

Real People, Real Work, Real Communities – Building Better Broadband



Ten employees with a combined total of 140 years of service were recognized at Pineland's 73rd Annual Meeting. L to R: Gerald "Nig" Powell (20), Amanda Vernon (10), William Gay (30), Steven McComas (10), Matthew Todd (5), Arthur Allen (10), Emily Thompson (5), Timothy Deaver (5), and Beau Youngblood (20). Not pictured: Jeffery Hilderbrandt (25).

On Thursday, June 12th, 225 members of Pineland Telephone gathered for the Cooperative's 73rd Annual Meeting. Held at the Metter Pre K-8 Educational Complex, local singer and songwriter Cade Beecher provided this year's entertainment, and Pastor Bo Fulginiti of Cedar Street Baptist Church led attendees with the invocation.

This year's theme, Powered by People, was reflected as President Mark Bland and CEO Dustin Durden presented their respective reports. "You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do, you earn that reputation from what you accomplish", said Bland, as he highlighted the commitment of Pineland's employees and directors to deliver high quality and innovative services.

Acknowledging the resilience of Pineland's infrastructure during the impacts of Hurricane Helene on Pineland's service areas, Bland stated, "While other providers with exposed aerial lines and towers were down for days and sometimes weeks, Pineland's underground fiber network following years of investment and redundancies resulted in most of our customers [being] able to continue to check on family and loves ones..."

In his address, Durden gave credit to those that made the connection possible; "While we weathered the storm well, our team didn't take a victory lap. They got to work immediately assessing damage, supporting members, and restoring full operations." He followed with a recap of service stats from the prior year; "These aren't just numbers, they're a testament to the relentless work ethic and commitment of the men and women who make up Team Pineland. Every call answered, every wire

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spliced, every home connected - that's real work, by real people, serving our communities with care. And they do it all while upholding the values that define our cooperative: excellence, integrity, innovation, and a servant's heart."

An update was provided on the Sumter County grant project, which now has 120 miles of fiber construction remaining, slated for completion by the end of this year, as well as success stories from businesses and individuals that are now connected with Pineland's gigabit enabled fiber network.

In the coming year, Pineland will focus on strengthening its core through enhancements in cybersecurity, customer service processes, and product offerings. Attention will also remain on advocating for smart policy, focusing on funding infrastructure efficiently and effectively.

Ten employees were honored for their dedicated service to the Cooperative, celebrating career milestones that represent a combined 140 years of service; William Gay (30 years), Jeffery Hilderbrandt (25 years), Gerald "Nig" Powell and Beau Youngblood (20 years), Arthur Allen, Steven McComas, and Amanda Vernon (10 years), and Timothy Deaver, Emily Thompson, and Matthew Todd (5 years).

Three incumbent directors on Pineland's Board of Directors were proposed for re-election, Will Donaldson representing District 1 (Lexsy & Oak Park), Carson Cross representing District 4 (Midville & Northeast Emanuel), and Brinson Lanier representing District 7 (Northeast Metter). All were re-elected, unopposed, and will continue their service for three more years.

Summer Safety: Grill Smart

As summer cookouts heat up, it's essential to remember that where you grill can make all the difference in keeping your gathering safe. Always use your grill outdoors in a well-ventilated area, never inside garages, under overhangs, or beneath decks where smoke and heat can quickly become dangerous. Set your grill on a flat, stable surface and place it at least 10 feet away from your home, fences, trees, or any flammable materials.

To further protect against accidents, always keep a fire extinguisher rated for grease fires within reach and know how to use it. These simple precautions go a long way in ensuring your summer grilling is safe and enjoyable for everyone.



An advertisement with a dark background. On the left, there are two tall, grey server racks. In front of them is a bright blue rotary telephone. The word 'Pineland' is written in a script font above the phone's handset. The phone has a large 'P' logo on its base. In the center, the text 'WEATHER THE STORM' is written in large, bold, white capital letters with a black outline. Below it, 'POWER YOUR FIBER' is written in the same style. To the right of this text, there is a paragraph: 'With the reliability of Pineland's fiber network & a backup power source, you can stay connected during power outages.' In the bottom right corner is the Pineland logo, which consists of a stylized 'P' inside a circle with the word 'Pineland' written below it.

WEATHER THE STORM
POWER YOUR FIBER

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Pineland