The value of electricity continues to shine

HOW MANY OF us remember dropping into the Pee Dee Electric Cooperative office with our parents and grandparents to pay the light bill? Whether you do that in person, by mail or online today, paying your monthly bill does a lot more than just keep the lights on.

Electricity keeps us connected to our modern world. Consider all the necessities and conveniences we enjoy in part because of the power lines running to the electric meter outside your home.

Count up your televisions, desktop, laptop and tablet computers, printers, your gaming consoles, music and video players and personal assistant devices. Whether they are used every day or just occasionally, the electricity that keeps them working comes from Pee Dee Electric.

Have you looked around your kitchen lately? Between the coffee maker, toaster, microwave and electric skillet, a lot of us have added several other modern small appliances.

If you’ve got a craft nook or workshop, the power tools and machines you use to cut and shape your projects are either plugged in or recharged from the outlets connecting your household wiring to Pee Dee Electric Cooperative’s distribution system.

Still a bargain

You use electricity to run all these devices, keep the lights on, use the stove, heating and air conditioning, and to get hot water from the tap. The good news is, even as we rely more on electricity, it’s still a bargain, especially compared to other things we pay for regularly.

Since 2011, medical care, residential rental rates and education have increased at rates of 3 percent or more per year. Butter, meat and egg costs have been up by more than one to 2 percent annually, and even bread costs have risen better than a half point on average.

Electricity costs rise about 1 percent a year, but Cooperatives across the country have reported a decline in average residential use per household since 2010. That means we’re doing more things with less energy.

Kilowatt hour use per household dropped by 8 percent between 2010 and 2016, slightly less than the 9 percent decline reported by all electric utilities, nationwide.

Making it even better

When it comes to value, electricity is a clear winner, and we’re always looking for ways to work with you to make it even better. That’s why Pee Dee Electric Cooperative urges energy efficiency, encourages you to look for efficient, Energy Star-approved appliances, and promotes technology, designed to give members more control over their electricity use. That’s good for families, couples and individuals trying to live within their budgets. And it’s going to become even more important as digital devices and internet-connected technologies become even more important in our lives.

The average home now has 10 Wi-Fi connected devices. That number is expected to explode to 50 by 2020. Technology and the gateways that keep them working use electricity, so you’ll depend upon Pee Dee Electric Cooperative for more than just the power that keeps the lights on.

That’s why we’re always working to provide service that’s reliable, affordable, and even more valuable to our member—you, your family and your neighbors.

MIKE S. FULLER
President & CEO
Partners bring new life to large industrial client of PDEC

FIBER INDUSTRIES LLC will soon open a new textile production operation, creating at least 135 jobs, at the Palmetto Plant, 1000 East McIver Road in Darlington.

The former Wellman Industries facility, long served by Pee Dee Electric Cooperative, closed in 2008. A privately held company, Fiber Industries was established by MHR Fund Management LLC, a New York-based investment firm and its partners, to restart the plant with a capital investment of over $30 million.

The management team and partners, Andrew Rosenfeld and Leandro Carboni, have over 60 years of combined experience at senior level positions in the chemical, oil and gas industries, and strong backgrounds in financial, commercial and plant operations. They say they've been very pleased with the local workforce and rehired many employees of the old Fiber Industries.

“There's a good, talented pool of labor in the area,” Rosenfeld said in early February. Carboni asked former employees why they wanted to come back. “They said, Leandro, this is home,” he notes.

“For Andrew and me, it surprised us,” Carboni said. “He and I have been working with big corporations in Houston, San Francisco and New York, and we're impressed with the quality of the people—their background, their knowledge is really good.”

Praising their employees, the two practically finish one another’s sentences.

Rosenfeld: “Their desire to work and be part of the team, you just don't see that in a lot of places.”

Carboni: “They don't just bring in their hours, they bring in their heart.”

Rosenfeld: “Which is what makes a company work.”

Carboni: “It makes all the difference!”

Co-op member happy to be ‘back home’ at Fiber Industries

Several former employees of the original Fiber Industries were among the early hires at the Palmetto Plant, helping the new ownership relaunch the Darlington facility and once again make Fiber Industries a leading manufacturer of polyester staple fiber.

One is Pee Dee Electric Cooperative member Rick Jones, now Fiber Industries’ safety and training manager, who started at the Palmetto Plant in April 1974. Jones worked there until Wellman Industries, the previous owner, closed the facility in December 2008.

“I tell people I actually grew up here. It was my home away from home,” he says in a featured video on Fiber Industries’ Facebook page. “I had the fortunate opportunity to make friends at this facility—not just coworkers but true friends, and friendships that I carry on even until today.

“It really has a special place in my heart because ... it has allowed me to raise a family, three children, and get them through college,” Jones says. “It’s exciting because we have the opportunity to recreate—and I know it’s not the same company but a lot of the values that were in place, the plant culture that was in place. I feel like those were the things that the current company would also like to have in place.”

Wearing two hardhats, overseeing safety and training, is a fresh challenge for Jones. “I’m loving it. I really am. It’s just a lot of fun,” he told South Carolina Living in early February. “That’s what brought me back, honestly—because I had it made,” says Jones.

He was semi-retired until he got the call to rejoin Fiber Industries. Jones had been teaching training part-time at Florence-Darlington Technical for ReadySC, a state government job-readiness program.

“IT just means a lot for me to see it be successful. I want to contribute if I can,” he says.

Already, Fiber Industries has re-hired more than 30 former employees. In icebreaker sessions with job applicants, Jones asked fellow Fiber veterans why they wanted to come back. “Almost all of them said, ‘I want to go back home. I want to go back to my family.’ You know, that just reaffirms my belief, it really was special.”

A Florence native, Jones also knows that Fiber Industries holds a place in South Carolina electric cooperative history: In 1974, the year Jones started there at age 23, Fiber Industries became the largest industrial load served by any co-op in the state.

The state’s 20 independent, consumer-owned electric co-ops had been formed in the late 1930s and early 1940s, primarily to serve farms and rural homes that previously could not get reliable, affordable electricity. For Pee Dee to serve a large load like Fiber Industries proved that co-ops were up to any job.

Jones is a proud Pee Dee member at home, too. “Trust me. I wouldn’t have it any other way,” he says. “When we were looking to build our house, I asked if the lot was in co-op territory. As far as I’m concerned, I’m Pee Dee Co-op for life.”