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**With Significant Changes Implemented,
Pineland Telephone Cooperative Members Meet for 68th Annual Meeting**

A change in the season, no entertainment, drive through registration, lots of masks, and no handshakes. These were just a few of the changes noticed at this year's meeting of the members of Pineland Telephone Cooperative, Inc, which was held on Wednesday, October 7, 2020. Serving its membership since 1951, "this year has truly been a challenge for all of us, and its impact on your cooperative is no exception," began General Manager, Dustin Durden, when addressing those in attendance.

Durden shared some of the challenges Pineland has faced during the pandemic. By late March, the decision was made to close the main offices in Metter and Swainsboro, shift all personnel that could work from home to that format, and shift all field technicians to working remotely as much as possible, picking up supplies as needed only. The demand for internet was growing rapidly and these connections were in Pineland's traditional service territory. Over a period of eight months, the team at Pineland installed high speed broadband to 1,075 new locations compared to 752 for the same timeframe in 2019. Upgrades in speed were coming daily so that people could work from home and students could find some bit of continuity in their classwork. During uncertain times, the staff of Pineland Telephone produced unprecedented results.

Cooperative President, Mark Bland led his discussion with praise for the employees of Pineland Telephone. President Bland likened the team with a Helen Keller quote, 'character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved'. Bland also thanked those in attendance for taking the time and making the effort to be at the annual meeting in spite of these most trying times.

Based on the current Bylaws of the Cooperative, an annual meeting was required to be held in person. An amendment passed during this meeting, and already in place at most electric cooperatives in Georgia, now allows the board of directors to make amendments to the Bylaws by majority vote.

Three directors were re-elected, unopposed, to serve Pineland Telephone Cooperative, Inc. another term at this meeting. Mr. Wiley C. Evans, III (Bartow and Davisboro) will represent District 2, Mr. Ralph D. Clifton (Southwest Metter and Southwest Cobbtown) will represent District 7, and Mr. Mark Bland (Northwest Metter) will represent District 8 until 2023.

Pineland

“Having worked for a cooperative my entire career, cooperatives get the job done,” says Durden. “Serving you, our members, is first and foremost, our mission.” Concluding his speech, Durden introduced the ten employees with service anniversaries celebrated this year, congratulating the group on a combined 140 years of service.



Top Row, L to R: Beau Youngblood (15), Arthur Allen (5), Gerald Powell (15), Chad Kingery (5); Middle Row, L to R: Steven McComas (5), Jeffery Hilderbrandt (20), Timmy Monroe (5), Greg Williams (30); Bottom Row: Amanda Vernon (5); not-pictured, William Gay (25).

Pineland Telephone serves over 1,300 square miles in all or parts of ten-counties and seventeen exchanges in South Georgia, bringing Telephone, Internet, Technology, and Security solutions to its customers. Nearing its 69th year, 100% of Pineland’s customers receive their services via a dedicated Fiber-to-the-Home network capable of delivering broadband speeds up to 1 Gigabit per second. Pineland’s mission is to offer an outstanding customer experience through the efficient delivery of progressive technology solutions in the markets served. We will achieve this mission by applying our Core Values of Excellence, Integrity, Innovation, and a Servant’s Heart in everything we do.

Pineland

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