

HI-LITES

A Piece of TCEC History Rolls Back Home

This past Spring, a beautifully restored 1935 Ford Coupe rolled into the parking lot at Tri-County Electric Cooperative. While it may have looked like just another classic car to some, to those who know its story, it was much more than that—it was a piece of Tri-County history returning home.

The coupe was meticulously restored by Ben Ceglinski, Tri-County's Supervisor of Forestry, for his lifelong family friend, Sarah Mellott. Ben enjoys restoring vehicles in his spare time, but this wasn't just any restoration project. It was Sarah's grandfather's car.

That grandfather was Ernie Lowery, who served as an engineer at Tri-County Electric Cooperative. Decades ago, this very Ford Coupe would have been a familiar sight in the cooperative's parking lot as Ernie drove it to work. To see it parked there again all these years later was a special moment that connected the cooperative's past with its present.

For Ben, the project was about more than restoring an old automobile. It was about honoring a family legacy and preserving a piece of local history. Countless hours of craftsmanship and attention to detail brought the coupe back to life, allowing another generation to enjoy not only the vehicle itself, but the memories it carries.

For Sarah, seeing her grandfather's car restored was an emotional reminder of the man who once drove it and the role he played in the cooperative's history.



*Ernie Lowery, Charlie Sigwerth, and Archie Ferguson
Photo courtesy of Archie's daughter, Kathy Ferguson
Lewis*

Mt. Vernon Office

**3906 Broadway
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864**

Monday - Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Salem Office

**1631 E Main St.
Salem, IL 62881**

Tuesday - Thursday
7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Closed: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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Phone: (618) 244-5151
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A Piece of TCEC History Rolls Home

For Tri-County employees, it served as a reminder that while facilities, equipment, and technology change over the years, the people who built this cooperative—and the stories they leave behind—remain an important part of who we are.

Sometimes history isn't found in a history book. Sometimes it rolls quietly back into the parking lot.

It's more than a restoration—it's a connection across generations, a tribute to craftsmanship, friendship, family, and the people whose dedication helped shape Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

Welcome home, Ernie's Coupe. Thanks for stopping by!

Caramel Apple Dip Cups

Ingredients

- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup whipped topping
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- Caramel sauce
- Toffee bits
- Apple slices tossed in lemon juice
- Pecans, optional

Directions

1. Mix together cream cheese, whipped topping, brown sugar, vanilla, and cinnamon.
2. Slice apples into bite-sized chunks. To keep them from browning, mix 2 cups cold water and 1 Tbsp. lemon juice. Soak apples for 3-5 minutes. Drain and pat completely dry with paper towels. *Tip: Dry apples help prevent watery cups.*
3. Into 5 ounce clear cups, add about 3 tablespoons of the cream cheese mixture, cover in bite-sized apple pieces, drizzle 1-2 tsp. caramel over the top. Sprinkle with 1 Tbsp. toffee bits. Add a few chopped pecans, if desired.

Make ahead: You can prepare the cream cheese mixture up to 2 days in advance. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve. Slice the apples before the event to maintain freshness.



ONE NUMBER.
SAME GREAT
SERVICE.

Tri-County Electric
Cooperative now uses
(618) 244-5151 as our primary
phone number for all member
services.

Our previous toll-free (800) number has been retired. Whether you're reporting an outage, asking a billing question, starting or stopping service, or just need assistance, we're here to help.

Save **(618) 244-5151** in your contacts so you'll always have us just a tap away!

Happy Labor Day!

**TCEC offices will
be closed Monday,
September 7th**

ATTENTION, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS!



Touchstone Energy®

Have a project you'd like funded?
\$4,000 available through Touchstone Energy
Classroom Empowerment Grants

ABOUT CLASSROOM EMPOWERMENT GRANTS

Touchstone Energy Classroom Empowerment Grants totaling \$4,000 (8 grants at \$500 each) are being funded by Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Inc. (TCEC) for the 2026/2027 school year.



**TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

HOW TO APPLY

- Option 1: Fill out the attached application and return using the information below.
 - Option 2: Apply online at www.tricountycoop.com/classgrant
- Deadline: November 6th, 2026

ELIGIBILITY

- School located in TCEC Service Area
- Teachers & Administrators of K-12 public or private schools may apply.
- Projects must be completed by the time school is out for the summer.
- Recipients must provide written proof of completion detailing how grant funds were used within 6 months of project completion.

RETURN BY MAIL OR EMAIL


 lhutchison@tricountycoop.com
 Tri-County Electric Cooperative
3906 Broadway St.
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

MORE INFORMATION

www.tricountycoop.com/classgrant

Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Inc. &
Touchstone Energy Classroom
Empowerment Grant Application



**TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

www.tricountycoop.com

Applicant Name

Title

School Name

School Address

City/State/Zip

Daytime Phone Number

Email

Electric Cooperative Territory: Tri-County Electric Cooperative, inc.

To apply for grant, send a double-spaced typed request (not to exceed 3 pages) that includes the following:

1. A description of the project and what it will accomplish
2. The estimated cost of the project
3. An explanation of why outside funds are necessary to complete the project
4. Whether funding options have been pursued, and if so, how
5. When the project will be completed
6. The number of people affected by the project
7. If the project's goals are measurable, and how
8. How the project ties in Touchstone Energy's four core values of integrity, accountability, innovation, and commitment to community

Photos supporting data are optional. Applications will be evaluated by an impartial panel of judges. Awards will be announced mid-December.

Deadline: Grant applications must be received by *November 6, 2026*.

Email or mail application to: lhutchison@tricountycoop.com

Tri-County Electric Cooperative, 3906 Broadway St, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

Acknowledgement

Touchstone Energy and Tri-County Electric Cooperative reserves the right to photograph grant winners and use photos for publication purposes. Projects must be completed by the time school is out for summer. Recipients must provide written proof of completion detailing how the grant funds were used within six months of the project's completion. Grant recipient agrees to follow all completion requirements.

Signature

Date