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**SANTEE ELECTRIC  
 COOPERATIVE NEWS**  
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## The go-to guy

**BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND**

is our featured employee column, and no one at Santee Electric is more

popular than Sylvester Speights, our warehouse manager!

Sylvester, or “Sly” as some of us affectionately call him, has been working at Santee Electric full-time since 2001, but he also put in quite a bit of time before that as an intern while he was in college.

Sylvester went to Kingstree High School and studied business management at Claflin University. Part of the time while he was in school in Orangeburg, he worked in the warehouse for the Department of Public Utilities, the local electric utility. He clearly has a strong background to run his department today!

Sylvester has been married to his wife, Yolanda, for 18 years. She is a foster care case manager for the Department of Social Services and has been with that organization for 18 years.

I found out during the interview that Sylvester and I have a lot in common. We both graduated from high school in 1994, played offensive and defensive line on our varsity football teams and love the New York Giants!

I asked Sylvester what he likes best about his job, and he was quick to report that he really loves the problem-solving aspect. Providing the materials our crews need to build their jobs is a big responsibility and Sylvester takes pride in good communication with the crews and helping them find the best equipment and material to make their job easy.

The toughest part, though, goes hand in hand with that. “Keeping track of millions of dollars of inventory is not easy,” he reported, “but I can answer the call—day or night—and tell you exactly where everything is on every shelf!”

I also asked him the more general



JOANNA ARNSMEIER

**Sylvester Speights is the go-to guy for all the cooperative’s equipment needs.**

question about what he likes about working at Santee Electric. “This place has blessed me and helped me provide for my family.” He added, “Some of the older gentlemen who were here when I first came, especially Eston Gamble, taught me a lot and helped me to make better decisions.” Eston Gamble was a 65-year employee of SEC. Employees recently named an annual employee recognition award after him when he passed last year.

When asked what he likes to do in his spare time (besides watching the Giants), he said, “I love Notre Dame too! And I love to cook—especially on the grill. I am particularly good with ribs and chicken. Yolanda is my sampler. If I get a thumbs up from her, I know it’s good!”

I concluded the interview with a final question: What would you like for our members to know? “Santee Electric appreciates its employees, and those employees do everything they can to keep our members’ bills as low as possible. We are very community-oriented.”

If you know Sly, you know he is always smiling. He is great to be around and a true blessing to your cooperative!

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

## WIRE Monthlies Project

SEC'S CHAPTER of Women Involved in Rural Electrification (WIRE), a community outreach organization affiliated with electric co-ops around the state, recently donated feminine products to Johnsonville High School as a part of the "Monthlies Project."

SEC WIRE started the Monthlies Project last year, after learning about the National Period Project, which was created to provide feminine products to those in need. SEC WIRE decided they wanted to make a difference at a local level within the counties they serve—Williamsburg, Florence, Clarendon and Georgetown. So, they started asking for donations and collecting feminine products.

"We do not want the girls in our communities to be forced to miss school each month because they did not have the feminine products they needed," says SEC WIRE Representative Megan Blackburn.



JOANNA ARNSMEYER

Johnsonville High student Ella Hodges (left) with SEC WIRE Representative Megan Blackburn. If you're interested in donating to the Monthlies Project, or would like more information, call Blackburn at (843) 355-0656.

Ella Hodges, a freshman at Johnsonville High School, had the same idea. She started asking for donations of feminine and hygiene products from her school and community. Hodges then donates what she collects to local organizations in her area. WIRE was grateful to be able to help her cause. Hodges has since donated over 100 kits to the local organizations in her area.

"I am happy to do what I can to help the women in my community," says Hodges.

### SANTEE EXTRA

Don't miss pages 12A–12D! Learn about historic Hopsewee Plantation and read a heartwarming story about local veteran Zola Godwin.

# WHO POWERS YOU?

Inspired by someone making a difference in our community? Tell their story and they could win a prize.

We know our community is filled with unsung heroes who are making a difference. Let's celebrate them! This is your chance to honor the people who are making a real difference. Winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact they have on our community. All entries must be submitted by July 31, 2022.

**Grand Prize \$2,500**

Your Local Co-op Prize \$500



Visit [ecsc.org/WhoPowersYou](https://ecsc.org/WhoPowersYou) for full contest rules



## Friendship the best part of Honor Flight

Lake City's Godwin reflects on the VIP trip he took in 2012

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

**THE HONOR FLIGHT** Zola Godwin took 10 years ago created a lot of memorable experiences—a flight to Washington, D.C. and a tour of the monuments there, a USO-style party that brought back memories of his time in the Army during World War II and hundreds of grateful citizens showing their appreciation for his service when he returned to South Carolina.

Sponsored by Santee Electric and the other electric cooperatives in South Carolina, Godwin was one of 100 World War II veterans honored on April 11, 2012. However, all those experiences pale in comparison to the friendship it created.

Godwin, now 96, first met Sharon Allen at a pre-trip orientation luncheon, which allowed the veterans to meet their guardians—men and women who had volunteered to accompany and support them on the special journey. This was especially important to Godwin, a resident of Lake City and member of Santee Electric. Godwin has low vision and is considered legally blind.

“She came to the table and said, ‘God has put you and me together for this trip,’” recounts Godwin. “From that moment on, she started taking care of me.”

Allen was proud to serve as a guide for a man who served in the 101st Airborne and was injured in the Battle of the Bulge.

“From that day forward we became dear friends, just like family,” Allen says. “It was an awesome, awesome day.”

One of the primary objectives of



Sharon Allen and Zola Godwin maintain a friendship that began on the Honor Flight sponsored by South Carolina's electric cooperatives ten years ago.

Honor Flight was to give veterans the opportunity to visit the World War II Memorial, which had opened to the public in 2004. As guardian to a visually impaired veteran, Allen helped Godwin experience the monument's elements that depicted the war's battles and soldiers.

“There are engraved, raised plaques,” Allen says. “I took him over there and put his hands on the paratrooper and told him to feel the picture. He could fill the lines, the cords, the parachutes on their back.

“As he brought his hands down, he said, ‘That’s a paratrooper. That’s what I was.’”

Even though he is legally blind, there were some sights that Godwin did not miss. Like that of a woman in a USO uniform marking the cheeks of veterans with her bright, red lipstick before they boarded their flight home.

“Let me tell you, I watched her paint those lips,” says Godwin. “When she got through smearing me, Sharon cleaned

me up. And I’m glad she did, because my wife was there waiting on me when we got back to Columbia.”

Godwin’s wife, Milvee, was not the only one waiting. Families, friends, motorcycle clubs, Boy Scout troops, cheerleaders and many more welcomed the veterans back as they walked through the terminal of Columbia Metropolitan Airport. Sharon’s husband, Paul, was there too.

“I liked him immediately,” says Godwin. “I gave him a great big hug and told him he is a blessed man.”

After that day, the foursome carried on an active friendship until Milvee Godwin died in 2020. However, the role Allen volunteered to fill 10 years ago is ongoing, just as Godwin predicted.

“I told her she needed to be my guardian for life,” says Godwin. “And she has been.”

**A 10-year anniversary video featuring some of the veterans reflecting on their Honor Flight experience and military service can be viewed at [scliving.coop/honor](https://scliving.coop/honor).**



JOANNA ARNSMEYER

## Journey of Hopsewee

### Frank and Raejean Beattie turn Hopsewee Plantation into a destination

BY JOANNA ARNSMEYER

**FOR 20 YEARS**, Frank and Raejean Beattie have opened their home to many visitors—up to 15,000 a year, to be precise. But their home is not the average house. It is the beautiful Hopsewee Plantation.

Hopsewee, which means “high island on river” in the local Sewee tribes dialect, was one of the South’s major rice plantations and the birthplace of Thomas Lynch Jr, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Santee Electric Cooperative started serving Hopsewee in 1947, and since then a great relationship and partnership has grown.

Since it was built around 1740, only six families have owned Hopsewee Plantation. The Beatties’ story began at Hopsewee in 2000 when Frank Beattie made an offer on the plantation. At first, the idea was shut down. But Beattie knew, God had told him to buy Hopsewee.

After a series of fortunate events and an unexpected check from past work—Beattie was a practicing attorney at the time—the Beatties became the official owners of Hopsewee

Plantation on January 8, 2001, which also happens to be his birthday.

“I walked to the post office, as most attorneys did in the old days, opened my box and I had received a check from a past case I had completely forgotten about. I looked up to the ceiling in that old post office and said, ‘God, I knew it was you all along,’” says Beattie.

And that is when the work began. With a pole saw, a worn-out Husqvarna mower and their hands, the Beatties started to clear the land, transforming it into the beautiful landscape it is today.

“It felt like we were living in paradise. We wanted to make it as beautiful as possible and share it with as many people as possible to glorify God,” says Beattie.

Jonah Stephen, tour and grounds guide of Hopsewee Plantation, adds, “If the Beatties hadn’t come along, Hopsewee might not be here.”

A tour of Hopsewee Plantation allows visitors to take a step back into history and explore a home that has stood the test of time for more than 200 years.

The home features rooms opening into wide center halls on each floor, as well as a full brick cellar, attic rooms,

hand carved molding and random-width heart-pine floors. Hopsewee Plantation is living history and draws in many people with its peaceful atmosphere.

“It was beautiful. The land was beautiful. The river was beautiful. It was very interesting to see the home of someone who signed the Declaration of Independence,” says visitor Ann McDermott.

Visitors can top their experience off with a treat or a meal at the River Oak Cottage Tea Room.

The Beatties opened the River Oak Cottage Tea Room in 2008, serving tea and sweet and savory treats. In 2010, they adopted a menu full of recipes created by Raejean Beattie, who is a gourmet cook. The menu reflects the tastes and traditions of the Lowcountry region.

The Beatties started out hiring a couple of tour guides and now they have close to 15 employees, after opening the restaurant.

Another feature the Beatties have included is offering Hopsewee Plantation as a wedding or event venue. With its natural beauty, it is the perfect spot for any special occasion.



Frank Beattie is proud to have a replica of an original Hopsewee desk.

The next big adventure for the Beatties is adding a museum. Two years ago, with the help of a friend, Dwaine Patrick, they began to conduct a ground penetrating radar study. Since then, they have learned the story of Hopsewee on an entirely different level.



Dwaine Patrick (left) and Lance Comfort use ground penetrating radar to find precious pieces of history on Hopsewee.

“The creativity of the (archeology) team is amazing,” says Raejean Beattie.

The archeology team has started to uncover all the secrets the ground has hidden in the last 300 years, which will be on display in the new museum. Based on the amount of shells located in the area, the state archaeologist has said the site was the first home of a large Sewee tribe.

The Beatties have succeeded in making Hopsewee Plantation a beautiful home and wonderful place to visit.

“The design to recreate the past is pervasive in human nature. That’s why Thomas Wolfe’s quote is often repeated ‘You can’t go home again.’ But I am here to tell you as God as my witness, over the last 20 years I have found out that I could go home again. And I have been here for 20 years,” proclaims Beattie.

**Hopsewee Plantation is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, to book a tour or plan an event, visit [hopsewee.com](http://hopsewee.com).**



The beautiful River Oak Cottage Tea Room with its gourmet cook and owner, Raejean Beattie.



Elizabeth Huntsinger (center) guides tourists through the historic home on Hopsewee Plantation.

## Hopsewee—birthplace of a signer

**THOMAS LYNCH JR.** had the shortest life of any signer of the Declaration of Independence, dying at sea at age 34. The home where he was born and spent his boyhood, however, lives on with vibrant history in Georgetown County.

Hopsewee Plantation is located on the shores of the North Santee River. The name is derived from the Sewee tribes that had inhabited the region before the land was granted to Europeans in the 17th century.

The home was built between 1735 and 1740 by Thomas Lynch Sr., a wealthy indigo planter and statesman, who played a significant role in colonial governance in the lead-up to the Revolutionary War. The home’s materials were sourced from the property—the riverbank’s clay made up the foundation bricks and the wood from the black Cyprus trees provided the siding.

Lynch Jr. was born there in 1749. He served alongside his father in the Continental Congress and signed the Declaration in his absence due to illness.

The Lynch family sold the plantation to Robert Hume of Goose Creek in 1762. With ties to Scottish nobility, his son John Hume declined the position of Earl of Marchmont so that he could remain “the earl of marsh mud in South Carolina.” Hopsewee was one of the largest rice plantations in the South until the Civil War.

It remained in the Hume family until 1945 when it was purchased by the International Paper Company, which had started its paper mill in Georgetown the previous decade. Two years later, it was sold to retired Army engineer Col. Reading Wilkinson and his wife, who made significant updates to the property, including adding electricity and plumbing.

Jim and Helen Maynard acquired the property in 1969 and secured its place on the National Registry of Historic Place in 1971. They also began opening the plantation to the public, a legacy continued and enhanced by Frank and Raejean Beattie, who became the owners in 2000.



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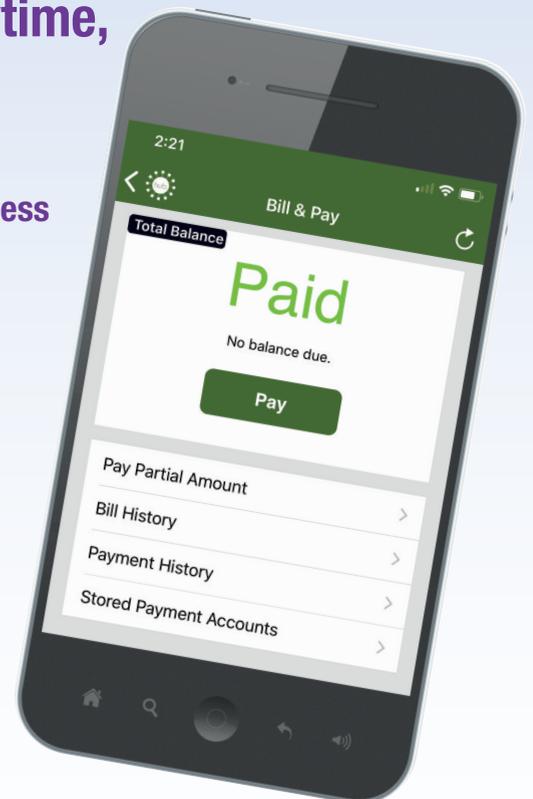
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