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Proudly serving the members of Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation

## Albemarle Sounds

is published monthly by  
**Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative   
The power of human connections®

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[www.aemc.coop](http://www.aemc.coop)

Outages:

**1-800-274-2072**

24-hour payments:  
**(252) 426-4419**

*Albemarle EMC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

## Members Can Contribute to Toy Drive

Members who would like to help financially with this year's Light Up Christmas Toy Drive, can mail a tax-deductible contribution to the Albemarle Community Trust, P.O. Box 69, Hertford, NC 27944.

## Fleet Receives New Logo

Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation's vehicles recently received the new company logo. Introduced in 2020, the cooperative has been gradually phasing in the new logo to replace the former green ball logo.

The logo is made from the first letter of the company's name, which incorporates a sailboat cutting through a wave. The logo pays tribute to our area's nautical heritage and also helps to differentiate us from neighboring electric cooperatives.

"Electric cooperatives are a cohesive group; however, we also have our own

unique characteristics that we are proud to display," said Albemarle EMC General Manager Gary Ray.



## ACT Grant Awarded



*Amber Meads, center director for the Albemarle Pregnancy Resources Center, displays items purchased with their recent ACT grant.*

The Albemarle Pregnancy Resources Center was the recent recipient of an Albemarle Community Trust grant.

The \$2,400 grant will be used to purchase supplies for their parenting program, Earn While You Learn. The supplies include diapers, wipes, baby wash, lotion and diaper cream.

"Our center provides weekly online parenting education classes and quarterly group sessions for women and men who are

expecting and parents of children through four years of age," said Dee Spruce, chief executive officer of the Albemarle Pregnancy Resource Center.

The Albemarle Pregnancy Resource Center provides free services to hundreds of families each year through grants, quarterly fundraisers and donations from local businesses, churches and individuals. Services are free and include pregnancy and STD testing and education, limited obstetric ultrasounds, prenatal vitamins, options counseling, education and material assistance.

The Albemarle Community Trust is funded by members who contribute voluntarily each month through their power bills. Close to \$60,000 in grants are awarded each year to individuals in need as well as organizations that benefit our community. To apply for a grant, please visit [aemc.coop/albemarle-community-trust](http://aemc.coop/albemarle-community-trust).

# October is National Co-op Month

by Gary Ray, General Manager



ACE Hardware, State Farm, REI, Land O'Lakes and Albemarle EMC all share something in common: We're all cooperatives.

We may be in different industries, but we all share a passion for serving our members and helping our communities to thrive. In

fact, all cooperatives adhere to the same set of seven principles that reflect our core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater community good. October is National Co-op Month, so this is the perfect time to reflect on these principles that have stood the test of time but also provide a framework for the future. Let's take a look at the first three cooperative principles.

## Voluntary and Open Membership

Just like all co-ops, Albemarle EMC was created out of necessity—to meet a need that would have been otherwise unmet in our community. So in 1945, a group of neighbors banded together and organized our electric co-op so everyone in our community could benefit. For a modest membership fee to the co-op, any farmer could get electricity brought to his farm. Neighbors came together to tackle a problem that they all had but couldn't solve alone. They worked together for the benefit of the whole community, and the newly established power lines helped power economic opportunity in our community.

While this history may be forgotten, key parts of that heritage remain—the focus on our mission and serving the greater good. In this, we include everyone to improve the quality of life and economic opportunity for the entire community. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory,

regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

## Democratic Member Control

Our co-op is well suited to meet the needs of our members because we are locally governed. Each member gets a voice and a vote in how the co-op is run, and each voice and vote are equal. Albemarle EMC's leadership team and employees live right here in the community. Our board of directors, who helps set long-term priorities for the co-op, also live locally on co-op lines. These board members have been elected by neighbors just like you. We know our members have a valuable perspective, and that's why we are continually seeking your input and encourage you to weigh in on important co-op issues and participate in co-op elections. Our close connection to this community ensures we get a first-hand perspective on members' priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments.

## Members' Economic Participation

As a utility, our mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to our members. But as a co-op, we are also motivated by service to the community, rather than profits. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control the capital of Albemarle EMC. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for co-op programs, initiatives, capital investments and other activities approved by the membership.

Because we are guided by seven cooperative principles, it's not just about dollars—it's about opportunity for all and being fair when engaging with our members. The cooperative way is a values-based business model.

Albemarle EMC is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. We view our role as a catalyst for good and making our corner of the world a better place.

## Don't Plant Near Transformers

Homeowners are advised not to plant vegetation around transformers in their yards.

Ground transformers are large, green boxes located near homes that are in neighborhoods with underground power lines.

Some homeowners have planted trees and shrubs to screen the transformers. Because this creates a safety issue, Albemarle EMC may notify homeowners that they need to remove vegetation within 10 feet of the side of the transformer that opens and three feet around all other sides.

If the vegetation is not removed within 30 days of notification, Albemarle EMC can remove the vegetation.



## Members Can Support the Environment, Education

Members have a convenient way to help protect our environment and support STEM education!

Albemarle EMC has joined with other utilities across North Carolina to offer our members a renewable energy alternative called NC GreenPower. The program is designed to improve the environment by supporting renewable energy, carbon offset projects and providing grants for educational solar installations at N.C. K-12 schools. Members may elect to contribute on their utility bill to help support a cleaner environment through electricity produced from renewable resources. For every \$4 donated, 125 kilowatt hours (kWh) of renewable energy is supplied to the electric grid in North Carolina, rather than from traditional sources. In addition, each \$4 donation will also help support the Solar+ Schools program, providing grants to N.C. K-12 schools for educational solar installations. Donations to carbon offsets may be made at [ncgreenpower.org](http://ncgreenpower.org). Or, call us at (252) 426-5735 to sign up and begin contributing with your next power bill.

# Albemarle EMC is at Your Service

## Spotlight On a Director

by Chris Powell

### Editor's note:

To help members better connect with their cooperative, we have begun spotlighting key Albemarle EMC leaders. As a member-owned electric cooperative, we are more than a faceless utility. The people who serve you are part of your local community, and some have dedicated decades to ensuring that affordable, reliable electricity is there when you need it. This month we turn our focus to L.A. Harris Jr., who is a member of the Albemarle EMC Board of Directors.

### Where were you born and raised?

I grew up in Elizabeth City.

### What county do you live in?

I live in Pasquotank County.

### Are you married, and do you have any children?

I am married to my wife, Diane, and we are blessed with six boys.

### Who has been your biggest role model in life?

My biggest role model was my daddy. He and I farmed together, and he was a great help showing and telling me things that he thought I was doing wrong and how I could do them better. I had a lot of respect for him.

### Do you still work, or are you retired?

I am retired.

### How long have you been a director and what offices have you held?

I have served on the Albemarle EMC Board of Directors for 45 years, which included 32 years of service as board president.

### How do you keep learning and growing as an industry leader?

I am an advocate of taking life one day at a time. Some people

try to do too many things and get nothing done because they are trying to carry too big of a load.

### What accomplishments are you most proud of?

I am most proud of serving 32 years as president of the Albemarle EMC Board of Directors. I'm proud to have served as president during a time when the cooperative has modernized much of how it functions.

### What is the biggest change you have seen take place at Albemarle EMC during your tenure?

When I first came on the board, members read their own meters and calculated their own payments to send in. Now, meters are read at the Albemarle EMC office, and bills are sent to customers.

### What excites you most about the electric co-op industry and your role in it?

When you turn the switch on, the light comes on. I was raised during a time when that was not always the case. I remember doing school work by the light of a kerosene lamp. The reliability that we have been able to achieve in this industry is truly astounding to me.

### What do you see are some of the biggest challenges for Albemarle EMC?

I would have to say that the biggest challenge I see coming is keeping rates affordable. We've all seen the effect

inflation is having throughout the economy, and power rates are being affected also.

### What do you see is the biggest opportunity for Albemarle EMC in the coming years?

We must continue to remind members that they are also owners. That is what sets cooperatives apart from the rest of the power industry. Cooperatives' strength comes from our member/owners.



L.A. Harris, Jr.  
Albemarle EMC board director