



A Second Stroke of Brilliance: Rylynn Vaden Wins Again

For the second year in a row, Rylynn Vaden, an 8-year-old from Roanoke County, captured top honors in Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative's Lineworker Appreciation Coloring Contest – and she couldn't be more excited.

When Rylynn learned she had won again, her reaction was simple but heartfelt: "Great!" she said with a big smile. Winning once is special, but winning twice makes it a moment she says she won't forget.

So what set her artwork apart from the rest? According to Rylynn, the secret lies in one key technique: blending. With encouragement from her mother, Jessica, Rylynn has been practicing blending colors smoothly, giving her artwork added depth and vibrancy.

"I used two sets of markers I got for Christmas," she explains.

Those tools, and a week of focused effort, helped her complete the piece even faster than last year.

Rylynn also made a few creative changes this time around. She experimented with different colors for the sky and continued refining her blending skills. Her favorite part to color? "The people," she says, bringing the lineworkers in the scene to life.

Creativity appears to run in the family. Rylynn's brother, Sawyer, also placed in the contest this year, earning third place. But don't expect any shared secrets between the two. "We kept completely separate, no cheating," she says.

At one point during the process, Rylynn realized she had created something special. "Yes," she says when asked if she feels it is her best work yet.

Beyond the art itself, Rylynn understands the importance of the people her drawing represents. She knows that lineworkers recently installed an underground power box at her home and appreciates that they "keep the lights on." It's that real-world connection that makes celebrating lineworkers meaningful to her.

Looking ahead, Rylynn already has ideas for next year's contest design. "Horses and nature," she says, two things close to her heart. In fact, when she grows up, she hopes to become a horse trainer or a veterinarian.

For other young artists hoping to win someday, Rylynn offers some simple but effective advice: "Blend your colors, do your best and watch Bob Ross."

As for her prize, a \$50 gift card, Rylynn hasn't decided exactly how she'll spend it, but she already knows she'll share it with her brother.

With her favorite colors, blue, teal, pink and purple – along with a growing passion for art – Rylynn Vaden continues to impress. And if her track record is any indication, this likely won't be the last time we see her name at the top of the contest list.



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*Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative is an
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Powering Bright Futures

Local students earn scholarships to light the way forward



Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative is proud to join the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives in celebrating the continued success of the Education Scholarship Foundation, which in 2026 awarded \$165,000 in scholarships to 92 outstanding high school seniors across the region.

For more than two decades, electric cooperatives have remained committed to investing in the communities they serve, especially in the next generation of leaders. As VMDAEC President and CEO Brian Mosier noted, this effort reflects the cooperative principle of Concern for Community by helping students pursue higher education, skilled trades and careers that strengthen rural America.

Since its founding in 2001, the VMDAEC Education Scholarship Foundation has awarded more than 1,350 scholarships totaling \$1.4 million. The scholarships support students pursuing college degrees, technical certifications and trade careers, with funds paid directly to their chosen institutions to assist with tuition, room and board.

CELEBRATING OUR LOCAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative is especially proud to recognize the 2026 scholarship recipients from its service area:

- Ryder Ward, James River High School — C.D Hypes Scholarship, \$2,500
- Keira Crawford, James River High School — Worth Hudson Scholarship, \$2,500
- Claire Morris, Craig County High School — Worth Hudson Scholarship, \$2,000
- Cole Fogus, James Monroe High School (WV) — Worth Hudson Scholarship, \$1,500
- Ian Morris, Craig County High School — Worth Hudson Scholarship, \$1,500

These students exemplify academic achievement, leadership and a strong commitment to their communities. Their accomplishments reflect the bright future ahead for the region CBEC proudly serves.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION THROUGH COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

The scholarship program is made possible through private donations and initiatives such as Virginia's "Keeping the Lights On" specialty license plate. Proceeds from the plate — available for \$25 annually, or \$35 for personalized versions — directly support student scholarships and help expand opportunities for young people across cooperative territories.

Additional contributions to the VMDAEC Education Scholarship Foundation are tax-deductible and may be made in honor or memory of a loved one. Every dollar donated goes directly toward supporting student scholarships.

At Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative, we believe empowering students today strengthens our communities tomorrow. We congratulate all of this year's recipients and look forward to seeing the positive impact they will make in the years ahead.



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ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

During these warm summer months, a smart thermostat can help keep your home comfortable while reducing cooling costs. Smart thermostats learn your routine and automatically raise the temperature when you're away and cool things down before you return, avoiding unnecessary energy use. You can also adjust settings remotely from your phone, so you're never cooling an empty house. Setting your thermostat a few degrees higher while you're away or asleep can lead to significant savings. Many smart thermostats provide reports and tips, helping you fine-tune your energy use and stay cool while keeping your electric bill in check.

TO ALL THE AMAZING DADS OUT THERE,

**HAPPY
FATHER'S DAY**