This month's featured employee is SEC's manager of community relations—AND the local editor of this magazine—Mary Grace McGee. She puts a great deal of effort every day into showcasing the awesome things going on in our communities and at SEC—but, today, we want to showcase her!

Although most employees at SEC call her Mary Grace (and I like to call her MGM!), I understand that a lot of her family calls her Gracie—at least those who don't call her Mom. However you know her, or if you have not yet had a chance to get to know her, Mary Grace is a wonderful asset to your cooperative.

Mary Grace grew up in Salters and currently lives within easy walking distance of her childhood home. She went to Williamsburg Academy—all 12 years! After graduation, she went on to study education at Francis Marion. She received a degree in early childhood education from FMU in 2000 and later went on to get a master's degree in curriculum in 2011.

After teaching for 11 years, she started in our member services department. In 2012, she moved to the public affairs department as a marketing representative. She has been in her current position since 2018.

Mary Grace's main functions involve getting information to you, our members. If you have seen something from us on social media, on our web page, or in print, she had a hand in it. She also handles our interaction with local charities.

Mary Grace has been married to Bubba McGee for 20 years—happy anniversary!—but they were high school sweethearts and have been an item for nearly 30 years. In addition to working at the federal prison in Salters, he also owns and operates Bubba's Small Engines. I can tell you from experience that Bubba can fix anything! The two of them have two lovely daughters. Katie, 16, is a junior in high school, and Lizzy, 12, is in the 6th grade.

I asked MGM about the best part of her job.

"The variety. I don't have to do the same thing day in and day out. I also love helping people."

And the toughest part?

"We have a very limited budget for charitable donations, but everyone wants money. They don't realize we are a not-for-profit, too. It's our members' money they are asking for."

When I asked what she liked best about working at SEC, she replied sheepishly, "I know everyone says it, but there really is a family feeling here. I love this place and the people I work with."

Finally, I asked her for one thing she wished everyone knew. Without hesitation, she responded, "Santee Electric really is the good guy. We are here to help our members, not take advantage of them."

In a world where it is easy to lump all utilities together as faceless, uncaring corporations, it is critical to know that your local cooperative is different. Mary Grace gets it. In fact, there's no way I could put it into words better than she did.

Have a great month, everyone!

Robert G. Ardis III
President and Chief Executive Officer
Santee member wins $1,000 gift card

Denise Johnson’s effort to reduce power costs pays off

WHEN DENISE JOHNSON received her $1,000 Visa gift card, she kissed it, then said a prayer of gratitude.

“I don’t mean any offense,” she told Santee Electric Cooperative representatives who delivered the card to her a week before Christmas, “but I know the Lord had a hand in this.”

Johnson’s name was randomly drawn from among 42,000 members of electric co-ops across the state. They all volunteer to participate in the co-op’s Beat The Peak program. Participants have signed up for alerts that let them know when a peak—a period when many people need electricity at once—is on the way.

Peak events typically occur during cold winter mornings and hot summer afternoons. Participants agree to reduce their energy use during these periods. Alerts come via voice messages, emails and texts. They also provide tips on how to reduce energy use, such as adjusting the thermostat and delaying the use of heavy appliances.

“I try to do all the things it tells me to,” said Johnson. “I even put in new light bulbs.”

Their efforts help to reduce demand at times when electricity is most expensive for the state’s cooperatives. Each Beat The Peak participant has reduced power demand on average by nearly 55 watts. That’s enough energy to power a 10-watt LED bulb for more than five hours. Multiply that by 42,000 volunteers and the savings really add up.

“Volunteers like Ms. Johnson help reduce power costs,” said Jay Kirby, vice president of public affairs for Santee Electric. “Since power costs impact rates, her actions will help keep rates stable and reduce the need for new power plants in the future.”

To join the cause and be eligible for future prize drawings, members can sign up at BeatThePeak.com by completing a simple form on the website and indicating how they want to receive peak alerts.

THE SANTEE SCENE

February
1 Georgetown Young Professionals Oyster Roast, Pawleys Island Tavern, Pawleys. (843) 546-8436
6 Blood Drive, 1–6 p.m., SEC Conference Center, Kingstree. (843) 355-0599
7 Youth Tour applications due

March
5 Business and Community EXPO/ Shrimp and Grits Cookoff, Pawleys Plantation, Pawleys. (843) 546-8436
10 Williamsburg Chamber Banquet, Kingstree Rec, Kingstree. (843) 355-6431

For High School Seniors

Santee Electric Cooperative will award eight $500 scholarships to high school seniors at our Annual Meeting, April 14, 2020.

The full application will be in next month’s magazine or it can be found online at santee.org.

The deadline for applications is 4:30 p.m. April 8, 2020.
Unclaimed capital credits: Is your name on this list?

The SOUTH CAROLINA LIVING cooperative has unclaimed capital credits for the following persons. As required by the state statute, this list identifies the names and last known address of the members whose unclaimed amount is $50 or more. If your name appears on the list, please contact our office at (800) 922-1604. If you recognize a name and know the location of the person, please have him/her contact our office. In order to claim capital credits for a deceased member who was married, the surviving spouse can claim the credits. If both partners of a membership have passed, the cooperative can reissue the unclaimed in settling the capital credit estate upon receipt of an official copy of the death certificate and letter of administration issued by the Probate Court.
Athletes show heart at the Touchstone Energy Bowl

FIVE LOCAL PLAYERS and two local coaches represented the Santee Electric service territory in the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Bowl at Doug Shaw Memorial Stadium in Myrtle Beach.

The South team was led to victory by Coach Ken Cribb of Johnsonville High School, with Coach Brian Smith of C.E. Murray, who was one of five assistant coaches. Antonio McKnight, also of C.E. Murray, Devon Mincey of Hannah-Pamplico High School, Isaiah Brown of Johnsonville High School, Clint Caldwell of Lake City High School, and Tyree Funanye of Waccamaw High School represented their schools as South team players in December 14 game. Coaches from across the state nominated seniors for the all-star squads.

This marks the seventh year Santee Electric and other Touchstone Energy Cooperatives across the Palmetto State have sponsored the bowl game. It recognizes 88 students—not just for their athletic ability, but also for their character on and off the field.

McKnight, a 6’2” defensive back, said the best part of this experience was “getting to gain unforgettable relationships with the rest of the team and also the coaching staff.”

These young men develop a true spirit of camaraderie throughout the week leading up to the big game, honing their skills and developing friendships that last a lifetime. When the teams were not practicing for the big game, they were learning about linework and how cooperatives give back to the community.

The players gave back to the community in the form of a Christmas shopping spree for needy children. Forty-four students from the Horry County School District were each paired with two football players—one from the North squad and one from the South squad—for a Target shopping spree. The children had their Christmas wish lists and the players had a $150 Target gift card to make those wishes a reality.

Mincey, a 6’3” offensive lineman, described the shopping trip as the most memorable part of the experience. He noted, “Knowing that we were going to help out the students and their parents and make them happy is a time that will stick with me forever.”

The players showed heart in connecting with the students—and they showed heart and their strength when they made an amazing comeback, scoring 35 points in the final 14 minutes of the game. These men will go far no
matter the path they choose.

McKnight has committed to Savannah State University, where he will major in cybersecurity and minor in business. He saw the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Bowl as “a fun experience to compete with the best of the best in South Carolina.”

Brown, the 6’3” wide receiver, hopes to attend Coastal Carolina or the University of South Carolina to major in physical education. The bowl experience gave him a chance to show his talents one last time as a prep player. “The best part was getting on the field and performing in front of my family,” he said.

Santee Electric is committed to community and the youth of our service territory. We are proud to promote the accomplishments of these young men. As one of about 750 Touchstone Energy Cooperatives across the nation, SEC also shares core values of integrity, accountability and innovation. Touchstone Energy is an alliance of local, independent, member-owned electric co-ops that work together to deliver energy solutions and support for their communities.

Tyree Funnyle waits in perfect position for the pass to arrive during practice for the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Bowl.

Devon Mincey and Ashton Shannon take their student on a Target shopping spree.
Continued from Page 20A