

# "I actually enjoy paying my electric bill"

And other testimonials of why you like your electric cooperative



**THERE'S SOMETHING** about buying electricity from a cooperative that creates a bond among its members. It's like getting your vegetables from a neighbor or child care services from your church, or like watching the local high school football team. Members tend to feel close to their cooperative — not all, but many do. New members, especially those who come from a bigger utility, warm up to the idea of owning their electricity provider. Members feel they have a stake in the business and its future and in how it operates in their community. They feel personally involved. They are more likely to be patient and understanding in tough times. They are likely to defend and protect their cooperative. They are loyal. I don't know why this is, but it's true.

Published here are selections of what North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperative members say about their co-op. They warm your heart, as Ann Doby Mercer says in one of them. Thanks to all of you who sent us your thoughts.

Our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series begins its seventh year in 2004. We like to believe that the idea of publishing your stories and pictures creates the same kind of bond that we feel for the cooperatives we belong to. It's like we're a big family. See page 14 for the 2004 themes.

— **MICHAEL E.C. GERY**

## FOR BRIGHTENING MY LIFE

When I was a child in rural Bladen County, I studied and did loads of homework by the light of kerosene lamps. We heated bath water on the wood stove, and chipped ice from a block in the old "Delco Plant" — that provided electric lights which dimmed every few minutes when the generator started up. But Four County EMC changed all that.

Electric stoves, refrigerators and Maytag wringer-washers were luxuries we cherished. Due to heavy defense production at that time, long waiting lists existed for most all electrical appliances. Imagine the joy of an electric iron for all those starched shirt collars, the aroma of coffee from an electric percolator, and music from a radio whose batteries never died!

When I think back to the day that an unknown man on horseback came through the neighborhood soliciting right of way for power lines, there was no way I could have imagined the impact it would have on our daily lives. Air conditioning, televisions, microwaves and computers opened up an entirely different view of life as we knew it.

After more than 50 years as a member of Four County EMC, I am more thankful than ever for the services of our cooperative. The refund of capital credits and the "Round-up" billing program are prime examples of community involvement. But at the top of the list is excellent service during storms and power outages. When needs arise, the co-ops are there!

*Edna Wray Nunnery  
Benson*

*Four County EMC, Elizabethtown*

## THE ONLY BILL I ENJOY

My electric bill is the only bill I enjoy receiving and paying. Why? The all-around good service. I seldom have to go to the office, but when I do (like to purchase the members' cookbook), everyone is friendly, pleasant and glad to welcome a member.

I cannot recall the last time the power was "off," but if it has to be, we are always notified. My security light bulb burns out, of course, but it is most always replaced the day I call. The employees who answer the phone are always courteous and helpful. My home is electric, and who else would run an entire home for such a bargain price?

Thank you, Tri-County EMC in Dudley. As I stated, my electric bill is the one I enjoy receiving and paying.

*Frances Taylor  
Dudley  
Tri-County EMC*

## THE FARMER'S DAY PRINCESS

The 1954 Farmer's Day Parade was approaching fast. I had been invited to ride on the Pitt & Greene EMC Float by board member Seth Barrow to represent the Lizzie community.

On parade day, Pitt & Greene entertained all of the girls at a luncheon. As we boarded the float, I was placed on the back, because I was taller than the other girls. Just as we were about to begin, I was moved to the middle seat at the front of the float. Riding on that float is one of my favorite teenage memories.

My parents taught me early in life that EMCs care about rural people. Our family was fortunate to have electricity when I was born in 1937. In 1964 when my husband and I built a new home in Lizzie, we had a choice between Pitt & Greene and another power company. There was no question as to which company we chose.

*Nolah Ann (Murphrey) Dail  
Snow Hill  
Pitt & Greene EMC*

## PRAYING FOR THE EMC

I have been with Edgecombe-Martin about eight years. Sometimes I mail my statement, and sometimes I take it in person. When I go in person, everyone there at the Tarboro office is very nice and concerned. And let me tell you, that means a lot.

When there's a power outage, they are prompt about getting it back on. Their rates are very reasonable. I really have been pleased with them. I have never had a problem with them. And the Carolina Country book they send each month, I really enjoy that. It's got so many interesting things in it to read.

I pray I will always continue to stay with Edgecombe-Martin County EMC.

*Patricia Whitley  
Rocky Mount  
Edgecombe-Martin County EMC*

## A CO-OP THAT STANDS OUT

First and foremost, I like how Pee Dee Electric constantly strives to improve service to members, stabilizes rates, rebuilds lines and pays off cooperative debt.

Pee Dee Electric's latest "win-win" opportunity warms my heart. That was when the Sandhills Utilities Service [formed by four electric co-ops, including Pee Dee] received the bid to serve the electric distribution system at Fort Bragg, which will serve our military and country as well as benefit our members at home.

Reliability and efficiency are two more reasons I appreciate Pee Dee Electric. It took only minutes for linemen to come to our home and take care of a tree in our yard that was in danger of falling on a main power line.

Also, the Bright Ideas grant program that Pee Dee Electric offers each year provides grants to teachers for innovative classroom projects that would not otherwise be funded.

Lastly, economy is another reason I like and find Pee Dee Electric different from other utilities. The water heater and heat pump rebate program are ways all families can save money and increase the energy efficiency of appliances all year.

*Ann Doby Mercer  
Hamlet  
Pee Dee EMC*

## REMC HEATS OUR TOAST

While I was growing up, we were with REA [Rural Electrification Administration]. It never occurred to me how special we were until I left home.

The first place that I had was the last residence on the "other company's" line. When I got married, we moved 100 yards away from where I worked (which I know was serviced by REA). When I called to set up service, I was told that, once again, we would be the last place on the "other company's" line.

Then the "blizzard of the century" hit in 1993. Of course there were massive power outages, and we were not excluded. We were out of power for eight miserable days. We could walk to the end of our driveway, look 100 feet to our left, and see our neighbor's house all lit up with the beautiful glow of electricity. They were out of power for six hours.

Right after this, we moved to a place serviced by Rutherford EMC. Even with all of our ice and snow storms this winter, we were not out of power. We've compromised before and regretted it. We're here to stay. We've discovered who heats the toast that we want buttered! Thank you all so much.

*Noel B. Sisk  
Rutherfordton  
Rutherford EMC*

## TEACHERS, MAGAZINES, ANNUAL MEETING

We are very proud of our electric cooperative. The cooperative offers many helpful benefits to the community.

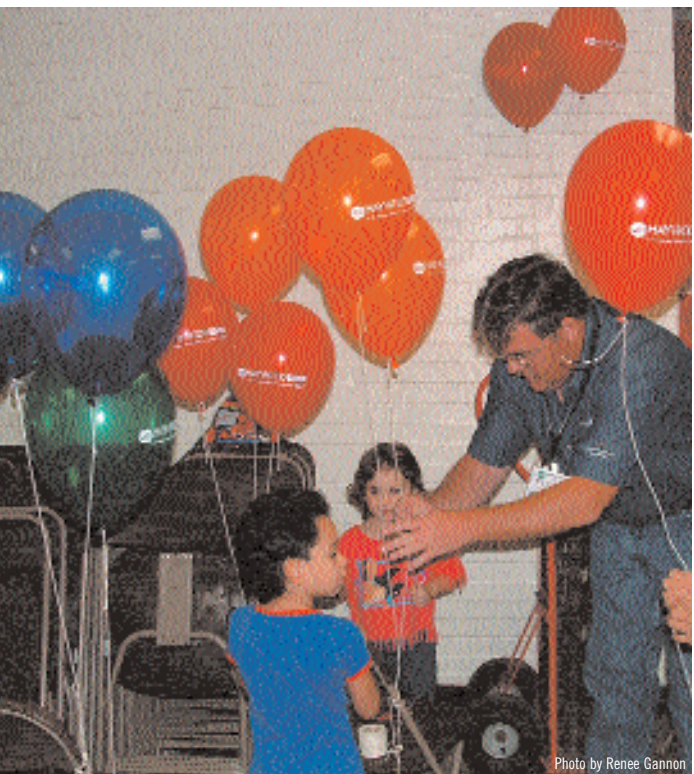
Each month we receive the magazine Carolina Country. We get to read about many important news items and events. We also get news and advertisements in the meter-reading card each month. We enjoy reading all of it.

If our electricity goes off for any reason, the workers are out to fix the problem quickly. The teachers are part of our co-op, too. At our electric co-op's annual meeting, we get to vote for our local board of directors, plus we get entertainment, a chance to win valuable prizes, and always a free gift.

We are so proud to be a part of the Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation.

*Earl & Sue Jones  
Pink Hill  
Tri-County EMC*

*continued on p. 14*



*Hosting future members at an annual meeting.*

Photo by Renee Gannon



Photo by Renee Gammon

*Learning about their cooperative electric utility.*

*continued from p. 13*

### MEMBERSHIP MEANS A LOT

When you join EnergyUnited, you become one of the owners of a nonprofit electric cooperative. Each year, EnergyUnited holds a special annual meeting of its owners to bring them up to date on cooperative matters and to elect its board of directors, so they can bring up more ideas on how to make EnergyUnited a better electric cooperative for the upcoming year.

As an electric cooperative member, when you buy electricity you are doing more than just sending a check to a power company. You actually have a share in the large, interrelated system that brings electricity to your home.

*Heather Orr  
Sandy Ridge  
EnergyUnited*

### SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY FROM HOME FOLKS

The most likeable thing about Pee Dee Electric is the fact that in 47 years and six months we have only spent 10 days in the dark.

Our Pee Dee Electric are “home folks.” Goldie Webb’s only job was at Pee Dee Electric. We have gentlemen who clean out the right of way. Robert Little, who works at Pee Dee Electric in Wadesboro, has a permanent smile and pleasing disposition.

Before the 800 number came along, we would call one of the fellows at home to let him know that our power was out. They are still just as prompt, even with this new automation. Pee Dee Electric has employed people that never have a bad day, even after being up all night.

My Pee Dee Electric still has southern hospitality and dependability. They are

always there, silent, most times unacknowledged, but very much a loved part of my life.

*Polly McDuffie  
Hamlet  
Pee Dee EMC*

### WHEN GIVEN THE CHOICE . . .

These days, everyone gets to choose their phone company. Before building our home in 1994, we had the rare option of choosing our power company.

We were at the very end of not one, but two power lines: one from Rutherford EMC and another from a larger electric company. Our other home was serviced by REMC, and we had noticed that we had fewer and shorter outages than our friends and neighbors served by the other company. When the REMC representative came to check, he agreed that since both lines crossed our property, we could probably be served by either. We chose REMC. They even ran us a longer-than-usual underground service to avoid overhead lines through the woods.

REMC’s policy of maintaining right of ways, plus the ability of a smaller local company to respond quickly in an emergency, have paid off many times for us. In the wake of the December 2002 ice storm and an earlier one, we were out of power only for a few hours. Our next-door neighbors who were not supplied by REMC were without electricity for four days. Thanks, REMC.

*Jim & Linda Bridges  
Ellenboro  
Rutherford EMC*

## Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our “Nothing Could Be Finer” series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don’t have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

### DECEMBER 2003

#### “How to Live a Long and Happy Life”

Do you know an older person who sets a good example for staying healthy and happy? Send a photo, too.

*Deadline: Oct. 15*

### JANUARY 2004

#### “How I Got My Name”

First name, last name, nickname, any name.

*Deadline: Nov. 15*

### FEBRUARY 2004

#### “Home Improvement Horror Stories”

That remodeling job that went crazy. Send pictures.

*Deadline: Dec. 15*

### MARCH 2004

#### “My Gardening Secrets”

What have you tried that really works?

*Deadline: Jan. 15*

### APRIL 2004

#### “The Camping Trip I Will Never Forget”

Where was it and what happened? Send pictures.

*Deadline: Feb. 15*

### MAY 2004

#### “What We Did When the Power Went Out”

Smart – and maybe not-so-smart – ways to cope during an outage.

*Deadline: March 15*

### JUNE 2004

#### “Being a Teenager Today”

What are you going through? Or: How does it compare to when you were one?

*Deadline: April 15*

### JULY 2004

#### “Our Money Pit”

What was the biggest waste of money you remember?

*Deadline: May 15*

### AUGUST 2004

#### “Was I Wrong!”

Lessons you learned the hard way.

*Deadline: June 15*

### SEPTEMBER 2004

#### “My Favorite Photo”

North Carolina people and places. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and printable size.

*Deadline: July 15*

### OCTOBER 2004

#### “If I Were Governor of North Carolina”

What would you do?

*Deadline: August 15*

### NOVEMBER 2004

#### “Mama’s Cooking Was Always the Best”

Send recipes, if you have one, and photos.

*Deadline: Sept. 15*

### DECEMBER 2004

#### “Meeting Your Grandparents”

Something you never knew about a grandparent.

*Deadline: Oct. 15*

### The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less. We retain reprint rights.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can’t pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don’t agree to this.)
9. Send to Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616. Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com