



For immediate release:
November 19, 2009

Contact: Jimmy Baker: (843) 208-5550
cell: (843) 384-7158
fax: (843) 208-5553
e-mail: jbaker@palmetto.coop

Twenty years of small change...changing lives for the better
Operation Round Up® program entering its third decade

Palmetto Electric Cooperative's Board of Directors has announced that Operation Round Up®, a charitable giving program founded by the co-op in 1989, will celebrate its 20th anniversary this month according to Board Chairman Deborah A. Malphrus. Since the program was created, Operation Round Up has grown into a goodwill movement of literally national proportions. More than 260 cooperatives in 40 states now have their own Operation Round Up programs, established using guidelines created by Palmetto Electric which also holds copyright to the program name.

According to L.G. Smith, Chairman of the Palmetto Electric Trust Board, all money raised by Operation Round Up stays within the three-county area. "This is a local giving program," he says, "The money contributed by Palmetto's members goes to charitable causes right here at home."

Small change changing lives

The Palmetto Electric Trust, a twelve-member local board appointed by the Palmetto Electric board, administers this unique community outreach program. Palmetto Electric's members have raised approximately 4.4 million for Beaufort, Jasper and Hampton counties simply by rounding up their electric bills to the nearest dollar. The voluntary program's slogan, "small change that changes lives," refers to the fact that members typically contribute only about \$6 per year. Currently 82% of Palmetto Electric's 66,000 consumers participate in the program. "The power that drives this program is the generosity of Palmetto Electric's members," says president and CEO G. Thomas Upshaw.

Lending a hand where it's needed most

"We've helped students get scholarships, put roofs on houses and helped with prescription drugs...there are just so many examples," Upshaw stated. "The positive impact of this program in our service area has been tremendous. Lives have been changed. Our members have every reason to be proud of what they've done and continue to do."

Some of the requests approved over the years include a heliport and portable X-ray unit for the Hampton County hospital, a 911 system in Jasper County plus start-up funds for Second Helpings in Beaufort County.

Adjusting to the times

L. G. Smith noted that a recent increase in individual aid requests prompted the board to reassess grant allocation priorities. Individual requests have grown steadily due to a weakened economy and continued job losses, he said. He hopes funding for organizations traditionally supported, such as Meals on Wheels, can resume in the future. One initiative the trust was able to continue to fund this year was Bright Ideas, where K-12 teachers in the service area were able to apply for grants for innovative classroom projects. This year the trust awarded \$20,000 to the Bright Ideas project.

“The anniversary that we are celebrating this month is largely our way of recognizing our members for making Operation Round Up possible. I would also like to thank the Palmetto Electric Board for their support and commitment to the program and our Trust Board for their excellent guidance and stewardship. The entire Palmetto Electric family got behind Operation Round Up twenty years ago and has stayed behind it ever since. It has been a true blessing to everyone involved.”

###

About Palmetto Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Palmetto Electric Cooperative is a non-profit electrical distribution utility that is owned by the members it serves. The Cooperative serves over 66,000 consumers in southern Beaufort, Jasper and Hampton counties