

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2014

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Board of Directors:

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Heather Erb, Vice President – [District 4]
Mark Garcia, Treasurer – [District 1]
Jeff Berman, Secretary – [District 3]
Britt Bassett [District 3]
Tom Compton [District 2]
Bob Formwalt [District 1]
Bob Lynch [District 1]
Jerry McCaw [District 2]
Davin Montoya [District 2]
Jack Turner [District 4]
Joe Wheeling [District 4]

Mission Statement:

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

Statement of Non-discrimination

LPEA is an equal opportunity provider and employer M/F/Disability/Veteran.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.



Working cooperatively

BY MICHAEL RENDON | LPEA BOARD PRESIDENT | MRENDON@LPEA.COOP

It is with great excitement that I write this article. There is a lot going on with your electric cooperative and I am happy to serve as president during this unique and transitional time.

As many of you are aware, we have a very diverse board at LPEA, representing a variety of perspectives that mirror a national debate about how we think about energy. I firmly believe that the diverse perspectives on the board make us a stronger organization, and that collectively we make better decisions as a group than we would as individuals.

Currently on the LPEA board we have ranchers, engineers, entrepreneurs, former CEOs and executive directors, educators, a banker, a former town manager, a business consultant, and a Realtor®. I

have served on multiple boards over the years, but I have never served on one where the board members were as passionate about the topic as this one, and that is a good thing. Your board members come to the meetings fully prepared and ready to debate their perspectives.

Likewise, the issues facing LPEA, like our board and members, are very diverse. Over the last year, your board has worked with and addressed issues as far ranging as AMI meters, a retiring CEO, an aging workforce, Community Solar Gardens, support of Solarize La Plata, extreme weather causing more frequent power outages, expanded efficiency programs, a PUC complaint against Tri-State, and monthly fiscal responsibilities. I have been impressed with how LPEA's talented staff – throughout the whole organization – has taken on these challenges. This is a well-run cooperative that we all should be very proud of.

As diverse as the Board of Directors is, the entire board is united by the mission of this organization: *La Plata Electric Association provides its members safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.* We are constantly reviewing safety measures and understand that safety is our top priority. Our grid continues to be reliable, and we are committed to maintaining the predictability of our system as we expand into new sources of power. Finally, we understand that there must always be a balance between keeping our costs as low as we can, while being environmentally responsible. Through our energy efficiency programs, we will continue to provide assistance and incentives that will help you lower your bills.

We are in the process of hiring our new CEO, and have a board retreat planned in October where we will collectively create a strategic plan to move us forward. We will continue to work in cooperation to support the mission of our organization. While we may have challenges ahead, this is an exciting time for your cooperative. ⚙️



BREAKING NEWS

LPEA is pleased to announce that **Michael Dreyspring** has been selected as the new Chief Executive Officer. Learn more in the October edition of *Colorado Country Life*.

LIVE WIRES

Board of Directors Meeting

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2014, 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at www.lpea.coop.

All members are reminded that not only do they have the opportunity to address the board with concerns or ideas during the regularly scheduled board meetings, they also have the option to run for the board. If interested, begin your education now by attending Board of Directors meetings.

Hunter Sight-in Days dates

Hunters, LPEA is once again teaming up with the Durango Gun Club to sponsor Sight-in Days for sighting scopes in preparation for the season. Free sighting is set for 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Gun Club's outdoor range on La Posta Road, October 9th and 10th, 16th and 17th, and 30th and 31st. Mark your calendars!

Follow us on Twitter

If you follow La Plata Electric Association on Twitter, you can receive notices and updates on major outages. LPEA endeavors to keep members and the media as informed as possible about outage causes and estimates for repairs. 

Energy Audit Rebates explored

The LPEA Board of Directors is considering approval of a new policy and program to financially assist members who take the "next steps" in energy efficiency through a professional energy audit. The program is scheduled to be finalized during the Board's October meeting.

Under consideration, LPEA customers who secure a professional audit and make at least one energy efficiency upgrade suggested in that audit, may receive a one-time Energy Audit Rebate. If approved, rebates will be available for both businesses and residents.

"One of the best ways to lower your electric bill is through energy efficiency," says Mark Schwantes, manager of corporate services. "For many years at LPEA we've supported members in energy efficiency efforts, and we currently offer complimentary energy assessments. Our energy management advisors provide valuable information and tips for using less energy and improving the efficiency of homes and offices."

The "next step," however, according to Schwantes, is scheduling a professional energy audit to secure more than just advice. Because professional energy auditors do assess fees for services, the LPEA board wants to assist members through rebates to encourage the investment in energy efficiency.

"Certified auditors can outline specifically where your home is costing you extra precious dollars," says Schwantes.

The certified auditors will be required to provide LPEA with confirmation of customers' energy audits performed to ensure proper rebate credit.

All customers within LPEA's service territory will be eligible for the rebate and required to provide LPEA with a copy of the audit and paid invoice. Total amount of rebates, combined with other entities such as Atmos Energy or the City of Durango, cannot exceed the cost of the audit. ⚡



Energy Auditor Mike Frisoni conducts a blower door test to discover the hidden air leaks in a home.

So long Greg Munro!



Don Mapel (right), current president of DIDF thanked Munro for his service to LPEA and DIDF, as well as support of economic development in La Plata County.

Everyone wanted to say "so long," thus Greg Munro, who retired from his position as CEO of LPEA on July 31, found himself at many "good-bye" events in late July, not the least of which was a luncheon with employees at the Durango LPEA headquarters. Special "surprise" guests from the Durango Industrial Development Foundation (DIDF) also attended.

Munro has been an active member of DIDF – the organization that made Bodo Park possible, and continues to work to provide opportunities for economic development in La

Plata County. Not to completely "retire," Munro has pledged to continue on the DIDF executive committee and is serving on the Durango-La Plata County Airport Commission. ⚡

The trip of a lifetime

BY LOGAN GRAHAM | 2014 WASHINGTON DC YOUTH TOUR PARTICIPANT

As a teenager, I've grown accustomed to being placed in new groups of kids. From the first day of high school onward, the awkward "hellos" and questions searching for something in common in new group settings are a staple of any teenager's life. But I've never bonded more quickly or more strongly than with the group of kids I met on June 12th in Denver.

On that date, around 30 kids met to begin traveling to Washington, D.C., to take part in the 50th annual NRECA Youth Tour. Sponsored by rural electric cooperatives across the country, the tour gives students an opportunity to experience all our nation's Capitol has to offer, and, as I soon came to realize, make lasting friendships with multiple high school students.

By the time I had bounced to a landing at Reagan International Airport a day into the trip, I already felt closer to my fellow youth tour members than many of my high school classmates – and that's what made youth tour so special. While touring Washington, D.C. at any age is an incredible experience, touring it as a 17-year-old boy surrounded by other high school students is worlds better. Instead of just remembering the towering Washington Monument and the thought-provoking Holocaust Museum, I built memories and friendships with 30 other students from across Colorado.

I remember screaming at the top of my lungs with four other soccer players on the trip with me while we watched the U.S. score a last-minute goal against Ghana during the World Cup; I remember getting completely lost in the Natural History Museum with another group of students; I remember singing acapella versions of "Don't Stop Believing" with kids from Georgia; I remember shaking veterans' hands and thanking them for all they've done for our country; And I remember feeling incredibly patriotic while visiting so many of America's symbols of freedom.

Memories and friendships made in our nation's Capitol left their mark on every Colorado student on the trip. And while the week ended in hugs in the parking lot of the Denver airport, friendships have remained strong between me and many others as we recall are favorite memories from Washington D.C.

Each year LPEA selects up to four high school juniors from its service territory to be a part of the DC Youth Tour. Applications will be available in November at www.lpea.coop. For information, contact Jeannie Bennett, jbennett@lpea.coop. ☀



Logan Graham and Kaycee Bennett were LPEA's representatives on the 2014 NRECA Washington DC Youth Tour. (Photo: Lisa Schwantes)

LPEA NOW HAS AN "APP" FOR THAT

In LPEA's continued effort to improve service to its members, the co-op now has an "App," allowing members to connect to their accounts from any electronic device that accepts applications.

LPEA has, over the past year, up-graded its electronic services with the SmartHub – which enables members to review their electricity usage, pay bills and more from their desk top or laptop computers. By securing the SmartHub App, members can monitor their accounts and manage all aspects of their LPEA account from their smart phones (both iPhones and droids) and tablets.

Members must first establish an on-line account through www.lpea.coop, and create a secure password. Then getting started with the app is easy – simply visit the App Store via phone and/or tablet and search for SmartHub. The program will ask you to identify LPEA and ask for user identification/password.

"You can pay your bill from your phone, check on outages – even report an outage via SmartHub," says Dennis Svanes, CFO, adding that the hub offers news and notifications as well. "You can also track your energy usage. We want to make connecting to LPEA as convenient as possible for all our members." ☀

Self-serve kiosk now open

LPEA members are reminded that the Durango drive-through now features a self-serve kiosk, operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The kiosk enables members to pay bills by credit card, bank debit card, check and cash (though the kiosk cannot make change, so any excess payment will be credited to a member's account). Payments will be immediately posted to a member's account, so there's no delay or potential for the electricity to be disconnected because of non-payment.

As technology advances, more opportunities will become available. At this juncture, members wishing to apply credit via the established Prepay card system, are reminded that they must visit LPEA's service counter in the lobby. ☀

SUTHERLIN NAMED SERVICEMAN



Veteran Journeyman Lineman Jerry Sutherland has been

named as a Serviceman at LPEA. In the electric utility industry, a serviceman focuses on direct work with customers, upgrading electrical systems, setting meters, and working with local electricians.

A Colorado native and graduate of Durango High School, Sutherland attended Fort Lewis College pursuing a degree in Education, also coaching wrestling during that time. In 2000 he came to LPEA on a temporary basis, hired to help change out electrical meters, at which time he learned of LPEA's Lineman Apprenticeship program. He subsequently completed the four-year apprentice program and earned his Journeyman Lineman in 2009, joining LPEA's line crews.

In 2011, Sutherland was part of the LPEA crew that received the "Adult Lifesaver Award" from the American Red Cross, and he continues to work to promote electrical and safety education within the cooperative. He is also a singer/songwriter, lead vocalist and guitarist for the local country band Midnight Backhand. ⚡

SACHS Construction learns "lights"

A light bulb went on at SACHS Construction LLC when the company got a glimmer of what LPEA offers in the way of efficient lighting technology information. The SACHS team requested and heartedly received a special "Lunch & Lights" workshop.

Lighting technology is evolving at a rapid pace, according to Ray Pierotti, LPEA's project specialist. To help SACHS meet their clients' needs and save energy and dollars through energy efficient lighting, he put together an overview for the contractors. The education proved important for new construction as well as renovations, as LPEA offers rebates for both.

"I wasn't aware of the rebates," said Rob Sachs, noting that with new projects the company will explore options to secure potential energy savings for customers. "The savings could be huge."

For renovations, LPEA customers can receive \$250 per kW of lighting load reduced, up to \$20,000 total (and rebate cannot exceed 50 percent of the lamp material costs). With LED lighting/new construction, rebates are \$750 per kW of estimated lighting load reduced up to \$20,000 per meter.

"This is the first contractor that has come to us and asked to learn more about energy efficient lighting," says Pierotti. "We were delighted to put on this special workshop for them, and we hope that other builders/contractors will also give us a call. Starting at the general contractor level really can benefit customers in the short and long term."

To learn more about lighting education opportunities, contact Pierotti at rpierotti@lpea.coop or 970.247.7770. ⚡



The SACHS Construction team convened with lighting specialists at LPEA to help provide their clients better information on energy efficient lighting.

Robinson now Superintendent



Darrick Robinson has been promoted to LPEA Superintendent, System Operations. In his new position – a newly established position at the cooperative – Robinson will oversee the Dispatch team as well as LPEA's Electronics division.

"With our continuing retirements, and the evolutions that continue in our industry, we are tasking people with increased responsibilities," says Steve Gregg, LPEA interim CEO. "Darrick's position is the first new one we have created in Operations in many, many years. His focus on specific areas of our operations will improve service to our members."

Robinson has been a part of LPEA's Dispatch team since 2008, involved not only in monitoring power flows and voltage, as well as assigning crews, but also involved in the creation of the continually evolving computerized Outage Management System [OMS], developed to streamline LPEA's response to outages. His OMS knowledge meshed with his new role overseeing the Electronics group, will help further the cooperative's rapid response to outages and repairs.

Originally from Illinois, Robinson began his career path in South Dakota, where he attended hot line school. He worked with a variety of contractors in various parts of the country, but finished his apprenticeship and "journeyed out" with his Journeyman Lineman in 2000 at Holy Cross Energy (Vail, Colo.). He came to LPEA from Holy Cross in 2006 as a Journeyman Lineman.

"At LPEA we're always looking for ways to improve service to our members," says Robinson. "I'm excited about this new role and to take our maintenance and outage management services to the next level." ⚡