

June 2021



**Choptank Electric
Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy
Cooperative 

Members First. Every day.



**Choptank
Fiber**

**Choptank
Fiber**



By Elizabeth Hallett
Manager of Marketing & Communications

Moments in Time: Electricity and Broadband Beginnings Intertwined

Cooperative beginnings and Choptank Fiber's first customer shared history.

"We wish we knew what fast was," said Sherry Hollingsworth about the internet service she and her husband Gordon had been using up to this point. Mrs. Hollingsworth need not wonder about fast internet speeds anymore — now, she and her husband can experience true gigabit-speed internet service at their home on Log Cabin Road in Denton, Maryland. Gordon and Sherry Hollingsworth are the very first connected customers of Choptank Fiber, Choptank Electric's broadband affiliate.

Choptank Electric has recognized for a long time that internet has quickly become a necessity that, unfortunately, many do not have access to in the rural United States. It was not that long ago, only 82 years since 1939, that our Cooperative was formed by a small group of farmers in Caroline County who needed electricity to increase business activity, ease chores, and add quality to their lives.

Among that original group of farmers stands Archie Carroll, who will turn 90 in August, and who is Mrs. Sherry Hollingsworth's father. He remembers when his dad was connected to the electrical grid, as one of the very first members of Choptank Electric Cooperative when he was only eight years old.

"We moved to the farm in 1937," he recalled, "and we had a Delco-Light unit to run a few lights for a few hours, but that was it. We didn't have any electricity. Then in 1939, I was walking home from school and these people were driving stakes into the ground." Mr. Archie chuckled as he continued, "They told me 'If you want electricity, don't mess with these stakes. Leave them alone!'"

Before electricity, Mr. Carroll recollected the heating situation in the home. "We had only two wood stoves.

One in the kitchen and one in the living room, and nothing upstairs. You had to pile on the blankets at night, and it wasn't uncommon to take a glass of water to bed and wake up with a cup of solid ice in the morning."

Electricity changed all of that. Not only did it relieve Archie's mom from washing oil lamp globes every day and heat their home, electricity helped boost his father's dairy farm production. They went from milking by hand with a bucket of milk exposed to the elements to an all-enclosed, cooling process that made it safer and more efficient. He was one of the first dairy farmers to own a milking parlor in the county because of their electric membership with Choptank Electric Cooperative. Access to electricity improved their quality of life personally and professionally. Electricity changed everyone's lives for the better back then, just like reliable, fast broadband internet can and will here on the Eastern Shore.

When planning out where these first broadband demo sites would be located, Choptank Electric staff analyzed the fiber that was already in place and how it connected back into our grid.

"It's a brilliant stroke of luck and extremely appropriate that the Hollingsworth family are our first Choptank Fiber customers," said Mike Malandro, President and CEO of Choptank Electric Cooperative and President of Choptank Fiber. "It wasn't planned this way, but the fact that they have deep-rooted ties to the origins of Choptank Electric Cooperative, and now Choptank Fiber — It's just serendipitous."

"It's amazing all the services that we depend on, that need internet," said Mrs. Hollingsworth. While people who reside in the city centers don't have to



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First Broadband Connection - Continued



Mr. Archie Carroll's wife, Patsy, age 3, at the doorstep of their farmhouse in 1939, when electricity was first connected.

worry about high-speed internet service availability, Mrs. Hollingsworth spoke about her many issues as a rural resident with limited internet options. "All of this COVID mess has really made it difficult for us, especially without reliable internet. I was on a virtual doctor appointment the other day, and the video kept cutting off, the audio going in and out. The doctor was struggling to understand me and see me."

Telehealth is just one of the many benefits that members will finally be able to take advantage of once the gigabit speed is available. Virtual learning, running a business from your home, shopping — the possibilities are endless. "It's such a big part of our world now. It's the little things like trying to buy a movie ticket that people don't think about," said Mrs. Hollingsworth.

The Hollingsworths cannot wait to use the faster internet service to talk to their grandchildren. "This is the bright side to the story," said Mr. Hollingsworth. "It will be nice to finally see the grandkids over video chat."

"Gordon and I are extremely excited and honored to be part of this incredible service. We really appreciate the outstanding work of Choptank Electric's employees," continued Mrs. Hollingsworth. "It will be a blessing to finally have reliable internet service."

On April 15, Mike Malandro memorialized the Hollingsworth's connection during a ribbon-cutting ceremony alongside Gov. Larry Hogan, members of the Eastern Shore Delegation, Caroline County

Commissioners and others, along with employees and staff and held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the special occasion.

During the event, Malandro introduced his "No Home Left Behind" philosophy by declaring that "our real goal is to change the quality of life for rural members on the Eastern Shore."

Gov. Hogan even commemorated the occasion by presenting an official citation to recognize the importance of Choptank Fiber's ribbon cutting and honor Choptank Electric Cooperative's commitment to expanding access to broadband on the Eastern Shore.

"We have been so successful over the years at delivering electric service to rural residents ... broadband service and internet access have become almost as important as electric service was over 80 years ago. I am pleased that we have found a way to deliver this life-changing service to our members," said Jeff Rathell, Chairman of the Cooperative Board of Directors.

Choptank Fiber plans to have its first 50 customers hooked up by end of June 2021.

To learn more about Choptank Fiber please visit www.choptankfiber.com.



Gordon and Sherry Hollingsworth's connection to Choptank Fiber marks a new chapter in the Co-op's history.

Your Pennies At Work: Betterton Beach Church Project

Choptank Trust contribution brings hope to community hub.



By Elizabeth Hallett

Manager of Marketing & Communications

Located in Kent County, Betterton Beach is an idyllic town, nestled in the Chesapeake Bay. Still known as the “Jewel of the Chesapeake Bay,” Betterton Beach used to be a thriving fishing and tourist community in the 1800s and 1900s where boats from Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore would port regularly. Now, with no commercial fishermen left, the town is better known as a sleepy small town with a few locals but also many seasonal and vacation homes. There on Main Street, you will find Betterton United Methodist Church, sitting atop a hill where you can see the Bay just down the street. Yet, amidst the beautiful



The eerie fog lingers over the Chesapeake Bay, not parting to reveal the coast of the Western Shore as it does on a typical day.

setting, the church needs some major repairs.

Artillery and machine-gun fire from the Aberdeen Proving Grounds, just across the Bay, boom in the distance as Dick Story, Chair of the Fundraising Committee and parishioner of the church, points to the huge holes in the original siding. “The stucco siding is crumbling, and we even have a few birds living in the

walls.”

Because of all this damage, the church began a fundraising project that would span several years. As part of their efforts, they applied to the Choptank Electric Trust in 2018, and were awarded some funds to repair their 23 stained-glass windows.

In March, the Trust pledged to donate \$5,000 to the restoration project, which Pastor Bill Carroll says will be a huge help. “There used to be three churches in this town, and now we are the last standing. This is so much more than just a preservation project. We want to be here to support this community for many years to come,” said Carroll. “Where do people go when they are in their own personal 9/11? We want this church to be a haven for hope in the community.”

The parish was founded in 1874, with the church built in 1913. The church is one of the few original buildings still standing in Betterton Beach.

The Methodist Church provides much-needed community services



A colorized version of the original photo of when the church was first opened in 1913.

to its residents, in addition to holding weekly services. During Lent, they held a popular “Meal and Message” program, where they served up meals and a few words of encouragement to drive-up vehicles at the local fire department parking lot. All donations went to the fire department to raise funds for much-needed equipment.

Before COVID struck, they hosted a youth group every Friday night in their basement community room. Upstairs, the former Sunday School room was turned into a learning hub for the Kent County Public School System by making upgrades to the electrical system and installing new internet service for students who do not have access to fast, reliable internet. COVID also created an opportunity for church members to call in to hear the morning message each Sunday.

The church’s fundraising committee has applied for other grants as well, but the donation from the Choptank Electric Trust will go a long way to help repair this beloved community church. “We have already raised \$70,000 for this \$150,000 project,” said Mr. Story. “If it weren’t for organizations like yours we would have no hope of reaching our goal. We have tried calling on local businesses, but they are hurting just as much as we are.”

“We plan on using the money provided by Choptank Electric Trust to redo the front half and bell tower so that it’s seen, and hopefully encourages more people to get involved,” said Mr. Carroll.

The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations

from members of Choptank Electric. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

For more information about the Betterton Beach Church Restoration Project and its historical town, visit www.stillbetterchurch.org. To learn more about the Choptank Electric Trust and its program, Operation Round Up, please visit <https://choptankelectric.coop/operation-round-trust-fund>.



Dick Story, Chair of the Fundraising Committee, and parishioner of the church, points to the large holes on the original siding.

Chuck Dehoff Retires After 36 Years of Service

Dehoff provided services to the Co-op and its members for over three decades!



Chuck Dehoff retires from the Co-op after 36 1/2 years of service.

Chuck Dehoff began his career at Choptank Electric Cooperative as an Apprentice Tree Trimmer on December 17, 1984. In 1985, he joined the Apprentice Lineman program in our Denton District and was awarded the titles of Journeyman Lineman and Chief Lineman respectively in 1987 and 1990. Then in 1991, a journeyman position opened up in our then Sudlersville office, which Dehoff took to be closer to his home. He was eventually made Serviceman in 1996, and then was later chosen in 2002 to fill a Chief Lineman position when we transitioned the office to our now Chestertown location. He accepted the position of Engineering Fieldman in October 2016, from which he will retire on June 11, 2021, after 36 1/2 years of service to the Co-op and its members. Dehoff’s charisma and professionalism will be missed, but we wish him much health and happiness in his retirement.

We wish Chuck a happy retirement and thank him for his wealth of knowledge, service, and experience for the last 36.5 years!

Directors Receive Accreditations

Olin Davis & Amy Brandt obtained NRECA accreditation to better serve the Co-op.

Congratulations to Directors Amy Brandt (Caroline County) and Olin Davis (Kent County) for continuing a tradition of excellence. Brandt obtained her NRECA Cooperative Director Certificate and Davis renewed his NRECA Cooperative Director Gold Certificate.



Olin Davis, Kent County Director, renewed his Director Gold Certificate.



Amy Brandt, Caroline County Director, received her NRECA Cooperative Director Certificate.

Meet Our Manager of Metering, Controls & SCADA

Engineering skills and experience define Nathan Irvin.



Nathan B. Irvin, P.E.
Manager of Metering, Controls
and SCADA

Nathan B. Irvin, P.E., is our new Manager of Metering, Controls and SCADA. Nathan has over 15 years of experience as an automation and controls engineer and as a project manager for several organizations including the Sussex County government, W.L. Gore & Associates Inc, ILC Dover, and Applied Control Engineering.

He also spent a few years as a college track coach at the University of Delaware and the University of California-Berkeley and as a teacher/Dean of Discipline in the Indian River School District.

Irvin has a Bachelors of Electrical Engineering (Univ. of DE), and a Master's in Education (Wilmington Univ).

In his spare time, Irvin likes to train for (and sometimes still compete) in the 100- and 200-meter in track and field. He also holds and maintains a Level 2 USA track and field coaching certification as well as an NSCA Strength and Conditioning specialist (CSCS) certification, and sometimes puts them to use training friends or their kids for speed or helping them meet their fitness goals. He lives in Millsboro, Delaware, with his two sons.

As part of Choptank Electric, Irvin is excited to take on a new role and challenges, and he is looking forward to getting to know everyone.

Play it Safe During Hurricane Season and Beyond!

June 1 is the start of hurricane season and other inclement summer weather, too.



Let's begin with the basics — Before any inclement weather event, take these steps to stay safe and minimize damage:

- Regularly check local news, radio or your mobile device for information about storm watches or warnings in your area.
- Keep supplies in an emergency preparedness kit. Include water bottles, non perishable food, blankets, first-aid supplies, flashlights, and a battery-powered radio.
- Make sure your yard is free of heavy debris that could be tossed around in the wind. Trim trees to prevent limbs from falling on your house.
- Contact your local emergency management agency for information about local shelters, evacuation plans, emergency exit routes, and so on.

Tornadoes

Tornadoes are capable of destroying homes, uprooting trees, and hurling objects through the air.

- Outdoor sirens are common, but communities have different warning methods. Get to know your community's tornado warning system.
- Choose a safe area in your home where you and your family can gather if a tornado warning is issued. This area should be located in the basement or a room with no windows, and located on the lowest level of your home.
- Conduct routine tornado drills with the entire family, so everyone knows where to go, and what to do if a tornado is approaching.
- Watch for signs of a tornado: a dark-colored sky, low-lying clouds, large hail or a loud roar.

Hurricanes

Hurricanes are violent storms that often cause property damage and life-threatening hazards, such as high winds and flooding.

- Create an evacuation plan and practice it ahead of time to avoid confusion during the event.

- Become familiar with your community's hurricane response plan; know the routes to local shelters, medical aid stations and so on.
- Close windows, doors, and hurricane shutters. If you don't have hurricane shutters, board up windows and doors with plywood.

Thunderstorms

Lightning kills more people every year than tornadoes and hurricanes. Rain and heavy winds can cause flooding, damage to homes, and widespread power outages.

- Learn about your community's emergency warning system and discuss lightning safety with your entire family.
- If a thunderstorm appears likely, postpone all outdoor activities.
- If a thunderstorm watch or warning is issued, take shelter in your home or other building.
- Shutter all windows and close exterior doors securely.

Floods

Flash flooding can be among the most damaging and costly of all natural disasters.

- Learn your vulnerability to flooding by determining the elevation of your property.
- If you live in a flood-prone area, keep sandbags, plywood, and plastic sheeting on hand.
- Contact your local emergency management agency to learn what protective measures should be taken around your home.
- Seal the walls in your basement with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.
- Standard homeowner's insurance typically doesn't cover flood damage. If you live in a flood-prone area, see the National Flood Insurance Program for information about obtaining flood insurance.

Power Outages

Although your electric service is generally reliable, a storm may lead to an extended power outage. Be prepared.

- Have candles and flashlights available.
- Use a battery-powered radio or your mobile device to get information about the status of power restoration.
- For backup power, consider purchasing a generator and operate it safely according to manufacturer's guidelines.

Member Notes

Our members are the reason Choptank Electric Cooperative exists. Without their support, it would be hard for us to move forward with current or new initiatives. Whether on social media, on the phone, or via old-fashioned letters sent along with their paper bills, our members love to let us know when their Co-op is doing a good job!

Robert & Suzanne H. from Mardela Springs called in with a big “THANK YOU !” [Choptank Electric crews were] working at their property and wanted to say what a great team of people you have at Choptank ... not just today but each time [Choptank Electric] has been out here to work on the lines - how wonderful, respectful, and what great work your team does!
In addition, Suzanne said, “So grateful for the Youth Tour, it made a great impact and difference in my son’s life”.

*Our offices will be closed
on Monday, July 5, 2021,
to celebrate
Independence Day.*

Choptank Electric Trust Awards

The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations from members of Choptank Electric. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

April 2021

- Women’s Civic League of North East (Sponsor 40 kids to Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library) - \$1,000
- Chesapeake Film Festival (Promotion) - \$500
- Cavallaro and Cleary Visual Art Foundation (Art supply backpacks) - \$500

The total of approved applications was \$26,619.99, which included \$24,619.99 for individual home and medical expenses.

Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution Co-op serving approximately 54,000 residential, commercial, and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

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