

year in REVIEW

2022



OHIO'S ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVES

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives 

government affairs + ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ADVOCATING FOR POWER THAT IS RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE,
AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE

ADVOCACY ON CAPITOL HILL

Ohio's Electric Cooperatives' (OEC) Government Affairs team was busy in 2022 advocating for Ohio's cooperative members. They, along with OEC leaders, visited Ohio congressional members and senators in Washington, D.C. throughout the year to urge the federal lawmakers to promote favorable tax treatment of electric cooperatives, encourage innovation in technology and infrastructure, and take a reasonable approach to energy and climate policies.

Their advocating paid off. Congress passed a measure into law that provides cooperatives access to tax incentives previously available only to investor-owned utilities. With these incentives, cooperatives will be better positioned to invest in new, innovative energy technologies.

Congress also passed a wide-ranging, bipartisan infrastructure bill that includes billions of dollars for broadband deployment, electric vehicle infrastructure, cybersecurity, grid resiliency, and clean energy development, including carbon capture and storage.

ADVOCACY IN OHIO

In the past year, OEC engaged on a variety of legislative proposals to protect co-ops from oversight of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), maintain autonomy with our community solar programs, and promote increased availability to electric vehicle charging stations in rural communities. Co-op advocacy has additionally focused on preventing the repeal of current law that continues to provide valuable economic benefits to Buckeye Power's generation resources, in turn allowing co-ops to provide the lowest-cost electricity available.

OEC also began work on soon-to-be-introduced legislation to keep tax dollars local and promote community reinvestment in cooperative service

territories, as well as efforts to curtail unscrupulous sales practices by some rooftop solar companies.

OEC's Government Affairs team is also pursuing a legislative proposal to promote the Community Foundation of Ohio's Electric Cooperatives and provide financial support to families of fallen or injured line workers in Ohio.



CULTIVATING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

As organizations that are built by and for the communities they serve, cooperatives are committed to the long-term health and prosperity of their service areas. Between 2021 and 2022, OEC awarded approximately \$76,410 in economic and community development grants within the service territories of:

- » Butler Rural Electric Cooperative
- » Carroll Electric Cooperative
- » Consolidated Cooperative
- » Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative
- » Lorain-Medina Rural Electric Cooperative
- » Mid-Ohio Energy Cooperative
- » Midwest Electric
- » Paulding Putnam Electric Cooperative
- » Tricounty Rural Electric Cooperative
- » URE – Union Rural Electric Cooperative
- » Washington Electric Cooperative

Year round, OEC supports the community and job growth of Ohio's rural communities by fostering relationships with economic development organizations, community, and cooperative leaders. Additionally, OEC invites stakeholders to workshops and key accounts events for networking and to attract commercial accounts to co-op service areas, with the goal of bolstering jobs and economic growth.



\$76,410

ECONOMIC/COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

A NEWLY ORGANIZED TEAM

The Government Affairs team saw a few personnel changes this year when Spencer Waugh departed from OEC. Kelly Barr was promoted to the position of Manager of Government Affairs. Additionally, the department welcomed Dennis Mingyar, Director of Economic Development, who was previously part of the Cooperative Development team. Dennis brings years of experience and expertise in the economic development arena, which often aligns with government affairs advocacy with state and county elected officials.

As we head into the new year, we need everyone – grass tops and grassroots supporters – to help advance our issues by engaging elected officials and fellow cooperative members with our story. Electric cooperatives can achieve remarkable things when we unite for our common cause to keep power generation, transmission, and distribution reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible for all Ohio cooperative members.

meet the team



Pictured L-R:

KELLY BARR

Manager, Government Affairs

MARC ARMSTRONG

Director, Government Affairs

DENNIS MINGYAR

Director, Economic Development

cooperative DEVELOPMENT

ENCOURAGING MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND ENRICHMENT

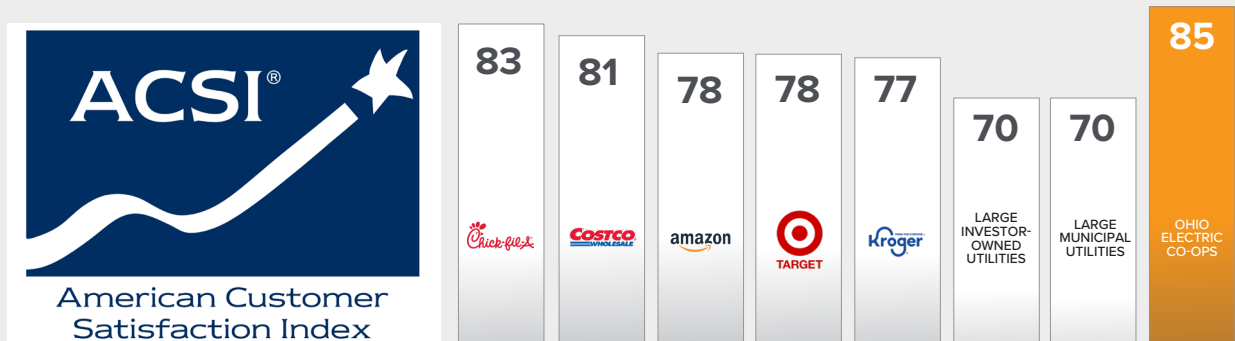
CONTINUED MEMBER SATISFACTION

For the fourth year in a row, Ohio's electric cooperative network outperformed their investor-owned and municipal utility counterparts, as well as many popular retail brands, in the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey. ACSI is one of the oldest and most highly regarded industry satisfaction studies and publishes annual customer satisfaction results based on roughly 250,000 customer interviews.

Ohio co-ops scored a comprehensive 85 of 100 points in 2022, with one co-op achieving its highest individual score of 92.

Co-ops attribute these high scores to:

- » Making decisions based on the needs of their member-owners
- » Providing members with one-on-one account support
- » Ensuring clear communication around energy costs
- » Keeping members informed during power outages
- » Supporting local communities through active involvement



COOPERATIVE INCENTIVES

Providing good member service means helping member-owners save money by helping them learn to use energy efficiently. In 2022, OEC provided more than 2,540 incentives under its geothermal, heat pump, water heater, Cool Returns, insulation, air-sealing, appliance, charging units, commercial industrial lighting, E3 Smart, and agricultural marketing programs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Workforce and professional training classes offered by OEC continue to grow as demand from co-op staff increases and the industry evolves. In the last 12 months, nearly 900 staff members from cooperatives, OEC, and Cardinal Plant have participated in OEC-hosted classes, including Leadership Edge curriculum for emerging leaders, co-op employee/trustee orientations, trustee education courses, and technical or role-specific development.



ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL YOUTH

Commitment to community begins with enriching the lives of our youth, who are the future of their communities. OEC acts on this commitment through its scholarship programs, which support the educational pursuits of high school students seeking advanced education, current college students, and those enrolled in technical careers. This year, OEC awarded \$87,300 in scholarships.

After two years, Ohio co-ops were excited to send 38 students from their communities to Washington, D.C. for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) Youth Tour. During the week-long trip, Ohio delegates enjoyed meeting with elected officials, touring monuments and memorials, learning about the history of America's electric cooperatives, and getting to know delegates from cooperatives across the nation.



\$87,300
SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

A NEWLY ORGANIZED TEAM

The Cooperative Development team welcomed new member Missy Kidwell, Manager of Marketing Projects & Events. Before joining OEC, Missy worked nearly two decades for Consolidated, a cooperative located in mid-Ohio. Former Cooperative Development team member Dennis Mingyar, OEC's Director of Economic Development, joined the Government Affairs team in summer of 2022 to better align efforts to spur economic growth in Ohio cooperative areas.

meet the team



Pictured L-R:

NILA MOYERS

Administrative Assistant, Member Information & Education

MISSY KIDWELL

Marketing Project & Event Manager

MELISSA IMARHANE

Marketing Coordinator

TIM STREET

Director, Cooperative Development

safety training + LOSS PREVENTION

OHIO CO-OPS' EMBEDDED CULTURE OF SAFETY



REINFORCING LIFE- SAVING RULES AND BEST PRACTICES

Rural Electric Safety
Achievement Program
(RESAP) area administrators
across the nation have been

working with NRECA and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange to develop the next phase of Commitment to Zero Contacts – an initiative that began in 2017 with the objective of eliminating devastating electrical contact injuries. In the next phase of this initiative, field workers will conduct a survey, followed by a planning session to discuss survey results and pinpoint opportunities for improvement.

While other states are conducting pilot sessions, Ohio is the first state to begin the new phase of Commitment to Zero Contacts, facilitated in conjunction with the RESAP program. The initiative has already helped Ohio cooperatives identify areas where field work practices can be improved to ensure the safety of lineworkers.

COLT PROGRAM CONTINUES TO GROW AND EVOLVE

Enrollment in the Central Ohio Lineworker Training (COLT) program has reached higher-than-anticipated numbers in 2022. The Journeyman Refresher Program continues to be offered to provide education opportunities to experienced lineworkers. Additional live line stations were constructed within the facility to offer students a more interactive experience zeroing out regulators and a visual understanding of how personal protective grounding in generator backfeed scenarios can keep them safe.

The grade reporting system at COLT was reconstructed across all 12 apprenticeship classes to provide a more comprehensive look at the

progress of an apprentice lineworker with two primary areas of emphasis: practical skill sets and overall course knowledge. This reporting system provides the cooperative and apprentice with an in depth look at areas of strength, while identifying training gaps.

COLT students continue to utilize the partnership between OEC and West Virginia University of Parkersburg that allows COLT graduates and current students to pursue an associate of applied science degree. To date, five COLT graduates have obtained this degree, while 16 others are actively completing coursework. Students receive 45 credit hours of related instruction at COLT, along with the on-the-job training they receive at the cooperative. Students are required to take an additional 15 credit hours in the areas of communication skills, quantitative skills, and general education electives, all of which can be completed online. Following completion of the associate degree, students can choose to pursue a bachelor's degree in supervisory management.

ONLINE TRAININGS OFFERED TO IMPROVE LINEWORKER SKILLS AND SAFETY

Monthly safety meetings provide technical and human performance training that support the apprenticeship and journeyman training at COLT, along with initiatives such as Commitment to Zero Contacts. The popular safety labs include hands-on training and visual aids. Vivid Learning Systems (Vivid) offers online training for cooperative employees and hosts courses for lineworkers to help them stay up to date with topics covered in monthly safety meetings when they are unable to attend in person. Each safety topic is professionally recorded and posted in Vivid. After watching the video, employees complete an exam to receive credit for the safety meeting. Nine cooperatives currently participate in this program.



PROGRAMS OFFERED FOR NON-ELECTRICAL WORKERS

In 2022, the Safety and Loss Prevention team launched a new workshop that teaches non-electrical employees about the hazards of performing their job in an electrical environment. The workshop, hosted at COLT, is geared toward IT professionals, but also benefits fiber and operations employees.



meet the team

Pictured L-R:

DWIGHT MILLER, Director, Safety Training & Loss Prevention

HARRISON METCALF, Specialist, Safety Training & Loss Prevention

RICH KLINGEL, Instructor, COLT

ZACK AZALLION, Instructor, Safety Training & Loss Prevention

CHRIS NAPIER, Senior Instructor, COLT

PEGGY HIEATT, Coordinator, Safety Training & Loss Prevention

JASON WOODS, Instructor, Safety Training & Loss Prevention

STEVE SAVON, Safety & Regulatory Consultant

KYLE HOFFMAN, Manager, COLT



communications + MEMBER SERVICES



CONTINUED EXCELLENCE OF OHIO COOPERATIVE LIVING

Ohio Cooperative Living (OCL) is the official voice of OEC and is delivered to 310,000 cooperative-served homes and businesses across Ohio and West Virginia each month. In partnership with the distribution cooperatives, OCL provides cooperative members with timely, informative updates on issues critical to electric cooperatives and the power industry, while also offering recipes, travel, lifestyle, entertainment, and industry feature stories with co-op specific news and events.

In 2022, OCL was recognized by NRECA with a silver “Spotlight on Excellence” award for best external news publication. Additionally, in the same contest, OCL received silver awards for best graphic design for the October 2021 feature article “Who was Grandma Gatewood?” and for best series of news stories for the 2021 “Why We (Still) Need Coal” series.

ALL-OF-THE-ABOVE COMMUNICATION

As the unified voice of the electric cooperatives that power rural parts of the state, OEC has remained focused on educating the public on the cooperative business model, power generation resource diversity, and humanitarian endeavors. This effort has been and will continue to be achieved through the utilization of social media, digital marketing, media engagement, and co-op member outreach efforts.

The OEC Communications and Member Services team members possess a diversified skill set, providing Ohio’s electric cooperatives expertise in innovative graphic design, video production, social media best practices, digital media, storytelling, and strategic marketing that supports cooperative’s engagement with their consumer-members. In addition, the communications team provides a mix of industry content and news to Ohio’s cooperatives for consideration for publication in OCL local pages, and in cooperative social media feeds. In the last 12 months, the Communications and Member Services team supported distribution cooperatives with the execution of integrated marketing and educational campaigns, to promoting topics and events, such as:

- » Cooperative membership value
- » Special election voter education
- » SmartHub feature education
- » Cool Returns rebate program
- » Distracted driving and utility pole crash safety education
- » Voices for Cooperative Power
- » Co-ops Vote

HIGHLIGHTS OF OCL READER PROFILE STUDY JUNE 2022

MRI-Simmons developed a four-page questionnaire specifically for OCL and American Main Street Publications (AMP) in June 2022. 264 Ohio cooperative members were contacted. The average reader was almost evenly split male and female; 36% were ages 18-59, and 61% were 60 and over; others didn’t answer.



91%

OF READERS SEE THE
CO-OP AS A TRUSTED
ENERGY ADVISOR

74%

OF READERS READ
THE PAST FOUR ISSUES



FOCUSED ON MEMBER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The OEC Communications and Member Services team conducted listening sessions with Ohio cooperative communicators in 2022 to receive feedback on how OEC could improve its tools and service to enhance the communication efforts at each Ohio cooperative. The listening sessions identified several areas of focus—including the need for a cloud-based, searchable portal where all Ohio cooperative communication professionals could interact, share content, and manage communication projects. A web-based portal called Basecamp is now being utilized by approximately a dozen Ohio cooperatives, with more slated for training and onboarding this year.

In addition to Basecamp, a web-based marketing program called Salesforce is being used by the OEC Communications and Member Services team to develop custom newsletters and email marketing journeys to enhance member engagement for cooperatives. The tool has proven to be valuable for internal OEC departments in promoting industry events, education and programs for Ohio's electric cooperatives.

A NEW STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBER SERVICES TEAM

The OEC Communications and Member Services team saw staff changes in 2022 including the hiring of a new Director of Communications, Caryn Whitney, and the creation of two new Communications Program Manager roles, to replace the former Manager of Communications position. The two new positions will be focused on more personal, regular contact with Ohio's electric cooperative communicators. Former Digital Media Specialist, Shelby Bradford Moore, is now in one of the Communications Program Manager roles and has begun providing service to communicators developing strategic communication campaigns. The second position will be filled in the last quarter of 2022.

Rebecca Seum, former Associate Editor for OCL, was promoted to Assistant Managing Editor, taking a more active role in planning the annual editorial calendar, editing of the magazine, and focusing on the magazine's digital strategy.

Two new Graphic Designers have also joined the team—Crystal Pomeroy—designer for OCL—and Neal Kindig—designer for cooperative and internal communication projects. Both are experienced designers with a customer-service mindset.

Veteran team member, Tim Baldwin, Videographer, has proven to be a critical asset to Ohio's electric cooperatives. His video production skills, including writing, producing, videography, and drone piloting, have been utilized by almost every cooperative for annual meetings, special cooperative events, elections, storm power restoration efforts, feature video stories, and video ad production, to name a few.

meet the team



Pictured L-R:

TIM BALDWIN, Videographer/Producer

CARYN WHITNEY, Director, Communications

JEFF MCCALLISTER, Managing Editor, *Ohio Cooperative Living*

CRYSTAL POMEROY, Graphic Designer, *Ohio Cooperative Living*

SHELBY BRADFORD MOORE, Communications Program Manager

REBECCA SEUM, Assistant Managing Editor, *Ohio Cooperative Living*

NEAL KINDIG, Graphic Designer

community FOUNDATION OF OHIO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Established in 2017, the Community Foundation of Ohio's Electric Cooperatives is led and funded by OEC employees, mirroring the community outreach efforts of distribution cooperatives and funding various central Ohio philanthropic organizations with which OEC staff are involved.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's (LLS) Light the Night event remains OEC's primary fundraising effort. In our third year of support, "Team OEC" earned the rank as the top fundraising team in the central Ohio region. To date, OEC has raised nearly \$170,000 to fight cancer. Tom Alban, Vice President of Power Generation, whose campaign raised \$50,000, was named LLS' 2021 Columbus-area "Executive Challenge" champion for the second year in a row. OEC's 2022 fundraising efforts currently have Tom and OEC in the top spot for Central Ohio.

Over the last year, OEC continued to support Dolly Parton's Imagination Library/Ohio Governor's Imagination Library, an initiative that reflects OEC's

cooperative principle of "concern for community" with the objective of fostering early childhood literacy.

In addition, OEC employees are encouraged to nominate non-profit organizations or volunteers in their cooperative communities doing admirable work for worthy causes, for a foundation grant. The Community Foundation of Ohio's Electric Cooperatives proudly provided financial support to:

- » Common Ground Free Store Ministries
- » National Alliance of Mental Illness of Ohio
- » JR Memorial Cruise for a Cure
- » Autistic Self Advocacy Network
- » Ovarian Cancer Alliance of Ohio

We look forward to watching the Community Foundation of Ohio's Electric Cooperatives continue to grow, supporting local efforts and fortifying our concern for community.





LEUKEMIA &
LYMPHOMA
SOCIETY®

**LIGHT
THE NIGHT®**



OHIO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives 

Buckeye Power: The wholesale power supplier for the 25 distribution cooperatives serving Ohio.

Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives: The statewide trade and services association.

Together, we are **Ohio's Electric Cooperatives.**

www.ohioec.org

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