

# BEACON



Amicalola Electric  
Membership Corporation

"Owned By Those We Serve"

Vol 71 | Issue 5 | DECEMBER 2021

## Comments from the CEO



Todd Payne  
President/CEO  
Amicalola EMC

## December is the month for giving

**W**e take pride in being able to give back to our community. Amicalola EMC has become one of the largest financial contributors to education, economic development and non-profits in our service area. The fact is we are also a nonprofit, so how are we able to contribute so substantially to improve the quality of life for residents in our service area? The short answer is unclaimed property and the generosity of our members.

Each year any monies (margins) over and above our operating costs are assigned back to the members who paid for electric service during the year. These margins are held until financial conditions allow the funds to be returned to the members. Returning the majority of the money is simple: For members who still have active accounts, a credit is placed on their account. For members who have

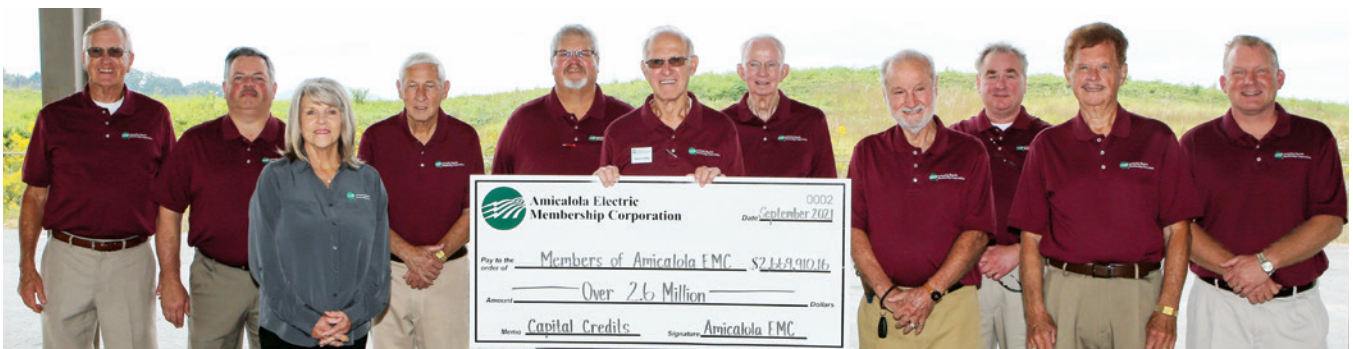
closed their account and left a forwarding address, a check is mailed for their portion. The remaining funds are advertised and held for five years, allowing the specific members ample time to claim the funds. If the money remains unclaimed after the five-year waiting period, it can be spent in accordance with Georgia's unclaimed property laws for three specific purposes: education, economic development and 501(c)(3) nonprofits.

This unclaimed property gives us the financial means to fund college scholarships, educational classroom projects, economic development projects and many grants to local fire departments, health facilities, food pantries and other nonprofits. On the following pages, you will see the donations we were able to make during 2021 with this unclaimed property.

In addition, through the generosity

of the thousands of Amicalola EMC members who round up their power bills each month, our Operation Round Up program has awarded \$2.4 million in grants to area nonprofits and qualifying individuals in need during the past 21 years. Every single Operation Round Up penny we collect from our members is spent for food, shelter, clothing, health needs and education.

We work hard to keep the lights on, but during December and throughout the year, we are also working hard to improve the quality of life for everyone in our service area and give assistance to those who need it the most. On behalf of the board of directors and the employees of Amicalola EMC, I'd like to wish you peace and joy, a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.



Amicalola EMC board authorizes \$2.6 million to members of 2002.

# 2021 Annual Meeting: drive-thru event for second year

The Annual Meeting of the Membership was held on Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021. As members arrived, they participated in a drive-thru registration, received gift bags and were directed to a designated area. Members remained in their vehicles during the entire meeting and the business session was broadcast over an AM frequency on their vehicle radios.

Directors **Travis D. Cline** (Post 5 - Cherokee), **David J. Pierce** (Post 2 - Fannin/Gilmer counties) and **Reggie Stowers** (Post 9 - Dawson/Lumpkin counties) were reelected.

Two \$500 cash grand prizes and \$50 power bill credits were awarded.



**Chairman Fendley gives remarks at 2021 Annual Meeting.**



**Two grand prize winners each take home \$500 cash.**

## IN MEMORIAM

1978-2021



*In memory of Damon Williams, who dedicated 21 years of loyal service to the members of Amicalola EMC.*



### *Office closings*

Our offices will be closed Thursday, Dec. 23, and Friday, Dec. 24, so our employees may celebrate Christmas with their families. We will be closed on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021, for New Year's Day. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

# Local teachers earn \$42,000 for Bright Ideas!

Local teachers recently earned \$42,000 for their hard work and bright ideas! The Amicalola EMC Bright Ideas teacher grant program rewards teachers who create innovative classroom projects. This year, 66 teachers were presented with funding for special classroom projects.



The Bright Ideas program has now funded 800 classroom projects for a total of \$526,133.59. All projects are funded using unclaimed property in accordance with Georgia's unclaimed property laws.



Hill City Elementary winning teachers Suzanne Hardison, left, and Danielle Phelps.

# \$500,000 awarded for education, economic development and local nonprofits in 2021



AEMC President/CEO Todd Payne, center, Board of Directors member Reggie Stowers, far left, and Board of Directors member Kathy Burt, second from right, present a check to the Dawson County Fire Department.



Pickens County Fire Chief Sloan Elrod accepts a donation from AEMC President/CEO Todd Payne.

## 2022 Amicalola EMC Scholarship Program



The deadline to apply for the 2022 Amicalola EMC Scholarship Program (for seniors) is Jan. 31, 2022. Students must live in an Amicalola EMC household to be eligible. To apply, go to [www.amicalolaemc.com](http://www.amicalolaemc.com), My Community, Scholarships.

For more information, please call Stacey Fields at 706-253-5287.

# Living Among Us

BY STACEY FIELDS



When the lake house went up for sale, it caught my attention. Grandview is a beautiful lake in Pickens County, Georgia, with a population just under 32,000. The property that surrounds the lake is dotted with a few houses, most likely passed down through families, one generation at a time. It's not often a property there goes up for sale, so I started researching it, mainly out of curiosity.

That's when I discovered that Al and Mary Ann Clayton had owned the property since the early 1990s. Mr. Clayton passed in 2014 at the age of 79, having spent portions of the last

20 years of his life, living among us in Pickens County. Mrs. Clayton passed earlier this year.

That's also when I discovered that Al Clayton was an award-winning photographer. During his time in Pickens County, I could have stood right beside him in the grocery store, unaware that I was in the presence of someone who had used the lens of a camera to change the world.

Born in Tennessee, he was the son of a teacher and railroad worker. When he joined the Navy in 1952, I've read he intended to use the G.I. Bill to pay for medical school to become a surgeon. Stationed at a hospital for Marines, he was given a camera to document a surgery, and his interest turned to photography.

Clayton traveled through parts of the South during the 1960s, photographing his way through the Mississippi Delta, eastern Kentucky, Georgia and Alabama, documenting families who were devastated by poverty. In July 1967 these photographs were presented at a hearing on Capitol Hill that ultimately led to an expansion of the U.S. Food Stamp Program. The photographs were used as illustrations in Harvard professor Robert Coles' 1969 book, "Still Hungry in America," which opened with an introduction by Sen. Ted Kennedy.

During his lifetime career in photography, his work focused on subjects related to the people, culture and music of the American South. His work has appeared in *Look Magazine*, *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *The New York Times*, *Esquire* and others. Though he photographed many famous people, it is reported that his work in photographing the poor and the hungry touched him the most. In one place I read that when he was asked by his daughter Jennifer which of his works had meant the most to him, he answered the "Still Hungry in America" project. It seems he literally used the lens of a camera to change the world for the better for so many.

*The Clayton family is preserving his legacy today through the Al Clayton Estate, Lumiere Gallery in Atlanta and Morrison Hotel Gallery. His iconic photographs of American country music illustrate much of Emmy Award winner Ken Burns' 2019 documentary, "Country Music." Permanent collections of his work are on display in the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Atlanta's Museum of Contemporary Art and the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill archives.*

*Grandview Lake in eastern Pickens County is located in the Amicalola EMC service area.*

