

## **From our CEO: Fulfilling the legacy of a giant**

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### **Connecting and caring for our communities**

Greetings! It's tough to believe that the summer season is behind us and we're preparing for fall. Just last month, we celebrated our 70th anniversary at our annual meeting. This is one of my favorite events of the year.

It's fairly simple. We bring our members together, provide an update on our past year and then socialize over food and refreshments. But that's not what makes the meeting special. It's being able to celebrate YOU and the forces you are in our communities. The past year has been a wonderful mix of community celebrations, festivals and milestones. And through it all, we are pleased to be your partner.

Connecting you is our mission. Cultivating and partnering with you to make vibrant, sustainable, safe and beautiful communities is our vision. We are committed to bridging the digital divide — not only through broadband fiber, but through educational opportunities that empower you to use digital media wisely and efficiently.

These past few months, we've partnered with Abbeville, Greenwood and McCormick on several adult educational opportunities: Streaming 101, Adult Literacy and Facebook for Business, to name a few. And more are on the way.

In this issue, you will read about the new Veterans Telemedicine Centers in Abbeville and Greenwood. You will also learn about our recent scholarship recipient and about McCormick High School student Jeremiah Fambrough's FRS Youth Tour experience in Washington, D.C.

Jeremiah was able to experience something I wish every resident in our area could: the strength of our connection, the power of our voices and the strength of our service. From the home to the halls of Congress, rural America is represented one voice at a time.

I always get a little nostalgic as I reflect on my remarks for the annual meeting. I am in awe of our youth. They are our future. And I am deeply committed to our history and the values that we so firmly hold.

Every now and again, I visit the hometown of our board president, Wes McAllister. I eat lunch at the Mount Carmel Café. And I take in the investments Wes has made to make Mount Carmel a vibrant community. Wes is the son of our founder and first board president, John McAllister. John believed in a better future. He started in his own backyard when he saw the needs of his neighbors and friends. Following the legacy of his parents and grandparents, John — and now Wes — continued the vision of McAllister and Sons. Building on its early days of selling furniture, appliances and even farm equipment, McAllister and Sons continues to evolve its business based on what the community needs.

But the story isn't in what they sell. The story is in their "why." John McAllister believed in a brighter future — without leaving home. He connected his communities. He nourished them, and he took care of their people. Today, Wes is carrying on that legacy.

And we at WCTEL stand on the shoulders of that legacy. We, too, believe in a better tomorrow. And we're committed to doing our part today. That's what we're doing, one connection at a time.