



Berkeley Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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Serving communities near and far



MIKE FULLER
President & CEO

One of the principles that sets electric cooperatives apart is our commitment to community. For Berkeley Electric Cooperative, that commitment extends far beyond providing safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. It means being an active partner in the communities we serve and looking for opportunities to create value wherever we can.

Most often, that community focus is local. It involves supporting schools, economic development efforts, charitable organizations, and events that strengthen the places our members call home. But occasionally, our role in the cooperative family allows us to contribute on a much broader scale.

In recent months, Berkeley Electric has had the privilege of hosting both state and national training sessions and workshops at our headquarters. These gatherings brought industry leaders, energy experts, and cooperative professionals together to share ideas, discuss challenges, and explore opportunities to help shape the future of energy.

When Berkeley Electric designed and built its headquarters several years ago, the primary goal was operational efficiency. We wanted a facility that would help our employees serve members more effectively, support our growing system, and provide the infrastructure necessary to meet the evolving demands of the electric utility industry.

What we quickly discovered, however, was that the facility offered another benefit. Its meeting and training spaces created opportunities to bring people from outside the co-op together for collaboration, education, and professional development. Being able to use our headquarters in ways that benefit not only Berkeley Electric but also the broader cooperative and energy communities has been an added bonus.

Berkeley Electric has earned a reputation as an industry leader, particularly through the work of our Energy Services Department. The expertise and innovation demonstrated by our employees helping members have attracted attention from organizations across the country.

That reputation recently led Berkeley Electric to both host and participate in a national energy-efficiency workshop sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. The event brought participants from across the nation to learn about best practices, emerging technologies, and programs that help members save energy and money.

We were also proud to host a statewide conference in partnership with the Center for Energy Efficiency. The conference focused on state and national trends, policies, and developments affecting renewable energy and energy efficiency. These discussions are increasingly important as utilities, policymakers, and consumers navigate a rapidly changing energy landscape.

Hosting events like these reflects the cooperative spirit at its best. It allows Berkeley Electric to share knowledge, learn from others, and contribute to conversations that affect our industry and our members.

While our focus will always remain on serving the members of Berkeley Electric, we are proud that our facilities and expertise can also support the wider communities we serve locally, statewide, and nationwide.

Sincerely,



CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS — we are on the hunt for wildlife! Cute and cuddly, slick and scaly ... if it runs, hops, swims, flies, or crawls in the Lowcountry, we want to see it! Share your Lowcountry wildlife photos with us for your chance to **win \$100** if your photo is chosen for the calendar.

The contest runs from July through Sept. 25. All submissions must be in landscape orientation (horizontal), and please send the highest-resolution image possible. Cell phone photos are typically not print quality. E-mail all submissions to micahp@bec.coop with the subject line “Calendar Contest.” **You must be a BEC member to enter and win!**



Hablamos español

Berkeley Electric kicked off the summer with the return of the popular Reading with the RiverDogs events at the John’s Island Library. Players from the baseball team read stories to children in Spanish and English. The event included dancing, singing, a free lunch, and photo ops with the mascots. Be sure to mark your calendar for Aug. 5 at 11 a.m. for our next event at the Goose Creek library!

Co-op scholarships awarded



PEYTON DRESS

Each year, the Berkeley Electric Trust Board awards up to 10 scholarships to graduating seniors in Berkeley Electric Cooperative’s service territory. The \$2,500 scholarships are awarded to students who meet the grade and income requirements and are intended to help children of co-op members attend an accredited college or trade school. Congratulations to this year’s recipients:

- Mariah Brown – Berkeley HS
- Aniyah Bryant – Berkeley HS
- Gibson Gavidia – Goose Creek HS
- Daniel Huang – Academic Magnet HS
- Nydira Hunter – St. Johns HS (Johns Island)
- Aydan Moore – Cane Bay HS
- D’Juan Robinson – Goose Creek HS
- Liam Rosebach – Oceanside Collegiate Academy
- Amare Simmons – Berkeley Middle College High School
- Josiah Washington – Ft. Dorchester HS

The funds for the scholarships are drawn from the Operation Round Up program. Members who agree to participate allow Berkeley Electric Cooperative to “round up” their monthly electric bill to the next highest dollar. For example, a bill of \$55.75 would be rounded up to \$56.00, with the additional \$0.25 going to the Operation Round Up® fund. The amount “rounded up” on each participating member’s bill averages \$6 per year. Collectively, your generosity equates to about \$50,000 a month to aid members in need here in the Lowcountry.

Operation Round Up is an opt-out program with all Berkeley Electric Cooperative members automatically enrolled when they become members. Members can opt out at any time by simply contacting their local district office.



The 2nd cooperative principle in action

Berkeley Electric Cooperative is not like other electric utilities. While sharing the same mission of delivering safe, reliable, and affordable power, co-ops accomplish this with help and guidance from their communities. Unlike traditional utility companies, electric cooperatives have a board of trustees elected from within the membership, making them truly representative of the communities they serve.

Make an impact

While running for the board may not be the first thing that comes to mind for many members, it's essential to recognize the power of active member participation. Board members are tasked with making informed decisions on long-term priorities and investments that keep the cooperative running smoothly. That's why we're looking for talented, engaged members who are willing to put their skills to work on behalf of their friends and neighbors.

BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE	MARCH 2025	MARCH 2026
Total kWh sold	399,048,173	437,278,671
No. meters served	134,327	138,826
Avg. residential kWh/meter	902	891
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$162.76	\$160.97
Miles of line	6544	6672
Avg. daily high temperature	73	77
Avg. daily low temperature	48	51

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- **Aug. 21** - Deadline for nominating committee candidates (Dist. 1,4,7)
- **Sept. 18** - Deadline for petition candidates (requires 50 signatures from active members)
- **Nov. 12, 17-19** - Annual Meeting of Members (voting)

It's easier than you think

To get started, a member must be in good standing, live in a district up for election, and collect signatures from 50 current members. The board is elected by members at the annual meeting and serves as their voice, shaping the cooperative's direction and ensuring decisions are made in the best interests of the community it represents.

New board members don't need to be experts in cooperative governance. Specialized training opportunities such as the Credentialed Cooperative Director program are available to help trustees make informed decisions. While day-to-day operations are handled by dedicated staff, major decisions rest with the board. Their mission is to look out for the health of the cooperative and the communities it serves.

Be part of the Cooperative Difference

The real power of any cooperative lies within its membership. By stepping forward to serve on the board, members can make a significant impact on the cooperative's success and the communities it powers. We love our community and want to help it thrive. If you share that commitment and want to contribute in a meaningful way, consider running for a board position.

Launching rural classrooms into the future

In a region where quality STEM programming has historically required a long drive to Charleston, a hometown nonprofit is changing the equation – one student at a time.

Ignite Tech Impact is expanding access to high-quality science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics education for rural students and community members. Founded by Pineville native Sonia Gaillard, the organization has grown from a single summer camp into a year-round hub of innovation, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship.

“I’m a builder at heart – a builder of programs, partnerships and pathways,” Gaillard said. “I’m here to prove to students that innovation on a global scale can start in a rural classroom.”

Gaillard, who holds technology patents in the telecommunications and financial industries and has advised government and industry leaders on topics ranging from artificial intelligence to digital assets, returned to her home state nearly three years ago with a clear mission to transform overlooked, under-resourced communities into launchpads for the next generation.

From Summer Camp to Year-Round Programming

What began as a flagship summer camp has evolved into a comprehensive suite of programs serving students and adults alike. Ignite Tech Impact now offers year-round activities, community technology summits and a “Learn and Earn”



Ignite Tech Impact offers hands-on robotics training for students to learn how hardware and software work together as well as engineering and coding skills.

series that teaches students practical entrepreneurial skills – including running a concession stand at community events.

This summer, the organization will host two camp sessions at St. Stephen Elementary School. The first, held July 6-9 in partnership with The Citadel, focuses on artificial intelligence (AI) health and humanoid robot programming for students ages 10 to 14. The week culminates in a robot rally where campers showcase what they have built, and partners from the S.C. Department of Natural Resources will take students out on boats for hands-on scientific experiments.

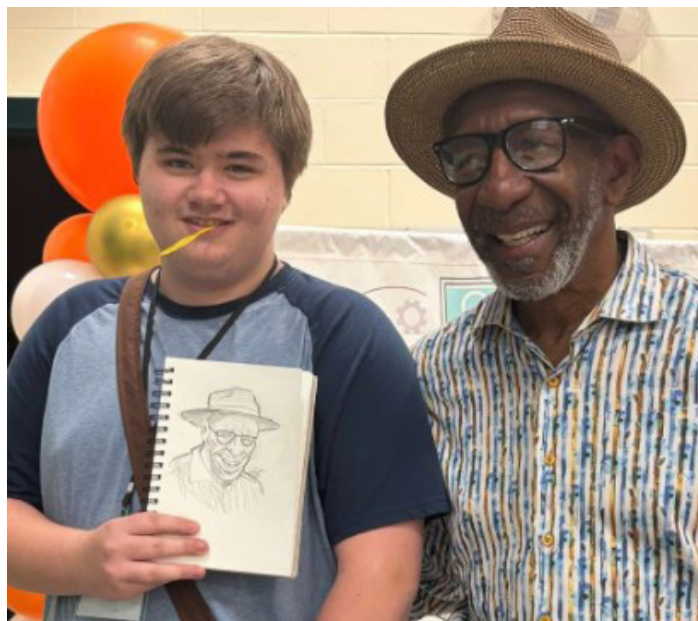
The second session, Ignite Tech Youth summer camp, held July 6-13, is open to middle and high school students and will explore mechatronics engineering, art, AI and a wide range of technology innovation projects. Both camps run full days from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and are offered free of charge – a value Gaillard estimates at more than \$1,000 per week when compared to similar programs in the Charleston area. Meals and snacks are also provided.

“The parents are so thankful that students no longer have to drive an hour or so to get this level of programming,” Gaillard said.

Bridging the Digital Divide

Beyond coding and robotics, Ignite Tech Impact weaves art, entrepreneurship, and outdoor education into its curriculum. Students have also taken on the role of teachers themselves, leading technology safety workshops to help senior adults navigate cybersecurity threats and new devices.

The organization recently launched a monthly AI com-



An impromptu drawing challenge from BEC Trustee Willis Sanders propelled one participant into a series of opportunities that led to him becoming a published illustrator in a coloring book for Keep Berkeley Beautiful.



This year, Ignite Tech Impact launched STEAM+Outdoors, a new initiative designed to explore how environmentalism and technology can interact.

community series designed to help residents of all ages understand how artificial intelligence is already becoming part of everyday life.

“We’re in the process of getting an AI community series started at least once a month – a session for the community at large to learn about different aspects of AI,” Gaillard said. “It’s integrated into the fiber of what we do every day already.”

The results are tangible. One student who participated in the 2024 camp – where campers used AI to brainstorm solutions to local community problems and presented findings to town leadership – has since advanced to the national level in computer networking competition through Future Business Leaders of America and submitted an AI-based solution to a real community issue in the Presidential AI Challenge. Another student turned a chance sketching exercise led by Berkeley Electric Trustee Willis Sanders, who was also a guest speaker at the camp, into a published illustrator credit for a community coloring book.

A Vision for What Comes Next

Gaillard said Ignite Tech Impact has outgrown its current footprint and is working toward establishing a permanent home as the North Berkeley Innovation Center. The facility would serve as a blueprint for rural innovation nationwide, providing critical infrastructure, connectivity, equipment, and flexible learning spaces. “We’ve reached the point where we are not able to move forward with things we want to do given the limitations of the structure that exists when you’re

using someone else’s equipment, location, or network,” Gaillard said

Ignite Tech Impact also seeks partners for its free summer camp for rural students and year-round programming, while supporting the next phase of STEAM+Outdoors through a pontoon boat that can serve as a floating classroom where students can explore environmental technology, water safety, conservation, and outdoor career pathways.

“We are grateful for partners like BEC and welcome new supporters to join us in this next chapter,” said Gaillard. “Together, we can give rural communities access to the tools, spaces, and experiences requisite to becoming future-ready, both indoors and outdoors.”

Berkeley Electric Cooperative has sponsored Ignite Tech Impact since the program’s first year. Community members and organizations interested in making tax-deductible contributions via any form can visit ignitetchimpact.org/donate or find the organization on Facebook and Instagram at Ignite Tech Impact and Ignite Tech Youth.



TEENS TEACH TECH

Through this program, Ignite Tech teen participants have facilitated more than 141 hours of digital training and technical support to adults and seniors. The campers serve as youth technology ambassadors by guiding adults through practical digital skills such as smartphone basics, email use, internet navigation, online safety, scam awareness, and basic AI awareness. Campers work in small teams to offer one-on-one support stations to benefit both the community and the students.

Co-op enjoys playdate in Awendaw



Berkeley Electric's core mission will always be to provide safe, affordable power for its members. Almost equally important is the co-op's goal to be a reliable partner to its communities. So, when the co-op learned that the Awendaw Town Hall playground needed to be revitalized, Berkeley Electric was first in line to help.

Co-op crews removed an aging piece of playground equipment and spread several tons of mulch around the new modern jungle gym that replaced it. Employees also trimmed trees and bushes and upgraded lighting fixtures around the Awendaw Town Hall recreation area.

The project was funded in partnership with CoBank, one of the cooperative's lenders, which provides a matching grant program known as Sharing Success. The program strives to improve life in rural communities across the country. Berkeley Electric budgets for participation in this program each year and rotates the allocation among the co-op's four districts. It's a way to maximize our charitable giving and support community projects that wouldn't be possible without CoBank's generosity.

Berkeley Electric has previously supported the Miracle League ball field in Moncks Corner, rowboat revitalization at Cypress Gardens, the Central Creek Park in Goose Creek, the Barrier Islands Little League ballpark project in Johns Island, and now a playground in Awendaw.



CHARLESTON RIVERDOGS

Community Champion is crowned

Berkeley Electric Cooperative is proud to announce David Irizarry as its 2026 Community Champion.

In recognition of the cooperative's commitment to community along with its growing Latino population, Berkeley Electric created the Community Champion Award. Now in its third year, the award recognizes someone who makes a positive impact benefitting the Latino and Hispanic community.

For more than a decade, Irizarry has done that across Berkeley County through his leadership, compassion, and unwavering commitment to service. He works to connect Latino families and underserved communities to healthcare resources and support.

From organizing back-to-school supply drives and community baby showers to supporting job fairs, food distributions and holiday turkey giveaways, Irizarry's efforts have touched countless lives. What truly sets Irizarry apart is his heart. He builds trust, fosters meaningful relationships, and shows up with compassion and a genuine desire to help others thrive.

In addition to being recognized as the co-op's community champion during a recent Perros Santos game at the Charleston RiverDogs, Irizarry was presented with a trophy, \$100 gift card, and the nonprofit of his choice received \$5,000 media credit with Norsan Media, a Hispanic media company serving communities in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Austin, TX.