

# CO-OP CONNECTIONS



Virginia  
Cooperative Council

Newsletter of the Virginia Cooperative Council - "Achieving together what one cannot do alone"

Summer 2020



Congratulations to our VICE scholarship winners, from left: Jordan Newman, Audrey Fleming, Loren Satterwhite, Brian Howard and Noah Esper. Each student submitted a project on the Virginia co-op of their choice, as well as two online tests about cooperatives.

## \$5,000 in VICE scholarships awarded

As with many educational opportunities in recent months, this year's Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education (VICE) was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Wishing to give VICE applicants an opportunity to earn scholarships, Council staff emailed these 50 students to let them know that while VICE would not be held as planned, each was invited to submit a project about the cooperative they profiled in their "Report on My Visit to a Cooperative." As detailed in the email, their project could take the form a short video, slideshow or 500-word essay.

VCC staff and VICE committee members also developed online tests based on two manuals VICE students normally receive, "Welcome to Cooperatives" and the "Purdue Agribusiness Management Simulation Operating Guide," as an added requirement to be considered for a scholarships typically awarded at the conclusion of this event.

VCC board members Brian Wolfe of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative and Adam Shiflett of Farm Credit of the Virginias ranked the project submittals. Adam Shiflett also reviewed answers to three open-ended essay questions about what steps the student would take as the manager of a co-op business seeking to increase sales. Following this process, VCC determined to award five scholarships, listed below along with the co-op each student researched:

- Noah Esper** of Ashburn, VA—\$500 (Farm Credit of the Virginias)
- Audrey Fleming** of Buchanan, VA—\$1,000 (Rockingham Cooperative)
- Brian Howard** of Fincastle, VA—\$1,000 (also Rockingham Cooperative)
- Jordan Newman** of Cartersville, VA—\$1,500 (Farmers Cooperative)
- Loren Satterwhite** of Dayton, VA—\$1,000 (Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative)

"With help from technology, we were able to keep the spirit of VICE alive, share news and information about Virginia's many cooperative businesses and fulfill VCC's mission of supporting youth education" said Mary Howell, VCC Executive Secretary.

## In This Issue

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# Friendly City Food Co-op launches store expansion

On June 1, Friendly City Food Co-op launched a three-phase project to expand their Harrisonburg, Va. store that first opened at 150 E. Wolfe St. in 2011. The co-op is again partnering with local companies Blueline (the architectural firm) and Harman Construction (the general contractor), with General Manager Steve Cooke serving as project manager.

“Phase 1 involves annexing the former Teeny Tiny Spice Company rental space next door to the co-op and turning it into deli, kitchen, and café areas,” Cooke explains. “We’ll move our coffee bar, salad bar and hot bar from the current locations to this new space, which will also house offices and storage.”

Phase 2 will change the overall store configuration to open up more space on the sales floor, add a produce walk-in cooler, sinks and prep area; move the bulk foods area; and add a larger meat case.

The project’s third phase will move the produce department near the entrance. New south-facing windows installed along the storefront will frame the café seating area, with an office by relocated cashier stations.

“We plan to remain open throughout the construction process and follow all health and safety protocols related to COVID-19 as long as necessary,” Cooke adds. For more about this project, please visit [www.friendlycity.coop](http://www.friendlycity.coop).



## Members in the news

In July, Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative President & CEO **John Lee** was elected chairman of the board of Old Dominion Electric Cooperative, a power supply cooperative that serves distribution cooperatives in three states. Lee also serves as Virginia director to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

On July 9, **Greg Rogers** was promoted to President & CEO of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative. Greg has more than 30 years’ experience in the electric utility industry and joined SVEC at the time of its acquisition of Allegheny Power’s Virginia assets in 2010.

Effective July 15, **Brad Cornelius** has been named CEO of Farm Credit of the Virginias. A Georgia native, he began his career at AgGeorgia Farm Credit and previously served at AgChoice Farm Credit in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania and as CEO of Cape Fear Farm Credit in Fayetteville, North Carolina, before joining the FCV team last year.

On Aug. 1, **John Hewa** was promoted to President & CEO of Rappahannock Valley Electric Cooperative. He succeeds Kent Farmer, who had been with REC for 41 years and served as Rec’s president & CEO since 2004. John was most recently REC vice president of corporate services and chief operating officer. He has more than 20 years of leadership experience in the electric utility industry.

On Aug. 16, Fredericksburg Food Cooperative held a virtual groundbreaking celebration for their new community-owned storefront.

We are saddened to report the passing of two members of the VCC family: **Bill Sherrod**, vice president of communications and public relations for the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives and editor of *Cooperative Living* magazine for the past 15 years; and **Pamela Melton**, the wife of retired Southern States Cooperative manager and VCC Executive Secretary Allen Melton.

### Three ways YOU can support the Virginia Cooperative Council:

1. **Nominate a deserving individual for our Leadership Awards — deadline is now Oct. 15.**
2. **Encourage co-op retirees and VCC supporters not employed by a Virginia co-op to join as individual members for just \$25 a year—application is on our website.**
3. **Promote the Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education, set for March 26-28, 2021, and consider helping as a volunteer.**

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# The VICE Squad: Where are they now?

*This column profiles past Virginia Institute for Cooperative Education attendees. Contact VCC if you'd like to suggest a graduate to feature in an upcoming issue!*

## Chandler Vaughan

### What did participating in VICE mean to you?

When I talk to people about VICE, I tell them the institute 'kick-started' the way I thought about life after high school. Up until the weekend at Graves Mountain Lodge, I had not been immersed in a business, decision-making atmosphere like the one VICE provides. The challenges presented at VICE through operating a virtual store and better understanding the cooperative business model helped me realize the importance of forward thinking and business dynamics. I remember leaving the weekend enthusiastic about taking the financial skills gained at VICE and applying them to my farm back home. I did not realize it in the moment, but VICE led to me thinking more about my career paths after high school. While that career path has since changed, I remember leaving VICE convinced that I would become an agricultural loan officer.

### How has participating in VICE influenced your career?

After graduation from Virginia Tech's Agribusiness program, I attended Appalachian State University where I recently attained a Master's Degree in Public Administration, focusing on local government management. Through the program at Appalachian State, I've noticed some common themes between local government and co-op management, specifically through the models of creating benefit for citizens and members. In the fall, I hope to start a career in state government, but in the meantime I am working with my home county government's administration department. Through the internship, I am focused on expanding internet access in the county. My work is similar to ongoing efforts of some electric cooperatives in the state who are partnering with local governments to secure state and federal funding to build out high-speed internet access to rural areas of Virginia. In a tie to the history lessons at VICE, modern day broadband efforts strongly relate to rural electrification efforts taken on by co-ops in the 20<sup>th</sup> century!



Chandler Vaughan, 2014 VICE participant

## Executive Secretary's message: Co-ops in a Virtual World

Among items discussed by the VCC board on its July 16 conference call were how best to celebrate Co-op Month this coming October, given concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 virus on public events. Recognizing the travel restrictions in place at member cooperatives, the board agreed that a virtual celebration would be necessary.

As part of this discussion, FFA advisor Claire Seibel detailed how the Future Farmers of America successfully used social media and online resources to hold their annual convention online. She noted that freed of travel constraints, the virtual audience was significantly higher than in-person attendance at last year's convention.

VCC's Co-op Month and Publicity Committees will be contributing ideas for a virtual Co-op Month celebration centered around our Facebook page. If you haven't already "liked" our page, please visit it soon and check back regularly in October to contribute to the discussion and be entered in several prize drawings.

The board also heard from Adam Ford of Rockingham Cooperative, one of the Commonwealth's first member-owned cooperatives. Adam explained that Rockingham Cooperative is celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2021 and invited the Council to hold our annual conference in conjunction with their celebration next March at their Dayton, Va. headquarters in Dayton.



The board also agreed to extend the deadline for VCC awards nominations until October 15, 2020, in hopes that we'll be able to recognize award recipients in person at VCC's 2021 annual meeting.

Technological advances, including increased access by more and more Virginians to high-speed internet, make it easier to share the spirit of Co-op Month and help more people learn about the benefits of belonging to and supporting our state's many cooperative businesses.

- Mary Howell

# 2020 Scroggs-Raper Scholarship recipients announced

The Virginia Foundation of Cooperation was established to benefit students at Virginia's two land grant universities, Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blacksburg and Virginia State University in Ettrick. The Council has a long affiliation with Virginia Tech, but until this year had not received any applications from Virginia State students.

This year, VCC contacted Virginia State Director of Corporate Relations Jonathan Young about the availability of Scroggs-Raper Scholarships.

"We're excited to award a student in VSU's ag program," said VCC Executive Secretary Mary Howell. Kyle Jacobs is a senior doing research in plant pathology. His goal is to help bring sustainable agriculture to developing nations.



**Kyle Jacobs, the first recipient of a \$2,000 Scroggs-Raper Scholarship from Virginia State University in Ettrick.**

Congratulations also to these seven students in Virginia Tech's Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics who each received a \$2,000 Scroggs-Raper scholarship:

**Hannah Browne**, a sophomore & Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets member who plays in their marching band;

**Elizabeth Deane**, a junior and longtime 4-H member active in Virginia Tech's Swine Club;

**Chris Kuhler**, a junior & FFA member who attended VICE in 2016;

**Claire Morris**, a sophomore & member of Young Farmers of Virginia;

**Matthew Myers**, a sophomore and FFA officer who attended VICE in 2017;

**Hunter Sanderson**, a senior who has worked on his father's poultry farm since age 12 and has remained consistently on the Dean's list;

**Shelby Smith**, a sophomore and member of the National Agri-Marketing Association.

Virginia Tech will not be holding a scholarship awards banquet this fall, but VCC will reach out to these recipients as they continue their educational careers.

Applications for 2021 Scroggs-Raper Scholarships will be posted on the VFC website and are due March 1, 2021.

## Virginia Cooperative Council

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