

DECADES OF INNOVATION: 1980s

A look back at the milestones that powered 90 years of progress

After the energy crises and soaring costs of the 1970s, Walton EMC entered the 1980s focused on controlling expenses while continuing to provide reliable, affordable electricity to its members.

NUCLEAR SETBACKS

The push toward nuclear power to meet growing energy needs suffered a major setback with the Three Mile Island accident in 1979. New safety regulations triggered cost overruns and construction delays throughout the decade, with many new facilities being canceled.

These developments drove up wholesale power costs, which rippled through to distribution co-ops like Walton EMC. Co-op leaders, already working to manage peak electricity demand, responded by expanding consumer marketing programs launched in the previous decade.

A bright spot arrived in 1987, when Unit 1 of Vogtle Nuclear Plant near Augusta came online — projected to produce electric power for up to 80 years.

EFFICIENCY PAYS

Peak demand initiatives helped both the members and the co-op. In 1985, the Energy Resource Conservation Loan Program offered low-interest loans to help members make their homes more energy efficient. Loans could be used for improvements such as adding insulation, installing storm windows or replacing older heating and cooling systems with energy-efficient heat pumps.

Around the same time, Walton EMC began offering cash rebates to members who installed high-efficiency heat pumps. These systems increased winter electricity use, helping balance the co-op's seasonal demand and reduce high summer peaks, while also lowering members' power bills.

To strengthen the rebate program, the co-op adopted the Good Cents Home Program in 1987.

PIONEERING GRID TECHNOLOGY

Walton EMC was also one of the first utilities in the country to install a SCADA system — short for supervisory control and data acquisition. This computerized system enabled real-time monitoring and control of the distribution system from a central operations center. This innovation reduced outage response times and significantly improved safety for linemen.

GROWING WITH GWINNETT

In 1983, the co-op dedicated a new office and operations center on Lenora Church Road in Snellville to better serve the rapidly growing areas around Gwinnett County.

In a welcome development, electric rates began to stabilize in the mid-to-late 1980s.

Plant Vogtle nuclear plant near Augusta

AUGUST 2026

REALITE

Walton EMC

90 Years
1936–2026

Celebrating
Walton EMC's
Powerful Journey

Walton EMC
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quick guide

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©2026 Walton EMC is a customer-owned power company.
That means our cooperative focuses on service, not profit.
We serve more than 145,000+ accounts in Athens-Clarke,
Barrow, DeKalb, Greene, Gwinnett, Morgan, Newton, Oconee,
Rockdale and Walton Counties.

Our subsidiaries supply natural gas and security services.

What \$1 of electricity buys

(It's probably more than you think!)

A single dollar of Walton EMC electricity goes surprisingly far, making it a great value in today's economy.

44

HOURS USING A REFRIGERATOR

79

HOURS WATCHING TV

2.3

HOURS RUNNING A HEAT PUMP AIR CONDITIONER

1.6

HOURS DRYING LAUNDRY

55

DAYS POWERING A LED LIGHT (40W)

60

SINGLE-SERVE COFFEES

20

WORKDAYS USING A LAPTOP COMPUTER

Estimates are approximate and based on Walton EMC's summer residential rate, assuming average monthly use of 2,000 kWh. Actual results vary by appliance, usage habits and rate schedule.

Celebrating WALTON EMC'S POWERFUL JOURNEY

Record-setting Annual Meeting attendance marks co-op's 90th anniversary

A record-setting attendance was just one of many highlights as Walton EMC celebrated its 90th anniversary at the Annual Meeting on June 20.

The drive-through event at the co-op's main office in Monroe attracted 2,848 customer-owners. The participation, which eclipsed the previous year's attendance by more than 400, capped a year of growth, progress and resilience, reported co-op leaders.

Board Chair Michael Lowder celebrated Walton EMC's powerful journey over nine decades, noting that membership is at an all-time high of more than 145,000 residential, commercial, institutional and industrial accounts.

He also reported that Walton EMC's strong financial position allowed the Board of Directors to approve an \$11 million capital credits refund to members last December. Total refunds now stand at \$163 million.

"In this climate of escalating prices, returning capital credits year after year requires extraordinary discipline to keep energy prices competitive, manage costs carefully and operate efficiency," Lowder said.

CEO Ron Marshall highlighted the co-op's continued success at providing electricity at rates below those of neighboring utilities.

"Last summer, those receiving power bills from investor-owned Georgia Power paid an average of 33% more than Walton EMC members," he said.

During the Annual Meeting, customer-owners re-elected three directors to new three-year terms: Michael Lowder (Farmington), Tommy Adcock (Good Hope) and Stan Pitts (Centerville-South Snellville). Members also approved proposed bylaw amendments.

COVER PHOTO:

Walton EMC employee Jennifer Broun distributes the traditional bucket of gifts, including a blanket created to commemorate the co-op's 90th anniversary, during the 2026 Annual Meeting held at the co-op's main campus in Monroe.



Board members took time out from greeting customer-owners at the Annual Meeting to honor longtime leader Dan Chelko of the Southwest Walton district. Board Chair Michael Lowder presents Chelko, right, with a plaque recognizing his 33 years of service and naming him Director Emeritus. Fellow Board members Wayne Lester and Tommy Adcock offer their congratulations.



Walton EMC member Chris Davis of Statham, right, receives the keys to the Annual Meeting grand prize pickup from CEO Ron Marshall. Another 200 meeting attendees each won \$50 bill credits during the prize drawing.



A record-setting 2,848 customer-owners turned out to participate in Walton EMC's 90th Annual Meeting on June 20.

2026 ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- Board Chair Report
- CEO Report
- Prize Winner List
- Photo Gallery
- Recap Video

CLASS IS IN SESSION: Walton EMC invests in local students



Walton EMC believes in investing in youth — and it backs that belief by funding programs that support students, teachers and classrooms across our 10-county service area.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: Each June, Walton EMC sends four high school students on the all-expenses-paid Washington Youth Tour. Check out this year's recap in the article below.

SCHOLARSHIPS: This spring, seniors from customer-owner families shared \$156,000 in Walton Electric Trust Scholarships to continue their education. The Walton EMC Engineering Leadership Scholarship offers five \$10,000 awards to University of Georgia College of Engineering students.

HANDS-ON SKILLS: Through the EMC/FFA Electrification Career Development Event, local FFA members compete for scholarship funds while building real-world electrical know-how.

CLASSROOM SUPPORT: Earlier this year, the co-op distributed \$366,164 in School Empowerment Grants to 69 projects at 55 schools — funded entirely by unclaimed refunds.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS: The Lineman of the Week program honors high school football players who exhibit excellence on the field and in the classroom.

Learn more about these programs at waltonemc.com/youth.

Building future leaders

Four local students represented Walton EMC on this year's Washington Youth Tour, spending a week of their summer exploring our nation's capital while building leadership skills and lasting friendships.

"These students are our future leaders," said Walton EMC Communications Specialist Morgan Barfield, who chaperoned the tour. "This next generation has a passion for leadership and a desire to make a positive difference."

Applications for the 2027 Washington Youth Tour will open this fall.

Learn more at waltonemc.com/youth.



Brandon Aguilar, Mattie Kane Rozar, Stevey Rouse and Maeve McCullers represented Walton EMC on the 2026 Washington Youth Tour.

