served by the co-op or those who live within the co-op's service area are eligible and encouraged to apply.

Previous grants have funded educational projects around the tri-county area, including a chicken coop at Charleston Collegiate School and a hydroponics garden at Sangaree Middle School.

Other awardees have used the funding to help improve learning outcomes. For example, an occupational therapist at Westview Primary School used the grant for sensory equipment, and a teacher at Berkeley Middle bought a washer and dryer so that students without access to the machines could do their laundry and special education students could learn how to use them.

For Patricia Casey, a teacher at Miracle Academy Preparatory School in St. Stephen, the grant allowed her students to learn how to grow their own leafy greens in a garden. Casey applied for the grant with fellow teachers Dietra Blanding and Barbara

Howell, and she said the application process was easy and straightforward.

She said the grant, along with a donation from another teacher, allowed her to buy the soil, seeds and other materials for the raised garden beds. The students and teachers held a fellowship dinner in February, with collard greens from the garden on the menu. Casey added that many parents don't keep gardens, so giving the students that opportunity has been important.



Students and teachers at Miracle Academy Preparatory School show off their garden, partially funded by the Bright Ideas Education Grants program.

"They have seen and they have planted a garden so that maybe one day they'll decide that, 'OK, this is what we want to do. I want to plant a garden when I get older,' " she said.

Students have also had to write and reflect about their experiences cultivating the greens. The Bright Ideas grant made it all possible, she said.

"I think it's a wonderful idea and a great thing that they're doing, to be able to provide this for the teachers, because we do use Berkeley Electric Co-op," Casey said. "So this lets us know that they do appreciate us and they're giving back to the community."

Dana Jenkins, a spokesperson for the co-op and the 5K's director, said the grant winners' ideas "are as imaginative as our educators" and that the projects funded by the grant "enhance the quality of education for our community—and inspire us every day."

Mike Fuller, the co-op's president and CEO, said the grant program is meant to help create a better educated workforce in the area. He added that teachers "play a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of leaders, innovators and problem solvers."



Timberland High used their grant to help its drone program fly to new heights as the JROTC team recently brought home almost all the awards in a U.S. Army aerial drone competition.



Charleston Collegiate used one of the first Bright Ideas grants awarded by the co-op to build a chicken coop as a hands-on teaching tool for students.

APRIL 25

CYPRESS GARDENS

BRIGHT IDEAS 5K
BERKELEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

LACE UP YOUR
Sneakers
TO HELP LOCAL
Teachers!

SEE YOU IN THE SWAMP!

SCAN ME

Continuing a life of service

Dr. Debbie Bryant is the new BEC trustee for District Five

BY JOSH CROTZER

FOR DR. DEBBIE CHATMAN BRYANT, service has always begun with listening—to patients, to students, to neighbors. Her new role as trustee on the Berkeley Electric Cooperative Board is simply the next chapter in that commitment to her community.

“Serving rural communities has always been important to me,” Bryant says. “Listening to what people are saying, helping their concerns land in the right place. At the end of the day, this is about service to our members.”

A Moncks Corner native, Bryant recently retired from the Medical University of South Carolina, where she served as associate dean in the College of Nursing. In a career spanning more than three decades, Bryant built a national reputation as a nurse leader, educator and advocate focused on expanding access to care in rural and underserved communities.

“For me, it was never just what I did,” she says. “It was who I am. My life’s work matched my calling.”

That calling was shaped by her parents and the close-knit community that raised her. Though her parents had limited formal education, they instilled in their children a belief in learning, character and responsibility to others.

“They believed education was a way to open doors they never had,” Bryant says. “They taught us that when someone reaches back to help you, you’re obligated to do the same for someone else.”

That ethic guided Bryant throughout her career. At MUSC, she helped build programs that took preventive care and cancer screening directly into rural neighborhoods, expanding services to 31 counties across South Carolina. The work combined practical solutions with listening to people and earning their trust.

Those same instincts now inform her approach as a Berkeley Electric trustee.

“The co-op’s mission is about people, and that matters to me,” says Bryant.

After winning election to the District 5 seat on the Berkeley Electric Board in November, Bryant says she has been encouraged by the culture of professionalism and kindness she has seen.

“From the very first day, I was impressed by the people here,” she says. “The kindness and intelligence I’ve seen, from staff to leadership, has been remarkable.”

She’s particularly impressed by Berkeley Electric’s member-focused programs, including the HomeAdvantage program, Operation Round Up and the investments in local students—initiatives that look beyond delivering power to



Dr. Debbie Bryant was elected to the Berkeley Electric board in November.

About Dr. Bryant

- ▶ Born and raised in Moncks Corner; youngest of six siblings.
- ▶ Earned nursing degrees (ASN, BSN, MSN) and a Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) from the Medical University of South Carolina.
- ▶ Served 19+ years at MUSC as community health nurse, educator, associate professor and associate dean; named associate professor emerita upon retirement.
- ▶ Expanded access to breast cancer screening in underserved counties; mentored future health professionals.
- ▶ Served leadership role at Virginia Commonwealth University’s Massey Cancer Center post-retirement.
- ▶ Married more than 35 years with two children.

supporting people.

“That tells me the mission isn’t just words on a wall,” Bryant says. “It’s lived out.”

As she continues learning the cooperative’s operations, Bryant says her focus continues to be a thoughtful, prepared and fair voice for the members who elected her.

“I hold that trust very close,” she says. “They chose me because they believed I would serve them well. And I intend to honor that.”