

Blue Grass Energy CARES

by Debra Gibson Isaacs

“Be satisfied with what you’ve got,” Vina Campbell, 79, was taught as a child reared in rural Kentucky. “Be thankful for what you have.”

A member of Blue Grass Energy for 27 years, Campbell has lived by that philosophy her entire life. Recently, however, Campbell’s husband died and she found herself in need of help after funeral expenses. Then she had a stroke, leaving the right side of her body compromised. Her daughter, who lives with Campbell, has suffered through diabetic comas and other medical issues.

When her energy bills reached nearly \$400 a month, Campbell didn’t know how she would pay them.

Thanks to the CARES program, she no longer has to worry about high electric bills.

Her latest bill was \$127. “I looked at it and couldn’t believe my eyes,” Campbell says.

CARES is a joint effort between Blue Grass Energy and numerous Community Action Agencies in the 23 counties that the co-op serves.

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Blue Grass Energy member Vina Campbell qualified for home energy improvements provided through the CARES program. Photo: Rachel Settles

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AS A SERVICE TO OUR MEMBERS.**

Rachel Settles, Editor



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Reliable Power

In this column over the last few months, I've shared a few things with you illustrating the value of your Blue Grass Energy membership. We've talked about member-focused decision making, competitive rates, and now, reliability.

We are proud to offer our members some of the most reliable and affordable energy in the commonwealth. In the past, we have restructured our organization to put greater emphasis on reliability. This has resulted in some of our highest reliability numbers over the last several years. In fact, our members had power to their homes and businesses 99.8% of the time in 2020.

Many hours of planning and work are behind this number. As I recently shared, we are a member-focused cooperative and you should expect no less from us. We understand the critical role we play in making life better, the cooperative way, for those we serve. Members and communities rely on us to be the bridge, providing the connection to the rest of the world through reliable power. That has never been more evident than in the past two years as many of our members began working and learning from home.

Even with our proactive reliability planning, there are inevitable service interruptions. Many times, we find Mother Nature or a distracted driver is the cause. So, if you experience an interruption, rest assured that our employees are immediately on the way. This is thanks to the technologies we have invested in to help us keep outage times to the lowest duration possible.

Our cooperative family has many skill sets and we put them to work each day on your behalf. Everyone at Blue Grass Energy considers it a privilege to provide reliable and competitively-priced energy for our members. And just as our communities have since 1937, you can count on us to be there when you need us.

I appreciate you being a member of Blue Grass Energy.

By President/CEO
Michael I. Williams



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“CARES helps people,” says H.C. Kenney, a residential energy advisor for Blue Grass Energy. “I’ve been in this position almost 30 years, and it is one of the best programs we have. People have the opportunity to get help making changes that will reduce their energy usage, help them stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

“I have yet to get any complaints about CARES and am proud to be part of a program where people who care about other people are able to really help.”

The CARES program is simple yet effective.

When Blue Grass Energy finds a member with a need, they contact the Community Action Agency in that member’s county, which helps with the specific problem the member has. The agency makes the needed repairs. When the work is complete, Blue Grass Energy sends a rebate to the Community Action Agency.

In Campbell’s case, Kentucky River Foothills Development Council (KRFDC) joined forces with Blue Grass Energy. KRFDC’s services are need-based and designed to lead to family self-sufficiency and economic self-reliance in the community.

“In a year that has been full of challenges, it is such a relief that the cost of home energy has been lessened by these funds,” says Brian Mullins, CEO of Kentucky River Foothills. “Our agency is grateful to Blue Grass Energy for the partnership that we have shared to provide this much needed program.”

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The program uses an approach Campbell has embraced her entire life: “Little things make a big difference.”

Contractors for the CARES program did all the little things that add up to a big difference in energy usage. They wrapped all the water lines and duct

work with insulation. They placed smoke detectors in every room. They installed insulation under the home and wrapped it in plastic so no water would get in. They installed a fan that removes mold and mildew from the home, replaced the thermostat and installed a carbon dioxide detector.

They also did some big things that result in big decreases in energy usage. For Campbell, they installed a new heat pump in her home.

“They (the contractors) became like family,” Campbell laughs.

The result, though, is no laughing matter.

“I wouldn’t have been able to stay here,” Campbell says of her home without the energy improvements. “I went a year without any electric. I used the fireplace and kerosene heaters. I liked to have burned up in the summer and froze in the winter.”

Now Campbell’s home is cool in the summer and warm in the winter, she says. She also brags on the cleanliness of the work. “If you look under the floor there is clean plastic wrapped all around.”

Campbell lives alone for the most part now and retains her gratitude and can-do spirit. Right now she is sewing a new cover for her couch. It will fit right in with all the invisible, yet significant, improvements in her home.



Blue Grass Energy member Vina Campbell proudly shows off her heat pump provided through the CARES program to Energy Advisor H.C. Kenney. Photo: Rachel Settles

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- \$35 can provide 6 people with free educational materials about Parkinson's.
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- \$1,000 can provide grants and funding to researchers.
- \$2,000 can provide a PDGene test for 1 person with Parkinson's.

To donate, visit https://bit.ly/Parkinsons_BGEnergy to help our friends and neighbors who have been diagnosed with Parkinson's.



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