

Currents

GRAHAM COUNTY

JULY 2021

Pursuing Art On the Road

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Graham County Electric is installing new long-life steel poles along the Hillcrest to Sanchez line project. See story on page 4. PHOTO BY DIANE JUNION

GCEC Foundation Awards Scholarships | Operation Round-Up



Graham County Electric Cooperative crews ready new cable for the Hillcrest to Sanchez line scheduled to be completed next year.

Hillcrest to Sanchez New Line Project

Upgraded line increases service reliability and capacity to serve future load

By Diane Junion

Several years ago, the Graham County Electric Cooperative management team developed a five-year work plan that included building a new power line from Hillcrest to Sanchez.

The project is expected to take about a year to complete, but regular system maintenance and seasonal storm outages could cause delays. Once completed, the project replaces

and upgrades 9.97 miles of distribution line and ensures more reliable power for members.

Crews began work in January 2021. North across the Gila River, the crews started in the Hillcrest area and completed the new line going east along Airport Road to CKC Construction & Materials facility.

H&H Contracting was hired to dig 33 holes for the power poles.

The holes can be up to 5 feet wide. The holes are bored out and a wire cage is lowered into the hole. The crews install rebar and pour 25 yards of concrete in each hole.

After the concrete is cured, huge nuts and bolts are

installed to secure the base of the steel power pole.

GCEC crews worked along Sanchez Road on the east end of the project. The final leg will be to connect the two ends and install poles in the middle sections around the airport.

Building new line alongside the old requires coordination with farmers to minimize the disruption of irrigation service. Several poles in hard-to-reach locations will be relocated.

Since January, the crews have installed 106 poles, with another 76 poles scheduled for installation. About a half-mile of line will be installed underground because some areas are not conducive to poles due to a shortage of space along the road.

Once all poles are placed for the new line, crews will install new wiring with increased capacity.

Switching stations have been installed on the line to enable the cooperative to reroute power across another section of line. This provides more reliable electric service to members on that section.

GCEC continues to look for opportunities to increase capacity for future growth needs in the Gila Valley.

This is another example of GCEC's commitment to our mission statement: "We are committed to provide safe, reliable and efficient resources to enhance the lives of our members and the communities we serve." ■



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Metal poles and wire span a section of the roadway. A rebar cage is readied for lowering into the hole to form the pole base. Crews pour concrete to create the stable base needed to anchor the metal power poles.

GCEC Foundation Provides Scholarships

\$10,000 awarded to local seniors

Each year, the Graham County Electric Cooperative Foundation provides scholarships to local high school students to help continue their education.

Due to COVID-19, the 2020 Washington Youth Tour was canceled by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and our Arizona partner, Grand Canyon State Electric Association. This was a big disappointment to the students selected in December 2019. The GCEC foundation board met in 2020 to determine an alternative for the student delegation. The board voted unanimously to award the 2020 WYT winners with \$1,500 scholarships to help further their educational journeys after high school.

The following high school seniors received scholarships:

Ft. Thomas High School

- McKia Preston, \$500
- Kendra Fuentes, \$1,500 (WYT)

Mt. Graham High School

- Matthew Mayer, \$500

Pima High School

- Brookie Bryce, \$500
- Jacob Beals, \$1,500 (WYT)
- Kali Nelson, \$1,500 (WYT)

Safford High School

- Hannah Smith, \$500
- Trett Wiltbank, \$1,500 (WYT-transferred to Pima)

Thatcher High School

- Maci Lopeman, \$250
- Dallys Casillas, \$250
- Mazie Hunt, \$1,500 (WYT)

In addition, equipment will be donated to the Eastern Arizona College automotive class in memory of Kade Nelson, a WYT recipient from Thatcher High School who died in a vehicle accident in 2020.

Information on annual scholarships, along with biographies and pictures, will be featured in the September issue of Currents.



Pima High School senior Brookie Bryce receives a \$500 scholarship from GCEC/GCU Director Gerald Schmidt.



Ft. Thomas High School senior McKia Preston receives a \$500 scholarship from GCEC/GCU Director Steve Hooper.

Rounding Up Can Help Your Community

Small contributions every month add up throughout the year

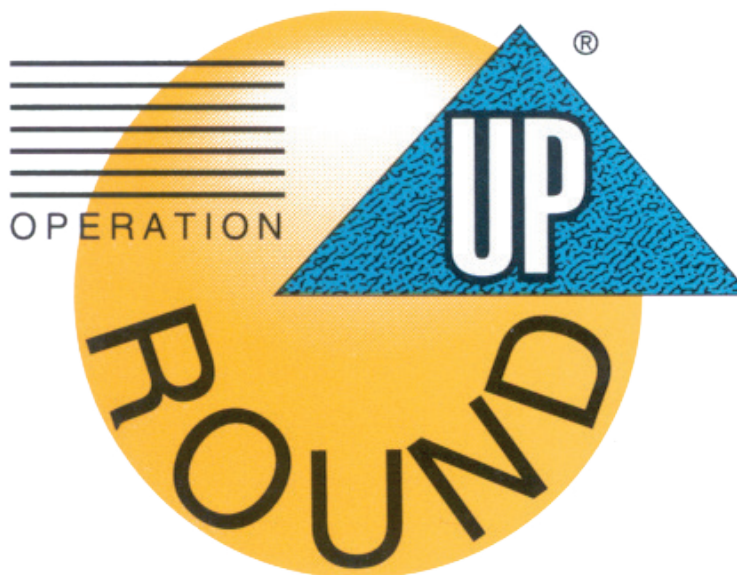
Have you considered giving your extra change to help others with scholarships and other types of support?

Graham County Electric Cooperative is proud to offer the Operation Round-Up program to our members. Operation Round-Up started in 2017, when the GCEC Board of Directors established a nonprofit 501(c)(3). 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 1989 creation of Operation Round-Up by South Carolina's Palmetto Electric, more than 200 electric cooperatives nationwide participate in the charitable program designed to provide for 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 ways, 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, provides a scholarship to each of our five local high schools, and sponsors students for the Washington Youth Tour. Last year, funds were provided to the Safe House and St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. The foundation plans



to review other opportunities to make a difference in our community.

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 have staggered terms. They review 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. Members can select from three donation options:

- Round up their bills to the next whole dollar.
- Round up their bills to the next dollar each month, plus add a fixed amount.
- Make a one-time donation.

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

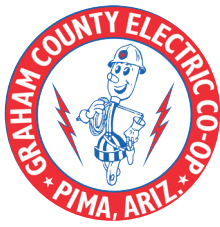
Although the average household

How to Participate

Signing up is easy, just check the box at the top of your billing statement. You will find program details on the back of the bill. To sign up online, go to www.gce.coop, look under the Member Services tab, locate Operation Round-Up in the drop-down box, save completed form, upload your document by using the link to the right or print and return it to the office.

Visit page 8 to see how Operation Round-Up funds are helping local students continue their education.

contributes \$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 more than 75 years ago. ■



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Manager's Message

Prepare for Summer Storms

The Arizona monsoon season runs from June 15 to September 30. Storm season brings much-needed rain and sometimes high wind as the systems roll through our valley. High wind can cause flying debris and break tree limbs, which wreak havoc with our electrical lines. Our staff is ready to respond by providing outage restoration and communications 24/7/365. Here are some suggestions on how to be prepared for outages year-round.

- **Have a storm emergency kit available for use during extended outages.** Make sure you have drinking water available—at least 1 gallon per person per day. Water pressure can be affected during extended outages. Make sure you have easy-to-prepare nonperishable food. Have flashlights and extra batteries and/or candles. Have a fully stocked first aid kit. Keep several days' worth of prescription medications on hand, because your local pharmacy may be affected by outages. Have a cellphone and a battery-operated cellphone charger available. Annually replace batteries in thermostats, smoke detectors, sprinkler systems and any device with a battery backup to reduce frustration.

- **Stay away from downed wires or electric equipment.** Do not attempt to remove any trees or debris in power lines or communications lines. If you happen to be in a vehicle near



downed power lines, do not get out of your vehicle. Remain in the vehicle until emergency response personnel or electric cooperative personnel let you know it is safe to exit the vehicle. The National Weather Service's rule of thumb is "When thunder roars, go indoors." Lightning can strike 10 miles in advance of a storm.

- **Please be patient while waiting to talk to dispatch personnel during outages.** Unless you have an emergency or have information that will help our crews identify the possible cause of the outage, we encourage you to follow us on our Facebook page. We will continually update our Facebook page with pertinent information until the power is restored. Following us on Facebook keeps our phone system available for emergency situations, such as gas or water outages and additional electric outages.

These are just a few tips and suggestions to help make outages a little more bearable. Regardless of the magnitude of an outage, our line crews and dispatch personnel work tirelessly to get as many members' power, gas and water back on as soon as possible. Our primary concern is the safety of our crews, the general public and you, our member-owners.

Phil Cook
CEO and General Manager



Touchstone Energy®
The power of human connections