

CHELCO NEWS

POWERED *by* YOU

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CHELCO and Southland Utility employees showcase the Season of Giving



At CHELCO, we see the value in supporting activities that make our community a better place to live. We also want to encourage our employees to get involved in these efforts. We know that volunteering not only helps the community but also enriches the lives of our team members. That's why we offer employees up to 8 hours each year to volunteer with a 501(c)(3) non-profit servicing our local community. Through this Volunteer Time Off program, CHELCO employees have assisted various non-profits in preparing for the holiday season and more.

CHELCO staff lent a helping hand to **Caring & Sharing of South Walton** as they packed Thanksgiving food bags and handed out gift cards to assist with holiday meals for their food pantry clients.

In DeFuniak Springs, employees volunteered with **United Way Emerald Coast** and their newest Born Learning Trail at the Wee Care Park. Born Learning Trails is a series of 10 interactive games for young children with engaging instructional signs.

CHELCO and our wholly-owned subsidiary, Southland Utility Services, recently teamed up to raise \$2,200 for the **Matrix Community Outreach Center** Community Christmas program, which provides gifts to local children who might not otherwise have them.

To learn more about CHELCO's charitable efforts, please visit www.CHELCO.com/charitable-chelco.

CHELCO



A Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative 

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Important Dates

- All CHELCO offices will be closed the following dates in December and January.
Dec. 12 - Employee Training
Dec. 24 and 25 - Christmas
Jan. 1, 2025 - New Year's Day
- Youth Tour applications for high school juniors will be accepted until Dec. 20. If you are interested, please visit CHELCO.com/Youth-Tour or contact your guidance counselor.
**More info on page 4*



CEO Insights: 2024 - A successful year at our cooperative

As we approach the end of another successful year at CHELCO, 2025 is already on the horizon. Before we turn the page on 2024, I'd like to reflect on the successes, challenges, and milestones that defined a busy and productive year for our cooperative.

Safety First

Nearly 85 years into our cooperative's history, safety remains our top priority. This year, we reached new heights by setting a record for consecutive days without an employee lost-time injury. Not only did we surpass our previous record of 885 days, but we also celebrated a historic milestone of 1,000 days. That is equivalent to 934,262 hours worked! And the streak continues to grow as I write this.

I am deeply thankful for each day without injury and incredibly proud of the standards we've upheld. As we look ahead, we remain committed to finding even safer ways of operating, staying proactive and vigilant to protect our team and members.

Quality Service

Continuous improvement is central to CHELCO's mission, whether in safety, processes, member services, or electric reliability. In 2024, we focused on preparing for the future while delivering exceptional service today.

With CHELCO growing at an annual rate of more than 4%, we are adding thousands of new members each year. To meet this demand, we've made significant upgrades to our substations, equipping them to handle larger energy loads and ensuring reliable, around-the-clock power.

This year, our Engineering and Operations teams also installed nearly 40 recloser devices. These devices automatically sense and isolate temporary power outages. For example, suppose a tree limb touches a power line. The recloser can sense when the branch is gone and automatically re-energize the line, drastically reducing crew times and helping minimize our most common outages, such as those caused by lightning, wildlife, and fallen limbs.

Value-Added Services and Community Impact

At CHELCO, we take pride in offering programs that go beyond electricity to add value to your lives. In 2024, we continued helping members manage energy usage, protect equipment, and save on monthly bills. We also expanded our outdoor and decorative lighting program, brightening homes, businesses, and neighborhoods.

Our commitment to community impact was stronger than ever this year. Through the Operation Round Up program—100% funded by our

members—we awarded nearly \$100,000 in grants to more than 50 local non-profits. With nearly 30,000 members participating, this program exemplifies the power of collective generosity.

To everyone who contributes to Operation Round Up: thank you. Your small monthly contributions make a significant difference. If you're not already part of this program, I encourage you to learn more at CHELCO.com/Operation-Round-Up. Together, we're creating a brighter future for our community.

Thank You and Merry Christmas!

As we close 2024, I want to thank all of you—our members, employees, and partners—for making this a remarkable year. I am especially grateful to our Board of Trustees, our wholesale power provider PowerSouth, and our subsidiary Southland Utility Services for their unwavering support and dedication.

It is an honor to lead this cooperative, and I have never been prouder to be part of CHELCO.

This Christmas season, I hope you'll join me in spending time with loved ones and reflecting on the true meaning of the holiday. May God bless your family, and may we carry this year's spirit of collaboration and kindness into the year ahead.

Steve Rhodes,
Chief Executive Officer



CHELCO Board of Trustees elections around the corner

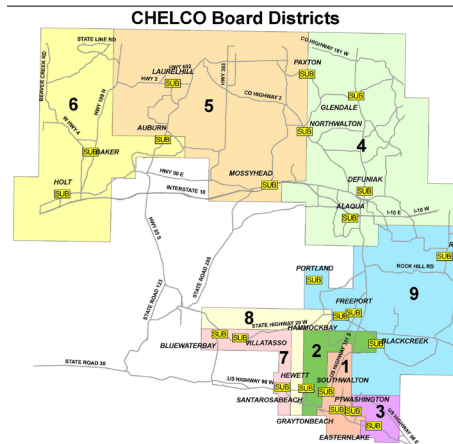


From L to R: Terry Pilcher, Dist. 2; Brady Bearden, Dist. 4; Gerald Edmondson, Dist. 6

Electric co-ops are democratically controlled by the members we serve, which means you have a say in who governs our co-op. By voting in the annual trustee election, you can weigh in on the leaders who will make important decisions about the future of CHELCO and our local energy needs.

CHELCO's board of trustees are community-minded individuals with different skill sets. We rely on them to help us make more informed decisions on long-term priorities and investments. CHELCO has nine trustees who live in the co-op's service area. We consider them the eyes and ears of the community because they provide their unique perspective on various local issues.

In 2025, members will elect trustees representing Districts 2, 4 and 6 through mail-in balloting. All members may vote for each district regardless of their membership district. Results will be announced at the CHELCO Annual Meeting on April 12 at Freeport High School. To learn more, visit www.CHELCO.com/board-trustees.



Important Dates

- **Jan. 30:** Applications due to CHELCO by 4:00 PM
- **Feb. 11:** Candidates' names posted in offices
- **Feb. 21:** Deadline for nominating by petition
- **Mar. 7:** Election ballot packets mailed to members
- **Apr. 7:** Deadline to return ballots via USPS
- **Apr. 12:** CHELCO Annual Meeting at Freeport High School

Capital Credits

CHELCO's Board of Trustees has approved a retirement of more than \$1.4 million in capital credits to be returned to approximately 30,000 members from 2004.

If CHELCO collects more money than it costs to operate, these additional margins are returned to the members. These margins are called capital credits, and the Board of Trustees determines when they are paid out based on the financial needs of the co-op.

CHELCO typically retires capital credits and returns them to members on a 20-year cycle, meaning that those who were CHELCO members in 2004 will receive a capital credit check based on how much business the member did with CHELCO that year.

CHELCO will begin the distribution of capital credits in early December. To search for unclaimed capital credits or learn more about allocations and retirements, visit www.CHELCO.com/capital-credits.

Recipe of the Month



Cranberry Brie Bites

Try out this simple, crowd pleasing appetizer perfect for the Christmas season! Visit CHELCO.com/recipes to learn this recipe and more.

CHELCO is governed by a nine-member board of trustees: Lee Perry, District 1; Terry Pilcher, District 2; Reese Harrison, District 3; Brady Bearden, Vice President, District 4; Ronald Jones, District 5; Gerald Edmondson, President, District 6; Bert Prutzman, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, District 7; Gayle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer, District 8; Dwayne Davis, District 9.

CHELCO to celebrate 85th anniversary in April



Join us in celebrating 85 years of electrification to our members! In 2025, we will celebrate our 85th anniversary of delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity to our members. Although we started out small, we have grown to one of the biggest co-ops in our region. A lot has changed in 85 years, but our core values have always remained the same.

Join us throughout 2025 as we celebrate our co-op, our members, and all that make us who we are. Be on the lookout for a special edition of CHELCO News in January to commemorate our history!

Last Call for Youth Tour applications!



2024 Youth Tour winners Asher Kimbrough, Jonas Mosley, Jack Beauchamp and Emery Hagan

If you are a high school junior and have parents or guardians who are CHELCO members, you are eligible to apply for Youth Tour through your school. Students will tour Tallahassee for two days in February and compete for a chance to visit Washington, D.C., in June 2025. Applications are available through your guidance counselor or on our website at CHELCO.com/youth-tour. Check out our podcast episode below to hear from students who visited Washington, D.C., in 2024!

Important Dates

Dec. 20, 2024: Deadline to apply

Feb. 12-13, 2025: Tallahassee trip

June 16-21, 2025: Washington trip



Listen Now



May Your Holidays Be Merry and Bright

This festive time of year brings joy and warmth, but as the weather gets cooler and we spend more time indoors, the holidays can also bring increased energy use and a higher risk of electrical and fire hazards.

Here are a few practical tips to help you stay safe and efficient during the holiday season.

Before you deck the halls, always check electrical cords and light strands to make sure they aren't frayed or damaged.

Spending more time indoors with a few more guests in the home can really impact home energy use. The thermostat is one of the best places for savings. Lower it a few degrees, especially when you have family or friends stopping by.

Your family can also save energy by decorating with LED holiday lights. LEDs are the most energy efficient lighting options available, and they last much longer than traditional bulbs.

From your friends at CHELCO, we hope your holiday season is merry and bright.

IS \$25 YOURS?

If the account number below matches yours, call us at (850) 892-2111 or stop by any CHELCO office to claim a \$25 credit on your next bill! This month's winner is:

Ringstad - 9000073607