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**SANTEE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEWS**  
 Joanna Hayes, *Editor*  
 jhayes@santee.org

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## Love what we do

**HAPPY SPRING, EVERYONE!**

If you are like me, you love this time of year. As a native South Carolinian, I'm a little biased, but I believe we live in the most beautiful place on earth, and it's hard to beat the beauty of spring in the Palmetto State.

Spring is also a happy time in the world of your cooperative. We just celebrated our 2026 Annual meeting of the membership. If you came out to see us, I want to thank you. If you did not make it this year, please consider joining us next year. I promise our new drive-thru method is a fast and efficient process.

In addition to the annual meeting, we also recently wrapped up the South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo. Last, but certainly not least, we like spring because milder temperatures mean lower power bills—the bills we send to you and the bill your cooperative pays each month. Temperature is what drives power costs, so we can all appreciate a few milder months.

I mentioned the Lineman's Rodeo because that's an awesome way for our talented, strong and athletic lineworkers to show off what they do. However, that's just one group of many gifted employees with which I am blessed to work. I might show a little favoritism toward Santee Electric, but I believe we have the friendliest member service representatives, the smartest engineers, accountants and technicians and, overall, the best group of employees I could possibly work with. Since you own SEC, I hope you are as proud of these employees as I am.

One of the things I really appreciate about our folks is all the cool innovations they bring to our membership. In this



Caroline McCants of Andrews shows off her member gift, a chargeable flashlight, at the Annual Meeting drive-thru registration event.

JOSH P. CROTZER

issue is a summary of what our SmartHub app can do for you. Everything you could imagine at your fingertips. Not only that, we have made reporting a power outage even easier than it was before. You can simply text "OUT" to (843) 355-6187 to let us know if you lose power.

Because so many of the calls we take each day are simply members wanting to know their account balance, our next offering will be a simplified balance inquiry. Texting "BAL" to the same number will be available very soon and will give you an immediate snapshot of the balance on your account.

Note that these last two innovations won't work unless you have a current mobile number stored with us, and you have opted into the texting service by texting "SECIN" to the above number.

Our editor, Joanna, has a fantastic issue in store for you this month, including a great interview with Representative Fawn Pedalino. She's an awesome friend to your cooperative and a great ally and asset to all her constituents and the state as a whole. Enjoy!

Y'all have a great month.

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

**SEC EXTRA**

Check out pages 12A-D for the Lineman's Rodeo recap, SmartHub information and exciting news about the Children's Book Challenge winners!

# Representative Fawn Pedalino

## Q&A with District 64 Representative

BY JOANNA HAYES

**FAWN PEDALINO** was ready to see change. So, in 2022 she ran for and won the District 64 seat in the South Carolina House of Representatives. Her focus is simple: “How can I help the people, and how can I make Clarendon and Sumter Counties better?”

A resident of Clarendon County since 2009, Pedalino has made this community her home, along with her husband Joseph and their two daughters. Since taking office, she has demonstrated a true servant of the people attitude, consistently putting the needs of her constituents and community first.

### Why did you go into public service?

Around the time COVID began, Clarendon County started to consolidate the school district, and we were having a lot of issues. It was affecting my kids, so I decided I needed to get involved.

Once I learned that the school board was not elected but appointed, I looked into other options. The next level was the House seat. Since the House and the Senate choose the school board, I decided to run for the House seat.

The seat had never been Republican.



JOSEPH PEDALINO

Rep. Pedalino attended the South Carolina Lineman’s Rodeo co-hosted by Santee Electric and Black River Electric, which was held within her service territory at the Clarendon County Industrial Park.

I didn’t think I would win, but here we are. I decided to jump in feet first and ask, “What can I do to make a difference?”

### What’s the most satisfying part of your job? The most challenging?

Being able to help with local needs is the most satisfying part. I’ve made a commitment that when I see a need, I will fight to help address it. My focus and commitment remain on my community.

The most challenging part is trying to get a bill passed that you want to see become law in South Carolina and getting everyone on board to make that happen.

### In the age of social media why do you think it is important to be online?

Social media is important because it gets word out to the people, quickly. I also use newspapers as well. I think it’s important for my constituents to see what I am working on and to keep engaged with them. It’s an avenue to also show that I am a wife and mother, as well as a House member, and I believe that connection matters.

### What challenges face the rural communities you represent?

One of the biggest challenges is the lack of jobs. On top of that, it is very difficult to start a new business and to grow existing local businesses. All of this affects affordability for my constituents.

Taxes are higher in Clarendon County, largely because property taxes are more expensive. We don’t have as much industry here to help offset that burden, which puts more pressure on local families and homeowners.

### How are you encouraging economic development in Santee’s service territory?

Economic development is so important, especially when you live in a rural



JOANNA HAYES

Representative Fawn Pedalino (left) with Walter Sanders, SEC Board of Trustees member, at Co-op Day at the State House in February.

## Representative Fawn M. Pedalino

DISTRICT 64—CLARENDON AND SUMTER COUNTIES

### Committee assignments

- ▶ Labor, Commerce, and Industry
- ▶ Rules

**Education:** Trident Technical College

**Occupation:** CFO, Southeastern Technology & Realtor

**Family:** Husband Joseph Jason Pedalino (married May 13, 2011) and two children, Selah and Rumer.

area. Many people are forced to move to find a job to better their future. When we are able to bring businesses into our communities that create jobs and are willing to train local workers, it truly helps the community thrive. It also strengthens our tax base, which benefits everyone.

I am thankful that Santee Electric has stepped up to the plate and helped bring industry to the area. When I get a call asking for help with it, I am happy to do so.

SEC always has an open line of communication and is ready to answer questions when I have a constituent need. So, thank you.

## Local students win book challenge

**WHAT STARTED AS** a classroom project at Walker Gamble Elementary School has become a statewide success story for four fourth-grade students whose creativity and curiosity brought a real-world career to life.

Lawson Cannon, Knowlton Carter, Wayne Ingram and Rayvon Kersey are the authors and illustrators behind *Job Shadowing a Lineman*, a children's book recently named a statewide winner of the 2026 South Carolina Children's Book Challenge.

The students were recognized at their school in Turbeville as winners of the competition's group division. Along with statewide recognition, the four students will split a \$500 cash prize, and their book will be professionally printed and mailed to elementary schools across South Carolina, allowing students from every corner of the state to learn from their story.

Their teacher, Lauren Kinlaw, who helped guide the students through the research and writing process, also received a \$250 award. Kinlaw and her students were formally recognized by the South Carolina General Assembly, highlighting the impact of education-focused partnerships between schools and electric cooperatives.

The Children's Book Challenge is sponsored by Santee Electric Cooperative and The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina. Students participating in the challenge are tasked with writing and illustrating an original children's book centered on a day in the life of a lineworker. The goal is to combine literacy, creativity and research while introducing students to the important work electric co-op employees perform every day. After being selected as Santee Electric's local finalist, *Job Shadowing a Lineman* advanced to statewide judging, competing against entries from across South Carolina.

The story follows a young boy named



Lawson Cannon, Rayvon Kersey, Wayne Ingram and Knowlton Carter (left to right), are the authors and illustrators of *Job Shadowing a Lineman*. They celebrated with their teacher, Lauren Kinlaw (left), and SEC's Manager of Community Relations, Joanna Hayes.

Jaden, who spends the day job shadowing his father, a Santee Electric lineworker. As the day unfolds, Jaden learns about the responsibility, safety precautions and challenges that come with maintaining reliable electric service.

"We loved the story and the artwork that Lawson, Wayne, Rayvon and Knowlton created," says Joanna Hayes, Santee Electric's manager of community relations. "We hope they learned a lot about their electric cooperative and the men and women that keep their power on."

The students created the book using StoryJumper, an online publishing platform, and relied on research tools and lesson materials from [schookchallenge.com](http://schookchallenge.com), along with information and guidance provided by Santee Electric. Kinlaw says the project fit naturally into classroom objectives and gave

students the chance to apply skills they've been building all year.

"Research is a big part of our standards, and I loved seeing them develop those researching skills throughout the process," Kinlaw says. "They also grew in their writing skills, creating a story, characters and a plot using the skills we've been building. It turned out amazing."

Since 1938, South Carolina's electric cooperatives have been committed to serving rural communities and investing in the future. Programs like the Children's Book Challenge reflect that long-standing commitment by encouraging students to learn more about energy, essential careers and the value of critical thinking. For these four Walker Gamble Elementary students, that investment has already paid off—turning a classroom assignment into a story that will educate and inspire readers across the state.

JOSH CROTZER

## Linemen test skills

Santee Electric co-hosts the South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo

BY JOANNA HAYES

**SHOUTING ENCOURAGEMENT** up the pole to teammates Corbett Collins and Evan Mizzell, Dustin Shady calls out “Come on,” “Y’all got this” and “Don’t forget to...” The three SEC journeyman linemen were competing in the Vertical Line Transfer event during the 2026 South Carolina Lineman’s Rodeo in March. The team placed third overall.

Sponsored by The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, the Lineman’s Rodeo highlights the hard work, dedication and skill of South Carolina’s lineworkers. SEC apprentice lineworker Abbi Davis also competed in the event.

This year, competitors didn’t know what events they would face until the morning of the competition, adding an extra layer of anticipation and



SEC’s journeyman team earned third place in the Vertical Line Transfer event.

CANYON DURHAM

excitement. Keeping the events a surprise forced participants to rely on their training, adaptability and problem-solving skills rather than rehearsed routines, mirroring the unpredictability of real-world linework.

“I was excited to finally find out what the events I would be competing in

would be,” says Davis. “We trained and prepared the best we could, but the ultimate goal is just to have fun doing what we love.”

For Davis, competing as an apprentice offered a valuable learning experience and a chance to test her skills alongside her peers from across the state.



Corbett Collins had his whole family cheering him on while he competed in the journeyman division.



The fans weren’t limited to humans! Dustin Shady’s dogs came to support him at the Lineman’s Rodeo.



Dustin Shady helped coach his teammates throughout each event.

PHOTOS BY JOANNA HAYES



CANYON DURHAM

Abbi Davis represented SEC in the apprentice division.

The mystery events included challenges such as an obstacle course, Bphase bell changeout, hurtman rescue, vertical line transfer and more. Each event was scored based on accuracy, time and (most importantly) safety. Competitors participated in one of two divisions: apprentice or journeyman. Apprentices, with less than four years of experience, competed individually, while journeymen competed in threeman teams.

This year's rodeo brought together more than 80 cooperative lineworkers and their families from across the state. While the rodeo is a serious competition, it also carries the feel of a sporting event, with families lining the course and cheering for their loved ones.

Santee Electric Cooperative was proud to cohost this year's event alongside Black River Electric Cooperative. The rodeo was held at the Clarendon County Industrial Park in Manning.

"We always have a good time

competing at the rodeo," says Shady. "This year meant even more because we were cohosting it. We're thankful for our families and friends who showed up to support us. It makes it more fun when you have people cheering you on."

While competing, Shady also made it a priority to encourage and coach his teammates throughout the events.

A huge thank you goes out to The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Black River Electric Cooperative, the many volunteers and everyone else who helped make the 2026 South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo possible.

It was an incredible weekend of friendly competition that truly showcased the skill, dedication, and passion of coop lineworkers. Moments like Shady coaching his teammates from below the pole reflect what the Lineman's Rodeo is truly about: trust, teamwork and pride in the work that keeps the lights on for communities across South Carolina.



JOANNA HAYES

Evan Mizzell (left) and Corbett Collins worked as fast, accurately and safely as possible during each event.

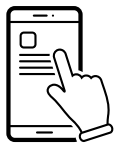
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