

Electric Cooperatives: Going Beyond the Wires

written by

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It was a cold night in December, and the state championship football game was underway. Fourth quarter with less than a minute to go, ball on the twenty-yard line, and it was either team's game. It was down to the wire. Cowbells were ringing, the bands were playing and every fan was on their feet screaming, stomping and cheering for their team.

My team was huddled ready to put into action the final play of the game. We were ready to give our absolute best and push across the goal line for the winning score and the coveted Championship title. As, our quarterback, Lex, prepared his team for the play, the stadium lights suddenly flickered, and we were plunged into darkness. The referees blew their whistles calling an official timeout.

The teams and fans were devastated unsure if the game would go on. "We can't stop now!" shouted our star running back Brandon. As we waited for the referees to officially announce what the next steps would be, I looked to my left and saw the most amazing site, the Electric Cooperative team arriving on the scene ready to be our star players and save the day. They worked diligently and were able to reset the power so the game could go on. The clock was reset, the players were back on the field in position, and the whistle was blown for the final play. Lex shouted, "Down, Set, Hike!"

Well, I know you're wondering what happens next, right? Who wins? First, let's talk about the real champions at this game and beyond this game. I would have to say it is our local Electric Cooperative. The Electric Cooperatives are much more than just the ones who "work on the wires" getting the power reset for us when the game was "down to the wire." They go way beyond this, providing power to more than 2.5 million Tennesseans in their homes and businesses. They are real team players, working for their communities and not for profiting shareholders like many corporations. We are all one team, the co-ops and the members with one common goal.

Going above and beyond and giving their best, the Electric Cooperatives recruit businesses and investment, assist members in operating their homes and businesses more efficiently and even prepare students of all ages to be tomorrow's leaders- both on and off the football field. Yes, their community involvement goes far beyond the wires. The Electric Cooperatives are engaged locally and strive to give back to communities in truly passionate and inspiring ways. The Youth who are the future of our great country are one important part of the team. The Co-op supports programs such as the Washington Youth Tour, Youth Leadership Summit, and 4-H Electric Camp. These programs provide priceless education and guidance to these future young leaders.

On the football field, it is imperative that we execute the play efficiently to be successful and achieve our goal - winning the game. Well, the Co-ops do this every day, 24-7. Always

available, keeping the lights on 99.96 percent of the time for their members. Regardless of the weather- rain, sleet, or snow- they are striving for that goal line and hoping to win the game that day. The Co-ops also are impressive with their unwavering support of other communities when there is a disastrous event such as flooding, tornadoes or other extreme weather. Again, team work is what it is all about, and they prove this again and again. Recently, with the devastating floods in Louisiana, more than 40 electric co-op employees lost their homes. The Tennessee Electric Cooperatives made a \$10,000 donation to a fund established to assist them. This is just one example of the various Co-op teams coming together without hesitation to support each other in their times of need.

Our football team is a diverse group of young men. This is what makes us great. We are a diverse group of players with a diverse pool of talents that we can build upon to have that winning team. Well, the Electric Cooperatives are very similar. They are voluntary organizations open to all persons who need to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without regard to gender, social, racial, political or religious differences. Yes, they are a diverse team of co-op members as well.

Okay! Now, are you ready to know how this football game ended? After our quarterback, Lex, shouted, “Down, Set, Hike”, he pump faked and released the ball with perfect accuracy resulting in a touchdown for the Tigers. The crowd was on their feet, roaring with excitement, and players were jumping up and down and hugging each other! What a game! What a win! On this night, there was one winner on the field - the Tigers. We gave our all, and our all was what it took. We were the Champions.

Again, we would have never been the Champions if not for the other team in our community who came to the rescue on this night. Yes, the Electric Cooperative was part of our winning team. With football, you can only have one winner at the end of the game, but with Electric Cooperatives, everyone can be a winner. All you need to do is join them and be part of their winning team!