



Generosity of WCEC Members Uplifts Local

JUNE 19 WAS AN OCCASION FOR CELEBRATION AND A WHOLE LOT of glee as representatives of three dozen local organizations received substantial checks from the Wood County Electric Charitable Foundation. With funds collected from cooperative members through Operation Round Up, the foundation gifted over \$48,000 to three local nonprofits and 33 regional fire departments.

This event marks the beginning of a grant program that will be sure to uplift our local communities through support of vital service organizations and projects. This first giving event also proves the spirit and enormous power of the cooperative

principles, and that great things happen when people work together. Each WCEC member who participated in Operation Round Up, more than 21,000 in all, gave just pennies each month. But, when those resources were pooled, 36 organizations and the communities they serve benefited.

“Wood County Electric Cooperative is all about community, and so are our members,” said Debbie Robinson, WCEC general manager and CEO, in her opening remarks at the event. “I want to emphasize that the money Wood County Electric Charitable Foundation board will present today is donated by those members. And we believe it’s going to do



LEFT: Sporting smiles and waving checks, representatives from East Texas service groups celebrate donations to their organizations made possible by the generosity of Wood County EC members.

ABOVE: Members of Forever Young Activity Center like to get out and about under the FYAC banner. Here they're crowing it up at a community event.

Groups

great things in the nine counties served by Wood County Electric Cooperative. The foundation board has worked hard to set up the foundation and to ensure the money will do the most good for the most people.”

Robin Johnson, vice chairman of WCECF, also emphasized the importance of supporting community organizations. “I’m so pleased to be here today, and even more happy for the reason behind it—and that’s to support our service organizations that make up the fabric of East Texas and add such richness to our communities,” Johnson said. “What’s notable is that every single organization here today is made up of people who volun-

teer many hours of talent, time and heart to make our communities a better place. The people from these organizations have servants’ hearts, and they lead servants’ lives. And I can think of no better action than for the people of our communities to rise and support their causes financially.”

Fighting Fire With Spare Change

What life hasn’t been touched by one of our local fire departments, many of which are all volunteer? These first responders don’t just fight fires. They respond to myriad life-threatening emergencies, often putting their lives on the line.



WCECF recognized that these fire departments are deserving of our thanks and bestowed each of the following 33 departments with a \$1,000 grant: South Franklin, Purely, North Franklin and Mount Vernon in Franklin County; Como, Pickton/Pine Forest and Hopkins Emergency Service Department in Hopkins County; Emory in Rains County; Lindale, Red Springs and Winona in Smith County; Tri Lakes and Mount Pleasant in Titus County; Big Sandy and Harmony in Upshur County; Ben Wheeler, Canton, Fruitvale, Grand Saline, Van and Van Zandt Midway in Van Zandt County; and Alba/Golden, Coke/Pleasant Grove, Pine Mills/Hainesville, Hawkins, Holly Lake, Land's End, Mineola, Ogburn, Perryville, Quitman, Winnsboro and Yantis in Wood County.

Ramping Up for Freedom

There are thousands of seniors and disabled people who require wheelchairs but don't have an easy way to enter and exit their homes, and many of these people can't afford a ramp

to ease their passage. For them, the Texas Ramp Project is a godsend that gives them back their mobility. TRP's mission is to establish regional wheelchair ramp-building programs across Texas to provide free wheelchair ramps to elderly and disabled clients in need. Donations to TRP pay for materials that local service clubs, churches and other groups use to build the ramps. Last year, TRP volunteers built 1,624 ramps in 97 Texas counties. Ninety-three of those ramps were built in the nine counties served by Wood County EC. TRP received 169 referrals in these counties. Local volunteers donated more than 2,400 hours of labor to construct those ramps, valued at more than \$60,000.

The WCECF board granted \$5,000 to help advance this project.

Service With a Smile

There are dynamic service organizations in every community that step in to help when there's a need. For more than 40



OPPOSITE: The Pilot Club of Quitman hosts an annual regional Special Olympics, which includes cheering, feeding and rewarding athletes.

A Texas Ramp Project team shows off their handiwork: a ramp they finished for a person in need.

years, the Pilot Club of Quitman has been one such organization. This volunteer club provides education for the prevention of traumatic brain injury and offers services to those with brain-related issues, such as those living with Alzheimer's, autism or the effects of a stroke. The Pilot Club also hosts an annual state-sanctioned Special Olympics, in which athletes come from all over East Texas to compete. The group also presents bicycle safety programs to several elementary schools, offers scholarships and supports Project Lifesaver.

To fund a fraction of the Pilot Club of Quitman's work, the WCECF board awarded \$3,550 to this nonprofit.

Keeping the Fountain of Youth Flowing

The leading citizens of many communities are those over 50 years of age. Seniors play an essential role in local economies and often serve as volunteers, community leaders and voices of wisdom. People are living much longer and healthier than ever

before, in part due to the aid of organizations such as the Forever Young Activity Center.

FYAC provides a place for adult fellowship and enrichment programs. Senior events occur every Wednesday and Friday and include group activities, chair yoga, educational programs, entertainment, health screenings, seminars, painting, crafts and various volunteer opportunities.

FYAC received a \$7,000 grant from the WCECF.

More To Come

This first day of giving was only the beginning. As grant requests flow in, and the foundation provides awards, we'll be sure to keep the membership informed.

Want to see in person the happiness this program brings? The next big check handout will take place at WCEC's annual meeting, October 5 at Jim Hogg Park in Quitman, beginning at 2 p.m.

Come be a part of it and see those broad smiles yourself!

What Grant Recipients Are Saying



Representing Tri-Lakes VFD, Fire Chief Jerry Ward and Investigator Ryland Ruffner are all smiles as WCECF board members Maxton and Johnson present a check to their department.

Billy Saucier, chief, Winnsboro Volunteer Fire Department
“The funds could not come at a better time. We were in need of a large pump for a grass truck, and this donation will help with that. We greatly appreciate the assistance!”



Quitman Pilots joyfully receive their check from WCECF.

Stan Richardson, Van Zandt Midway Volunteer Fire Department
“This donation certainly comes at the right time. We are facing grass fire season right now. Our brush truck is in desperate need of work, and we have been working on it as we can. The money will help us buy new hoses, nozzles, rakes and shovels. We thank the foundation very much.”

Martha Scroggins, president, Pilot Club of Quitman
“Over the years, we’ve expanded the service work of our club, but our funding has not always grown along with the extra costs. This grant gives us a solid foundation to present Special Olympics, and our bicycle safety and brain-minders programs, while continuing to meet other needs such as scholarships, student recognition programs, backpack programs, and in countless other charitable ways. Now and into the future, the opportunities Operation Round Up will afford our communities is something to celebrate. Our club is grateful to be among the first recipients!”



John Laine, executive director of the Texas Ramp Project, and Tom Lewis, local coordinator, were thrilled to get some more money to build ramps for local residents in need.

Tom Lewis, coordinator, Texas Ramp Project East Texas Area
“The Texas Ramp Project is so grateful for the funding we just received from the Wood County Electric Charitable Foundation. Our volunteers build free wheelchair ramps for elderly and disabled people who can’t afford one on their own. These ramps bring overwhelming relief and much joy to the clients who receive them—you can tell by their smiles. And our volunteers experience the same abundance of joy. As executive director John Laine says, ‘I never had a bad day on the ramp project. Ramp project is a happy thing.’”



Representatives from the Forever Young Activity Center happily accept a check from WCECF board member David Maxton and Robin Johnson, vice chair.

John F. Johnson, chairman, Forever Young Activity Center Executive Board
“The Forever Young Activity Center has become an integral part of the senior community, and its doors are open with organized activities that include educational programs, health screenings, fitness activities, arts and craft, group games, and volunteer opportunities. These opportunities contribute to the fabric of our community. This donation from the charitable foundation of Wood County Electric Cooperative will be invaluable in helping us maintain the facility and ensure it’s a place where our seniors want to come to not only be served but to serve others.”



After their recent grant review meeting, the WCECF board informed Debbie Robinson, WCEC general manager and CEO, of its decision to award \$48,000 in grants. From left: Emile Pugh Clifford, Marti Busbee, Debbie Robinson, Wiley E. Vonner, Robin Johnson, David Maxton and Manzell Manley. Not pictured is Jeannette Giles.

The Background of Operation Round Up

IN FALL 2017, WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BEGAN OFFERING MEMBERS A way to collectively give to local charities through Operation Round Up. Those who volunteer to be a part of the program have their electric bills rounded up to the next dollar each month. That means members give anywhere from a penny to 99 cents each month. Each donation is a small amount, but when combined across the cooperative’s membership, the impact to our communities is significant. Those donations are sent to the nonprofit Wood County Electric Charitable Foundation to support charitable endeavors in our nine-county region, which includes Camp, Franklin, Hopkins, Smith, Rains, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt and Wood counties.

Local service organizations can request grants from WCECF to help fund worthwhile projects. WCECF has a seven-member board of directors—one from each of WCEC’s districts—that reviews and approves the grant requests.

The foundation’s board recently met for the first time to review and approve grant requests.

“Operation Round Up has given me a sense of excitement to be able to give back to so many organizations that help so many people in our community,” said Wiley E. Vonner, WCECF board chair. “This is a true statement to people helping people. Thank you to all the organizations that took the time to apply for the grants, and I am encouraged that more will continue to apply.”

Grant amounts will vary and depend on the number of requests, funds available to the foundation and the area served. The types of organizations that can receive grants include volunteer fire departments, food banks, civic organizations, child welfare groups, economic development organizations, health and wellness foundations, animal rescues, museums and libraries, performing arts centers, and parks and recreation facilities.

Over the years, cooperatives across the nation have collected and distributed millions of dollars via Operation Round Up programs. Like those, WCEC’s Operation Round Up is going to be a vehicle to help vital service organizations—those that are important to the members of WCEC and East Texas.

Details on the foundation, grant qualifications and applications can be found at wcec.org. Select the Programs & Sponsorships tab to find Operation Round Up.



Wood County Electric Cooperative

501 S. Main St. • P.O. Box 1827
Quitman, TX 75783

CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Debbie Robinson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Pat B. Lindley, President, *District 1*
- Lewis D. Young, Vice President, *District 7*
- Cathy S. Roberts, Secretary-Treasurer, *District 5*
- Burke Bullock, *District 2*
- Kenneth Langley, *District 3*
- Brent Glenn, *District 4*
- Jane Roberson, *District 6*

Contact Us

CALL US
(903) 763-2203

EMAIL
info@wcec.org

OUTAGE HOTLINE
1-866-415-2951

FIND US ON THE WEB
wcec.org

MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

- Online account access and bill payment
- Paperless E-Bill services
- Free bill-paying app
- Visa, MasterCard and Discover accepted
- SmartPower prepay electric system
- Scholarships and youth programs
- Safety and energy conservation programs

MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

- Monday**, First Methodist Church, *Van*
- Tuesday**, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*
- Wednesday**, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
- Thursday**, Brookshire’s, *Winnsboro*
- Friday**, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*