

Horry Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Horry Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Horry Electric Cooperative Inc. is a non-profit, member-owned organization providing information and energy-related services on a fair and equitable basis.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Celebrating membership

THE FALL SEASON is a busy time. October is a particularly eventful month with school, sports

and community activities in full swing. It's also when cooperatives across the country celebrate National Co-op Month.

The cooperative business model has been around since the 19th century and it's used across many different industries. Co-op Month really means we're celebrating you! Our co-op would not exist without you, our members.

Horry Electric's core business purpose is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electric service to members. "Concern for community," one of our seven guiding principles, is at the forefront of our minds when it comes to making decisions. The co-op always wants to be a responsible partner and good neighbor.

Horry Electric works to help the community thrive through initiatives led by employees and your Board of Trustees, who live right here in the community. We value being your local electric cooperative, and that means understanding our community's unique needs and striving to meet those needs.

We're proud to support local students through the Washington Youth Tour, Cooperative Youth Summit and scholarship programs. Through EnlightenSC and Bright Ideas, Horry Electric supports teachers and their students with valuable classroom resources. Thanks to the generosity of participating members, we are able to

offer Operation Round-Up, a program that provides assistance to members in need.

The word "cooperative" is close to "cooperation," meaning people working together towards a common goal—benefitting one another and the community as a whole. That's the core of the cooperative spirit. Horry Electric's employees and board members are invested in the community in which they live and serve.

**We strive to put
our members'
priorities first.**

We strive to put our members' priorities first. As your trusted energy advisors, we know saving money and energy is

important to you. We have several programs in place to help accomplish that goal, including our smart thermostat program, H2O Select, H2O Load Management and Beat The Peak.

I encourage you to download our HEC Mobile app so you're able to monitor and manage your energy use. We want to empower you to be in control and manage your energy use at home. We're always here to help, so give us a call any time you have questions.

Horry Electric is continuously researching ways to operate more efficiently, while providing excellent service and support for the communities we serve. We are your local electric cooperative and you are our reason for existing.

Daniel B. Shelley, III

DANIEL B. SHELLEY, III
Executive Vice President and CEO

Ell among finalists in podcast challenge

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

LILAH ELL OF MYRTLE BEACH, a student at Coastal Leadership Academy, was a finalist in a podcast challenge sponsored by South Carolina's electric cooperatives.

Ell, along with three other students from across the state, helped create a 7-minute audio essay about how young people can impact their local communities in a turbulent time. Their podcast addressed the violence and threats of violence in schools.

"Four teenagers from South Carolina came together to make a podcast," Ell points out. "We didn't know each other, but each of us knew someone who was directly impacted by a school shooting."

As a finalist, their podcast was judged by a panel of journalists that included Avery Wilks of *The Post and Courier* newspaper, Kenneth Moton of



Lilah Ell (third from left) and her podcast collaborators Mercy Fletcher, Zariyah Fulton and Ally Stephens work on their podcast during the Cooperative Youth Summit.

ABC News and Dawndy Mercer Plank of WIS News. The winning team—Abigail Crumley of Pinopolis, Emma Rose Radcliff from Pawleys Island and Natalia Salas of York—each won \$5,000 scholarships.

A total of 37 high school students from across South Carolina competed in the challenge after having been selected by their local cooperative

to participate in the Cooperative Youth Summit, a four-day leadership experience that offers students the chance to learn more about state government and electric cooperatives. Ell's participation in Cooperative Youth Summit was sponsored by Horry Electric Cooperative.

All of the students' podcasts are available online at anchor.fm/ecsc.

Another chance to win

Sign up for Beat The Peak before Dec. 15

SECOND TIME'S THE CHARM. Horry Electric members participating in Beat The Peak have another chance to win this December.

Horry Electric will draw from participating members for a \$100 gift card. There will also be a drawing for a \$500 gift card from among the over 62,000 members across South Carolina participating in Beat The Peak.

Members not currently participating can sign up at BeatThePeak.com/peak-alerts. Enter your name, select Horry Electric from the drop-down menu and insert your contact information for the way you'd like to receive alerts.

Once enrolled, members will receive alerts projecting system-wide energy peaks, typically during hot summer afternoons or cold winter mornings. By voluntarily delaying the use of large appliances, adjusting your thermostat or turning off lights during peak times, you'll be helping to lower wholesale power costs.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

THE POWER OF PINK is something Horry Electric supports throughout October. Breast Cancer Awareness Month is something we hold close to our hearts.

During October, employees wear special pink breast cancer awareness t-shirts and pink flowers can be seen throughout our offices. We do this to honor two Horry Electric member service representatives who passed away from breast cancer.

Horry Electric wears pink for Tiffany Dixon, who passed in 2015, and Albertha 'Bert' Myers Mazzyck, who passed in 2017. We miss Tiffany and Bert each and every day and we continue to pray for a cure.



A second chance

WIRE scholarship helps member pursue her dream

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

IT'S AMAZING the perspective gained by a few years, a few kids and more than a few miles.

That's been the journey of Jacqueline Kelly-Silva, a native New Jerseyan and mother of three who is now pursuing her dream of becoming a marriage and couple's counselor.

"I've always contemplated going in that direction," says Kelly-Silva, who now lives in Myrtle Beach. "But when I was younger, I was intimidated by all that schooling and going for a master's degree. As I got older and began raising my kids I realized, I'm not afraid anymore."

Thanks in part to that courage, Kelly-Silva has been awarded the Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship, a \$2,500 one-time award for adult women resuming their pursuit of a college degree that was interrupted or delayed. The scholarship is sponsored by Women Involved in Rural Electrification (WIRE), a service organization associated with South Carolina's electric cooperatives.

"This was very unexpected," says Kelly-Silva. "But I'm very thankful and honored to receive it. This helps relieve some of the added costs of tuition for a family already on a tight budget."

Kelly-Silva, the second member of Horry Electric Cooperative in two years to receive the scholarship, is studying psychology at Coastal Carolina University and plans to graduate in 2024. She hopes to continue her education with a master's degree and become a certified therapist.

"The support from my family and my community mean so much to me," says Kelly-Silva. "The opportunity to have a second chance at a career after 40 is a dream."

Before moving south, Kelly-Silva obtained an associate of arts degree in New Jersey and worked as a recreational director at a facility for seniors and the developmentally disabled. When her parents retired and moved to Myrtle Beach, the family followed.

Since then, she's been a stay-at-home mom to her three kids, ages nine, six and five. Now that her youngest has started school, she knew it was time to get back into the classroom herself.

"I've always felt like I was capable of something more, but I just didn't know how to reach it," says Kelly-Silva. "I want to be an example to my children and be able to provide more for them."



JOSH P. CROTZER

Horry Electric member Jacqueline Kelly-Silva, a mother of three and winner of the Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship, stands on the Wall Pond Bridge after her first day of class at Coastal Carolina University.

The scholarship's namesake, Jenny Ballard, was an instrumental part of WIRE's beginning in 1981. The organization now has chapters at electric cooperatives throughout the state—including Horry Electric—that raise funds for the scholarships and work in their communities to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

"To support Mrs. Kelly-Silva, to validate her courage and determination, that's what the Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship is for," says Susan Brown, Horry Electric's WIRE coordinator. "This scholarship is only one example of the examples of our commitment to education and the community."

All members of Horry Electric are invited to join their WIRE chapter. Contact Susan Brown at (843) 369-6323 for more information. Applications for the 2023 Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship will be accepted beginning in January. Look for more details in the January issue of *South Carolina Living* magazine.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JANICE ASH SIALIANO

Janice Ash Sialiano (right) works to package to-go boxes of meals as part of the Community Christmas Dinner pickup and delivery service. Volunteers man their stations and pass the to-go boxes down the line to be filled.

Christmas dinner brings community together

Surfside woman crowned Horry Electric's Who Powers You contest winner

TAKE A STEP back in time. It's September 1989, just a few months before Christmas. Summer is ending and fall is on the horizon. Then, on Sept. 21, Hurricane Hugo rips through Horry County. The damage across the county, and South Carolina, is devastating. Homes are destroyed and many people are without power for more than a week.

Fast forward three months. December has arrived and people across Horry County are preparing for Christmas, after enduring the Category Four hurricane weeks prior. Almost beyond belief, an unprecedented snowstorm covers Horry County in over a foot of snow the week of Christmas.

The two intense weather events three months apart triggered a thought for Janice Ash Sialiano. At the time, she was volunteering with the American Red Cross, providing meals to families for several weeks throughout both natural disasters. Standing in a kitchen over a little stove, she and another volunteer wondered about the many people who don't have a home or anywhere to go for Christmas.

A new Christmas tradition

Christmas dinner is a sacred time for families. A time to laugh, share memories and reflect on the things we're thankful for. After the devastation and loss in 1989, Sialiano knew she had to create that same opportunity for those who don't have a home or family with which to spend the holiday. What better way to do that than by bringing people together for Christmas dinner?

The idea for the Community Christmas Dinner was born. "We started calling the fire departments, emergency services, police and whoever could help us get meals out to whoever needed them," says Sialiano. A local church allowed Sialiano and her team of volunteers to use their kitchen. Five hundred meals were provided to people in Myrtle Beach in the first year.

The event was so successful, it's become an annual Christmas tradition. The Community Christmas Dinner today is a nonprofit, 501 (c)(3) organization. The organization has a board of directors and Sialiano serves as the president. The board is responsible for planning

the event and working to coordinate volunteers across multiple counties.

Spreading love and cheer

This year marks the 34th Annual Community Christmas Dinner. "As the dinner has grown over the years, we've started expanding into neighboring cities and counties," says Sialiano. "We went into Murrells Inlet, then into Georgetown and Williamsburg counties and now we're in Dillon County."

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Christmas Dinner hosted a sit-down meal, as well as delivery and pickup. "It was a huge event. We had Santa Claus, Pippy Longstocking, face painting and an amazing meal," says Sialiano.

For the past few years, meals have been provided by delivery or pick-up only. This year, Sialiano and her team expect to feed over 14,500 people.

Serving up smiles

The Community Christmas Dinner takes pride in serving up a smile, along with a nearly two-pound meal. This



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JANICE ASH SIALIANO

Trays and trays of prepared green beans sit on the counter to be served during the Community Christmas Dinner. Volunteers and chefs cook thousands of pounds of green beans each year.

year, the volunteers and chefs will be responsible for cooking 2,100 pounds of halved chickens and 4,000 pounds each of green beans, mashed potatoes and corn. With the help from the chefs at Crabby Mike's restaurant in Surfside, volunteers package a full meal, and even to-go meals to help people and families in need.

"The owner of Crabby Mike's, Mike Arakas, jumped in about 11 or 12 years ago. Since they run a daily buffet, it's not a big deal for them to make thousands of half chickens for this event, like it would be for you or me," Sialiano says.

Volunteers, church groups and businesses across Horry and neighboring counties also help with baking 14,000 servings of dessert.

"Each year, five or six ladies and their daughters come in and they'll make a thousand cookies for us. They'll put them in little packages. It's something they look forward to every year because it's their gift to the community," says Sialiano.

Sialiano adds the event wouldn't be possible without the hundreds of volunteers who elect to spend Christmas with their community.

"We have an amazing team of



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JANICE ASH SIALIANO

Residents across Horry County gather for the Community Christmas Dinner hosted in 2019. The dinner allows the community to eat and join together in fellowship.

volunteers across the counties we serve," Sialiano says. "The people who cook, deliver food and donate to this dinner are the reason it happens every year. They are the lifeline of this entire operation."

Making a difference

Community events like this are the reason Horry Electric, and other South Carolina electric cooperatives, launched the Who Powers You contest this year. This contest is a way to recognize the unsung heroes making a difference.

Sialiano was selected as Horry Electric's Who Powers You winner. She was awarded a \$500 prize. "This \$500 will pay for 150 to 200 meals for the Community Christmas Dinner," she says. After being presented with her prize, she added she would be matching that \$500 out of her own pocket to pay for an additional 150 to 200 meals for this year's event.

"One of the seven cooperative principles that guide us is concern for community," says Executive Vice President and CEO Danny Shelley. "The work Mrs. Sialiano and her team are doing is admirable and making an amazing impact in our community."

As the local winner, Sialiano has been entered into the statewide Who Powers You contest for a chance to win \$2,500.

Monetary donations are needed to make this event a continued success. If you're interested in donating to this



JENNIFER CUMMINGS

Janice Ash Sialiano stands in front of the Horry Electric Cooperative sign with her \$500 Who Powers You prize.

organization, visit the Community Christmas Dinner Inc. Facebook page. If you or someone you know needs a meal this Christmas, the Community Christmas Dinner Facebook page will post contact information after Thanksgiving. Horry Electric will share these posts to raise awareness for this event.

Boost your cyber defense game

Four ways to combat hackers

CYBERATTACKS ARE NOTHING NEW in today's digital world. Cyber criminals can attack on a multitude of levels, from large-scale attacks targeting corporations to smaller phishing attacks with the goal of gaining someone's personal information.

Horry Electric goes to great lengths to protect the data with which members have entrusted us. Our employees go through cybersecurity training on a regular basis. We continually monitor cyber threats and strengthen our anti-virus and anti-malware software. We regularly improve the security mechanisms that protect you and the reliable power you depend on.

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, but you should always be on your game when it comes to cybersecurity practices. There are several steps you can take to safeguard your devices and data.

Enable multi-factor authentication

Also known as two-step verification, multi-factor authentication adds a second step when logging into an account. This proves you're really you and increases your account security. This second step could include an extra PIN, answering a security question or receiving a code by phone or email. Regardless of which type of authentication, this makes it harder for cyber criminals to access your account.

Use strong passwords

Remember, passwords are the "keys" to your online world. Your passwords should always be long, unique and complex. Create passwords using at least 12-16 characters. "Never use the same password for multiple accounts," says Dale Johnson, Horry Electric's information technology manager. "Use a combination of upper and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters. Passphrases make for great passwords."



JENNIFER CUMMINGS

Horry Electric's Adam Chestnut (left) and Dale Johnson work in the information technology control room. This hub keeps the cooperative connected to the cyber world, in addition to our electric system and members.

Update software

This may seem like an obvious step, but regularly updating software is one of the easiest ways to keep your information secure. "This applies to all mobile devices, too, such as phones and tablets," Johnson says. Most companies provide automatic updates and will send you reminders. Be aware that some cyber criminals will send fake updates; these typically appear as a pop-up window when visiting a website. Use good judgment and think before you click.

Recognize and report phishing attacks

Don't take the bait when cyber criminals go phishing. The signs of a phishing attack can be subtle, so take time to thoroughly inspect emails and messages. Most phishing emails include offers that are too good to

be true, an urgent or alarming tone, misspellings and poorly crafted language, ambiguous greetings, strange requests or an email address that doesn't match the company it's coming from. Most platforms like Outlook, Gmail and Mac Mail allow users to report phishing emails. If you suspect a phishing attempt, be sure to report it.

Cyber criminals aren't going anywhere. Their tactics are ever evolving. By taking a risk-based approach to cyber behavior, we can create a safer internet environment for everyone. Visit staysafeonline.org for more cybersecurity tips.

Want to know if a hacker has your information? Visit haveibeenpwned.com for password info and details. If the date is recent, change your password for the breached site and make sure to practice using different passwords for different sites.