



VECcustomers Share Donates One-Millionth Dollar

Volunteer Energy Cooperative's VECcustomers Share program donated its one-millionth dollar on Monday, May 10, 2004.

The program, founded in October of 2001, allows VEC customers to round their electricity bills to the nearest dollar. The extra change is then pooled with the donations of other customers and grants are awarded to non-profit community-service organizations by an independent VECcustomers Share board of directors.

A \$1,500 grant, awarded May 10, to the Make-A-Wish Foundation® of East Tennessee pushed the program over the one-million dollar mark.

"None of this could have been possible without the giving attitude of VEC's member-owners – our customers," said VEC President and CEO Bill Buchanan. "I am proud to say that about 75% of our member-owners voluntarily participate in the VECcustomers Share program. Electric cooperatives were formed and are still operated today in the spirit of the strength of many people working together. Nowhere is this more evident today than in programs such as VECcustomers Share."

Heather Anderson, executive director of the Make-A-Wish Foundation® of East Tennessee, accepted the grant during a luncheon at VEC's corporate offices in Decatur. She said the grant was not only a milestone for the VECcustomers Share program but it also came at a crucial time for her organization which is dedicated to granting wishes for children with life-threatening illnesses.

She said she had closed out the budget for the month of May when she got a last-minute request to grant a wish. She said she was about to give up hope on being able to fulfill that wish when she got word that the Make-A-Wish Foundation® had been awarded the grant.

"God certainly had a plan for this," she said.

In less than three years the pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters donated by VEC member-customers has been translated into \$1 million for local communities.

"Since October 2001, VEC customers have given back to their communities in a big way," Buchanan said. "They have helped build wheelchair ramps for the handicapped. They have supported troops of Girl Scouts and

Boy Scouts. They have assisted senior citizens groups and community fire departments. They sent needed funds to their neighbors in Cumberland County after a devastating tornado. Neighborhood athletic teams and civic clubs alike have been the beneficiaries of these funds. It is an impressive list.”

The average donation of participating VEC customers is about \$6 per year. As Buchanan put it, “... most of us lose more than that in our clothes dryer every year.

“I am continually amazed that your pennies and mine add up to approximately \$30,000 per month that the VECustomers Share Board of Directors awards each and every month,” he added.

Buchanan also noted that the funds gathered by the program have been awarded throughout VEC’s 17-county service area.

“There is not a county served by Volunteer Energy Cooperative that this program has not touched in a positive way,” he said.

The VECustomers Share Board serves voluntarily and reviews about 80 grant applications per month. Board Member Bobby Scott, Hamilton County’s representative, said he is happy to donate his time and effort to the VECustomers Share program.

“I’ve been involved in several community projects,” Scott said. “But it’s hard to find a program that has done more good for local communities than this one.”