



# Virginia Cooperative Council

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VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE COUNCIL'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

Fall 2018

## Cooperative month breakfast breaks record

**M**ore than 70 members and supporters of the Virginia Cooperative Council, including representatives from Virginia, Maryland and Delaware Electric Cooperatives and other cooperatives gathered Oct. 9 in Glen Allen to celebrate the 70th annual National Co-op Month. Launched in 1948 to increase public awareness of our nation's diverse cooperatives, the 2018 theme for Co-op Month was "See the Future."

Following a traditional hearty breakfast that included fresh apples and cider provided by Graves Mountain Lodge, VCC Board President J.T. Anderson of Farm Credit of the Virginias introduced keynote speaker Bettina Ring, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry.

Secretary Ring noted that agriculture and forestry remain Virginia's first-and third-largest industries, providing more than 450,000 jobs and generating \$91 billion each year for



Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring was the guest speaker at the 70th annual National Cooperative Month breakfast meeting Oct. 9. VCC President J.T. Anderson and VCC Executive Secretary Allen Melton shared the podium.

Virginia's economy. She added that the recent expansion of agri-tourism operations across the Commonwealth has contributed to the state's second-largest industry, tourism.

Sharing that she grew up in Craig County and spent much of her career at the Virginia Department of Forestry, Ring added that initiatives such as the Small Farm Outreach Program, the Generation Next Program and the Farm to School Program are helping to preserve Virginia's 8.1 million acres of farmland and 10 million acres of managed forest.

"Cooperatives are the bedrock of rural communities, and people really don't realize the diversity of cooperative businesses that are available," Ring said. "Community is the bedrock of the agriculture industry, and cooperatives work to serve communities every day. Thank you for your leadership and support."

Secretary Ring shared a number of initiatives she's working on, including protecting farmland and forestland from growth, helping rural families find and use tools for estate planning, assisting producers to become sustainable in their farm and forest practices, and integrating farmland



Chuck King of the Brann and King Pumpkin Farms in Riner, Va., Sec. Ring, First Dog Murphy, First Lady Pamela Northam and Gov. Ralph Northam celebrate Virginia Pumpkin Month. Courtesy Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

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and forestland into urban and suburban areas.

“Food insecurity issues like food deserts and farm to school programs are also priorities,” she said. And her secretariat also houses the Virginia Racing Commission, which is working to bring back pari-mutuel betting on horse racing in the Old Dominion. “We need responsible racing regulations,” to protect consumers and encourage more thoroughbred breeding in Virginia, she said.

Future concerns include expanding access to rural broadband, updating the Virginia Tobacco Commission and meeting the environmental improvements required by the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed agreement. “Working together we can take these challenges and turn them into opportunities” to improve Virginia’s environmental impact on the Bay, she said.

Ring invited attendees to attend the Governor’s 10th Conference on Agricultural Trade in Richmond on March 5, 2019. “We want to keep conversations going with our trading partners even during trade disputes” like the current tariff battles with China, Ring said.

“I fully believe our farms and forests can help us meet the economic, environmental and social challenges of the future,” she told the audience of farm and mostly rural cooperative leaders.



Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Dr. Jewel Bronaugh and Sec. Ring joined the King family and the Northam’s with the proclamation of Virginia Pumpkin Month on Oct. 9.



VCC members gathered to talk shop and celebrate the Cooperative Industry. And enjoy fresh apples, of course, courtesy of Graves Mountain Lodge.

# Start recruiting now for VICE 2019

Introducing the next generation of Virginia business leaders to the cooperative business model is the primary purpose of the Virginia Council of Cooperatives, and the next opportunity to do so is coming up faster than you think.

The 2019 Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education is set for March 29-31 at beautiful Graves Mountain Lodge in Syria. This three-day free youth leadership conference is nationally-recognized for its top-quality interactive, educational and entertaining experience. Students enhance their business, teamwork and leadership skills as they work through a business-simulation exercise, “Who’s Minding the Store,” to learn how cooperatives work from the inside.



VCC President J.T. Anderson and Executive Secretary Allen Melton urge members to reach out to their communities and recruit students for the next Virginia Institute of Cooperative Living, scheduled for March 29-31, 2019

Dozens of Virginia high school students have benefitted from the VICE scholarship program in the past three decades. The business-simulation is competitive, so every participant has a chance to win a \$2,000, \$1,500 or \$1,000 college scholarship awarded to the top three performers.

“Virtually every young person that has attended this program over the years has praised it,” noted Allen Melton, VCC executive secretary. “In addition to the fellowship and educational opportunities, they love the food. About the only complaint we ever get is the long uphill walk they face at the end of the day,” he added with a smile.

Students who attend the conference are generally nominated by FFA teachers and 4-H leaders. Some also come from private and home schools. Melton urged all cooperative business leaders to be reaching out to their



The 2018 Virginia Institute for Cooperative Education had a strong turnout, but there’s room for more students next year.

local schools and teacher contacts well before next spring.

“Your best candidates are usually among the busiest in high school,” he observed. “We’ve lost the chance to bring a number of top quality students to VICE over the years simply because their calendars filled-up with other commitments. So please invite students in your community to apply for this event right away.”

Students must be age 16 to 19 as of July in the year they attend, and they may attend the conference only once. They have to commit to coming the entire weekend, from 10:30 a.m. on Friday to Sunday at 2:30 p.m. That means they will need to be excused from school on Friday, March 29th for this year’s program.

“Please don’t let this wonderful opportunity slip by one or more young people in your community,” Melton said. “The more people who learn and understand the cooperative business model, the stronger we all are in the industry.”

To nominate a student to VICE, contact Melton at 804-2181-1211, email him at [allen.melton@sscoop.com](mailto:allen.melton@sscoop.com) or visit the VCC website at [www.virginia.coop](http://www.virginia.coop).



Shelvin Arey, Wade Reiter and Lydia Eskelund took home the top cash prizes at the 2018 VICE Conference.



Virginia  
Cooperative Council

## Cooperation among cooperatives video highlight

One of the fastest growing and most powerful storms in recent years, Hurricane Michael tore across a wide swath of Virginia, leaving significant damage to electric distribution systems from the North Carolina border to the Eastern Shore. During this time, the 6th cooperative principle was put into action: Cooperation Among Cooperatives. The Virginia Maryland Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives produced a video tribute to the crews who worked tirelessly to rebuild the lines. You can watch it online at this address:

<https://youtu.be/tH0s43eunpQ>

- Thanks to Laura Emery, Cooperative Living  
Field Editor, for sharing.



Electric Cooperative line crews from across the Mid-Atlantic region worked together to restore power to customers in Virginia after Hurricane Michael hit last September.