Honoring the Area’s Best and Brightest

Glades Electric Cooperative saluted 14 graduating seniors and one junior during the annual Glades Electric Educational Foundation Youth Scholarship banquet. Read more on page 4.
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Glades Electric Cooperative, Inc.
“Neighbors Working for Neighbors”

GEC Wishes You A Safe & Happy 4th of July!

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July 2017
Vol. 6, No. 9

Chasing the Thrill 12
Despite the risks, extreme sports offer a rush that keeps enthusiasts coming back for more.

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Honoring the Best and Brightest

High school students recognized at annual scholarship banquet

The employees at Glades Electric Cooperative are proud to provide safe, reliable electricity to members, but sometimes our proudest moments come when we show our commitment to community.

One of those proud days was May 4, when our community’s brightest and most deserving youth were recognized at the annual Glades Electric Educational Foundation Banquet at the Lake Placid Camp and Conference Center. Fourteen high school seniors were awarded college scholarships, and one high school junior was honored for her selection to participate in the 2017 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

All students represent the best of the incredible students living in the GEC service territory.

The scholarships—funded by the cooperative’s unclaimed capital credits—are coordinated by the Glades Electric Education Foundation, which was formed in 2000 to recognize hardworking, dedicated, achievement-oriented students and encourage brilliant and innovative young leaders in our communities.

Eight graduating seniors are chosen each year: two each from Glades, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee counties. Each student receives a $4,000 scholarship given during a four-year period. This year was even more special. Unclaimed funds from previous scholarships were available, allowing the Glades Electric Educational Foundation to award an additional six $1,000 scholarships.

Members’ children who have maintained academic excellence and have shown leadership and community involvement throughout their high school years are eligible to apply for the awards.

Involvement in extracurricular activities such as sports, student government and National Honor Society are among the accomplishments reviewed as part of the selection process.

Choosing scholarship winners is more difficult each year due to an increased number of applicants. This is a result of school administrators, staff and teachers encouraging students to pursue higher levels of education, and students becoming more driven to excel and better their own communities.

Many school district officials—including guidance counselors, advisers, principals and superintendents—attended the banquet to extend their congratulations to the students.

Through the years, GEC has supported area schools and continues to make youth a priority. GEC and the Glades Electric Educational Foundation are privileged to have the opportunity to help make students’ dreams a reality.

This is just one of the many ways GEC fulfills the Seven Cooperative Principles and continues being “Neighbors Working for Neighbors.”

Robyn Basquin
Clewiston High School

• Daughter of Jon and Becky Basquin
• Health Occupations Students of America vice president, Kappa Gamma philanthropy chairwoman and Key Club secretary
• National Honor Society, honor roll
• FFA and 4-H
• Varsity cheerleading captain and varsity softball
• District GPA: 4.41
• Accepted to Kaiser University, where she will study science and nursing, with plans to become a pediatric nurse
Justin Bickman  
Sebring High School  
- Son of George and Samantha Bickman  
- President’s Honor List, National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta freshman through senior years, International Baccalaureate and STEM scholar  
- Outstanding Leadership Award 2016  
- Varsity baseball and football  
- 4-H: president, Emerald Performance Standard recipient, Clover Award and leadership camp youth director  
- FFA: past president and speaking district winner  
- District GPA: 4.54  
- Accepted to the University of Florida and the Milwaukee School of Engineering (undecided), with plans to study electrical engineering and law, ultimately pursuing a career in agricultural law

Cindy Cemitiere  
Lake Placid High School  
- Daughter of Leon and Maria Cemitiere  
- Key Club freshman and sophomore years  
- National Honor Society sophomore through senior years and Principal’s List freshman through senior years, STEM scholar

Kylie Daum  
Lake Placid High School  
- Daughter of Warren Daum and Linda Spurlock  
- National Honor Society freshman through senior years  
- Varsity volleyball, weightlifting and flag football  
- District GPA: 4.35  
- Plans to attend South Florida State College for an associate degree, then pursue additional schooling, with a goal to enter either clinical psychology or elementary education

Glades Electric Cooperative Board President Jack Coxe presents a plaque to Sebring High School scholarship winner Justin Bickman.
Olivia Everett  
**Moore Haven High School**  
- Daughter of Tony and Sara Everett  
- Class president four years, student council president and Beta Club president  
- STEM program  
- 4-H member  
- Varsity volleyball and softball  
- Class of 2017 salutatorian  
- District GPA: 4.3  
- Accepted to the University of Tennessee’s pre-dentistry program, with plans to become an orthodontist

Marielena Frenes  
**Clewiston High School**  
- Daughter of Jessica Frenes  
- FFA chapter president  
- Softball  
- Student government treasurer  
- Montura Fire Department fire station Explorers  
- Perfect attendance since kindergarten  
- District GPA: 4.3  
- Accepted to Florida Southwestern State College; plans to join the military after college graduation

Josianne Griffin  
**Okeechobee High School**  
- Daughter of Coryn Griffin  
- Varsity volleyball Brahmin Award recipient and travel volleyball

- Varsity soccer most valuable player and travel soccer  
- National Honor Society and BETA Club  
- American Legion scholastic award and academic excellence award recipient  
- Graduating cum laude  
- Will have associate degree from Indian River State College at time of high school graduation  
- District GPA: 4.76  
- Plans to major in political science and then continue on to law school

Zachary Kielbasa  
**Okeechobee High School**  
- Son of Richard and Deanna Kielbasa  
- Science Fair: first place in Okeechobee County three years, first place in regionals two years and state finalist two years  
- Speech: first place in Tropical two years, first place in Farm Bureau and first place in U.S Soil and Water Conservation contests  
- Graduating summa cum laude  
- STEM program freshman through senior years  
- 4-H, Drama Club, Beta Club, Key Club and SWAT  
- Varsity swimming and basketball  
- National Honor Society  
- Class treasurer  
- 2016 Washington Youth Tour representative  
- District GPA: 5.01  
- Accepted to the University of Florida where he will study environmental engineering and business management

Katie Knipper  
**Lake Placid High School**  
- Daughter of Richard and Loreen Knipper  
- Student government association freshman through senior years and current president  
- National Honor Society sophomore through senior years  
- Florida Association of Student Councils sophomore through senior years  
- STEM program  
- 2016 Washington Youth Tour representative  
- District GPA: 4.38  
- Plans a career in communications, journalism or political science

Michael Kurtz  
**Clewiston High School**  
- Son of Michael and Emily Kurtz  
- Lake Placid High School scholarship recipients Katie Knipper, left, and Kylie Daum with LPHS Scholarship Adviser Esther Gill. Not pictured from LPHS: Cindy Cemitiere.
• 1-A Honor Roll, having never made less than an A
• National Honor Society sophomore through senior years
• Student council secretary/treasurer
• Academic team captain
• Varsity golf team
• Yearbook editor
• District GPA: 5.04
• Accepted to Florida State University, with plans to pursue a career in intellectual property law

Adrian Pardo
Moore Haven High School
• Son of Andrew and Belinda Couse
• FFA
• Varsity baseball
• 4-H member and sergeant at arms the past two years
• District GPA: 3.42
• Accepted to Mississippi State, where he plans to study civil engineering and graphic design

Richard Perez
Clewiston High School
• Son of Ricardo and Rosa Perez
• National Honor Society sophomore through senior years
• Academic team senior year
• Cross country freshman year and baseball freshman and sophomore years
• AP Scholar sophomore year, AP Scholar with honors junior year and 2016 Sunshine State Scholar
• District GPA: 5.19
• Accepted to the University of Florida, University of Central Florida and Florida State University; plans to study biology at the University of Florida, with the goal of becoming a veterinarian

Hunter Sills
Okeechobee High School
• Son of Glen and Tracy Sills
• National Honor Society sophomore through senior years
• FFA member since sixth grade and current secretary
• Renaissance Club
• 4-H: past president and current vice president of the Bacon, Steaks & Eggs Club

Trevor Thomas
Okeechobee High School
• Son of Gene and Dollie Thomas
• National Honor Society junior and senior years
• JV football freshman and sophomore years (co-captain and scholar athlete)
• Fellowship of Christian Athletes junior and senior years
• District GPA: 3.44
• Plans to earn a degree in business and apply it to the agricultural industry
Almost 70 percent of Glades Electric Cooperative members participate in Operation Round Up, which helps people in GEC’s service area who have exhausted normal avenues of financial assistance.

Sign up, and your electric bill will be rounded up to the nearest dollar. The extra is placed in the fund for deserving individuals and organizations.

As of June 1, your Charitable Trust Board of Directors has approved $990,733.01 in disbursements, assisting 609 individuals and/or families and 141 community organizations with food, emergency lodging, disaster relief and specific emergency needs.

The trust does not fund utility bills (electric, phone, water and gas) or budgets of organizations. Organizations in counties served may apply for funding for a specific need or project.

The Charitable Trust Board of Directors meets monthly to review applications for funding.

If you know of people who need and deserve assistance and live within our service area, encourage or help them complete an application. Applications can be picked up at each of our three offices: Moore Haven, Lake Placid and Okeechobee.

Glades Electric Cooperative offers you three ways to earn credits on your monthly billing statements.

- **Paperless Billing Winners**
  All members enrolled in eBill and selecting paperless billing are entered into a monthly drawing. These five automatically received $10 credits on their June bills: Willard Mullens, 121971-001; Glen Wahl, 119482-001; John Anthony Ramos, 123189-001; Andres E. Requena, 122505-001; and Steve Shevick, 2163-001.

- **Automatic Draft Winners**
  All members enrolled in automatic payments from their bank account or credit card are entered into a monthly drawing. These five automatically received $10 credits on their June bills: Wilfredo and Isabel Lugo, 106527-001; Cathy Arthur, 9490-001; Sandro Gomez, 115931-002; Allen Kim Slujo, 118641-001; and Karen Lee, 114168-001.

- **Florida Currents Winners**
  All active GEC members are entered into a monthly drawing for a $25 credit on their bill. The two winners for this month are Henry and Maria O’Hagan, 102289-001; and John and Gayle Purvis, 104669-001. To claim the credit, they must call (863) 946-6200 or sign their name to this page and mail it to: Glades Electric Cooperative P.O. Box 519, Moore Haven, FL 33471.

The Charitable Trust Board of Directors will meet at 1 p.m. July 25 in the Lake Placid office.
Introducing SmartHub!

SmartHub lets you manage your Glades Electric account online or with your mobile device. Creating a SmartHub account takes less than three minutes. Enter your profile information, choose Glades Electric Cooperative and you’re ready to begin.

- Check Usage
- Pay Your Bill
- Report an Outage
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July 10, 2017
A Path to Efficiency Independence

By Anne Prince

While fireworks and Independence Day parades are synonymous with the Fourth of July, no such fanfare comes to mind when discussing energy efficiency. Perhaps it should.

If you think about it, energy efficiency not only benefits individuals and families, but the country as a whole.

Energy efficiency, combined with energy conservation and advances in technology in the utility industry, ultimately helps our country on a path toward greater energy independence—and that’s worth celebrating.

Benefits of Efficiency

At its essence, greater efficiency means less energy is used for the production of goods and services. For individual consumers, a reduction in energy use usually translates to a tangible financial benefit: more money in your wallet at the end of the month.

If your neighbors also use less energy, collectively, it means the overall cost of providing electricity could be lower and may result in reduced costs for all members. For many, this is reason enough to strive for greater energy efficiency.

On a national level, energy efficiency—sometimes called the “fifth fuel”—has a more profound impact. It potentially can boost the economy by allowing consumers and businesses to invest in other areas.

Equally important, greater energy efficiency may slow the rate at which domestic energy is depleted, reducing or diminishing the need for foreign energy.

Strike Up the Band

There is no need to wait for the first exploding burst of fireworks in the night sky to start your energy-efficiency efforts.

All Americans can take charge of their energy use, regardless of the date on the calendar. Small steps can lead to a big difference for you and your neighbors—whether they are across the road or across the country.

Energy efficiency can generally be achieved two ways. The first is with mechanical change, such as replacing an older HVAC unit or a less-efficient appliance with a new Energy Star model or upgrading to new, insulated windows.

Less-expensive actions include improving the seal of your home’s envelope by caulking exterior windows and doors and sealing openings where pipes and ductwork meet the outside. Swapping out incandescent bulbs with LEDs also makes a noticeable difference.

The second way is through smarter management of your energy use.

Leveraging smart thermostat technology is a good place to start. Most smart thermostats contain an app allowing remote control by mobile phone or tablet. Program your thermostat to reflect your family’s schedule. Many thermostat programs allow you to view and edit your thermostat schedule and monitor the amount of energy used.

Sometimes, however, energy efficiency is simply a matter of changing old habits such as washing clothes in cold water instead of hot or running the dishwasher during off-peak times.

Regardless of the path you take on the road to energy efficiency and independence, Glades Electric Cooperative can help you on the journey. For more energy-saving ideas, contact a member services representative at (863) 946-6200.

Attention, GEC members

In a continuing effort to reduce costs to members and keep our employees safe, as of September 1, 2017, Glades Electric Cooperative is discontinuing all remote payment boxes, Western Union® Speedpay® and payments received through CenterState Bank.

GEC offers multiple payment options, including mail, phone, online, in the office or automatic payments.

Please call (863) 946-6200 for information on our many convenient payment methods.
Capital Credits
One Example of the GEC Difference

Being a member of a cooperative has many advantages. We call it the cooperative difference.

As a not-for-profit member-owned cooperative, everything we do is focused on taking care of you, our members. That means that instead of answering to private investors, we are governed by a board of trustees you elect.

Since we are not-for-profit, every dollar you pay toward your monthly bill goes to electricity costs, to improve our system and give you the best service we can.

As a cooperative, we are also able to give back to our members through the capital credits program. Capital credits refers to the equity each member has in the cooperative.

At times, the GEC Board of Trustees determines we are financially able to return those capital credits to our members. This year, the GEC Trustees approved the retirement of capital credits totaling $1,574,930 for members who held accounts from 1976-1982.

Current members who had active accounts during that time should have seen a credit on their May bills.

Some of our members don’t claim their capital credits or instructed us to use them as part of our scholarship program through the Glades Electric Educational Foundation. This year’s recipients are featured on page 4.

Unfortunately, one of our large business members in the 1980s closed its doors and was dissolved. As a part of its dissolution order, the business generously requested that its capital credits be distributed to the school board scholarship funds for Glades and Hendry counties. This year, Glades Electric Cooperative CEO Jeff Brewington was proud to issue a check for $10,650 to the Glades County School Board Scholarship Foundation.

As happy as GEC is to distribute those funds to our local school districts, we know the scholarship foundations receiving them are even happier.

GEC is proud to be a partner in our local communities as “Neighbors Working for Neighbors.”

Trustee Earns Gold Credential

Glades Electric Cooperative CEO Jeff Brewington recently presented longtime Trustee Jim Aul, left, with his Director Gold Credential earned through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. The credential recognizes cooperative trustees who have previously earned their Credentialied Cooperative Director certificate and Board Leadership Certificate, and are committed to continuing their education throughout their service on the board.

Aul completed both certification programs, and also earned additional training credits for trustees through NRECA.

He has represented District 7, Lorida, for more than 20 years. Since 2012, he has served as the board’s vice president.
A Whole New Energy

Farewell Kenn Rice
Florida Rural Electric Credit Union’s Board of Directors wishes a fond farewell to our President/CEO Kenn Rice, who is retiring after 18.5 years of dedicated service and leadership. The Board extends its thanks to him for an outstanding job and for making us an exceptional credit union.

During Kenn’s tenure, the credit union completed a successful merger and grew to over 3800 members and approximately $29 million in assets.

With the full support and endorsement of the credit union Board of Directors, he led the credit union staff to successfully implementing a wide variety of new electronic products and services now available to members to complemen FRECU as a full service financial institution.

Kenn’s thoughts on retirement, “live each day to its maximum without plans or constraints, simply take each day as it comes.” His exit thoughts on the credit union - “I fully intend on maintaining my credit union membership as I truly believe it to be as a shining diamond in the rough - where excellent member service is priority one. I leave knowing the credit union is financially sound and in great hands with my successor.”

Welcome President & CEO, Paula Tuten
Florida Rural Electric Credit Union is excited and proud to announce Paula Tuten as our new President/CEO.

Paula will assume her new duties on July 1, 2017 after serving the past five years as the credit union’s Compliance Officer and Vice President. During her employment with the credit union, Paula has been instrumental in the growth of the credit union’s membership, as well as the products and services offered.

Mrs. Tuten is a 2015 Graduate of the CUNA’s Southeastern Regional Credit Union Management School at the University of Georgia and has approximately 25 years of experience in the financial services industry. She is extremely knowledgeable and understands the electric cooperative world and its operating environment. Her husband John is a 26 year veteran employee of Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

Paula and John reside in Madison with their son Cole. Daughters Andrea and Crystal both reside in Florida.
CEO’s Message

Cooperative Makes Transition to New Operating System

Very soon we will enter the brave new world of the National Information Solutions Cooperative.

All of this year, we have been diligently making way for implementation of a new operating system from NISC. The fully integrated operating system will replace four separate and not-so-integrated systems we currently use. We expect this single-source solution to modernize all our processes, eliminate a ton of paperwork, expedite activities, improve outage management and provide you, our members, improved interaction with us.

NISC provides a smartphone app and account management website known as SmartHub. With SmartHub, you will be able to monitor your energy use, report and monitor outages, pay your bill, and receive an array of alerts and notifications.

The accounting and business solutions segment of NISC came online in early June. The segment affecting you most, customer care and billing, is scheduled to come online July 10. One of the first things you may notice is our bills will look different—not only in format, but in color. As a cost-savings measure, they will be printed in black and white only.

You can help us reduce costs even further by signing up for ebill and receiving your bill via your personal email or through the SmartHub app. To encourage this, we are rolling out a new promotion. Sign up for ebill and you will be entered into a monthly drawing for a $250 billing credit!

To accommodate all that is going on with the customer care and billing “go live” event July 10, we will close the Lake Placid and Okeechobee member service offices during our normal business hours the entire week: Monday, July 10, through Thursday, July 13. Those offices will reopen Monday, July 17, for normal business hours. The Moore Haven headquarters office will remain open for normal business hours the entire time.

It is an exciting time throughout the organization, and we are looking forward to better serving you.

Jeff Brewington

Member service offices at Lake Placid and Okeechobee will be closed July 10-13 during the switch. The Moore Haven office remains open.