



Connection

Communicating local energy news to Four County Electric members

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

inside
Four County
Connection

Voting Procedures for Your Board of Directors Explained

The election of seven members to the Four County EMC Board of Directors will be held at the 2021 Annual Meeting. The drive-thru meeting is scheduled for Saturday, October 9, from 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. at the Elizabethtown District Office.

In accordance with the Four County EMC bylaws, the terms of the following directors will expire this year:

- E. Carlton Raynor, East Duplin Directorate District
- R.W. Blanchard, Jr., East Sampson Directorate District
- S. Franklin Williams, West Duplin Directorate District
- Arlester Fullwood, At-Large
- Ronald J. Allen, West Bladen Directorate District
- S. Eugene Jordan, West Pender Directorate District
- J. Steven Matthis, West Sampson Directorate District

than 45 days, nor more than 90 days before the annual membership meeting.

Each of the eight directorate districts will be represented on the nominating committee by at least one (1), but not more than two (2) persons.

The nominating committee will meet and prepare a list of nominations for directors for each directorate district and post that list at least 30 days before the annual membership meeting.

Further, the bylaws provide that any 50 or more members, working together, may

make additional nominations of qualified candidates by filing a petition. The petition must be on Four County EMC provided forms and be presented to the Cooperative at least 30 days prior to the annual membership meeting.

The nominating committee will meet on Thursday, August 5, to establish a list of

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Get the Scoop



Four County EMC offices will be closed on Monday, July 5, in honor of Independence Day. Have a safe and happy holiday!

Save the Date



The bylaws require that the Board of Directors appoint a nominating committee of not less than ten (10) persons, with the appointments made not less

VOTING PROCEDURES, continued from page A

nominees for Directors whose terms expire this year. The list and official meeting notice will be published on the co-op's cover wrap of the October 2021 edition of Carolina Country and mailed to all members at least ten (10) days prior to the Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, October 9, 2021. Four County EMC will also post the list of nominees on the corporate website at fourcty.org.

The nominees will be presented for election at the Annual Membership Meeting.

Please note that you will not receive a separate mailing with this information; it will appear only on the October 2021 cover wrap of Carolina Country.

For more information, please feel free to call Four County EMC at 1-888-368-7289.

Four County EMC Announces Don Gatton as CEO

After a 27-year career in the electric cooperative industry, Four County Electric Membership Corporation's (FCEMC) Chief Executive Officer Mitchell Keel will retire effective June 30, 2021. Under Keel's leadership, there was a significant focus on innovation and technology, assuring the cooperative's abilities to meet its members' needs for generations to come.



Don Gatton

"It has been an honor and privilege to serve Four County EMC and its membership for the past 17 years," said Keel. "It has been a rewarding career, made easier by the support of a talented and dedicated workforce and hard-working board. The cooperative is well-positioned to transition to new leadership."

The cooperative's Vice President of Human Resources, Don Gatton, will take the helm as CEO when Keel retires. Gatton has over 30 years of experience within the electric utility industry and a broad knowledge of Four County EMC and the cooperative business model.

"Don is the right leader to take our cooperative into the future,"

stated Franklin Williams, president of Four County's board of directors. "He has a proven record as a dedicated and motivated employee and reflects the character of our organization."

Born in Reidsville, North Carolina, Gatton began his career as a first class lineworker for Duke Energy in 1987. He came to Four County EMC in 2001 as a lineworker, moving up to Director of Safety, Training and Loss Control, and eventually, Vice President of Human Resources.

Gatton graduated from Mt. Olive University with a B.S. degree in business administration and organizational development, and

earned his MBA with a concentration in management from the Florida Institute of Technology. He currently serves on the Friends of Camp Kirkwood board and is a volunteer fireman at the Wallace VFD. He and his wife, Adrienne, have three children and live in Wallace.

"I'm honored by the opportunity to lead this remarkable organization," Gatton said. "Four County has a reputation for having a strong culture of service, trust, and commitment to our members; these will continue to be our focus. I look forward to building on the legacy of excellence left behind by Mitchell Keel and feel privileged to help navigate the future of our cooperative."



Fan Donations Help Senior Citizens

In southeast North Carolina, summer is a beautiful time of year, but the heat and humidity can be brutal. During our hot summer months, older adults living without air conditioning or circulating air are at higher risk of hyperthermia.

Throughout May, Four County EMC delivered fans to agencies that serve senior citizens. In turn, these agencies donate these fans to elderly residents who are in need. “We are happy to help our communities ensure senior citizens can stay cool during the hot North Carolina summers,” explained Chris Ingram, Four County’s marketing supervisor.

Four County distributed fans to:

- Duplin County Services for the Aged, Kenansville
- Sampson County Department of Aging, Clinton
- Garland Senior Center, Garland
- Bladen County Division on Aging, Elizabethtown
- Columbus County Department of Aging, Whiteville
- Pender Adult Services, Burgaw

Four County EMC has been donating fans to local agencies for over 25 years. If you would like to donate a new fan, please contact a senior center near you.



Above: Kristie Massey, Aging Director for Columbus County (left) and Office Assistant Whitney Williamson (right).

Right: MaKayla Killens, Four County EMC Communications (left) with Sharon Hester, Bladen County Nutrition Coordinator (center) and Kelly Robeson, Director for Bladen County's Division on Aging (right)



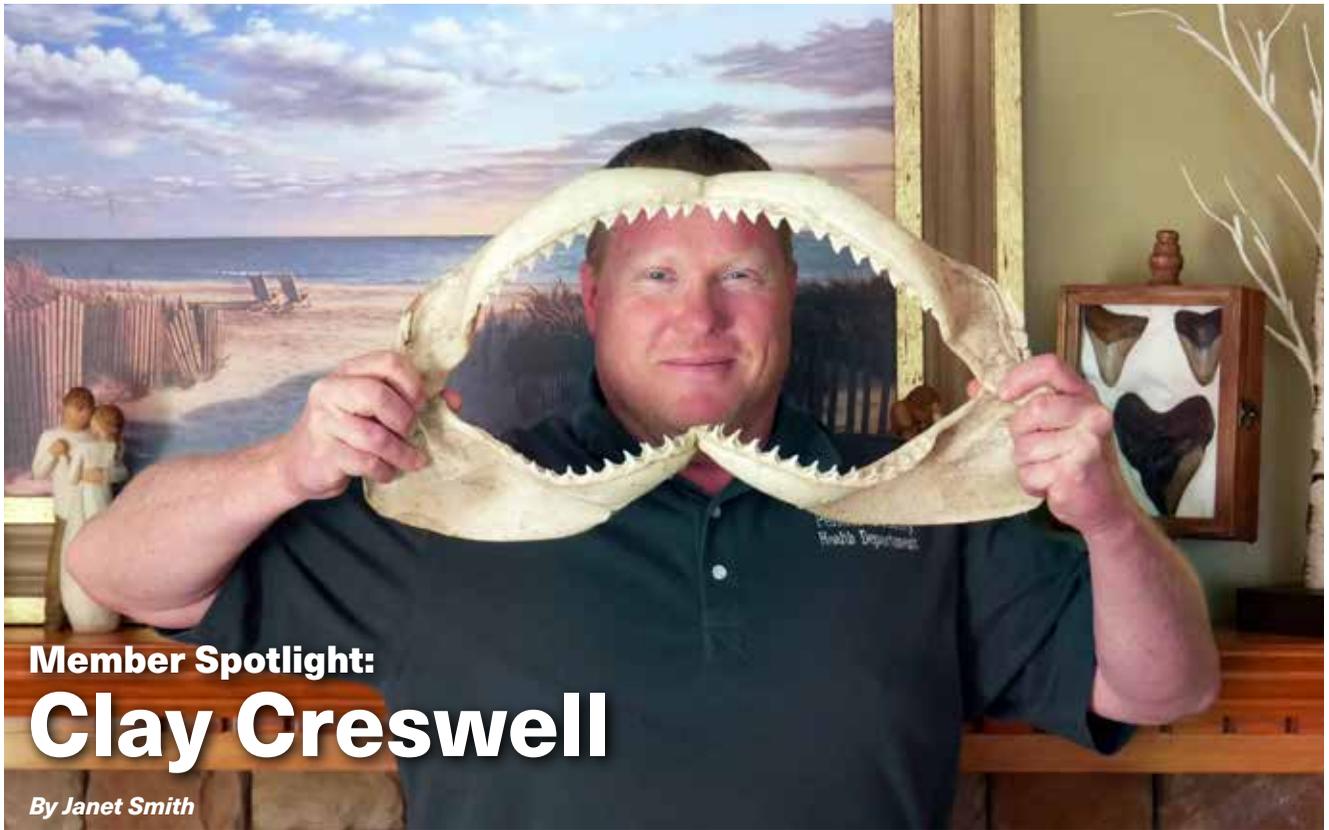
Apply Early for Bright Ideas Education Grants for a Chance to Win \$100

As the old saying goes, “the early bird gets the worm.” Be one of the “early bird” K-12 teachers who submit their Bright Ideas Education Grant application by Aug. 16 to get “the worm,” or a chance to win one of five \$100 gift cards in a statewide drawing.

The final deadline to apply for a Bright Ideas grant of up to \$2,000 from Four County EMC is Sept. 15.

The Bright Ideas Education Grant program, offered by Four County EMC and North Carolina’s 26 electric cooperatives, advances excellence in education and accelerates student learning by providing funds for innovative projects. Since the program began in 1994, educators statewide have received more than \$13.6 million in Bright Ideas grant funding for nearly 12,922 projects benefiting 2.7 million North Carolina students.

To learn more about the program and apply, visit ncbrightideas.com.



Member Spotlight:
Clay Creswell

By Janet Smith

Jaws. Even after 46 years, the iconic music from this movie strikes fear in many beach-goers' hearts. But are they really the mindless killers portrayed by Hollywood? Not so, says Clay Creswell of Rocky Point. Clay is an environmental health program specialist in Pender County by trade, and a shark bite specialist for the Shark Research Institute by choice.

Clay Creswell was born in Shelby, North Carolina, and moved to Rocky Point over 20 years ago to get closer to the water. Ever since he can remember, Clay has had a fascination with fossils, dinosaurs and sharks. At the age of five, he saw that blockbuster movie that changed the trajectory of his life. Rather than being afraid, he was enthralled.

In elementary school, his research began. Clay scoured local beaches for shark teeth and collected newspaper clippings regarding shark sightings and "attacks." His passion carried him into college, where he majored in biology at Limestone University in Gaffney, South Carolina.

Clay admits, though, it's not easy to turn marine biology into a career – the jobs are few and far between,

and the competition is fierce. He enjoys his career with the health department, but Clay says, "There's just something about marine life and critters. I've always been interested and I've never grown out of it. As a kid, I enjoyed hunting shark teeth and I still enjoy it as an adult."

Over the years, he expanded the shark data collection he started as a young boy. If he read about an incident in the newspapers or saw a report on the news, he would research the occurrence, collecting whatever information he could glean for his files. Eventually, his reputation and knowledge led to him becoming the local contact for the Shark Research Institute (SRI) and the Global Shark Attack File.



In 2004, SRI made their collaboration official. While still a volunteer position, being an official shark-bite investigator with the SRI allows Clay access to data such as victim and witness information, medical

“There’s just something about marine life and critters. I’ve always been interested and I’ve never grown out of it.”

records, photographs and witnesses. The National Geographic Channel also utilizes Clay as a local media source. Like the SRI, they contact him if a bite occurs in the Carolinas. He has even appeared on two episodes of their popular series “When Sharks Attack.”

Clay says he’s investigated over 100 cases of shark bites in North and South Carolina. “When a bite occurs, the detective work begins,” Clay explains. He collects his data and sends it off to the Global Shark Attack File. The purpose of these investigations is to learn and understand shark behaviors—what might have triggered the shark to bite, what environmental factors may increase the chances of an occurrence and possible preventative measures.

Clay has recently taken his expertise one step further—he’s written a book called “Sharks in the Shallows.” Released in June, the book is available online and, Clay hopes, in local museums and book stores. Not surprisingly, this book is pro-shark, intended to quell people’s fears and pique their interest. However, Clay states, “I don’t sugarcoat it. If you’re in the ocean, shark sightings are a possibility. Bites do happen, but they are rare.”

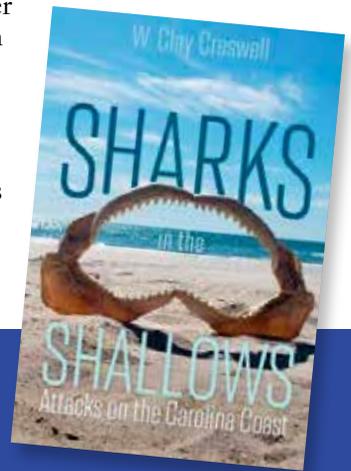
Clay says the most common misconception about sharks is that they are mindless creatures who seek out humans as prey. Clay explains, “Most attacks are what we call ‘hit and runs’ where the shark mistakes a person for food, bites once, then leaves when the taste is not what it expects. A simple case

of mistaken identity. But bull sharks will sometimes carry out a ‘bump and bite’ where they deliberately bump into someone to size up the situation before deciding to bite.” Interestingly, it is not uncommon to have fresh-water sightings of sharks. People will occasionally contact him about bull sharks spotted in the Northeast Cape Fear River.

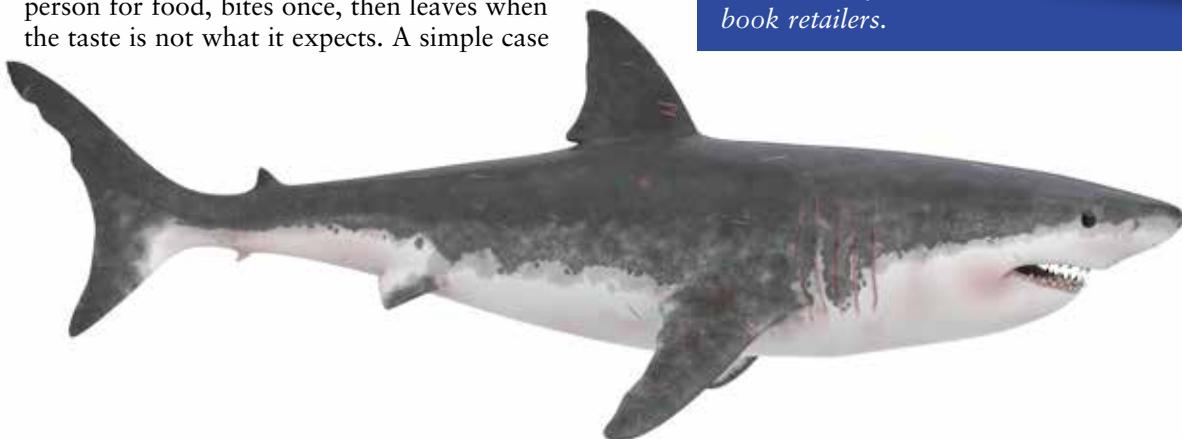
Does Clay’s wife, Terri, share his passion? “Not really,” admits Clay, “but she does love to scour the beaches with me, hunting for shark teeth and other fossils.” Terri has even started a jewelry business utilizing the shark teeth and sea glass they find at local beaches. Their favorite finds include a rare cow shark tooth and pre-megalodon teeth dating back 30 million years. But Clay says it’s tough to pin down his favorites. “This is a fossil-rich area and I love everything we find!”

Not one to rest on his laurels, Clay has already written three more books that he’s trying to get published. One is an adult book examining local tales of terror, and the other two are children’s books, which Clay also illustrated.

While most people may never share Clay’s fascination with sharks, he hopes that people will take the time to learn more and fear less about these mysterious creatures. “In fact,” Clay says, “sharks have more reason to fear us than we do them.”



“Sharks in the Shallows” is available online through uscpress.com, amazon.com, and other book retailers.





CO-OP CONNECTIONS BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Coastal Carolina Charm

UNIQUE HANDMADE
JEWELRY



When Terri Creswell’s daughter gave her a popcorn popper for Christmas last year, no one could have predicted it would be the start of a jewelry business. Terri said they didn’t use the machine very often, so she sold it for \$100, and that became the seed money to start Coastal Carolina Charm.

Terri and her husband, Clay, have always enjoyed scouring the beaches for fossils and sea glass. While she doesn’t share Clay’s passion for sharks, she does love discovering the many riches offered up by the ocean. “It’s God’s amazing treasure chest opened up there to anyone who looks,” she says with a smile.

They had been trying to come up with a way to earn a little extra money when they retire someday. After an afternoon of combing the beach, Clay mentioned they should wrap up one of their finds and sell it. From there, it evolved into pendants and eventually bracelets, necklaces and earrings. Terri now sells her beautiful jewelry on Coastal Carolina Charm’s Facebook page and at Blue Moon gift shop in Wilmington.

They’ve also added homemade beach glass to their inventory. Using a rock tumbler and a secret recipe of glass, sand and grit, they create uniquely colored glass not easily found at the beach. Terri says they do, however, make it clear to customers whether a piece is from the beach or homemade.

“Each piece is special to me,” Terri says and then laughs. “It sounds funny, but I want to make sure they find their perfect forever home. When a person looks at my jewelry and I see their face light up, it lights me from the inside out.”



Owner Terri Creswell shows off some of her unique jewelry offerings.

Coastal Carolina Charm is a participating business in the Co-op Connections program. Four County members save 10% when shopping at facebook.com/Coastal-Carolina-Charm-185282752979989. Just mention you’re a Four County member!

Are You a Local Business Owner?

Would you like to receive FREE marketing and advertising for your business? Four County has a program for you! Sign up your business for the Co-op Connections Program, choose the discount you’d like to offer to cooperative members, and that’s it! In exchange, Four County will promote your business on social media, our website, in new member packets and more. For more information, contact janetsmith@fourcty.org or call 888-368-7289.





Congratulations to our 2021 Youth Scholarship Winners

These four rising seniors each won a \$2,000 scholarship to assist with college expenses at the college of their choice. With the cancellation of this year's Youth Leadership Weekend due to COVID-19 concerns, participating students had the opportunity to create a leadership vision board or PowerPoint presentation explaining how they will leverage their leadership skills to become better at one of the seven cooperative principles. A committee judged the projects and selected winners from the submitted entries.

Four County EMC congratulates each of this year's winners and wishes them the best!



*Graci Braden,
Pender Early College*



*Ariana Romero,
Union High School*



*Isabella Rumbold, Harrell's
Christian Academy*



*Forrester Spears,
Heide Trask High School*



Four County EMC Offers Comfort Loan Program

Temperatures are rising so now is a good time to ensure your home will be comfortable during our hot summer months. To assist with this, Four County EMC offers a Comfort Loan program that aids qualifying members in making energy improvements to their homes. This program gives homeowners a cost-effective way to purchase a high-efficiency heat pump, central air conditioning or to add insulation to their primary residence. Depending upon the improvements, loans can be up to \$6,500 and members can take up to five years to pay off the low-interest loan.

In addition, rebates are available for any member who installs a 16 SEER or greater heat pump. The rebate is \$100 per ton and applies to new construction or retrofits.

For more information on Comfort Loans or rebates, please contact us at 1-888-368-7289. Four County EMC has offered this valuable program for 29 years and has provided over \$6 million to members for home energy improvements. The Comfort Loan program is one more example of how Four County is empowering the people and communities we serve.

Winning
from the editor
Recipe



Ingredients:

- 1 large container Cool Whip
- 1 pint strawberries
- 2 pints blueberries
- 1 angel food cake (store-bought or homemade)
- A clear dessert bowl is best to use so layers are visible. Individual clear glasses also work well!

Prep:

- Cut cake into 1-inch cubed pieces or crumble into chunks.
- Wash fruit. Check for stems on blueberries and cut strawberries. Keep the prettiest strawberries to the side to help decorate the top later.
- Add sugar for sweetness, or lemon juice, if you like.

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

Red, White, and Blue Trifle



To Layer the Trifle:

- Place ½ of cake cubes in the bottom of the dish.
- Add up to ½ of the container of Cool Whip to the top of the angel food cake. Use enough to cover the exposed cake.
- Add, at most, half of the strawberries and blueberries on top of the Cool Whip.
- Add the rest of the cake on top of the fruit.
- Add the rest of the Cool Whip to the top of the cake.
- Use remaining fruit to decorate the top as you wish

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

Set your programmable thermostat as high as is comfortable in the summer, and raise the setpoint when you're sleeping or away from home.

Source: energy.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

1-888-fourcty (368-7289)
customer@fourcty.org

Burgaw 259-2361

Elizabethtown 862-3551

Rose Hill 289-4534