



Berkeley Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

TO REPORT OUTAGES

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MIKE FULLER
 President & CEO

Small change that changes lives

EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK

lately it seems like there is a new housing development or set of apartments being built in our service territory. While growth is important, we need to remember that

the appearance of prosperity can often hide the fact that there are many people who still need a helping hand. That is one reason your participation in our Operation Round Up program can truly make a difference in someone's life.

Community-driven initiatives have long acted as a safety net and Operation Round Up is one more example of how a simple act can have lasting effects. In case you are unfamiliar with how the program works, participating cooperative members agree to have their electric bill rounded up to the nearest dollar. On average, individuals contribute about \$6 each year but even these small donations can grow into a worthwhile amount when multiplied by the generosity of thousands of members.

The fund is administered by a board of volunteer directors made up of nine community leaders who operate independently from the cooperative. It is their job to review requests and award funds to Berkeley Electric members who demonstrate a verifiable need of assistance. Since the program began in 1992, over \$10 million has been distributed directly to co-op members and local non-profits. Last year, Operation Round Up allocated nearly \$675,000 to 135 different projects.

But what makes the Operation Round Up program so impactful is that the funds amassed are channeled into a variety of avenues that directly uplift and empower the community. Although the funds cannot be used to pay bills,

they do pay for critical structural repairs to things such as roofs, floors and plumbing. They also pay for critical repairs to heating and air systems as well as medically necessary wheelchair ramps and other vital home repairs.

Education is another cornerstone of this program. Each year, Operation Round Up funds ten \$2,500 scholarships that are awarded to graduating seniors whose parents are co-op members. By allocating funds towards scholarships and educational initiatives, Berkeley Electric Cooperative invests in the future of the community. These scholarships open doors for aspiring students, enabling them to pursue higher education and, in turn, contribute to making our communities better.

In addition, the program's support for local nonprofits and community projects amplifies its impact. By providing resources to these organizations, Operation Round Up becomes an agent for positive change, powering initiatives that address crucial needs within the community, from healthcare and social services to infrastructure development.

The success of Operation Round Up isn't found just in the financial aid it provides; it's a testament to the cooperative spirit in our communities. It reflects the ideal of neighbors helping neighbors and embodies the principle that collective action, no matter how small, can yield profound and lasting results. Thank you for doing your part to make the Lowcountry a better place for everyone.

Sincerely,



MICAH PONCE

Member donates grand prize

BERKELEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE has a long history of giving away one of its retired fleet vehicles as the grand prize during its Annual Meeting of Members. This year, for the first time in that history, the winner opted to donate the vehicle back to the cooperative so it could be given to charity. Thanks to the generosity of Frances Stork of Summerville, the cooperative was able to donate the 2010 Ford Escape to Middleton's Village-to-Village Foundation.

This organization provides donated vehicles to families in need as part of their mission to provide reliable transportation in rural South Carolina. The foundation is led by Eliot Middleton and was featured in *South Carolina Living* in 2019 after drawing national attention for its positive impact.

“Living in rural areas is especially hard for people who don't have their own transportation,” Middleton says. “Once you get 10 or 20 miles outside of the city, you don't have the option of public transportation or Uber.”

At the time of our first article, Middleton had just given away his 36th vehicle. Over the years, that number has grown with Middleton delivering his 104th vehicle this December. He restores the vehicles himself, relying on donations and his own money to fund repairs on the used cars, which are donated to the non-profit. One unexpected source of donated vehicles has been from families who previously benefited from the program.

“As these families find themselves in a better financial situation due to having reliable transportation, they are able to upgrade to a newer vehicle and in many cases, they have given the original cars back to me,” Middleton says. “I've gotten about 20 cars back, which I freshen up and send on to the next deserving family.”

Middleton has yet to turn a family away, but he prioritizes requests based on the urgency of the verifiable need.

To learn more about Middleton's Village to Village Foundation or how to donate to the program, visit www.village2villagefoundation.org.



DENVER LEE CLAYTON
Trustee, District 5

The good kind of audit

AS WE MOVE FURTHER into the new year, many of us start pulling receipts in preparation for tax season so we can avoid the possibility of a dreaded audit. But, as the title of this column implies, not all audits are bad. We are still dealing with the cold weather that typically results in higher energy bills, and with winter in full swing, we'd like to help you boost efficiency and save money around your home. That's why Berkeley Electric offers free home energy audits.

An energy audit provides a holistic view of your home's efficiency. Understanding how your home uses energy can help determine the best ways to adjust energy consumption, improve problem areas and ultimately keep more money in your wallet. An energy audit can also identify potential safety issues surrounding electrical wiring and HVAC systems, making your home safer. You could say this is a good kind of audit.

So how does it work? First, request the energy audit by completing the form on the Energy Tips page on our website at berkeleyelectric.coop, or by contacting your local district office.

The next step is for one of our certified energy auditors to review your account online. Thanks to our advanced digital metering system, our auditor can examine your home's electric usage data in detail. Although we can't tell how you are using energy in your home, our trained auditors can often spot patterns that indicate a common problem such as a hot water heater leak or HVAC heat strips running more than they are supposed to.

What to expect during the audit

The audit is comprised of three parts: evaluation, energy testing and recommendations. First, our energy audit will review your energy use patterns

with you and discuss recommendations for making improvements—many of which can be found on our website. If the auditor is unable to pinpoint the problem, a free in-home energy audit will be scheduled.

Second, our energy advisor conducts a walk-through of your home, examining energy use and identifying problem areas. The advisor will look at specific elements of your home impacting energy use such as doors, windows and insulation levels. The advisor will also examine major appliances including your heating and cooling system, thermostat setting and operation and conduct a room-by-room assessment. During the assessment, the advisor will ask questions about your energy use habits and review past energy bills.

Third, recommendations will be made which may include replacing of the existing heating and air system using on-bill financing through our Home Advantage program. They may include air sealing the home, like openings to the outside, attic access hatches and replacing recessed lighting with LEDs.

The power to save is in your hands

Finally, our advisor will provide you with a detailed evaluation. This is a written report, along with recommendations, regarding energy consumption and steps you can take to improve efficiency and save money.

One of the greatest values of an energy audit is helping you understand how you use electricity and identifying ways to use it more efficiently.

Additionally, making improvements and upgrades based on the evaluation can increase your property value—even more reason to schedule an audit for your home.

Free energy audits are just one of the many perks of your co-op membership, so we hope you'll take advantage of this valuable service. If you're looking for more ways to save, check out our additional efficiency offerings such as our Beat The Peak program and time-of-use rate. These programs and services are designed with Berkeley Electric members in mind, putting the power to save in your hands.

Sincerely,

BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE	OCTOBER 2022	OCTOBER 2023
Total kWh sold	332,244,986	370,494,476
No. meters served	120,530	125,950
Avg. residential kWh/meter	849	852
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$121.15	\$127.15
Miles of line	6214	6350
Avg. daily high temperature	75	79
Avg. daily low temperature	54	58



Made in America

Local golf cart manufacturer sets standard on quality

IN A QUIET CORNER of Summerville, a revolution is rolling off the assembly line. Golf cart manufacturer Honor LSV is rewriting the rules of craftsmanship and quality in the industry.

“If we hadn’t had a golf cart at the house, and if my son hadn’t wrecked it, I probably wouldn’t be here talking to you today,” says Brian Plaisance, the driving force behind Honor LSV.

His son’s accident happened just two weeks after Plaisance retired from his job at Bosch.

“After the wreck, I started looking into fixing the cart and I realized that I wasn’t impressed with the quality,” Plaisance says.

That realization sparked the birth of a new career path. Drawing on his experience as a design engineer, Plaisance began researching golf cart manufacturing. Within weeks, he had ordered the first set of machines to start building his own line of golf carts.

Honor LSV is the third company Plaisance has created. His first grew into the largest manufacturer of AR-15 rifle barrels in the world. His second venture manufactured precision automotive parts.

Quality as a driving force

At the core of Honor LSV’s mission lies a simple but ambitious goal—to help rekindle American manufacturing while outshining competitors, both domestic and overseas. The dedication to this cause is evident in every meticulously crafted golf cart that rolls off the production line.

The heart of the company’s operation is a 130,000-square-foot facility housing a small-scale auto manufacturing plant, along with cutting-edge technology and an unwavering commitment to quality control.

“We’re doing everything from the ground up,” says Plaisance.

This dedication to quality and American craftsmanship is what helps set Honor LSV apart. Every golf cart is meticulously assembled in-house.

“We’re doing more in-house than any other golf cart company,” Plaisance says.



Owner Brian Plaisance (right) inspects the laser cutting machine at the heart of his production line



A one-of-a-kind \$1.6 million robotic arm is used to create precise welds on each cart

The process starts with manufacturing each cart's all-aluminum frame and subframe from American-sourced materials. From there, the carts go through welding, powder coating, mechanical and electrical assembly. Aiding the process is cutting-edge technology seamlessly integrated into their manufacturing process. A sophisticated \$1.6 million 65-foot-long, 60,000-pound laser tube is the heartbeat of the operation, cutting materials with precision and speed.

"It gives us complete control over the accuracy and consistency of each part of our carts, Plaisance says. Honor LSV also employs a sheet laser, CNC press brake, CNC 3 stage tubing bender, a dual stage robotic welding cell, 5 axis CNC router, a massive thermoform machine, and a custom-built automated powder coating line.

"It's a point of pride for Honor LSV and represents our steadfast commitment to innovation and reviving American manufacturing," says Plaisance.

Buckle up and enjoy the ride

Honor LSV's golf carts include amenities such as a 10-inch touchscreen, upgraded seats with cell phone holders and a lightweight lithium-ion battery pack. All carts feature a fully adjustable front independent suspension and four-wheel disc brakes. The roof height is adjustable to help with garage clearance and the sideview mirrors have integrated blinkers that are self-cancelling after 30 seconds. There is even an on-board charger that requires no additional equipment beyond a drop cord. The standard cart has a range of 30 miles with a top speed of 25 miles-per-hour for the DOT-approved version and 19 miles-per-hour for personal transport.

"We're the only company that can say our golf carts are manufactured and 100 percent assembled in-house in America," Plaisance says. "We make a good product for a good price. That's how it should be, and it shouldn't cost as much as a car."

Distributed through TruCarts in Charleston, Honor LSV carts cost an average of around 30 percent less than comparable American brands while delivering higher quality.



MEADE AGENCY

Honor LSV powder coats all of its own frames on-site in a custom built powder coating line that is unique in the industry



MEADE AGENCY

To help maintain the highest quality standards, each cart is personally driven by owner Brian Plaisance before it leaves the factory

Although the company hasn't been up and running for a year yet, Plaisance already has his eye on the future.

"We're capable of producing 7,000 carts a year, and that's our goal," he says.

In a world dominated by mass production and overseas manufacturing, Honor LSV is setting the standard for American-made craftsmanship and quality, which serves as a testament to what dedication and a dream can achieve.

All-stars lend hand to deserving students

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

SOMETIMES THE THINGS we want are just out of reach and we need a little help.

It's a good thing Langston Barnes had the long arms and dependable hands of Ashley Ridge High School wide receiver Derrick Salley at his disposal. The fourth grader was one of 44 deserving Myrtle Beach Elementary students joined by some of the state's top high school football players during a Christmas shopping spree at their local Target store.

"I was too short for some things," says Barnes, who scored a Minecraft watch, a coat and some other clothes. "They followed me around and got them down for me."

Barnes was matched up with all-star football players from both the North and South squads, who were set to face off in the annual Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Bowl later that week. Salley, a member of the South squad, teamed up with his North squad counterpart, Saluda High running back Kenmane Brunson, to help Barnes fill his red cart. The shopping trio was equipped with a wish list and a \$150 gift card provided by South Carolina's electric cooperatives, including Berkeley Electric Cooperative.

South Carolina's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives sponsor the bowl game not only to recognize local players for their athletic ability, but for their character on and off the field. In addition to Salley, the area players invited to play in the game included Cane Bay High offensive lineman Andrew Tumbleston, Ashley Ridge High tight end Dwayne Simmons, James Island defensive back Jayden Whaley, Phillip Simmons High kicker Sam Crocker, Cane Bay defensive lineman William Coker and Cross High defensive lineman Jayden Middleton.

"I thought it was a very heartwarming moment," says Tumbleston, who helped fifth grader Kim De Jesu Galindo get some new winter clothes. "I enjoyed getting to spend time with her and seeing all of the kids happy."

The shopping spree was part of a full week of experiences for the 88 players participating in the annual all-star game at Doug Shaw Memorial Stadium on Dec. 9. The night before, the players were given the opportunity to take a tethered ride in the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives hot air balloon. They also got to explore careers as lineworkers through hands-on demonstrations presented by a crew from Horry Electric Cooperative.

In the South's 28-8 victory, Salley led all receivers with four catches for 47 yards. Middleton had two tackles and Coker registered a tackle for a loss in their team's dominating defensive effort.



PHOTOS BY TRAVIS BELL

Kayden Gaddist (left) helped Reliani Johnson score some winter clothes during their shopping spree.



Andrew Tumbleston explored some of the duties of an electric lineman the night before the bowl game.



Jayden Whaley takes a tethered ride in the Touchstone Energy balloon.