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JAN. - FEB. 2025

# CHOPTANK ELECTRIC *Cooperative Living*



## *Choptank* **MEMBERS MAKING A BIG IMPACT**

**PAGE 16** Stevie and Sherry Stevenson prepare their '95 Marmon for a run of feed to Burnsville, NC, where Hurricane Helene destroyed lands and livelihoods. **PHOTOS BY BOBBY SCHALLER**

For changes of address, please contact Choptank Electric Cooperative.

# HAPPY TWENTY TWENTY-FIVE CHOPTANK MEMBERS!

**W**elcome to the first edition of Choptank Electric's *Cooperative Living* magazine for 2025. We are ushering in the new year with the hope for happiness, good health and prosperity for all the families that make up our not-for-profit rural electric cooperative.

As a member-owner of the cooperative, your needs are our No. 1 priority. In a recent survey of members, Choptank's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Score was 86. This is 2 points higher than previous years, 4 points higher than other cooperatives, and 8 points higher than investor-owned (for profit) electric utility companies.

In the survey, Choptank members rated our service as a 9 out of 10 for responding to outages, providing

reliable service, and having knowledgeable and helpful employees. You also said the cost of electricity, cybersecurity, and grid resilience are your top concerns in the year ahead. Your priorities are reliability first, followed by affordability then sustainability.

I can assure you the leadership here at the cooperative shares your concerns and priorities and will continue our commitment to serve your needs in 2025.

As you read this edition, I'd like to call to your attention the overall success of our Choptank Fiber broadband subsidiary and the recent launch of our low-cost mobile phone service. These are examples of how we continue to deliver the services you request from your cooperative.



*Happy New Year!*

**Mike Malandro,**  
*President and CEO*  
*Choptank Electric Co-op*



JAN.-FEB. 2025



**Choptank Electric  
Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup>  
Cooperative 

**Choptank  
Fiber**

P.O. Box 430 | Denton, MD | 21629

Member Service Center: 1-877-892-0001

Automated Member Service: 1-844-975-2746

Electric Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790 and select option 1

Fiber Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790 and select option 2

Use SmartHub to Manage Account,  
Track Usage and Report Outages →



**WWW.CHOPTANKELECTRIC.COOP**

## Choptank's Casey Butler Assists Jamaica in Power Grid Rebuild after Hurricane Beryl

Chief Lineman Casey Butler stepped up to serve another country in need with his skills through NRECA International.

Choptank Electric's Casey Butler and eight other lineworkers from co-ops across the country traveled to Saint Elizabeth Parish in Jamaica this August after Category 4 Hurricane Beryl did significant damage on July 3 to utility lines and poles, leaving the area without power for weeks.

"This Parish is known for production agriculture, but the irrigation wasn't able to run without power, leaving farmers with damaged crops and no way to water what was left," says Casey. "Our crew was one of many from around the world that traveled to Jamaica to help restore power."

The group with NRECA International worked together from the initial planning stages after the hurricane to bring equipment and pack various gear that would be beneficial for the trip. "I packed my climbing gear, hoists and grips for our team to use, and others brought different tools to share to efficiently get the job done," adds Casey.

In 2023, Casey traveled with NRECA

International to Guatemala to connect a town with electricity for the first time. This trip to Jamaica was different because it was storm restoration, leaving short notice and unexpected conditions.

"We worked with the local electric utility, Jamaica Public Service (JPS), to reach their goals for restoring power to all customers. They were very welcoming and appreciative of our help, showing our crew how to use their equipment and tools to get the job done," shares Casey. "I learned a lot from their workers and new techniques to bring back home."



Casey Butler in the Blue Mountains of Jamaica

According to JPS President & CEO Hugh Grant, this was "a rebuilding process, not a restoration," due to the extent of the devastation on the electrical infrastructure. Casey and the NRECA International crew helped JPS reach their goal of connecting 100% of customers back on by August 31, so they were

able to return home a few days earlier than planned.

Casey noted that the locals were also welcoming and had tremendous pride in their country. "Despite all the damage the hurricane had caused, they were still excited to show us around and give us a great experience."



## Maryland Farmer Can't Stop Helping Hurricane Victims in North Carolina

By Valerie Connelly, VP Government Affairs and Public Relations



Stevie Stevenson, a farmer, trucker and Cooperative member from Fruitland, Maryland, loaded his truck with donated hay to make a run down to North Carolina right after Hurricane Helene devastated the lands around Asheville last September. His intent was to provide immediate relief for the farmers who lost everything but still needed to feed their livestock.

He traveled around Asheville to a town called Burnsville, where he unloaded his truck at a local farm market. He was blown away by the amount of destruction the flooding caused to local businesses and nearby lands. He learned there is no way farmers were going to recover their crops this season and they have hundreds of cows and horses that need to be fed. Stevenson began organizing a second run almost immediately.

Now, five runs later, Stevenson says he can't stop helping. His heart breaks when he hears that horse owners have been coming to the Burnsville farm market daily to see if any more feed has been delivered. They have no other local option.

Choptank Electric Cooperative recently presented a check for \$1,500, and several Board members donated funds as well to help cover the next trip. "We are committed to serving the community," explains Mike Malandro, President and CEO. "When we have the opportunity to help with a grassroots effort like the one started by our member, Mr. Stevenson, we jump in."

Stevie and his wife Sherry have expressed a huge amount of gratitude to local farmers who continue to donate hay they could otherwise use on their farms or sell into the market. The Stevensons are also thankful for the monetary donations that help pay the costs associated with making the Maryland to North Carolina run.

"I can do the trip for about \$2,000," explains Stevenson. "That covers the fuel, the tolls and the wear and tear on the truck." If he was pricing out a commercial freight haul, the price would be much higher, but he is donating his time and kicking in some of his income with each trip.

The generosity of families on the lower-shore is remarkable. By mid-November, Stevenson loaded up two trucks for a run that included hay, animal feed, clothing, and other items important to farmers in North Carolina as they prepare for the coming winter.

"I am impressed with how many members of Choptank Electric Cooperative have offered crops and funds for this livestock relief effort," says Jeff Rathell, a Choptank Board member and long-time friend to Stevie Stevenson. "I've always known the cooperative community to be big-hearted, and I am tremendously proud of everyone who has stepped up to help our neighbors in North Carolina."

With colder temperatures on the way, Stevenson is working double time to get trucks loaded and get supplies where they are needed.

"The thing I want to share the most with people is how much devastation still exists," said Stevenson. "A lot of folks think that because it's not on the news every day, the problems have been resolved—but that is not what I see when I go down there."

Stevie worries that livestock owners are going to have to sell their animals or, even worse, watch them suffer without food through the winter. That's why he continues to reload his truck and travel the 530 miles to Burnsville as often as possible.

Members who want to hear more about Stevenson's effort can contact him at 443-614-2670. Other contacts are North Carolina's State Hay Coordinator Adam at 336-318-6000 or David Davis of the Burnsville Farm Market at 859-556-3121.



Stevie Stevenson in front of his 1995 Marmon right before the haul. Upper left: Sherry and Stevie take a moment before his long trip.



CHOPTANK HOSTS  
**GIRL POWER**

**1st Annual Girl Power Eastern Shore Event**

By Katie Lockett, Manager Marketing and Communications



**C**hoptank Electric Cooperative was proud to host Girl Power Eastern Shore on October 3, 2024, at our training facility in Salisbury. Held by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives, this event welcomed 25 female students across the Eastern Shore and beyond to learn about the electric utility industry and its powerful careers.

While at Girl Power, participants

were able to climb a pole, operate a bucket truck, splice fiber optic cables, drive a CDL simulator, practice using equipment and tools, try on safety gear, and more. “Not only did the girls have fun, but they realized they are capable of these jobs and can have a successful career in the utility sector without obtaining a four-year degree,” says Valerie Connelly, VP of Government Affairs and Public Relations at Choptank Electric Cooperative.

In addition to these hands-on activities, students also watched demonstrations of drone spraying, hotline switching, system control operations, and talked with finance and human resource professionals about joining the workforce after high school.

“Girl Power is a significant event for local workforce development and the future of our industry as it opens new opportunities for young women in our community,”



Girl Power participants at our Regional Service Center's Training Yard in Salisbury, Maryland

shares Mike Malandro, President and CEO of Choptank Electric Cooperative. Entry-level operations roles can often lead to other opportunities within an organization, including leadership roles.

“This camp taught me that you don’t have to go to college to get a good job,” shares a participant from Talbot County. “I learned important safety measures in case something happens with electricity. I had fun and now consider this a future option in my career.”

Students were briefed on the importance of safety in the industry and for the day, specifically by Choptank Electric’s Nathaniel Smith and Tom Simpson. They also heard powerful messages from women in the industry during lunch, including Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative President and CEO Sonja Cox, River City Construction’s CEO Cindy Haddock and Wor-Wic Community College Powerline Worker Pre-Apprenticeship recent graduate Hunter Morton.

“We are seeing more women enter and excel in the energy industry today, especially in field and operations positions,” adds Paula Bishop, VP of Human Resources at Choptank Electric Cooperative. “Lineworkers are essential to keeping our lights on, and we have both males and females to thank for this necessity.”

Girl Power was powered by staff volunteers from Choptank Electric and many other electric cooperatives and utility providers who shared their

experience and knowledge with the girls. Several partners helped to make this event possible, including G&W Electric, Choptank Fiber, Milwaukee Tool, AUI Power, Terex Utilities, Bulwark FR Protection, Bradley Electro Sales, CEEUS, Hilti, Sentinel Robotic Solutions, S&N Communications, River City Construction, Utility Service Agency, Utilitrain, Wor-Wic Community College, as well as Choptank, Southern Maryland, Delaware, Northern Neck and A&N Electric Cooperatives.

Stay tuned this summer for information about our 2025 Girl Power Eastern Shore event!

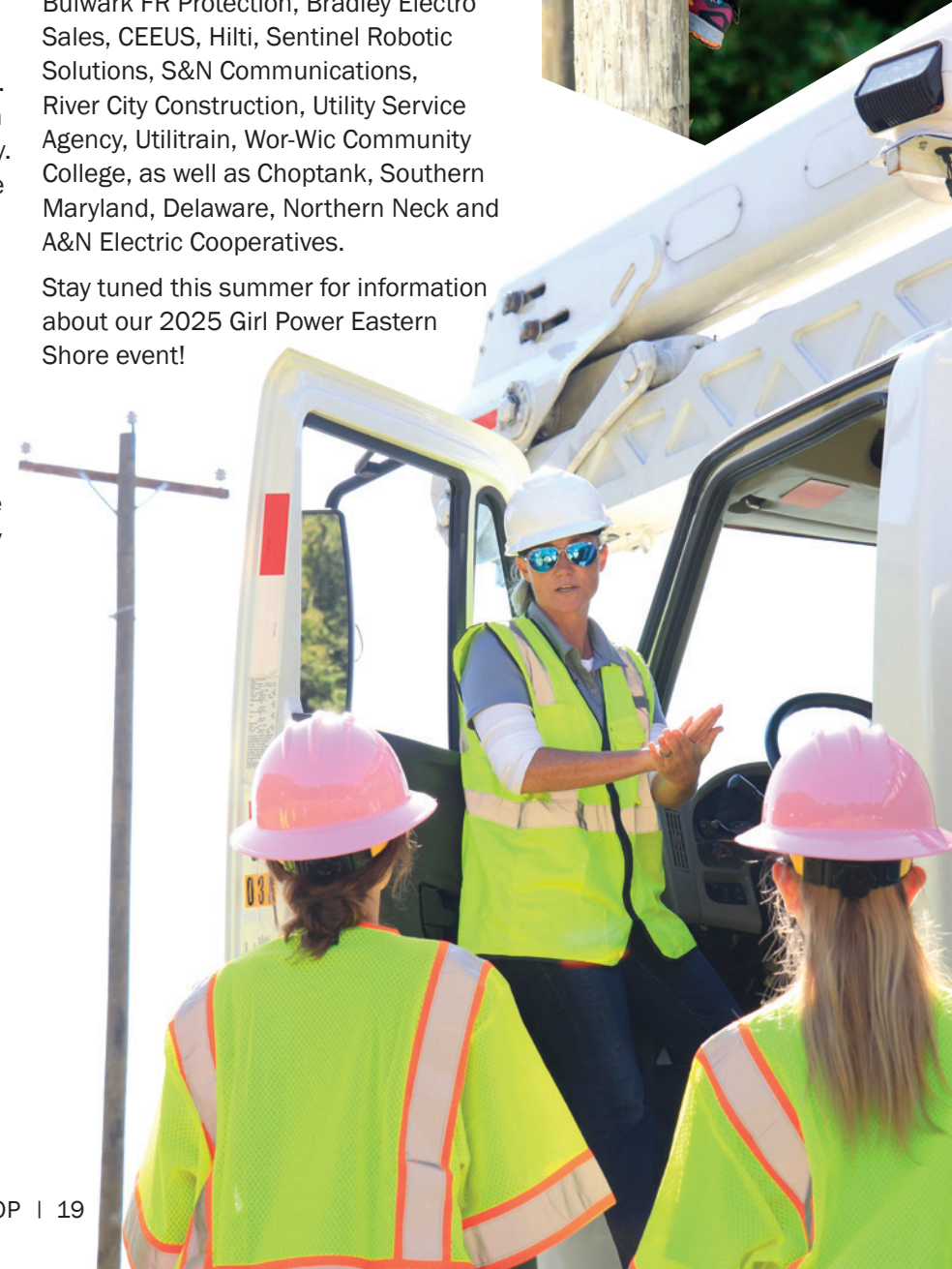


**C**hoptank Electric Cooperative and the Choptank Electric Trust donated \$2,160 to the Fallen Linemen Foundation this fall to support injured lineworkers and their families. The donated funds from Choptank

**Giving back to the Fallen Linemen Foundation**

Electric Cooperative of \$1,080 were generated from the proceeds of the Gaff-n-Go Rodeo T-shirt sales over the summer. Thank you to the more than 400 members and families for buying a shirt to support our winning rodeo team and the Fallen Linemen Foundation!

Choptank Electric Trust generously matched our donation of \$1,080 with funds from Operation Round Up®. We are proud to give back to such an impactful organization in our industry. To learn more about the Fallen Linemen Foundation visit > [www.fallenlinemenfoundation.com](http://www.fallenlinemenfoundation.com)



# CELEBRATING A POWERFUL CAREER

## Peggy Fuller retires after 34 years



**PEGGY FULLER**

Human Resource Specialist

After 34 years of dedicated service, Peggy Fuller, Human Resources Specialist, is retiring from Choptank Electric. We are celebrating Peggy's remarkable career and wishing her well in this exciting next chapter. Peggy began her career at Choptank in 1990 as a Staff Management Services Clerk. Two years later, she moved to the Engineering Department as a Customer Service Representative where she stayed for seven years before moving to the position of Administrative Assistant for the VP of Marketing and Member Services. Peggy has spent the last 16 years in the Human Resources department as a Human Resources Specialist.

Peggy describes there is never a dull moment while working in the Human Resources department at Choptank. "From the hiring process and conducting interviews, to worker's compensation filings, DOT drug and alcohol testing, handling employee benefits—to EEOC reporting, helping with payroll, employee engagement activities, and even helping retirees—there's always a variety of work to do in H.R." says Peggy.

Peggy's favorite part of working at Choptank Electric was knowing she was working in an industry that provides such an important service to people. She enjoyed watching the young lineworkers grow up and excel in their position. Peggy explains, "The lineworkers who love to shine when they are needed the most, during any kind of storm trouble. Whether it's here, in our communities on the shore, or away helping restore power in other states after a hurricane, these employees have always made me proud to be part of their team!"

When asked what advice Peggy would give to a new employee coming into the Co-op, Peggy advised, "Always be nice to people and never pass someone in the hall without speaking or at least giving them a smile. Life is short, and we spend most of our waking hours at our jobs, so be kind to the people you work with, and they'll be kind to you! I have made some great friends here, and that's important to me!"

While Peggy will be missed at Choptank Electric Cooperative, we're excited for what the future holds. After retirement, Peggy plans to spend time with her three grandchildren as well as her father, who resides in Tennessee. She looks forward to getting back into golfing, having more time to spend with friends and family, going to sporting events and going to the beach.

As Peggy embarks on this well-deserved retirement, we want to express our deepest gratitude for her years of hard work, dedication, and commitment. Choptank has truly benefited from Peggy's contributions, and we will miss her expertise, humor, and leadership.

*"Always be nice to people and never pass someone in the hall without speaking or at least giving them a smile. Life is short, and we spend most of our waking hours at our jobs, so be kind to the people you work with, and they'll be kind to you! I have made some great friends here, and that's important to me!"*

- Peggy Fuller



# Scholarship Offered by Trust Board

## Scholarship available for fall 2025 school year

By McKayla Kiernan, Communications Specialist

The Choptank Electric Trust Board is pleased to announce that our annual scholarship program will begin accepting applications on January 2, 2025. If you are a high school or home-schooled senior whose parent or guardian is a member or employee of Choptank Electric Cooperative, you are eligible to apply for the Choptank Electric Trust Scholarship which is distributed by the Choptank Electric Trust Board, a 501(c)(3) organization. Applicants must be entering a post-high school educational institution or technical/trade school as a freshman in the fall of 2025. The Choptank

Electric Trust Board distributes nine \$2,000 scholarships every May and scholarship recipients are selected based on a combination of the following criteria:

- ✓ Financial need
- ✓ Academic achievement
- ✓ Extracurricular and community activities
- ✓ References
- ✓ Personal essay

The required essay should be limited to two typed, double-spaced pages on the following topic: "Why have I chosen to continue my education and how will this scholarship assist me?" Letters of reference are required

and may be from school administrators, teachers, civic leaders, clergy, or neighbors (not from relatives). Please limit to three references. The Academic Information section of the application must be completed by the student's guidance counselor or other appropriate school official. Applications postmarked after March 1 will not be eligible for consideration.

For additional information and to download the application, please scan the QR code below or visit: [choptankelectric.coop/scholarships](https://choptankelectric.coop/scholarships)



**On one of her last days at Choptank Electric, Peggy had the opportunity to inspire the next generation and climb a pole for the first time. She handled it like a seasoned lineworker in front of her colleagues and young women inspiring to be professional lineworkers in their futures.**

## BYLAWS 101

Choptank's Governance Committee will undertake a comprehensive review of the cooperative's bylaws in the year ahead to update the document and ensure it is consistent with the current-day practices of our electric cooperative. These changes will also make the bylaws more easily readable for our members.

Our original bylaws were drafted when Choptank was incorporated back in 1938. While we have passed a few amendments over the years, a modernization is now due. With the use of a template from the

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), Choptank's bylaws will resemble those of rural electric cooperatives across our nation.

The new bylaws will be presented for member approval at the 2026 annual meeting. We will publish updates about the committee's process monthly in *Cooperative Living* magazine to make your consideration of the new document easier when asked to vote in 2026.

Let's start by asking what is the purpose of bylaws and why are

they important to the organization? Bylaws are a set of written rules that govern internal operations and outline how decisions are made, how meetings are conducted, and the roles and responsibilities of members, directors, and officers. Bylaws are important because they provide a clear framework for consistent management and can be used to resolve disputes by establishing guidelines for the organization's conduct.

Stay tuned for more bylaws information in the months ahead.

# MEMBER'S NOTES

Our members are the reason Choptank Electric Cooperative exists. Whether on social media, by phone, or through handwritten letters, we appreciate when members let us know that we are doing a good job! **Thank you, all!**

*Dear Mr. John Beck,*

*This message is intended for the supervisor of your Meter Reader, Mr. John Beck. John has been coming to our home regularly over the past several years and has been extremely pleasant—as well as tolerant of our very noisy dogs - and last week was no exception. He came across as the voice of reason, calming a member in need.*

*Through this whole encounter I was reminded of how courteous John has always been and thought it important that his superiors hear about the experience. You have an exceptional employee in John Beck, one who brings genuine pride to the Choptank Cooperative name. We believe he should be recognized as such and commended by you in whatever way you deem appropriate. Meanwhile, I shall look forward to every visit to my home by your Mr. John Beck —a most extraordinary individual.*

*Sincerely,*  
Mary Dolan

## Choptank Electric Trust Awards

The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations from members of Choptank Electric. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of MD's Eastern Shore.



To apply, or to find out more about this program:

> [www.choptankelectric.coop/operation-round-trust-fund](http://www.choptankelectric.coop/operation-round-trust-fund)

### September 2024

- Bay Hundred Community Volunteers Inc..... \$1,500
- Cambridge Woman's Club .. \$1,150
- Chesapeake Housing Mission ..... \$3,000
- Freedom Hills Therapeutic Riding Program ..... \$1,000
- Delmarva Evangelistic Church Food Pantry..... \$1,650
- Kinera Foundation ..... \$6,000
- Parsons Cemetery..... \$1,434
- HomePorts..... \$800

### October 2024

- Salem Methodist Church .. \$5,000
- LEAD Maryland Foundation ..... \$4,150
- Queen Anne's County Make a Difference Day ..... \$2,000
- Salisbury Jaycees Foundation Incorporated ..... \$300
- Maryland FFA Foundation ..... \$2,500

**The total of approved applications for September and October was \$66,137, which included \$37,003 for individual home and medical expenses.**



**Choptank Electric Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

**Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution co-op serving approximately 56,000 residential, commercial and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

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Micheal E. Malandro

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#### Choptank Fiber, LLC

Choptank Fiber, LLC, is a wholly owned broadband subsidiary of Choptank Electric Cooperative. Choptank Fiber's goal is to install true gigabit broadband with no data caps one community at a time until we serve all of our unserved members on the Eastern Shore.