

**Client:** Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)  
**Creative Agency:** redpepper  
**Consulting Firm:** LHH (formerly Paladin)  
**Copywriter:** Julie A. Downey

**Project:** Each local power company (LPC) that delivers electricity provided by TVA is given the opportunity to develop a Community Energy microsite to highlight the ways the partnership supports people in their service area. I conduct research and interview LPC leaders to discover how they enhance the quality of life for customers with economic development, educational programming, disaster relief, renewable energy, recreation and electric vehicles. To write their stories, I reach out to partners and program beneficiaries to get to the heart of the narrative and depict the community spirit.

**Additional responsibilities:** Create microsites in WordPress, manage workflow of projects

**Website:** [TVA Community Energy/BTES Microsite](#)  
**Published:** February 2022

## Creating Opportunities for Youth and Industry to Flourish

[BOILERPLATE] Bristol Tennessee Essential Services (BTES) and TVA were founded on a mission to serve — through reliable and affordable energy, a safe and protected environment and thriving economic development.

BTES provides electricity to more than 34,000 customers in the City of Bristol, Tennessee and other communities within a 280-square mile area within Sullivan County.

### BTES Connects Educators with Industry

A true testament to BTES' commitment to youth and economic development in Bristol, Tennessee, the local power company (LPC) has organized an annual Teacher Industry Day for more than 25 years, partnering businesses with Bristol Tennessee City Schools (BTCS). A true testament to BTES' commitment to youth and economic development in Bristol, Tennessee, the local power company (LPC) has organized an annual Teacher Industry Day for more than 25 years, partnering businesses with Bristol Tennessee City Schools (BTCS). Educators in the local school system are paired with area businesses, and spend the day with on location with leadership. They tour the facility, discuss career opportunities, and learn the skills needed to work in the various positions offered.

"Teacher Industry Day keeps teachers current on the latest technologies, requirements and methodologies used in the workforce within businesses right here in our community," April Eads, BTES business development manager said.

Teachers who bring up-to-date knowledge about occupations back to the classroom help prepare students to make informed decisions about potential career paths. And BTCS curriculum and instruction directors partner with BTES to ensure the work-based lessons meet grade-appropriate criteria.

"Teacher Industry Day allows conversations between two very vital sets of people and processes. Teachers are able to not only see behind-the-scenes of businesses in our community, but also what it takes for a worker to do their job today," Eads said.

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Visiting a site sheds light on the latest modes of operation. They may see first-hand the role of automation in a manufacturing facility, or wonder about the absence of call center employees to find out many work remotely.

While the program's culminating event takes place during a single day—starting with a breakfast sponsored by TVA—this is only the tip of the iceberg. The program is made possible by the relationships BTES builds with industry leaders, workers and educators. They regularly communicate with local businesses to check in and find out how they can help facilitate their continued success.

BTES also engages in year-round strategic planning with partners such as TVA. Along with fellow members of the TVA Workforce Institute cabinet, “We are always looking for ways to move the needle. We continue to be creative and visionary in our approach to understand the needs of the ever changing workforce,” Eads said.

TVA is also involved as a host to teachers and students to showcase the breadth of opportunities offered in all departments. Eads said, “Most people think TVA is only comprised of engineers and technicians, and don't know that they also employ people in fields such as marketing, cybersecurity and community relations.”

Teacher Industry Day began as a way to promote economic development and career development in the community and has continued to expand and create new programs. “Work-Based Learning is an initiative that was born out of Teacher Industry Day. This initiative places students in local businesses and industries and has resulted in close to 100 student placements,” Eads said. One great success story is that of a recent college graduate who is now a full-time graphic designer at Robinette Company, where she participated in a work-based learning opportunity while enrolled at Bristol High School. This experience introduced her to package manufacturing design.

These programs are helping to bridge a huge gap in economic development. Eads explains, “In the 1940s when a student graduated from high school, he or she was qualified for 80 percent of the jobs in the market. Today when a student graduates from high school, he or she is qualified for less than 20 percent of the jobs available. Bridging the gap between job openings with a qualified workforce helps our existing industries grow and brings in new jobs and capital investment into our community.”

Eads continues, “As anyone in economic development arenas knows, one of the first items on the list of industries looking to move to a new community is a qualified workforce. It is our collective responsibility to do everything we can to facilitate a conversation between industries and educational leaders so they can prepare our future workforce and provide an informed career pathway for the students.”

Teacher Industry Day is a globally recognized program, earning an International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Gold Award in the Business Retention and Expansion Initiatives category.

### **New Resident Leaves Retirement to Join BTES**

Stacey Crowe had worked in customer service at energy company Pepco in Washington, DC before she and her husband retired and moved to Bristol, Tennessee. At Pepco, she helped seniors and other low-income individuals find ways to save money with energy conservation methods and budgeting. Crowe not only talked to the customers, but also went to their homes to install plastic over windows, swap out light bulbs with the energy-efficient variety, and change air filters.

During the relocation process, Crowe visited the BTES office to set up utilities. She said, “You could tell that BTES took pride in their products. The woman who helped me was so organized—and prepared to answer any questions. She was also there to help in any way.”

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And like many incoming residents, she found the benefits BTES and TVA provide the community through the public power model to be a pleasant and welcoming surprise—along with the low utility prices.

“I joked to my husband, ‘Too bad I don’t need a job.’ When it came time and I decided I was ready to get back to work, BTES was the first place that came to mind. I wanted to be a part of what they had to offer. My dad taught us to always go above and beyond and I could tell they shared that belief,” Crowe said.

“This one interaction was enough to let her know that she wanted to be here,” said Leslie Blevins, public relations and communications manager at BTES.

“When Stacey walked in the door she knew how we treat our customers is extraordinary. She provided a valuable outsider’s perspective, noting that the Customer Service Representative asked the right questions, looking for not only what our customers need but also what they want.”

Crowe happily accepted a position in customer service, and takes phone calls and walk-in customers. She answers questions, completes new connects, and facilitates engineering paperwork for general power and residential. She approaches inquiries with compassion, embodying the spirit of community energy.

Crowe continues, “If people come in and they are upset, usually something else is bothering them. It’s often not anything about their electric service. Maybe they can’t pay their bill. I try to find different ways to help—and remain calm. I really do find it gratifying. I like the harder to please customers. I like angry ones. Give them to me. I sense how people feel in their hearts. I want to be something positive in their life for the day.”

### **BTES Staff Star on Power 7 TV**

The LPC has its own cable TV station, BTES Power 7, which provides a way for employees to connect with the community. A popular show is the live broadcast of the annual Christmas parade, which Blevins co-hosts. She takes this opportunity to interview their partners such as TVA and to elevate economic development initiatives. Crowe is visible on the TV station, too, as a co-host of the DIY craft program Design Time with Jennifer Booher, BTES CEO Dr. Mike Browder’s executive assistant. He said, “We have lots of people that are TV stars.”

Crowe said, “Our customers can see another side of us. I love what I do on the show, making something inexpensively that Tennesseans can put together for ten bucks. Some of the projects, kids can do with you. It helps kids learn that you don’t always have to buy stuff, that they can use creativity! I was one of seven children and we had to use our imagination. Whatever materials we had at home, my mother would lay them out on the table and say, ‘What are we going to make?’”

### **Bristol, Tenn. Loves a Parade**

Blevins said BTES employees take every opportunity possible to talk about the LPC and its partnerships with TVA. And their messages have an especially widespread impact with broadcasts of the annual Bristol Christmas parade on Power 7 and Facebook Live. While floats, bands and Clydesdales march through the charming town, Blevins and her co-host talk with BTES and TVA employees, residents and business in the booth about the great work they are doing to elevate quality of life the community.

### **Bristol: Industrial Sites as Welcoming as the Rolling Hills**

Beautiful rolling hills make Bristol, Tennessee an appealing place to live for those who prefer a quiet, rural setting. Industries looking to relocate can enjoy the balance of a peaceful environment in addition to all the amenities they need, thanks to the efforts of BTES and TVA.

Together, they have created Bristol Business Park, which houses three pad ready sites—one of which is large enough to house a 420,000 square foot structure. They have graded the ground, completed zoning requirements, and prepared connections to electric, water, gas services and fiber optics that can provide Internet speeds of 10 Gigabits per second. They also worked with the state to achieve proper certifications. BTES business development manager April Eads said, “The pad ready sites allow us to compete with areas of the country that have naturally flat land. We offer attractive speed-to-market for prospects considering moving their operations here.”

In June 2020, BTES was awarded \$500,000 from Tennessee Governor Bill Lee as part of the Site Development Grant Program that helps communities prepare industrial sites for businesses. TVA has also provided funding for the purpose.

Eads said, “Having large pad-ready sites is a critical component in attracting new business to our community. These sites give us the opportunity to participate in requests for information from Site Selection Consultants that we wouldn’t have been able to otherwise. Pad-ready sites are more attractive to potential businesses since it helps to mitigate risk and allows for a faster speed to market.”

This, in addition to BTES’ highly reliable electric service and fast Internet for every business and home helps attract advanced manufacturing, service industries, data centers, fulfillment centers or corporate offices to these newly developed sites.

### **Bald Eagle Cameras**

High up in the canopy at Winged Deer Park, two bald eagle families tend to their newly hatched chicks who came into the world in March 2022. Jolene and Boone built their nest in a pine tree on Boone Lake in Johnson City, and Eugene and Frances have a Bluff City postal address in a Sycamore tree along the Holston River. The public is able to safely view these majestic creatures in action via [livestream](#), thanks to eagle cameras run by the East Tennessee State University (ETSU) department of biological sciences.

The cameras cost \$25,000 per year to operate, and are sponsored by TVA, Bristol Tennessee Essential Services (BTES), BrightRidge, Mahoney’s Outfitters and Bank of Tennessee. TVA also provided assistance installing the cameras and BrightRidge utility crews maintain the feeds when it’s not hatching season.

“Our Eagle Camera project has been the cooperative project of a community of volunteers, donors and corporate sponsors. [TVA has been a strong supporter](#) of this educational service effort almost since its initiation,” Eagle Camera project leader and ETSU biological sciences professor Dr. Fred Alsop said, adding, “Together we have brought the personal lives of this pair of our national birds into the homes of viewers around the world, and we continue to do so 24/7 and 365 days of the year.”