

Foundation Community Grants to Local Helping Agencies

Written by Steve Frank

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Watauga County citizens will benefit from grants totaling \$37,500 awarded recently from Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation to local helping agencies for the 2013-14 grant cycle. These most recent grants are examples of why Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation established the Members Foundation in 2006 — to support the work of community organizations providing services that improve the quality of life for the cooperative's members. Projects in the areas of health, wellness, education, youth, and economic and community development are the Foundation's priorities for support.

A total of \$91,000 to help 18 different organizations across the Blue Ridge service area was awarded in the Foundation's current grant cycle.

Local organizations receiving grants include:

Community Care Clinic, \$2,500, to support the Health Education Project which provides local citizens with assistance to improve their health in areas such as smoking cessation, diabetes avoidance and care, and the need for exercise.

High Country Women's Fund, \$2,500, to support childcare services for local children of women currently working to earn their high school diploma through the GED (certificate of high school equivalency) process to improve their employment opportunities.

Casting Bread Food Pantry, \$2,500, to support the ability of the organization to provide food for families in need and to support an initiative designed to enhance the nutritional impact of that service.

Eagle Rock Ministries, \$2,500, to support the High Country Toy Run, a project to purchase items for less fortunate children at Christmas.

Children's Council of Watauga County, \$2,500, to continue weekly support groups for single parents and parents in recovery, GED classes with free childcare, resource library for families, childbirth classes, and other community projects.

Appalachian Regional Healthcare Foundation, \$25,000, an Impact Grant awarded to help fund the capital campaign to construct a post-acute care facility called "Chestnut Ridge" to replace the current Blowing Rock Hospital.

Community grant funding decisions are made by a Foundation Advisory Committee that is comprised of 12 member volunteer representatives from the Blue Ridge Electric service districts. Non-profit agencies who serve residents in Blue Ridge Electric's service area are eligible to apply for grants.

During 2013, the Foundation also provided crisis heating assistance to more than 1,300 Blue Ridge Electric members in need of emergency help to pay their electric bills. While crisis assistance is funded by the Foundation, local helping agencies evaluate needs and determine who qualifies for assistance.

Funding for Foundation grants and crisis assistance comes from members participating in Blue Ridge Electric's Operation Round Up® and Operation Round Up Plus® programs as well as an annual contribution from the profits of Blue Ridge Energies, the cooperative's heating fuels subsidiary. More than 28,000 members are either rounding up their monthly electric bill with Operation Round Up or adding a dollar or more with Operation Round Up Plus.

Anyone with questions about the Foundation, or agencies interested in applying for grants, may contact Grey Scheer, community relations director, at (828) 264-8894 or gscheer@blueridgeemc.com.