

Operation Round Up allows members to use 'small change' to help their communities

As a cooperative, Clay Electric is bound by the original seven cooperative principles. Concern for Community is the seventh Cooperative Principle.

In an effort to improve the lives of members, the co-op is implementing Operation Round Up, a program to generate and collect charitable donations used to benefit organizations in the community. The program "rounds up" a member's bill to the nearest dollar, and that tax-deductible amount is donated to local charities in the co-op's service area. All funds stay in the community to benefit Clay Electric members.

Beginning this October, the electric bills of participating members will be rounded up – increased to the next dollar amount. So, if your bill is \$119.99, it is rounded up to \$120, and if your bill is \$175.53, it is rounded up to \$176. The average amount any given member donates is just \$0.50 per month, with the maximum being \$11.88 per year.

The money collected will be deposited in a separate bank account to be used at the discretion of the Clay Electric Foundation. The foundation board is now accepting applications for donations. The board is made up of nine volunteers from throughout the cooperative service area who were appointed by Clay Electric's board of trustees. You can read about them on the co-op's website.

Clay Electric has a long history of supporting charitable and community service organizations, from children's programs and athletic organizations to food banks and scouting.

The co-op's leadership sees the Operation Round Up program as part of our cooperative heritage and values – people coming together to help their neighbors. More than 77 years ago, residents came together to form Clay Electric

to get electricity to their homes and farms, something they couldn't do individually. Now, through Operation Round Up, local residents would have the opportunity to come together to create change in their communities through a foundation – something they couldn't do individually on this scale.

Derick Thomas, director of Member & Public Relations, believes Operation Round Up is the next logical and important step in the co-op's history of helping communities.

"This program will benefit so many with just spare change from each member," he said. "When nearly everyone contributes, the funds collected will be enough to make a real difference in communities we serve."

While the program is voluntary, members are being automatically enrolled and will need to opt-out in order to not participate.

"We felt our members would want their foundation to have as much impact in the community as possible. Other co-ops that have introduced Operation Round Up have 75-90 percent of their members participating," Thomas said.

Philosophically, it is simply part of being a Clay Electric Cooperative member.

All organizations receiving funds generated by Operation Round Up will be publicized on the co-op's website and in the *Kilowatt* newsletter.

Please visit ClayElectric.com to read more about Operation Round Up and the Clay Electric Foundation Board.

To opt out of Operation Round Up, visit
optout.clayelectric.com or
call 1-888-595-2655

3040-24541

Are you an adult who is going back to school?

If you are an adult in school or returning to college, you may want to consider applying for a new Clay Electric scholarship.

For nearly 20 years, the co-op has given scholarships to high school seniors to assist them with their higher education goals. The co-op now also offers a \$1,000 "Back to Your Future Scholarship."

This scholarship program is limited to any student/applicant, age 22 or over, who meets the following criteria:

- Home/residence must be served by Clay Electric
- Applicant cannot be a previous winner of a Clay Electric Scholarship
- Applicant has earned a High School Diploma or GED Completion Certificate prior to this application
- Applicant must be registered at and/or attending an accredited college or trade school for the Spring 2017 semester

Only one scholarship is available and it will be awarded based on need; leadership and/or community service; and educational goals and career plans. The application deadline is Sept. 23.

Please visit ClayElectric.com or your district office for an application.

MEMBER SERVICES

ONLINE ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Visit clayelectric.com to access your account information:

- View your bill statement/ account history
- Sign up for Average Billing Plan
- Make a one-time payment online
- View current charges & account balance
- View account balance
- View estimated meter reading dates
- Request emailed bill statements (Clay eBill)
- Sign up for automatic monthly payment plan
- Report your power outage:

<https://outagereport.clayelectric.com>

MOBILE APP - You can now pay your bill through our mobile app, Clay Electric Go, available for Android and iPhone. You can pay bills with a credit card (including Visa) and view past billing statements, payment history and electricity usage. The app is mainly for taking payments and viewing account information. There is a \$2.95 convenience fee for using the app to pay a bill.

PROJECT SHARE - Help others by designating a tax-deductible amount to be added to your electric bill or make a one-time donation.

REMOTE METER READING (RMR) - Enables a co-op meter reader to obtain the meter reading without entering the homeowner's property. The monthly charge is just \$1.95.

ENERGY SMART REBATE PROGRAM - Offers rebates for members who install additional insulation in their homes, or who install a high efficiency heat pump or solar water heating system.

SURGEBLASTER - High quality surge protection equipment at a low monthly lease.

PAYMENT STATIONS - Clay has contracted with Fidelity Express to offer payment stations for paying your electric bill at various businesses in the co-op's service area. Fidelity Express charges \$1.50 for each transaction. A list of payment locations is available at clayelectric.com and at your local district office.

Report from the manager

Ricky Davis

General Manager/CEO



Rights-of-way & reliability — the importance of vegetation management

This time of year, we must be aware that our area has the potential to be hit by severe weather and even hurricanes. Damaging lightning, gusty winds and heavy rains come with the thunderstorms that sweep across our service area. These storms have the power to disrupt your electric service.

So what do we do to lower the chances that bad weather will knock your power out? Our emphasis on properly maintained rights-of-way around our distribution and transmission lines is one reason our service reliability is so high.

Vegetation management (we used to call it right-of-way maintenance) is essential in providing safe and reliable electric service. Clay Electric works hard to ensure that rights-of-way are cleared regularly of trees and brush to help reduce potential outages and hazards. Trees and branches growing in or near power lines can cause interruptions in service. Uncontrolled brush can impede access to utility structures.

Keeping safety first

Trees and branches pose significant safety concerns when they are too close to power lines. Children climbing trees whose branches can contact energized lines could be severely injured or killed. Adults are also at risk. Pruning trees near power lines should be left to qualified vegetation management professionals.

Additionally, trees and branches can break and fall across power lines during strong winds and inclement weather. Not only can power lines be

damaged, but power poles and towers can also be damaged and broken by falling trees. Although weather-related outages are not always preventable, successful vegetation management minimizes damage, injury and outages.

Reducing the likelihood for power outages

In August 2003, there was a startling example of how a lack of proper right-of-way maintenance can plunge millions of folks into the dark. Approximately 40 million people lost power for roughly two days in the northeastern United States. The cause for this massive blackout: overgrown trees that contacted high-voltage power lines. Proper vegetation maintenance is so important to utilities that the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) established mandatory requirements for transmission vegetation management.

Our power supplier, Seminole Electric, also knows the importance of properly maintained rights-of-way. James Frauen, Seminole's vice president of Technical Services and Development, says that regular vegetation maintenance increases electric reliability and decreases service interruptions.

Clay Electric is committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable power, and our vegetation maintenance program is key to fulfilling that promise.

In addition to safety concerns and outage prevention, good vegetation management practices also enable our crews to restore power more quickly. Part of our vegetation management program focuses on removing dead or dying trees located close enough to our rights-of-way to present hazards if they fall. These trees are removed before they come down and cause damage and outages.

To learn more about Clay Electric's Vegetation Management program, please visit clayelectric.com. Topics include Notifications, Methods of Tree Pruning, Tree Removal, and Tree Planting and Power Lines.