

Rayle Lines

Member Newsletter



September 2014

The Official Newsletter of Rayle Electric Membership Corporation

Rayle EMC sends one student to youth leadership conference

Tabitha High of Comer joined an elite group of 57 students attending the Georgia Cooperative Council's Youth Leadership Conference at the Georgia FFA/FCCLA Center in Covington July 14-18, 2014. Tabitha, daughter of Teresa and Wesley McDonald and Scott High, was sponsored by Rayle EMC.

The purpose of the conference is to build and enhance leadership skills and learn the role cooperatives play in the communities they serve. The leadership event is also designed to promote teamwork through a series of exercises, training and presentations.

According to Rayle EMC's General Manager Tony Griffin, it is important that students understand the basics of cooperatives and the principles on which they were founded.

"These students may become trailblazers in their own right, so we feel a responsibility to teach them about organizations that play a pivotal role in helping their towns and cities grow and prosper, and co-ops are a perfect example," Griffin says.

During the conference, students engaged in activities designed to challenge, teach and entertain, including a field trip to Snapping Shoals EMC in Covington and Godfrey Dairy Farm in Madison.

According to Gale Cutler, Chairman of the Georgia Co-op Council Board of Directors and Public Relations Coordinator at Georgia Electric Membership Corp., attendees learn firsthand about cooperatives and their unique characteristics compared to other business structures.

"Co-ops are owned and controlled by their members, the people who use their products and/or services," says Cutler. "These teens have shown themselves

to be peer leaders in their community to be selected by their local co-op to attend this conference. We help them to grow those leadership skills by providing a fun-filled week surrounded by other young leaders. The activities include workshops to better understand people's personality types and the legislative process, as well as encounter sessions with co-op representatives. The students leave with greater awareness of how co-ops operate and the impact of co-ops in their local community and nation."

An additional focus of the conference includes a discussion of the diversity of industries represented by co-ops. Cooperatives come in different shapes and sizes and include a broad collection of industries from agriculture, health care, electric power, housing, food and purchasing, to finance and insurance, education and child care, as well as telecommunications and technology.

To learn different perspectives from various co-ops, the group heard presentations from Craig Scroggs, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Lee Howell, NRECA; Jack McMullan, Farm Credit

Associations; Stephen Krueger, Southern States; Mark Coiner, Dairy Farmers of America; and Gale Cutler, Georgia EMC.

To be eligible to attend the Youth Leadership Conference, students must exhibit leadership potential, complete at least their freshman year of high school, apply as a first-time attendee and attend as a guest of their local cooperative.

The 2014 Cooperative Youth Leadership Conference was sponsored by the Georgia Cooperative Council and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development.

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Tabitha High attends Cooperative Youth Leadership Conference

Stafford and Kristin Green reflect on the solar energy system they installed in 2012

BY STAFFORD GREEN

Stafford and Kristin Green of White Plains have been members of Rayle EMC since June 2009, when they built their dream home on Lake Oconee. In June 2012, they heard about solar energy and decided to install solar panels. We recently contacted them to see if they are satisfied with their decision to go solar. This is their story.

The first thing many people ask us is how long it takes for the solar panels to pay for themselves. I calculate the system will be paid off in 10 or 15 years; but really, it depends on the future cost of energy. As energy becomes more expensive, the investment pays off faster. And of course, once the panels are paid off, my wife Kristin and I have a couple of decades of absolutely free energy whenever the sun shines. Because there are no moving parts, the panels are expected to last a long, long time.

While the finance component was a consideration for me, the real reason why I did this was the following: The money for these made-in-America panels stays right here at home in the U.S. That means no wars have started from solar power; no terrorist plots devised; no coal burned; no gas fracked. For solar energy, a bad day is only a cloudy day. We really like that.



View of the Staffords' solar panels from the ground.

It feels good. It feels good cranking up the air conditioning on a hot summer day and being 100 percent guilt free. Everything runs off the sun. And when it isn't so hot, thanks to Rayle EMC, all the excess energy we generate goes back to them, so my wife and I are contributors to our co-op community grid. We buy energy at night and we sell energy we don't use in the day.

How we learned about it.

We first learned about solar from MadisonFest in the local town park where Kristin and I met the local business, Solar Sun World, based in Madison. The owner, Josef Kullmann, was born in Germany, and he has 25 years experience building these systems. It was really unusual to find quality experience right here in our neighborhood. What I liked was Solar Sun World had this experience from Germany—a country that has spent several decades perfecting their solar installations—but these panels were built in the U.S. While I believe it's easy to get cheaper panels made in China, the quality can be much lower, and they break

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Stafford and Kristin Green, left, and the roof of their home fitted with solar panels, above.

Rayle EMC services

In order to provide you—our members—the very best in service, Rayle EMC has a number of special services and payment options.

Budget Billing and Levelized Billing

In a continuing effort to provide a service to our residential members by preventing seasonal fluctuations in electric billing, Rayle EMC offers both Budget Billing and Levelized Billing to qualifying classes of members.

Both Budget Billing and Levelized Billing are initially based on your average energy use for the most recent 12 months; therefore, members who have been with Rayle EMC for at least 12 months and have a zero balance are eligible to participate in either program upon written request.



Budget Billing is a fixed amount each month, which does not vary. At the end of the year, the difference between the actual bills and the budget bill amounts will be applied to the following year's budget bill amount when it is calculated.

Levelized Billing is re-averaged each month, using the past 12 months; therefore, the amount varies each month. Accounts may be removed from Budget Billing or Levelized Billing if not paid in full by the due date of each month.

Payment of electric statements

Electric statements may be paid in several different ways:

Online—Open your Internet browser and navigate to our home page at www.rayleemc.com and click on **Billing**, then **View or Pay Online**. You will then be directed to a new site, Customer Services Portal, where you will be prompted to type in your account number and password. The first time you log in, your password will be your account number, without the last three digits following the dash. Once you are logged into the site, you may change the password to something else. Then simply follow the prompts to make your payment by e-check or credit card.

Credit card—Rayle EMC also accepts payments of electric statements by credit card. You may come into one of our offices in person, call us and pay over the phone or pay online. We accept both VISA and MasterCard.

Automatic draft—Paying by automatic draft offers several benefits. You save time, travel and postage, and you never have to worry about your bill being paid late and being assessed a penalty. Drafts can be on your

checking account or your credit card.

Take advantage of this convenient method to pay monthly electric bills and eliminate those monthly trips to the Rayle EMC office. After a written request from the member, Rayle EMC will draft your bank account or credit card and continue sending a billing statement each month. A Draft Schedule message will be indicated on the electric statement. The drafting of your account will begin the month following receipt of your signed authorization form. Your account will be drafted each month, according to your due date.



Senior Citizens Billing Service

Rayle EMC recognizes the special needs of its older members who may be on fixed incomes and receiving retirement or Social Security checks each month. We want to make payment of electric statements for this group as convenient as possible. The Senior Citizens Billing Service places participating accounts in a special billing cycle that can make paying electric statements more convenient.

To qualify for the Senior Citizens Billing Service, a member must be 62 years of age or disabled and provide written documentation that they are receiving a Social Security or retirement check.



E-bills

Members have a choice of receiving their electric statements by email or e-bills, as they are called. The day after your meter is read, an e-bill is emailed to you with a link in the email that lets you view the bill and also gives you the option of paying it electronically. This eliminates the hassle of writing and mailing checks and saves you postage.

If you are interested in any of the services mentioned above and would like more information, call your nearest Rayle EMC office: Washington (706) 678-2116; Greensboro (706) 453-2268; or Lexington (706) 743-8107.

RAYLE LINES

Official Publication
Rayle EMC



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24-HOUR PHONE SERVICE AT EACH LOCATION

OFFICE HOURS

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Rayle EMC serves Wilkes, Lincoln, Oglethorpe, Greene, Taliaferro and parts of Hancock, Morgan, Clarke, Madison and Oconee counties.

Rayle Electric Membership Corporation is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Youth leadership conference,

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Electric Membership Cooperatives (EMCs) sending students this year included Altamaha, Canoochee, Diverse Power, Flint, GreyStone Power, Irwin, Jackson, Little Ocmulgee, Middle Georgia, North Georgia, Ocmulgee, Oconee, Planters, Rayle, Southern Rivers, Tri-County, Upson and Walton.

Rayle EMC is a member-owned cooperative providing electricity and related services to more than 13,900 consumers in Wilkes, Lincoln, Oglethorpe, Greene, Taliaferro and parts of Hancock, Morgan, Clarke, Madison and Oconee counties.

Solar energy system,

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more often. Plus, I simply prefer to buy things made here.

Back in June 2012, it took only a few days for Josef to install the 51 panels on my home office roof. Once Solar Sun World plugged them up and Rayle EMC connected them in, my wife and I started making electricity! It was very strange—and good—to see the electrical meter read what electricity we buy and what electricity we sell.

We are not “off the grid” (e.g., there are no batteries); we need Rayle EMC for power at night and on cloudy days. The unique installation Josef provided means that each panel is its own unit, so electricity is generated even if some of the panels are covered by a shadow or cloud. This makes them 20-25 percent more efficient than others.

Solar energy results. Our Solar Sun World web and mobile phone app tells us what energy we have generated. It tells me that yesterday we generated 60.966 kilowatt-hours. And we have generated more than 33.28 megawatt-hours over the life of the system. That means since June 2012, we generated power for 100,800 lightbulbs for a day, quadruple that if they were energy-efficient bulbs! We also saved 50,543 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions.

The unexpected. The only unexpected thing were squirrels. For some reason, our lake squirrels decided that the wire behind the panels was good to chew on. Something not wise for them to do on a sunny day as they could be zapped! So, Josef and crew kindly came back to the house and built a metal squirrel barrier around the panels. This saved the panels and the lives of our squirrels!

Hot water too. We also installed a home thermal system that Solar Sun World connected up for us. That means our hot water is heated by the sun, too. All it needs is a few hours a day of sunshine and our water is the perfect temperature. If we have a few days of rain, then the system will pull electricity from Rayle EMC to heat things up.

Final thoughts. Stafford remarks, “There’s nothing better than a safe investment that saves money over time, helps cleanly power our community and is built from products made in the U.S.” Kristin adds, “And it’s good for our environment and lets me soak in the bathtub with water that is warmed by the sun.”