

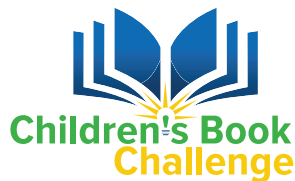
# Captain Co-op, the New Assistant, & the Tornado



Written and Illustrated by  
*Aydin M. Soner*

Captain Co-op, the New Assistant, and the Tornado is dedicated to all the co-op linemen and technicians that brave the elements and tough working conditions to provide us with power. Thanks for keeping us lit!





*Captain Co-op, the New Assistant, and the Tornado* by Aydin M. Soner was selected as one of two winners of the 2023 Children's Book Challenge, sponsored by EnlightenSC—an educational initiative of The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina. The competition challenges fourth- and fifth-grade students to write and illustrate stories that focus on how electricity has impacted their lives, communities and the history of our state.

South Carolina's electric cooperatives have been committed to powering rural communities since 1938. Since their founding, the Seven Cooperative Principles have included a commitment to education, concern for their communities, and attention to the future of young people. Those same ideals guide co-ops today. By inspiring students to learn about the history of electricity in our state, S.C.'s electric co-ops hope to spark a passion for critical thinking in the minds of tomorrow's energy leaders.



To learn more about the Children's Book Challenge, visit **[enlightensc.org/book](https://enlightensc.org/book)**.



It was an overcast Friday at the Fairfield Electric Co-op building in Blythewood. Captain Co-op and his new assistant, Volt the electric eel, were monitoring the weather conditions in the western part of Fairfield County.

“It looks like severe thunderstorms over Lake Monticello near the V.C. Summer Nuclear Plant,” said Volt.

“Yes,” said Captain Co-op, “these are the perfect weather conditions for a tornado.”

Captain Co-op was the head lineman over operations for the entire cooperative, covering five counties, servicing 30,000+ members.





“We must keep an eye on this in case of a tornado,” said Captain Co-op, looking concerned. “Severe weather could mean downed power lines and outages.”

“I’ve only been on the job four weeks,” said Volt, “but I’ve seen so much of what the co-op does to provide electric services to the community. My job at my uncle’s Eel-ectric Lights and Fans was not as exciting as my job at the co-op. What a cool place! So who owns the co-op?” inquired Volt.

“The members own the co-op, Volt,” replied Captain Co-op.

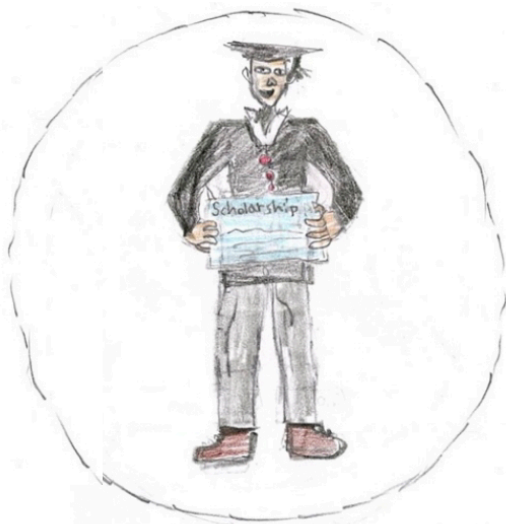




“Really?” asked Volt.

“Yep, that’s right,” he replied.

Co-op is short for cooperative. A cooperative is an independent association of individuals who unite to meet their needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned, democratically-governed enterprise. The need for the community is electricity. There is use of a shared resource (electricity); shared expenses for purchasing, distributing and maintaining the resource; and shared profit as capital credits for any excess funds. S.C. co-ops have connected communities in this way since their inception back in the 1930s. Before that time, rural areas were pretty much in the dark, except for candles and lanterns.



“Did you know that the cooperative does more than just provide electric services? I’m scheduled to install a new hot water heater for one of our new customers at their brand new farm in Chester County on Monday. As one of our new cooperative members, they will receive a free hot water heater unit with our **H2O Select Program.**”

“Wow! That is so kind and helpful,” said Volt.

“We also have **youth programs** for the next generation of co-op landowners. We award scholarships annually for higher education and we sponsor state and Congressional visits, so that the co-op is supported and protected by lawmakers,” added Captain Co-op.



“People in rural communities were given the chance under President Roosevelt to invest in their communities by forming cooperatives to serve their energy needs. The co-op exists solely to serve the community and members have joint ownership,” explained Captain Co-op.

“You know, I naturally generate electricity,” said Volt, “because I’m an electric eel and we use our unique ability to catch prey, but it’s not enough to power a home. Does the cooperative provide electricity that is generated via any carbon-free processes?”

“We sure do provide that option,” smiled Captain Co-op. “Co-op members can purchase a power block on one of our solar panels at our Winnsboro location through our **Solar Community Program.**”





EEEEERRRRR EEERRRR EEERRRR (sirens)

“Yikes! What’s that?!” shrieked Volt.

“That’s the alarm for a power outage in the service area. Let’s check the map. Looks like a tornado touchdown in western Fairfield, as expected. We will wait for the okay, and head out to assess the damage. We should start packing our gear,” said Captain Co-op.

Captain Co-op and Volt headed down the highway in their bucket truck. Volt was excited, yet a little afraid.



As they rode through the countryside, they could see the extent of the storm damage.

There were downed trees and branches, some of which had fallen on lines. Other linemen had arrived to start removing some of the debris and repairing lines.

“Look at that fire station,” exclaimed Volt, “it has sustained a lot of damage. It looks like no one was there at the time though. What a relief!”

“Yes,” nodded Captain Co-op, “natural disasters are common and people in rural areas can be greatly affected by them.”



“The co-op can provide assistance to those community members suffering through a crisis with **Operation Round Up**. They can assist this fire station with their repairs and have even provided funds to those living with long term disabilities and chronic illnesses,” added Captain Co-op.

“Gee whiz, it seems like the co-op is a useful part of the community,” giggled Volt as he lit up with excitement at the thought of being a new assistant in the co-op community.

“Members can maximize use of cooperative resources through education provided by the co-op on saving money through conserving energy, home energy efficiency measures through our **Beat the Peak** alert, and we provide home security system







services. Moreover, the co-op has negotiated discounts for members at local businesses through the availability of member discount cards. With the increase in **electric vehicles** (EV) as an alternative to gas cars, we are also currently educating the public on the benefits of EV use for the members and the environment,” explained Captain Co-op.

Captain Co-op and Volt worked for the remainder of the afternoon alongside the linemen and technicians. After a hard day’s work they headed back to the cooperative.

“I hope I’ve provided you with great information on what we do here at the co-op and how we connect our communities, but not just through electricity,” chuckled Captain Co-op.

“You have,” said Volt. “I’ve learned that the cooperatives are more than just electricity providers. They are run by the community for the community!”



# **Co-op Programs and Services**

**Beat the Peak**

**Operation Round Up**

**Community Solar**

**H2O Select**

**Youth Programs**

**Electric Vehicles**



### About the Author

Hi! My name is Aydin (pronounced 'I-den') Michael Sonek. I am a homeschooled 4th grader living in Columbia, S.C., and I love science and history! I am a child scientist and I help universities in conducting cognitive development studies. I play guitar and I am a djembedownfola. My favorite food is sushi. I want to one day be an astrobotanist and engineer, leading the first mission for a Mars colony, completely run by hemp plant derivatives. For my book, I interviewed Mrs. Chaundrea Lee at the Fairfield Electric Co-op in Blythewood to learn details about services provided and the cooperative's interaction with community members and businesses. The Enlightensc website was helpful in providing details on 'what is energy' and 'how it is produced.' I hope you learned from my book the various important ways cooperatives serve our community. Bye!







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