

# THE GRID

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Office hours:  
Monday-Friday  
7:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

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## Find Your Name and Win \$50

Find your name hidden inside this issue of The Grid and receive a **\$50 bill credit**. Credit must be claimed by the end of each month in which this newsletter is published.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Moultrie Douglas Farm Bureau Safety Day



CMEC Employees Bob Schafer and Summar Smith attended the Moultrie Douglas Farm Bureau Safety Day held at Arthur Christian School, where they taught electrical safety to more than 300 students. This event reflects Cooperative Principle Five: Education, Training, and Information.

### Vegetation Management

Tree-trimming activities began in late November 2025 in the Bethany Substation area and will continue through early spring. This work is part of our ongoing efforts to ensure the safety and reliability of your electrical service.

Tree trimming is crucial for maintaining a clear space around power lines, which helps to prevent outages and safety hazards. Our trained crews will be performing this work with a focus on minimizing any inconvenience to you.

#### What to Expect

- All trimming will follow strict safety and environmental guidelines.
- You may experience some noise and minor disruptions during work hours.
- If you have specific concerns or require special assistance, please contact us at 217-235-0341 or [info@cmec.coop](mailto:info@cmec.coop).

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we work to keep your electrical service safe and dependable. If you have any questions or need further information, do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Thank you for your support.



# YOUTH TOUR & YOUTH DAY 2026

## Make Your Mark



## Applications are being accepted for 2026 Youth Day and Youth Tour.

Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative (CMEC) will again sponsor area sophomores, juniors and seniors for an opportunity to attend Youth Day in Springfield, to be held on March 25, 2026, sponsored by CMEC and the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC). Two of the youths who participate in Youth Day will have a chance to win the opportunity for the trip of a lifetime at Youth Tour, an all-expense-paid trip to Washington D.C. the week of June 15-26, 2026, sponsored by CMEC, AIEC and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

### WHO MAY ENTER?

Youth Day in Springfield and Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., are open to high school sophomores, juniors and seniors whose high school is located within the CMEC territory.

### YOUTH DAY TO SPRINGFIELD, IL

Students from across the state of Illinois will meet in Springfield for Illinois Rural Electric Youth Day. The day's activities will include touring the State Capitol complex, visiting legislators, and a luncheon. Transportation to Springfield will be provided by CMEC.

**Gayle Strader**

### YOUTH TOUR TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Students who attend Youth Day in Springfield will have the opportunity to win the trip of a lifetime at Youth Tour. CMEC will select two youths from Youth Day for an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., the week of June 15-22, 2026. They will travel on an air-conditioned bus with other Illinois delegates and chaperones. Delegates from Illinois will join more than 1,800 students from across the country in Washington, D.C. On the trip they will visit attractions such as Gettysburg, the White House, the U.S. Capitol, the Smithsonian Institution, the Arlington National Cemetery, the Lincoln Memorial and many more!

### TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Every generation leaves behind a legacy, footprints that shape the future. The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is your chance to do the same. For over 60 years, electric cooperatives have sent high school students to Washington, D.C., to discover their voice, step into history and begin writing the story only they can tell. This once-in-a-lifetime experience isn't just about seeing the nation's capital. It's about preparing students to lead, to grow and to make their mark on the world.

During the trip, students will:

- Develop leadership skills through hands-on experiences and workshops
- Strengthen their resumes with a nationally recognized program that stands out to colleges and employers
- Connect with peers from 44 states, building friendships that last long after the trip
- Meet with elected officials and learn how government impacts their communities
- Experience history up close by visiting world-class museums and monuments
- Learn about cooperatives and how they support rural communities across America

Don't let this opportunity pass you by! This is more than a trip — it's a chance to leave your mark!

### HOW TO APPLY

Applications are available on our website at [cmec.coop/community/youthprograms](http://cmec.coop/community/youthprograms) or by emailing Summar Smith at [ssmith@cmec.coop](mailto:ssmith@cmec.coop). The deadline to apply is Feb. 27, 2026. For questions or additional information, please contact CMEC Communications Coordinator Summar Smith at 217-235-0341, toll-free at 888-661-2632 or by emailing [ssmith@cmec.coop](mailto:ssmith@cmec.coop).

# Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative Scholarships

CMEC will once again be awarding six \$500 scholarships, as well as the \$1,000 Randall Beasley Memorial Scholarship in 2026!

## Rules to Apply

- Applicants must be either a CMEC member or under 21 years of age and a legal dependent of a CMEC member.
- Applicants must also be enrolled in 2- or 4-year degree program at an accredited institution, including vocational/technical schools.
- Applicants cannot have previously received a CMEC scholarship, and CMEC employees, directors, and their dependents are ineligible.
- Deadline for applying is March 31, 2026.

For more information or to apply, you can visit our website at [cmec.coop/community/scholarships](http://cmec.coop/community/scholarships) or contact Communications Coordinator Summar Smith at 217-235-0341 or 888-661-2632 or by email at [ssmith@cmec.coop](mailto:ssmith@cmec.coop). Don't miss this great opportunity!

The Randall Beasley Scholarship honors long-time CMEC employee and Navy veteran Randall Beasley. The scholarship was founded and funded by his daughter and cooperative member, Sue Meyer. Thank you, Sue, for continuing to honor your father's legacy and for pouring into the future of our community. Preference for this scholarship will be given to an individual attending lineman school or majoring in the electrical or engineering field of study.



## Thank you

to all our members and employees who donated for One Stop Community Christmas! With your help, we were able to give over 50 gifts to teenagers in need!



## Scholarship Showcase - Open House Event

High school seniors residing in Coles, Moultrie, and Shelby Counties are invited to attend the Scholarship Showcase on **Jan. 15, 2026**, at the **Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center's Education Wing**, from **5-7:30 p.m.** This is an open house format, so feel free to stop by anytime between 5 and 7:30 p.m.

### What to Expect

- Explore the many scholarship resources and opportunities available to local students.
- Learn how to access thousands of scholarships and secure valuable financial support for your education.
- Attend one of the ISAC Financial Aid Completion Workshops, offered at:
  - 5:30 p.m.
  - 6:30 p.m.

**Be sure to stop by the Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative table!**

# 2026: A YEAR OF CHALLENGES



**Jim Wallace**  
President & CEO

As I'm writing this column just before Thanksgiving, I'm reminded how thankful the early members of CMEC must have been to receive the

amazing technology of electricity to power their homes and farms. It was a herculean effort by those instilled with the drive to provide convenience to the rural countryside that had been left behind only because of the area in which they lived. Today, as the staff of CMEC and the Board of Directors prepare a budget for 2026, there are challenges and roadblocks to be able to balance that budget. Just like the early cooperative leaders, the current leadership of CMEC is working diligently to continue to provide reliable, cost-effective service in the face of the many challenges placed in front of us. Let's look at some of the components of the budget for 2026.

## Revenue

We look at the historical averages over the last few years to try to estimate the sale of electricity to the membership while also taking into account any changes to specific large accounts that may reflect an increase, or decrease, in sales. The number one factor in predicting electricity sales is weather. The intensity of temperatures, primarily in winter and summer, has a tremendous effect on electricity sales, so the best course of estimating sales is by using the average method. When the electric industry says it's like predicting the weather, they're not wrong!



## Expenses

The number one topic of conversation among electric utility consumers over the past few years, especially this last summer, has been the cost of energy. Legislation in Illinois has mandated a reduction in fossil fuel generation that has created a shortage of supply in the state. As a result, increasing amounts of energy are having to be transported through transmission lines from out-of-state sources of supply. While CMEC has a fairly stable source of energy through Prairie Power, Inc., our overall cost of electricity is expected to rise for 2026 by approximately 5%. In addition to the cost of electricity, other costs continue to increase, including trucks and equipment, materials for distribution lines, labor and benefits and fuel, to mention a few areas. Despite all of these increases, CMEC must continue to maintain the distribution system to effectively provide energy to our members' homes and businesses. In 2026, the cooperative needs to purchase trucks and equipment to replace aging units, facilitate the Construction Work Plan to rebuild the aging distribution system in key areas, which will minimize outages

and increase load capabilities to areas predicted for growth, continue an aggressive tree trimming program, purchase a substation transformer for our Bruce substation to minimize the inconveniences caused to members in that area, continue to invest in technology that allows improved management of the system, and continue to provide the necessary training for the workforce to become more proficient in their responsibilities. In addition, the board and staff continue to evaluate the necessity for a new facility to replace the current building built in 1955.

Yes, CMEC has plenty of challenges facing us in the year 2026. Together, we will continue to provide the best service possible at the most affordable cost. CMEC is planning to offer some district "town hall" type meetings to offer the membership the opportunity to hear what is going on at CMEC and ask questions. There will be more information to follow on that topic.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and all of the employees at CMEC, I want to wish you a very happy and prosperous new year in 2026.

Monthly Board Meeting Minutes can be viewed on our website: [cmec.coop](http://cmec.coop)