From healthcare to education to unemployment, rural and suburban communities lag behind the state’s urban centers in several important measures.

In November, I attended the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association’s annual meeting in Nashville. The theme for this year’s event was “The Power to Be.” Throughout the meeting, attendees were reminded that, though electric co-ops provide power, they also empower Tennesseans to not just survive, but to thrive.

Our co-ops are uniquely positioned to have a positive impact on the people and communities we serve. From infrastructure to education to communications, co-ops invest more money in rural Tennessee than almost any other group. We know that our communities matter, and we have a vested interest in their success.

We also believe that Tennesseans should not be limited by where they choose to live. Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is committed to closing the gap between opportunities that exist in places like Nashville and Chattanooga and those that exist from Dover to Portland and hundreds of other rural and suburban communities.

The continued success of co-ops and the communities we serve depend on people choosing to live and raise their families here — not in spite of the limitations but because of the abundant opportunities.

Tennessee certainly faces challenges, but I honestly believe that electric co-ops, more than any other group, have the power to be agents for change — to push and lead our communities to a brighter and more abundant future.

I also recognize that we cannot tackle these challenges alone.

As we begin a new year, let me encourage you to find a way to get involved in your community. Whether it is volunteering to read to schoolchildren or participating in a clothing drive at your church, start the new year off with a focus on serving others.

Tennessee is already a fantastic place to live and raise a family, but together we have the power to be more.
‘The Power to Be’: An electric cooperative creative writing and scholarship competition

Each year, 12 high school juniors from Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation’s five-county service area spend an incredible week in our nation’s capital, getting a front-row view of government, leadership and public policy.

The Washington Youth Tour, sponsored by CEMC and the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association, provides young leaders with an opportunity to explore Washington, D.C., learn about government and cooperatives and develop their leadership skills.

Students will win spots on this year’s trip for writing winning short stories titled “The Power to Be,” describing how local electric co-ops give their members the power to be connected, engaged, productive, healthy and educated by providing affordable and reliable energy.

Stories must not exceed 900 words, including articles (“a,” “an” and “the”), and the exact word count must be included on the cover page. Entries, which must be typewritten and double-spaced, will be judged on appropriate treatment of theme, knowledge of the subject, originality, creativity, grammar and composition.

The contest deadline is Wednesday, Feb. 19, and winners will be announced in April. Writers of the top 12 entries in CEMC’s service area will join 140-plus other delegates from Tennessee and more than 1,800 representatives from across the country for the 2020 Washington Youth Tour June 19-25.

CEMC’s Youth Tour delegates also have the opportunity to compete for Tennessee’s spot on the Youth Leadership Council to represent the state at the 2021 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

Additionally, TECA will award scholarships of $3,000, $2,000 and $1,000 for the state’s top short stories. Winners of the TECA scholarships will be announced during the 2020 Washington Youth Tour.

“The Youth Tour is an incredible opportunity for these students to actually experience history up close and personal,” says Stephanie Lobdell, CEMC community relations coordinator. “Delegates experience a whirlwind of a week, visiting museums, monuments and other landmarks.”

President Lyndon Johnson inspired the tour in 1957 when, as a senator from Texas, he encouraged electric cooperatives to send youngsters to the nation’s capital. In the years since, more than 6,000...
young Tennesseans have been delegates on the Washington Youth Tour.

“Commitment to community is what sets cooperatives apart from other businesses,” said Chris A. Davis, CEMC general manager. “The Washington Youth Tour is one way we show the youth of our service area that their co-op is more than their electricity provider. We genuinely care about the prosperity of our communities, and that includes providing special opportunities for these exceptional students and preparing them for future success.”

The Washington Youth Tour Creative Writing and Scholarship Competition is open to high school juniors living in CEMC’s five-county service area.

Additional details about the 2020 Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest can be found by visiting www.cemc.org/youthprograms.asp or by contacting at 1-800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or slobdell@cemc.org.

CEMC’s 2019 Youth Tour delegates gather in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Senior scholarships available

Each year, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation invests in future leaders by awarding scholarships to deserving high school seniors through the Senior Scholarship Program.

Twelve students will be chosen this year to receive one-time awards of $1,000 that can be used toward their freshman year expenses such as tuition, textbooks or lab fees or to purchase other required classroom materials. The program is coordinated through each school’s senior guidance counselor.

To be eligible, applicants must meet these requirements:

- Must be a graduating high school senior whose parents or guardians are members of CEMC and receive electric service from CEMC at his or her primary residence.
- Must have attained a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade-point average.
- Must enroll or plan to enroll as a full-time student at an accredited Tennessee college, university or trade school by fall 2018 (Murray State and Western Kentucky are included).
- Must submit a completed application, including two letters of reference: one from a teacher or other school official and one from a community leader.
- Must write an original essay of at least 300 words explaining what the student most looks forward to about attending college and how a scholarship, in terms of financial assistance, will help in completing his or her education. All essays will be judged on the basis of content, composition, grammar and neatness.

Applications are available through the senior guidance counselors at each school and can be found on CEMC’s website, www.cemc.org. Deadline for scholarship entry is Wednesday, Feb. 19. Children of CEMC, Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association or Tennessee Valley Authority employees, directors or attorneys are not eligible to apply.

www.cemc.org/youthprograms.asp or by contacting at 1-800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or slobdell@cemc.org.
2021 CEMC Calendar Art Contest

The 2021 Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation calendar art contest has begun, and the cooperative is calling on local students to submit their best entries. Winners will receive cash prizes and have their artwork published in CEMC’s 2021 calendar, which will be displayed in homes, schools and businesses throughout the co-op’s service area. Calendars are free and available at each of CEMC’s offices beginning in November of each year. (Get your 2020 calendar at any CEMC office while supplies last!)

The contest is open to all students — grades kindergarten through 12 — who reside within CEMC’s service area. Entries will be accepted through participating schools and are due by Friday, Feb. 21. Each grade (for which the student is currently enrolled) has been assigned a calendar month to illustrate as follows: January, sixth grade; February, seventh; March, eighth; April, ninth; May, 10th; June, 11th; July, kindergarten; August, first; September, second; October, third; November, fourth; and December, fifth.

Seniors will illustrate the cover. While there is no specific theme for the cover, rural scenes, barns, wildlife and items that illustrate CEMC’s service (bucket trucks, utility poles, etc.) are a few suggestions.

Artwork will be judged on artistic merit, creativity and how well the assigned month is depicted. All elements of the artwork must be the work of the student submitting the entry. Artwork must be on white or light-colored, unruled paper no larger than 11 by 14 inches and no smaller than 8.5 by 11 inches.

Complete contest details and instructions are available at www.cemc.org or by contacting CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Stephanie Lobdell at 800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or via email at slobdell@cemc.org.

CORRECTION —

Regretfully, Youth Corner bicycle winner Taylor Love, far right, was incorrectly identified as Taylor Lowe in the November issue of The Tennessee Magazine. We sincerely apologize for the error.
How big is too big for heating and cooling?

In the dead of winter, it seems like your heating system couldn’t be too big. But many homes have units that are bigger than they need—which means they’re wasting energy and paying for it.

Most older homes have older heating and air conditioning systems that are way too big. That’s because old homes were not built according to today’s energy-efficiency standards. Heated air leaked right through the walls, windows and attic, and builders compensated for that by installing huge heating units.

Improvements to your home over the years — like new windows and added insulation — have rendered those giant units unnecessary. So if you live in an older home and haven’t replaced your heating or air conditioning system, there’s a good chance that they’re up to four times too big for your house.

Newer homes are built so “tight” that leaks are not as big of a problem.

When the HVAC system is too big, it tends to cycle on too often, which can leave too much humidity in the air and make your house too hot, too cold or too humid.

When you’re ready to replace your oversized, out-of-date systems, choose energy-efficient models. And insist that your service technician correctly “size” the system for your lifestyle and the efficiency of the house — not on its age or size.

Saving energy: basic tips

If your heating bill is too high, don’t fall for ads selling specialty products to lower your electric bill. All you really need is a caulk gun and some common sense to save energy this winter.

Here are five examples:

1. Change your air filter. The filter collects dust, pet hair and other particles from your home’s air so they can’t get into your furnace. But if your filter is covered in particles, air can’t get through either, and your furnace needs air to operate properly. If it can’t operate properly, it will run too often or too long, and it might leave you feeling cold and tempted to crank up the thermostat. So clean or replace the filter every few months (more often if you live someplace with dusty or dirty outdoor air).

2. Turn on your ceiling fans — yes, in the winter! Set it to the “winter” or “reverse” setting so the blades create a subtle updraft that pushes the warm air that naturally rises to the ceiling back down into the room. The fan doesn’t actually warm up the room, but it makes the air feel warmer so you’ll be more comfortable. And that means you won’t reach for the thermostat to crank it up.

3. Open the blinds. If it’s sunny outside, that natural warmth will radiate into the house through your windows, meaning your heating system won’t have to work so hard to keep the house comfortable. Close the blinds when the sun goes down to keep the cold out.

4. Get out your caulk gun. A hole or a crack in a wall, window or door sends your cozy, conditioned air right outside — and invites cold outdoor air indoors. Plug gaps with caulk or weather stripping. A tip: Hold a lighted candle or stick of incense near a window or door and notice if it sways. If it does, you’ve got a draft that needs sealing.

5. Turn your thermostat down at bedtime. If you set it back 10 degrees for eight hours at a time and do it every night (and reverse it in the summer), you can slash around 10 percent from your heating and cooling bills, the Department of Energy estimates. A tip: If you have a programmable thermostat, set it to do this consistently so you won’t forget.

For more energy tips, visit us online at www.cemc.org or contact Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation Energy Consultant Chad Corlew at 1-800-987-2362.
It’s time for everyone to have access to high-speed fiber internet!

By Kaitlyn Bonds, Creative Director

It has been all hands on deck this month as Cumberland Connect, the fiber to the home division of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, continues to ramp up in preparation for the launch of the much-anticipated network. Behind the scenes, multiple CEMC departments meet daily to engineer and design this innovative network and the supporting platforms. Focus remains on our members and creating a top-notch member experience, expanding on the traditions built over the years at CEMC.

Over the last several months, engineering, construction and vegetation management have taken place along the existing electrical pathways to prepare the work space for fiber installation crews to begin construction of the mainline fiber. Crews have been working feverishly on vegetation management and make-ready engineering, both of which are essential to not only the fiber construction but to the proper maintenance of the electrical poles and lines.

Months of preparation led up to an exciting announcement that Cumberland Connect officially began the construction of the mainline fiber on Nov. 11. The initial construction began in Dover. Crews are continuing at a fast pace as we draw closer to our launch date. Extra care has been taken in choosing the right contractors to work with during our network build out. It is important to us that the contractors we choose to work with share the same passion and vision for our mission to serve our members. Cumberland Connect is proud to partner with Ervin Cable Construction on the construction of our mainline fiber. Ervin Cable Construction crews began hanging strand in the Fort Donelson Shores area of Dover on Nov. 11. The strand will hold the fiber once it’s wrapped and serve as its backbone. The next step of construction will be wrapping the fiber to the strand, which another crew will come in behind to do. The construction is progressing well, and we are excited to be one step closer to launch of our broadband services and serving our members with high-speed connectivity.

This is an exciting milestone in the construction process and illustrates the hard work taking place by all those involved. Everyone is so excited to see the construction moving along, and we are all looking forward to further serving our members and our communities.

We truly appreciate all the excitement and support surrounding the fiber to the home project from our members. We understand that members want to be kept up to date on the progress of the network build out, and we are committed to
Keeping everyone in the know throughout the process. Monthly project updates are being sent out via email on the fifth of each month, and updates are being posted throughout the month on our social media pages. Throughout the project, location-specific updates will be sent in various formats — including email, online posts and print media — notifying members of construction progress near their homes and when service will become available. If you haven’t already, please sign up for updates on our website. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter — @GetCCFiber.

Strides have been made to ensure that the technology and products behind this network are truly cutting edge as we believe our members deserve the best. It’s an exciting mission, and we are proud to share the journey with our members. We invite you to follow along to see the process and get to know the people behind it. Our members inspire our mission daily to bring high-speed fiber internet services where no one else will.

Students power community food drive

This fall, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation partnered with local elementary schools to host its annual community food drive.

With the help of students, parents, teachers and communities, thousands of nonperishable food items were collected to help feed families in need again this year. All items collected were delivered to local food banks for distribution.

“We are so grateful to all who supported our community food drive,” says CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Stephanie Lobdell. “Your generous donations helped put food on the tables of our neighbors in need, and it is truly appreciated.”

Participating elementary schools were Coopertown, Clyde Riggs, East Robertson, Sango, West Cheatham, Cumberland Heights, North Stewart and Watt Hardison.