

Rounding Up Can Help Your Community

Giving less than a dollar every month adds up through the year

Have you ever thought about giving your extra change to help someone less fortunate? You can help make a difference in our community.

Graham County Electric Cooperative is proud to offer the Operation Round-Up program to our members. The process started about a year ago when the GCEC Board of Directors approved the establishment of a nonprofit 501(c)(3) in February 2017. After management investigated the program created by Palmetto Electric Cooperative in South Carolina in 1989, Graham County Electric Cooperative Foundation Inc. was formed under Arizona State laws.

Since the original adoption of Operation Round-Up in 1989, more than 200 electric cooperatives nationwide participate in the charitable program designed to provide to their local communities. All contributions to Operation Round-Up are tax deductible.

The bylaws state, "All the earnings and property of the corporation shall be used to further the charitable and educational purposes and objects of the corporation."

You can make a difference in our community. Funds are used in many different venues, such as helping other nonprofit organizations, community projects, investing in our students' education and investing in our leaders of tomorrow. The foundation provides families in our community with utility assistance through a screening process, provide a scholarship to each of our five local high schools, sponsor students for the Washington Youth Tour. The foundation plans to review other opportunities

to make a difference in our community.

The funds are administrated by five volunteer directors: three appointed from the GCEC Board of Directors, one appointed from the GCEC membership, and one appointed from management. The GCEC Foundation directors will have staggered terms. They are tasked with reviewing grant applications for disbursement of funds to community projects, underprivileged families and other designated venues.

Foundation President and GCEC Office Manager Kim Larkey says donating is easy. Member's can select from three donation options:

- 1) Round up their bill to the next whole dollar.
- 2) Round up their bill to the next dollar each month, plus add a fixed amount.
- 3) Make a one-time donation.

"With the help of the community, we can make a difference," Kim says. "All donations are important."

To sign up, go to www.gce.coop, look under the Member Services tab, locate Operation Round-Up in the drop-down box, find the form to complete and return it to the office. There also is a form on page 5 of this magazine to fill out and mail in when you pay your electric, gas or water bill.

Although the individual change averages \$6 a year, when combined with other participating co-op members, the potential impact could make a substantial difference in our community. Operation Round-Up is an extension of the "neighbor helping neighbor" concept that built our electric cooperative almost 75 years ago. ■

You Can Make a Difference

Graham County Electric Cooperative Inc. is proud to offer Operation Round-Up, which was approved by our board of directors in February 2017.

Funds collected are used to benefit local nonprofit organizations, youth education, community projects and utility assistance.

Join us in supporting our community in one of the following ways:

- Round-up your bill to the next whole dollar amount.
- Round-up Plus by rounding up, plus an additional amount.
- Single-up by donating any dollar amount one time.

To complete the enrollment process, fill out the registration below and mail, drop off or submit online at www.gce.coop.

Operation Round-Up

Name: _____

Account Number: _____

Service Address: _____

Choose your enrollment option below (check one). All options will begin with your next bill.

- Round up my bill to the next dollar each month.
- Round up my bill to the next dollar each month plus a fixed amount. \$ _____
- Make a one-time additional donation. \$ _____

SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____

Return this form with your bill or deliver it to the GCEC office.

Terms and Conditions

By submitting this form, you authorize Graham County Electric to enroll you in Operation Round-Up. Each month, your electric billed will be rounded up to the next whole dollar or the amount specified (if any). These rounded funds will be donated to Graham County Electric Cooperative Foundation Inc. All contributions to Operation Round-Up are tax deductible. You will remain enrolled in Operation Round-Up until you notify Graham County Electric Cooperative Inc. in writing of your intent to discontinue your participation.

Save the Date

Annual Meeting in February

Graham County Electric Cooperative is preparing for the upcoming annual meeting Saturday, February 10, at 10 a.m. in the Pima School cafeteria.

You will have the opportunity to participate in the one-member, one-vote process that sets co-ops apart from other business models.

The process of electing directors has begun. Petitions for those wishing to run for seats had to be turned in by closed of business January 4. The incumbents are Jim Bryce, District 1; Gerald Schmidt, District 2; and Mark Claridge, District 3.

Ballots will be mailed to members the week of January 16 and must be returned to the office by noon on February 8. Do not mail it with your payment. Please use the envelope that was enclosed with your ballot.

As members, it is important to vote, even if candidates are unopposed.

Election results will be reported by the election committee chairperson at the meeting, along with reports from Board President Dennis Jacob and CEO/General Manager Kirk Gray, and guest reports from the generation and statewide organizations, Arizona Electric Power Cooperative and Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association.

Save the date now to be there. We are looking forward to seeing you. ■



Above, the crowd hears news about the cooperative's financial condition and events that affect rates. Top, members register at the 2017 annual meeting.

Washington Youth Tour Winners Announced

The 2018 Washington Your Tour participants have been selected and are listed below. More information on our winners will be in the March Currents.

- ▶ Brock Jones, Thatcher High School
- ▶ Hayden Ashby, Pima High School
- ▶ Trae Nelson, Pima High School
- ▶ Camilla Larson, Safford High School

Thank you to all those students who participated. Each year, we have great students who apply and make the selection process difficult for the panel of judges.

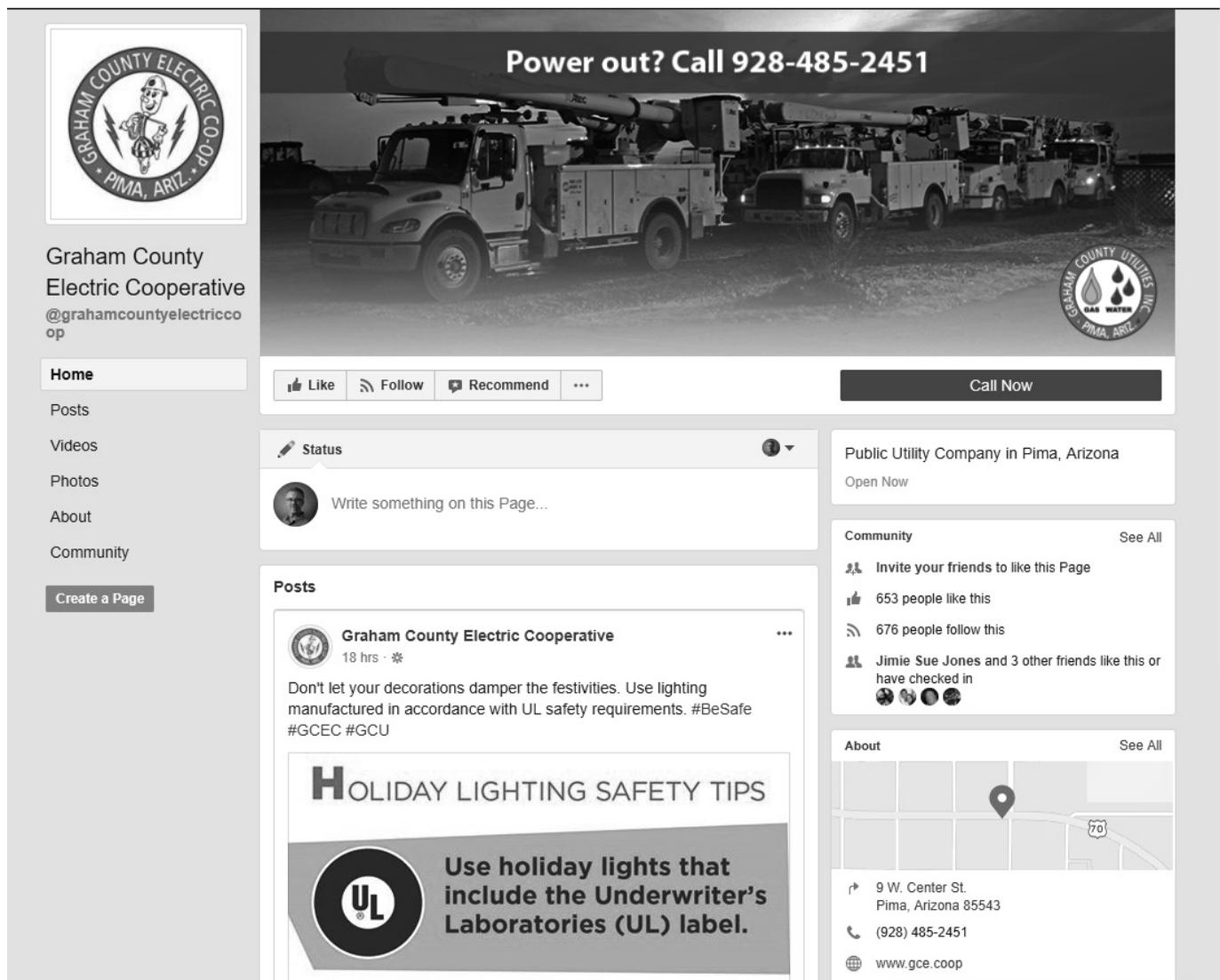
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Manager's Message

Capital Credits Legislation

Last year, Graham County Electric Cooperative members unanimously approved a change to the bylaws that would allow unclaimed capital credit retirement payments to be used to fund valuable services in our community.

GCEC established a foundation to provide youth scholarships, educational opportunities and assistance for low-income cooperative members, but the funding for this foundation depended on passage of a bill by the Arizona legislature.

The Legislature failed to pass that bill last session. GCEC and Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association, along with all the other electric cooperatives in Arizona, are working to re-introduce legislation to fund those needed programs.

All of the state's unique, not-for-profit electric cooperatives return their margins—what for-profit utilities call profits—to their members. If former members cannot be found, the capital credits are returned to the cooperative. Arizona's electric cooperatives, like other cooperatives across the country, have historically used these resources to support charitable groups and service organizations for things such as classroom grants, scholarships and other educational programs.

That may end. In 2016, the Arizona Department of Revenue re-interpreted the law, allowing the state to take possession of unclaimed property, including those returned



capital credits. This interpretation reversed decades of guidance and interpretation from the department that allowed for the establishment of these programs. Prior to the 2016 interpretation, communications to the cooperatives indicated cooperatives were exempt from unclaimed property laws and were well within their rights to conduct these programs.

Unless legislation is passed in the 2018 state legislative session clarifying cooperatives' ability to retain those returned capital credits, the money will wind up in the state's general fund, and is not likely to go back to the communities from which it came.

These programs are about more than dollars and cents, or how one person's interpretation differs from another. The true impact of these programs is felt within the rural communities they benefit, by the children and families who live there.

GCEC is proud to support our rural communities. And we support the 2018 legislation that provides an exemption for returned capital credit payments from Arizona's unclaimed property laws, so cooperatives can keep these resources local. Let's hope lawmakers listen and vote for it.

Please watch for our legislative grassroots efforts to get this important legislation across the finish line.

—Kirk Gray