

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2014

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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

Board of Directors:

Davin Montoya, President - District 2
Heather Erb, Vice President - District 4
Ken Fox, Secretary - District 1
Joe Wheeling, Treasurer - District 4
Britt Bassett - District 3
Jeff Berman - District 3
Tom Compton - District 2
Bob Formwalt - District 1
Mark Garcia - District 1
Jerry McCaw - District 2
Michael Rendon - District 3
Jack D. Turner - District 4

Chief Executive Officer:

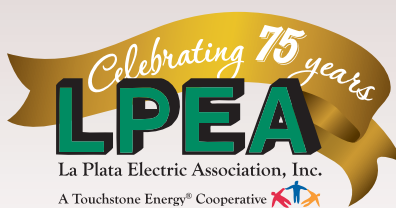
Greg W. Munro

Next Board Meeting:

9 a.m. | Wednesday, March 19, 2014
LPEA Headquarters, Durango

Mission Statement:

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



Celebrating our great employees

BY GREG MUNRO | CEO | GMUNRO@LPEA.COOP

Many years ago, in the 1990s, we experimented with what was then a new idea, but has since taken hold with other electric cooperatives across the United States. That was to organize an "annual meeting" for all of the employees at LPEA.

Given the nature of the electric utility business, our employees often, on a day-to-day basis, don't have an opportunity to interact with many of their fellow employees. For example, the line crews are out in the field and the customer service representatives are focused in the front office. All are working for our members, but in completely different capacities. Add to that, LPEA has offices in both Durango and Pagosa Springs. So keeping everyone current on what's happening within the company, as well as the industry, can prove challenging.

Since that "trial" annual meeting launch, LPEA employees have embraced the Employee Annual Meeting, and each year the event has become more popular and effective. Over the years we've varied the format and location, and had different presentations, but all have proven effective, giving us time to discuss with all employees the past year's performance of LPEA, and the new challenges we face ahead. I believe this type of open communications has gone a long way to bring everyone together to build a strong company for our membership.

Organizing this kind of "personal" event, could also be part of why LPEA has such low employee turnover. The Employee Annual Meeting gives us the opportunity to celebrate major milestones, and each year we honor those who have been with the company for 5, 10, 15, 20... all the way up to, yes, 35 years. [See the list of the 2014 Service Awards on page 2.]

In addition to presenting information about the company, this meeting provides a forum where we can answer questions about things of importance to our employees and their families, such as retirement planning, personal financial planning, medical coverage issues, and safety.

We usually always have guest presentations as well. This year we had an excellent speaker covering "how to deal with difficult people." Sadly, I can tell you that every employee at LPEA needs this kind of training. I can also assure you that they do a very good job at working with difficult people, even in very stressful situations.

What I have found over the past years is that when we ask for the employees to provide input concerning content for their annual meeting, they actually give us lots of ideas – and we listen. I believe this really makes the difference in ensuring the annual meeting is valuable and worthwhile for all who attend.

I am very proud of the employees of LPEA. I applaud them for their outstanding work, dedication to the membership, and professionalism. ⚙️



EMPLOYEES HIT SERVICE MILESTONES

Each year at the LPEA Employee Annual Meeting, the cooperative celebrates employment milestones. Congratulations to all those who received Service Awards in January 2014:

35 years

Doug Moore, Serviceman
Larry Redman, Purchasing Agent
John Shafer, Meterman

30 years

Jerry Wills, Working Foreman

20 years

Nathan Bryant, Journeyman Lineman
Randy Ferris, Land Rights Administrator

15 years

Tracy Graybeal, Network Administrator
Ryan Peacock, Working Foreman
Ray Pierotti, Project Specialist

10 years

Tracy Allen, Customer Service Representative
Randy Dunton, Equipment Operator
Linda Looman, Human Resources Director

5 years

Renée Davis, Customer Service Representative
Dennis Svanes, Chief Financial Officer

LPEA as a company enjoys tremendous employee retention. To learn more about employment opportunities at the cooperative, visit www.lpea.coop. ⚙️

Want to run for the board?

Electric cooperatives, such as LPEA, are private, independent electric utilities owned by and operated for the benefit of the members they serve. Everyone who pays their electric bill to LPEA is eligible to be a member of the cooperative, and as such has the right to both vote for the directors who represent them on the board, and run for a seat on that board.

Pursuant to LPEA's Bylaws, one-third of the 12 Board seats are up for election annually, one in each of the four districts. Board members must be members of the cooperative in-good-standing, and be permanent residents of the district they seek to represent. Incumbent directors up for election in 2014 are Ken Fox (District 1-Archuleta County), Davin Montoya (District 2-South and West La Plata County), Jeff Berman (District 3-city of Durango) and Joe Wheeling (District 4-North and East La Plata County).

Election packets will be posted on LPEA's web site on Mar. 17, 2014, plus hard copies will be available at LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs. The packet includes Board Policy information pertaining to the election, as well a petition that must be signed by 15 LPEA members within a candidate's district and returned to LPEA with the completed candidate's information form, biography, candidate's statement and digital color photo (headshot), 300dpi or larger, by 1 p.m. on April 7, 2014.

Ballots will be mailed to all members on May 1, 2014, and election results announced at the LPEA Annual Meeting, Thursday, May 22 at the Community Concert Hall at Fort Lewis College. For further information visit www.lpea.coop. ⚙️

Pierotti on the road...

Project Specialist Ray Pierotti has garnered quite a reputation for his efforts in energy efficient lighting – so much so that he was invited to take his proverbial show on the road by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the Colorado Rural Electric Association, presenting, respectively, at the 14th New & Emerging Technologies (NET)



Ray Pierotti showcases LPEA members' successes in lighting efficiency at the national NET conference.

conference in Fort Meyers, Fla., and CREA's Annual Meeting in Denver.

"LPEA's commercial lighting program has been a tremendous success on all fronts, so we were showcased to let our peers in on the impact of what we're doing – the energy savings to members and a reduction in the need for generation," says Pierotti, who at the NET conference was joined by Keith Emerson of Tri-State Generation and Transmission, LPEA's power supplier.

At press time, LPEA's commercial lighting change-out program, where rebates have been awarded, has logged in a reduction in electricity demand of more than 1.4 megawatts (and this doesn't include numerous residential change-outs or businesses ineligible for rebates). And Pierotti has more businesses pending.

"Our members are doing more than the rest of the nation," adds Pierotti.

To learn more about the lighting program, visit www.lpea.coop. Contact Pierotti at rpierotti@lpea.coop. ⚙️

Going 100% “Green” – again

As the adage goes, “it’s déjà vu all over again.”

After a five year hiatus, the City of Durango has once again committed to offset 100 percent of the electricity used in City facilities through purchase of “Green Power” from LPEA.

Green Power is the colloquial term for the renewable energy credits LPEA purchases at a premium from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, LPEA’s primary power supplier. It currently is electricity generated from wind.

“The environmental benefits associated with Green Power are very significant,” says Mary Beth Miles, the City’s sustainability coordinator. “As a community, the City tries to reduce its environmental impact.”

According to Miles, if in 2014 the City indeed uses and purchases Green Power offsets for the anticipated 9 million kilowatt hours, 6,360 metric tons of carbon emissions will be avoided.

“It’s equivalent to the annual greenhouse gas emissions from 1,300 passenger vehicles, and approximately the annual fuel emissions from electricity used for an average of 1,000 American homes,” she explains.

The City of Durango has supported Green Power since the program’s inception in 1998 and was the first governmental entity in LPEA’s service territory to make a significant commitment, covering initially 10 percent of the usage at City Hall. When the Green Power rate dropped to \$1.25 per 100 kWh block in January 2007, City Council made the decision to go 100 percent “green,” while also working with LPEA to maximize energy efficiencies in all facilities.

Unfortunately, when the economy turned and budgets tightened, in 2009 the City necessarily trimmed back its green power purchase, and the 100 percent designation was forfeited. However, City officials maintained 100 percent on the City’s LEED-certified buildings – The Library and Transit Center – as well as the Recycle Center and Water Treatment plant. The City also continued to purchase one 100 kWh block for each of the 155 electric meters tied to City facilities. This covered about 40 percent of the City’s electricity usage.

“When the City dropped the full offset, the Green Power premium was 80 cents per 100 kWh block,” says Sue Maxwell, LPEA project specialist. “Now it’s 9 cents per 100 kWh block, which means the Green Power premium will be about \$55,000 less than back in 2008 when it was last 100 percent Green Power.”

“The significant reduction in cost has been very beneficial,” confirms Miles. “It really helps us meet our goals and it’s been great to partner with LPEA.”

The LPEA Green Power program was initiated by Tri-State in response to requests by its member systems, including LPEA.

“To date, LPEA is among the leading purchasers of Green Power in Tri-State’s 44-member cooperative system,” says Mark Schwantes, manager of corporate services. “We purchase about 20 percent of Tri-State’s total Green Power sales for our members.”

To sign up for Green Power, or explore additional sustainability programs, visit www.lpea.coop, or call 970.247.5786. ☀



The City of Durango’s Sustainability Coordinator Mary Beth Miles (L) meets with Project Specialist Sue Maxwell and Manager of Corporate Services Mark Schwantes to review the City’s energy efficiency efforts.

CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

Q: If I install a solar PV system on my property and LPEA’s equipment isn’t compatible or has to be upgraded, who pays for that?

A: If a member is installing an interconnected, net metered PV [solar photovoltaic] system at their property and LPEA needs to upgrade its equipment [such as installing a new transformer or larger service wire] to accommodate the size of the proposed, private generation, the member is responsible for all costs of the upgrade.

LPEA has recently seen a trend for installation of increasingly larger PV systems on private homes, which is impacting LPEA’s existing distribution equipment, and indeed the entire system. LPEA maintains its system for the “whole” of the cooperative, and thus individuals impacting the existing system must shoulder the costs their new PV panels impose on the overall system, and not expect the rest of the LPEA membership to pay for private, individual benefits. ☀

CALL BEFORE YOU START THAT DIGGING



The lack of snow thus far this year, and seemingly premature spring, might encourage some early outdoor construction or yard work, but remember, dial 8-1-1 before you dig and arrange a free "line locate." Truly, no project is too small.

Utilities can be buried only a few inches underground, making them easy to strike even during shallow digging projects. More than 256,000 underground utility lines are struck each year in the U.S., resulting in injuries, property damage and electrical outages, and 35 percent of all those digging damages result from not calling before digging.

"It's all about safety," says Steve Gregg, manager of operations. "All we ask is, before you start those outdoor projects, let us come out and do a line locate."

Within two days of dialing 8-1-1, LPEA will send a professional line locator who will mark the paths of any underground cables. Line locate arrangements can also be made online via the Utility Notification Center of Colorado, <http://colorado811.org> or click on the link on LPEA's web site www.lpea.coop. ⚡

DC students named

Area high school students Kaycee Bennett of Pagosa Springs and Logan Graham of Durango have been selected to represent LPEA as part of the National Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington D.C. scheduled for June 12 - 19, 2014.

Students completed an application and penned a 500-word essay covering an aspect of the electric industry of their choosing.

In her essay, Pagosa Springs High School junior Kaycee Bennett, addressed the "power" or electricity and its origins: "The simplest way to describe what causes any sort of electricity is friction between positive and negative electrical charges. When you rub certain materials together, it can cause excess electrical charges to be created. The electric field from the excess of charges then causes the static electric effects of attraction, repulsion or a spark."

Logan Graham, a junior at Durango High School and vice president of the Colorado Youth Advisory Council (COYAC), honed in on the politics of electricity: "While witnessing the debate on SB252 at the state capitol last spring, I became interested in how politics affect energy, and how, in turn, energy affects the youth of Colorado. I am looking forward to working on energy-related issues this year and next year as chair of the new COYAC committee (on energy and environmental policy)."

LPEA's student representatives will join juniors from the cooperative's sister electric co-ops across Colorado for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. The schedule includes an intimate look at the nation's capitol and the government from the inside, including discussion of current concerns with national and state Congressional representatives. Tours of Washington D.C.'s monuments and museums, plus social activities, are also part of the agenda.

Applications for the 2015 Washington D.C. Youth Tour will be available in November 2014 at LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs, through area high school counselors, or on the web, www.lpea.coop. Home-schooled students are eligible to apply. ⚡



Kaycee Bennett



Logan Graham

Update on AMI deployment

The deployment of LPEA's new Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) is in full swing, with approximately 250 meters being changed out per day. If a member isn't at home when the installation contractor comes by, an informative "tag" is hung on the front door.

The new meters are already proving beneficial, streamlining efficiencies, as well as enabling members with the new meters to monitor their energy usage via LPEA's SmartHub at www.lpea.coop.

Recently, letters to the editor in the *Durango Herald* and *Durango Telegraph* (containing a great deal of erroneous information) raised new concerns among members. LPEA addresses each of the claims on the web site (see LPEA Metering Upgrade Information), and encourages members to be informed.

Do not hesitate to call with questions, 970.247.5786. We are happy to explain the program in greater detail. ⚡

