

# WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

**LPEA**

La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

MARCH 2017

Shaping the future by building trustworthy community partnerships as an innovative, forward-thinking industry leader, delivering excellence in our member-owned cooperative.

## Lighting the darkest nights

When Project Specialist Ray Pierotti got the call from Emil Wanatka of Timberline Builders, seeking LPEA's assistance in a Home Builders Association (HBA) of Southwest Colorado project, he wasn't sure what to expect.

Wanatka is Team Captain for a multi-phase renovation of the Volunteers of America (VOA) Southwest Safehouse, the Durango shelter for women and children fleeing domestic violence and abuse.

"He asked that I come do an energy assessment of the Safehouse and see about new lighting," says Pierotti. "When I walked in, the house was so dark and dreary. The need for renovations was dramatic."

According to VOA Division Director Rachel Bauske, the house was originally built in the 1950s, and it's seen a great deal of wear and tear over the years.

"We house over 200 families and individuals a year," says Bauske. "And we have a no turn-away policy. On average we provide shelter to about 26 children and women a night."

VOA was able to secure a grant with HomeAid Colorado for part of the renovation costs, plus HomeAid teams up with for-profit businesses (builders, trades, suppliers) to build/renovate facilities for people who are circumstantially homeless.

"We've been trying to bring a HomeAid project to Durango for a long, long time," says Wanatka, who recently oversaw the team build days at the Safehouse.

"It was so impressive when I walked in. It was addicting," says Pierotti, referencing the 37 HBA volunteers, who ended up donating 330 man-hours. "I was drawn in immediately and right away started planning out new lighting. It was so inspirational what these guys were doing."

In addition to Pierotti's time on the project, LPEA donated approximately 100 ceiling light fixtures and LED bulbs. Installation was donated by CT Electric.

Renovations will continue into the summer with new energy efficient windows, insulating blinds, and ADA



LPEA Project Specialist Ray Pierotti, VOA Division Director Rachel Bauske, Program Manager Kyra Moon, and HomeAid Team Captain Emil Wanatka celebrate the new LED lighting and renovations in the women's dorm at the Southwest Safehouse.

renovations, plus a new kitchen and two bathrooms are in the planning stage. When complete, materials cost – either covered by the HomeAid grant or donated by suppliers – will be nearly \$100,000, and that doesn't include the volunteer labor.

"Emil and the Home Builders, with their painting and everything they did in this initial phase, and then LPEA able to contribute new light on top of it, it's a drastic difference," says Pierotti. "In time I will be able to show tremendous energy savings, but more importantly, the new lighting truly improved the ambiance and feel of the place."

"The best way for us to show people that we respect them and care for them is to provide a comforting facility," says Bauske. "We've needed to do a project like this for years and years, and now it's a reality."

To assist the Southwest Safehouse, call 970.259.1021.

# Interested in running for the LPEA Board?

Election packets for those interested in running for a seat on the LPEA Board of Directors will be available Monday, Mar. 6, 2017, at co-op offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs and online at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop).

To be placed on the ballot, candidates must return completed petitions to either LPEA office by 1 p.m. by Wednesday, Mar. 29. LPEA's offices are located at 45 Stewart St., Durango [Bodo Industrial Park] and 603 S. 8th St., Pagosa Springs.

As per LPEA bylaws, one-third of the directors' seats are up for election annually, one in each of LPEA's four districts. Candidates are required to be members in good standing and permanent residents of the district they seek to represent, and cannot work for a competing enterprise or supplier of the cooperative, plus not be employed or have a spouse or child employed by the cooperative in any position. A complete list of director qualifications can be reviewed in LPEA's bylaws ([www.lpea.coop/pdf/policies/LPEA\\_Bylaws.pdf](http://www.lpea.coop/pdf/policies/LPEA_Bylaws.pdf)).

Submitted election petitions must contain at least 15 signatures from co-op members in a candidate's district. A map of LPEA's voting districts is available on the cooperative's website ([www.lpea.coop/company\\_info/board/district\\_map.html](http://www.lpea.coop/company_info/board/district_map.html)).

"LPEA is a cooperative, owned by and operated for the benefit of those who use its services," says Mike Dreyspring, LPEA CEO. "So, if you purchase your electricity from La Plata Electric, and haven't opted out of membership, you are entitled to run for a director seat and join the board that determines company policy."

Ballots will be mailed to the membership in late April, and all those returned tallied by an independent third party. Results will be announced at LPEA's Annual Meeting set for Saturday, May 13, 2017, at Sky Ute Casino Resort, Ignacio.

The candidate packets contain additional election information and instructions, including copies of LPEA's bylaws and board policies. Candidates with questions should contact Jeannie Bennett, 970.382.3505 or [jbennett@lpea.coop](mailto:jbennett@lpea.coop).

# Unclaimed Capital Credits to be publicized

LPEA is seeking members, or former members, who are due to receive Capital Credits refund monies.

To that end, the co-op is publishing in local newspapers, and posting on its website, [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop), a public notice naming those individuals or businesses whose Capital Credit money (aka patronage capital) has gone unclaimed because of an invalid address, or whose Capital Credit checks have not been cashed.

The Unclaimed Capital Credits insert will appear in the *Pine River Times* on Friday, Mar. 10; in the *Durango Herald* on Sunday, Mar. 12; and the *Pagosa Springs Sun* on Thursday, Mar. 16, 2017. The notice will also be posted on the LPEA website as of Mar. 1, 2017.

"This is money that belongs to our members," says Dennis Svanes, LPEA chief financial officer, explaining that electricity payments made by members in excess of the cost of providing their electric service (called the "margin") 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. The margins allow LPEA to maintain system reliability at its highest level and help keep rates lower. But when we find we have patronage capital in excess of what we need, we refund it to members."

To claim funds, individuals and businesses noting their names on the public notice are asked to contact LPEA's Durango office, 45 Stewart St., Bodo Industrial Park, or call 970.247.5786. Identification will be required to claim the available funds.



## New board members at Round Up

Looking forward to being part of the "next million" granted by the LPEA Round Up Foundation to deserving non-profit organizations, Melinda Volger (District 1) and Patti Zink (District 4) have been appointed to serve on the Round Up Board.

Round Up is the non-profit arm of LPEA, funded when members opt to "round-up" their electric bill to the next highest dollar. "Pocket change for positive change," Round Up has helped fund non-profit programs in Archuleta and La Plata counties for more than 20 years. Grant requests are reviewed each month by the Round Up Board.

Sign up to "round-up" at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop) or call 970.247.5786.



# Colomb named Billing Clerk

Jennifer Colomb has joined the LPEA Finance and Accounting Department as a new Billing Clerk.

Working in coordination with LPEA's finance personnel and customer service representatives, she assists customers with billing concerns as well as troubleshooting meter reading and billing issues.

With a Pennsylvania family heritage that dates back prior to the Revolutionary War, Colomb comes to LPEA with a professional background in loans and forensic mortgage analysis, most significantly having served for the past eight years with NIA Consulting in Durango.

"It was very interesting studying default or foreclosure issues – going back and figuring out what happened," says Colomb, who grew up in Texas and came to Durango for the outdoor lifestyle. "I can definitely apply those analytic skills here at LPEA, helping our members with their accounts."

Colomb earned her initial bachelor's degree in psychology from Trinity University in San Antonio, Tex., and is currently working toward her BS in accounting through Colorado State University. Early on she also pursued her more creative, entrepreneurial side, and was a professional potter for seven years.

LPEA offers a variety of apprenticeships and employment opportunities. To explore employment, or for additional information, visit [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop).



## LPEA to survey members

To help determine members' opinions of electricity delivery practices and reliability, plus better serve its members in the future, LPEA has contracted with NRECA Market Research Services to survey a sampling of households in La Plata and Archuleta counties. The telephone and online surveys are scheduled to begin Mar. 27, 2017.

"The overall objective of the study is to measure current residential member satisfaction with the co-op and the trends over time," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering and member relations who is working with NRECA, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "Each time we have NRECA conduct a study we learn more about our members' evolving attitudes and opinions, and we use the information to shape the cooperative's practices and goals."

Survey telephone calls will be placed during evening hours, between 5 and 9 p.m. and no calls will be made on Sundays. More than 400 households will be arbitrarily selected and surveyed, and LPEA requests that those who do receive the calls or email notifications participate. The survey takes about 5 minutes, and responses are confidential.

Direct additional questions to LPEA at 970.247.5786.

### CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

**Q:** We're trying to figure out if Time-of-Use is saving us money. Can you help?

**A:** If you're already on Time-of-Use [TOU] (the LPEA program that encourages our members to shift their significant electricity usage to off-peak, lower cost time periods), there's a new feature on your bill: a line item that will note that TOU has saved you \$XX.xx in energy charges versus the standard rate. OR it will note that no savings was realized on the TOU rate this month.

If you haven't signed up for TOU and are curious if you might save money, give us a call [970.247.5786] and we're happy to run an analysis (based on your historic electricity usage). The 2017 off-peak, lower cost hours are Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., plus all day Sunday and designated holidays.

## LIVE WIRES

### Board meeting Mar. 15, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Mar. 15, 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop). All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

### Lunch & Lights

Learn more about new LED lighting technology on Wednesday, Mar. 22, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at LPEA's Durango headquarters. Lunch included. RSVP required: [rpierotti@lpea.coop](mailto:rpierotti@lpea.coop).

### Spring ahead

Daylight Saving Time goes into effect Sunday, March 12. Be sure to set your timers and other devices ahead one hour.

### Round Up Grants

The following organizations received Round Up or Educational grants, distributed by the Round Up Foundation Board of Directors, in January:

- Bayfield Association for the Advancement of Music
- San Juan Historical Society
- ELHI Community Center
- SOS Outreach
- Escalante Middle School
- Ignacio School District



@LaPlataElectric



# We have a voice in our future power supply

BY JOE WHEELING | TRI-STATE BOARD REPRESENTATIVE | JWHEELING@LPEA.COOP

One need not look far to see changes in the utility industry.

LPEA, along with 42 other cooperatives and public power districts, is a member of Tri-State Generation and Transmission. I have served as LPEA's representative to the Tri-State Board for six years, and last year I was elected vice chairman by the Tri-State board. In this new position, I have an increased ability to shape policy and Tri-State activities.

In 2016 the Tri-State board approved three new utility-scale renewable energy projects – two solar projects currently online and one wind project, which is still under construction. In 2017, the association will thus have three solar projects, four wind projects and six small hydropower projects in place. These renewable resources combined, along with a supply of federal hydropower, account for 25

percent of the power delivered to LPEA from Tri-State coming from renewable energy.

While coal-based power remains the mainstay of Tri-State's generation fleet, the association is not immune to the challenges presented by increasing regulatory and market pressures. Tri-State will relinquish its share of San Juan Generating Station in the Farmington area effective this year. In addition, the board decided in 2016 to retire the Nucla Station and the New Horizon Mine in Montrose County by the end of 2022 and retire one of three units at the Craig Station in Moffat County by the end of 2025. As part of this decision, the board felt it was critical to provide Tri-State's employees and their communities time to plan and transition. Tri-State has created several transition teams to help mitigate the impact of these station retirements, including re-education and economic development opportunities.

Tri-State is a founding member of the Mountain West Transmission Group established in January 2017. Mountain West is a brand new organization made up of Colorado's other big power suppliers with the idea of becoming a full-fledged regional transmission organization

(RTO). An RTO is a marketplace for power as opposed to individual companies, cooperatives and municipalities buying and selling power as they react to hourly demand within their service territories.

The importance of this is best explained by example. If you wanted to invest in a company, would it be more cost efficient to buy the stock direct from the company or to buy it through the stock exchange? It would be a better deal if you bought it through the exchange because the price of the stock is able to adjust in a highly efficient manner based on the market driven price. This is the potential advantage of this new relationship with Mountain West.

The current environment presents both challenges and opportunities. Tri-State is responding by reshaping its generation portfolio and reorganizing how power is marketed and delivered.

We've often compared Tri-State to a large ocean liner – something that cannot be turned on a dime like a small speed boat. But with forethought, vision and planning, we can redirect that ocean liner – and we're making it happen.

**Mailing Address:**

PO Box 2750 Durango, CO 81302-2750

**Street Address:**

45 Stewart St. Durango, CO 81303  
603 S. 8th St. Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

970.247.5786 | [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop)

**Mission Statement:**

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

**Board of Directors:**

- Davin Montoya, President [District 2]
- Kohler McInnis, Vice President [District 2]
- Joe Wheeling, Secretary [District 4]
- Karen Barger, Treasurer [District 4]
- Mike Alley [District 1]
- Britt Bassett [District 3]
- Jeff Berman [District 3]
- Bob Formwalt [District 1]
- Dan Huntington [District 2]
- Bob Lynch [District 1]
- Doug Lyon [District 3]
- Jack Turner [District 4]

**Chief Executive Officer:**

Michael A. Dreystrup

**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](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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

