

# When the Lights Came On

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

Mrs. Powers might have been a tad irritated.

You see, her husband had decided to take the day off, and she wanted to know why.

But Lindsey Powers, a farmer residing in the Turkey Creek community of Walton County, had a good reason. His life was about to change dramatically, and he realized it.

A Walton EMC employee told Powers his home was going to be the first to receive electric service — and it was happening that day.

“Occasionally I would go around and pull on the little cords to see when the lights [came] on,” Powers said, remembering his excitement in 1937. “My wife spoke up and said ‘You gonna wear the cords out before the lights ever come on.’”

“They finally come on,” continued Powers. “After dinner, I failed going to the field again. She said ‘Why you not going to the field this evening?’ I said I’m celebrating today. I want to sit here and wait ‘til dark comes to see how supper eats with a good light!’”

Many more homes and farms across the local countryside would celebrate the miracle of electric power over the coming years.

“Everybody just had a light bulb hanging down from the ceiling at first,” remembers Jerry Morrow of Loganville. “I know of a family that got a refrigerator but didn’t leave it plugged in all the time. They were afraid it would use too much electricity.”

The Walton EMC customer-owner also recalls the difference electric power made to his family, especially after having electric service and then losing it.

Lindsey Powers was 47 years old the day his Turkey Creek community home became the first energized by Walton EMC. Decades later, he still recalled the excitement surrounding “the day the lights came on.”

Walton EMC customer-owner Jerry Morrow of Loganville fondly remembers the many conveniences and benefits his family enjoyed when they moved to a home connected to electricity.

“We moved several times, and sometimes we would move from a house that had power to one that didn’t,” he said. In the homes without power, he was forced to use an oil lamp for light to do homework.

Housekeeping without electricity was particularly challenging for Morrow’s mother.

“When she’d iron clothes, she would have to put an old solid iron on the wood stove to heat it up to use,” he said. “In one home, we had a washing machine but no indoor plumbing, so I had to draw the water from the well.”

Families living in homes connected to Walton EMC lines improved their standard of living one electric convenience at a time. “It was a progression of appliances that you got,” Morrow said.

The electric radio was the most important and welcomed appliance in the Morrow household.

“Up until then, we had a battery-powered radio and it required a battery almost as big as the radio itself. Daddy made us be very careful about how much we listened to it,” he said.

Electric power evolved from a luxury to a convenience to a necessity. The cooperative model that brought the first glimmer of light to dark Georgia nights still serves Walton EMC members today — efficiently, reliably and with the same dedication to service that made such a difference in the lives of Lindsey Powers and Jerry Morrow.



OCTOBER 2026

# REALITE

Walton EMC

## 90 Years

1936–2026

OPERATION ROUND UP TOPS \$10 MILLION

### quick guide

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### our leaders

**President and CEO** Ron Marshall  
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**Senior VP Engineering and Operations** Tim Morris  
**VP Power Supply** Hudson Kingery  
**VP Finance** Darlene Butler  
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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.

Walton EMC's  
**Holiday Program**

Free admission and door prizes!

**Deck the halls!** Learn pro decorating, entertaining and gift-giving tips, plus the latest trends to celebrate the season from Dean Pannell and Denise Beacham.

**Thurs., Nov. 12 • 7 p.m.**

Oconee County Civic Center,  
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Dean Pannell      Denise Beacham

# HIGH SCHOOL LINEMEN OF THE WEEK

Walton EMC is proud to recognize local high school student-athletes who display the strong work ethic, teamwork and dedication essential for succeeding. A new Lineman of the Week is revealed each Friday on our Facebook page.

**SEE THIS SEASON'S HONOREES**

ON THE COVER

OPERATION ROUND UP TOPS

\$10 MILLION

For years now, participants in Walton EMC's Operation Round Up have been pooling their small change to make a big impact in our communities. This long-term generosity recently marked an important milestone, exceeding \$10 million in donations.

"We've known this was coming for a while, so it's been exciting to watch the total climb closer and closer to the \$10 million mark," said Walton EMC President and CEO Ron Marshall.

The timing of the achievement is ideal, he added. It comes just as the co-op celebrates its 90th anniversary.

"This program's success is an expression of our cooperative's core value of caring for the community," Marshall said. "Year after year, our customer-owners have demonstrated the power of coming together for good. It's a perfect example of our co-op's commitment to improving the quality of life in our service area throughout the last nine decades."

Operation Round Up launched in 1998 as a simple way for customer-owners to lend financial assistance to worthy causes within the community. More than 76,000 co-op members now participate by "rounding up" their monthly electric bill to the nearest dollar with the extra cents being collected in a special fund. Annual donations range from just 12 cents to a maximum \$11.88 per participating member.

The donations are distributed as financial grants to nonprofit organizations, community projects and qualifying individuals within the co-op's 10-county service area. More than a thousand grants have been awarded over 28 years.

Beyond sharing small change, co-op members also play an active role in determining where the funds are distributed. Grant applications are reviewed and approved by the Walton Electric Trust Board, a group of Walton EMC Board-appointed volunteers representing every district of the cooperative.

"One person's pennies may not seem like a lot. But, when you put together the contributions of thousands of co-op members, it adds up to something pretty remarkable," said Cindy Haddon, Trust board member. "Thank you to every fellow co-op member who has participated in this program."

Walton EMC covers all administrative costs, ensuring that 100% of every donation goes back into the community.



Because One Matters, which supports children in the foster care system with resources and confidence-building experiences, is among the most recent recipients of an Operation Round Up grant. From left: Pete Ervin, Walton EMC; Because One Matters board members Tray Leslie and Raechell Dickinson; Because One Matters CEO Andrea Barclay; board member Lucy Mejia; and Walton EMC's Sara Beddington and Kathy Joiner.



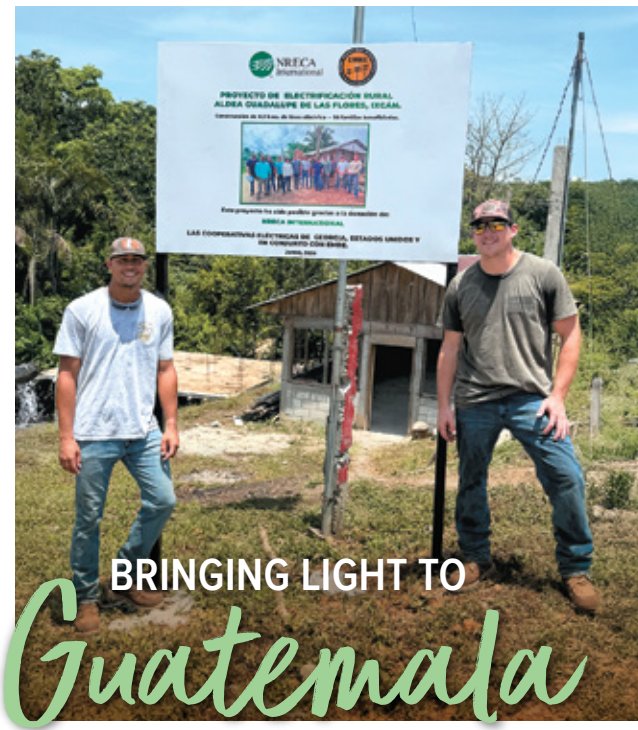
Representatives of Across The Bridge, a local nonprofit that serves individuals recovering from addiction and other life-changing circumstances, accept one of the grants that helped Operation Round Up exceed \$10 million in giving. From left: Across The Bridge Executive Director Glenn Yankowski; Walton Electric Trust Board members Kylie Myers and Patti Ruiz; Walton EMC's Kathy Joiner; and Across The Bridge's Robert Colbert.

COVER PHOTO:

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OPERATION ROUND UP

Since 1998, Operation Round Up has awarded thousands of community grants to local organizations. Among the most recent recipients is Athens Area Diaper Bank, which provides diapers to low-income families. From left: Walton Electric Trust Board member Cindy Haddon; Athens Area Diaper Bank Director of Development Kelsey Ripley, Executive Director Erin Campbell and Operations Manager Shona Foster; and Walton Electric Trust Board member Penny Warren.



Walton EMC's Isaiah Glasper, left, and Mason Byron traveled to a remote village in Guatemala to bring power to homes, schools and churches.

Flipping a switch to light a room seems like a simple task to most, but for some, it's a luxury they've waited years to experience.

Walton EMC linemen Mason Byron and Isaiah Glasper joined linemen from other Georgia co-ops on a trip to Guatemala to bring power to homes, schools and churches in a remote village.

Treacherous terrain and limited access to modern tools made the work challenging. The linemen traveled mostly on foot and climbed poles using their spikes while pulling heavy wire and carrying tools.

"It was a lot of uphill and downhill," recalled Glasper. "It was muddy, and it rained every night. So it definitely wasn't easy."

After nearly two weeks of hard work, it was time to turn the power on.

"Around day 13, we were able to turn the power on, which gave the villagers a chance to turn on their light switches," said Byron. "Just watching them flip the switch and seeing the light come on, they loved it — and we did too."

For Byron and Glasper, bringing electricity to the village was a reminder of just how powerful their work can be.

Watch their recap video here

