



**Berkeley Electric Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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 Hours: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

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## This place is for the birds

**AS AN ELECTRIC UTILITY**, it isn't unusual to find ourselves in the news. Hurricanes, outages, energy prices, school

outreach and economic development projects are all just as likely to land us on the front page or the 5 o'clock news. What I didn't expect to put us in the media spotlight was a bird.

That's right, a bird. To be more specific—a killdeer. If you aren't familiar with it, a killdeer is a species of shorebird that is fairly common to the Lowcountry and can be seen on beaches, golf courses and, in this case, a parking lot. Last month was nesting season and killdeer like to scratch out a shallow nest in open, rocky ground, usually around water. We often run across them in our substations but one adventuresome killdeer decided that the middle of our Johns Island pole yard would make a fine spot to lay her eggs.

Now you might be thinking to yourself, "no big deal, just move the nest." What you might not realize is that the killdeer is protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act so its nest cannot be disturbed. This meant that we lost the use of a portion of our parking lot and pole yard for the almost two months it took for the eggs to hatch and for the chicks to leave the nest.

When the media caught wind of the situation, we were surprised by how quickly the story spread. Before we knew it, our killdeer had been featured on the local news, **SouthernLiving.com**, major online news pages and on TV affiliates in 15 states from Alaska to Vermont. At first I figured it was just a slow news day but the more I thought about it I believe that the interest stemmed from seeing a company go the extra mile to protect wildlife. That is something that I almost take for granted because, as an electric cooperative, Berkeley Electric is a strong steward of the environment. In fact, it is one of our seven core co-op principles.



MICAH PONCE

A federally protected killdeer laid eggs in the middle of BEC's Johns Island parking lot, shutting part of it down.

Most often, this stewardship is based on responsible business practices like maintaining a balanced fuel mix that includes renewable energy. However, we are also lucky enough to live in one of the most beautiful and culturally significant parts of the state. Protecting our environment is essential for maintaining the region's unique character and ensuring its economic, cultural and ecological sustainability for future generations and it's a job we're happy to do. And if you think that we went the extra mile for this killdeer, be sure to read about the adventures of Mr. Cat.

Sincerely,

**MIKE FULLER**  
 President & CEO



JONATHAN HODGE

A member's cat took an unexpected journey, ending up at BEC's headquarters more than 20 miles from home.

## Mr. Cat's wild ride

IT ALL STARTED with a simple mistake.

Mr. Cat (yes that's his real name) decided that the flatbed trailer parked in his yard looked like a good place to soak up some sun and take a cat nap. The next thing he knew he was 20 miles away from his home on Shortcut Road in Cross as the utility contractor was pulling into the parking lot at the co-op's Moncks Corner office.

The contractor finished the job on a Monday, but Mr. Cat didn't make his first appearance until the following Wednesday when BEC warehousemen Jonathan Hodge and Otto Wilson went to load a truck and saw him sitting on the trailer.

A couple of hours later, the cat was seen again, and Hodge and Wilson snapped a picture of Mr. Cat to post on Facebook to attempt to find his owner. Within 10 minutes, multiple messages were received claiming that the cat belonged to them.

The owner showed up to collect his pet, but Mr. Cat had pulled a disappearing act. Wilson and Hodge searched the entire yard with the owner in the rain to no avail. Undeterred, Wilson and Hodge enlisted help. While Member Service Specialist Dancy Steen kept an eye on the security cameras all day to see if Mr. Cat showed up, Lisa Padgett, distribution operations analyst, took a trip to the store for catnip to try and lure him out of hiding. Stephanie Ulam, manager of propane services and a volunteer at Berkeley Animal Center, spent her lunch break picking up a live cat trap to help bring him home.

The next morning Substation Tech Brandon Hughes was waiting at the warehouse door with Mr. Cat in hand after the felonious feline snuck into the substation building to spend the night. His owner was quick to make his way to HQ to pick up his furry friend. "It was awesome that he got to go home to his family," Burke says.

The cat's owners were grateful for the help of the entire co-op and reached out with this message, "our cat caught a ride in a track hoe from Cross to the Highway 52 site for a few days. I just want to thank Mr. Hodge and his wife for reaching out on Facebook. We now have our cat back home. Please thank everyone for their help."

## Are you beating the peak?

OVER 60,000 ELECTRIC cooperative members across South Carolina have already signed up to receive notifications that remind them to reduce their electricity consumption during peak use periods. Members that register receive alerts projecting system-wide energy peaks—typically occurring in the late afternoon of high temperature days during the summer or cold winter mornings. By voluntarily delaying the use of large appliances, adjusting your thermostat or just turning off some lights during these peak times, you'll be helping to lower wholesale power costs. As an added incentive, members who sign up are eligible to win up to \$500. Visit [energysmartsc.org](http://energysmartsc.org) for details!

What could **YOU** do with **\$500?**

**A vacation?  
New appliance?  
For your chance to WIN:**

**SIGN UP NOW!**



- Sign up to receive peak alerts.
- Delay electricity use\* during peak times.
- Hold down wholesale power costs *and* delay the need for new power plants.

All Beat The Peak volunteers signed up by **June 30, 2023**, will be entered to win a **\$100 gift card** in addition to the **\$500 gift card**.



**BEAT THE PEAK**  
Energy Smart Solutions for a Bright Future

\* Wait to run the dishwasher and postpone laundry until off-peak times, when not as many people are using electricity. Even turning off a light and/or electronics helps.



**BEAT THE PEAK**  
Energy Smart Solutions for a Bright Future



**WAYNE DEWITT**  
Trustee, District 3

## Preparing to serve you better

**PROVIDING RELIABLE POWER** to you is and will always be a top priority for Berkeley Electric Cooperative. These days, power reliability seems to be making news, now more than ever.

As the energy industry continues to transition and more segments of the economy are becoming electrified, such as vehicles, machinery and even lawn equipment, additional pressures are being placed on our electric grid.

With summer storm season upon us, I thought it would be a good time to tell you about a few measures we're taking to ensure you continue receiving the reliable power you depend on and deserve.

Let me be the first to say I love trees and the charm they add to our communities, and I know you do too. While trees provide shade and add beauty to our area, you may be surprised to learn that overgrown vegetation accounts for about half of all power outages.

That's why we strive to keep the co-op's power lines clear in right-of-way (ROW) areas. A ROW area is the land a co-op uses to construct, maintain, replace or repair underground and overhead power lines. This ROW enables Berkeley Electric to provide clearance from trees and other obstructions that could hinder distribution power lines. The overall goal of our vegetation management strategy is to provide reliable power to our members while maintaining the beauty of our area.

### Modernizing vegetation management

Generally speaking, healthy trees don't fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems. Proactive trimming and pruning keep lines clear to improve power reliability. However,

<b>BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE</b>	<b>JANUARY 2022</b>	<b>JANUARY 2023</b>
Total kWh sold	361,547,801	366,647,992
No. meters served	116,399	121,762
Avg. residential kWh/meter	1,371	1,121
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$169.95	\$147.85
Miles of line	6104	6236
Avg. daily high temperature	59	67
Avg. daily low temperature	36	45



MICHAEL PONCE

**Line Clearance Foreman Jeremy Walker removes a tree endangering a power line to prevent a future outage.**

traditional vegetation management is costly and time consuming. It entails on-the-ground, labor-intensive efforts involving dozens of workers assessing vegetation and overseeing the quality and completion of contractor work.

One of the ways we are taking proactive steps to address reliability is by using tree growth inhibitors (TGRs). TGRs are applied to the soil around trees and shrubs bordering the ROW area. Once the TGR is taken up by the plant's root system, it inhibits plant growth by 85-90% and can last up to three years.

With the addition of drone technology, co-ops are now also able to quickly survey rights-of-way to look for danger trees and other problem areas as well.

Vegetation management is an essential tool in ensuring power reliability and minimizing the risk of outages. As advancements become more accessible and costs drop, we anticipate using additional technologies to ensure a consistent energy supply while managing the environment.

Sincerely,

## WIRE looking for new members

**IF YOU'RE SEARCHING** for ways to give back to your local community then your local WIRE chapter may be the answer. Women in Rural Electrification (WIRE) is a co-op service group that engages in projects to help improve the lives of people in the cooperative's service territory. For example, each year WIRE partners with Food Lion in Moncks Corner to donate Thanksgiving meals to local families in need. This year was especially important with the increase in grocery prices and WIRE was able to help 24 families across all districts who were gifted a box filled with a full Thanksgiving meal.

Through another service project last August, WIRE donated 60 backpacks filled with school supplies to children who live in the Awendaw district. The group also collected and donated over \$500 worth of toys, books and other items to MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital in December. As a bonus, ladies in the Awendaw district enjoyed Christmas carols sung by St. James-Santee Elementary School scholars during their December meeting.

The initial purpose behind WIRE was to engage women in a male-dominated industry. Male cooperative employees often shared co-op business with their spouses, so those women decided to form a group to network and formally share co-op updates. Today, more than half the cooperatives in South Carolina have a WIRE chapter, including Berkeley Electric. Each chapter focuses on the needs of their respective communities and brainstorms ways to meet those needs.

Berkeley Electric is hoping to start new chapters and expand its existing program so, if interested, please visit the co-op's website at [berkeleyelectric.coop](http://berkeleyelectric.coop) and complete the form on the WIRE page located under the "My Community" tab. Be sure to keep an eye on the co-op's social media channels as well for upcoming projects and service opportunities.



**WIRE Vice President Debbie Wilder (top) and member Hilda DeHay volunteer at the Gateway Open Arms food pantry as part of a service project.**

BRIANNA JOHNSON



**Youth Tour students spend a week meeting with state representatives, learning about co-ops and touring D.C.**

## Lucky students headed to Washington, D.C.

**WHEN MR. SMITH WENT** to Washington in the 1930's film classic, he learned a lot about the way government worked in real life. Jimmy Stewart's character had his eyes opened to the wider world, and now eight lucky local students will get their own chance to experience our nation's capital firsthand as part of the Washington Youth Tour. The rising juniors representing Berkeley Electric are Tihly'Zhariquek Bryant, Cross High; Oscar Leighfield, Charleston Collegiate; Brady Hurd, Aeisha Smith and Christopher Dial, Stratford High; Chrisitan Long, Summerville High; and Bryce Bradley and Sidnee Saulters, Cane Bay High.

During this all-expenses paid trip, they will join other high school students from across America to spend a week in the nation's capital this June as part of a unique leadership experience. Students will take a trip to remember as they tour monuments and museums while learning about the impact electric cooperatives have on their communities. Each year, roughly 2,000 delegates mix, mingle and make friendships that last a lifetime.

Berkeley Electric also offers a similar experience for sophomores during Cooperative Youth Summit in July. Students selected for the summit spend a week in Columbia learning about state government, visiting local attractions and trying their hand at a variety of lineman skills during a visit to a local cooperative. Berkeley will be announcing the Youth Summit participants next month and you can learn more about both trips by visiting "My Community" at [berkeleyelectric.coop](http://berkeleyelectric.coop).

BERKELEY ELECTRIC

# Berkeley Electric racks up at rodeo

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

**IT'S A GOOD THING** Berkeley Electric lineworkers drove their trucks to the South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo. They had a lot of hardware to carry back home.

Berkeley Electric's journeyman teams placed either first, second or both in the division's four skill competitions, led by the top overall scoring crew—William Burbage, Will Mills and Zach Johnson—who had perfect 100-point scores in all the competitions and finished the digger derrick obstacle course with the fastest time of the day.

The crew of Kevin Rhodes, Robbie Harrelson and Brit Pipkin also had good day, winning the two equipment changeout competitions and finishing second in the GFC Relay, which requires competitors to install a guy wire, replace a fuse barrel and climb a 50-foot pole. Henry Owens, Steve Fulton and Jared Orvin placed second in the digger derrick obstacle course, where truck operators are required to maneuver an object through an obstacle course while taking non-verbal instructions from a crewmate spotter.

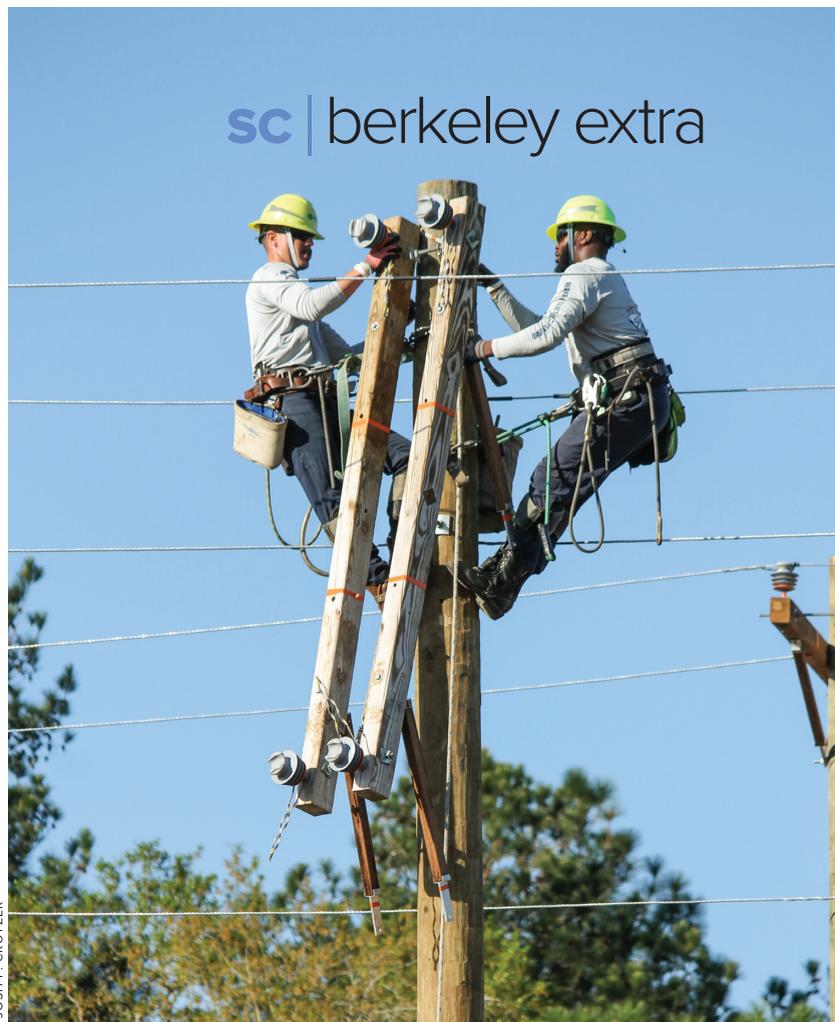
Berkeley Electric also had seven linemen competing in the apprentice division, which featured four individual competitions for apprentice lineworkers. Evan Mizzell placed second overall in the division and Harry Horn finished second in the Hurt Man Rescue competition. Other apprentice linemen competing included Owen Ford, Steve Graham, Marcus Gariepy, Brandon Fowler and Evan Sparks.

Winning trophies and buckles weren't the main purpose for the rodeo, however, according to Berkeley Electric's Patrick Gailey, director of safety and technical training.

"The rodeo is a great way for our line-workers to perfect and display their abilities," says Gailey. "Rodeos are competitive in nature but, as always, keep safety the number one priority."

Sponsored by The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina and hosted by Palmetto Electric at their Ridgeland campus, the South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo gave spectators a chance to watch well-trained lineworkers showcase their skills in a safe and fun environment. Rodeo activities began with a special flag-raising ceremony that featured lineworkers from each participating co-op climbing a pole to mount the U.S., South Carolina and Touchstone Energy Cooperatives flags.

Volunteers and family members from various co-ops, including Berkeley Electric, were there to show their support for linemen and the work they do. The cooperative-affiliated community outreach group WIRE (Women Involved In Rural Electrification) held a bake sale at the event and raised \$1,250 for the Chavis House at Burn Centers of America in Augusta, which has treated many linemen over the years.



Steve Fulton and Kevin McHoney compete in the double crossarm changeout event.



Berkeley Electric's Zach Johnson, Will Mills and William Burbage were the top scoring journeyman lineman crew at the 2023 South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo in March.



Evan Mizzell placed second overall in the Apprentice Lineman Division.

# WHO POWERS YOU?

Inspired by someone making a difference in our community?  
Tell their story and they could win a prize.

We know our community is filled with unsung heroes who are making a difference. Let's celebrate them! This is your chance to honor the people who are making a real difference. Winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact they have on our community. All entries must be submitted by July 31.

**Grand Prize \$2,500**

**Your Local Co-op Prize \$1,000**



**Berkeley Electric  
Cooperative**

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Together, let's  
celebrate the  
power of  
human  
connections.



Visit [ecsc.org/WhoPowersYou](http://ecsc.org/WhoPowersYou) for full contest rules



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