



December 2025

UPCO news

A life-changing leadership experience

By Fiona Chambers

Stepping into this experience, I didn't expect anything close to what I gained in the end. I didn't think I'd make friends, I didn't think I'd learn so much, and I especially didn't think I'd have the best time of my life. This was my first time ever going to camp, much less the Georgia Cooperative Council Youth Leadership Conference. So naturally, I didn't know what to expect.

The leaders over us shared so much knowledge about co-ops, particularly electric membership cooperatives (EMCs). We learned about them through engaging sessions and even got to visit Walton EMC for a more in-depth look at how everything works. One of the highlights of that visit was watching someone climb up a power pole.

We also visited Godfrey Dairy Farm, where we got an amazing tour of the main part of their operation. We had the chance to feed calves and even



Fiona stands in front of the camp sign with her new friend and early morning running partner, Spencer, from Ocmulgee EMC.

milk cows! That day ended on a sweet note with ice cream and milk from companies that use the farm's milk in their products.

In addition to the educational side, we held leadership sessions that helped us bond as a team and build essential skills. We learned about what it means to be a leader and the qualities that make one effective.

Between all the informational sessions and tours, we had fun events too. One of my favorites was the mud obstacle race. This event had five different obstacles that each team had to complete. First, we faced a deep trench with a tricky drop-off, followed by a wall we had to climb over using teamwork. Then came the over-under logs, a muddy ladder climb and finally, the tube pull, which was one of the trickiest parts. One teammate had to pull a rope while the rest of us held onto an



Fiona, right, sits atop a tractor wheel with another camper at Godfrey Dairy Farm.

inflatable tube and were pulled across. Usually, we ended up underwater, so you had to hold your breath, close your eyes and just go for it.

The last obstacle was sitting on a
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Fiona scales a rock wall.

BLAIR BROWN

A life-changing leadership experience,

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large pipe while getting sprayed with mud. After watching the first two teams go, it was finally our turn to race the fourth team. With teamwork and determination, we won that round! Then we faced the winners of the first race. They finished first, but we weren't far behind. I like to think we were the better team, not just because we were nearly all girls and they were mostly boys, but because our teamwork was incredible. I'm going into detail about this because this event helped me connect deeper with the other campers. We really got to learn to trust one another in a split second. We never argued, never left anyone behind and everyone stepped up as a leader. In my eyes, we truly won.

The fun didn't end there. I even got launched off a blob for the first time which was something I never imagined doing! Right after, we slid down what must have been a 100-foot water slide that dropped into a pond. The speed felt like a roller coaster.

Every night after leadership sessions, we had time to hang out and explore the camp. There were basketball courts (where I spent most of my free time), tennis courts and even early



KRISTI GREER

morning jogs. At 6 a.m. each morning, one of the campers I met ran with me around the camp. There was something peaceful and calming about the place—definitely not the steep hills—but the quiet, natural beauty that surrounded us. It made you want to stay longer.

Even two months later, I'm still in contact with several campers I grew close to. One of them, the girls' camp counselor, is even planning to visit me



KRISTI GREER

Fiona experiences the mud course.

at the University of Georgia in Athens where I attend college. And the girl who ran with me, Spencer, still texts me almost every day. She was even voted to be a counselor for next year.

I couldn't be more grateful for this experience made possible by Upson EMC, especially Brooke Parrott, who helped make it happen. This organization is incredible, and the people behind it are some of the best you'll ever meet. Anyone would be lucky to experience a trip like this.



KRISTI GREER

Forty-one students participated in the five-day Georgia Cooperative Council Youth Leadership Conference in July.

Upson EMC hosts 88th Annual Meeting of Members

On Tuesday, October 28, 2025, Upson EMC proudly held its 88th Annual Meeting of Members. The event brought together members from across the community to celebrate another year of service, growth and connection.

As a token of appreciation, each attendee received a gift bucket filled with a variety of goodies, including a bottle of Crack BBQ Sauce. This year, Upson EMC was proud to partner with Dusty and Jennifer Elliott, owners of Crack BBQ Sauce, LLC and fellow Upson EMC members, to include their locally loved product in the giveaway.



Locally made Crack BBQ Sauce appreciation gift.

The inclusion of Crack BBQ Sauce not only added a flavorful touch to the event but also showcased Upson EMC's commitment to supporting member-owned businesses. It was a delicious reminder of the strong community ties that power everything we do.

More than 300 members completed registration before the business meeting began at 11 a.m.

Chairman of the Board Ronnie Hendricks called the meeting to order, followed by an invocation from Kenny Cogins, Secretary-Treasurer of the Board. The Upson-Lee High School Navy Junior ROTC presented the colors and Pledge of Allegiance as the Upson-Lee High School Chorus performed the national anthem. Vice Chairman Lorenza Wilder took a moment to recognize board members, special guests and military personnel in attendance.

Brooke Parrott, Executive Administrator, introduced Athens McGlon, Upson EMC's 2025 Washington Youth Tour delegate. Although McGlon was unable to attend due to college commitments, attendees viewed a video presentation in which he shared his Youth Tour experiences.

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A huge thank you to the Upson-Lee High School NJROTC and Chorus for their incredible performances at this year's Annual Meeting!



Lonnie Wilder of Culloden was the lucky winner of a 55-inch smart TV.

88th Annual Meeting of Members, *Continued from page 20C*

President/CEO Ken Simmons provided a year-end review, addressing the challenges Upson EMC faced over the past year, including inflation and severe weather events. His remarks highlighted the cooperative's ongoing commitment to reliability, resilience and community support. Simmons also commended employees for their continued dedication and service to the cooperative.

Attorney Alan Connell gave an update on the board elections, announcing the reelection of Jim Meeks (District One, Post One – Upson County) and Lorenza Wilder (District Two, Post Two – Crawford and Upson counties). Both were unanimously reelected by the membership to serve three-year terms.

Following the adjournment of the business meeting by Chairman Hendricks, members enjoyed a prize



From left: Daniel Eldridge, 25 years; Stanley Lowe, 5 years; Betsy Maddox, 10 years; Matt Hill, 5 years. Not pictured is Bobby Tucker, 25 years.

drawing. Congratulations to Lonnie Wilder, the lucky winner of the grand prize, a 55-inch smart TV.

An employee appreciation luncheon followed the event, where several team members were honored for their

dedicated service:

- **25 years:** Daniel Eldridge and Bobby Tucker
- **10 years:** Betsy Maddox
- **5 years:** Matt Hill and Stanley Lowe

GATE Card Exemption Will Expire Soon



If you are currently receiving a Georgia Agricultural Tax Exemption (GATE), your card will expire on December 31, 2025. To continue receiving the exemption, please send copies of your renewed GATE card to:

Upson EMC
P.O. Box 31
Thomaston, GA 30286

Email: customerservice@upsonemc.com

A festive holiday-themed image featuring gingerbread cookies shaped like a reindeer and a person, pinecones, and stars on a dark blue background.

Holiday Office Closings

Upson EMC's office will be closed on December 24 and 25 for Christmas. We wish you and your family a very merry Christmas.