



Connection

Communicating local energy news to Four County Electric members

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

inside Four County Connection



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Four County Annual Meeting Highlights

Thank you to everyone who came out to Four County EMC's first drive-thru annual meeting, held on Saturday, October 9, 2021. Despite the rain, it was a tremendous success, with 1,137 members driving thru – that's the most members ever for an Elizabethtown annual meeting!



★ CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2021 ANNUAL MEETING PRIZE-WINNERS!



GRAND PRIZE WINNER OF THE 2010 CHEVROLET SILVERADO - MYRTLE LEE JOHNSON!

BILL CREDIT WINNERS:

- ANGELIA RHODES FLOWERS - \$500
- LISA MCKOY WILLIAMSON - \$100
- NELLIE MCGREGOR - \$100
- PATSY JACOBS - \$100
- KENNETH WEST - \$100
- ROY C. EZZELL - \$100
- ROLAND R. BURNEY - \$100
- LARRY N. MERRITT - \$100
- ANNIE D. SOWERS - \$100
- RUBY MAE WATERS CARR - \$100
- JASON HALL - \$100
- VIRGINIA LANE - \$50
- WILLIS FENNELL - \$50
- SOPHIA FLOYD - \$50
- NADINE TORRANS - \$50
- CATHERINE BURNEY - \$50
- RAYMOND MONROE - \$50
- BERNICE MCDOWELL - \$50
- VERNELL MURRAY - \$50
- DONALD GRAINGER - \$50
- ELIZABETH MCKOY HAWKINS - \$50



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

FOUR COUNTY EMC OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED DEC. 24 and 27 FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY AND JAN. 3 FOR THE NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAY



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Edwards Braks, Model Train Enthusiast

What do Rod Stewart, Kevin Costner, and Four County member Edward Braks have in common? They all shared a passion for model railroads. Though model trains might have started as a kid-centric hobby in the 1950s, that is no longer the case today – it takes a lot of woodworking, engineering, electronics, and planning to build these elaborate miniature worlds.

Edward Braks was born with a love of trains. He passed away in 2020, but his widow, Frances, still loves sharing her memories of Edward and his hobby. While he had a long and successful career in finance as a partner with Deloitte and Touche, and then as CFO of Arpin Van Lines, Edward was like a little kid when it came to trains. Frances said it was one of his favorite ways to chase away



the stress and tiredness from a long day at work.

Edward collected trains for over 60 years, and when they moved to North Carolina 12 years ago, they designed their house so he could devote a room to his beloved hobby. Frances said much of Edward's train layout, containing 12 stations and nearly 300 trains, filled their 800-square-foot bonus room.

She laughs and recalls, "When we moved here, we had more boxes of trains than we did dishes!" Frances continues, "Edward was very creative. He designed the layout and built it all himself." She says Edward attended train shows, conventions, and classes to learn how to build the mountains,

tunnels, and buildings. "He even created a pond!"

Realism in Miniature

Like many model train enthusiasts, Edward designed his layout to be as realistic as possible. He modeled stations after those he traveled when he worked at the World Trade Center in New York City.

Sound effects were added, including announcements such as "the doors are now opening" and "now arriving at Penn Station." Miniature people were scattered throughout the layout, shopping or waiting for trains. In homage to his employer, Edward even had an Arpin Van Line building complete with moving trucks.



Showing his humorous side, Edward named buildings after their friends – Joe’s Bistro for their beer-loving friend; and Sheila’s Boutique for a friend who Frances says laughing, “lives to shop.” She smiles and says Edward named a station and building after her as well.

While they never had children of their own, they were often a go-to spot for neighborhood kids and grandchildren. Frances says fondly, “I was so proud of him. He loved those trains and did a wonderful job with the layout. One of his greatest joys was showing it to children and seeing the delight on their faces.” Edward even had engineer hats for the kids and stools so the little ones could sit and watch the action.

Not surprisingly, vacations for the Braks involved train rides. “Edward would hunt out a local train ride no matter where we went. Alaska was his favorite, and he especially loved to find the old-fashioned trains,” Frances recalls. On one vacation, they traveled to Dillsboro, North Carolina, to see the train that crashed in the movie *The Fugitive*. The remains of that iconic train crash were left rusting along the Great Smoky

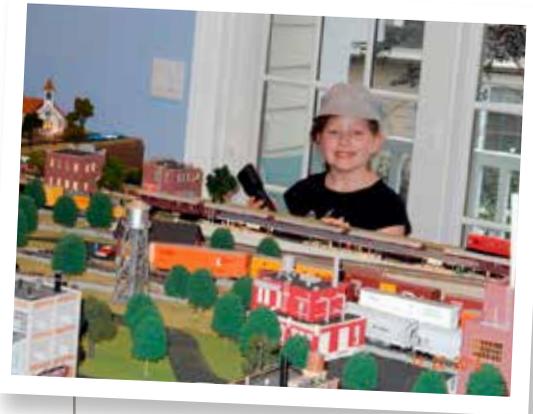
Railroad. “I know in his mind, Edward could see Harrison Ford climbing out of that wrecked train.”

Frances recalls another vacation at Christmas. They traveled to Bryson City, North Carolina, to ride the Polar Express. She laughs and says, “There were kids in pajamas drinking hot chocolate and visiting with Santa Claus. We were the oldest people there, but we were enjoying it just as much!”

Most model railroaders will agree that layouts are never finished; it’s always a work in progress. Frances remembers occasions when they would be eating dinner and talking, and suddenly, Edward would run upstairs to the train room where she’d hear him exclaim, “Yes, that’s something I can do!”

Sharing Trains with Others

When Edward passed away in 2020, Frances knew he would never want her to sell his trains, but he would still want people to enjoy them. Edward had been a



longtime member of the Wallace Friends of the Depot, so it seemed fitting when the group agreed to take his layout. Frances recalls it took five men several trips to disassemble the structure. She remembers how respectful they were, wrapping each train with care. She said the organization has some pieces on display in their train room while others are being used in a fundraiser to build a garden by the depot. “I’ll never be able to repay them for their kindness.”

Frances misses Edward every day. She can still hear the train whistle that was his text notification and keeps his *Mighty Trains* series saved on their DVR.

“I’m sorry everyone didn’t get to meet Edward,” Frances said. “He was a wonderful, spectacular human being – compassionate, exciting, and very creative with his trains. He would do anything to be close to a train.”

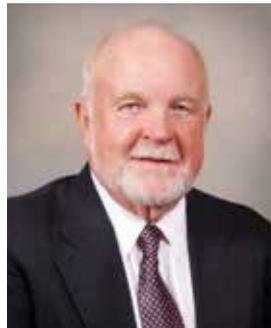
Edward coaching a future train engineer.



BOARD SPOTLIGHT:

Bertice Lanier

“**T**he son of a local farmer and businessman, Bertice Lanier grew up with the values of determination, hard work, and integrity instilled in him. He says the family’s focus on God, country, family, and community helped him navigate life as a young man and continues to guide him today.



farming, Lanier decided to chart his own path and opened a used car lot. Pender Motor Co. in Maple Hill became the first in a string of successful car dealerships Lanier owned throughout the years. The farmland remained in the family. Lanier and his brother helped transition the cattle farm to crops and then into a sow farm that Lanier’s nephew now owns and runs.

Joining a Community Team

In 1985, Four County CEO Bill Beverage approached Lanier about filling a board seat vacated by a deceased director. Over 35 years later, he declares, “The greatest thing I’ve ever done is serve on the Four County Board.”

Lanier says he’s seen a lot of advances at the cooperative and changes in the communities over the past three decades. “The AMI meters, LED outdoor lights, the growth in the communities, increased agriculture, the fiber loop, the list goes on,” he says. “People don’t think about this, but years ago, tobacco farming didn’t require much electricity, but it’s a necessity for modern farming.”

Lanier is proud of serving on the Four County board and says a successful board of directors must think for themselves but be collaborative. “The talented and dedicated workforce at Four County is a big part of what makes the cooperative so good. Between the talented employees, the technology we’ve added, and the programs we offer, it’s like I always say, Four County is one of the best co-ops in the U.S.!”

Lanier was born and raised in Maple Hill, an unincorporated community in northeastern Pender County. After he was born, a funny thing happened between the hospital and the courthouse. Lanier was supposed to be named after his grandfather, Bertis. Somehow, between the hospital and the courthouse, the spelling changed from Bertis to Bertice, the name of a local plumber. He laughs and says he’s gotten used to all the mispronunciations of his name, and he’ll answer to any of them.

Lanier grew up across the street from his family’s general store on Highway 50. He adds that the busy highway was just a quiet dirt road when he was born. He always tells people that he was raised “in the store, in the house and somewhere in-between” since his parents were always busy running the family business.

If you were a teenager in the ’60s, the place to “see and be

seen” was the Chic Chic Drive-In, located on Fourth Street in Wilmington. Teens from Wilmington and surrounding areas would cruise the streets and check out the popular



The Chic Chic Drive-In.

Photo courtesy of the Star News

drive-in to see who was there. The person who caught Lanier’s eye was Phyllis Horrell, a young lady from Ivanhoe attending school in Wilmington. After a five-year courtship, they married in 1970 and had two children. Today, their son is a doctor in Wilmington, and their daughter manages country music artists in Nashville.

Back when Lanier and Phyllis were dating, he was working at the family farm in Onslow County. After a few years of



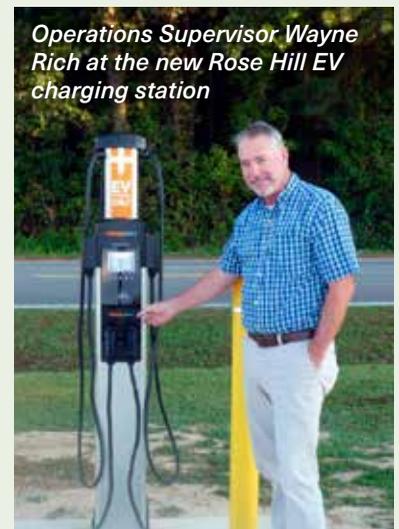
Four County Unveils Three New EV Charging Stations

In addition to the EV chargers already installed at our Burgaw office and the Mad Boar Restaurant in Wallace, Four County EMC now has three additional charging stations available to the public.

Utilizing the DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) grants funded with money from the Volkswagen emissions settlement, the cooperative installed chargers at each of their three offices – Burgaw, Rose Hill, and Elizabethtown.

These Level 2 chargers, available to the public 24/7, are operated by Four County and supported and maintained by ChargePoint, an EV infrastructure company serving more than 114,000 stations worldwide.

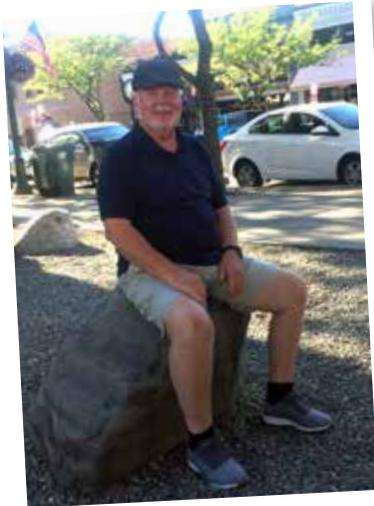
Gregg Cohn, Four County's vice president of Engineering, says, "Almost any electric vehicle or plug-in hybrid can utilize the chargers. Tesla owners will need an adapter, but they can still use these stations. To find our stations and others, EV drivers can search online or use the ChargePoint app." He continues, "These new charging stations are very exciting since, to our knowledge, the Elizabethtown charger is the first public charger in Bladen County."



Operations Supervisor Wayne Rich at the new Rose Hill EV charging station

“The talented and dedicated workforce at Four County is a big part of what makes the cooperative so good. Between the talented employees, the technology we’ve added, and the programs we offer, it’s like I always say, Four County is one of the best co-ops in the U.S.!”

Lanier continues: “Training is an essential part of being on the board. The continuing education courses are essential for staying current in the electric industry, not only for the curriculum but for the opportunity to meet other cooperative board members. Talking to directors from different parts of the country allows for an invaluable exchange of ideas. Four County started Operation Round-Up after learning about it from another cooperative and that is one terrific program.”



Four County, Lanier is a retired member of the Burgaw Rescue Squad and the Maple Hill VFD, a former board member of the Maple Hill Medical Center, an elder of Maple Hill Presbyterian Church, and currently serves on the Maple Hill Community Center Board.

When not serving his community, Lanier loves being with his grandchildren, flying his plane and spending time on the water, fishing, and oystering. He’s been to every state in the country except Hawaii and, while he enjoys traveling, he firmly believes there’s no place like home.

Home is still Maple Hill, across the street from his childhood home. Lanier laughs and says, “I didn’t get very far.” Maybe not far in miles, but his commitment to positively impacting his community and the people living in it is immeasurable.”

During his tenure at Four County, Lanier has served as president of TEMA (Tarheel Electric Membership Association), the service company responsible for supplying materials to electric utility systems. He is also past-treasurer and current vice-president of the Four County Board. Outside of



CO-OP CONNECTIONS

Keep our Small Business Community in Mind this Holiday Season



Gift wish lists are being made with haste and it's getting a little colder outside. That means the holiday shopping season is here! While shopping, please remember there are plenty of locally owned businesses in our neck of the woods that can provide unique gifts and experiences for your loved ones. And Four County's Co-op Connections member benefit program can help you save while you keep dollars in the local economy.

This winter let's power a Small Business Comeback and frequent the shops and restaurants owned by our friends and neighbors. Visit Connections.coop to find all the ways to save locally, or download the free Co-op Connections smartphone app in the Apple App Store or on Google Play. Use the app's "Deals Near Me" option as you holiday shop or anytime you are out running errands. Show your Four County Co-op Connections card or the app at the point of sale to save.

Are you a local business owner? If so, we'd love to have you join our program! Contact janetsmith@fourcty.org for more information.



Leinwand's Department Store, Elizabethtown



Billy's Pork & Beef, Wallace



Congratulations again to Tammy Bollinger of Burgaw! She was the winner of our September Co-op Connections Facebook contest! Tammy won a \$100 gift certificate to The Cork Room Restaurant at Cape Fear Vineyard & Winery! Thank you to all who entered, and we invite all our Four County members to like us on Facebook and get ready for the next contest! Remember to shop local and save!



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Heading out of town for the holiday season? Remember to unplug electronics that draw a phantom energy load. Some gadgets like TVs, phone chargers, gaming consoles and toothbrush chargers use energy when plugged into an outlet—even when they're not in use.

Source: energy.gov



Holiday Décor Tips for an Energy-Wise Home



If you haven't made the switch to LED holiday lights, it's time. LEDs can last 40 holiday seasons, and they're safer than incandescent holiday lights.



Whether you've already decked your halls or you're just getting started, there's still time to incorporate energy savings into your holiday décor planning.

- If you haven't strung your twinkle lights, be sure to use LED light strands. LEDs consume far less energy than incandescent lights and they can last 40 holiday seasons. They're also safer because they're made with epoxy lenses, not glass, making them more resistant to breaking—and they're cool to the touch, so no burnt fingers!
- If you missed Santa's memo about energy-saving LEDs and your holiday lights are already up, you can still save on lighting costs. All you need is a programmable light timer. Most models cost between \$10 to \$25 and can be purchased through online retailers like Amazon or at big box stores like Lowe's or Walmart. With a light timer, you can easily program when you want your holiday lights

turned on and off, which will save you time, money, and energy. If you're using a timer for exterior lighting, make sure it's weatherproof and intended for outdoor use.

- If Clark Griswold's décor style is a bit much for your taste, consider a more natural approach. Many Christmas tree farms, and even retailers like Lowe's and Home Depot, give away greenery clippings from recently trimmed trees. With a little twine, extra ornaments, and sparkly ribbon, you can create beautiful garlands and wreaths to hang over your front door or windows. To add extra twinkle at night, you can install solar-powered spotlights to illuminate your new (essentially free!) greenery. Solar spotlights can vary in price, but you should be able to purchase a quality set of four for about \$30—and because they run on natural energy from the sun, there's no additional cost to your energy bill.

Regardless of how you decorate your home for the holidays, there are plenty of ways to save energy throughout the season. Visit [energy.gov/energy-saver](https://www.energy.gov/energy-saver) for additional energy-saving tips.

Winning
from the editor
Recipe



Ingredients:

- 12 Tbsp, or 1½ sticks of butter, melted
- 2 - 16oz canned biscuits
- 4 - 0.7oz envelopes instant hot cocoa mix
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- 1 cup mini chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Make sure to position your rack on a lower tier. Your Bundt pan needs to be as centered as possible for best cooking results. Prep Bundt pan with butter or oil of your choice. Cut biscuit dough into quarter pieces. Whisk sugar and instant hot cocoa together in large bowl. Add biscuit dough to sugar and instant hot cocoa mixture. Add half of the melted butter to bowl and mix until biscuits are coated. Working in sections, place a third of biscuits in Bundt pan, followed by a third of the marshmallows and chocolate chips.

Hot Chocolate Monkey Bread



Repeat process until all ingredients have been used. Pour remaining butter over ingredients. Cover Bundt pan with foil and bake for 35 mins. Remove foil and bake for another 10-15 minutes until biscuits are puffy and cooked. Let it cool for 5 minutes before handling pan. It will be hot! Before flipping Bundt pan, loosen bread with knife to make sure nothing sticks. Place serving plate on top of the Bundt pan and carefully flip. Serve while it is still warm.

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

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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Look for your Capital Credit Refund on this month's statement!

Four County EMC members will receive over \$2 million in Capital Credit refunds this year. The credit represents 100% percent of each member's share of the remaining margins for 1997, 100% of 2000, and 10% of 2020. Members qualifying for these remaining margins will receive a credit on their December electric bill. Inactive members will receive a check for any eligible capital credit refund. Capital Credits are another benefit of being an electric cooperative member.

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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