



Essay winners earn trip to Youth Leadership Workshop

Two high school juniors represented Southern Pine Electric Power Association at a three-day workshop designed to help prepare them for leadership roles in their schools and communities.

Taylor Ainsworth and Beth Derryberry joined other juniors from across the state for the 21st annual Electric Power Associations of Mississippi Youth Leadership Workshop, held March 7-9 in Jackson.

The workshop gave the students opportunities to meet their legislators, watch government in action at the state Capitol, hear motivational presentations and take part in activities designed to teach team-building and leadership skills.

The young delegates were among students recommended by their schools for participation in Southern Pine's essay contest on the theme, "How Electricity Powers My Life."

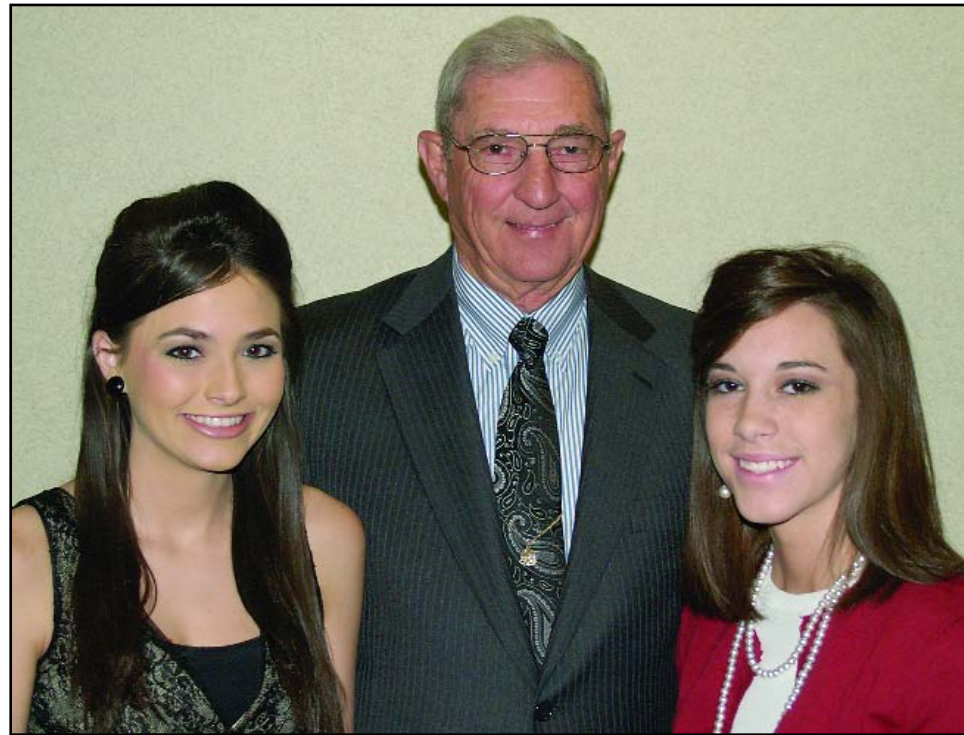
Taylor Ainsworth, a Taylorsville resi-

dent and student at Taylorsville High School, is the daughter of Stephanie Walley and Bobby Ainsworth.

Beth, a student at Florence High School, is the daughter of Jim and Gail Derryberry, of Pearl.

Other students who competed in Southern Pine's essay contest are George Salomon, Pearl High School; Angelina Easterling, Magee High School; Allison Stevens, Crystal Springs High School; Hannah Burch, Mize High School; DeAngelo Wilkerson, North Forrest High School; Chelsea Palmer, East Rankin Academy; Dylan Harris, Newton County High School; Jay Barnhart, Copiah Academy; Jacob Cole, McLaurin High School; and Lyndsay Pleas, Simpson Academy.

Southern Pine congratulates Taylor and Beth for their winning essays. We appreciate the efforts of all participants in helping make our annual essay contest a success—and a challenge to judge!



Southern Pine General Manager Don Jordan meets with Taylor Ainsworth, left, and Beth Derryberry during the Youth Leadership Workshop in Jackson.

Essay excerpts

Southern Pine invited high school juniors to write on the theme "How Electricity Powers My Life." Entries revealed students clearly remember the difficulties of life without electricity after Hurricane Katrina. Excerpts from the two winning essays appear below.

"The next time I am frustrated about something not working right, I will remember Katrina and how my family lived without power. I will think about how my life and the lives of others would permanently be altered without electricity."

—Beth Derryberry

"Electricity does more than power the blow dryer, recharge the cell battery, cool our homes and bring light into a dark room. In 2005 I realized just how much I depended on electricity and the many luxuries it provides. Without electricity, my school closes, the local manufacturing plants do not operate, service stations cannot sell gas and water does not pump into our home.... Hurricane Katrina insisted that I pay attention to the daily conveniences of electricity."

—Taylor Ainsworth

Hodge retirement wraps up 45-year career

Although James Walker Hodge said he will miss "playing in the mud," the 45-year Southern Pine Electric Power Association employee retired March 2 as construction supervisor for an underground line crew.

Hodge's retirement brought to a close a career that began Dec. 18, 1961, when he became a groundman on a Southern Pine line crew.

Through the years, the Smith County native wore many hard hats for the electric cooperative. Hodge worked as an apprentice lineman, right-of-way crew member, aerial bucket truck driver and journeyman lineman on an underground line crew before becoming a working foreman on an underground line crew.

For the past 10 years, he worked as an underground line crew supervisor working out of the cooperative's Taylorsville district office.

Regardless of his job title, Hodge performed his duties with sound judgment and knowledge gained through years of wide-ranging experience.

Hodge supervised a crew composed of three journeymen linemen and a groundman. He was responsible for every step of the process, from inspecting the site to energizing the line. He also looked after his employees, making sure all were well versed in safety procedures and understood the tasks at hand.

Using a trenching machine, Southern Pine's underground crews lay heavily insulated power line up to 4 1/2 feet deep in the soil. The line extends from a pole- or pad-mounted transformer to the member's meter.

"I enjoyed the underground work more than anything," Hodge said.

"I didn't mind getting muddy," he added with a laugh. Reflecting on his long career, Hodge said he has seen many improvements in electrical distribution methods and member service at Southern Pine. "There have been great changes just in the last few years, and it's all for the best," he noted.

Hodge enters retirement with a few personal goals in mind: "I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses and I plan on increasing my field service. That's my No. 1 goal."

He also plans to help his wife, Sue, with yard work and to plant deer plots for his grandchildren's enjoyment.

The Hodges have been married 46 years and live in Smith County, south of Taylorsville. They have two sons, Gary Hodge of Smith County and James Michael Hodge of Clayton, N.C., and a daughter, Nannette Singleton of Taylorsville.

The couple has five grandchildren, Suzette Sullivan, 27; Dexter Singleton, 21; Tara Allen, 30; Sonny Hodge, 17; and Lindsey Hodge, 9; and two great-grandchildren, Brance Sullivan, 10; and Brady Sullivan, 2.

Hodge enjoys hunting, especially with his grandchildren. He also likes to piddle in his shop.

Southern Pine appreciates James Walker Hodge's many years of devoted service and is grateful for his contributions to the electric cooperative's mission to deliver high-quality electrical service at the lowest possible cost. He will be missed by his co-workers.



James Walker Hodge supervised underground line construction in the Taylorsville district before his retirement in March.

Underground service on the rise in Southern Pine's area

Demand for underground power line construction is on the rise as more of Southern Pine Electric Power Association's service area becomes urbanized.

About 12 percent of Southern Pine's lines are buried underground.

Underground electrical service offers several advantages for both Southern Pine and the members who request it:

- Underground service is more reliable in normal and adverse weather conditions and less susceptible to power interruptions.
- It does not require trimming of bushes or trees to allow for overhead lines.
- Underground lines can be located in areas too confined for overhead lines, poles and guy wires.

- Burying lines underground can be a safer alternative in some areas.
- There are fewer utility poles and visible wires to detract from the landscape.

So, why doesn't Southern Pine put all its power lines underground? Here are a few reasons:

- Underground power lines are far more expensive to build than overhead lines.
- Power outages occur less frequently in underground lines but their duration may be longer.
- Underground facilities are susceptible to water damage.
- Repairs of underground lines may require pre-arranged outages and excavation of private property.
- Underground service can a shorter life expectancy than overhead service.

After weighing the pros and cons, more homeowners are choosing underground electrical service for their new homes. Southern Pine has added underground construction crews in recent years to meet increasing underground construction requests from members and local developers.

For more information on underground electrical service, contact the Southern Pine district office that serves you.



Southern Pine's Brandon district underground crew (left) builds service to a new subdivision home in Rankin County. The Taylorsville district underground crew (above) buries lines to serve new poultry houses in Smith County.

For your safety...
If you have underground electrical service, please call Southern Pine Electric Power Association before digging.

Make a note...

Magnolia Beef and Poultry Expo

April 12, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Smith County Ag Complex, Highway 35 South, Raleigh

The Magnolia Beef and Poultry Expo will present a trade show and offer educational seminars for beef and poultry producers. The trade show will feature local, national and international exhibitors with agricultural equipment, pharmaceuticals for cattle and other information. Seminar topics will include animal disposal, alternative feeds and energy, and marketing cattle.

The event is sponsored by the Mississippi State University Extension Service; Jasper, Newton, Rankin, Scott, Simpson and Smith counties; and Community Bank. For details, contact your local Extension office or Community Bank.

18th Annual Okatoma Festival

May 5, 9 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Collins

The 18th annual Okatoma Festival will feature Baltimore Ravens quarterback Steve "Air" McNair and a full day of fun activities, including arts and crafts, fair rides, golf tournament, quilt exhibits, softball tournament, 5K run/walk (8 a.m.), canoe race, health fair, antique car show and more. Admission is free. For details, contact the Covington County Chamber of Commerce at (601) 765-6012.