



1 Cooperative Way

Hardeeville, SC 29927-5123

843-208-5551

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Contact: Tray Hunter: (843) 422-5277

email: thunter@palmetto.coop

Missy Santorum: (843) 384-2419

email: msantorum@palmetto.coop

Celebrating community partnerships at Palmetto Electric's 2022 Annual Meeting

More than 5,007 members registered and voted at Palmetto Electric Cooperative's 2022 Annual Meeting.

Drive-thru registration and voting was held May 5, 6, and 7 at the co-op's Ridgeland office. Members were able to drive-thru, register and cast a vote for the Board of Directors election. Palmetto Electric employees were on hand to distribute registration gifts and assist members with any questions.

"I want to sincerely thank the 5,007 members who made the drive-thru registration and voting a tremendous success," said Berl Davis, Palmetto Electric president and CEO.

"Investing in community partnerships to benefit our members" was the resounding theme of this year's meeting and focused on the strong partnerships the cooperative has forged with other organizations and individuals in our community this past year. The business meeting, livestreamed online only, highlighted some of these different partnerships

- The COVID pandemic heightened the need for improved internet access in many of Palmetto Electric's rural service areas. In 2021, Palmetto Electric joined with Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative to bring high-speed internet access to members living in rural Jasper and Hampton counties through a program called PalmettoLink. Fiber optic lines are being installed beside existing power lines, and the project should be completed within the next two to three years.
- After 17 years, the conversion to underground power lines on Hilton Head Island was finally completed in 2021. In 2004, Palmetto Electric and the Town of Hilton Head formed a partnership to remove overhead power lines, with intentions to not only improve the aesthetics of the Island, but to also strengthen Palmetto Electric's system during storms. The Town of Hilton Head collected franchise fees to assist with the funding of the project.

- Palmetto Electric continued to invest in both students and teachers by providing scholarships and grants. The Palmetto Electric Trust and Operation Round Up donated nearly \$9,000 to local students in scholarship money. Palmetto Electric also partnered with Women Involved with Rural Electrification (WIRE) and the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina (ECSC) to award scholarships and educational opportunities, including the Virtual Youth Summit where Tess Sanford of Hilton Head Island High School won the \$5,000 R.D. Bennett Community Service Scholarship. In 2021, 50 teachers were awarded a total of \$40,365 in Bright Ideas grants to fund innovative classroom projects.
- Palmetto Electric Cooperative received a score of 90 on the American Customer Satisfaction Index Survey (ACSI). This is five out of the past six years that Palmetto has scored a 90 or higher, in comparison to the average Touchstone Energy cooperative score of 74. Palmetto continued to show their commitment to their members in 2021 by returning more than \$10 million in the form of Capital Credits and member rebates.

Board of Directors incumbents David L. White (Beaufort County, Position 2), James L. “Jimmy” Rowe (Beaufort County, Position 5), D. Terrell Smith (Hampton County, Position 2) and Jeremiah E. Vaigneur (Jasper County, Position 2) all ran unopposed and were re-elected. Alicia Holland was elected to fill the Beaufort County, Position 4, seat vacated by the late David Solaro in 2021. Board officers re-elected included Jeremiah E. Vaigneur, chairman; C. Alex Ulmer, vice chairman; and Eunice F. Spilliards, secretary-treasurer.

This year’s grand prize winner was Mary Ann Fyall of Ridgeland. She won the 2015 Ford Escape.

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About Palmetto Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Palmetto Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit electrical distribution utility that is owned by the members it serves. The Cooperative serves over 75,000 consumers in southern Beaufort, Jasper and Hampton counties. Palmetto Electric’s mission is to provide diversified, innovative energy and related services to its members consistent with sound business practices, while always acting in a community-building leadership role. For more information, visit palmetto.coop or call 843-208-5551.

Palmetto Electric is also a member of Touchstone Energy, which is a national alliance of local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives providing high standards of service to customers large and small. More than 692 Touchstone Energy cooperatives in 46 states are delivering energy and energy solutions to approximately 40 million customers every day. Touchstone Energy cooperatives serve their members with integrity, accountability, innovation, and a longstanding commitment to communities.