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Guest Column

What Goes Around Comes Around

After raising two sons and watching my two grandchildren grow-up, there has been an expression that I, as I'm sure many of you, have passed on: *What goes around, comes around.* Whether it's regarding how we treat others or how our actions today will affect our future, this simple, but true, phrase holds a lot of meaning.

It also applies today, when we find ourselves in a time where government entities, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are trying to gain more and more regulatory power over how the energy needed to fuel our country is produced—something we've experienced before.

In 1978, Congress passed the ill-conceived power plant and industrial fuel act, which prohibited the burning of natural gas to generate electricity. While removing a vital source of our country's energy generation, the growing need for base load energy was not taken into consideration, and utilities were forced to choose between coal or nuclear plants for their electricity production needs. This was further compromised when government policies and regulations left the construction of nuclear plants at a complete standstill. Coal was the only base load source that could meet our country's needs.

Nine years later, in 1987, Congress finally repealed its mistake in regard to the elimination of natural gas. Ironically today, we are looking at a very similar scenario to 1978. The EPA is proposing stringent limits on future coal plants. The problem is the new standards are currently impossible to meet with existing technology, which targets coal plants for premature closure. Unlike the natural gas ban 35 years ago, the elimination of coal will leave our country without a reliable base load source—one that is not volatile to price spikes as natural gas is.

As a cooperative member serving on your board of trustees at CAEC and as Chairman of the Alabama Rural Electric Association (AREA) Board of Directors, I understand that keeping our members' power both affordable and reliable is one of our primary goals. It is also our duty to make our members aware of the issues facing our industry, especially those that will impact all of us as end users of electricity.

Our national association, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, (NRECA) has 42 million members and is considered a strong grassroots organization because people like you and me have historically engaged in national discussions. Today, we continue to have the opportunity to voice our opinion about the EPA's overreach through the Cooperative Action Network. By visiting the site action.coop you can quickly send an email to the EPA urging them to reconsider their current approach of making coal obsolete as a generation source by implementing requirements for technology that is non-existent.

Your co-op, AREA and NRECA stay up-to-date on new regulations and communicate how these regulations impact our members, but in the end, co-ops are strong because of grassroots support. Our voices today, or lack thereof, can have a major impact on our energy future. ■



Patsy Holmes
CAEC Trustee
District 3

Classroom Creativity Honored with Bright Ideas Grants

Imagine the creativity sparked in the classroom when students can touch underwater creatures, build robots, see and hear the culture of other countries and map out a plan for their life after high school. It is this inspiration and learning that is at the heart of the Bright Ideas Grant Program.

CAEC's Board of Trustees presented grants to area teachers during a January ceremony and reception held at the cooperative's headquarters in Prattville. Applications had been evaluated by a panel of judges from local community associations. From the 64 grant submissions, the judges selected 17 projects, totaling a \$16,000 investment to benefit more than 4,900 students in Autauga, Chilton and Elmore counties.

"We cannot wait to see the excitement in our students' eyes when they begin learning in a fun and unique way, thanks to the Bright Ideas program," said East Memorial Christian Academy elementary teacher Stephanie Nobles who received a grant for her LEGO robotics program.

Founded in 1998, the program has the goal of supporting creative, interesting and effective initiatives not usually

covered by school funding.

Grants are awarded to individuals or teams in public, private and home schools within CAEC's service area.

"What children learn in the classroom today is what helps develop students into future

leaders," said CAEC President and CEO Tom Stackhouse.

"We are honored to be able to provide assistance to our educators who work tirelessly to give students all the tools they need to be successful."

Sixteen years after its inception, more than 96,300 students in all grade levels and subject areas have benefited from Bright Ideas grants totaling \$240,000.

A full listing of this year's recipients along with more information on the program is available at caec.coop. Application information for the 2014-2015 grant process will appear later this year in the September issue of *Alabama Living* magazine. ■



Elmore County Grant Recipients



Autauga County Grant Recipients



Chilton County Grant Recipients

Applications for the 2014-2015 Bright Ideas Grant Program will be available this September



Distribution—Delivering Power to Your Home

Have you ever considered how handy it is to flip a switch or push a button and have instant conveniences in your home? It seems so simple; you get a little cold or hot, you adjust your thermostat; your family gets hungry, you grab food from your refrigerator and heat it up in the microwave, or cook a meal on your flat top stove; stressful day at work, you jump into a hot tub of water; need to know what's going on in the world, you grab the remote and turn on the TV.

Now, consider this question: How valuable is electricity to you?

Last month in *Alabama Living* magazine we

featured an article entitled, “Electricity Usage in Your Home,” which discussed how to calculate the amount of energy your electronics, appliances and other devices use over a period of time. We told you that the average home uses 1,200 kilowatt hours (kWh) a month, which allows you the enjoyment of the conveniences listed above.

Regardless of the kilowatt hours (kWhs) you consume, how did the energy get to you? Was it as easy as flipping a switch or pushing a button?

The following explanation may give you some insight about the operations side of your distribution co-op, CAEC. Let's start at the substation:

Substation

CAEC purchases energy from our generation and transmission co-op, PowerSouth, which generates or purchases the electricity and transmits it over long distances on transmission lines to distribution utilities, like CAEC. Our substations are the point at which power grid infrastructure becomes distribution.

Distribution substations step down the voltage coming in from the transmission lines in order to begin the process of sending power to your home. A great deal of work goes into planning new substations or even substation upgrades. CAEC uses long-term forecasting to plan for new substations, which has a positive impact on reliability.

When you sign up for service, no matter what your intentions are for that meter, we have to factor in your current and future needs for power into these forecasts. Locating and building a substation is no simple process; in fact, from the planning phase to implementation, it takes two to three years to complete just one, at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million. CAEC has 22 substations with plans to build two new stations in the Ray Community (Coosa Co.) and Burkville (Lowndes Co.) areas and to upgrade the Enterprise (Chilton Co.) and Wallsboro (Elmore Co.) stations in the next five years.



Power Transformer

The voltage coming to the substation, at 115,000 or 46,000 volts, is too high to go directly into your neighborhood. Power transformers are used to step the voltage down to an acceptable level to be brought into neighborhoods after being sent across miles of power lines.



Distribution Transformer



We're not ready to get the power to your house just yet; the voltage coming from the power transformer, at 25,000 or 13,200 volts, is still too high to go directly into your home. The power from the power transformer is distributed across miles (depending on how far your home is from the substation) of power lines to reach a distribution transformer, which steps the power down again to the voltage level required by your home, which is 120/240 Volts.

Service Drop and Meter

From the distribution transformer, a service wire is connected to your house, which is called the service drop. If your service is overhead, CAEC connects the service wire to your weather head, which is the point of connection between CAEC's facilities and the homeowner's. If your service wire is underground, CAEC connects the service wire to your underground meter base. The tie that is made on the source side of the meter is the point of connection between CAEC and the member. The meter base in both cases allows CAEC to measure the amount of energy used.



From the meter base, a wire usually connects to the home's breaker box, which functions as a safety mechanism for your home. At this point your home wiring comes into play and enables energy to be sent to your plug outlets and light switches.

This only covers a few major pieces of equipment we use to keep your power on more than 99.98 percent of the time. Some other vital equipment we use includes highside and lowside breakers, voltage regulators and lightning arrestors.

This process also does not cover the maintenance we must perform as well as the personnel it takes to ensure the infrastructure we have put in place stays in top condition. This includes our vegetation manage-

ment program, line and substation inspections and other critical programs.

The next time you're sitting in front of the TV watching your favorite show with a bag of freshly popped popcorn from the microwave, think about the long distance the energy traveled to give you that moment. But electricity is more than that—it's providing a warm meal for your family. It's not just the ability to have a cold glass of milk; it's being able to keep food at a temperature that preserves it over a period of time. It's not heating a room; it's keeping your family comfortable.

We're at work every day looking out for you, making sure you have power available whenever you need it.



Know What's Below: Call Before You Dig



Darren Maddox
Manager of
Safety & Training

In the next few months, spring will sweep across our area, bringing with it many outdoor projects. If your planned projects include digging, like planting a tree, adding a deck or bringing in a backhoe for trench work, always plan ahead so you'll have a few extra days so the job can be done safely. Underground utilities, such as buried gas, water and electric lines, can be a shovel thrust

away from turning a spring project into a disaster.

To find out whether utility lines are located on your property, simply dial 811 from anywhere in the country a few days prior to digging.

Your call will be routed to a local "one call" center. Tell the operator the address of where you're planning to dig and what type of work you'll be doing, and the affected local utilities will be notified.

In a few days, a locator will arrive to designate the approximate position of any underground lines, pipes and cables with flags or marking paint so you'll know

the location of the infrastructure. Then the safe digging can begin.

Although many homeowners tackling do-it-yourself digging projects are aware of "Call Before You Dig" services, the majority don't take advantage of the service. A national survey showed only 33 percent of homeowners called to have utility lines marked before starting their digging projects, according to the Common Ground Alliance, a federally mandated group of underground utility and damage prevention industry professionals.

Although light gardening typically doesn't call for deep digging, other seemingly simple tasks like planting shrubs or installing a new mailbox post can damage utility lines. A severed line can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm the diggers and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Never assume the location or depth of underground utility lines. There's no need: the 811 service is free, prevents the inconvenience of having utilities interrupted and can help you avoid serious injury. For more information about local services, visit www.call811.com.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

CAEC Rate Information

DEFINITIONS

Access Charge – Your daily portion of the fixed infrastructure cost

Distribution Charge – Energy charge based on your consumption and remaining fixed cost

Wholesale Power Cost – Power generated and delivered to you

	Access Charge	+	Distribution Charge/kWh	+	Wholesale Power Charge/kWh
Residential	.99/day		.01611		.08865
Small Power Service	.86/day		.04687		.077737
Medium Power Service	.99/day		.04169		.07124

Rates are designed to recover the cost of purchasing wholesale power, operating expenses and a margin level required by our lenders.

For more rate information, visit our website www.caec.coop.



Water Heater Rebates

CAEC offers rebates for water heaters. Purchase your new electric water heater from any store and receive a rebate for meeting the following criteria:

*Electric water heaters only
(cannot be tankless)*

Minimum energy factor of .92

Participation in CAEC's Peak Shaving Program
(at no additional charge)*

Water heaters will be inspected to verify:

Installation at member's address

Manufacturer's Information:

Name and spec information (which includes model and serial numbers and the energy factor)

Proof of purchase:

Copy of receipt and store name

Rebates are available in the following amounts:

Under 80 gal:	up to \$235
80 gal & up:	up to \$375

For more information about our rebate program, call (800) 545-5735, ext. 2118 or (334) 351-2118.

**To learn more about CAEC's Peak Shaving program, visit www.caec.coop.*



Central Alabama
Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Need **\$1,500** for College?



College scholarship applications are now available to high school seniors graduating this upcoming spring.

Two \$1,500 scholarships will be awarded by the Electric Cooperative Foundation, Inc. (ECF), for post-secondary institutions.

Applicants must be dependents of CAEC members. The scholarship will be paid by ECF directly to the educational institution for credit to the student's account.

Applications are available at www.caec.coop, any of our service centers or by calling (334) 351-2125 or 1-800-545-5735, ext. 2125 to have an application mailed to you.

Deadline for application is March 14



Central Alabama
Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 