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## ABOUT CO-OPS

Co-ops are an American way of life. In the very best sense they reflect the ability of Americans to work together toward a common goal. The first United States co-op was established by Benjamin Franklin in 1752 to help provide insurance coverage for a group of Philadelphia citizens. Today, over 100 million Americans rely on more than 47,000 co-ops across the country.

The important fact about a co-op is that the customers own it. A co-op belongs to the people who need and use its services; they band together to establish one because they believe they can serve themselves better and at less cost if they own the business.

Most co-ops operate on a non-profit basis. The people who make up a co-op become shareholders or "members." Any profits the co-op generates go back to the owners in the form of annual refunds called "patronage refunds" or "capital credits."

## ABOUT PEARL RIVER VALLEY ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

In Mississippi, rural electric co-ops are known as electric power associations. Pearl River Valley Electric Power Association, headquartered in Columbia, is one of 26 electric power associations across the state and has been serving its members for more than 71 years.

Pearl River Valley EPA was incorporated in May of 1938 "to make electric energy available to its members at the lowest cost consistent with sound economy and good management." A membership fee was \$5, which was a lot of money in those days. But one year later, on May 19, 1939, 227 members had electricity in their homes when Pearl

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River Valley first began service to its customers.

One hundred miles of line were erected during that first year and, 10 years later, 1,500 miles of line had been built to serve over 4,500 members. By 1951, nearly 90 percent of the people in Pearl River Valley's service area had electricity. Today, Pearl River Valley serves 45,596 members in 12 counties with over 6,435 miles of line. Now every residence and business in the area has access to electricity, and Pearl River Valley has branch offices in Hattiesburg, Purvis and Wiggins.

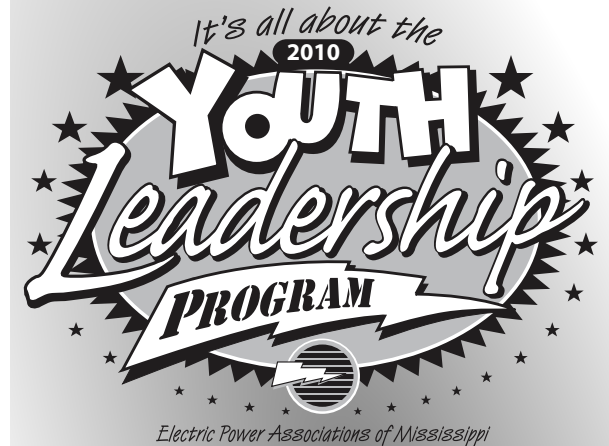
In 1960, Pearl River Valley became the first co-op in the state and one of the first in the nation to refund capital credits to its members, something the company has done every year since. To date, Pearl River Valley has paid patronage refunds of \$29,052,493. In 1988, Pearl River Valley established a new program to return accumulated patronage capital to the estates of deceased members and has already returned \$7,773,826 in that manner.

Pearl River Valley gets much of its power from South Mississippi Electric Power Association, a generation and transmission co-op owned by 11 electric power associations. South Mississippi EPA, headquartered in Hattiesburg, has two of its own generating facilities and also owns a part of the Grand Gulf Nuclear Plant.

People throughout South Mississippi are familiar with Pearl River Valley's annual meeting. Every year since 1939, members have gathered together to have a say in how their co-op will be run. Co-ops are democratic; each member has one vote when it comes to business matters, and such matters are addressed during the annual meeting. Pearl River Valley was the first electric power association in Mississippi to begin holding annual meetings.

## PEARL RIVER VALLEY ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



*A comprehensive statewide youth leadership program developed to better acquaint the future leaders of our communities with cooperative philosophy and how it relates to building leadership skills.*

## Contest Guidelines

- Contest is open to junior class (11th grade) or equivalent students in high schools located within Pearl River Valley Electric Power Association's service area.
- Students must be 16 years of age on or before December 31 of the current year of the program.
- Participants do not have to be members of Pearl River Valley EPA. However, if two electric power associations offer this program within one school, then students' parents or legal guardian would be required to be members of Pearl River Valley EPA.
- Essay must contain a minimum of 400 words, but should not exceed 800 words. A listing of resources used to write essay must be included.

### *Topic for essay will be:*

#### *"Meeting Future Electricity Demands"*

*As you develop and write your essay, you must discuss the following four topics:*

- (1) Give a short history of Pearl River Valley EPA and REA (Rural Electric Administration). How was electricity brought to rural people in our service area?*
- (2) Briefly discuss the difference between rural electric cooperatives and other types of utilities and the advantages to being a member of a rural electric cooperative.*
- (3) With the ever-increasing demand for electricity, electric cooperatives are constantly urging their members to use electricity wisely. What can you do in your daily life to become energy efficient?*
- (4) Briefly discuss the types of renewable energy sources available in Mississippi.*

*The essays must be in our office by November 20, 2009.*

- The essay should be typed.
- It is suggested that each class write the essay as a class project with the teacher grading the essays for regular class credit. The teacher will then submit the top essay to Pearl River Valley EPA.
- Students who participate in the home school program are eligible to participate in this program. However, only one student will be chosen from all essays received from home school students throughout our system to represent the home school program and be eligible for the awards.
- The name of the student should not appear on the essay, but will need to be supplied on a separate sheet attached to the essay. Information provided on the sheet should be: name of school, school telephone number, person to contact at school, student's name, home address, telephone number and parents' names. For home school students, please provide all information that is applicable.
- Pearl River Valley EPA has the right to publish the essay at its discretion and may use the winner's name and photograph in any promotion for this program.
- Pearl River Valley EPA reserves the right not to present any award, if in the judges' opinion, quality essays are not present.
- These guidelines are subject to be changed at any time deemed necessary by Pearl River Valley EPA.

## Judging

- Judges will be named by Pearl River Valley EPA.
- The judging committee, consisting of three individuals, will review the essays and select the top five entries. Judging for the essays will be based on 50 percent content, 25 percent originality and 25 percent grammatical.
- Each of the top five finalists may be contacted and required to participate in an informal interview with

the judges. The judges will then select two winners and one alternate. The two winners will attend the Leadership Workshop in Jackson, March 3-5, 2010, and the Rural Electric Washington Youth Tour, June 12-18, 2010. The students must attend the Leadership Workshop in order to attend the Washington trip.

## Reference Materials

- Reference materials have been supplied by Pearl River Valley EPA and can be found in your school library. These include *The Next Greatest Thing*, a publication of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association *A Giant Step* by Clyde T. Ellis; and *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow – The Farmer Takes A Hand*; by Marquis W. Childs. Information can also be found in encyclopedias and similar reference materials.
- For additional reference material, visit our Web site at [www.prvepa.com](http://www.prvepa.com) (click on Youth Services) or contact the Member Services Department at Pearl River Valley EPA, 601-736-2666. Also, check out NRECA's Web site at [www.youthtour.coop](http://www.youthtour.coop).

## Awards

- The top two student essays will receive \$100 for each student, teacher and school. The remaining school winning essays will receive \$25 for each student and teacher.

## Notes

*\*Children of Pearl River Valley EPA employees and board of directors are ineligible to receive an award.*

*\*Essays should be mailed to:*

C. R. Stuckey, Jr.  
Manager of Member Services  
Pearl River Valley EPA  
P. O. Box 1217  
Columbia, MS 39429-1217