

# 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

Four County EMC offices will be closed Friday, April 2, in observance of Good Friday. We wish all of our members a Happy Easter!



## Educators, Get Your Bright Ideas Ready!

It's that time again! Four County EMC kicks off its Bright Ideas Education Grant program and begins accepting applications for the 2021–22 school year on April 1. Teachers with ideas for creative classroom projects that bring learning to life can learn more and apply online at [ncbrightideas.com](http://ncbrightideas.com).



Grants are available for projects across all grade levels and subject areas, and educators can apply for grant funding individually or as a team. Over the past year, the program has supported educators as they seek new ways to engage their students in modified classroom environments during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Four County EMC will continue to provide resources to facilitate innovative learning no matter what the upcoming school year holds.

Applications will be accepted until September 15. As an added incentive to apply early, educators who submit their applications by August 15 will be entered into a drawing to receive a Visa gift card.

Since 1994, electric cooperatives in North Carolina, including Four County EMC, have partnered with K–12 teachers

statewide to provide Bright Ideas grants for unique classroom projects that would not otherwise be funded. Over the program's history, more than 2.7 million students across North Carolina have benefited from nearly 13,000 Bright Ideas-funded projects totaling more than \$13.6 million.

The Bright Ideas grant program is part of our continued commitment to building a brighter future for the people, businesses and communities we serve. In addition to ensuring the delivery of reliable, affordable and sustainable power, this vision emphasizes the importance of innovation and ongoing community support.

Learn more at [fourcty.org/bright-ideas-grant-program](http://fourcty.org/bright-ideas-grant-program).

**BOARD SPOTLIGHT** by Janet Smith

## Carlton Raynor

**E**dward Carlton Raynor has represented eastern Duplin County on the Four County EMC board since 2011. His roots run deep in the Cypress Creek area of Duplin County. Raynor and his wife, Annette, live on land that dates back more than three generations. Raynor's family, including his sister, son, and daughter, all live on the 137-acre tobacco farm that his great-great-grandfather started. Raynor feels "very blessed to have my children and grandchildren so close." While no longer a tobacco farm, the land now produces hay, corn and soybeans while providing many acres for Raynor and his beloved Bluetick hounds to roam.



Raynor and his wife graduated from Chinquapin High School in 1961. He laughs: "We had a graduating class of only 43 kids, yet, from first grade to our senior year, Annette and I never had a class together!"

Raynor made plans to pursue a business degree at East Carolina University after high school; however, a guidance counselor set him on a career path almost unheard of at that time. The counselor suggested that with Raynor's aptitude in math, he might want to study data processing. Raynor's response: "What's that?" Burlington Industrial Education Center, now Alamance Community College, was the only school in North Carolina offering that curriculum. Raynor says he was the first person in North Carolina to enroll in the data processing program through the NC education system.

After graduation, Raynor took his new skills to J.P. Stevens Textile

Company in Wallace, where he worked for the next five years as a mainframe computer programmer. In 1969, he left for Camp Lejeune, working as a computer programmer for the US Marine Corps. By the time he retired in 2000, he was the database administrator for the base.

### Relaxing with Hounds

Raynor enjoyed his career but said, early on, he learned that he needed an "out," a way to decompress after a day spent at a challenging job. Raynor's "out" is his Bluetick hounds. "Having that 'out' made me a more well-rounded person," he says.

Raynor campaigned the beautiful and versatile hounds in field trials for many years, winning numerous championships. "We've met some good people in these shows and trials and made life-long friends all over the country," he says. Raynor doesn't campaign or travel anymore, but he's a well-respected

breeder with his championship-level hounds. He is also active behind-the-scenes in the United Kennel Club (UKC) community. He is a former national vice president of the Bluetick Breeders of America, a UKC-chartered Hound Association, and served on the UKC board that sets night-hunt rules and show standards.

Bluetick hounds are not Raynor's only hobbies. At home on the farm, he enjoys restoring old cars, hunting, beekeeping, and walking the land with his dogs. Raynor is also a servant-leader in his local community, having served as president of the Mill Swamp Ruritan Club, president of the Mill Swamp Community Club, and on the Mill Swamp Baptist Church board of deacons.

### Serving the Community

Outside of Mill Swamp, Raynor is a community advocate through his service with Four County EMC. The cooperative has been a part of his family for as long as he can remember. The farm, home to many generations of the Raynor family, is on Four County lines, and Raynor's father, Graham Raynor, was a Four County employee for many years. As a teenager, Raynor worked summers for a Four County contractor, setting pole locations on transmission lines.

It's not surprising, then, that Raynor answered the call in 2003 when Four County asked him to represent Duplin County on their Four County Cares TRUST board. He thinks about the impact of members rounding up their power bills to help out those in need. Raynor smiles and says, "I can



honestly say that serving on that board made me a better person.”

In 2011, he left the TRUST board to serve on the Four County EMC Board as director of the East Duplin district. Raynor is the only director to have served on the TRUST board, the FCEMC Nominating Committee, and the Four County Board of Directors. “Four County EMC is a very well-managed co-op with a great CEO, dedicated employees and board. We work hard to provide our members a positive experience with options such as the pay-as-you-go program and our remote pay kiosks,” Raynor says proudly. “And no rate increase for nine years. Think about that!”



Raynor with his dogs



## Help Create the 2022 Four County EMC Calendar!

Show us your photography skills and participate in the 1st Annual Member Photo Contest! Your photos can be scenery, buildings, power line equipment, anything you find interesting in our beautiful service area.

Prizes will be awarded for the 12 photos selected to appear in our 2022 calendar. First place receives a \$100 bill credit, the calendar cover page and the photo will also be used within the calendar. The other 11 winners receive a \$50 bill credit and their photos will be in the calendar.

Please submit your photos to [marketing@fourcty.org](mailto:marketing@fourcty.org). The deadline to enter is August 15 and a panel of judges will choose the winners. Please follow the guidelines:

- Photos must be taken in the Four County service area by a Four County member.
- Submitted photos must be a high-quality JPEG image.
- Only landscape (horizontal) photos will be considered.
- Scenic or nature photos only (no individuals in the photo).
- Employees of FCEMC are not eligible to enter.
- Up to three entries per member.
- Photo submissions should include the following information: (1) Name, (2) Account number, (3) Address, (4) Phone, (5) Email, and (6) Description of the photo, title and who took the photo.

Email any questions you may have to [janetsmith@fourcty.org](mailto:janetsmith@fourcty.org).

*By submitting a photo entry to this contest, you are granting FCEMC permission to use the image in any and all of its publications, including internal and external newsletters and website entries, without payment. However, photo credit will be given. FCEMC reserves the right to disqualify any photo deemed inappropriate or offensive.*

# Join Us as We #ThankALineworker on April 12

Each year, Four County EMC joins other electric cooperatives across our state and nation to celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day. Held annually on the second Monday in April, this day recognizes lineworkers' critical roles in providing our members with the power they depend on every day.

The important responsibilities of lineworkers have become all the more challenging over the past year as they have implemented additional safety procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our lineworkers undergo extensive training and follow numerous protocols to ensure safety as they work to maintain our lines and restore power, often in very treacherous conditions,” said Four County EMC CEO Mitchell Keel. “The current pandemic has added another layer of precaution to an already demanding job, but our lineworkers have risen to the challenge and demonstrated an exceptional level of skill, dedication and expertise.”

In addition to serving their own communities, lineworkers are also called on to provide aid across the state and nation following major storms and other times of need. This commitment to “cooperation among cooperatives” is one of the core principles that demonstrates the true strength and character of the cooperative network.

Please use the hashtag #ThankALineworker on April 12 and throughout the year to pay tribute to our lineworkers' many outstanding efforts!





# LINEWORKER GEAR WORD SEARCH

Did you know lineworkers wear special protective gear to keep them safe while working on power lines and other electrical equipment?

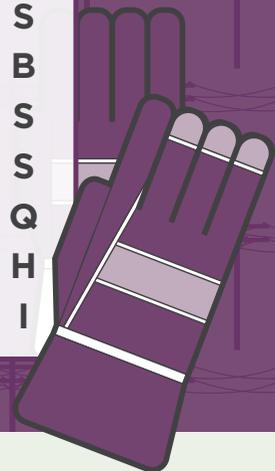


Read the descriptions to learn about a lineworker's gear and find the bolded words in the puzzle below.

- **Safety goggles** keep debris away from lineworkers' eyes while on the job.
- **Hard hats** protect lineworkers from head injuries and falling debris.
- **Work boots** provide extra protection while lineworkers work with heavy materials that could fall near their feet.
- **Flame-resistant** clothing keeps lineworkers safe from electrical hazards.
- **Insulated gloves** protect lineworkers from electrical shock while working on power lines.
- **Equipment belts** hold several tools that lineworkers need to get the job done.



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

## Chris Ingram

**F**our County EMC strives to give the ultimate experience when it comes to its members. Chris Ingram, who serves as the marketing supervisor at Four County, is one of many individuals who ensures that every member understands how valued they are to our community. His job includes providing members with information regarding billing inquiries, explaining programs offered through the cooperative, serving as an energy advisor, helping with rates, and various other tasks. You may also know Chris from community meetings, as he coordinates and speaks at these events.



After graduating in 1982, his first job opportunity was with the Boy Scouts of America. He then transitioned into an accounting supervisor for Carolina Power & Light. In January 1990, he came to work at Four County EMC, where he has now been employed for 31 years. Chris said, “The best aspect about Four County is that everyone treats each other as a family. When times are difficult, whether it’s storms, hurricanes, or outages, everyone comes together to get the job done.”

He also shared how his job is challenging in the sense that every day is not the same. “People inquire about different things from energy efficiency tips, to who makes the best HVAC system,” he explained. His biggest takeaway from Four County is “to do his job well, he has to be motivated.” Chris spoke a lot about motivation with regards to dealing with the members’ needs. He commented that “motivation is a significant factor because every request you receive will be something different... you have to be willing to be flexible, understanding, sympathetic, and open-minded.”

Chris has enjoyed being a part of Four County EMC’s progression into the technology era. “The technological advances are benefiting our members as well as the cooperative,” said Chris. He is most proud of helping members identify and solve their problems. “Establishing the relationship with members is key to success... you break down barriers, enable trust, and provide members with what they want and need.” Chris will continue to have a caring and willing attitude to the members and employees at Four County EMC.

Chris was born in Waynesville, North Carolina, though he grew up in Greensboro. Chris was raised in a loving household with two parents and one older brother. He is married to Karen Ingram, the senior manager of human resources at Butterball Turkey Company in Mount Olive. They have two children, Chase, who studies at East Carolina University; and Marley, a Pitt Community College student in Greenville. Chris is very proud of his children in all regards, but especially in basketball. As a former high school and community college basketball player, Chris was thrilled that both of his kids set records at their school. Chase is the all-time leading scorer at East Duplin High School, scoring well over 1,000 points, and Marley has the girl’s all-time leading assist record at East Duplin. As a four-year-starter, Marley’s win-loss record was 92-15.

Chris enjoys collecting basketball cards and vintage military models such as German planes and naval ships. One interesting fact about Chris that you might not know is that he went to Yankee Stadium in 1972 when he was 14 years old. Chris’ aunt took him to see a baseball game between the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees. At the game, he was able to go into the dugout and locker room to mingle with some of his favorite players, Thurman Munson, Bobby Mercer and Sparky Lyle. This was the same stadium where Yankee legends Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Mickey Mantle and Joe DiMaggio played. Chris said: “Looking back, I now realize the experience was unimaginable... breathtaking.”

### Four County EMC Family

In addition to his hobbies, Chris studied business with a minor in marketing at UNC-Greensboro.



## CO-OP CONNECTIONS BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



# Auto & Truck Repair

12027 US 117 N., Wallace • 910-679-7191



**R**&S Auto & Truck Repair, located on Highway 117 in Wallace, is a full-service shop offering high-quality service from certified technicians. Owner Roger Coombs and his staff are ready to assist in every aspect of vehicle maintenance and repair. “Every job we perform receives the highest level of attention and service. We love our customers and want you to leave here happy,” says Roger.

R&S Auto & Truck Repair offers:

- Auto and diesel repair
- Body repair
- Tires
- NC State Inspections
- Wash and detail
- Paint services
- Notary
- 24/7 towing
- Lockouts
- Fuel deliveries

R&S Auto & Truck Repair is a participating business in the Co-op Connections program. When using the Co-op Connections card or mobile app, Four County members save 10% on any mechanical service over \$50 and receive 10% off professional body services and paint. Support your local businesses and save!



Roger and Michelle Coombs

Need a Co-op Connections card? Need help with the Co-op Connections app? Call Four County at 888-368-7289!



Edén Mills, Instagram contest winner

## Co-op Connections Contests!

In February, the Co-op Connections contests had three lucky winners! Edén Mills won a \$25 gift card to Fat Daddy's Pizza in Burgaw from our first Instagram contest. On Facebook, Susan Wellington and her family won a \$50 gift card to Fat Daddy's. Laurie Willoughby won a \$50 gift card to The Garden Center at Johnson Nursery in Willard.

Thank you to all who participated and a big thank you to all our local businesses who participate in the Co-op Connections program. Because of you, Four County members can shop local and save money!

Follow us on social media and get ready for this month's contest!

Own a local business and want to participate in the Co-op Connections program? Contact [janetsmith@fourcty.org](mailto:janetsmith@fourcty.org) for more information. We'd love to have you join us!



Samantha & Cayden Wellington, Facebook contest winners

Winning  
from the editor  
**Recipe**



- 24 oz. grape tomatoes, whole
- 1-16 oz. block feta cheese
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. basil, divided
- 1 tsp. oregano, divided
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 16 oz. pasta shells

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Place your grape tomatoes in a 9x13 dish. Add salt, pepper, garlic, ½ teaspoon basil, ½ teaspoon oregano, and enough olive oil to coat tomatoes. Combine ingredients. Move tomatoes to the sides of the dish.

**Baked Feta Pasta**



Place feta cheese block in between tomatoes. Top with remaining olive oil, oregano, and basil.

Bake for 30 minutes. While that's baking, cook and drain your pasta according to packaging.

Once baking is complete, mix feta and tomatoes, making a sauce.

Once combined, pour in cooked pasta, mix and enjoy!

**2021 Touchstone Energy Sports Camp Scholarship Program Suspended Due to COVID-19**

Due to the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, Four County EMC has made the difficult decision not to offer its Touchstone Energy Sports Camp Scholarships this year. This long-standing program typically provides full scholarships for middle school students to attend overnight summer basketball camp at North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"We are disappointed not to move forward with the program this year, but feel this decision is in the best interest of scholarship applicants and their families given the challenges of the current pandemic," said MaKayla Killens, communications specialist at Four County. "We remain optimistic that we can resume this opportunity in 2022 when campers can once again experience the full benefits of the program."

Middle school students at qualifying schools are encouraged to apply for a scholarship to attend camp in summer 2022. Applicants will be judged on their academics, extracurricular activities and an essay. The application period will begin on **January 1, 2022**, with a final deadline of **March 31, 2022**.

Four County  
**Connection**  
Janet Smith, Editor

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**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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