



Connection

Communicating local energy news to Four County Electric members

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

inside Four County Connection



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Get the Scoop

Cut Your Energy Costs Day is January 10. Lower your water heater to 120 degrees. Most of the energy consumed goes toward storing the water at the select temperature.



Four County EMC Opens New District Office

Four County Electric Membership Corporation recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new district office in Elizabethtown, located at 2668 NC 242 South. The new office replaces the 58-year-old office in downtown Elizabethtown that the cooperative had outgrown.

Four County CEO Mitchell Keel stated: "The goal was to meet the needs of Four County and its members for a long time just as the previous Elizabethtown facility did. We now have almost 18,000 square feet of covered space on 15 acres of land. This facility will greatly benefit employees and members and allow us to provide better service day-to-day, but it's really going to shine during storm restoration efforts."

Construction of the new facility began in October 2019 with Cooperative Building Solutions (CBS), but planning began several years ago. "The previous location served the cooperative well for many



Four County EMC Board of Directors and CEO Mitchell Keel at ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Elizabethtown district office.

years and we're excited for what the future holds, both for the community and Four County," explained Four County EMC Board President Franklin Williams. "And we thank the elected officials of Elizabethtown and Bladen County for the working relationship

we've had over the years and appreciate their support during this process."

The new office is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. There is also a kiosk located in the vestibule that is accessible 24/7 for making payments.



Offices Closed Four County EMC offices will be closed on Friday, January 1, in observance of New Year's Day. Have a safe and blessed holiday.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

Sue Rivenbark

A lot of people will agree that they like their job. However, Sue Rivenbark's work ethic and genuine character exemplify a real passion for Four County EMC.

By MaKayla Killens

As an assistant for the engineering department, Sue presides over various administrative and clerical duties. Sue has been at Four County for 43 years, making her the most-tenured employee at Four County. Sue, along with her older brother, was born and raised in Willard. She says she enjoyed growing up in a rural community because of the bonds between family members and other individuals within the area. Sue attended Kings College in Charlotte for one year and then came to Burgaw to work at Four County when she was 18 years old. In her free time, she enjoys going to the beach, baking, reading, and spending time with her daughter and her dog Jersey, a black lab.



When asked about her favorite part of Four County EMC, Sue said, “the people I work with.” Sue loves how her co-workers are always willing to help out when needed and how everyone makes an effort to get to know one another personally to create a better atmosphere at the office.

One impression she leaves with people is the respect she has for her fellow employees. Scott Cook, vice president of operations at Four County, said, “Sue is an extremely valuable asset to the operations department. I wouldn’t hesitate to call her the glue that holds everything together. Most people in the engineering and operations departments call her the S Drive because she always manages to find what we are looking for!”

“The secret to having a great experience at your workplace is to ‘enjoy your job.’”

Sue believes Four County is a community and admires how the cooperative has always ensured its employees have everything they need to be successful. One piece of advice that she would give someone developing in the professional world would be to “keep an open mind and always be respectful.” Sue says the secret to having a great experience at your workplace is to “enjoy your job.”

She said her most significant takeaway from being involved in the co-op community is being adaptable. When hurricanes have

occurred, Sue has checked in crews and provided help where needed. Everyone agrees that she goes above and beyond to make sure everyone feels included.

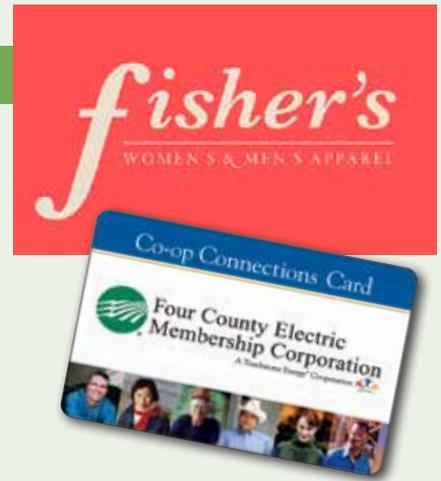
When Sue first started, approximately 15,000 meters were on Four County lines and around 51 employees. Now the co-op has grown to over 33,000 meters and close to 100 employees. Sue describes how she had seen many advances within the company, such as implementing new technologies and engaging with the community and members through social media. She states, “I love to see Four County in the spotlight and how they truly serve the community.”



CO-OP CONNECTIONS BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Two Gems in One Place!

Fisher's Apparel in downtown Elizabethtown is two stores in one—Fisher's Ladies Shop and Fisher's Men's Store! They are a family-owned and operated business offering men's and women's apparel, shoes, jewelry and accessories. Owners Mike and Karen Suggs pride themselves on providing exceptional customer service with a wide variety of options to fill everyone's needs.



Fisher's Women's & Men's Apparel is part of the Four County Co-op Connections program where Four County members save money when they shop locally. The store offers a 15% discount when you use your Co-op Connections card or mobile app. Go to fourcty.org/co-op-connections or use the Co-op Connections mobile app to view participating businesses. For more information or to request a card, call Four County at 888-368-7289.

In our November Facebook contest, Aspen Batten of Elizabethtown identified the shop and won a \$100 gift card to Fisher's. Congratulations, Aspen!



Follow us on Facebook and get ready for the next contest!



Four County Supports Small Business Saturday

Small Business Saturday was November 28, and to celebrate, Four County gave away three gift baskets containing merchandise and gift cards purchased from our local Co-op Connections businesses. Winners were selected at random from a Facebook contest held on Small Business Saturday.



Four County EMC employee Myranda Ross (left) presents a gift basket to winner Meghan Goulette.

Our lucky winners of these baskets, valued at over \$200 each, were Meghan Goulette of Rocky Point, Alyson Edwards Daughety of Bladenboro, and Mary Rose of Harrells. Congratulations to our winners, and thank you all for supporting our local businesses! Remember, with the Co-op Connections program, you save money when you shop locally.



Local Educators Receive Bright Ideas Grants

New creative learning projects are brightening this school year for students near you! Recently, Four County Electric Membership Corporation awarded \$19,400 in Bright Ideas education grants to 15 exceptional local teachers in Bladen, Duplin, Pender, and Sampson counties. These grants are awarded each year to K-12 educators for innovative projects that enhance student learning.



MaKayla Killens of Four County presents a check to Timothy Mateer of Rose Hill Magnolia Elementary.

“The Bright Ideas grant winners have truly persevered this school year,” says MaKayla Killens, communications specialist at Four County EMC. “The projects submitted this year have brought out the creative skills in educators, as they’ve raised the standard in educating students both through virtual and physical classrooms.”

Typically, these grants bring creative projects to life inside classrooms. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Four County EMC has been flexible with the types of projects awarded to ensure that all students can benefit, whether in the classroom or learning remotely. Grants are awarded for projects in all subject areas, such as music, art, history, reading, science, math, and more.

Since 1994, Four County Electric Membership Corporation has contributed more than \$474,760 for creative projects benefiting local students. Statewide, North Carolina’s 26 electric cooperatives have collectively awarded more than \$12.9 million for 12,359 projects helping 2.5 million students.

Follow Four County Electric Membership Corporation on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to see how programs, such as

Bright Ideas, are impacting local students and communities. To learn more about Bright Ideas grants, visit ncbrightideas.com, and follow [@NCBrightIdeas](https://www.facebook.com/NCBrightIdeas) on Facebook and Twitter.

The following is a list of the winning Bright Ideas grant recipients:

BLADEN COUNTY

- Olivia Herring, Bladenboro Middle School: Taking Flight with Geography!, \$1,800.00
- Ron Warren, East Bladen High School: Classroom Mosaic Mural, \$2,000.00

DUPLIN COUNTY

- Britani W. Becher, Chinquapin Elementary: Music To My Ears!, \$905.85
- Timothy V. Mateer, Rose Hill - Magnolia Elementary: Eagles Bees & Blooms, \$969.00
- Tanya Novakowski, Rose Hill - Magnolia Elementary: Eagles, Dig in!, \$973.96
- Sulnora Spencer Oluyer, Rose Hill - Magnolia Elementary: Addressing Social Emotional Trauma Through Visual Imagery Poetry, and Collaboration!, \$1,811.40
- Victoria Newkirk, Rose Hill - Magnolia Elementary: We

Can Virtually Go Anywhere, \$2,000.00,

PENDER COUNTY

- Amber Huckaby, Cape Fear Elementary: SEAL (Social and Emotional Artistic Learning) the Deal with Art, \$664.59
- John C. Wirszyla, Cape Fear Elementary: RECESS- Recess Equipment for Classrooms to Expand Student Skills, \$943.84
- Bradley Reynolds, Heide Trask High School: Heide Trask Disc Golf Course, \$1,772.91
- Jessica Croson, Heide Trask High School: Evolving Engagement in Biology, \$241.45
- Elaine C. Linke, Penderlea School: Stem Exploration for Disease Protection, \$217.00
- Jared Pinkston, Pender High School: Team PHENix Game Changers in STEAM education, \$2,000.00

SAMPSON COUNTY

- Regina Uribe, Union Middle, 21st Century Workforce Ready, \$1,100.00
- Dan Chabot, Union High, Lettuce, Turnip, the Beet LIVE, \$2,000.00





Use Caution When Relying on Space Heaters

Electric space heaters can help warm a room quickly. However, they can be dangerous if used improperly. Four County EMC urges everyone in the home to understand the importance of using space heaters safely:



- Purchase only space heaters that have been safety tested and UL approved. Make sure the unit has an emergency tip-over shut-off feature and heating element guards. Read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions for operation and care.
- Before using a space heater, make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in good working condition.
- Make sure the heater is clean and in good condition.
- Place the heater out of high-traffic areas and on a level, hard, non-flammable floor surface—NOT on carpets, furniture, or countertops.
- Space heaters have one purpose—to provide supplemental heating. Never use them to thaw pipes, cook food, or dry clothing or towels.
- Remember to keep space heaters at least three feet from combustible liquids, like fuel, spray cans, and paint, and flammable items such as draperies, blankets, and sofas.
- Never allow pets or children near an electric heater. Accidental contact could cause serious shock or burns.
- Never use extension cords or multiple plugs with a space heater and make sure not to plug the unit into the same circuit as other electric appliances. This might overload the circuit and trip the breaker.
- If your space heater is plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) and it trips, don’t assume something is wrong with the GFCI. Immediately stop using the heater until a professional can check it— if not, a serious shock could occur.
- Never leave space heaters unattended. Turn off your space heater and unplug it before leaving the room or going to bed.
- Replace older space heaters with newer, safer models.

Many people also use electric blankets to keep warm during cold winter nights. Before plugging in electric blankets, check for any damage and inspect the cord for frays, cracks, or cuts. Do not tuck electric blankets under the mattress and place nothing on top of the blanket while it’s in use, including comforters and bedspreads. Don’t allow pets to sleep on the electric blanket.



We at Four County EMC greatly value our connection to you, the members we serve. And we would like to help you maximize the value you can get from us through a variety of programs, products, and services that we offer our members.

For example, we can help you save money on your energy bill through our free energy audits and rebates on the purchase of heat pumps and Energy Star appliances.

Our Four County EMC website at fourcty.org and our mobile app make it easy to manage your

account from your home or on-the-go. You can pay your bill, view outages, set up alerts, learn about programs and services, and set up text or email alerts. With these alerts, you can monitor your energy usage, pay your bill, receive due date reminders, be alerted to outages, and more!

Social media is a great way to stay connected to Four County. When you follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, you can stay up to date on outages, power restoration efforts, Four County programs, Co-op Connections

contests, and more. You’ll also see photos of our line crews in action and Four County’s engagement in the community—and who doesn’t enjoy seeing good things happening!

By connecting with us, whichever way you choose, you can get real-time updates from your co-op. Four County EMC exists to serve our members, and when we are connected to you and our community, we are better prepared to answer the call.



Five Ways to Stay Cozy This Winter

It may be cold outside but when you're feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways you can keep comfortable without turning up the thermostat.

- Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply "run cold," an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth that a regular blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, like timers and dual temperature settings. This winter, consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat, and your energy bill will thank you.
- One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to keep your feet warm. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature, so when your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.
- On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and harness natural warmth from sunlight. Open all curtains, drapes and blinds in your home to let the sunshine in—you'll be able to feel the difference.



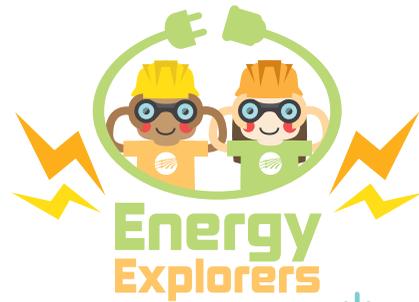
- Another way to make your home cozier is to use a humidifier. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer. A favorable level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin and improve sleep.
- Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, area rugs can also provide extra insulation and a warm surface for your feet on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time and the additional warmth will help keep your home comfortable.





WINTER WONDERLAND WORD SEARCH

Can you find all the words associated with winter in the puzzle below?
Use the word bank to check your work.



E	M	C	C	G	H	S	L	B	N	F	L	L	B	L
P	K	E	A	R	M	U	F	F	S	L	R	L	K	L
P	B	A	V	I	S	I	E	A	X	A	A	K	L	
X	W	E	L	H	S	E	T	B	W	N	D	I	C	U
P	B	C	N	F	G	O	W	T	K	I	I	C	B	S
N	L	A	F	Y	W	O	Q	E	E	Z	G	I	C	R
R	C	L	C	E	N	O	T	Y	G	N	E	C	V	U
L	O	P	C	S	X	M	N	I	D	Y	S	L	I	H
W	A	E	H	D	N	S	M	S	A	Z	C	E	B	R
Z	I	R	Y	L	L	I	H	C	O	U	J	S	K	W
C	X	I	R	Q	H	C	Z	L	C	A	X	W	W	L
P	H	F	O	Y	V	S	I	W	O	H	O	C	S	M
B	P	I	P	C	O	O	Y	J	C	D	A	J	Y	L
I	Z	W	Q	F	H	E	V	F	M	D	S	P	S	P
Y	F	E	U	H	Z	V	D	N	L	W	R	B	Q	F

WINTER ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP:

Instead of turning up the heat in your home, wear an extra layer of clothing or get cozy under your favorite blanket!

WORD BANK:

- snowflake
- mittens
- scarf
- snowball
- chilly
- icicles
- cocoa
- earmuffs
- fireplace
- blanket

Winning
from the editor
Recipe



- 1 (15 oz) can black beans
- 1 (15 oz) can corn
- 1 (10 oz) can Rotel Diced Tomatoes and Green Chilies
- 1 package ranch dressing mix
- 1 (8 oz) package cream cheese
- 2 chicken breasts
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper

Watch 'Cooking with Cam' on our Facebook page to see how this dish is made.

Slow Cooker White Chicken Chili



Dump all ingredients, minus the cream cheese, into your slow cooker. Cook for 6 hours on low or 4 hours on high. Once cooked, take out your cooked chicken and shred into pieces. Dump chicken back into slow cooker and add the block of cream cheese. Once incorporated, it is ready to serve.

Optional: Garnish with cheese, salsa, onion or sour cream.

Four County Connection

Janet Smith, Editor

Published monthly by Four County Electric Membership Corporation, P.O. Box 667, Burgaw, NC 28425, as a service to our members.

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load). The National Renewable Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

Source: www.nrel.gov

Four County Electric

Our Mission

To provide highly reliable electric service, innovative energy solutions and outstanding service to our Members and Communities.

Our Values

- Respect
- Integrity
- Trust
- Teamwork
- Commitment
- Excellence

Our Vision

To be an advocate for our Members by:

- Exceeding members' expectations
- Utilizing well trained, motivated employees
- Achieving excellence
- Operating efficiently
- Maintaining hometown values

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

We believe in the Power of Human Connections

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