



CHOPTANK ELECTRIC

Cooperative Living

INSPIRING *the next* GENERATION

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Choptank staff took over the Junior Achievement Center in Salisbury to inspire 125 Colonel Richardson 6th grade students.

For changes of address, please contact Choptank Electric Cooperative.



Vets Power Our Community

May is Military Appreciation Month. At Choptank Electric Cooperative, we are grateful to have active military and veterans on staff and are proud to serve them and their families. As a veteran of the U.S. Army and the West Virginia Army National Guard, I understand the sacrifices these men and women have made for our country and the unwavering dedication they have to serve.

Our mission as a Cooperative is to serve our local community and put our members first every day. This commitment to our members is similar to the sense of duty and responsibility that veterans experience in the military. Our lineworkers, engineers, system control operators and essential field staff work 24/7 to keep your electricity on and, in turn, protect the safety and reliability of your home and family.

Choptank Electric Cooperative is proud to support the national Vets Power Us program, through which we have pledged to employ and honor veterans and their families. With 12 current active military or veteran employees, we continue to provide the resources and time that is required for these staff to serve our country. More than 40% of veterans are from rural communities, and we are working to ensure that these brave men and women have access to career opportunities in the electric utility industry.

I hope you will join me in sharing your gratitude and appreciation to our community's military and veterans for the sacrifices they have made and continue to make for our great nation.



Mike Malandro
President & CEO
Choptank Electric Cooperative



Choptank Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative



P.O. Box 430 | Denton, MD | 21629
Member Service Center: 1-877-892-0001
Automated Member Service: 1-866-999-4574
Electric Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790 option 1
Fiber Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790 option 2
Use SmartHub to Manage Account,
Track Usage and Report Outages —>



WWW.CHOPTANKELECTRIC.COOP

MAY 2024

Choptank Welcomes New Employees



Brody Bennett
Apprentice Lineman, Denton

Experience: Rock Creek Line Construction

Hobbies: Hunting, fishing and being a volunteer firefighter

Looking Forward To: Learning the cooperative side of the lineworker career and learning different aspects of the job



Shawn McGuire
Apprentice Lineman, Chestertown

Experience: AUI Power and Amtrak

Hobbies: Hunting, fishing and camping

Looking Forward To: Working on lines that are close to home

⚡ Congratulations to **Mike Schroeder, Tyler Blackiston** and **Austin Peet**, who completed the Apprentice Lineman 4th Class testing and moved to Apprentice Lineman 3rd Class.

⚡ Congratulations to **Matthew Taylor** and **Patrick Helgason**, who completed the Apprentice Lineman 5th Class testing and moved to Apprentice Lineman 4th Class.

⚡ Congratulations to **Glenn Williams**, who became Warehouse Manager. His new duties began on March 11.

⚡ Congratulations to **Robert Hall**, who earned the Work-order Material Coordinator position and began duties on March 18.

⚡ Congratulations to **Brody Bennett**, who completed the Apprentice Lineman 3rd Class testing and moved to Apprentice Lineman 2nd Class.

⚡ Congratulations to **Tiffany Trautman**, who was named Director of Finance and Accounting, assuming her new duties on March 1.

⚡ Congratulations to **Brian Postles**, who completed the Apprentice Lineman 6th Class testing and moved to Apprentice Lineman 5th Class.



Life on The Shore requires working with water, following the tides and the forecast. On this day, crew members are changing out a transformer pad and extending service wires to keep things high and dry.





The 2024 Maryland General Assembly

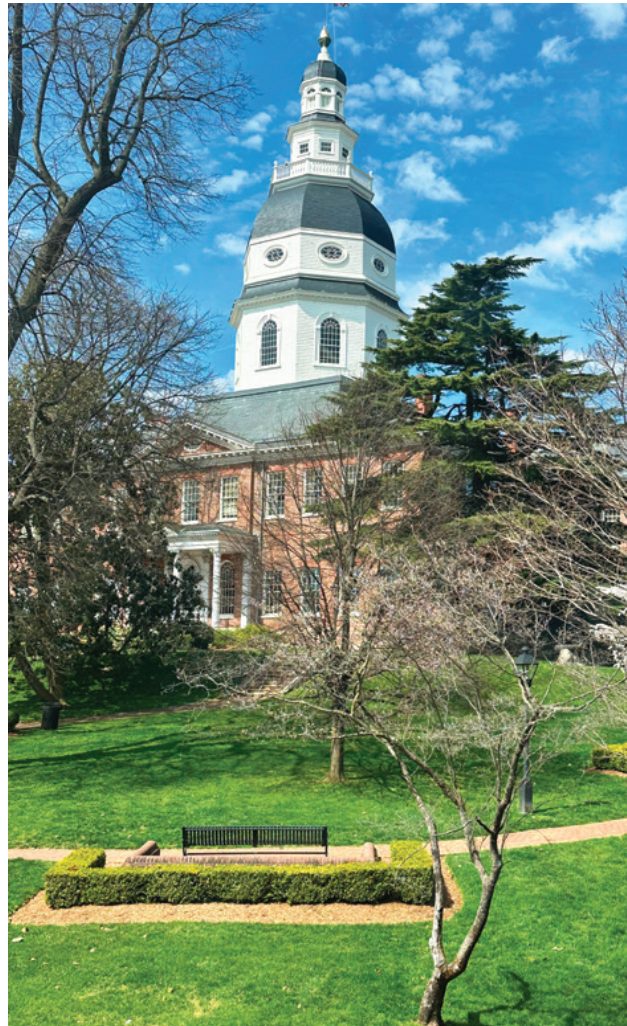
Your state government at work

By Valerie Connelly, VP Government Affairs and Public Relations

The annual 90 days of the Maryland General Assembly session wrapped up on April 8 after legislators completed consideration of 2,700 bills. Topics for debate this year centered around the declining state revenues, our structural deficit and the need to find new funding sources for education, road construction and mass transit.

There was also significant discussion of juvenile justice reform, housing affordability and cybersecurity.

From an electric cooperative perspective, Choptank analyzed over 130 bills that would impact members. We actively opposed efforts to add Choptank to the Energy Efficiency and Conservation planning program called EmPOWER. This could lead to an extra line item on monthly electric bills of \$20 to \$35 per month—that's \$200 to \$400 per year. The funds are collected from all ratepayers and used to incentivize some ratepayers to upgrade



The Maryland State House in Annapolis

appliances or install beneficial electrification—like moving from gas heat to electric heat.

Choptank supported legislation that would allow electric cooperatives to use unclaimed capital credits for the benefit of members, rather than forfeit them to the State of

Maryland. We believe those dollars can be used more efficiently right here on the Eastern Shore to improve our cooperative and support community activities.

An issue that will likely come back for debate in 2025 is the massive sales tax and revenue increase proposed by the House of Delegates. The package would raise \$1.2 billion annually and would fund the Blueprint for Education and the Transportation Trust Fund. To do this, the state would legalize and tax iGaming, add a fee to the registration of electric vehicles, increase the tax burden for corporations, apply the sales tax to used car trade-ins, add a 75-cent fee on ride-sharing and increase tolls to out-of-state drivers.

You can be assured that in Annapolis and back home on the Shore, the elected Board and staff here at Choptank Electric Cooperative are working to keep your lights on and your rates affordable.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

Choptank Electric Cooperative participates in many youth engagement activities throughout our community to educate and inspire our future leaders. During these events we teach electrical and power line safety, careers in the utility industry, how power gets to homes, and provide hands-on interactions and demonstrations.

“Educating the children in our local community is one of the most important aspects of an electric cooperative,” says Mike Malandro, President and CEO of Choptank Electric Cooperative. “Making sure our students know how to remain safe during an outage at home or around power lines outside is not only valuable, but lifesaving.”

One of the largest youth engagement events we attend each year is the Junior Achievement Inspire Career Fair at the Wicomico Civic Center. We spend two days



By Katie Luckett, Manager of Marketing, Communications and Education

interacting with over 4,000 eighth grade students from across the Eastern Shore of Maryland, demonstrating how to close a switch at the top of a pole with a hot-stick, and a tabletop glove challenge. Both demonstrations provide middle school students with real-life experience of being a lineworker for Choptank Electric. They get to put on our gloves and safety glasses, open

and close switches with our hot stick, and race their peers in removing and adding bolts to a tabletop utility pole.

We added a Choptank Fiber display to this event in 2024 to showcase fiber-optic cables and the process of installing broadband internet to homes. This opened the conversation with students about careers in the fiber and IT fields, which is a rapidly growing industry here in Maryland, especially in our rural areas.

Our participation with Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore continues with our electric utility storefront in the new Perdue Henson Junior Achievement Center in Salisbury (refer to the January 2024 edition for more details on the opening of the Center). We held a Choptank Electric Cooperative Takeover Day on March 25, when we supplied the entire Center with our staff to volunteer leading each storefront for a group



“Educating the children in our local community is one of the most important aspects of an electric cooperative.”

– Mike Malandro,
President & CEO

of Colonel Richardson Middle School students to participate in the Biztown program.

In addition to these events, we also host students of all ages at our district buildings for tours, visit schools for career days/fairs, speak to trade schools and tech classes about the lineworker industry, and take bucket trucks and our hot-line demonstration out to show kids what happens when things come in contact with power lines. We are looking forward to bringing five high school students to Washington, D.C., this summer for Youth Tour, where they will learn about electric cooperatives and how our national trade organization, NRECA, works to protect our industry and mission.

Concern for Community and Education, Training and Information are two of the Seven Cooperative Principles that we follow; both of which are modeled by our youth outreach efforts daily. We realize that the future of our community and industry lies within our students and the next generation, so we are investing resources to keep them safe, educated and inspired here on the Eastern Shore.

Opposite page: Board Member Donna Richardson West volunteering at the JA Center. Top to bottom: A young lady realizes her ability at our hot-stick demonstration, Shawn Sparks volunteering at the JA Center, Youth Tour 2018, DeShawn Gayle being interviewed by 8th graders, JP Watson volunteering at the JA Center, Lineworkers teaching electrical safety.





Electric Use Projected to Increase Nationwide

By Matthew Teffeau, Manager of Government Affairs

Electric Cooperatives are starting to see an increase in the amount of energy their members use. This current trend and recent “surge” projection of energy-use will conflict with current policies that affect the overall cost of energy. Choptank Electric Cooperative, along with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, has continued to engage with policymakers at the federal and state levels about the need to keep power reliability and affordability at the forefront of policy decisions.

Cooperatives have taken a clear stance that policymakers must allow sufficient time for renewable-energy transitions and the conjunction of technology development to maintain

reliability during this transition. This will take time and change the energy landscape, current supply-chain practices, and existing generation and distribution infrastructure.

According to a recent New York Times article titled “A New Surge in Power Use is Threatening U.S. Climate Goals,” this surge of energy use is related to data centers, large manufacturing and electric-vehicle charging infrastructure. These types of investments are being seen in the PJM Interconnection, which oversees the nation’s largest regional grid, including the state of Maryland. PJM representatives fear the current grid will not keep up with this increase in demand and “finding enough power could

be a challenge, since PJM’s process for new connections, including the renewable energy project, have been afflicted by delays.” This has led PJM to delay retiring older power plants because they still supply baseload generation. PJM is tasked with maintaining grid capacity and reliability.

Keeping in mind the Cooperative mission to provide reliable and cost-effective services that improve the quality of life for our communities, we must stay vigilant during this forecast of increased demand. Choptank Electric Cooperative is advocating for sound policies and promoting smart energy-use incentives when accessible.

OFFICES  **MEMORIAL DAY**  **CLOSED**
MONDAY, MAY 27



Electrical Safety Tips

By McKayla Kiernan, Communications Specialist

At Choptank Electric Cooperative, we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. From our co-op crews to you, the members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety. We all depend on electricity to power our lives, but accidents can happen when electricity is improperly used.

Choptank Electric Cooperative's concern for safety extends beyond our employees. We care deeply about the safety of our members, and this month, we encourage you to plug into safety. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity, but we all must understand the potential dangers associated with it.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the prevalence of electrical devices, tools and appliances, practice the electrical safety tips listed below:

- **Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard.** *Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use, or excessive current-flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause a shock when handled.*
- **Avoid overloading circuits.** *Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely handle – by having too many devices running on one circuit.*

- **Label circuit breakers** to understand the circuits in your home. *Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old and you need to install multiple large appliances that consume large amounts of electricity.*

- **Use extension cords properly.** *Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you “daisy chain” them together, it could lead to overheating, creating a potential fire hazard. Don't exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.*

We want to help keep you and all members of our community safe. That's why you'll see Choptank Electric hosting safety demonstrations at community events, such as fairs and festivals, and in schools throughout the year to demonstrate the dangers of electricity. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution students on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices, and frequently provide electrical safety content in the *Cooperative Living* magazine and our social media accounts. We encourage the public to contact us if they see a downed power line or any other type of dangerous electrical situation. We encourage you to talk with your kids about playing it safe and smart around electricity. Help them be aware of overhead power

lines near where they play outdoors.

Along with Electrical Safety Month, May is also National Pet Month!

In order to keep our furry friends safe, follow the tips below:



- **Keep power cords and wires out of pets' reach** so they don't chew on it and receive a shock. *What may seem like a mild shock to an adult may be enough to kill a small pet.*

- **Turn off electrical items** like lamps, fans, irons or heaters when not in use.

- **Never place electrical items near bathtubs or sinks.** *Curious pets may be tempted to knock items off the counter.*

- **Check to be sure night lights and appliances are completely plugged into wall outlets.** *Small paws or tongues can easily find partially exposed prongs and are a hazard for curious pets.*

Our top priority is providing an uninterrupted energy supply 24/7, 365 days per year. But equally important is keeping our community safe around electricity now and well into the future.

Sources: safeelectricity.org

MEMBERS' 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!**

Donna,

We have had Choptank Fiber broadband service on Marshall Creek Road since late December '23, and it's really nice to have high-speed internet. I know you worked very hard to bring this service to Choptank co-op members. If public service is helping others to live healthier, happier, more productive lives, the availability of Choptank Fiber is an important resource for Worcester County.

Thank you, Burton

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

March 2024

• Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra	\$1,000
• Delaware and Maryland Search Dogs	\$3,000
• Betterton Volunteer Fire Company	\$7,994
• Caroline Tennis Association	\$529
• Chesapeake Developmental Unit	\$2,500
• Furnace Town Foundation	\$7,500
• Mt. Zion Historical Society	\$2,000
• Olivet United Methodist Church	\$2,000

The total of approved applications for March was \$45,789, which included \$22,266 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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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 our members on the Eastern Shore.