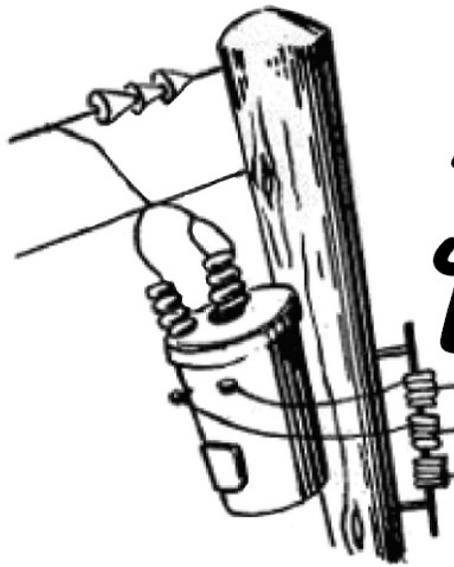


# Pole to Pole News



A Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative 

## Vintage Edition CHELCO News: Beginning to look back at 85 Years

This year marks a significant milestone for CHELCO—85 years of powering our community! Since our founding in 1940, we’ve been dedicated to providing safe, reliable, affordable electric service to our members. As we celebrate this special anniversary, we are taking a trip down memory lane, honoring the rich history that has shaped our cooperative.

To commemorate this occasion, we’re paying homage to our roots by recreating the vintage look of our very first documented newsletter, “Pole to Pole News” which was published in 1960. This edition will capture the classic feel of that era, complete with retro fonts and layouts that bring our history to life.

Throughout this year of celebration, you’ll see more than just nostalgic designs. We’re excited to include historic photos, ads, and other

memorabilia from CHELCO’s early days. These glimpses into the past will be seen throughout our newsletters and communications, allowing our members to join us in reflecting on the journey we’ve taken together.

Since the earliest publications of its newsletter, CHELCO has highlighted the benefits of electrification, helping members understand the value of bringing electricity into their homes. While electrifying homes is no longer as novel of an idea as it was 85 years ago, CHELCO continues to use its newsletter as a vital resource. Today, the newsletter keeps members informed about energy-saving tips, the latest technology trends, and important news from within the cooperative, ensuring that members stay connected and empowered to make smart energy choices. To read more about the evolution of our newsletter, and see archived issues, visit [www.chelco.com/chelco-news](http://www.chelco.com/chelco-news)

### FREE APPLIANCE OFFER

**GREAT FREE APPLIANCE OFFER**

<p>FREE! ..for Co-op Members only..</p> <p>TABLE TOP, ELECTRIC WATER HEATER 30 GALLON DOUBLE ELEMENT</p>		<p>NOTHING TO BUY!</p> <p>ONE CO-OP MEMBER will get absolutely FREE, a 30 gallon, table-top, double element, ELECTRIC WATER HEATER, JUST DEPOSIT signed, certificate at one of the listed Electric Appliance Dealers--by March 31, 1960.</p> <p>NAME _____ ADDRESS _____</p>
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Just tear out the above certificate and deposit at any Appliance Dealer in Crestview, DeFuniak Springs, Florida, or Freeport. Drawing will be at 2:00 P. M., April 5, at CHELCO Office, DeFuniak Springs. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE PRESENT TO WIN !!

**From the March 1960 edition of Pole to Pole News.**  
*(Promotion no longer valid)*

### Share your memories

If you or your family have any old articles, photos, or documents related to CHELCO, we’d love to see them! Share your pieces of history with us and join us in honoring the legacy of CHELCO. To share, items can be mailed or emailed through the following outlets.

By mail: CHELCO (Attn: Communications)  
655 U.S. Highway 331 North  
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435  
*(please include return address or phone number for memorabilia that you would like returned)*



## CEO Insights: What's ahead for your cooperative

With the new year comes a renewed excitement and purpose here at CHELCO. We understand the vital role we play in enhancing the quality of life for our members. We're ready to continue providing safe and reliable power while adapting to the economic and technological changes within our industry.

### Safety & Service

Safety will continue to remain a focus for CHELCO. While we were proud to accomplish 1,000 days and 1,000,000 hours without a lost time injury in the last quarter of 2024, we do not plan to rest on those achievements. Later this year, CHELCO will roll out our new and improved Live Line demo. Available to schools, organizations, first responders, and large groups, our experts use a life-sized model of power lines, poles, and equipment to show the dangers of electricity and how to stay safe around power lines. Progress continues on our new Member Services & Operations Center located off Hwy. 20 and W. Bay Loop Road in Freeport, Florida. Projections indicate the new facility will be complete at the end of this year or early 2026. To learn more about that building, read my announcement article at [CHELCO.com/new-freeport-office](https://CHELCO.com/new-freeport-office).

### More Efficiencies Coming to Engineering & Operations

While contact-less communication became popular in 2020 due to the pandemic, its benefits have continued well into 2025. Paperless solutions offer convenience and efficiency, which businesses and customers have embraced. As a utility company, CHELCO has also adopted these innovations. A great example is our use of Futura's Paperless Workflow system. Futura Systems provides CHELCO staff with state-of-the-art mapping, staking, and outage management technology. And this year, we look forward to expanding that software to include their newest workflow software. Paperless Workflow allows us to dispatch work directly to field representatives via iPads, improving communication and streamlining operations far beyond the office.

### Financial Forecast

Self-proclaimed number nerds, our Finance Division takes great joy in regularly assessing your cooperative's financial well-being. As a member-owned cooperative, we are mindful of our duty to spend cooperative funds responsibly.

Over the past 4-5 years, we have seen dramatic cost increases in building and repairing the electric distribution facility, wages and benefits, and the overall cost of doing business. In fact, this year, CHELCO will buy nearly 1.2 billion kilowatt hours from our wholesale power provider. Those hours will cost CHELCO \$99 million. That's a drastic jump from the \$42 million we spent 20 years ago. This is why we are working with a rate consultant to understand our fast-growing cooperative's future needs and ensure that our rates do not force us to ever sacrifice reliability.

Along with crunching our numbers, we like to see how we stack up to other local and regional co-ops. CHELCO ranks favorably across state and county lines regarding rates. As one of the 16 distribution member systems within the PowerSouth family, CHELCO sits at the top for lowest rates. Additionally, we're in the top 50% for all Florida co-ops. Even more impressive, prior to a modest rate increase in mid-2024, CHELCO had not increased distribution rates for 11 years. In fact, during that time, we decreased rates twice!

### Meeting Members & Our Community

Focusing on convenience, value, and connection, we have a variety of great programs and events slated for 2025. Be sure to follow us on social media through our email blast, website, and newsletter for timely news and events. This year, we will roll out incentives for paperless billing to cut down on rising postage costs. As everyone feels the effects on the economy, our Energy Advisors are here to help members save through our rebate programs, load control, value-added services like surge protection, outdoor and decorative lighting, and much more. CHELCO's community-centered mindset will be evident through our bi-annual Member Appreciation nights, local events and community organizations sponsorship, and charitable giving through the member-funded Operation Round Up and the Drebing Fund, which we discuss in more detail later in this newsletter.

As you see, we have a lot on the horizon, but we are up for the challenge. I will continue to update you as things progress throughout the year. Thanks for your continued support.

**Steve Rhodes**

Chief Executive Officer



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## Announcing the Muriel “Midge” Drebing Fund



*Muriel “Midge” Jane Drebing, 77, of Freeport, FL, peacefully passed away on October 21st, 2021.*

We are pleased to announce the “Drebing Fund” following the bequeathment of approximately \$1.9 million from former cooperative member Mrs. Muriel “Midge” Drebing to the CHELCO Foundation.

Following her passing in October 2021, CHELCO received notice from Mrs. Drebing’s attorneys of the generous gift and her intentions: that the funds benefit the community in need, focusing on education and community programs.

After the approval of the Board of Trustees, CHELCO invested the money from the Drebing trust to earn interest, dividends and other capital gains. The gains and earnings were designated for community programs rather than the invested principle, ensuring the gift’s longevity.

In the summer of 2024, CHELCO partnered with United Way Emerald Coast (UWEC) to distribute funds to local charitable organizations. Through the UWEC Partner Agency Certification, all 2024 recipients were rigorously vetted and met standards for transparency, financial health and governance. In 2024, funds were split into two categories.

A large portion of the funds – \$67,500 – was awarded to 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations working in CHELCO’s service territory to support critical needs. The other portion – around \$22,500 – was distributed to agencies that assist CHELCO members with utility payment assistance.

“Mrs. Drebing’s vision will allow us to extend support to members and programs that will create meaningful, lasting benefits,” said CHELCO CEO Steve Rhodes. “Her generosity speaks to the very heart of cooperative values – strengthening our communities and supporting one another. We are committed to honoring her legacy with responsibility and care.”

CHELCO is grateful to Mrs. Drebing for her profound contribution, which will touch many lives throughout our area for years.

To learn more about the Drebing Fund and other charitable outlets CHELCO contributes to through its CHELCO Foundation, visit <https://www.chelco.com/charitable-chelco>.

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## CHELCO Board of Trustees election information

CHELCO’s Board of Trustees elections are coming up. If you are eligible and interested in running, applications are available at CHELCO offices and online at [CHELCO.com/board-trustees](https://www.chelco.com/board-trustees).

This year, Districts 2, 4 and 6 will be up for election through mail-in balloting. Each trustee represents a geographical area of CHELCO’s service territory, and candidates must be a member in good standing and live in their district for at least one year before running. If you are unsure of the district in which you live, it can be found on your monthly power bill, and you can view our Board District map below.

Applications are due to CHELCO by close of business (4 PM) on Jan. 30, and the deadline for nominations by petition is Feb. 21.

In early March, ballot packets will be...

*cont’d on page 4*

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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.

## Robinson named 2024 Award Recipient

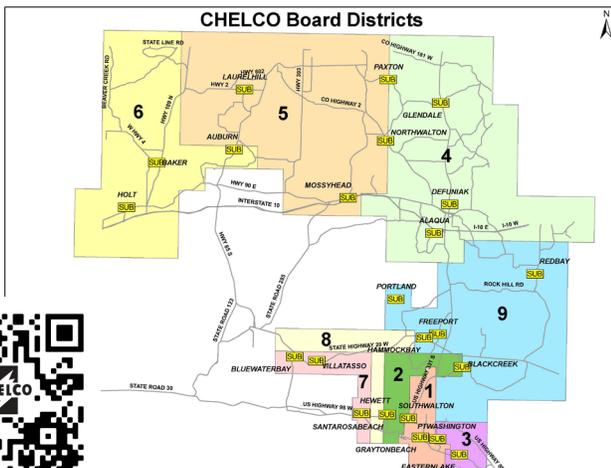
We proudly announce that CHELCO Lead Member Services Representative Beverly Robinson has been named the 2024 GEM (Going the Extra Mile) of the Year due, in part, to her invaluable knowledge, expertise, and leadership to the Member Services Department. Beverly will celebrate 28 years with the cooperative this April and we are beyond blessed to have her on our team. Congratulations, Beverly!



## election cont'd...

distributed to all members of the cooperative and must be returned no later than April 7 to be counted.

The results of the 2025 Board of Trustees elections will be announced at the 2025 CHELCO Annual Meeting at Freeport High School on Saturday, April 12. We hope to see you there!



## Pilcher elected FECA 2025 Board President



*Pilcher (right) with Jimmy Patronis, Florida's Chief Financial Officer, State Fire Marshal, and member of the Florida Cabinet*

Last month, CHELCO Trustee Terry Pilcher (District 2) was elected Board President for the Florida Electric Cooperatives Association, Inc. (FECA), Founded in December 1950, FECA is the professional trade association that represents

the collective interests of 18 electric cooperatives, including 16 electric distribution cooperatives and two generation and transmission cooperatives, providing electric service in Florida.

## Energy Efficiency Tip

Start the new year off right by making energy efficiency a priority in your home. January's colder temperatures often mean higher energy usage, so take simple steps to keep costs in check. Seal any drafts around doors and windows with weatherstripping or caulking to prevent heat loss, and lower the temperature while you're away from home. Doing these simple things will save you money this month!

## \$25 Bill Credit Winner



If the account number below matches yours, call (850) 892-2111 to redeem a \$25 bill credit on your next power bill!  
**Mulcahey - 9000133980**

## Stay Informed

Find @myCHELCO on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube & X (formerly Twitter)  
Visit [www.CHELCO.com](http://www.CHELCO.com) for more information.