



## Media Release

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### 2016 Round Up for Education scholarships awarded

The education careers of 217 students from throughout Pearl River Valley Electric Power Association's 12-county service area will get a financial boost this fall. Each will receive a scholarship of \$935 to help them attend state community colleges this year, thanks to the generous spirit and support of the Association's member-consumers.

This is the fourth year for the Round Up for Education scholar's program, which is funded by members who round their bills up to the nearest dollar each month. Scholarships are available to members who do the round up, as well as for their spouses or dependent children who are enrolled as freshmen this fall.

"Throughout our history, Pearl River Valley Electric has not only been providing electric service to rural areas, but working to improve the quality of life of our members and the communities where they live," said General Manager Randy Wallace. "We believe that education is vital to improving the future for all of us in south Mississippi, and the Round Up program was designed to encourage more young people to further their education.

"Members working together to achieve a common goal is a unique hallmark of cooperative organizations, and I am proud of the positive response we've received on this effort. More than 90 percent of our members continue to round up their bills and we're very thankful for their support.

"As we are now able to see, the accumulation of what would normally be spare change for an individual has added up significantly. These funds will help create long-term educational opportunities as well as economic benefits, which is good for everyone in the communities we serve."

PRVEPA serves more than 48,000 meters. Since the Round Up program began in November 2012, more than \$840,000 has been collected and deposited in an account overseen by the Greater Pine Belt Community Foundation. At least ten percent of each year's funds are set aside in an endowed fund for future use. The remaining money is divided equally between the number of eligible applicants, resulting this year in 217 scholarships worth \$935 per student (the maximum award per the program's guidelines is \$1000). In the program's 4 years, more than 780 students have now received scholarships.

Scholarship recipients this year include 115 students attending Pearl River Community College, 49 at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, and 36 at Jones County Junior College. An additional 17 students are attending 6 other state community colleges. Overall, students came from 21 different high schools and home school programs.

PRVEPA determined that helping community college students would enhance the program's impact in its initial years. "Because of the large numbers of potential college students living on our lines, we decided to start with those attending community colleges," explained Kurt Brautigam, manager of member services. "Community colleges are an ideal place to begin higher education for many of our members and their children, and we think the scholarships will have greater impact for those students."

"The PineBelt Community Foundation administers a variety of scholarship programs," said Theresa Erickson, Executive Director of the Foundation. "The Round Up for Education Scholarship program is the largest scholarship program we manage. We often see how small contributions from large numbers of people can grow into significant amounts that benefit many individuals, and when people continue their education it not only benefits the individual, but it also benefits their family and ultimately their community."

"Now that our members are able to see the effects this program can have—helping nearly 800 students begin their college careers—we hope to have even more participants next year," said Wallace. "We are thrilled with the results this year and know that what our members are doing by participating in the program will have positive impacts for years to come."

Round Up for Education funds collected after August 1 go toward next year's scholarships. Applications for 2017 scholarships will be available beginning this month.

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