



SEPTEMBER 2012

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Chief Executive Officer:

Greg W. Munro

Next Board Meeting:

9 a.m. | Wednesday, September 19, 2012
LPEA Headquarters, Durango

Mission Statement:

La Plata Electric Association provides its members safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.

Save Your Energy
LPEA
La Plata Electric Association, Inc.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Reduction: 2.3 percent

BY MARK SCHWANTES, MANAGER OF CORPORATE SERVICES

Given current economic conditions, it only makes sense to practice energy efficiency whenever possible – to save both energy and dollars.

We've found, however, that our members often encounter technical, informational or financial barriers that preclude them from initiating efficiency projects. So, LPEA seeks out opportunities to help eliminate these obstacles, and we intend to continue to offer programs aimed at reducing the growth of energy consumption and peak demand.

The effort stems from one of your Board of Directors' Strategic Focus Items (goals): “Improve service to our members with payment options, energy efficiency, conservation.... education and electrical service.” Thus, LPEA has sought and obtained, and partnered with others to secure outside funding for energy efficiency (EE) programs.

Funds are often passed through LPEA from Tri-State in the form of Energy Efficiency Credits, plus LPEA has partnered with agencies such as the Four Corners Office for Resource Efficiency (4CORE) and the Governor's Energy Office to bring EE benefits to co-op members. These collaborations have worked great to help combine and leverage the available human and monetary resources, making it possible to assist a larger and more diverse segment of the population than we each could have separately.

An example of an effective, on-going, working partnership is with the City of Durango. LPEA, the city and Tri-State each contributed \$25,000 to ensure completion of the Main Avenue LED Historic Street Light Retrofit. Because of this effort, the city is realizing more than \$3,000 in reduced electric bills each year. Over the past two years, LPEA provided rebates for “efficient” lighting retrofits completed at many city buildings.

EE credits and rebates are also available directly from LPEA. These funds are intended to help offset the higher initial cost of EE products and/or appliances. Please see the description on page 2 or learn more on our website www.lpea.coop, or at our offices in Pagosa Springs and Durango.

After 25 years of meeting with many of you, I know that you, our residential members, are very interested in using energy wisely and efficiently, and greatly appreciate the monetary savings. Many of you have purchased an Energy Star product, implemented “low cost/no cost” conservation measures, or perhaps you have changed out some of your lighting to more efficient CFLs or LEDs.

The results of your efforts, and ours, have made a difference, but are hard to measure, given the many variables that could increase or decrease residential energy usage such as weather or “on-site” generation. **One thing we do know is that the average residential electricity usage for LPEA's residential class during the first half of 2012 is about 2.3 percent lower than the average of the four previous years.**

Keep up the good work – and we will too. ⚙



ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES

To help reduce electricity consumption, LPEA and its power supplier Tri-state Generation and Transmission pay credits to consumers for purchase and installation of a variety of energy efficient products.

Most recently added is the \$10 rebate for purchase of Energy Star LED light bulbs, 300 lumens or greater (limit 50). Additionally, commercial customers receive \$250 per kW reduced when changing out their old fluorescent lights at their place of business. Both lighting rebates are limited up to 50 percent of material costs.

When purchasing a new Energy Star-rated refrigerator, freezer, dishwasher or clothes washer, members can receive rebates of \$40 (each), plus a \$25 rebate for recycling the refrigerator is available.

For purchase of a Marathon water heater, the rebate is \$300 (\$200 for all other brands) when taking advantage of LPEA's Time-of-Use, on-peak, off-peak program. Additional rebates are available for non-controlled electric water heater purchase.

Rebates are also offered for investment in efficient electric motors, air/ground source heat pumps and electric thermal storage heating. Contact LPEA for details, 970.247.5786, or visit www.lpea.coop. ☼

Historical lighting

Keeping the proverbial flames of the region's heritage fanned is the Animas Museum, operated by the La Plata County Historical Society and established with a mission to collect, preserve and interpret the history and culture of the San Juan Basin, with a focus on La Plata County. Located in a residential neighborhood at 3065 W. 2nd Ave., Durango, the museum has a nearly 40 year history, with a permanent collection of some 35,000 objects including artifacts, historic photos, maps and more.

Part of the charm, and perhaps part of the frustration, is the Animas Museum's physical structure. It's an old school house – a multi-story sandstone block building originally constructed in 1904-05. The stairs are bowed and the hardwood floors scuffed from the many children who attended school there until 1967. Energy efficiency wasn't a top priority in "olden days" – and given the building's historic designation, structural upgrades aren't an option.

"But changing the lighting is," says Ray Pierotti, LPEA project specialist. "Not only are they reducing their electricity usage, the illumination of the exhibits is really great."

"We're doing something that's sort of cutting edge technology," says Carolyn Bowra, museum director, noting that 60-plus lights in the Main Gallery are now new LED bulbs. "A grant from the LPEA Round Up Foundation for about \$700 allowed me to purchase essentially three-quarters of what I needed."

And once the lights were installed, Bowra could show LPEA the reduction in kilowatts, which earned her an additional \$342 rebate, enabling all the lights in the Main Gallery to be replaced.

"Originally it was a 'someday project' but when we got the quilt exhibit, 'someday' became 'now' because UV light is absolutely deadly to paper things and textiles," says Bowra.

The Animas Museum is also participating in the Resource Smart Business Program (RSBP), a program to promote health and sustainability in La Plata County. Numerous entities are involved, and the grant is held by the County. LPEA's chief role is efficient lighting change-outs and when the participating businesses complete their projects, they can receive an additional \$1,000 rebate from the RSBP grant.

"With what they've got installed now, they've reduced their kilowatt usage by about 2.2 kW," says Pierotti. "They should save about \$320 per year on the electric bill. And there will be more as they're able to change out more lights."

For this initial effort, the museum should realize a return on investment of 1.35 years.

"I'm hoping we can be the poster child to make it less intimidating for others with old buildings to make changes," says Bowra. "Our historic easement is held by the state. If we can do it, you can do it."

To learn more about the La Plata County Historical Society and the museum, visit www.animasmuseum.org. ☼



Animas Museum Director Carolyn Bowra installs new LED lights in the museum's main gallery. Photo courtesy Animas Museum

Keeping the store...

Long-time La Plata County resident Robert Lloyd has been named Warehouse Storekeeper at the Durango headquarters of La Plata Electric Association (LPEA), responsible for organizing inventory and assisting linemen with material needed for repair and maintenance of the electric system.

Lloyd comes to LPEA from WESODI, LPEA's wholly-owned line construction company, where he worked for six years. Serving first as a groundman, eventually promoted to equipment operator, Lloyd gained familiarity with LPEA's system, literally from the ground up. He also filled in temporarily in LPEA's warehouse in 2007-2008.

Originally from Texas, Lloyd moved to La Plata County in 1983 to assist his grandparents on their ranch near Saul's Creek. He then worked a variety of jobs, eventually hired on at South City Market, where he was employed for 18 years before joining WESODI.

Lloyd has resided with his family in the Oxford area for the past 14 years. ☀



DO YOU "TWEET"?

In its continuing effort to improve communication with members, especially during electrical outages, LPEA is utilizing Constant Contact and Twitter, two "social media" tools.

"The world is moving toward more instant messaging," says Indiana Reed, LPEA public information officer. "And we want to make that available to members. Social media tools do, however, require that members be proactive and sign up. LPEA won't push anything to you that you haven't requested."

During predominantly large or extended outages, in addition to alerting the media, Reed will "tweet" key bits of information to those "following" LPEA on Twitter.com. The messages can be received on smart phones, tablets or computer. Additionally, Reed writes the more in-depth "Outage Hotline," sent out as a press release and to those who have opted to receive email messages from LPEA via Constant Contact.

To follow LPEA on Twitter, visit www.lpea.coop and click on the blue Twitter bird icon. For email messages, click on "Contact Us" and sign up for email alerts.

Questions? LPEA's "live" customer service representatives are available during business hours, Monday-Friday, 970.247.5786. ☀

\$2.5 million for members

Archuleta and La Plata County businesses and residents who have paid their electric bills to LPEA for at least one year, received capital credits refunds totaling \$2.5 million during the August billing cycle, as approved by the LPEA Board of Directors.

"Capital credits represent our member's investment in La Plata Electric Association," says Greg Munro, LPEA CEO, noting that LPEA is a not-for-profit corporation with a 501 (c)(12) tax designation. "As part of that tax designation, which establishes us as a cooperative, we are required to refund capital credits to our members as we can afford to do so. We give the money back to our members instead of giving it to stockholders as is done in investor-owned utilities."

Capital credits are essentially the margins or revenues remaining after all expenses have been paid. The electricity payments made by members in excess of the cost to provide their electric service is placed into a patronage capital account in each member's name. This capital, along with borrowed funds, is used to finance needed improvements to LPEA's system infrastructure.

"In other words," says Munro. "LPEA invests the margins earned by each owner back into our system. It helps build members' equity and reduces the amount of money LPEA has to borrow - so it reduces interest charges we'd have to otherwise pay. The margins allow LPEA to maintain system reliability at its highest level and help keep rates lower."

Annually, should the patronage capital account reach a level in excess of the amount LPEA needs to maintain the system, then LPEA "retires," or gives back, a percentage of the funds in proportion to that member's contribution to LPEA's margins. Since incorporation in 1939, LPEA has refunded more than \$34 million. ☀

“OFF-PEAK” TIMES TO ADJUST

LPEA customers participating in the WattWatcher® “Time-of-Use” (TOU) program are reminded that on-peak, off-peak times adjust for the season, Saturday, Sept. 15, 2012. From Sept. 15 through midnight May. 14, 2013, the “winter” off-peak (lower rate) hours are daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., plus all day Thanksgiving and Christmas.

TOU rates take into consideration seasonal “peak” electrical use periods, and LPEA offers a lower rate for electricity used during the “off-peak” hours.

“LPEA works very hard at ‘managing’ the electricity everyone uses to help avoid things like the ‘brown-outs’ we’ve heard about in metropolitan areas,” says Mark Schwantes, manager of corporate services. “Those happen when customer demand for electricity is greater than what the power company can supply. If people can shift their electrical usage to the ‘off-peak’ periods, it helps even-out the flow and keep everyone in power, as well as help decrease demand for additional power generation.”

To take full advantage of the TOU program, members are urged to use appliances that draw the most power – dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer or irrigation pump – during off-peak hours. Also, installing programmable thermostats and timers on water heaters maximizes the TOU benefit. ⚙️

Welcome the new FACE

It’s an understatement to say that funding is tight in the current economic climate – especially for students. But a fledgling organization is now in place to help with academic achievement: The Foundation for Archuleta County Education or FACE.

Designed to financially support curricular and extracurricular programs that enhance academic opportunities for K-12 students throughout Archuleta County (including home school students), FACE was developed over the past two years by three long-time Pagosa Springs residents, Jessie Formwalt, Lynne McCrudden and Timothy C. Taylor.

“We didn’t know each other,” says Formwalt, admitting surprise since all three are active community members. “We started visiting and coming up with ideas. It seems like we’ve only been taking baby steps, but now we’re here and it’s so exciting. The response already has been tremendous and we’re just getting started!”

To help with start-up costs and fund application of the 501(c)(3) non-profit designation, the LPEA Round Up Foundation granted \$2000 to FACE.

“We truly appreciated the Round Up board... we had tears. They validated us,” says Formwalt.

FACE expects to receive notification of the non-profit designation by the end of the year, thus individuals and businesses can contribute now and receive a tax write-off for 2012. Students, educators and parents are encouraged to submit proposals to the FACE board of directors outlining funding needs for their established or new, innovative academic enrichment programs. FACE is not funding school supplies or scholarships.

In addition to LPEA, initial corporate sponsors include BiomEditor, International Bioscience Consultants and MTech Internet Marketing & Web Development. Fundraisers are also in the offing, including a “FACE-off of the Bands” featuring local musicians.

To donate or for further information, visit www.facepagosa.org, or email face81147@gmail.com. Checks can be mailed to the Foundation for Archuleta County Education, PO Box 2051, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147. ⚙️

Co-op managers visit

LPEA and Empire Electric Association (based in Cortez) recently played host to the managers of sister co-ops from across Colorado as the Colorado Rural Electric Association (CREA) came to LPEA’s Durango headquarters for a special meeting.

In addition to important business pertinent to co-op management, the managers enjoyed meals at Durango restaurants Cosmopolitan and Gazpacho, as well as a round of golf at Dalton Ranch. ⚙️

