



# Tideland Topics

*Real People. Real Power.*

## *the end* of the line

Ocracoke line superintendent Bobby O'Neal retired on October 31 after 46 years of service with the co-op.

He's had one of the best vantage points to witness tremendous change on the barrier island, playing a key role for much of it.

Read more on page D



## next *generation*

High school seniors, now is the time to apply to the Tideland Electric Care Trust for one of eight college scholarships awarded annually.

High school sophomores and juniors may also apply for the Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

Details can be found on pages B and C.





## A week to remember

High school sophomores and juniors may apply now for Electric Youth Tour to D.C.

Youth Tour is a once-in-a-lifetime, all-expenses-paid leadership travel opportunity. From the halls of Congress to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, youth tourists will explore the leadership lessons of our nation's history and be immersed in the cooperative principles that define Tideland EMC.

While on Youth Tour, all transportation, meals, admissions to events and lodging will be arranged and paid for by Tideland.

What are we looking for in a Youth Tour candidate? We're looking for someone who is outgoing and has a demonstrated ability to work well with others. With nearly 1,600 young people from across the country participating in the event, we're looking for candidates eager to form new friendships, exchange ideas and find their own voice about the things they care about.

The Youth Tour dates for 2020 are June 20-26. Applications must be received by Tideland EMC no later than January 10 and a winner(s) will be selected by January 31.

To apply, students must reside in a home served by Tideland EMC and must currently be a high school sophomore or junior.

Applications have been mailed to Tideland area high schools or you can download the application at [tidelandemc.com](http://tidelandemc.com).

Application Deadline  
*January 10*

## Gift Giving made easy

Want to brighten the Christmas Season for someone special?

Give a H.U.G.:  
A home utility gift!

We'll credit any Tideland member's account in the gift amount of your choice. Gifts must be paid in full with cash, check or credit card.

We'll also provide you with a special holiday greeting card to notify the recipient of your gift.

Call 1.800.637.1079 for details or visit any Tideland office.



# Power of higher education

## Eight college scholarships to be awarded to local high school seniors

Established in the spring of 2000, the Tideland Electric Care Trust awards eight \$1,000 college scholarships annually. Two of the eight scholarships are reserved for students planning to attend a community college. Community college scholarships will be paid as follows: \$500 for the first academic year and \$500 for the second academic year with proof of continued enrollment.

Scholars attending a four-year college or university receive a \$1,000 non-renewable scholarship for their first year of enrollment.

Application Deadline  
*March 6*

Applicants must be the legal dependent of a Tideland EMC member and must be graduating from a high school in one of the 6 counties served by Tideland EMC. Applicants may not be the dependent of

a Tideland EMC employee or director. Winner must have been accepted by an accredited community college, four year college, or university.

Scholarship Criteria:

- Scholastic Achievement
- Financial Need
- Extra-Curricular Activities

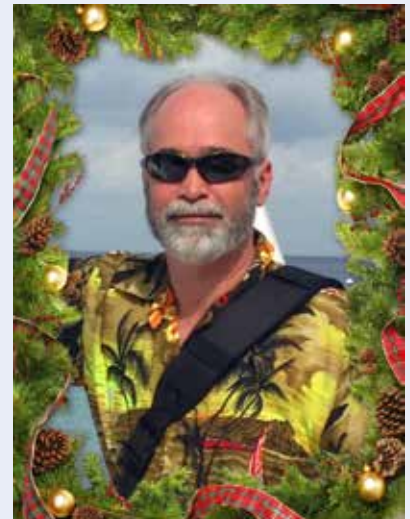
Applications have been mailed to Tideland area high schools or you can download the application at [tidelandemc.com](http://tidelandemc.com).



## Right-of-way maintenance schedule

Tideland has hired Lucas Tree Experts to trim trees in our right-of-way. During December they will continue work on the Merritt circuit in Pamlico County. They will be trimming along Florence and Trent roads and surrounding side roads.

Please observe proper distances when planting trees and erecting fences and other structures. And always call 811 before you dig to have underground utilities located before beginning an excavation or construction project.



## Employee Christmas card

Be sure to check out our annual video Christmas card featuring Tideland employees and their families. The video will post on our social media pages Friday, December 20.

(Above: Grantsboro district employee John Marsh)

# End of an era

Fresh from high school graduation in 1973, Ocracoke native Bobby O'Neal was ready to go to work. He put in an application with the state to work on a dredge, and while awaiting a call back, his uncle Ronald "Conk" O'Neal suggested he instead consider becoming a lineman with the island's electric cooperative. And that's exactly what Bobby did, reporting to none other than long-time line superintendent Conk.

In those days, there were four employees: Taft Howard, Calvin O'Neal, Conk and Bobby. Calvin ran the office, which was located in what is today the Community Square. Unlike their mainland counterparts, linemen on the



Bobby's uncle, Ronald "Conk" O'Neal

island also had to maintain the diesel generating plant that served as back up for the original transmission cables, which were susceptible to the occasional collision with a boat prop or dredge operation. Bobby vividly recalls the first time he accompanied Conk to splice one of



Bobby O'Neal with wife, Allison, and children Chloe and Jackson. Not pictured are sons Billy and Mark. (Ann Ehringhaus photo)

the submerged transmission cables. They set out in a boat and Conk instructed Bobby to dive down and pull the cable up for repairs. Bobby disappeared below the surface of Hatteras Inlet and soon came up empty handed. He tried again. And again. The day wasn't getting any longer so Conk instructed Bobby to go back under and said "Don't come up again without that cable." When Bobby resurfaced he had the cable in hand.

In those days, prior to digger trucks, the O'Neals set poles using dynamite. It was a delicate operation and if things went awry a pole could easily be reduced to toothpicks. But despite a sea of hardships and potential hazards, Bobby relishes every memory made working side-by-side with his kin.

Proximity so far from the mainland along with the demands of keeping the power flowing with a small crew didn't afford Bobby much down-time. They say you shouldn't take your work home with you, but in Bobby's case his

island home was his work. If power went out most islanders just picked up the phone and called Bobby directly.

Bobby officially hung up his climbing gear and stepped into retirement on November 1. He looks forward to the opportunity to more fully participate in his young daughter Chloe's childhood as she turns eight along with his grandson Paxson who is four. He also has a new grandson Jude in California whom he has yet to meet.

Unfortunately, like so many islanders, he also has a house to put back together due to flood damage from Hurricane Dorian. While he has witnessed so much change on the island during his lifetime Bobby still can't quite wrap his head around the devastation that ravaged Ocracoke in a matter of a few short hours. Yet he's still proud to note that power was restored early on in the recovery even though hundreds of homes were not able to reconnect right away.

With Bobby's retirement it is the end of an era. For the first time since 1958, an O'Neal will not be a member of Tideland's Ocracoke line crew.

# PREVENTION:

It's the gift that keeps on giving

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, approximately **47,000 fires** occur during the **winter holiday season**. Keep your home and loved ones safe by preventing the most common causes of **holiday fires** with these tips from ESFI:

## CO AND SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES.

Install CO and smoke alarms on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area.

Be sure to test the alarms once a month, and change the batteries yearly.



Happy Holidays  
from ESFI

### PREVENTION IS...

keeping decorations, or any other **flammable items** at least **3 ft** away from open flame and heat sources.



### PREVENTION IS...

ensuring multiple **extension cords** are **never strung together** or run under rugs, carpets or furniture. And making sure those used **outdoors** are labeled "for outdoor use."



### PREVENTION IS...

never leaving a **space heater** unattended and **turning it off** when you're leaving a room or going to sleep, and not letting **pets or children** play too close to a space heater.



### PREVENTION IS...

inspecting all decorations to ensure they do not have any **frayed or pinched wires** and discarding any worn decorations.



### PREVENTION IS...

never leaving cooking equipment **unattended** and **turning off burners** if you have to leave the room.



### PREVENTION IS...

watering Christmas Trees daily and **discarding trees** when they are dry and begin **dropping needles**.





**\$450,000**  
**returned to**  
*member estates*

Throughout the year, the co-op receives requests to refund untaxed capital credits to the estates of deceased members. As we went to press in early November, the refunds to estates for 2019 was estimated at \$450,000.

As the co-op nears its first rate increase since 2013 coupled with hurricane recovery costs, coal ash cleanup expenses, and over \$33 million in new electric plant investments during that time, the co-op is not in a position to issue a general retirement of capital credits this December as has generally been the case.

In the event of the death of a loved one, please contact the co-op to see if the estate is due a refund of member equity. The request form can be found online: [tidelandemc.com/my-residence/billing/capital-credits](http://tidelandemc.com/my-residence/billing/capital-credits)

Should you move out of the Tideland EMC service area, please provide us with your new address so future capital credit checks can be properly delivered.

## *Message to members*

# **We value the gift of you**

**by PAUL SPRUILL**  
GENERAL MANAGER &  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

In the spirit of this quote by author William Arthur Ward, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for your membership in our electric cooperative. Because of your connection to Tideland, we are able to make our community a better place.

I generally use this space to provide updates on new projects and developments, and report out on the progress of ongoing initiatives. We share these updates so that all of our members have a window into our priorities, progress and challenges.

However, during this holiday season, I think it's equally important to let you and other Tideland members know just what an impact you have on our co-op and the greater community, likely in ways you may not even realize.

As part of the cooperative business model, one of our core principles is “Concern for Community.” While our priority is always to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy, we view our role in the community as a catalyst for good.

When you attend the co-op's annual meeting, alert us to problems, participate in our social media platforms, and provide feedback on member surveys you help us improve operations and thereby better serve the larger co-op membership.

Because we are locally governed by members of our community, we are able to get a first-hand perspective on community priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments and new service initiatives.

We value our close working relationships with each of the emergency management directors in the six counties we serve. Their tireless efforts to prepare for and respond to disaster events make our job of power restoration more safe and efficient. The same is true for our partners at numerous state and federal agencies including the NC Ferry Division and FEMA.

On a more personal note, we appreciate the countless acts of kindness our lineworkers and other employees receive when they are working in severe weather and dangerous conditions. Our employees are thankful for your patience and consideration when we are trying to restore power during challenging situations and prolonged periods.

Tideland EMC was established to bring electricity to our area when no one else would. The cooperative is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. Together, let's continue making our corner of the world a better, brighter place. We can't do it without you, and for that, we're thankful for both your membership and friendship.

I wish for you and your family the warmest of holiday seasons.



# TOUCH A TRUCK



**Tideland EMC**

Real People. Real Power.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Pamlico Community College  
October 19, 2019

## 2019 rebate *Reminder*

If you made qualifying equipment installations or manufactured/modular home purchases in 2019, you have until March 1, 2020 to submit your rebate paperwork. All current rebate programs will be continued in 2020.

To learn more about our HVAC, water heating and Energy Star home rebates visit [tidelandemc.com](http://tidelandemc.com).

## 2019 roundup *Contributions*

Members who participate in Operation RoundUp giving will find a summary of their 2019 contributions on their December electric bill. Thank you for your generosity assisting members in need to ensure their home energy needs are met during times of crisis. If you are not yet a contributor, you can enroll online via the member portal or call our office at 800.637.1079.

## Holiday *Closing*

Our offices will be closed December 24 and 25 as well as January 1. Our 24-hour call center will remain fully staffed for outage reporting and account services. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



## Annual Notice *of Nondiscrimination*

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail:  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

*Real People.  
Real Power.*

## Tideland Topics

[www.tidelandemc.com](http://www.tidelandemc.com)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Paul Sasnett, President  
J. Douglas Brinson, Vice President  
Clifton Paul, Secretary  
David Ipock, Treasurer  
Rudy Austin, Mark Carawan,  
Garry Jordan, Dawson Pugh,  
Wayne Sawyer & Charles Slade

### GENERAL MANAGER & CEO

Paul Spruill

### EDITOR

Heidi Jernigan Smith

### Member Service

252.943.3046

800.637.1079

### 24 Hour Outage Reporting & Automated Services

252.944.2400

800.882.1001

Tideland EMC is an equal opportunity provider & employer



SIEMPRE  
LLAMA  
ANTES DE  
EXCAVAR

