

BEACON

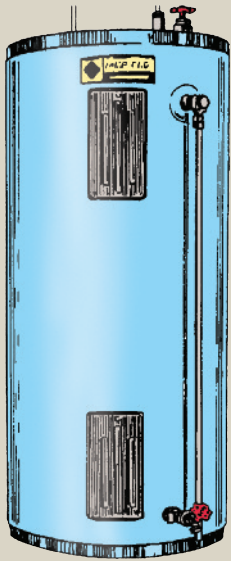
 Amicalola Electric
Membership Corporation

“Owned By Those We Serve”

Vol 63 | Issue 1 | February 2013

Let us keep you
in hot water!

Water Heater Maintenance
Program, \$1.49 per month.
Call Member Services at 706-
253-5200 or your local EMC
office for more information.



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Comments from the CEO



Charles Gibson
President/CEO
Amicalola EMC

Ready for more growth in 2013

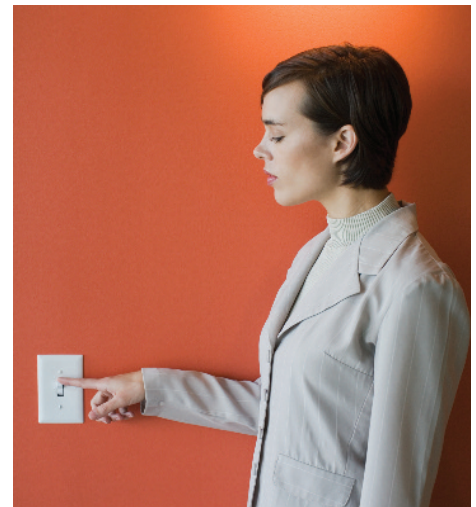
Our economy continues to improve and, even if slowly, we have turned a corner. The year 2012 was the first year in the past four that Amicalola EMC added new members. This is a welcome sign for the communities we provide electricity for, and I am looking forward to continued growth in 2013.

Beginning with this issue of *The Beacon*, we are spotlighting some of our small business owners, shops and entrepreneurs. Our local economy depends upon local support, but also in getting the word out to others. Our North Georgia mountains have much to get excited about: unique shops, talented individuals and interesting places to visit and experience. See what three special Gilmer County businesses have to offer on page 14D.

Winter is in full swing, but you can stay warm without breaking the bank by following the helpful winter tips we've outlined for you in this issue. But remember, the easiest way to save money and energy is simply by turning something OFF. Turn off the lights when leaving a room. Turn off your computer when you finish. Turn off the TV when you are reading or cooking dinner. Lower that thermostat a few degrees. Just flip a switch.

Winter storms may also bring power outages. We've included an important article on generator safety. A generator connected to a home's wiring or plugged into a regular household outlet can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone who comes in contact with them—even if the line appears to be dead. Please read and follow our recommendations for generator safety.

Amicalola EMC continues to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity to our members. We look forward to serving you in 2013.





Community Spotlight

Local FFA students win scholarships

Eleven area FFA students, representing schools from six counties in Northwest Georgia, competed in the Area I wiring competition held recently at Amicalola EMC.



Chris Townsend of North Murray High, fourth from left on bottom row, placed first, taking home a \$500 scholarship. Chris Perdigo of Gilmer High, far left on top row, placed second, earning a \$300 scholarship. Congratulations to both winners!

Stay warm and save energy this winter

The average family spends \$2,024 a year on energy; nearly half of that goes toward heating and cooling costs. Want to stay warm AND save energy and money? Start with these helpful winter tips:

- **Check furnace filters.** Be sure to clean or replace your heating and cooling system's air filter. At a minimum, change the filter every three months; a dirty filter clogs the system, making the system work harder to keep you warm.
- **Install a programmable thermostat.** Is no one at home during most of the day? Programmable thermostats can knock up to 10 percent off heating bills with the ability to automatically turn temperatures down 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours a day. The exception to

this is a heat pump, which should be set at the lowest comfortable temperature and left alone.

- **Insulate water heaters and pipes.** Wrap water pipes connected to the water heater with foam, and insulate the water heater, too. To save up to \$75 annually, consider lowering the water heater temperature to 120 degrees.
- **Bundle up your home.** The more heat that escapes from cracks, the more cold air enters, causing your system to work harder and use more energy. Use an incense stick to spot air leaks. When it's windy outside, hold a lit incense stick near your windows, doors and electrical outlets. If the smoke blows sideways, you've got a leak that should be plugged with weather stripping, caulk or expandable foam.



- **Use a low-flow showerhead.** About 14 percent of your energy bill funds water heating. Low-flow showerheads can minimize water use by up to 50 percent.

Little changes add up to big savings. For more energy-saving ideas, call 706-253-5200 today and schedule a free energy audit.

Portable generator safety

Winter usually finds us preparing for severe weather. Portable electric generators provide a good source of power, but if not installed or operated properly, can become deadly. Here are some precautions for safe generator use:

- Contact a licensed electrician to install your generator and make sure your electrician installs a double-pole, double-throw switch. Do not connect generators directly to household wiring. **Power from generators can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including line-workers making repairs.**

- Make sure your generator is properly grounded.

- Keep the generator dry.

- Make sure extension cords used with generators are rated for the load, are free of cuts and worn insulation and have three-pronged plugs.

- Do not overload the generator. A portable generator should be used only when necessary, and only to power essential equipment or appliances.

- Never operate the generator in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. Generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide very quickly, which can be deadly.



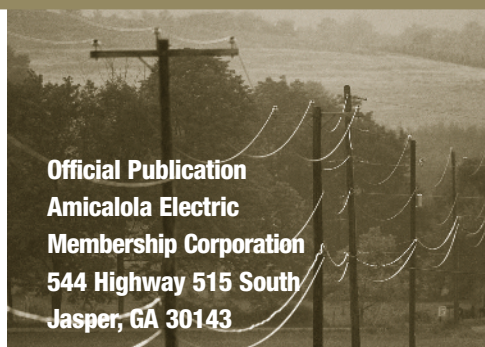
- Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to help prevent electrocutions and electrical shock injuries.

- Make sure fuel for the generator is stored safely, away from living areas, in properly labeled containers, and away from fuel-burning appliances. Before refueling, always turn the generator off and let it cool down.

- Turn off all appliances powered by the generator before shutting down the generator.

- Keep children away from portable generators at all times.

A generator can help you weather some unexpected power outages, but use it carefully and do *your* part to keep *others* safe. For much more on electrical safety visit the Electrical Safety Foundation International website at www.esfi.org.



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Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Your heat pump can use 10 percent to 25 percent more energy if it's not properly maintained, which includes regularly checking and replacing the air filter when it's dirty to keep parts from working too hard or even becoming damaged. Keep brush and plants tidy around the outdoor unit, and dust the return registers inside. For more details on heat pump maintenance, visit EnergySavers.gov.

—Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Shining a light on local entrepreneurs

This is the first in a series of articles highlighting local businesses. This issue spotlights Gilmer County and three local business owners, who all share a love of the beautiful mountains we call home.

The majestic mountains of Gilmer County are a fitting backdrop to some of the most talented and hard-working folks you'll ever find.

Traveling north from Jasper to Ellijay on Highway 515, the Highland Crossing Shopping Center and a hidden gem waits for you.

The Music Workshop owned by John Crawford, is not your ordinary music studio. You can almost hear the gentle strumming of a guitar as you glance up at the studio walls lined with string instruments of all shapes and sizes.

The former owner of Galaxy Music in Stone Mountain, John brings more than 20 years of music experience to Ellijay. His love of music leads him to put his heart into his work, and from the first moment, it is clear that music lessons with John will teach you much more than just a few musical notes. A classically trained musician, he feels strongly about sharing his experience and vast knowledge of the music industry with his students.



The learning starts before an instrument is ever picked up and time flies in the studio as John shares his witty insights, encouraging students to take their learning to a much higher level. Choose from a variety of lessons including guitar (string, electric, acoustic and bass), drums and piano. Voice lessons are also available. Looking for a great gift? Lessons from The Music Workshop make a unique and rewarding gift. Call 678-357-7492 or visit www.amicmusicworkshop.com to learn more.

An artist with many abilities, John is also a talented professional photographer. His photos tell a story, and he is able to capture special moments in a way that will be treasured for generations to come. He is affiliated with The Bridal Exchange in Woodstock. Visit www.photocentricstudios.com, or call 678-357-7492.



North Georgia Mountain Outfitters, owned by Travis and Shirley Crouch, is also located at Highland Crossing. The store is a treat in itself and has a special room for trying out sleeping bags, complete with nature sounds, sheep to count, stars on the ceiling and a jar of lightning bugs. You have to love a store whose Employee of the Month is Abby, the family dog. She has held that spot for the entire three years they've been in business. The store offers everything from North Face and Patagonia clothing and Oboz shoes to waterproof Bibles and one-on-one assistance when

choosing just the right backpack. North Georgia Mountain Outfitters is a family-owned business and operated by folks who love the outdoors. Don't hike? Bet someone on your gift list does; consider a gift card from North Georgia Mountain Outfitters. Call 706-698-4453, visit www.bike-northgeorgia.com or find them on Facebook for more information.



Also in Highland Crossing, **Blue Sky Cabin Rentals**, where the pavement ends and relaxation begins...

As a great way to enjoy the North Georgia mountains, consider

a cabin rental for your next getaway. Beautifully furnished and fully equipped, Blue Sky Cabin Rentals can accommodate up to 20 guests and features stunning mountain and water views. "Like" Blue Sky Cabin Rentals, of Ellijay, Georgia, on Facebook for a chance to win a relaxing mountain getaway. Gift certificates are also available. Call them at 706-636-2226 or visit www.bluesky-cabinrentals.com.

Gilmer County has dozens of unique businesses. Recognized as an entrepreneur-friendly community, see for yourself what else the mountains have to offer at www.gilmerchamber.com.