

# CO-OP CONNECTIONS



Virginia  
Cooperative Council

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

Summer 2021

## Beckett to headline Sept. 30 Co-op Month Event

At its June meeting, the Council's board of directors voted to hold an in-person event Thursday, Sept. 30 at The Place in Glen Allen to kick off Co-op Month in October.

"We're delighted to host the Council's first member gathering in nearly 18 months, at which we will honor outstanding cooperative leaders," said VCC President Brad Brown of Augusta Cooperative.

Thomas Beckett, a North Carolina-based attorney who serves as executive director of Carolina Common Enterprise, will be keynote speaker. Beckett launched a cooperative business development center in Raleigh in 2012 to help cooperatives and community-based ventures get started and succeed.

Following Beckett's remarks, VCC will recognize this year's recipients of the Council's Cooperative Career Leadership Awards.

Both Council members and guests are invited to the breakfast, which is \$30 per person and includes a hearty buffet meal starting at 7:30 a.m.

Please RSVP by Sept. 22 to VCC Executive Secretary Mary Howell, [mary.howell@sscoop.com](mailto:mary.howell@sscoop.com).

As continued celebration of Co-op Month, members are encouraged to "like" and share posts on the Council's Facebook page throughout October.



*Carolina Common Enterprise founder Thomas Beckett will share the work of this cooperative development center at the Co-op Month breakfast in Glen Allen, VA.*



## Meet our 2021 Scroggs-Raper Scholarship recipients

Generous donations by Luther Raper and Claude Scroggs to the Virginia Foundation of Cooperation established the Scroggs-Raper Scholarships, awarded since 2013 to students at Virginia's land grant universities studying topics related to agriculture. This year's bumper crop of 12 recipients includes nine enrolled in Virginia Tech's Department of Agriculture & Applied Economics, one attending Virginia State University and a student at both Southside Virginia Community College and Virginia Western Community College.

**Morgan Bright** earned her associates degree in agriculture at Southside Virginia Community College and will begin attending Virginia Tech this fall. She grew up near Lake Gaston, was active in 4-H and served in leadership roles for her church's youth group. Passionate about reducing pollution, especially plastic, she has participated in several beach cleanup efforts. A job with Meherrin River Forest Products led to earning their scholarship and invitation to speak at the Sustainable Forestry Initiative conference. "In my career, I want to make a difference in the conservation of our waters and lands," Morgan explained.



Morgan Bright

**Alicia Blackburn** is a Virginia Tech senior majoring in agribusiness management with a minor in entrepreneurship-new venture growth. Her grandfather is a dairy, beef and grain farmer and her father a Blacksburg police officer who got her

### Mark your calendars!

- March 2, 2021:  
Virginia Cooperative Council Annual Meeting at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton
- March 25-27, 2022:  
Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education at Graves Mountain Lodge in Syria

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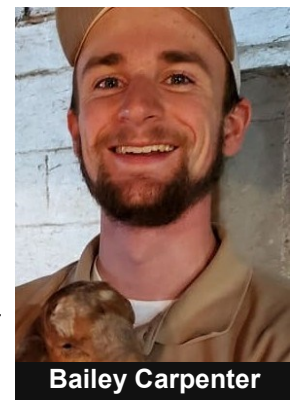
## Scroggs-Raper recipients, continued

a Holstein calf to raise when she was four; since then Alicia has earned numerous awards from showing her cattle. Alicia has worked part-time for Southern States employee since May 2019, she orders products, bags and loads mixed feed, and makes feed deliveries to farms. During a 2020 Southern States internship, she learned more about the co-op's services, including propane sales, mixing and creating fertilizer batches, and collecting soil samples.



A Virginia Tech sophomore, **Mia Bostic** is majoring in applied economics with an emphasis in environmental economic management and policy. Her work experience includes serving as camp director at Chesapean Outdoors, which offers adventure camps as well as guided kayak and paddleboard tours. She also interned at Ono Organic Farms in Hawaii and held several retail and food service jobs. "I aspire to be a farmer advocate and part of a movement that helps small farmers expand their impact on communities," she said. Mia's long-term goal is to earn a law degree that will help her pursue concrete policy changes that will contribute to her goal.

**Bailey Carpenter** is a Virginia Tech sophomore majoring in agribusiness who participated in the 2017 VICE conference. Active in Spotswood High School's FFA Chapter in Rockingham County, he went on to serve as a 2018-2019 state FFA officer. Bailey's parents are members of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative and Rockingham Cooperative, where he's worked part-time since 2016. His career plans are to become an agronomist and help on his family's Boer goat farm. Earlier this year, Bailey started a pick-your-own strawberry patch as a side business.



**Hannah Chambers** is an agriculture major at Virginia Western Community College who plans to transfer to Virginia Tech in 2022. She explained that her dream job would involve networking and engaging with others to support sustainable and regenerative agriculture. A native of Roanoke, she's volunteered for Delegate Sam Rasoul, who represents Virginia's 11<sup>th</sup> District and earned the second highest number of votes in the June primary for Lieutenant Governor. She also hopes to work for the Roanoke Outside Foundation, which seeks to educate citizens about environmental stewardship and conservation as well as promoting a healthy lifestyle through outdoor recreational activities.

A general studies major at Southside Virginia Community College, **Rachel Chernault** grew up on a family farm near Chase City that harvests 400 acres of hay each year and raises several kinds of livestock. A member of her local FFA and Youth for Christ clubs, she works at a local horse farm and plans to transfer to Virginia Tech. "I want to continue learning how to succeed in agriculture and animal husbandry to better help our farm," she said.



**Trey Hall** graduated from Richard Bland College at age 17 with an Associate of Science degree, and at age 19 is a junior at Virginia State University majoring in agribusiness and economics. This Petersburg native's many high school achievements include being named a USDA 1890 Scholar, Presidential Classroom Scholar, and receiving the West Point Leadership Award. Active in the student government, he plays on VSU's baseball team and works as a lifeguard and camp counselor for Petersburg, VA Parks & Recreation. Following a successful internship as a financial analyst at the local USDA office, Trey plans to continue working with the USDA ARS after graduation.

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## Scroggs-Raper recipients, continued



**Claire Morris**

**Claire Morris** is an agribusiness major at Virginia Tech minoring in crop & soil environmental science. In addition to working on the family farm in Jetersville, she interned the summers of 2019 and 2020 at the Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Blackstone, working in the lab and tobacco fields doing data entry and analysis. Claire also served as a research assistant for Virginia Tech's weed science department. A past local FFA chapter officer, this avid horseback rider helps maintain local trails, is a member of Virginia Tech Block & Bridle and volunteers at the Catawba Sustainability Center.

Community Investing by Students (COINS). He also tutors student athletes and facilitated FFA's Leadership Conference for middle schoolers. He recently earned his real estate license and plans to attend law school.

**Matt Myers** is majoring in agribusiness management at Virginia Tech. A 2017 VICE participant, he went on to serve as a 2018-2019 state FFA officer and VICE student leader. Matt serves as a junior analyst for



**Matt Myers**

**Claire Seibel** is double-majoring in agriculture & applied economics AND international trade & development at Virginia Tech. Beginning when she was a local FFA chapter officer in high school, Claire has contributed to FFA in numerous ways, serving as 2018-2019 state FFA officer, and FFA advisor to VCC board since 2018. She earned a VCC scholarship as the top VICE participant of 2017 and joined the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets in 2019. Claire hopes to graduate summa cum laude in 2023 and seek a commission as 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. After three years' active duty, she plans to apply for the funded legal education program and be able to enter the Judge Advocate General Legal Corps.



**Claire Seibel**

A junior at Virginia Tech majoring in agribusiness with a minor in crop & soil environmental sciences, **Shelby Smith** took part in 2019 VICE. "I served as accountant for our team in the 'Who's Minding the Store?' competition," noting this experience influenced her career choice. Shelby is active in Young Farmers and was a volunteer leader for The Big Event. She works part-time at Woodbine Farm Market near her home in Strasburg and for Virginia Tech's Meat Science Center.



**Shelby Smith**

**Jackson Thurman** is majoring in agribusiness at Virginia Tech. As a college sophomore, this Eagle Scout is active in the pre-Vet club, sheep barn and works as a lab assistant. Returning home to Glen Allen this past summer, he interned with Markel's agricultural department as an insurance underwriter for horses, cattle and vineyards. "I want my career to involve livestock, encouraging sustainable practices buying local," he explained.



**Jackson Thurman**

*Donations to the Virginia Foundation of Cooperation to benefit this program are tax-deductible.*

## VCC members donate to support Virginia's 4-H Camps

Each summer, more than 17,000 Virginia youth learn important life skills while having a great time at 4-H camps sponsored by the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service. COVID-19's impact on travel, conferences and in-person events significantly reduced the typical annual revenue generated by Virginia's six regional 4-H camp facilities.

The Virginia Tech Foundation invited VCC members to make a one-time donations that will help address the several million dollar funding shortfall. The VCC board voted to provide \$1,000, and Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative let us know that their generous donation was eligible to be matched by Co-Bank through the Sharing Success program. Please consider supporting this worthwhile cause! Make checks payable to "The Virginia Tech Foundation" and mail to: *Virginia Tech Advancement Gift Accounting*  
902 Prices Fork Rd (0336), University Gateway Center  
Blacksburg, VA 24061



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

# Statewide Co-op Association Promotes ‘Powerful Careers’

During 2021, the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC) has been spotlighting careers in the energy industry to attract prospective employees. The target audience includes young people just entering the workforce, those looking for a career change, and those with jobs were impacted by the pandemic. Using the statewide magazine *Cooperative Living*, VMDAEC websites and social media channels, as well as job fairs, co-op annual meetings and other events, the 15-member Association is highlighting co-op employees who have nontraditional backgrounds.

“These employees have great stories to tell,” noted VMDAEC President & CEO Brian Mosier. “By sharing their path with hundreds of thousands of readers, we hope to interest them in a co-op career and the stability, security and fulfillment these jobs bring.”

Two upcoming initiatives include the ‘Powerful Careers’ Essay Contest for students, with entries due Sept. 1, and ‘Girl Power,’ a day camp focused on line work to be held Sept. 22 at the Electric Cooperatives Training Center in Palmyra. Developed for high-school girls curious about working on a line crew, in a substation or with advanced metering technology, this free event will lead students through activities in the classroom and training yard. For more, visit [www.vmdaec.com/powerfulcareers](http://www.vmdaec.com/powerfulcareers) or watch the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s video at <https://youtu.be/64Qwr0gmocA>.

**Did You Know? The Cooperative Network posts career opportunities at co-ops across the nation at [www.cooperativenetwork.coop/careers](http://www.cooperativenetwork.coop/careers)**



Gena Boerman  
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## Virginia Cooperative Council

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