

April 13, 2005

Arkansas Electric Vehicle Rally is picture perfect second time around

Little Rock, Ark. — April 13, 2005 — Picture-perfect weather accompanied student teams as they competed in the 2nd Arkansas Electric Vehicle Rally on April 8 at the Arkansas State Fairgrounds. The annual event was sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas.

More than 50 students from four schools brought five electric vehicles they had constructed to compete in the intensive academic and hands-on driving events.

Paragould High School placed first overall for the second year in a row with newcomer Berryville High School placing second and Corning High School coming in third. Waldron High School also participated in the event.

The event began with technical inspections and rigorous safety inspections of the student vehicles. The competitive continued with oral presentations by the students and troubleshooting competitions tested teams' abilities. Next, academics were left behind as the participants moved to the track and strapped on helmets for an acceleration event. An autocross competition followed with many twists and turns. Teams then participated in a quiz bowl to test the students' knowledge of science and electric vehicles. The teams then return to the track to test how far the vehicles could go on a single charge. The on-track and pit lane strategies made this event one of the most exciting in the rally.

As part of the Oral Presentation event, students had to demonstrate that they could articulate the value of their electric vehicles study to a panel of judges. Berryville High School won first place in this event and is eligible to attend a national meeting in New Orleans to present the school's experience with the electric vehicle program to marketing and member services representatives from electric cooperatives across the United States.

Overall rally winners in each category were determined by totaling the highest scores from each individual event.

Nick Manatt, member services manager from Clay County Electric Cooperative in Corning and event co-director, credited the Rally's success to the students, teachers, parents and community sponsors of the program. "They put in a lot of time and effort to prepare for the competition and make it happen. With volunteer programs and no budgets, it is the generous support of teachers, sponsors and parents that make this event happen."

The rally was conducted by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. Participating cooperatives included Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation of Little Rock, Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative of Ozark, Carroll Electric Cooperative of Berryville and Clay County Electric Cooperative of Corning.

The Arkansas Electric Vehicle Education Program is an ongoing education program that brings together students from a wide variety of disciplines – including math, auto mechanics, physics, engineering, electronics, and journalism. Throughout the year, students complete a variety of activities, developing presentations and taking part in a wide range of projects. This unique project's highlight is student design and construction of electric vehicles that they can actually drive and enter in statewide competitions.

“The Arkansas Electric Vehicle Education Program has accomplished great things, motivating students to learn and excel through hands-on application of classroom topics,” said Bill Rue, key accounts director for Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative of Ozark and event co-director. “It is a credit to the hard work of students, teachers, parents and local businesses that have volunteered to make it work. With the current national focus on the environment, energy prices, and the need to improve education, the issues students address and solutions they explore through the program are very timely.”

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.

For additional information, contact:

Rob Roedel, Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, 501.570.2296 or rroedel@aeci.com

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