

Beating the Odds

WALTON ELECTRIC TRUST SCHOLARSHIP MAKES COLLEGE DREAM A REALITY

“I never thought college was a possibility. I had lost hope...”

Not so long ago, FlorEstrella Rojas — Stella to her friends — thought she had little to look forward to after high school graduation.

In the foster care system since age 6, she bounced from place to place, never attending the same school for very long. Personal safety was a frequent concern. School took a back seat to being primary caregiver for a disabled sibling.

Things took a turn for the better a while after the two arrived in Walton County. Stella attended Loganville High School for four years, despite changing homes three times.

The idea of college formed as her home life finally stabilized. Encouragement from a new foster family and a Department of Children and Family Services caseworker allowed her to believe she could be among the 3% of foster care youths who obtain a college degree.

By her senior year, Stella was earning good grades and teachers twice named her Student of



the Semester. Dr. Brad Boleman, school principal, lauded her ability to “lean into the hard things and not only survive but thrive.”

Personal drive, plus a \$4,000 Walton Electric Trust scholarship, are helping the local student achieve her college dream. She plans to attend Kennesaw State University, working toward a degree in criminology with a minor in psychology. After, she wants a career in law enforcement, specializing in forensics.

“I have spent my life being a statistic and am ready for that to change,” the 19-year-old said.

“I’m now optimistic about my future.”

2023 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Archer High School

Jacob Ball

Brookwood High School

Bryson Handy
Eden Melka

Dacula High School

Tori Totman

George Walton Academy

Timothy Pham

Grayson High School

Carlos Ceron
Morgan Pickeral

Loganville Christian Academy

Elijah McClintock
Stella Rojas
Presley Whitaker

Monroe Area High School

Ellie Brooks
Maxwell Hendricks

Morgan County High School

Destiny Hunter

North Oconee High School

Sarah Arnold
Cofer Hall
Michelle Li

Oconee County High School

Victor Huang
Jack Marable
Samuel Rue
Avery Van Laar
Mary Ella Worthington

Oglethorpe County High School

Nathaniel Irwin

Parkview High School

Naomie Dargon

Prince Avenue Christian School

Sydney Gilbert

Providence Christian Academy

Lydia Panek

South Gwinnett High School

Zoie Dozier

Trinity Prep School

Kensington Hammons
Patricia Sears

Walnut Grove High School

Alexis Baldwin
Braxton Brooks
Gwyneth Green
Shelby Redding

Walton EMC
Customer-Owned Electric Power

realite

JULY '23

- > plugged in
- > energy savers
- > operation round up
- > beating the odds

LINEMEN
COMPETE IN



Seven Walton EMC apprentice linemen put their mental and physical electric utility work skills to the test during the 2023 Georgia Lineman’s Rodeo held May 6 in Fort Valley.

Professionals representing electric co-ops and municipal electric systems from across the state competed in a series of events involving traditional lineman skills and tasks. The competition provides a continuing education opportunity with a focus on safety and training, said Adam Simmons, Walton EMC journeyman lineman and crew leader, who coached the Walton EMC team.

This year, 126 apprentice linemen competed in four events. Linemen must complete a five-year apprenticeship to earn the journeyman lineman designation.

Apprentice Mason Tolbert was Walton EMC’s highest finisher, ranking 17th overall.



PHOTOS

ABOVE: Representing Walton EMC at the 2023 Georgia Linemen’s Rodeo are, from left, Phillip Mork, Steven Favinger, Cody Jarrett, Adam Simmons (coach), Mason Tolbert, Nate Howell, Ryan Garner and Caleb Tallant. INSET: Walton EMC journeyman linemen David Abbott and Adam Simmons, both kneeling, provide last-minute suggestions to help apprentice Nate Howell prepare to compete in a skills event.

Walton EMC
waltonemc.com

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quick guide

IF YOUR POWER IS OUT

770.267.2505

waltonemc.com > Report an Outage

WHEN WE’RE AVAILABLE

Power Outages and Emergencies > 24/7

Contact Center > M-F, 7A-7P

Business Offices > M-F, 8A-5P

find us

Monroe 842 US Hwy. 78

Snellville 3645 Lenora Church Rd.

Watkinsville 2061-D Hog Mountain Rd.

Web waltonemc.com

Facebook facebook.com/waltonemc

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Youtube youtube.com/emctv

our leaders

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Senior VP Corporate Services Russell DeLong

CFO/Senior VP Finance Marsha Shumate

VP Walton Energy and External Affairs
Jim Bottone

VP Engineering and Operations Tim Morris

VP Power Supply Hudson Kingery

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walton gas

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emc security

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©2023 Walton EMC is a customer-owned power company. That means our cooperative focuses on service, not profit. We serve more than 135,000 accounts in Athens-Clarke, Barrow, DeKalb, Greene, Gwinnett, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Rockdale and Walton Counties.

Our subsidiaries supply natural gas and security services.

New PURPA Standards for Consideration

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) amended the Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act of 1978 (PURPA), by adding two new provisions that must be considered by electric utilities. The new provisions pertain to (1) demand response and (2) electric vehicle charging programs. In accordance with the requirements, electric utilities are to consider the two standards and determine whether to adopt each one by November 15, 2023.

Summary of the New Purpa Standards To Be Considered:

- 1) Demand Response program goals
 - a) Promote the use of demand response and demand flexibility practices in order to reduce electric consumption during periods of unusually high demand
- 2) Electric Vehicle (EV) charging program goals
 - a) Promote and improve charging options
 - b) Improve the customer experience associated with EV charging
 - c) Encourage third-party investment in EV charging infrastructure

Notice of PURPA Hearing

Walton EMC has posted to its PURPA page (WaltonEMC.com/purpa) its initial positions in regard to the proposed standards. The public is invited to read those positions and provide any comments. All comments received by Friday, Aug. 25, will be considered in developing its final position to be presented to the Walton EMC Board of Directors for its final determination. The final determination of the Board will be posted to the PURPA page as well as the Walton EMC web page.

PLUGGED IN

Q: Can you help me purchase a standby generator for my home?

A: Walton EMC teams with its own materials supply cooperative, GRESKO, and another Georgia-based electrical solutions company, Anderson Power Services, to make it easy for co-op customer-owners to purchase and install a quality Generac home standby generator at a competitive price. In addition, the co-op's HomePlus Loan is available to finance any generator purchase for qualified EMC members.

Walton EMC customer-owners can schedule a free, no-obligation site survey by calling Anderson Power Services at 770.796.0047. A professional from Anderson will survey your home to review your power needs and provide a quote for a generator unit and installation.



ENERGY SAVERS DO A LITTLE, SAVE A LOT

Set your thermostat at 78 degrees and leave it alone. Even a one-degree setting change can add 3 percent to the monthly electric bill.

SET IT &
FORGET IT! **78°**

OPERATION ROUND UP

Co-op's Customer-Owners Donate to Community

Homeless families and critically ill children are among recent beneficiaries of nearly \$211,000 in charitable grants announced by the Walton Electric Trust Board.

The primary source of funding is Operation Round Up, the community assistance program supported by Walton EMC customer-owners.

"Concern for community is among the principles by which our member-owned business operates," said Debbie Fowler, a Walton EMC customer-owner who serves on the Walton Electric Trust Board. "Donating to local charities, needy individuals and service organizations is just one way Walton EMC members put this principle into action."

OPERATION ROUND UP RECIPIENTS:

- **Across the Bridge, \$10,000.** Addiction recovery support project. *Gwinnett and DeKalb counties.*
 - **Athens Community Council on Aging, \$10,000.** Education and supplies for grandparents raising grandchildren. *Barrow, Clarke, Oconee and Walton counties.*
 - **Barrow Ministry Village, \$5,000.** Emotional and psychological counseling program scholarships. *Barrow, Gwinnett, Clarke, Oconee, Walton, Newton and Rockdale counties.*
 - **Camp Twin Lakes, \$10,000.** Adaptive camp programs for children with special healthcare needs. *All of Walton EMC territory.*
 - **Family Promise of Athens, \$15,000.** Emergency shelter and support services for families with children to avoid homelessness. *Barrow, Clarke and Oconee counties.*
 - **Fresh Wind Recovery Ministry, \$10,000.** Work transportation for addiction recovery program participants. *Barrow, Clarke, Oconee and Walton counties.*
 - **Georgia Children's Chorus, \$5,000.** Scholarships for music education. *Gwinnett and Walton counties.*
 - **Georgia DECA, \$2,000.** Financial assistance for Georgia state winners participating in DECA International Career Development Conference. *All of Walton EMC territory.*
 - **Georgia Transplant Foundation, \$10,000.** Support programs for organ transplant candidates and recipients. *Barrow, Clarke, Dekalb, Gwinnett, Newton, Oconee, Rockdale and Walton counties.*
 - **Horizons Atlanta, \$3,000.** Summer learning program for K-8th grade students to improve reading, math and life skills. *Clarke and Dekalb counties.*
 - **Make a Wish Georgia, \$5,000.** Funds to grant wishes of local critically ill children. *All of Walton EMC territory.*
 - **Mosaic Georgia, \$10,000.** Programming, counseling and advocacy for children/ adolescent victims of sexual abuse and their non-offending caregiver. *Barrow, Clarke, Dekalb, Gwinnett, Newton, Rockdale and Walton counties.*
 - **Oconee County Extension 4-H, \$10,000.** Sponsor of project achievement contests for two years. *Oconee County.*
 - **Restoring Hearts for the Brave, \$10,000.** Counseling, mediation and coaching for traumatized public safety personnel and military veterans. *Barrow, Gwinnett and Walton counties.*
 - **Team Maggie for a Cure, \$10,000.** Fund four fertility preservation for four teen/young adult cancer patients. *All of Walton EMC territory.*
 - **Emergency assistance to two families, \$9,189.**
- Organizations receiving funds from Walton EMC's unclaimed capital credits account are:**
- **FISH4Kids, \$15,000.** Summer feeding program for children. *Walton County.*
 - **Friends of Gwinnett Senior Citizens, \$15,000.** Funding for home repairs and food. *Gwinnett County.*
 - **Judy House Ministry, \$15,000.** Transitional housing for previously incarcerated men. *Gwinnett County.*
 - **Salvation Army of Athens, \$15,000.** Emergency shelter and feeding program. *Clarke County.*
 - **Shepherd's Staff Ministries, \$15,000.** Food bank support. *Barrow, Gwinnett, Newton, Rockdale and Walton counties.*

Organizations interested in applying for a grant can learn more about the program at waltonemc.com/community/operation-round-up or call Kathy Joiner at 770.266.2353.



L-R: Jessica Davis, Katherine Rodriguez, Jason Simpson accept \$10,000 from Walton EMC's Operation Round Up program that will benefit Camp Soar.

Camping for Confidence

The lives of seven area teenagers have changed for the better, thanks to a Walton EMC Operation Round Up grant. They recently participated in Camp Soar, a five-night camping experience for teen girls who have been sexually abused.

Walton EMC customer-owners who donate to Operation Round Up supported this year's camp with a \$10,000 grant. The donation provided an all-expenses-paid week of camping for participants and their therapeutic counselors.

The financial aid was well-timed and much needed, said Katherine Rodriguez, director of clinical services at The Tree House Inc. in Winder. The child advocacy center coordinates the camp, which resumed after three years of COVID-related shutdowns.

"It was just a blessing, and our sign that this year was the time to restart this program," she said.

Camp Soar participants receive therapeutic support and engage in confidence-building activities during the week. A high-ropes course, archery, canoeing and horseback riding are among the challenging pursuits offered to help campers overcome their abusive pasts.

Rodriguez has witnessed how the camp provides an opportunity for abused teens to make lasting friendships.

"So many come to camp thinking they are alone in what they have experienced," she said. "When they meet other girls with similar stories, they develop a new community – a new support system that lasts long after camp ends."