

Electric Cooperatives: Energizing Our Communities

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It was late November and the temperature was dropping fast. Coach Watts walked into the locker room. A banner hung over the door with the words, “Go! Fight! Energize!”

“All right boys, listen up,” said Coach Watts. “Tennessee is expecting a major Artic blast and that means we will need each one of you working your hardest. This will be our first big game of the year.”

As the coach walked around the room he stared deeply into the eyes of his players. “Gentlemen you are trained. You bring energy to the field.”

Coach Watts paused momentarily and looked off into the distance.

“I know you are ready for this challenge,” he said, “because each of you comes from the Tennessee Valley Authority where you were generated by hydroelectric dams, nuclear plants, coal-fired plants and green energy sources. Each of you knows this game is not just about electricity anymore, but finding ways to use it more efficiently.”

“What’s the game plan coach?” asked a player.

“Each of you must go out to one of the twenty-two electric cooperatives across the state and *energize* their community by providing affordable electricity. If you play hard, the points you score will generate valuable services to its members,” answered the coach.

“What’s an electric cooperative?” asked one freshman player.

The coach shook his head in disbelief, “I thought you were bright. An electric cooperative is a member-owned business that is run on a non-profit basis with each member getting a vote or say so in how it is run. We play for them, and have been since 1933, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Tennessee Valley Authority which began producing electricity. Once they had the electricity, they had to find a way to distribute it to rural areas. Private power companies considered it unprofitable to build power lines in small communities, so in 1935 the Rural Electrification Administration was created. That’s our team!”

“What position do we play? What’s our part in energizing the community?” said one player.

The coach flipped over the chalk board and drew a series of arrows, X’s and O’s. He pointed to his tackles. “A line is all about providing safety for the quarterback, so you block to the right providing basic electricity safety programs to students through school outreach programs.”

“What about us Coach?” asked the wide receivers.

The coach fired back, “You spread left helping members with Hometown Energy Services like low interest financing for electric heat pumps, rebates on electric water heaters, and *energy right* Home Programs.”

The coach pointed at the quarterback. “YOU run it right up the middle providing affordable electricity to cooperative members.”

The coach looked proudly over his team. “When you take the field don’t think you’re alone boys! You’ll have the support of the whole community because if it’s one thing that electric cooperatives know, it’s team work. Electric cooperatives are all about working together and supporting their members.”

“Gentlemen, cooperation is the key to our success. Each of you now knows what must be done. Each of you knows the part you will play. The talking is over! Now get out there and **ENERGIZE YOUR COMMUNITIES!**”