



CHOPTANK ELECTRIC *Cooperative Living*

GOOD SAMARITANS AMONG US

PAGE 21 Choptank members Jennifer and Ben Marchi, owners of Home Instead of the Mid-Eastern Shore, proudly display the VMDAEC Good Samaritan Award.
PHOTO BY VALERIE CONNELLY



For changes of address, please contact Choptank Electric Cooperative.



GOOD SAMARITANS AMONG US

One of the most rewarding activities for me at the cooperative is visiting with and recognizing members who are serving our community with distinction. Presenting the Good Samaritan Award from our regional association to Ben and Jenna Marchi of St. Michaels was joyful.

Bestowed by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives, the purpose of the Good Samaritan Award is to honor individuals who provide exceptional service to others, either within their chosen profession or as a passion beyond. Their service constitutes a body of good works so extraordinary, so selfless and so life-changing that it is worthy of being held up to others as a “gold standard” example of philanthropic community service.

Ben and Jenna are owners of Home Instead in Easton, serving seniors in five counties. Beyond their daily effort to coordinate services that help seniors remain in their homes, they also coordinate

a community-wide “Be a Santa to a Senior” program that allows hundreds of seniors, who may otherwise miss out, to receive gifts at Christmas. They worked with social services agencies to identify seniors in need and then with local merchants and generous citizens to gather and deliver gifts for the holidays. They said the effort was personally rewarding and set a great example for their young family.

It was my honor to present the Good Samaritan Award and my privilege to tour the Home Instead operation while getting to know some good people in the cooperative community. Congratulations, Ben and Jenna Marchi! Read more about their organization on page 21.



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



Choptank Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy 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 →



Luck of the Draw Scholarships Awarded at Annual Meeting



2024 Luck of the Draw Winners

The Luck of the Draw Scholarship is awarded by randomly selecting student applications from a live drawing at the end of our annual meeting. To enter the drawing, students must fill out the application and answer a ten-question quiz based on a Cooperative article in the application.

This year, the annual meeting will be held on Thursday, April 24, at The Fountains in Salisbury. The Board of Directors will draw and award ten \$1,000 scholarships to students in attendance who meet the following qualifications:

- ✓ Complete the Luck of the Draw application on our website at choptankelectric.coop under Annual Meeting or Scholarships.
- ✓ Submit the application to the Co-op by April 17 before 4:30 p.m. (applications will NOT be accepted at the annual meeting). You will receive a confirmation phone call/email when your application has been processed.
- ✓ Be present at the annual meeting on April 24 with your parent/legal guardian who is a Choptank Electric Cooperative member.

- ✓ Enrolling in an accredited two-or four-year college or technical school for the 2025 fall semester.

Winners of prior years, employees, and immediate family members of Choptank Electric are NOT eligible to participate.

For more information, please visit choptankelectric.coop/scholarships

*Scholarships must be redeemed by 8/31/25

Introducing
CHOPTANK FIBER MOBILE!

We brought high-speed broadband internet to the Shore, and now we are offering mobile phone service! Add our cellular service to any Choptank Fiber internet package today! Plans start at \$20/month per line.

Choptank Fiber

for more information > www.choptankfiber.com/mobile

Thank you for voting for us!



Please join us for the annual meeting of cooperative members on Thursday, April 24, to discuss important policy and leadership issues and review the successes of 2024. All customers of Choptank Electric Cooperative are members and are entitled to vote and participate in discussions about how our electric distribution company



AMY BRANDT



MATT HOLLOWAY



DONNA RICHARDSON WEST

Three Board members will be standing for reelection during the 2025 meeting. Scan the QR code to learn more about our board members up for reelection.



**CHOPTANK ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE
ANNUAL MEETING**

87th Annual Member Meeting

Thursday, April 24, 2025

- ✓ **Amy Brandt**, representing Caroline County
- ✓ **Matt Holloway**, representing Wicomico County
- ✓ **Donna Richardson West**, representing Worcester County

Biographical information about each director candidate is posted online at choptankelectric.coop and is displayed in the lobby of the headquarters office in Denton. Petitions for nomination were

In addition to the formal business of the meeting, there will be an opportunity for students to receive scholarships. Ten \$1,000 Luck of the Draw scholarships will be awarded to students who pre-file their applications and are present at the meeting with their parent or legal guardian who is an active Choptank member. Applications, qualifications and other details about the scholarships are posted on the website under Member Benefits and are covered on page 16 of this *Cooperative Living* magazine.

All members who attend the annual meeting will be awarded a \$10 bill credit on their next electric bill (limited to 1 per membership). There will also be door prizes drawn at the end of the meeting ranging from \$100-\$500 in bill credits.

To RSVP and reserve your space at the 2025 Annual Meeting, please contact our Member Service Center by:

- ✓ Calling 1-877-892-0001 or
- ✓ Emailing us at annualmeeting@choptankelectric.coop

We will need your name, account number, guests' names and total number in your group to reserve your space and accurately register you for the 2025 Annual Meeting. The RSVP deadline is Monday, April 7, but call today to guarantee your spot.

> www.choptankelectric.coop/annual-meeting

functions here on the Eastern Shore. The annual meeting and dinner will be held at the Fountains Wedding & Conference Center at 1800 Sweetbay Drive in Salisbury, Maryland. Doors will open at 4:30 p.m. for members to register, visit with staff and vendors, and enjoy dinner.

The business portion of the annual meeting will begin at 6 p.m. with President and CEO Mike Malandro reporting on the Co-op business over the last 12-months. Three Board members will be standing for reelection during the 2025 meeting.

submitted, reviewed and approved by the Credentials and Elections Committee. Because there is only one approved director candidate for each district, the Committee has invoked bylaws section 4.06(b). This section states that in the event of an uncontested election, Choptank Electric Cooperative may forego the balloting process. A final vote to elect directors will occur during the annual meeting. This saves the Cooperative and its members thousands of dollars in the printing and mailing of ballots and the hiring of a voting service provider.



“Our fiber infrastructure and speeds will support our customers’ needs as technology continues to advance many years down the road. We are building the network of tomorrow, today.”

- Tim McGaha,
VP of Operations for Choptank Fiber



Choptank Fiber Celebrates Rural Connection Milestones

By Katie Luckett, Director of Marketing, Communications & Education

Choptank Fiber connected 5,000 customers this February with reliable and affordable high-speed internet on the Eastern Shore. With over 1,250 miles of distribution fiber laid, service is now available to 12,000 locations. Since its first connection in 2021, Choptank Fiber has remained ahead of schedule in every aspect of its fiber construction and buildout process.

“We are, of course, proud of these accomplishments, but more importantly we are celebrating that Choptank Fiber has stuck to its mission of serving our unserved rural electric cooperative members and reinvesting profits back into

infrastructure development,” shared Mike Malandro, President of Choptank Fiber and CEO of Choptank Electric Cooperative. Using the cooperative principles that are at the core of its business, Choptank Electric Cooperative created Choptank Fiber to deliver reliable and affordable internet service to families and businesses throughout its service territory where current providers wouldn’t build. “This is a prime example of putting members first by utilizing our existing infrastructure and working with local government and community members to deliver this much-needed service,” added Malandro.

Following a successful vote in 2020 by Choptank Electric Cooperative members to become member-regulated, the broadband subsidiary was formed. After years of expressing to the Cooperative a need for reliable and affordable internet, rural residents are finally able to join the digital landscape at home and in their businesses.

Taylor Hall had Choptank Fiber installed at his house outside of Preston this January after struggling to find reliable internet for 17 years. “As primarily a teleworker, I’ve been astonished at the difference Choptank Fiber speeds make in my daily work,” shared Hall.

“I’m able to get into remote tools

which require a good connection that I wasn't always able to reach with previous Wi-Fi providers. Online meetings are better, and my wife can access the internet and stream movies without having to schedule around my job."

Theo Hobbs and his family have been Choptank Fiber customers for nearly a year now. "I can work from my home office without being concerned about the wireless signal or loss of bandwidth," said Hobbs. As Senior Pastors of Lighthouse Church of God in Berlin, he and his wife, Linda, took advantage of the business packages as well. "Our service at the church handles all our security camera bandwidth needs easily. Customer service has been very accessible and quick to respond."

Tim McGaha, VP of Operations for Choptank Fiber, remarks on the world-class service being constructed with the future in mind. "Our fiber infrastructure and speeds will support our customers' needs as technology continues to advance many years down the road. We are building the network of tomorrow, today."

Cecil County's Broadband and GIS Manager, David Black, has worked closely with Choptank Fiber for the past few years to connect over 500 unserved locations to high-speed internet. "Choptank Fiber is extremely responsive to meeting the needs of Cecil County's unserved residents and businesses," expressed Black. "These locations were originally unserved for a reason; they are extremely isolated, challenging to reach and require significantly more effort to connect. Choptank Fiber's staff have the technical acumen necessary to solve the most challenging broadband builds. Our collaboration is a true

partnership, and Choptank Fiber's dedication to serving its customers is top notch."

Residential service offerings started four years ago with broadband packages and have since expanded to include the complimentary CommandIQ mobile app for whole-

than ever; to keep you connected to what matters most, now and for generations to come," concluded Malandro.

Visit > www.choptankfiber.com today to explore our packages and sign up for service.



Theo Hobbs and his family with Choptank Fiber staff and Choptank Electric Cooperative Board members at the Lighthouse Church of God in Berlin, Md.

home managed Wi-Fi and Choptank Fiber Voice (in-home VoIP phone lines) and Choptank Fiber Mobile (cellular service), which can be bundled with any internet package. Commercial broadband packages are now available with added services, including cloud-based business phone lines, SmartBiz (a business managed Wi-Fi service) and the CommandWorx mobile app. As Choptank Fiber looks to the future, it will continue to serve as the hub for technology on the Eastern Shore by providing rural businesses and consumers with the services and education they need. "Our commitment remains stronger



Thank you to State Senator Steve Hershey and Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes for going above and beyond to guide our broadband bill over the finish line during the 2020 Maryland General Assembly, and pass legislation allowing us to create Choptank Fiber for our members.

THANK YOU, JIM CANNON, FOR 33 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE!



JIM CANNON

Inspector

Jim Cannon began his career at Choptank Electric Cooperative in September 1992 as a Tree Trimmer at the age of 25. After an accident while removing trees, he transitioned to the role of System Controller. In January 2000, Jim became the Bill Collector for the Salisbury office. Several years later, he took on the position of Storeroom Attendant at the Berlin office. Jim concluded his career as an Inspector for the Cooperative at the Regional Service Center in Salisbury, retiring in December 2024.

As an Inspector, Jim's responsibilities included inspecting both overhead and underground lines at substations to ensure that all equipment was functioning properly. He identified issues before they could develop into larger problems or lead to outages within the substations.

Jim's favorite aspect of working for Choptank Electric was the sense of purpose in his job and the appreciation he felt from the team. He enjoyed looking forward to each workday.

When asked about the most important lesson he learned during his career at Choptank, Jim replied, "You may not have all the answers, but you should know from whom you got them. Thanks, Tom Ireland." His advice to new hires at the Cooperative is, "Work as if you were signing the paychecks, and leave your personal feelings at home." In retirement, Jim looks forward to spending more time with his grandchildren and traveling.

"In the end, I've had a great career at Choptank Electric Cooperative. Every supervisor I've worked with has left me feeling appreciated, valued and trusted."

- Jim Cannon

Choptank Electric Cooperative BUZZ

Choptank Welcomes New Employees and Employee Promotions!!!

CHOPTANK WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEES!

Jordan Walls

Engineering Fieldman

Logan Hollowell

System Operator

Lisa Robinson

Member Service Specialist

Cory Mattox

Work Order & Material Coordinator

Morgan Chandler

Member Service Specialist

Jordan Walls

Engineering Fieldman, RSC

CHOPTANK CONGRATULATES PROMOTIONS!

Congratulations to **Jordan Watson, Chas Fisher, Mason Johnson, Tyler Blackiston and Tyler Parker** for graduating from Northwest Lineman College!

PROMOTIONS CONTINUED

Matthew Taylor

Apprentice Lineman 3rd Class

Judi White

Member Service Specialist 4th Class

Rachael Kelley

Member Services Project Analyst

Samantha Schuyler

Manager of Human Resources

Patrick Helgason

Apprentice Lineman 3rd Class

Brian Postles

Apprentice Lineman 4th Class

Caitlyn Cawley

Member Service Specialist 2nd Class

Tyler Williamson

Apprentice Lineman 2nd Class

Chris Moorefield

Apprentice Lineman 5th Class

PROMOTIONS CONTINUED

Kimberly Billbrough

Human Resources Specialist

Frankie Davis

Apprentice Lineman 2nd Class

Ariel Dawson

Energy Assistance & Collections Admin

Colby Gebhardt

Apprentice Lineman

DeShawn Gayle

Apprentice Lineman 2nd Class

Clint Mills

Serviceman

Derek Brinsfield

Meter & Apparatus Tech 2nd Class

Adam Dukes

Engineering Fieldman

Tim Hardesty

Apprentice Lineman

“We love being cooperative members. We recognize the importance of investment and concern for our community—a key cooperative principle.”

- Ben Marchi



Member-owned Home Instead Provides Valuable Option for Many Seniors

By Valerie Connelly, Vice President Government Affairs & Public Relations

Nestled into a business park on the outskirts of Easton is a gem with dedicated staff providing services to thousands of seniors across five counties on the mid-shore. Home Instead offers aging adults the opportunity to stay in the homes they love while contracting for various levels of support services.

Ben and Jenna Marchi, Choptank Electric Cooperative members from St. Michaels, own the franchise and employ more than 150 caregivers, offering services for Alzheimer's and dementia support, and personal, hospice and chronic illness care.

“We feel truly blessed to be able to make a living this way,” said Ben as he discussed their dedication to identifying and training staff to assist seniors in our rural

community. Experts expect a growing number of aging adults will need support services in the years ahead.

Some of the Home Instead care professionals are contracted to help clean a home, shop for groceries and provide nutritious meals. Others provide transportation to doctors' appointments, worship services, fitness classes and more. Regular companionship to talk, garden or play cards is also a need for many aging adults and can be organized through Home Instead.

Members of the Choptank Board of Directors visited the Easton location with our President & CEO, Mike Malandro, to learn more about the operation and to honor Ben and Jenna Marchi with the 2024 Good Samaritan Award.

While the business is one of 635 similar franchise operations across the United States, Ben and Jenna consider it a family business. Ben's parents own a franchise in Bozeman, MT and Jenna's parents recently retired and sold their operation in Bel Air, MD.

“We love being cooperative members,” explained Ben. “We recognize the importance of investment and concern for our community—a key Cooperative principle.”

To learn more about career opportunities and home services through Home Instead of the mid-Eastern Shore, visit their website at www.homeinstead.com/location/561.

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!**

Choptank Customer Service.


I am writing to express our gratitude to Choptank for the great service we received on Jan. 7, 2025 when our power was off for an extended period of time. We had lost power in the morning. Shortly after 2, I received a call from a gentleman whose name I can't remember, unfortunately, but he called several times through the afternoon to keep me updated. Late that afternoon, just as the house was getting a bit chilly and dark, a gentleman from the crew working outside knocked on the door to let us know they were hooking up a generator so we would have heat (totally unexpected and much appreciated). He also came to the house several more times to keep us updated on what they were doing. Again, unfortunately, I can't recall his name, but he was very friendly and polite every time, despite the long day and difficult working conditions. The crew worked all day and late into the night in the freezing cold, as well as the next day, and we very much appreciated their efforts.

I don't know if you'll take the time, but I hope you will pass this on to everyone who got us up and running, from the gentleman who called, to the hardworking crew, and to Choptank management, because your company's customer service is unbeatable!

With Sincere Appreciation,
Mike and Denise Brusak



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.

President & CEO

Micheal E. Malandro

Board of Directors

Douglas D. Scott
Chairman, Dorchester Co.

Robert E. Arnold
Vice Chairman, Queen Anne's Co.

John J. Burke Jr.
Treasurer, Cecil Co.

Matthew R. Holloway
Secretary, Wicomico Co.

Amy I. Brandt
Caroline Co.

Craig N. Mathies Sr.
Somerset Co.

Kristen E. Nickerson
Kent Co.

Jeffrey D. Rathell Sr.
Talbot Co.

Robert B. Thompson
Ocean Pines District

Donna R. West
Worcester Co.

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

November 2024

- Cambridge Main Street \$300
- Chester River Chorale..... \$1,320
- Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry \$1,845
- Friends of the Grape Chesapeake Culinary Center.....\$1,607
- Junior Achievement \$1,500
- Legacy Creative Arts and Athletics \$2,500
- One Mission Cambridge.... \$1,000
- Union United of Burrsville \$775

December 2024

- His Hope Ministries \$2,000
- Judy Center Early Learning \$2,395
- Salisbury Urban Ministries \$4,700

The total of approved applications for November and October was \$47,698, which included \$24,987 for individual home and medical expenses.



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.