

# WATT'S UP

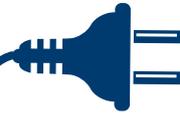
AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2015

# LPEA

La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Have you thanked a lineman today?

Jergen Montgomery and Gregg Smith

Mark your calendars. There's now an official day set aside to honor those linemen whose dedication and hard work are at the core of LPEA, and all electric cooperatives across the country.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) board has declared the second Monday in each April as National Lineman Appreciation Day. This year, that's April 13.

"Our members become aware of our line crews when we have a significant outage, and they see our guys out there in miserable weather, working around the clock to get the power back on," says Justin Talbot, manager of operations.

Simply put, the job of a lineman is to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure, but the work is dangerous. Linemen are required to climb utility poles and work high atop bucket trucks, and also work with "live" electrical lines. Linemen have been compared to the military's Special Forces – highly skilled and trained and on the front lines when issues occur on LPEA's system.

"We hear from members who are amazed by watching a crew work," adds Talbot. "The crews function as a team – intuitively responding to each other. They work steadily, methodically until a job is done."

As a profession, power line work is unique as the linemen are exposed to high risk hazards on a daily basis, but LPEA has a

strict culture of safety, and has been fortunate to have had minimal lineman injuries in more than 75 years.

"Our linemen take many precautions, and one of the most important aspects of the job is safety training and implementation," says Bret Cochrane, superintendent in charge of co-op safety. "No matter what, we want our line crews to be going home to their families every night."

Linemen make up the largest single category of jobs at the typical electric distribution cooperative. LPEA employs 44 operations employees, including foremen, servicemen, linemen, substation techs, and apprentices.

"They work hard, plus linemen are the best folks you'd ever want to meet," says Talbot. "They bring tremendous value to the community that people don't often recognize. If you have the opportunity to meet a lineman, please say 'hello,' as they're always eager to talk with our members. They're literally on the line out there for you."



Dennis McCarthy, Michael Messier, Bryon Kelly

Photos: Indiana Reed

# Area students selected for Washington DC Youth Tour

Area high school students Chloe Ciotti and Rebecca "Becca" Schaldach of Durango, Chandler Jackson of Bayfield, and Regan Richardson of Pagosa Springs have been selected to represent LPEA as part of the National Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington D.C., June 12-18, 2015.

"This trip is a tremendous opportunity for our area juniors," says Mike Dreyspring, CEO. "Our communities, as well as the country and the world are facing many challenges in the energy arena, and the industry is changing, so it's important that our next generation gain an understanding about energy policy development at the federal level. We are pleased to be able to further that education."

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

The opportunity to participate in the D.C. Youth Tour was open to all current high school juniors, including home-schooled students, who receive their electric power from LPEA. Students completed an application and penned a 500-word essay covering an aspect of the electric industry.

Applications for the 2016 Washington D.C. Youth Tour will be available in November 2015 at LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs, through area high school counselors, or on the web, [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop).

For further information, contact Jeannie Bennett, [jbennett@lpea.coop](mailto:jbennett@lpea.coop).



Chloe Ciotti



Becca Schaldach



Chandler Jackson



Regan Richardson

# Your vote counts: Watch for your ballot in the mail

"Your vote makes a difference." It's something of a cliché, but when it comes to electing the directors who oversee the current and future policies of LPEA, every vote truly does make a difference. Ballots for LPEA director elections will be mailed to all member-owners (residential and commercial customers) by April 24.

"We encourage all LPEA members to get to know the candidates and vote," says Mike Dreyspring, CEO. "We have many challenges, and our board members need to be thoughtful and conscientious going forward. LPEA elections are important."

In accordance with LPEA's bylaws, one seat in each of LPEA's four districts comes up for election annually. As of press time, the full slate of candidates had not been finalized. The mailed ballot packets will include background information on each candidate, as well as the individual candidates' statements.

Ballots must be returned by mail by Friday, May 15 (remember mail goes to Albuquerque before returning to Durango) or physically brought to the LPEA Annual Meeting for votes to be counted.

Election results will be announced at the LPEA Annual Meeting, set for Pagosa Springs High School on May 16. Registration begins at 9 a.m. with the business meeting to commence at 10:30 a.m. Complementary lunch follows.

"We truly appreciate our members' time and involvement," says Dreyspring.

For information on LPEA Director Elections, visit [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop).

ALWAYS  
CALL  
BEFORE YOU  
DIG



## Call before you Dig

Safe digging begins by calling 8-1-1.

From planting shrubs to building a fence, many outdoor projects require digging. Avoid striking underground utilities by calling the "Call Before You Dig" 8-1-1 number first. Within two days, LPEA will send a professional line locator to mark any underground electric lines. The service is free to members.

April is National Safe Digging Month. The simple step of calling 8-1-1 could prevent serious injury, or even save a life.

A line locate request can also be made on line at [www.colorado811.org](http://www.colorado811.org) or through the link on LPEA's home page, [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop).

# Wills named Line Superintendent

Jerry Wills has been named Line Superintendent, overseeing day-to-day line crew operations in LPEA's Pagosa Springs office. Wills fills the position held by Mike Alley, who will retire in April.

Originally from Pueblo, Colo., Wills' parents had a vacation home in the area, so from an early age he was inspired to move to Pagosa Springs.

"All the things that we all do here, the hunting, the fishing, it's the mountains," said Wills, who learned about job opportunities in rural electric cooperatives from his uncle, a journeyman lineman. When he arrived in Pagosa, however, no opportunities were available at LPEA.

"I was in the office almost every day," says Wills of his job pursuit, and his persistence paid off. In 1983 he signed on as a Meter Reader. By 1985 he'd entered LPEA's Apprentice Lineman Program, earning his Journeyman Lineman in 1989.

After several years on the line crews he was promoted to Working Foreman, overseeing and supervising day to day tasks, and ensuring the safety of an individual team of men in the field. He served in this position for nearly 22 years until Mike Alley announced his retirement. Wills is currently working with Alley to ensure a smooth transition into the management position.

"Jerry is a great guy – a hardworking, dedicated employee of LPEA," says Justin Talbot, manager of operations. "We will miss Mike, but we all know those big shoes will be very well filled by Jerry Wills."



## RE Magazine toasts the spirit of LPEA and local brewpubs

*RE Magazine*, the trade publication of rural electric cooperatives throughout the country, tapped LPEA and local breweries to be featured in its April cover story, "That's the Spirit – Beverage producers toast the benefits of being on co-op lines."

Writer Michael Kahn wrote the article that discussed the Durango Bootlegger's support of LPEA Green Power, and how Project Specialist Ray Pierotti has worked with brewpubs such as Carver Brewing Co. and Steamworks Brewing Co. on energy efficient lighting.

"It's great exposure for Durango and our brewpubs," says Indiana Reed, LPEA's marketing communications specialist. "*RE Magazine* is distributed to employees and board members of some 900 co-ops nationally, plus available on-line."

Toasting with green beer and LED lightbulbs during the photo shoot are [LtoR] Steamworks General Manager Steve Kammerer, LPEA's Ray Pierotti, Steamworks Executive Chef Sean Clark, Carver's Co-founder Jim Carver and Carver's Co-owner Mike Hurst. The photo is by McCarson Jones of Red Scarf Shots in Durango.



Read the full story on-line at <http://remagazine.coop>.

## LIVE WIRES

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

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, April 15, 2015, 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.

### Lighting Workshop April 29

LPEA will host a free Lighting Technology Workshop, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., on Wednesday, April 29, 2015 at LPEA's headquarters in Durango, 45 Stewart St. (Bodo Park). All those interested in learning more about the seemingly ever-changing lighting technology, and saving energy and dollars through energy efficient lighting, are invited to attend. RSVP required as lunch will be served. Contact Ray Pierotti, 970.382.7770 or [rpierotti@lpea.coop](mailto:rpierotti@lpea.coop).

### Save the Date!

The annual LPEA Golf Tournament is set for Saturday, June 20 at the Pagosa Springs Golf Course. Team registration is currently underway, plus sponsors and volunteers are needed. Contact Garrett Hammer or Jeremy Matney, 970.247.5786.



Follow us on Twitter.  
[@LaPlataElectric](http://Twitter.com)



# Director's Corner Energy efficiency – the first step

BY MICHAEL RENDON | PRESIDENT | MRENDON@LPEA.COOP

When most people think of reducing their environmental impact at their house, the first thing they usually think of is purchasing a solar system, but that should be the last step. Similar to the phrase “reduce, reuse, recycle,” from an electric consumption perspective, reducing your energy usage is the first step.

Around 10 years ago, wanting to lower my own energy use, and my LPEA monthly bill, I decided to invest in an energy audit on my house. Mike Frisoni with Annadel Building Solutions came to my house and spent around four hours conducting a variety of tests. To better understand my particular house, he poked around in the crawl space, spent time in the attic, attached a blower door to determine leakage, and checked my furnace and lighting [these last two items usually result in the biggest financial advantage].

His analysis was something like

this: Keep the existing furnace as it's pretty efficient, insulate the walls that don't have insulation [it's an old house], add another 6 – 8 inches of insulation in the attic, change out the light bulbs with energy efficient bulbs, and consider purchasing new double [or triple] paned windows.

Besides providing me with a complete energy breakdown and money-saving tips, Mike made me look at my house in a completely different way. I had never considered that there might be heat leaking around the light fixtures in my ceiling or around the electric outlets in my walls. I didn't understand how efficient windows had become, and the different varieties of insulation that are now available. I also became very conscious about leaving doors and windows open and turning off the lights when they were not in need.

LPEA is interested in helping you lower your electric bill. Currently LPEA offers a variety of options, from energy assessments to rebates, and the efficiency program is going to grow. During our Board's Strategic Planning meeting, energy efficiency was named as one of the top issues for us to address. In 2015, the board will be engaged in evaluating each of our energy efficiency offerings and removing the ones that are not widely used or do not make sense, and expanding the most popular programs that

offer the greatest reduction to our members' bills. One of the programs we will be considering is an “on-bill financing” program, a mechanism whereby LPEA could offer members low-interest loans for energy efficiency upgrades that the borrower repays as part of his or her monthly electricity bill.

There is nothing wrong with putting solar panels on your house to lower your bill and reduce your ecological footprint, but the first step should always be energy efficiency. If you get really good at efficiency, you might only need half the panels you'd originally anticipated.

To find out the energy efficiency programs LPEA currently offers, click on the “Environment” tab on the LPEA website, [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop). Here you can also find a list of energy efficiency suggestions along with a list of rebates and credits. Additionally, you can visit the Four Corners Office for Resource Efficiency at [www.fourcore.org](http://www.fourcore.org) for a list of local contractors who provide energy audits, or learn when the next energy efficiency educational program will take place.

Finally, stay tuned to LPEA radio announcements, *Colorado County Life*, and advertisements for updates on new energy efficiency rebates and offers so that you can reduce your energy consumption and save money.

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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:

Michael Rendon, President – [District 3]  
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]

Chief Executive Officer:  
Michael A. Dreyspring

#### 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).

