

the Co-op Connection

FEBRUARY 2024

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM YOUR POWER PARTNER



What It Means To Be An Owner

The system of ownership called the cooperative model is one that has stood the test of time. Electric cooperatives, like Central Florida Electric Cooperative, are closing in on 100 years in business and are growing stronger. Even so, sometimes members can misunderstand what it means to be an owner of their own service provider.

Electric cooperatives, like CFEC, are considered privately-owned, not-for-profit companies that deliver electricity to its members. Why members and not customers? When you signed up to receive electric service, you became a member. This means that you get to participate in the democratic process of running the cooperative and in other benefits that customers would not receive. It also means that cooperative leadership answer to the members, who are their neighbors and fellow citizens, not shareholders who may live far away.

But that's not the only benefit. As a not-for-profit business model, your membership earns you dividends. Cooperatives pay their bills with what is collected from members' paying their power bills. Most of it, almost 70%, goes directly to pay for the actual electricity generation. The rest pays for the cost of keeping power on – trucks, parts, personnel, hardware, software, etc. What's leftover between the amount collected and the amount needed for business is called a margin. In time, this is returned to members as a "patronage dividend." So, essentially you are a part-owner in your electric cooperative (or otherwise said, an Equity Owner). As well, for the newly formed, up-and-running fiber business, you own that too. That is why it is so important that when you have this fiber choice, you select Fiber by Central Florida for your fiber/internet needs. As I have said in some presentations, "when it does well, you will do weller".

Each year, the board of directors determines whether the cooperative's financial position permits the return, or retirement, of capital credits; and, if so, what amount of capital credits will be retired. The amounts allocated to each member are based on each individual member's participation in the cooperative. Rather than worry about

shareholders, CFEC's trustees and leadership always keeps your best interests at heart. This is why it is so critically important on the fiber side to get as many of our members to participate – the more that do, the stronger your fiber company becomes. So, tell your friends, your neighbors, the folks that you go to church with and all your relatives, to select the business that is home-grown, locally-owned and where the benefit all stays local. And, if you are served by another utility (Duke Energy or a municipality), when you join the "home-town team" you are, again, strengthening the "makes the most sense" option for our area.

This may seem like a simplified version of how the cooperative works, but it really is fairly simple. What's more – electric cooperatives around the world operate by a set of Seven Cooperative Principles that date back to the 1800s. The fact that these principles are still followed is a testament to the power of the electric cooperative model.

- *Voluntary and Open Membership*
- *Democratic Member Control*
- *Members' Economic Participation*
- *Autonomy and Independence*
- *Education, Training, and Information*
- *Cooperation Among Cooperatives*
- *Concern for Community*

Just as electric cooperatives brought power to rural areas not served by large power companies serving major metropolitan areas, now CFEC and many other



Denny George
GENERAL MANAGER



Central Florida Electric Cooperative, Inc.

~ YOUR POWER PARTNER ~

Our mission is to be the finest example of an electric cooperative where excellent service, competitive rates and concern for the consumer, community and environment guide our every action.

Cover photo: Future CFEC Members pose with a CFEC Christmas Truck by Madison Redd, CFEC Communications Specialist

cooperatives are embarking on another first – bringing fiber internet to its members. Fiber By Central Florida is a subsidiary that will operate in a similar fashion to CFEC. Town-by-town and home-by-home, fiber lines are being brought to CFEC’s members, bringing with it the much-needed access to high-speed internet.

Although there seem to be numerous things to work out daily, overall, as a cooperative, we feel honored to be able to undertake this effort and bring this so needed service to our members and others. Hopefully this helps you understand a little more about what it means to be an owner and helps you feel honored to be a part of this amazing organization.

2024 Board of Trustee Elections

Central Florida Electric Cooperative is owned by its Members. As part owner of an electric power distribution cooperative, you have a say in who is elected to serve on the Board of Trustees. The following information from CFEC’s By-laws outlines the nomination process for Board of Trustee elections.

Article 4 - Trustees

Section 4. Nominations

It shall be the duty of the Board to appoint, not less than thirty (30) nor more than ninety (90) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which Board members are to be elected, a committee on nominations consisting of not less than five (5) nor more than eleven (11) members who shall be selected from different sections so as to insure equitable representation. No member of the Board may serve on such a committee. The committee, keeping in mind the principle of equitable representation, shall prepare and post at the principle office of the Cooperative at least twenty (20) days before the meeting a list of nominations for each Board position to be filled by election. Additional members may be placed in nomination for available Board positions by the filing of petition with the General Manager of the Cooperative at least fifty (50) days before the meeting. Said petition must be signed by at least fifteen (15) members residing within the district represented by the available Board position.

There shall be no nominations from the floor during the meeting.



Trustee Election Timeline

March 2023

Nominating Committee selected and will meet to confirm nominations. Member petitions must be submitted by March 15.

April 2023

Ballots are collected and counted prior to Annual Meeting by the appointed CPA firm.

May 2023

Election results will be presented at the Annual Meeting of Members, May 4.



Trustee Terms Expiring in 2024:



Carl Roof
District 2



Tony Weeks
District 3



Kenneth O'Steen
District 7

Powering Communities: Central Florida Electric Cooperative Educational Charity Gives Back

Promoting and protecting the human rights of citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities is the mission of Levy ARC, also known as LARC and soon to be called Tri-County ARC. Unfortunately, LARC's long-time home – a 92-year old building in Otter Creek – was finally beyond repair, causing the organization to move.

Temporarily, they have been operating out of the fellowship hall at Saint Alban's Episcopal Church in Chiefland. Finally, in late 2023, The Levy ARC closed on the sale of a building in Chiefland that will become their new facility. However, their new home, a former childcare facility located on U.S. Highway 19 before Bett's Big T Restaurant in Chiefland, needs renovations to make it usable for their clients.

CFEC's donation will help make this possible.

CFEC Trustee President James McCain said, "We are honored to present this donation to Levy ARC, who works so hard to make sure their clients are not overlooked in our society. They provide the support and training needed to help these members of our communities be more self-reliant and even self-supportive. We are happy we can be a part of making their new facility usable well into the future."

Programs provided to the Levy ARC students include adult/intensive day training, community-based employment and supported living. LARC, which was founded in 1975, assists anywhere from 25-40 clients. Their goal is to be in their new building by June 2024.

The Ark of Levy County

The CFEC Educational Charity also recently extended a helping hand to our local schools, with donations to the Education Foundations in Gilchrist, Dixie, and Levy counties. The funds for these generous donations come from unclaimed capital credits and the CFEC Educational Round-Up Program. Rather than accumulating these funds in an account somewhere, the CFEC Educational Charity invests these funds locally each year through scholarships and donations to organizations like our local Education Foundations.

Education Foundation of Gilchrist County



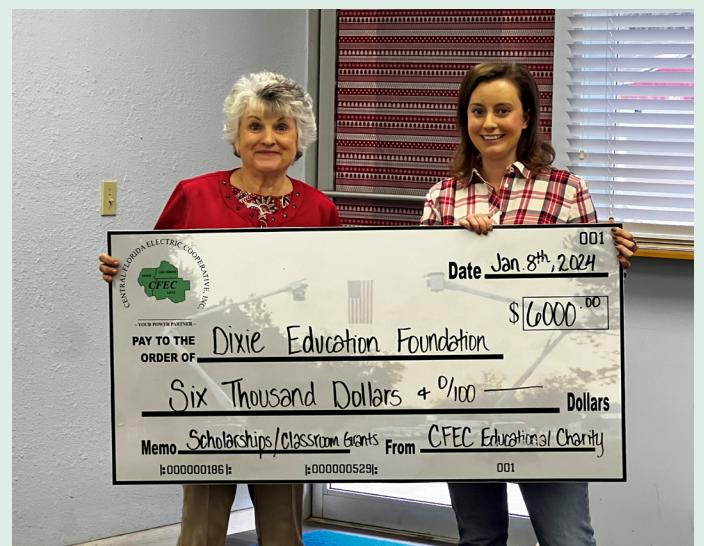
This year, each Education Foundation in our three counties was awarded an equal share of the \$25,000 in total being donated based on the number of active CFEC accounts in each area. Through these foundations, these funds will be used to provide scholarships to deserving students and/or classroom grants to help both students and staff succeed.

And what better avenue to invest in than our schools, as they hold our future community and business leaders.

Levy County Schools Foundation



Dixie Education Foundation





George Buckner
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER,
FIBER BY CENTRAL FLORIDA

Ensuring Uninterrupted Connectivity: Our Commitment to Fiber Network Reliability

Fast, Affordable, and Reliable.

This is the tagline that you will often see on our marketing material and are three attributes of our service that differentiate us from our competitors. Of course, fast and affordable are

useless if the service is not reliable; so, below is a quick glance at what we are doing here at Fiber by Central Florida to ensure that your service remains reliable.

Our overall design, construction, and support related partners are the main items that we lean on in order to make your service as reliable as possible. When it comes to our network design and construction we follow the same path as our electric lines, which allows us to:

- Quickly identify outage related issues with your service thanks to the assistance of our power related resources here at CFEC.
- Keep costs down by utilizing CFEC's current electric infrastructure and their preventative maintenance programs, which are second to none.
- Ultimately, by following our current power infrastructure ensures that you should be able to steam your favorite show or play your favorite online game as long as you have power at your residence.

Both the design and construction of the network provides the most benefit to our members regarding reliability; however, we still need a group of support partners to assist with identifying, locating, and correcting issues as they arise. So, who are these partners and what do they do you ask; well, let's dive right into it:

- When it comes to identifying and locating issues, we attempt to take care of a few things locally; however, our Calix Cloud Services and our Conexon Network Operations Center assist with our overall Network Management and Monitoring.
- If issues are of the physical nature, we quickly pivot to the folks with "boots on the ground" and work with our Conexon, Bigham, or Benton Technical Services group to quickly resolve these types of issues.

Having a good set of plans, procedures, and partners in place to assist when issues arise is invaluable; however, it is equally important that we remember that we are a growing organization and as such we must remain as "fluid" as possible to our ever-changing environment. To quote Mr. Robert Burns, "The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry."

With that being said, we have been thrown a few curveballs out of the gate that have put our plans and procedures to the test for sure. As a cooperative employee for 15+ years, I have participated in my share of tabletop sessions that have covered incidents ranging from natural disasters to cyber security related events; however, maintaining the Fiber by Central Florida network is on a whole new level.

In November we had a 15-minute system-wide outage due to a misconfigured piece of equipment, located on another provider's network, which sent a malformed Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) update to our network systems! Say that fast three times...

On a network like ours, BGP is similar to a digital postal service. For example, this protocol helps all of your internet traffic get to the right place at the right time, just as the post office ensures that your mail is delivered to the right person. Talk about something out of your control. This one event took support personnel from two of our vendors, along with our local Fiber by Central Florida team, to review various system logs and downstream devices to pinpoint the issue. We then had to collaborate with one another to implement a solution to this problem; all without taking another system-wide network outage. We are not simply providing internet access for customers to use Google, but are providing critical connections to local businesses, local government agencies, and local healthcare providers.

Additionally, there are other customer service-related issues that we are striving to improve upon; however, some of these growing pains are to be expected when we are moving at much faster speed than we originally anticipated.

Remember, this was initially going to be a 4+ year build-out; however, we have been working to expedite various aspects of this project and plan to have the bulk of the build completed in 2.5 years! We could go a little bit slower, which may improve certain business aspects; however, we knew that this would only benefit those that currently have access to high-speed internet and would then continue to delay these types of live changing services for the rest of our rural communities.

While we strive for perfection, we are also well aware that interruptions to your service may occur; however, we will be working to manage each service interruption in a manner that dramatically reduces the time it takes to repair your services when compared to our competitors.

With Fiber by Central Florida, you have the benefit of working with a local company that has been engaged in your community since 1939 and local resources that you may have grown up with and rely on the same service for all of their family's connected devices. Our roots run deep in the Tri-County area, so rest assured that we have a solid foundation to weather every storm with you and to ensure that your internet service is just as reliable as the electricity that has powered your world for decades.



FIBER-TO-THE-HOME

Unleashing the Power of Modern Hard-Wired Connectivity

When it comes to reliability, a hard-wired fiber internet connection stands above the rest. Unlike traditional copper or wireless connections, fiber optics use thin strands of glass to transmit data at the speed of light. This means it is not susceptible to interference from electromagnetic signals or environmental factors like weather conditions. Fiber connections are also not affected by distance, which is why our rural customers can now enjoy the same high-speed internet as those in urban areas.

Additionally, the use of dedicated fibers from Fiber by Central Florida directly to your home ensures that you do not have to share bandwidth with others, resulting in faster and more consistent internet speeds.

Whether you are streaming your favorite shows, working remotely, or engaging in online gaming, a hard-wired fiber connection provides the fastest and most reliable connection possible.

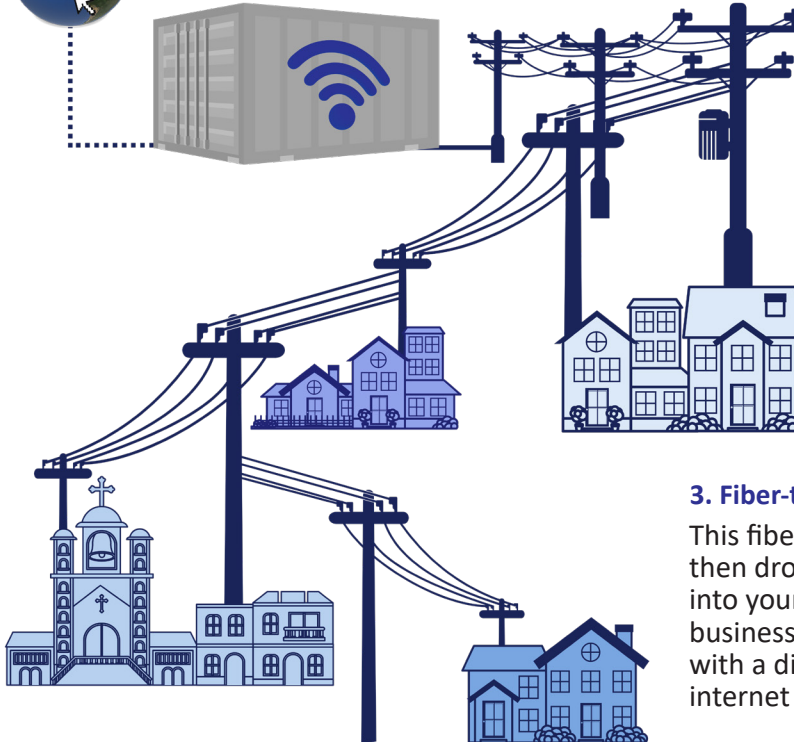
1. World Wide Web

We access the World Wide Web through multiple network access points, that we refer to as “Fiber Huts”, dispersed throughout our service area



2. Utility Poles

Data is sent from those “Huts” via fiber-optic cable pulled alongside CFEC’s existing electric infrastructure - either overhead on poles or underground

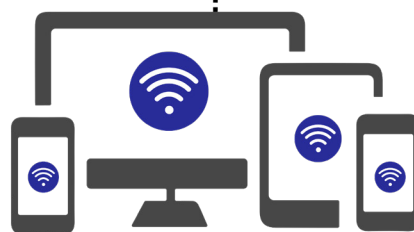


3. Fiber-to-the-Home

This fiber-optic cable is then dropped directly into your home or business - providing you with a direct, hard-wired internet connection

4. Whole-Home Wi-Fi Connection

Data is then delivered uninterrupted, at lightning-fast speeds to all your devices through a powerful whole-home Wi-Fi connection.



CONTACT US



Customer Service

1-844-53-FIBER
(1-844-533-4237)



Technical Support

1-844-533-4237



Email

info@fiberbycentralflorida.com

WAYS TO PAY YOUR BILL

Fiber by Central Florida offers a variety of ways to pay your bill, including:



My Fiber Account Customer Portal
- www.fiberbycentralflorida.com



Fiber by Central Florida App
- MyFiberIQ



By Phone
- 1 (844) 533-4237

Enroll in Autopay

To enroll in Autopay and set up monthly credit card or bank draft payments, visit fiberbycentralflorida.com and access the Customer Portal.



Once inside the Customer Portal, follow the prompts to set up a bank draft or assign a credit card to your Fiber by Central Florida account.

TROUBLESHOOTING AND TECH SUPPORT

No internet connection? Need help?

If you are having trouble, you may need to reboot your GigaSpire. With GigaSpire plugged in and powered on, pull the power plug out of the GigaSpire to turn it off, wait 10 seconds and plug power cable back in to turn it back on. Once the power is returned, give it some time, as it will take about 1 to 2 minutes to fully boot up.



GigaSpire BLAST u6x LED Status

Green (solid)	Connected to the internet
Green (flashing)	Pairing attempt with other Wi-Fi capable devices
Yellow (flashing)	Booting up or service/software is being upgraded
Red (flashing)	No internet

Device Troubleshooting:

1. Verify your device is connected to your network in your Wi-Fi settings.
2. Try to connect to other websites using your device.
3. If you cannot visit any website with your device, try to access the internet with another device. If the other device connects, restart your device and try to connect to your network again.

If you are still unable to connect your device to the network, call Tech Support at 1(844)533-4237.

Strawberry Brie

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup strawberries, chopped
- 1/2 cup pecans, chopped
- 3 tablespoons strawberry jam or preserves
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 (6-inch) wheel brie cheese
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lime zest
- 1/2 cup fresh mint leaves, chopped



PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 275 degrees. In a small sauce pot, cook jam and vinegar over medium heat until bubbly. Stir in lime zest. Place Brie on an oven-safe serving platter or dish. Place chopped strawberries and pecans on top of Brie wheel. Cover with jam mixture. Bake Brie wheel until it is warm and soft, about 15 minutes. Garnish with chopped mint leaves. Serve immediately with crackers or crusty bread.

Strawberry and Basil Chicken

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/4 cups fresh strawberries, diced small
- 4 tablespoons fresh squeezed orange juice
- 2 tablespoons white balsamic or balsamic vinegar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 teaspoon fresh garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons all-purpose seasoning (Everglades seasoning)
- 4 large boneless chicken thighs or breasts, trimmed
- 1/2 cup red onion, diced small
- 1 cup fresh basil, chopped



PREPARATION

Make the marinade for the chicken by combining the vinegar, 1 tablespoon cooking oil, 2 tablespoons fresh squeezed orange juice, garlic, 1 teaspoon seasoning blend and 1/4 cup diced strawberries. Stir ingredients well and use mixture to marinate the chicken for a minimum of 2 hours, or preferably overnight. Preheat a sauté pan over medium heat and add 1/2 tablespoon cooking oil. Remove the chicken from the marinade, and pat dry. Carefully place the chicken in the sauté pan and cook for 8 to 10 minutes (4 to 5 minutes on each side) until the chicken is completely cooked. Remove the chicken from the pan and let cool slightly. In a small mixing bowl, combine 2 cups strawberries, red onion, 2 tablespoons fresh squeezed orange juice, 1 teaspoon seasoning blend and basil. Stir to combine. Taste the strawberry-basil mixture and adjust seasoning with the spice blend. To serve, add the cooked chicken to a platter and top with the fresh strawberry-basil mixture. Garnish with fresh citrus, whole Florida strawberries and fresh basil leaves.

7 Ways To Pay Your Bill:



In Office / Drive-Through

Make your payments at any CFEC location during working hours or place your payment in a drop-box after hours.



Mail

Mail your payment to: Central Florida Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 9, Chiefland, FL 32644. Allow for adequate delivery time or the payment may be late.



Phone

Pay by phone at 1-800-227-1302, or 1-352-619-9988, through a third-party provider. A \$2.50 service fee will be charged by the provider per \$500 transaction and is NOT a charge by CFEC. Payments made by phone are posted to the member's account at the time of payment.



Online

Go to www.cfec.com to pay online. Choose the e-check option to pay with NO FEE. To pay with credit or debit card, a \$2.50 convenience fee will be applied by the third-party payment provider. Members who opt for paperless billing will also receive a 0.50 cent credit on their bill each month.



Power Partner App

Use CFEC's Power Partner App to make a payment. Choose e-check to pay with NO FEE. A convenience fee of \$2.50 will be charged to pay by credit card or debit card.



Bank Draft

Set up automatic recurring bank draft payments and receive a \$1 CREDIT on your bill each month. Members can use their bank routing and account information to complete a Bank Draft Application to ensure timely payment each month. Applications can be found online at www.cfec.com under the Documents tab, then under Member Benefits & Safety Documents, or at any of our office locations.



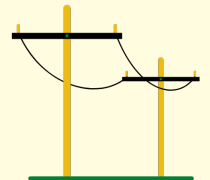
Bank Locations

Payments can be made at Seacoast Banks located in the CFEC service area or at Lafayette State Bank in Bell, Fla., during their normal working hours. Returned checks or payment arrangements cannot be processed by these banks.

Co-ops Vote

To Report A Power Outage:

- Call: 1-800-227-1302 or 352-493-2511, follow the prompts of the Automated Outage Response system.
- Use the Power Partner App: On the Home page, click "Outage," then select "Report an Outage." Fill out the form as to Outage information and press "Report Outage."
- Online: Click on the "Report Outage" button located at the top of the website. Fill in the "Identify Outage Location," form and click "Submit."



Central Florida Electric Cooperative, Inc.

~ YOUR POWER PARTNER ~

Meeting Notice: The Board of Trustees for Central Florida Electric Cooperative, Inc., meet on the fourth Monday of each month at 5 p.m. at the Cooperative's main office in Chiefland. Members are always welcome to attend.



**CENTRAL FLORIDA ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC**



**Central Florida Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

~ YOUR POWER PARTNER ~

MAIN OFFICE

11491 NW 50th Ave.
Chiefland, FL 32626-3247
352-493-2511
or 800-227-1302
www.cfec.com

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ORLANDO, FL
PERMIT NO. 3937

Physical Address/Payment Locations

MAIL ADDRESS

P.O. Box 9
Chiefland, FL 32644-0009

CROSS CITY OFFICE

207 NE 210 Ave.
Cross City, FL 32628
352-498-7322

INGLIS OFFICE

167 Highway 40 West
Inglis, FL 34449
352-447-3553

ADDITIONAL PAYMENT LOCATIONS

Seacoast Banks
Lafayette State Bank (Bell only)
*For a complete listing of payment locations,
go to www.cfec.com.*
*This institution is an equal opportunity
provider and employer.*

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SAVE THE DATE
for the 2024
Annual Meeting of Members
of
**Central Florida Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

SATURDAY, MAY 4, 2024

*Suwannee River Fair Pavilion
located at 17851 NW 90th Avenue,
Fanning Springs, FL 32693*



**Central Florida Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

~YOUR POWER PARTNER~