

# Small Change, Big Impact

## *Operation Round-Up funds 20 nonprofits in record year*

Through Operation Round-Up, First Electric members turn pocket change into powerful community impact — simply by rounding their bill up to the next dollar. Since 1998, that small gesture has added up to more than \$1.7 million supporting local nonprofits and opening doors for students through scholarships.

The Operation Round-Up (ORU) Board of Trustees met on Dec. 4, for its annual Christmas gathering — a celebration that captured both the holiday spirit and the generosity of our cooperative members. This year marked a milestone for the program, with a record number of applications submitted for funding. The surge in requests demonstrated how deeply communities across our service area depend on the support from ORU.

This meeting also represented an important transition for the board. Jim Zahnd, who has faithfully represented members in the Benton District for the past seven years, stepped down. His dedication, thoughtful insights and commitment to helping others were greatly appreciated and acknowledged by the board. Susan Cigelman of Hot Springs Village has been appointed as his successor, and the board looks forward to the experience and perspective she will bring to ORU's mission.

After careful review and discussion, the board approved funding for 20 deserving nonprofits and community groups. These grants will directly support food initiatives, senior services, domestic-violence shelters, educational programs, rural volunteer fire departments and organizations dedicated to restoring hope and stability.

From supporting shelters like Margie's Haven House and Women & Children First to aiding the Turtle Creek Volunteer Fire Department and empowering students through programs such as the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Foundation, each award reflects our members' commitment to uplifting neighbors and strengthening our communities.

The Christmas meeting concluded with gratitude to the members who round up their monthly bills, the volunteers serving on the ORU board and the organizations working tirelessly to make a difference. This record-breaking year reminds us that even small acts of giving, when multiplied across thousands of members, can create a powerful and lasting impact.



Front row, left to right: Jim Zahnd, Hot Springs Village; Susan Cigelman, Hot Springs Village; Courtney Chism, Secretary, Perryville; JoAnn Harkey, Jacksonville; Toshia Smith, Treasurer, Stuttgart; Kim Ezell, Vice Chair, Heber Springs; Jim Hawkins, Heber Springs. Back row, left to right: Lois Ann Burks, Chair, Benton; Mark Snowden, President/CEO; Lucas Minton, Jacksonville. Not pictured: John Gaunt of Jacksonville.

### Organizations funded:

Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Foundation – Arkansas County – \$500  
 Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Foundation – Cleburne County – \$1,500  
 Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Foundation – Independence County – \$250  
 Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Foundation – Stone County – \$250  
 Cleburne County Aging Program, Inc. – \$1,205  
 Floyd Community Center – \$1,000  
 Grant County Unified Community Resource Council, Inc. – \$500  
 Greers Ferry Storehouse Ministries – \$2,000  
 Hot Springs / Hot Springs Village Symphony Guild – \$1,000  
 Imagine & Believe Foundation – \$2,000  
 Lisowe's Lights – \$1,000  
 Margie's Haven House – \$2,000  
 Mid-America Science Museum – \$500  
 Perryville Elementary PTO – \$1,500  
 Pine Snag-Lobo Association, Inc. – \$2,000  
 Rachel's House – \$1,000  
 Renewal Ranch – \$1,000  
 Restoration Hope – \$1,000  
 Turtle Creek Volunteer Fire Department – \$2,500  
 Women & Children First: The Center Against Family Violence – \$2,000



# As a First Electric Member, YOU Get the Credit

In December, First Electric Cooperative proudly returned \$7 million to the people who make everything we do possible — our members. The capital credit refund represented your share of the cooperative's margins from a full retirement of 2003 and a partial retirement of 2020–2024.

Capital credits are one of the defining benefits of being part of an electric cooperative. Unlike investor-owned utilities, First Electric exists solely to serve its members — not generate profits. When revenues exceed expenses, those margins are allocated back to members based on the amount of electricity they used during the year. When financial conditions allow, your Board of Directors authorizes refunds, ensuring the money goes right back where it belongs: to you.

With this year's retirement of \$7 million, First Electric has now returned more than \$160.7 million to members since the cooperative was founded. It's a powerful reminder of the cooperative difference and the value of member ownership.

We thank you for your continued trust in First Electric Cooperative. You helped build this cooperative — and now, through capital credits, YOU get the credit.



Crestpark DeWitt nursing home received their First Electric capital credit check in December.

**THE POWER  
TO SERVE YOU.**

**105,977  
ACCOUNTS SERVED**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**First Electric**  
firstelectric.coop  
800-489-7405  
(Option 2 for outage reporting)

**Connect2First**  
connect2first.net  
833-411-2234  
(Option 2 for outage reporting)

**Holiday Closing**

**First Electric Cooperative and Connect2First will be closed on**  
**Jan. 1 for New Year's Day and**  
**Jan. 19 for Martin Luther King Day.**

**Crews will be on hand in the event of an outage.**

*May you enjoy a safe, happy New Year and  
a day dedicated to service and community!*

**First Electric Cooperative**  
firstelectric.coop

**CONNECT2First**  
connect2first.net

## Working Together for a Warm, Efficient Winter

As temperatures drop in Arkansas, small, low-cost and no-cost habits can make a big difference on your winter energy bill. For an extra boost in efficiency, members can take advantage of quick improvements that pay off all winter long.

- **Start by adjusting your thermostat** — lowering it just a few degrees when you're asleep or away can lead to meaningful savings.
- **Opening blinds during the day** helps capture natural warmth from the sun, while closing them at night keeps cold air out.
- **Sealing drafty windows and doors** with simple weatherstripping or caulk is one of the most affordable ways to stop heat loss, and it can be done in just a few minutes.
- **Make sure your vents are open and unblocked** to keep warm air flowing freely throughout your home.
- **Using smart power strips** can help reduce wasted electricity from devices that continue to draw power even when turned off, and changing your HVAC filter every 30 to 60 days helps your system run smoothly and use less energy.

Members can also track their daily energy usage in the First Electric app to better understand when and how they use electricity. If you have questions or need help managing your winter bills, feel free to call us at 800-489-7405. First Electric is here to help our members stay comfortable, safe and energy-smart year-round.



## START THE YEAR STRONG. STAY CONNECTED LOCALLY.

As the New Year begins, our team is ready to keep your home and business connected.



Call 833-411-2234 or visit [connect2first.net](http://connect2first.net) to learn what services are AVAILABLE NOW to you.



BRUCE  
OUTSIDE FIBER PLANT  
TECHNICIAN