

# DECADES OF INNOVATION: 1960s

Walton EMC's power grid has been built out and beefed up. Members have fully embraced electric appliances and machines to handle routine tasks and make life easier. Now the co-op turns its attention to making their homes more comfortable.

Homeowners are replacing outdated heating systems that run on wood, coal or LP with electric heat. These systems are much safer because they don't rely on a flame or produce dangerous combustion byproducts. Warmth comes with the click of a switch – no more cutting, splitting or hauling firewood!

Members can choose to heat individual rooms with electric wall heaters or install whole-home systems.

Walton EMC develops initiatives to help. A wiring assistance program provides financial incentives so members can install or upgrade their home's electrical system to meet the increased demand. Energy efficiency programs educate members on insulation and weatherization.

Some members also install electric air conditioning to keep their homes comfortable year-round. The first mention of a new technology that both heats and cools – the heat pump – is featured in the *Realite*.

The price of electricity falls significantly, with some calling the 1960s the "golden age" of the electric utility industry. Economies of scale, improvements in generating technology and cheap, abundant fuels provide the perfect trifecta for low power prices.

The co-op makes strides in customer service. The Snellville office is established in 1962, and a brand-new office building opens in 1965. The Watkinsville office follows in 1969. Meter readers are hired in 1963, meaning members no longer had to read their own meter, mark a postcard and return it to the co-op.

The first computer is installed in 1969 to handle billing, payroll, capital credits and member accounts. The transformer shop, allowing the co-op to service its own equipment, is also fully operational.

Friday night lights become a reality for many communities. Lighting high school football fields takes off during the '60s. Members also enjoy outdoor lighting at their homes, farms and businesses with the 500th security light installed in 1961.

## COVER PHOTO:

*Walton EMC members were encouraged to install electric heating during the 1960s. Electrification Advisor Carlton Farmer shows off the co-op's new mobile electric heating display. Inside were samples of various types of electric heaters.*

## Off to Washington!

Four high school juniors from area schools are the winners of an all-expense paid trip to the nation's capital to participate in this summer's Washington Youth Tour. They will meet with congressional delegates, visit national monuments and engage with students from around the nation during the leadership and citizenship development conference sponsored by electric cooperatives.

### SELECTED TO REPRESENT WALTON EMC ARE:



**Brandon Aguilar**  
Monroe Area High School



**Maeve McCullers**  
North Oconee High School



**IfeOluwa Olabiya**  
Loganville Christian Academy



**Mattie Rozar**  
Oconee County High School



APRIL 2026

# REALITE

Walton EMC

90 Years  
1936-2026



# 1960s

## DECADES OF INNOVATION

Walton EMC

waltonemc.com

REALITE APRIL 2026 VOLUME 76, NO. 4

### 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

GET THE REALITE ONLINE  
Step 1 Point your phone camera at the QR code.  
Step 2 Tap the screen to access Walton EMC news online.



### 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  
Youtube youtube.com/emctv

### our leaders

President and CEO Ron Marshall  
Senior VP Corporate Services Russell DeLong  
Senior VP Walton Energy and External Affairs Jim Bottone  
VP Engineering and Operations Tim Morris  
VP Power Supply Hudson Kingery  
VP Finance Darlene Butler  
Board Chair Michael Lowder  
Board Vice Chair Jason Sidwell  
Board Secretary/Treasurer Stan Pitts  
Board Members Tommy Adcock, Billy Ray Allen, Dan Chelko, Wayne Lester, Sam Simonton, Dawn Taylor  
Public Relations Savannah Chandler, Morgan Barfield

### walton gas

NEED NATURAL GAS SERVICE?  
770.GAS.HEAT or waltongas.com

### emc security

NEED SECURITY SERVICE?  
770.963.0305 or emcsecurity.com

### unclaimed funds

Scan the QR code



©2026 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.

# EmPOWERing education

LOCAL TEACHERS SHARE NEARLY \$300,000 IN GRANTS

Students at Youth Elementary School are creating a pollinator habitat to support food production. At North Oconee High School, agriculture students will learn animal husbandry skills in an improved barn. STEM studies that include robotics will help Jordan Middle School students prepare for a technology-driven future.

These are only three of the 57 creative, engaging classroom projects that are pushing the limits of learning with a 2025–26 Walton EMC School EmPOWERment educational grant. Co-op representatives visited area public and private schools in late February to present checks for this year's grants totaling nearly \$300,000.

The current grants pushed Walton EMC's all-time grant funding to more than \$3.3 million. Funneling money into classrooms is one of the ways Walton EMC demonstrates its commitment to the community, said CEO Ron Marshall.

"We're proud to continue supporting local education, knowing that these investments help shape the next generation of learners and leaders," he said.

Teachers receiving this year's grants submitted applications last fall. Winning proposals were selected in a competitive evaluation process by a committee.

This year's grant recipients are reimagining teaching with lesson plans and hands-on projects that foster a love of learning, said Jennifer Broun, Walton EMC's community and youth representative.

"These educators have a creativity and commitment for student success that shines through in the innovative projects they bring to life," she said.

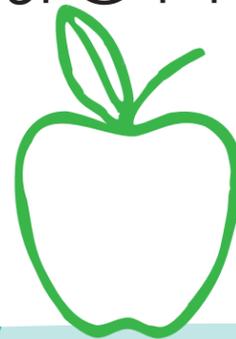


Walton EMC's Jennifer Broun, left, surprises media specialist Christina Crowe with news that Rocky Branch Elementary School is the recipient of a Walton EMC School EmPOWERment grant to purchase a book vending machine to promote reading.

W J Cooper Elementary science teacher Melissa Barth, center, accepts a Walton EMC School EmPOWERment grant to create an outdoor learning classroom from co-op representatives Evette Jones, left, and Kathy Joiner.



## FAST FACTS



Total Distribution: **\$296,908**

Number of grants: **57**

Schools receiving grants: **49**

Total awarded since 2016: **\$3,331,792**

Source of money: **Unclaimed refunds**



Students are all smiles as Loganville Elementary School receives a \$26,715 Walton EMC School EmPOWERment Grant for an inclusive playground. Pictured with the students are, left to right: Loganville Elementary Principal Carrie Collins, co-op representatives Morgan Barfield, Savannah Chandler and Sara Beddington, with grant recipient Billie Jo Diehl (center).

Read a complete list of 2025–26 School EmPOWERment grant recipients and their projects.



THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT – *we appreciate our linemen!*

Whether the power goes out in the middle of the night, after weather events or vehicle accidents, these dedicated professionals take pride in getting the lights back on.

But what do linemen appreciate that helps them do their job?

"Two of the most appreciated pieces of equipment are our hot sticks and rubber gloves," says Safety and Training Director Ryan West. "These essential tools – when used correctly – keep us safe while letting us do our job, and in many cases without disrupting members' power."

Both have come a long way since their early days.

Hot sticks, invented around 1910, were originally made of dry wood or bamboo. They changed the game by allowing linemen to work on live power lines while keeping their distance.

But wood and bamboo can absorb moisture and become conductive. In the mid-20th century, fiberglass hot sticks became the new standard. They are much lighter, stronger and durable – and they withstand higher voltages.

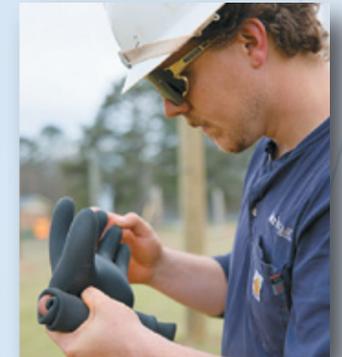
Fiberglass also made telescoping sticks possible, allowing linemen to perform some operations from the ground. That improves safety while saving time and money.

Rubber insulating gloves were also introduced in the early 1900s and made it possible for linemen to safely perform hands-on work with energized lines. Worn with protective leather outer gloves, they remain a critical part of the job.

Today's gloves are made with advanced rubber compounds that provide better insulation while being thinner and more flexible. This allows greater dexterity and less hand fatigue. Improved testing has also made modern insulating gloves safer than ever.

Many lineman tools have improved over the years, but advances in hot sticks and insulating gloves have played a direct role in reducing injuries and fatalities.

"This is a benefit to our linemen, their families and Walton EMC members," says West.



Apprentice Lineman Phillip Mork demonstrates how he tests his rubber gloves for pin holes by blowing them up with air and checking for leaks.



Apprentice Lineman Hollis Lucas saves time and money by not having to use a bucket truck or climb the pole for routine operations.

See a telescoping hot stick in action.

