Renée R. Whitener is director of public relations for Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, a cooperative serving some 74,000 member-owners in northwest North Carolina. Renée manages media, member, employee and government relations for the cooperative and its two subsidiaries: Blue Ridge Energies, which provides commercial and residential heating fuels; and RidgeLink, which leases the cooperative’s excess fiber optic capacity.

She received her bachelor’s degree in Communications/Broadcasting from Appalachian State University and is a graduate of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Management Internship Program at the University of Wisconsin. Before joining Blue Ridge Electric, she worked as public relations director in the healthcare industry and for two ad agencies after starting her career as a newspaper reporter.

In 2011, Renée and her team received the highest honor from the Spotlight on Excellence program: the Edgar F. Chesnutt Award for Best Total Communications. The award recognized results achieved using media and member communications, including social media, during a week-long ice storm and widespread outage crisis beginning on Christmas Day.

Renée serves on the Board of Directors of The Wig Bank of Caldwell County, a not-for-profit assistance services provider for cancer victims and their families. She is also on the Advisory Board for An Appalachian Summer Festival, a month-long performing arts series and one of the nation’s leading regional arts festivals.