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P.O. Box 548  
Kingstree, SC 29556  
(843) 355-6187  
(800) 922-1604

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**SANTÉE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE NEWS**  
Joanna Arnsmeier, *Editor*  
[jarnsmeyer@santee.org](mailto:jarnsmeyer@santee.org)

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## An option for everyone

**I'VE HAD A FEW QUESTIONS** recently about why Santee Electric's lobbies are still closed, and I thought this month's column would be a good opportunity to address those questions.

First, yes, we did close the lobbies because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as terrible as this virus has been, it has forced us to learn a lot about the way we can do business. For one thing, COVID brought us the drive-thru annual meeting, and everyone loves that change! It also forced us to take a hard look at the way we interact with you, our members.

We knew that we could not shut Santee Electric down for months and months, so we set about making sure that our members could do everything they needed to remotely. We made sure our call center representatives could handle every request over the phone. We put our application for electric service online. We enlisted the services of DocuSign to make sure you could fill out necessary forms remotely. Of course, all of this is in addition to the kiosks and the SmartHub mobile app we were already using.

What is interesting about all of this is that, even before the pandemic, 80% of our membership had already stopped coming to the office to conduct business. Most of you either mail your payments in, have them automatically drafted from your bank accounts, or you use another of our automated methods (the SmartHub app, our kiosks, our website, etc.).

Once we realized that everyone could do whatever they needed remotely, we started encouraging

everyone to do so. Trust me, it is not because we want you to stay away. Rather, it is to save you money. A trip to the office costs a lot more at today's gas prices than it did a couple of years ago. There is more to it than fuel prices, though. Did you know that our average in-person transaction costs \$3 more than a bank draft transaction? Three dollars does not sound like much until you consider we had more than 12,000 in-person transactions last month alone. That really starts to add up. Since we are a not-for-profit organization, any money you help us save on transaction costs saves you money.

I mentioned the 80% already. There is a large group of our membership which sees the idea of coming to a physical office location to conduct business as unnecessary. They want to be able to do everything on the app. There is another group of our membership who prefers to come to the office to conduct business.

Our goal is to satisfy both groups while managing costs as much as possible. For the 80%, we have everything you need online and over the phone. For the 20%, our drive-thrus are open during normal business hours, and our lobbies are open to you if you make an appointment. To all of you, thank you for helping us save you money. Have a great month!

**ROBERT G. ARDIS III**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

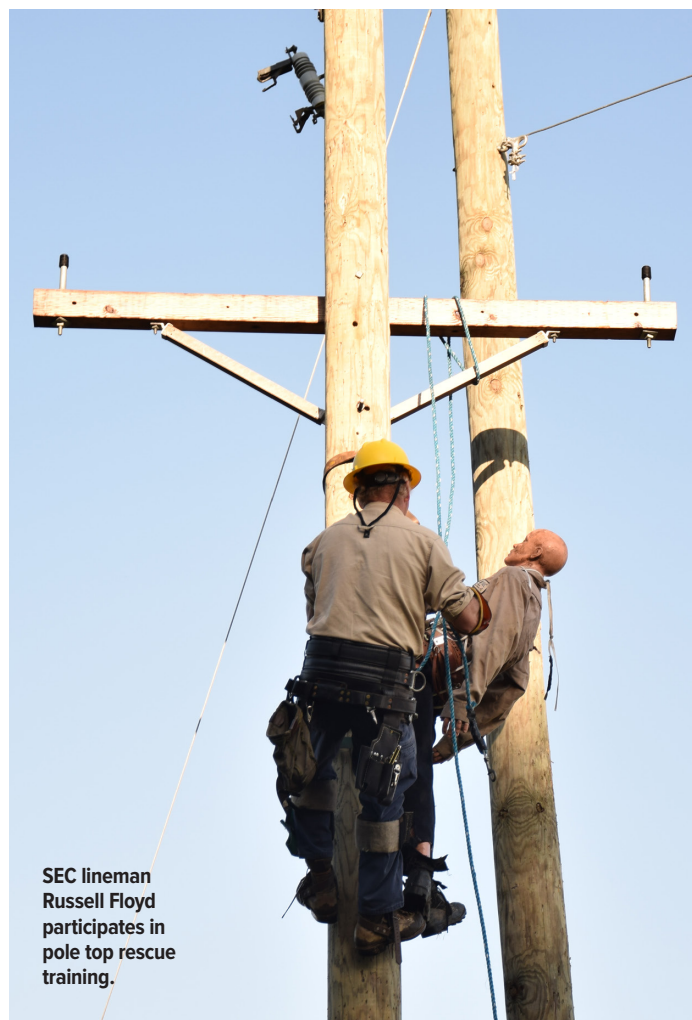
## Pole top rescue crucial to training

**EACH YEAR, SEC'S LINEMEN** participate in a lot of safety training, from monthly meetings to specific courses and more. Training is a necessary part of their job. One specific safety exercise that all linemen are required to take part in is pole-top rescue training. This training provides a very real reminder of what could be a tragic event.

The exercise starts with a “limp body,” represented by a 150-pound dummy, suspended at the top of a utility pole to simulate an emergency our linemen could face—a coworker losing consciousness.

The question “are you okay?” is yelled out, and with no answer, there is a declaration to call 911. Then a lineman quickly straps on his equipment and climbs the pole towards the limp body hanging in the air. He hooks a rope to the body and lowers it to the ground, all while keeping himself secured, calm and safe. The dummy in the training scenario might be fake, but that doesn't mean our linemen don't take their training seriously. Such a risk can never be fully eliminated, even with all the training and money that is dedicated to the safety of our linemen. So, they must be able to respond quickly and efficiently when one of their own is in need.

While this training is crucial, it is, at the same time, a reminder of the dangerous job that our linemen do; working on power lines day in and day out that have the capability of injuring them. Participating in safety training helps them learn how to act quickly, but most importantly, safely. It also instills a



SEC lineman Russell Floyd participates in pole top rescue training.

JOANNA ARNSMEYER

confidence in them for their fellow linemen. They know that all the men on their crew are always looking out for them and are prepared to take care of them.

If you see a lineman, make sure to thank them for the dangerous work they do!

## Bright Ideas teacher grants available

Apply by Oct. 3

**TEACHERS IN** Williamsburg, Georgetown, Clarendon and Florence counties—applications are now open for the Bright Ideas grant!

Bright Ideas grants are intended to fund projects outside normal school funding parameters and are available to all disciplines in grades K-12. They are not intended for professional development. A school may submit more than one application, but a teacher is limited to one application per school year.

This fall, teachers will be competing for grants totaling \$15,000. Grants are awarded for up to \$1,000 each. Recipients will be announced in November with the Bright Ideas Prize Team.

If you have questions about the grant program or application procedures, please contact Joanna Arnsmeyer at (843) 355-0599 or 1 (800) 922-1604. Please also feel free to reach us by e-mail at [brightideas@santee.org](mailto:brightideas@santee.org).

Apply online at [SANTEE.ORG/BRIGHT-IDEAS](https://santee.org/bright-ideas). Completed applications are due by Monday, Oct. 3.



KEVIN MYERS

Angel Miles (second from left), a teacher at Kenneth Gardner Elementary School, received a \$1,000 grant for her project proposal, Markerspace Lab. Markerspace Labs are collaborative workspaces designed to challenge students by allowing them to create and learn through hands-on, personalized experiences within a safe school environment. Students will have the opportunity to learn something new, whether it is an alternate way to approach learning or using new tools and resources to reach a solution. With Miles are Berlinda Mack, Kenneth Gardner Elementary principal, Jay Kirby, SEC vice president of public affairs and Joanna Arnsmeyer, SEC manager of community relations.