

Rayle Lines

Member Newsletter



July 2026

The Official Newsletter of Rayle Electric Membership Corporation

Tony Griffin of Rayle EMC named Distinguished Cooperator

For his dedicated support and service to cooperatives, long-time electric cooperative champion and Rayle EMC General Manager Tony Griffin was named a 2026 Distinguished Cooperator by the Georgia Cooperative Council.

Griffin's career in the electric utility industry is a testament to his commitment, hard work and passion for serving his community and the cooperative business model. Starting as a meter reader at Rayle EMC in March 1981, he steadily advanced through the ranks, gaining hands-on experience and expertise in every aspect of the organization. From lineman trainee in 1983 to general manager in 2009, Griffin's 45-year journey reflects not only his professional growth but also his deep appreciation for the cooperative principles that guide Rayle EMC's mission.

A graduate of Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School, Griffin furthered his education at Middle Georgia College and Athens Technical College. Along the way, he became a licensed electrician and certified arborist, showcasing his dedication to lifelong learning and professional excellence.

Griffin's impact extends far beyond Rayle EMC. Over the years, he has served on several key boards that have shaped the cooperative and energy sectors, including Green Power EMC, Georgia Energy Cooperative,



Jeff Paul, left, congratulates Rayle EMC General Manager Tony Griffin on his award.

Georgia Right-of-Way, the Georgia EMC Economic Development Committee and Oglethorpe Power's advisory board.

He's also taken on leadership roles as President of the Georgia Rural Electric Managers Association and Vice President of the Georgia Cooperative Council, where his vision and expertise have left a lasting impression.

"Thanks to his 45 years of service, Tony is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to EMCs," says Jeff Paul, Director of Member Services at Walton EMC and Georgia Cooperative Council Treasurer. "He is the standard for me of what an EMC employee should be."

Nominees for distinguished cooperators may be a director, agent, professional, public official or other individual who deserves recognition for his or her commitment to cooperatives and efforts on behalf of a cooperative.

The Georgia Cooperative Council is a statewide, non-profit cooperative with members representing marketing, supply, financial, electric, telephone, cotton, dairy and service organizations.

The council promotes the cooperative movement through proactive programs in education, communications and public relations and recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to cooperative businesses.

Local student receives EMC scholarship

Lincoln County High School student Kate McWhorter is a 2026 recipient of the Walter Harrison Scholarship awarded by electric membership corporations (EMCs) in Georgia, including Rayle EMC.

Kate competed against 85 other students from across Georgia for the scholarship, which provides \$1,000 to help offset the rising costs associated with obtaining a college degree. Nineteen scholarships were awarded to students statewide who were chosen based on their academic achievements, extracurricular activities and service to the community.

"The caliber of scholarship applicants keeps rising every year," says Richard Heard, Member Services Director at Rayle EMC. "Rayle EMC takes great pride in supporting the education of such a talented young individual, who has already shown remarkable academic success and a strong commitment to our community."

Kate is the daughter of Ben and Cathy McWhorter of Lincolnton. She is a graduate of Lincoln County High School, where she was a member of the cheer, cheer competition, basketball and soccer teams, in addition to the Georgia Border Bowl Cheer Team. Her honors include being named a STAR Student, Cheer Devils Marcella Goldman Award, Cheer Devils Best Attitude and Leader Award, Junior Varsity Girls Soccer Offensive MVP and Washington-Wilkes/Lincoln Retired Educator Award.

Kate will be attending the University of Georgia in the fall to pursue an undergraduate degree in human development and family sciences so she can then pursue a nursing degree.

Scholarship applicants were asked to submit a short

essay detailing why they would be strong candidates for the honor, while also sharing their educational and career aspirations, along with any unique circumstances. This was an opportunity for students to emphasize their community involvement or passion for serving others. The selection committee considered school performance, GPA, academic honors, extracurricular activities and financial need in their decision-making process.

The Walter Harrison Scholarship Executive Committee is composed of the Georgia EMC board chairman and vice chairman, the Georgia EMC Services Committee chairman and the managers of Excelsior EMC and Planters EMC. Each committee member individually reviewed blind copies of all applications and scored each scholarship to determine a final ranking. Georgia EMC compiled the judges' choices to determine the

winners, with the 19 highest scorers receiving scholarships. Scholarships may be used at any two-year or four-year college in Georgia, as well as technical colleges.

The scholarship was created in 1985 by the board of directors of Georgia EMC and is named in honor of Walter Harrison, a pioneer in the rural electricity movement and a leader at the local, state and national levels among EMCs.

It is funded by Georgia's 41 EMCs, including Rayle EMC, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the Georgia Rural Electric Supply Corp. Since 1987, more than \$290,000 has been awarded to approximately 309 students through the Walter Harrison Scholarship.



Kate McWhorter

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Running multiple major appliances at the same time—like your dishwasher, laundry machines and oven—can spike energy demand and strain the grid, especially during peak hours (typically late afternoon to early evening). Instead of stacking appliance use, spread it out throughout the day or shift chores to off-peak hours when energy demand is lower. This not only helps improve overall efficiency but can also reduce your energy costs. A simple habit change, like doing laundry in the morning and running the dishwasher overnight, can make a meaningful difference for both your wallet and energy reliability.



Rayle EMC awards scholarships to seven local students



Rayle EMC takes pride in giving back to its members in various ways throughout the year. One of the methods of giving in 2026 is by awarding scholarships to students in its service area.

General Manager Tony Griffin is proud to announce Rayle EMC awarded seven students in Rayle EMC's service area a \$1,000 scholarship each. Students receiving the scholarships were Aubrey Branan from Taliaferro County; Callie Bridges and Cole Faust from Oglethorpe County; and Jonathan Conard, Sophia Eligio, Amelia Hall and Ethan Hardy from Wilkes County.



Aubrey Branan,
Briarwood Academy

Aubrey Branan

Aubrey Branan is the daughter of Kelly Branan of Crawfordville. She is a graduate of Briarwood Academy, where she was a member of the softball and basketball teams, Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), Honors Society, Kindness Club, Prom Committee and student council, and she is an active member of the Warrenton

First Baptist Church youth group. Her honors include Honor Roll, President's Award of Educational Excellence, College Board AP Scholar and Coach's Awards for softball and basketball. Aubrey will be attending the University of Georgia in the fall to pursue a degree in occupational therapy.



Jonathan Conard,
Washington-Wilkes
Comprehensive
High School

Jonathan Conard

Jonathan Conard is the son of John and Beth Conard of Washington. He is a graduate of Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School, where he was a member of the football team, FFA, FCA and National Honor Society. His honors include receiving the Golden Helmet Award for football, College Board Rural and Small-Town Recognition Award, UGA Merit Scholar, STAR Athlete of

the Week and Top History Student of the Year. Conard will be attending Georgia Southern University in the fall to pursue a degree in construction management.

Callie Bridges

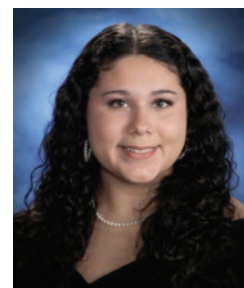
Callie Bridges is the daughter of Phillip and Leigh Anne Bridges of Lexington. She is a graduate of Oglethorpe County High School, where she was a member of the Prom Committee, National Honor Society, Beta Club, student council, FFA and FCA, and she is an active member of the Salem Baptist Church youth group. Her honors include being a Governor's Honors finalist, Rotary Club Student of the Month, National Certificate of Merit recipient, A Honor Roll student and a first-place winner in the FFA State Floral Design. Callie will be attending the University of Georgia in the fall to pursue a degree in marketing or finance.



Callie Bridges,
Oglethorpe County
High School

Sophia Eligio

Sophia Eligio is the daughter of Alejandro and Barbara Eligio of Washington. She is a graduate of Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School, where she was a member of the Key Club, National Honor Society and TRIO program (academic tutoring program). Her honors include being named valedictorian and being a recipient of the AP Scholar Award, Georgia Certificate of Merit, GREA Academic Award and Certificate of Achievement Awards for English, Language Arts, AP Government and Honors Spanish III. Sophia also served as a volunteer dance teacher at the Washington Dance Academy. She will be attending Georgia Southern University to study psychology.



Sophia Eligio,
Washington-Wilkes
Comprehensive
High School

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Cole Faust

Cole Faust is the son of Charles and Kimberly Faust of Carlton. He is a graduate of Oglethorpe County High School, where he was a member of FFA, Beta Club, National Honor Society and FCA. His honors include Honor Roll for all four years of high school and being a recipient of the Georgia Certificate of Merit. Cole will be attending Abraham Baldwin Agricultural

College to study agriculture education. 10th grade, second-highest academic average in ninth grade, being on Honor Roll and receiving the Rural and Small-Town Recognition Award, First-Generation Recognition Award and a State FFA Degree. Amelia will be attending Georgia Southern University to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering.

Cole Faust,
Oglethorpe County
High School

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Amelia Hall

Amelia Hall is the daughter of Wade and Renee Hall of Washington. She is a graduate of Lincoln County High School, where she was a member of the National Beta Club, FFA, FCA, chorus and the Lincoln County Red Pride Jazz Band. Her honors include having the highest academic average in



Amelia Hall,
Lincoln County
High School

Ethan Hardy

Ethan Hardy is the son of Chris and Monica Hardy of Washington. He is a graduate of Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School, where he was a member of the cross-country and tennis teams, Key Club, Interact Club, FFA, Student Ambassadors and Sources of Strength. His honors include being salutatorian, and receiving the Business Student of the Year Award, as well as being named a STAR Student and an AP Scholar. Ethan will be attending Georgia Southern University to pursue a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.



Ethan Hardy,
Washington-Wilkes
Comprehensive
High School

Annual Wilkes-Lincoln Farm Safety Camp

The Wilkes-Lincoln farm safety camp was held Thursday, May 28, at the McGill-Woodruff Agricultural Center in Washington, with more than 130 pre-registered campers. The camp featured classes for children ages 6-11 on fire safety, lawnmower safety, electrical safety, first aid, gun safety, bus safety and reptiles and birds of prey by Rock Eagle Environmental Education.

Rayle EMC employees Madeline Callaway, Josh McLeroy, Suzie Weaver and Paul Wilson volunteered to lead groups around to each demonstration. Rayle EMC employees Paul Wright and Ronnie Mann led the electrical



Ronnie Mann, left, and Paul Wright present a high-voltage safety demonstration showing the dangers of coming into contact with energized lines.

safety presentation. Wright taught the children the dangers associated with electricity and provided safety tips to help the children understand the importance of staying away from fallen powerlines.

The lawnmower safety demonstration was provided by Rayle EMC Director Kyle Brown and Kyle Wilson, Wilkes County Young Farmer advisor. They reviewed safety guidelines the children should follow when around lawnmowers.

The Farm Safety Camp was created to help increase safety awareness among our local children by communicating the dangers associated with rural farm activities.