



**Berkeley Electric Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

**TO REPORT OUTAGES**

Call: 1-888-253-4232

**DISTRICT OFFICES**

Hours: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

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## Powering prosperity



**MIKE FULLER**  
President & CEO

**WHEN I FIRST STARTED** as the CEO of Berkeley Electric Cooperative, I knew that I needed to learn more about the communities the co-op served and the Lowcountry region as a whole. Luckily, I was chosen to serve as the board chairman for the Charleston Regional Development Alliance (CRDA) where I was able to

learn all that and more.

One of the first things I learned was that the CRDA shares a mission with the cooperative, and that is to drive economic vitality in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties. For 85 years, Berkeley Electric has delivered safe, reliable and affordable power to this region, but our role today extends far beyond that—we're investors in a thriving future, and partnering with CRDA is one way we ensure our community prospers.

The CRDA's story began in the mid-90s, sparked by the Charleston Navy Base closure—a loss of jobs and contracts that demanded action. From that crisis, a united group emerged, bringing together businesses, government and utilities like ours to rebuild and reimagine our economy. The team at CRDA markets our region globally, touting assets such as our port, airport and quality of life—bolstered by the manufacturing might of Boeing, Volvo and Mercedes-Benz. It's a compelling pitch, and it's working.

At Berkeley Electric, we view our CRDA partnership as an investment, not charity. Our peak load has tripled in 20 years, reflecting the growth fueling our region. We collaborate with utilities such as Dominion and Santee Cooper because success here benefits us all. When Volvo set up in a neighboring co-op's territory, it was still a win for us as our members gained from job

growth and an expanded tax base resulting from nearby satellite industries setting up shop in our service territory. That is because this isn't about rivalry; it's synergy powered by cooperation. A strong grid powers advanced manufacturing, and our joint efforts with CRDA ensure companies' energy needs are met without overpromising.

CRDA's strength lies in its public-private alignment, a rarity compared to other nearby regions where sectors often clash and compete. When prospective industrial clients hear a unified message from us—business-friendly, infrastructure-ready—they tend to invest.

Last year, South Carolina saw \$8.1 billion in new capital, much from companies already here, doubling down on the growth and prosperity we are experiencing in the Tri-County. But it's not just about newcomers. CRDA's strategy supports existing businesses while diversifying into tech, life sciences and robotics. It's like walking and chewing gum—you nurture what's here while chasing what's next.

We're also tackling broader challenges. Take workforce housing as an example. CRDA's Economic Leadership Council, where I now serve, is exploring a Charlotte-inspired fund to renovate multifamily units for affordability. It's not a full fix, but it's a start—and it's innovative, offering investors a modest return while addressing a real need.

Growth brings growing pains, yet I'd rather manage expansion than stagnation. This isn't just economic development, it's building communities. At Berkeley Electric, we're committed—because this is home, and together, through strategic partnerships, we're powering its future.

Sincerely,

*Michael S. Fuller*

# SmartHub just got smarter

Have you ever wanted a personal assistant to help you figure out how to save money on your electric bill? Well, the wait is over as Berkeley Electric is incorporating an AI assistant into the SmartHub payment portal.

From real-time projected bill views and personalized saving tips based on your actual use to detailed usage analysis and customized home profile features, these tools can help members make timely adjustments throughout the billing cycle. And all information is private, personalized and presented in a user-friendly format within SmartHub.

## ■ Energy Breakdown

Found at the bottom of the SmartHub Home Screen, the Energy Breakdown helps members understand their appliance energy usage. You can see your spending or consumption per appliance, per billing period, using interactive pie or bar charts.

## ■ Bill Analysis

This option enables members to easily compare two bills and understand the reasons for any differences. Using insights from individual appliance use, weather data and more, you can identify the factors contributing to changes in your bill.

## ■ Energy Detail

With the Energy Detail widget, members gain in-depth insight into their energy consumption. You'll see detailed charts showing itemized energy usage and spending, with kilowatt hours and dollar values graphed against temperature for year and month timeframes. Plus, you can easily switch between Appliance, Cost and Usage views for detailed analysis.

## ■ Projected Bill

Plan your energy spending with the Projected Bill widget. It gives you a view of your projected bill so you can proactively manage appliance use and avoid surprises at the end of the billing cycle.

## ■ Similar Home Comparison

Using the Similar Home Comparison option, you can compare your energy use to similar homes in your zip code, based on size and heating type. Please note, no utility data is shared or sold. SmartHub uses co-op data for the comparison, and the results are kept private.

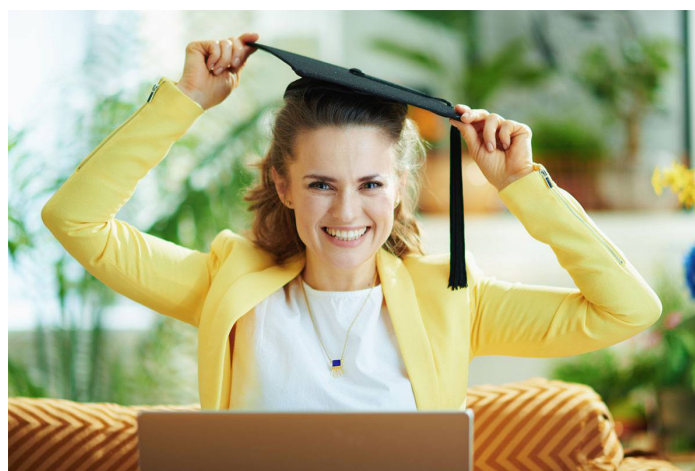
## ■ My Recommendations

Provides you with top tips tailored to your specific energy usage and data. This gives you the opportunity to learn more about conserving energy, improving energy efficiency and gaining other valuable insights.

## ■ Build Your Home Profile

The Build Your Home Profile widget allows members to provide information about their homes, enabling SmartHub to deliver more personalized appliance itemization and saving tips. This is accessible through the 'Survey' or 'Home Survey' links in the main drop-down menu or on various dashboard pages. Importantly, the answers will be used for future analysis and recommendations, not to change historical data.

Submitting the Home Profile Survey ensures that your breakdown is a true reflection of your home, particularly if you recently bought a new appliance or if you own appliances that aren't commonly seen within Berkeley's service area.



## Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship

Apply by June 1 for \$2,500 scholarship

The WIRE Opportunity Scholarship is awarded to a woman who may not have been able to attend college when she graduated from high school but now wants to further her education. The \$2,500 one-time scholarship will be presented to an electric cooperative member in South Carolina.

### APPLICANTS MUST:

- Be a member of a South Carolina electric cooperative
- Have graduated from high school/GED at least 10 years ago
- Be accepted into accredited college or university
- Demonstrate financial need

For more details visit [ecsc.org/wire](https://ecsc.org/wire) or scan the QR code.





Connie Shuler,  
Trustee, District 7

# Here to help you save this summer

When summer heats up, our electric bills tend to increase as air conditioners are working overtime, driving up home energy consumption. Berkeley Electric Cooperative is your local not-for-profit electricity provider, and we are committed to helping you beat the heat without breaking the bank.

As the temperatures get hotter over the next few months, we want to make sure you know about a range of energy-saving offerings designed specifically with you in mind. By taking advantage of these programs and services, you can manage your summer energy use and costs.

## Beat the heat

Speaking of beating the heat, Berkeley Electric is partnering with Kirkman Broadcasting again this summer to give away two window A/C units to co-op members each week from now until July 25. The contest is free for members and you can enter on our website or at your local district office.

## Time-of-Day Rate

Signing up for Berkeley Electric's Time-of-Day Rate allows you to lower your energy bills by shifting electric use to periods of lower demand (also known as off-peak times). Adjusting your electrical use to off-peak hours helps us avoid peak demand charges, and those savings can be passed on to you.

## Levelized and Fixed Budget Billing

When you sign up for the co-op's levelized billing plan, your energy bill is calculated by averaging your previous 12 months of use. With levelized billing, your monthly energy costs are easier to budget and

manage, especially during seasonal fluctuations when bills tend to increase based on the weather. Berkeley Electric also offers a fixed budget billing program where your bill stays the same amount for six months at a time, followed by a settle-up month.

## Home energy audits

Berkeley's advanced digital metering system allows our energy advisors to diagnose most energy related issues with a simple phone call. If an in-depth audit is required, they can conduct a free in-home energy audit to identify areas where energy is wasted and provide recommendations on ways to improve efficiency and lower your monthly bills.

## Energy improvement loans

Let us help you make your home more comfortable while saving money with our HomeAdvantage loan program. It features a low 5% interest rate and, the loan amount will also be added to the electric bill for easy payment. The program is designed so that energy savings should ideally cover the cost of the loan, up to \$20,000.

Want to pick and choose which upgrades to make? We also offer the Energy Advance loan program through Farmers & Merchants Bank.

## Thermostat rebates

When you make upgrades or purchases to reduce home energy use, those smart decisions should be rewarded. Berkeley Electric will give you an ecobee smart thermostat for free, after rebate.

Plus you can qualify for even more rebates when you participate in the smart thermostat control program. Berkeley Electric will sync your thermostat to make small automatic adjustments based on peak times. Before a peak occurs, Berkeley Electric will pre-cool or pre-heat your house, so you stay comfortable while your HVAC system saves energy. You can even opt out a control period, if needed.

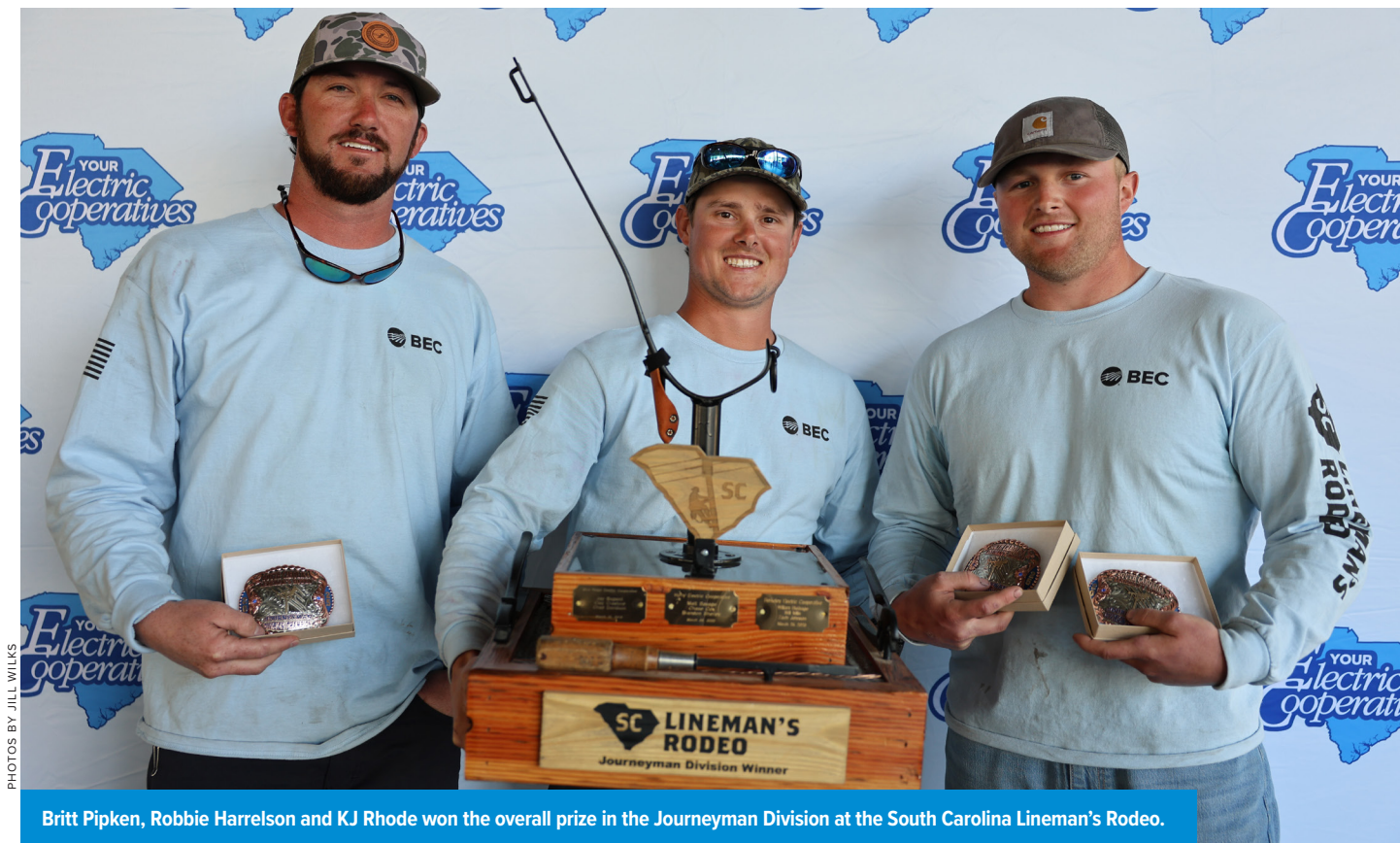
So don't let energy bills take a toll on your summer fun. Berkeley Electric Cooperative is here to help manage your energy use, whether through efficiency programs and services or energy-saving advice from our local energy advisors.

Sincerely,

*Connie P. Shuler*

BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE	JANUARY 2024	JANUARY 2025
Total kWh sold	420,691,124	490,496,295
No. meters served	126,906	133,072
Avg. residential kWh/meter	1,303	1,679
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$182.61	\$231.33
Miles of line	6378	6501
Avg. daily high temperature	64	54
Avg. daily low temperature	40	33





PHOTOS BY JILL WILKES

Britt Pipken, Robbie Harrelson and KJ Rhode won the overall prize in the Journeyman Division at the South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo.

## Rodeo team hooks top overall prize

Berkeley Electric's journeyman crew wins at South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

**THE BEST TEAMS** don't just train together; they look out for each other. That's what makes the bond between Berkeley Electric linemen KJ Rhode, Robbie Harrelson and Britt Pipkin so effective, both on the job and in competition.

After three years competing and working with one another, the trio brought home first place overall in the Journeyman Lineman division at the fifth annual South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo, hosted by York Electric Cooperative in March. They also placed first in two of the four competition events.

"It feels pretty good," says Pipkin. "We've been chasing this for a little while now. We push each other real hard at practice and on the job."

Trey Colyar, Berkeley Electric's director of safety and technical training, says he's not surprised by the linemen's success.

"They work together; they communicate, they put a strategy together," says

"We've been chasing this for a little while now. We push each other real hard at practice and on the job"

-BRITT PIPKIN

Colyar. "It's unreal to see it all roll out. I don't think they could have done it any better if they were on the ground."

In addition to the journeyman lineman team, six linemen represented Berkeley Electric in the Apprentice Lineman division—Ryan Huxford, Samuel McCants, Brandon Fowler, Marcus Gariepy, Brandon Wise and Owen Ford. Ford won the overhead transformer arrester change-out competition.

Sponsored by The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, the rodeo is designed to mirror the real-world challenges line-



Apprentice event winner Owen Ford.

workers face in the field. While it's a chance for crews to showcase their skills in front of their families and peers, the real focus is on doing the job safely, not just quickly. Each event highlights the importance of precision, communication and control under pressure.

"I think every person out there says, 'slow and steady wins the race,'" says Colyar. "That doesn't mean don't use your ability to get up the pole and get

the work done, but to talk through it, do it the right way and make sure you are your brother's keeper."

Beyond competition, the rodeo preparation sharpens the skills linemen need every day.

"You always look at safety first," Pipkin says. "We want to get the lights on, and we want to get home safely. The rodeo just helps us to do things faster than we would in the field."

Rodeo activities began with a flag-raising ceremony that featured line-workers from each participating co-op climbing a pole to mount the American, South Carolina and Touchstone Energy Cooperatives flags.

Volunteers and family members from various co-ops were there to show

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 money for the Chavis House at Burn Centers of America in Augusta, which has treated many linemen over the years.

The South Carolina electric cooperatives family also came together to support two New Horizon Electric linemen who were injured in March while working on a substation. Money was raised through a raffle for the injured linemen.

Events such as the crossarm changeout relay challenge competitors to perform the tasks safely, as well as quickly. ►



JOSH P. CROTZER

## 'Knowledge and confidence' the foundations of safety at BEC

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

Trey Colyar has spent half of his life as a lineman at Berkeley Electric, a job he says he'd wanted since he was a kid.

"I'll turn 36, and I came here two weeks after my 18th birthday," says Colyar. "At first, I was just focused on figuring out the work. Then, I just set my mind to retaining all the knowledge that comes with being a lineman."

Now, 18 years into his career, he brings that knowledge to a new position as Berkeley Electric's safety and technical training director. He and his team are tasked with implementing safety protocols, technical training and OSHA compliance across Berkeley Electric's four districts. Colyar works alongside three seasoned professionals—Teddy Jeffords, Kenny Infinger and Brandon Gray.

"They are huge assets to this company," says Colyar. "Between the three of them, they bring a lot of experience from different areas—linework, right-of-way, substations, training and compliance."

Berkeley Electric's annual Safety Improvement Plan (SIP) is at the foundation of their initiatives. In 2025, the co-op is emphasizing vehicle safety, clarification of safety rules and procedures and awareness and safety communication. The department has designed interactive exercises such as safety scavenger hunts and crossword puzzles that keep safety top-of-mind in a practical way.

"We try to make safety training interactive and engaging," Colyar says.

Reinforcing this culture is the cooperative's focus on near-miss reporting. Employees are encouraged to anonymously submit either hypothetical or past situations that could have resulted in

injury or damage. In the first quarter of 2025 alone, more than 240 near-miss reports were submitted.

"That's 240 opportunities we have to prevent something worse from happening," Colyar says. "Every report helps us improve."

For Berkeley Electric, safety training and real-world application go hand in hand. Whether it's ensuring proper climbing techniques or enforcing vehicle safety measures, Colyar believes continuous education is the foundation of a strong safety culture.

"If you're not shown the right way, how are you supposed to do the right thing?" he says. "Our goal is to give our employees the knowledge and confidence to work safely every single day."

Beyond employee safety, these efforts also benefit the cooperative's members. A safer work environment translates to fewer service disruptions, improved efficiency and, ultimately, lower costs.

"A safe co-op operates more efficiently, which benefits everyone," Colyar explains. "It's not just about following the rules—it's about making sure our people go home to their families every night."



Trey Colyar

PHOTO PROVIDED BY BERKELEY ELECTRIC



## Local elementary student wins statewide co-op book contest

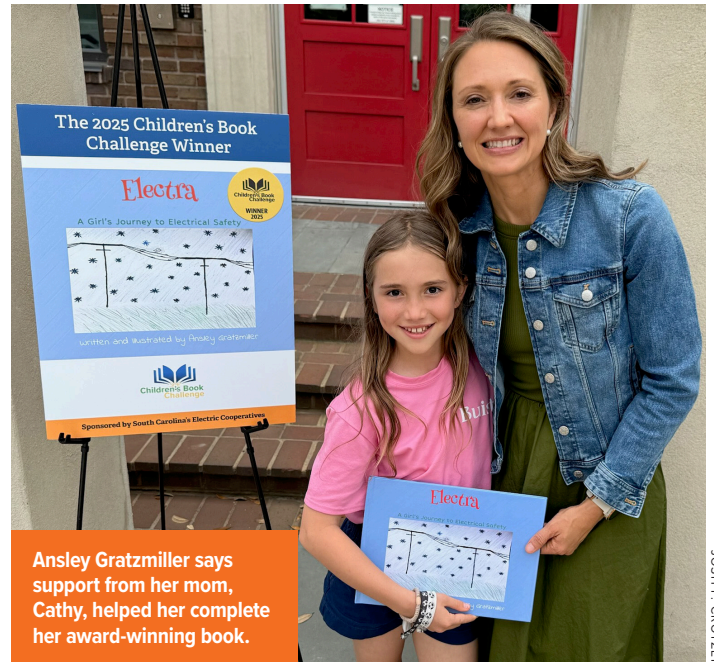
BY JOSH P. CROTZER

**WHEN THE GHOST** of Electric Co-ops shows up, you know it's not the typical children's book.

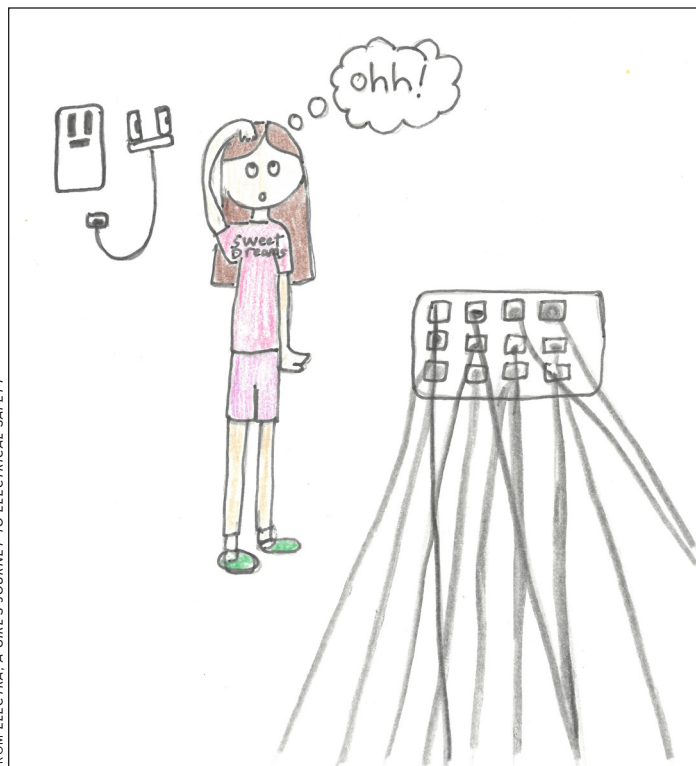
For fourth grader Ansley Gratzmiller, that ghost—and several others—lit the way to a grand prize win in the 2025 South Carolina Children's Book Challenge. Her book, *Electra, A Girl's Journey to Electrical Safety*, beat out entries from across the state to claim top honors in the individual division and a \$500 prize. Her book will be printed and distributed to elementary schools throughout South Carolina.

"I learned that electricity is a good thing to study, but it's not something to play with," says Ansley, who lives in Mount Pleasant and attends Buist Academy for Advanced Studies in Charleston. "I love that other people are going to be safe because of my book."

The contest, sponsored by Berkeley Electric Cooperative and The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, asks students to write and illustrate a story that teaches electrical safety. Berkeley Electric selected *Electra, A Girl's Journey to Electrical Safety* as its local finalist before it advanced to the statewide round. Along with the state prize, Gratzmiller also earned a \$50 award from the co-op for her local win.



JOSH P. CROTZER



FROM ELECTRA, A GIRL'S JOURNEY TO ELECTRICAL SAFETY

One of Ansley's favorite illustrations depicts the Ghost of Outlet Safety teaching Electra about plugging too many cords into outlets.

"We've been doing this program for a long time, and Ansley's book is right up there at the top," says Micah Ponce, of Berkeley Electric. "She did an awesome job with the storytelling, the writing and the illustrations."

Ansley's book is about Electra, a girl guided by supernatural visitors who reveal the dangers and importance of respecting electricity. Her characters include the Ghosts of Outlet Safety, Power Line Safety and Light Safety, each offering Electra a lesson in how to stay safe.

"I came up with the story because it was wintertime, and we had just watched *Scrooge*," says Ansley. "I thought all the characters in that story would be really good for showing the scenes—so I made them ghosts who teach safety."

Behind the scenes, her biggest cheerleader was her mom, Cathy Gratzmiller, who watched her daughter juggle writing, schoolwork and soccer during the book's creation.

"There were a lot of things that kept her busy at that time, but she kept going," says Gratzmiller. "She learned the value of persevering, even when it was hard. It gave her a chance to use everything she loves—reading, writing and art—with a real purpose."

The South Carolina Children's Book Challenge is a cross-curricular energy education initiative that aligns with state academic standards. The program encourages students to think critically about how energy powers their lives and how to use it safely. By inspiring students to learn more about energy in our state, South Carolina's electric co-ops hope to spark a passion for critical thinking in the minds of tomorrow's leaders.

For more information about the Children's Book Challenge, visit [enlightensc.org/book](http://enlightensc.org/book).