

EMC...from Page 1A

good time to start the next initial phase of new fiber rollouts," said Nelms.

When Nelms first came on board as general manager of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, one of his stated goals was to find a way to increase the fiber

take-rate among members who already live within reach of the service.

Nelms said at the time that, instead of taking on new debt to expand the fiber network, he wanted to increase the current take-rate to generate

revenue to pay for future fiber expansion.

The fiber take-rate was right at 25 percent then, and it has grown since to between 35 and 40 percent current day, as the cooperative's broadband division continues to shine, said Nelms.

On how the EMC arrived at the \$500,000 expansion figure, Frizzell said in the board meeting that was what fit the budget, to which Nelms added, "without acquiring debt."

The EMC's original fiber system was paid for using federal monies designated by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

In other budget news, Nelms reported in the May 8 meeting that negotiations on the EMC's underwater cable TV contract are well underway.

As previously reported, after Nelms took over as general manager in 2016, he discovered that the EMC had been losing as much as \$30,000 a month from its cable television offering.

"We're actively working to reach an agreement that, at the very least, ensures that the members aren't losing money each month," said Nelms.

Around 1,200 customers still utilize the EMC's cable TV service, which is housed under the cooperative's broadband division, though Nelms said in August 2017 that "we are no longer taking any new customers."

All told, the EMC operates on a roughly \$87 million annual budget, 65 percent of which goes directly to the Tennessee

Valley Authority to cover electric costs.

"Blue Ridge Mountain has had five years without its own rate increase – any rate increase that's been passed through has been a TVA rate increase," said Nelms. "The actual salaries, benefits and things like that account for a rather small portion of the overall budget, with TVA being the biggest chunk."

"That's why you see me and other employees of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC being the members' advocates when it comes to the wholesale power supply level with TVA, because any transition that TVA does has a tremendous impact to our overall bottom line."

"So, we always want to be able to push back, because our members need some relief, and we try to get it for them."

Nelms' comments foreshadow an upcoming TVA rate change to be implemented in October, the details of which will be available in the coming months.

Also in the May 8 meeting, the board welcomed EMC Lineman Chase Hemphill, who competed recently in the 2018 Georgia Lineman's Rodeo, where he placed third in the Mystery Event # 2 of the Apprentice Events.

Hemphill performed an

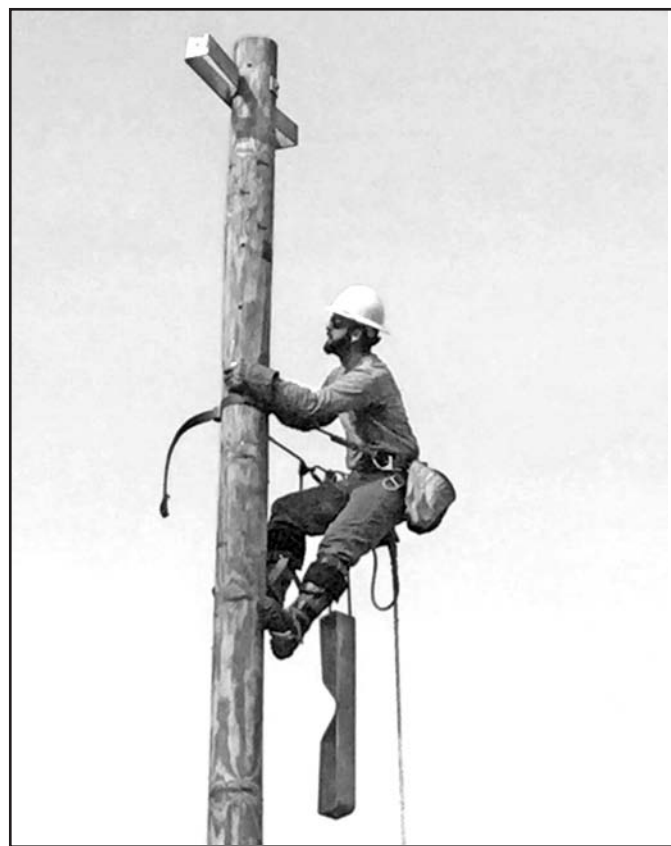


Photo by Shelia Partin
Chase Hemphill competing in the 2018 Georgia Lineman's Rodeo on May 5 in Perry.

arm relocation in three minutes and 11 seconds to clench the Third Place trophy, and Board President Mickey Cummings bragged on Hemphill for being

a former Union County 4-H'er. The next meeting of the BRMEMC Board of Directors will be held on Thursday, June 21.

Grandparent Scam...from Page 1A

up on the scam, but that there are also a good many who fall for it hook, line and sinker, losing thousands of dollars in the process.

In the most recent "Grandparent Scam" involving a Union County resident, the scammer pretended to be a public defender.

"He called and said the victim's granddaughter was in jail," said Lt. Osborn. "They wanted \$8,000, and the victim said that they couldn't come up with the \$8,000, but that they could do \$4,000."

The "public defender" said he would see what he could do before hanging up to presumably pretend to haggle with a judge.

Of course, when he called back, he had good news – \$4,000 would do after all, since the victim's granddaughter had not previously been in trouble with the law.

That was when the victim spent \$4,000 on a pre-paid card before shipping it to an address in the Bronx, New York, to a building later determined to house dozens of people.

The shoe dropped when the victim reached out to their granddaughter and learned that the entire scenario was a complete fiction.

Unfortunately, there's usually very little for investigators to go on after people fall prey to scams like this one, which are on the rise all across the country.

"It's surprisingly easy for a scam artist to impersonate someone," according to the Federal Trade Commission. "Social networking sites make it easier than ever to sleuth out personal and family information."

"Scammers also could hack into the email account of someone you know. To make their story seem legitimate, they may involve another crook who claims to be an authority figure, like a lawyer or police officer."

But just because scammers are growing increasingly sophisticated in their methods, it doesn't mean that people can't protect themselves.

The FTC has laid out a variety of safety precautions designed to help residents avoid becoming victims in "Grandparent Scams."

For starters, residents should resist the urge to act immediately, no matter how dramatic the story they're being told is.

Next, they should verify the caller's identity by asking

questions no stranger could possibly know the answers to.

Residents should also call a family member or friend they know to be genuine, then run the story by them, even if the potential scammer insists on secrecy.

Finally, never wire money or send a check, money order or other form of payment by overnight delivery or courier, as the money will probably be impossible to recover afterward.

"We get a lot of scams around here, but a lot of people are very vigilant about them, because we try to keep the public notified," said Lt. Osborn. "A lot of people are not. We've had several people hit by scammers."

"People need to realize that once their money is taken, it's usually gone, and there's no way of getting it back."

When it comes to dealing with situations like this, Lt. Osborn's advice is simpler than that of the FTC.

"When people call over the phone and ask you for money, hang up," said Lt. Osborn. "I don't care if it's somebody that you owe money to – seriously, hang up. You call them, and you make contact with them."

Voting...from Page 1A

For more election information, stop by the Registrar's Office in the courthouse, or call (706) 439-6016.

Each of the following candidates appears on the ballot of his or her respective political party:

For Governor, L.S. "Casey" Cagle, Eddie Hayes, Hunter Hill, Brian Kemp, Clay Tippins, Marc Urbach and Michael Williams, all Republican; and Stacey Abrams and Stacey Evans, both Democrat.

For Lieutenant Governor, Geoff Duncan, Rick Jeffares and David Shafer, all Republican; and Sarah Riggs Amico and Triana Arnold James, both Democrat.

For Secretary of State, David Belle Isle, Buzz Brockway, Josh McKoon and Brad Raffensperger, all Republican; and Josh Barrow, Dee Dawkins-Haigler and Rakeim "RJ" Hadley, all Democrat.

For Attorney General, Incumbent Chris Carr, Republican, and Charlie Bailey, Democrat.

For Commissioner of Agriculture, Incumbent Gary Black, Republican, and Fred Swann, Democrat.

For Commissioner of Insurance, Jim Beck, Jay Florence and Tracy Jordan, all Republican; and Janice Laws and Cindy Zeldin, both Democrat.

For State School Superintendent, Incumbent Richard Woods and John Barge, both Republican; and Sid Chapman, Sam Mosteller and Otha E. Thornton Jr., all Democrat.

For Commissioner of Labor, Incumbent Mark Butler, Republican; and Richard Keatley and Fred Quinn, both Democrat.

For Public Service Commissioner District 3, Incumbent Chuck Eaton, Republican; and Lindy Miller, John Noel and Johnny C. White, all Democrat.

For Public Service

Commissioner District 5, Incumbent Tricia Pridemore and John Hitchins III, both Republican; and Dawn A. Randolph and Doug Stoner, both Democrat.

For U.S. Representative in 116th Congress from the 9th Congressional District of Georgia, Incumbent Doug Collins, Republican; and Dave Cooper and Josh McCall, both Democrat.

For State Senator from the 51st District, Incumbent Steve Gooch, Republican.

For State Representative in the General Assembly from the 8th District, Incumbent Matt Gurtler and Mickey Cummings, both Republican.

For District Attorney of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, Incumbent Jeff Langley, Republican.

For County Board of Education District 2, Incumbent Tony Hunter and Joan Anderson, both Republican.

For County Board of Education District 4, Incumbent Keith Potts, William McQuillan and John T. Strickland, all Republican.

For County Board of Education District 5, Incumbent Patrick White, Republican.

On the Nonpartisan General Election Ballot, John Ellington and incumbents Michael P. Boggs, Britt Cagle Grant, Harold D. Melton and Nels Peterson are all running unopposed for Justice, Supreme Court of Georgia.

Incumbents Charlie Bethel, Stephen Dillard, Amanda H. Mercier, M. Yvette Miller, Clyde L. Reese III and Brian Rickman are all running unopposed for Judge, Court of Appeals Georgia.

UC Primary School Parent Review meeting

Union County Primary School will hold a Title 1 Parent review meeting on Wednesday, May 16th at 11:30 a.m. We encourage all parents to attend.

UC Elementary School Parent Review meeting

Union County Elementary School will hold a Title 1 Parent review meeting on Thursday, May 17th at 7:15 p.m. We encourage all parents to attend.