



Berkeley Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

TO REPORT OUTAGES

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Co-op embraces strategic planning

WHILE THE YOUNGSTERS have been enjoying some time off from school this summer, your cooperative

has been hitting the books to update its strategic plan. I know that sounds like a dreadful way to spend the summer, but in our true cooperative fashion, we used it as an opportunity to work together to serve our members at the highest level.

A key benefit of strategic planning is the ability to ensure everyone understands the cooperative’s vision, objectives and strategies. When they do, it becomes easier to channel efforts in a unified direction to achieve our strategic objectives in three main categories.

Member focus

Our members are at the heart of everything we do. As a rapidly growing electric cooperative, strategic planning lays the foundation for long-term success, enables effective decision-making and ensures sustainable growth. First and foremost, we must listen to our members who represent our diverse service territory. There are some common themes, of course, but what the grandmother in Huger needs is often different from the family who just moved to Cane Bay. So, we strive to meet you where you are.

Talent development

Berkeley Electric’s employees are our most valuable asset. About 300 people in four districts strive to fully embody all seven of the cooperative principles every day. They know you, our members, best, so it’s important that we listen to them as well.

We also must strategically attract, develop and retain successful, engaged employees. Berkeley Electric is a special place to work, and we’re proud of our family-oriented culture, so it’s important we find people who have a heart for service. Once we’ve found and hired these people, we are dedicated to helping them meet their career goals through professional development and maximize trust and respect throughout the co-op.

Enterprise sustainability

The third and final objective is to use our resources wisely. Time and money are not infinite resources, and they also belong to you, our members. We strive to optimize the balance between reliability and costs, while focusing on relevant benchmarks and goals to ensure success.

At some companies, strategic plans are thick, three-ring binders that sit on a shelf and collect dust. Berkeley Electric, however, strives to always serve our members better, to use our resources more effectively and to recruit and retain the best talent.

Our strategic plan provides a roadmap for success and enables Berkeley Electric to adapt and thrive in a dynamic environment. By your cooperative embracing the power of strategic planning, we are paving the way for a brighter future.

MIKE FULLER
 President & CEO

MICAH PONCE



"Backroads" calendar contest

WHETHER IT IS YOUR FAVORITE fishing hole or favorite roadside attraction, we want you to show us the hidden gems that can only be found along the backroads of South Carolina. From tumbled down barns to breath taking views, help us showcase the unique beauty found off the beaten path. And, if your photo is chosen, you **win \$100!**

The contest runs from July 1 through Sept. 30. All submissions must be landscape orientation (horizontal) and print quality, so send us the highest resolution image possible. Cell phone shots are accepted but not encouraged. Please e-mail all submissions to micahp@bec.coop with the subject line "Calendar Contest." Be sure to let us know the location of your photo. You must be a BEC member to enter and win!

Need proof of residency before your child goes back to school?

Download a copy of your bill from your Smarthub account. Available online at berkeleyelectric.coop or through our free mobile app.



PIXABAY

Smart home, smart savings

NOW YOU CAN CONNECT with Berkeley Electric through SmartHub and your smart home device such as your Amazon Echo or Google Home. Not only are all Amazon Echo and Google Home devices supported, but a wide range of functionality is included. With just a few simple phrases, members can pay their bill, get payment history, check electric use and have the ability to make a one-time payment with a previously stored payment option.

The connected device can provide the current account balance for traditional month-end billing and will provide the number of days remaining for Pay-As-You Go accounts. Members can also request their account number and check for outages on their account(s) as well as receive a variety of other information or alerts. Visit the Smarthub page under "My Energy/Payment Options" at berkeleyelectric.coop.

Amazon Smart Solutions Store

Ready to take your home energy efficiency savings to the next level? Berkeley Electric has made energy-efficient product shopping easy and convenient by partnering with Amazon.

Our online Smart Solutions Store features hand-selected energy-efficiency products specifically designed to help you save. So why not take the guesswork out of upgrades that save energy and money! Visit BeatThePeak.com/Store and shop smart today.





ROBERT VANDROSS
Trustee, District 1

Factors impacting electricity prices

I WAS RECENTLY ASKED by one of our newer employees about factors that impact electricity prices. We talked about how the daily cost of living seems to have increased across the board.

Just as inflation has impacted everything from the price of gasoline to the price of eggs, costs for the fuels required to produce electricity have also risen. This is a timely topic, so I wanted to explain some of the factors that impact electricity prices (and energy bills).

While there is no short answer, there are a few key elements that impact electricity prices and rates. Some of these factors Berkeley Electric can manage; some you can impact. Other factors are beyond our control. So, let me break it down.

There are three primary parts to your monthly electric bill: a service availability charge, an energy consumption (kWh) charge and a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). To understand your total energy costs and what impacts on your bill, let's unpack those one at a time.

Service Availability Charge

The service availability charge is a fixed monthly [service] charge, which covers the costs associated with providing electricity to your home. This includes the equipment, materials, labor and operating costs necessary to serve each meter in Berkeley's service territory, regardless of the amount of energy used. To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local system, including power lines, substations and other necessary equipment. It may be called something else at other companies, or it may be bundled with the energy charge, but all electric utilities charge this type of fee.

Like many other businesses, we've experienced supply chain issues and steep cost increases for

some of our basic equipment. For example, the cost for a distribution transformer (which looks like a metal can at the top of a power pole) went from \$900 in 2019 to \$1,780 this year and wait times to receive this essential piece of equipment are up to 60 weeks. Because we are a not-for-profit cooperative, some of these expenses must be passed on to our members. I should note that the service charge is the same for everyone and the costs are shared equally across the membership.

kWh Charge

The kWh charge covers how much energy you use. You've likely noticed the amount of energy you use can vary from month to month and is typically impacted by extreme temperatures.

As we head into summer when temperatures soar, your heating equipment runs longer, which increases your home energy use. Regardless, energy consumption is an area that you have some control over, and you can lower your monthly bill by reducing energy use. Your thermostat is a great place to start, so be sure to keep it close to 78 degrees during summer months. We also offer free online and in-home energy audits to identify and solve issues.

Power Cost Adjustment

The Power Cost Adjustment, or PCA is the same amount for all co-op members. The PCA recently increased because of higher fuel prices, which means the power Berkeley Electric purchases from our wholesale provider is more expensive. The PCA covers fuel cost fluctuations without having to continually restructure electricity rates.

I hope this information sheds light on some of the factors that impact electricity prices. While we can't control the weather or the rising costs of fuels, please know Berkeley Electric Cooperative is doing everything possible to keep internal costs down.

We're here to help you, too. Contact us if you have questions about your energy bill or for advice on how to save energy at home.

Sincerely,

BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE	APRIL 2022	APRIL 2023
Total kWh sold	308,029,756	350,094,741
No. meters served	118,033	123,063
Avg. residential kWh/meter	857	894
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$123.82	\$129.18
Miles of line	6140	6270
Avg. daily high temperature	77	78
Avg. daily low temperature	53	57

Hatching a bright idea

BY GUEST COLUMNIST KATE WILLIAMS

AS LONG AS I HAVE been at Charleston Collegiate School, our campus has been home to many types of animals. We have the wild creatures that make their homes in our outdoor education center, our campus cat Poe and we even had goats! The animals that have had the biggest impact on our school and our students' learning, however, are our school's chickens.

In 2016, our previous third grade teacher, Shannon Leonard, had a vision for bringing chickens to CCS. She was awarded the Bright Ideas Grant from Berkeley Electric, and was able to bring her vision to life. I can still remember the magic of seeing baby chicks hatching in her classroom. From that year forward, the third graders became the school's "chicken keepers."

Fast forward to 2021, when I moved into a third grade teaching position and the chickens became my responsibility. By

then, we only had a few ladies left from our original flock and were getting few eggs. Since the money from egg sales is used to purchase food for the chickens, I knew we needed another source of income. I also wanted to create a more sustainable model for our chicken coop, and to offer our chicken keepers greater opportunities for learning and responsibility.

Remembering the Bright Ideas grant, I decided to apply, since Berkeley Electric's goal of funding projects that promote innovative teaching methods aligns with the mission and pillars of our community at CCS. In the fall of 2022, I was thrilled to learn that we got the grant!

My teaching partner, Sarah Knight, and I used a project-based learning model to engage our students and give them ownership of their work. We started by guiding students through observing our current coop and flock, assessing what we have and what needs improvement. The students narrowed down the needs to four categories: coop and care, safety, food and hatching chicks. Through discussion, we chose the driving question for our project: "How can we best spend our grant money to improve our chicken coop?"

Students were divided into research groups and began work. Each team had to create a claim that answered the driving question, provide research based evidence to support the claim

and create an action plan budget for the items needed. To help guide the students, we used an interactive project wall, a calendar for deadlines, resources from the Johns Island library, discussion with experts in the field and more. The students then presented their project boards and speeches at our exhibition.

After we reviewed our research and discussed our findings and budget, it was agreed that for our coop model to be sustainable, we needed to sell more eggs—which meant we needed more chickens! When the students returned from Spring

Break, they found eggs waiting for them in an incubator. Ms. Knight and I used grant money to buy items the students had included in their budgets, and the next phase of our project began.

Because of the Bright Ideas grant, we now have nine healthy pullets (young chickens) that have joined our flock! The students got to experience the magic of hatching chicks, and take ownership of making

our coop a safe and sustainable place for them to live. We were also able to use our grant money to purchase coop cleaning supplies, a better storage container for food and supplies, boots to wear in the coop, chicken enrichment toys, a composter and raised garden beds. Using a mini-grant from our PTO, students purchased herbs from the Sea Island Farmers Market and planted an herb garden for our chickens.

The extraordinary thing about this grant is the lasting impact it will have at our school. The chickens will create learning opportunities for many years to come. This class of students got to hatch and care for chicks, construct play areas and composters and plant a garden. Ms. Knight and I plan to incorporate a composting plan into this year's project based learning, and work with students to create a better business model for selling our eggs. Students will become leaders as they train the next generation of "chicken keepers" to care for our flock.

At Charleston Collegiate, our mission is to empower students in a project based approach that values collaboration, innovation, and individuality, in order to become resilient leaders for 21st century careers. The Bright Ideas Grant has made this possible in ways that will have a lasting impact on all future chicken keepers and the CCS community.



Thanks to a Bright Ideas grant from Berkeley Electric, students at Charleston Collegiate learn a variety of lessons through raising chickens.

KATE WILLIAMS

Youth Tour a learning experience

Ten local students travel to nation's capital

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

LIKE MANY THAT SERVED in the war, Richard Barcus has friends whose names are on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. He's never been there to etch those names on a piece of paper, but thanks to his local electric cooperative, his grandson did it for him.

Christian Long was one of eight rising high school seniors sponsored by Berkeley Electric Cooperative on the Washington Youth Tour, an all-expenses paid trip to the nation's capital. Long joined 58 other electric cooperative delegates from across the state for an experience that included visits to the museums, monuments and memorials there. He brought with him the names of 10 soldiers killed during the Vietnam War: John Donnelly, John Durlin, Richard Wolfe, Howard Blandino, Toby Thomas, Eliot Gish, Jerry Ritter, Douglas Hobbs, David Westbury and Richard Salona. Long found each among the 58,318 names of Americans who gave their lives in service to their country and returned their imprints to his "Papa."

"It was very moving, seeing all those names," says Long. "It's very sad to see and at the same time there's a lot to learn from it."

There was a lot to learn during the entire week-long trip, with stops at the National Museum of Health and Medicine, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the U.S. Capitol. Berkeley Electric's delegates included Aeisha Smith and Brady Hurd of Stratford High, Ti Bryant of Cross High, Bryce Bradley and Sidnee Saulters of Cane Bay High, Oscar Leighfield of Charleston Collegiate, Christopher Dial of Goose Creek High, and Long of Summerville High. Oliver Frey of Summerville, a student at S.C. Virtual Charter School, was sponsored by Central Electric Power Cooperative. Each visited the offices of their U.S. House members and participated in a discussion with Rep. Ralph Norman on the Capitol steps.

The students also experienced first-hand how a cooperative operates. Throughout the week, the student-run Soda Pop Co-op provided snacks and beverages to everyone on the trip. Saulters was one of the six students named to the cooperative's board. They hired a fellow youth tourist as manager, determined the price points and returned revenue back to their members.

"We learned how to set prices that will work for everyone," says Saulters. "Being a part of a co-op showed us how to work together so that we could all benefit from it."

For Dial, coming to Washington fulfilled a wish he's had for years.

"I'm not the kind of person to put my emotions out, but the



PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER

▲ Ten students from Berkeley Electric's service area visited the U.S. Capitol as part of Washington Youth Tour; (from left) Chris Dial, Christian Long, Oscar Leighfield, Bryce Bradley, Oliver Frey, Ti Bryant, Sidnee Saulter, Brady Hurd and Aeisha Smith.



◀ Vietnam War Memorial Christian Long's grandfather gave him 10 names to etch from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial during his Washington Youth Tour experience.

second I found out I was going I was hysterical," he says. "I'm really glad I was able to get out and see new places, meet new people and make new friends."

Bryant, the second oldest of seven siblings, says his mother encouraged him to apply for the trip and challenged him to make the most of it.

"Most people that come from the struggle that we come from don't get this chance," says Bryant. "I'm bringing what I've learned back home to my brothers and sisters. I want them to learn more about history and politics and their local community, things I didn't do when I was their age."

McClellanville duo racks up diplomas

Cousins head to college with 60 credit hours

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

THEY HAD TO WAKE UP before sunrise and commute an hour to classes, and they missed out on parts of the typical high school experience. But they did it together and they've got the papers to prove it.

Ja'Niah Simmons and Dinystee Porcher recently graduated with three diplomas and two years' worth of college credits thanks to a special educational opportunity offered by Charleston County Schools.

Instead of starting ninth grade at Wando High School, the two cousins from McClellanville travelled over an hour to attend Early College High School, located on the Palmer Campus of Trident Technical College. In the ensuing four years, they each completed the requirements for two high school diplomas—Wando High and Early College High—and associate degrees from Trident Technical College. They were a part of Early College High School's third graduating class.

"We were coming all the way from McClellanville to downtown Charleston," says Simmons. "I was getting up at 4:30 or 5 a.m. It was a lot, but I am happy that I did it because it gave us the opportunity to earn our associate degrees and get a head start on college."

Porcher agrees. Attending classes at Trident Tech was different, but worth it.

"We didn't have an actual cafeteria or a gym," says Porcher. "But we were able to make our own high school experience. Taking college classes can be draining, so they tried to help out as much as possible to still give us that light-hearted experience with things like Fun Friday and teacher versus student games."

Before entering into those unique circumstances, their mothers reminded them to support each other. Simmons' mother Lachelle Gray is the member services supervisor at Berkeley Electric's Awendaw district office.

"We are both from the country," says Porcher. "Nobody knew us and we didn't know anybody but each other. Our moms told us we'd go in together and come out together. We need to make sure we always have each other's back and we've done that."

Now that they've earned their diplomas, the cousins will take their head starts in different directions.

Porcher is attending Francis Marion University to study nursing. Thanks to the 60 hours she already has, Porcher anticipates earning her bachelor's degree and completing the nursing program within four years.

Simmons plans to claim two more certifications—her commercial driver's license and her esthetician license—before starting at the University of South Carolina this semester. She already has her own skincare business, JKB Creations, and will study biology in hopes of becoming a veterinarian.

"I applaud them for their hard work and dedication," says Sheila Powell, Berkeley Electric's trustee representing the student's home district. "It's not every day that you receive your associate degree from college weeks before receiving your high school diploma. I extend my sincerest congratulations to Ms. Simmons and Ms. Porcher and wish them well on their journey of higher education."



PHOTOS BY MICAH PONCE

Ja'Niah Simmons will enter the University of South Carolina this fall and plans to study biology.



Dinystee Porcher will attend Francis Marion University to study nursing.