

April 1, 2005

Second Annual Arkansas Electric Vehicle Rally Slated for April 8 in Little Rock

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. - April 1, 2005 -- The second annual Arkansas Electric Vehicle Rally is scheduled for Friday, April 8, at the Arkansas State Fairgrounds. The event is sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas.

Students from four Arkansas high schools will compete in an exciting and challenging mix of competitions designed to test the teams' and their vehicles' abilities. The public is invited to attend the rally events, which begin at 9 a.m. There is no charge to attend the event.

Students have the opportunity to create their own operating, drivable electric-powered vehicles. "We are anticipating at least four schools and five vehicles to participate," said Bill Rue, key accounts director for Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative of Ozark and event co-director.

The event will kick off with technical inspections and rigorous safety inspections of the student vehicles. Then, oral presentations by the students and troubleshooting competitions will test teams' abilities. Next, academics are left behind as the participants move to the track and strap on helmets for an acceleration event. An autocross competition will follow with many twists and turns. Teams will then participate in a quiz bowl to test the students' knowledge of science and electric vehicles. The teams will then return to the track to test how far these vehicles can go on a single charge. The on-track and pit lane strategies make this event one of the most exciting in the rally.

The schools participating in this year's rally are: Berryville High School, Corning High School (two teams), Paragould High School and Waldron High School. Paragould High School won the competition in 2004.

"What has impressed the teachers who have participated in the electric vehicle competitions has been the diversity of interests that come together in these team efforts. We've had band members, students who excel in science math and physics as well as students who have a natural mechanical talent. The nature of this kind of project forces them to interact and work off of each other's strengths in order to solve the problems that confront them," said Nick Manatt, member services manager from Clay County Electric Cooperative in Corning and event co-director. "But more importantly, this program motivates students to be excited about learning and exploring, both in an academic and in a hands-on setting. It shows how real-world applications of what is taught in the classroom can accelerate the learning process."

According to Rue, the program is a tremendous opportunity to integrate disciplines and to give students an opportunity to work as a team.

“It provides our young people with the skills and knowledge that can be applied in a work setting later in their lives,” Rue said. “It also enhances their awareness of environmental challenges.”

The EV program is an ongoing education program that includes students from a variety of disciplines, including math, auto mechanics, physics, engineering, electronics, journalism and other classes. Throughout the year, students complete a variety of activities, developing presentations and taking part in a wide range of projects. The highlight of this unique project is the design and construction of electric vehicles that the students can actually drive and enter in the statewide competition.

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas comprise 17 electric distribution cooperatives; Arkansas Electric Cooperatives Inc. (AECI), a Little Rock-based cooperative that provides various services to the distribution cooperatives; and Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corp. (AECC), a generation and transmission cooperative. The distribution cooperatives provide electricity to more than 440,000 members, or customers, in Arkansas and surrounding states.

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