

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

LPEA

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

APRIL 2017

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

LPEA supports the new Fort Lewis "GPE"

This month, Fort Lewis College will formally celebrate the opening (and dedication) of the new Geosciences, Physics and Engineering (GPE) building. LPEA and its members helped fund this new gem in our community through an Educational/Special Projects Grant of \$200,000 from Unclaimed Capital Credits (UCC).

"I don't think people realize the quality of education that is now available at Fort Lewis," says LPEA Staff Engineer Rachel Schur-Wagner, who started at the Fort but necessarily completed her degree at CSU. "This is not just some small town college. It's cutting-edge, and with the opening of the new GPE, it is providing incredible opportunities in engineering and the sciences."

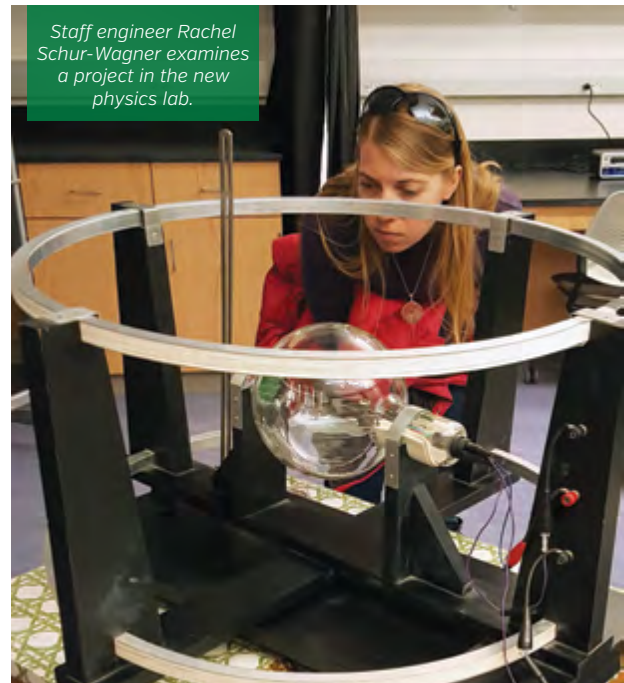
Indeed, the GPE is not just a building. It's an inspirational educational environment, designed for learning by "doing." Labs and study spaces are filled with the latest in high-tech equipment, and students work in smaller, collaborative groups –not just listen to mass lectures.

"They have a huge maker lab now," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy management at LPEA, who also completed his degree at CSU. "It's incredible. And there is great value to local companies that we can now home-grow our own future employees."

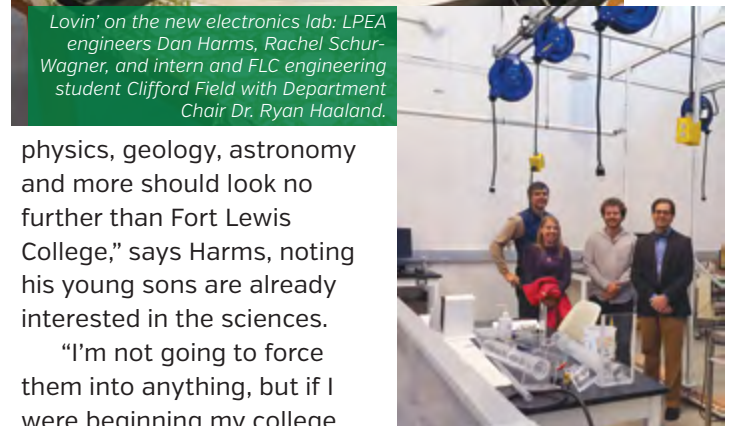
"The best compliment I received in the last week is that it feels like a start-up company – spaces for students to be creative," says Department Chair Dr. Ryan Haaland, explaining the educational foundation is a multi-disciplinary approach and allows for critical thinking. "The pace of each technology is changing. You really don't want to label the young men and women who are getting degrees now. The job they get eventually in five years doesn't exist today."

With the new GPE, the Fort is able to expand its student base. The entire department had previously been confined to five rooms. The new GPE is three stories, including a rooftop observatory.

"I think every student interested in engineering,



Staff engineer Rachel Schur-Wagner examines a project in the new physics lab.



Lovin' on the new electronics lab: LPEA engineers Dan Harms, Rachel Schur-Wagner, and intern and FLC engineering student Clifford Field with Department Chair Dr. Ryan Haaland.

physics, geology, astronomy and more should look no further than Fort Lewis College," says Harms, noting his young sons are already interested in the sciences.

"I'm not going to force them into anything, but if I were beginning my college search today, and I had any interest in engineering, physics or geosciences, Fort Lewis College would be at the top of my list," he says. "I'm incredibly proud that LPEA and its members have had a hand in helping make this a reality."

Fort Lewis will hold two grand opening events for the GPE: April 6, TLC Gala, \$100/ticket (www.fortlewis.edu/gpe) and April 7, Dedication Ceremony at noon – free and open to the public.

LPEA Director Election ballots to be mailed

Ballots for LPEA Board of Director Elections will be mailed on or around April 10, 2017, to all members in those LPEA districts with contested elections [more than one candidate in the district].

Ballots must be returned by mail by Friday, May 12 (remember mail goes to Albuquerque before returning to Durango), or dropped off in person at local locations, which are printed on the ballot information and include LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs. Ballots may also be physically brought to the LPEA Annual Meeting and submitted PRIOR to 10:30 a.m., for votes to be counted.

Election results will be announced at the LPEA Annual Meeting, set for Sky Ute Casino Resort in Ignacio on Saturday, May 13. Registration begins at 9 a.m. with the business meeting to commence at 10:30 a.m. A complementary lunch follows.

In accordance with LPEA's bylaws, one seat in each of LPEA's four districts comes up for election annually. As of press deadline, the petition period remained open, so a final list had not been compiled. Publicity and advertising regarding director candidates will be released in local media, and posted on the LPEA website, www.lpea.coop.

*Love a Lineman!
April 18 is National
Lineman's Appreciation Day
Thank you LPEA's crews
for all you do to keep the
lights on!*

LPEA's generation mix? April workshop will explain

To provide LPEA members with insight into the opportunities and challenges of integrating renewable/distributed electricity generation into LPEA's resource mix, the cooperative will host a special information session, Thursday, April 13, 2017, 5 to 7 p.m. at LPEA's Durango headquarters, 45 Stewart St. (Bodo Park). **Reservations required.**

"At LPEA we are excited about new technology," says Mike Dreyspring, LPEA CEO. "But this is the analogy I like to use – the electric utility industry as a whole is like an ocean liner, and it takes time and patience to turn a giant ship. We're not a speed boat that can turn on a dime, but that doesn't mean we're not moving ahead and evolving in how your power is supplied now and in the future."

LPEA is a distribution cooperative, which manages the infrastructure that transports electricity from a power generator to the end user – homeowners and businesses in La Plata and Archuleta counties. To provide reliable energy to its members, LPEA has a long-term contract with Tri-State Generation and Transmission to supply 95 percent of its power requirements.

"I think some people are surprised to learn that Tri-State has been moving steadily to incorporate more renewable generation into its mix," says Dan Harms, manager of rates, technology and energy policy, who will lead the workshop. "With projects coming online this year, Tri-State's resource mix will have about 25 percent from renewable generation, plus the company is retiring its Nucla and Craig I coal generation plants. This is one of the items we will discuss at the workshop."

The presentation will also cover an explanation of the 5 percent leeway LPEA has to purchase power outside of Tri-State, as well as what it would take to buy out of the Tri-State contract. Topics of discussion will further include an explanation of distributed generation [Power Purchase Agreement with LPEA versus net-metering]; policy, pricing and physics – what currently limits LPEA; LPEA's current resource mix and a breakdown of the power bill – electricity costs versus the infrastructure expenses; and more.

"We also want to go over some options, and things our members and LPEA can work toward together, such as Green Power Programs," says Harms. "Where do we go from here, what are the options?"

"As a cooperative, we are very conscientious about how our members' money is spent," adds Dreyspring. "We want to be prudent and fiscally responsible as we look at embracing the new technology."

To reserve a seat at the workshop, RSVP to Sue Maxwell, 970.382.7170 or smaxwell@lpea.coop. If demand exceeds room capacity, LPEA will schedule an additional workshop.

Call before you dig!

April is National Safe Digging Month. Before starting any outdoor digging project, call 8-1-1 and within two days, LPEA will send a professional line locator to mark underground electrical lines. The service is free to LPEA members. 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 or through the link on LPEA's home page, www.lpea.coop.

ALWAYS
CALL
BEFORE YOU
DIG



New Lineman scholarships!

Adding to the cooperative's mix of scholarships, the LPEA Board of Directors has approved the new La Plata Electric Lineman Scholarship. Applications will be available Monday, April 3, and due by Friday, April 28, 2017 - for use in the upcoming academic year.

"We want to support our next generation of Linemen," says Justin Talbot, manager of operations and a Journeyman Lineman. "There are more than 900 rural electric cooperatives across the country who need these skilled individuals, not to mention the investor-owned and municipal utilities. Linemen are in great demand, and we want to make it easier for these individuals to pursue this specialized career."

Linemen are responsible for building, maintaining and repairing the electric infrastructure, and the job involves climbing utility poles and working high atop bucket trucks, and also engaging "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.

The La Plata Electric Lineman Scholarship will fund two annual scholarships covering tuition, fees, books, not to exceed \$12,000 for each scholarship for up to one year at an accredited institution, including a vocational school, technical school, junior college or university in the United States, majoring in an electric line worker program. Any scholarship overage, following payment of tuition and fees, can be applied to purchase of tools and supplies.

"This is a great opportunity since at hotline school, students must provide their own tools, which can be a costly proposition for aspiring linemen," says Talbot.

Eligible applicants must be high school graduates from within LPEA's service territory.

Funds for all of LPEA's scholarships come from LPEA's unclaimed Capital Credits. Each year, LPEA endeavors to find "missing" members who are due a share of retired Capital Credits. Those funds unable to be returned to members are then put back into the community - in this case, into scholarships.

For further information and to download applications, visit www.lpea.coop or contact Jeannie Bennett at 970.382.3505, or jbennett@lpea.coop.



Apprentice Lineman Michael Messier, a graduate of Mesa Hotline School, an institution that qualifies for the new scholarship, participates in pole top rescue training at LPEA.

CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

Q: Can you explain the new Time-of-Use rates? It's still unclear to me.

A: The 2017 off-peak, lower cost hours (if you sign up for Time-of-Use) are Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., plus all day Sunday and designated holidays. The lower cost rate is 5.9 cents per kilowatt hour during that period.

The on-peak rate is 23 cents per kilowatt hour, charged Monday-Saturday 6-9 a.m. and 5-10 p.m., so you can see it pays to move your heavy electricity usage to the off-peak periods.

The Base Charge is \$20 per month.

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting April 19, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, April 19, 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 public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

Thanks for your input

LPEA, through NRECA, is conducting a Member Survey. A random sampling of members have (or may still) receive phone or email requests to provide input about LPEA. Please participate. Help us learn how to better serve you.

Round Up Grants

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

- Bayfield Lyons Club
- Bayfield After Prom
- Colorado Outdoor Learning School
- The Garden Project
- San Juan BOCES Science Fair
- Southern Ute Montessori Head Start
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Southwest Colorado



@LaPlataElectric



From the CEO LPEA elections – Does voting matter?

BY MIKE DREYSPRING | CEO | MDREYSPRING@LPEA.COOP

Ballots for LPEA's Board of Directors elections are mailed this month. The Board of Directors sets the vision and policies that govern how LPEA is managed as a business.

So, does your vote matter? Yes it does.

Ask business owners why they voted. They may say that reliable and affordable electric power is essential to their business. Likely, the electric bill is a large portion of their monthly expenses. Perhaps not the largest, but probably more significant than any other check a business might write, other than payroll. Beyond cost, however, for most businesses, reliable electric service is important, as all commerce stops without electricity.

Ask our irrigators why they voted. Our farmers and ranchers vote in LPEA elections because

electricity is also vital to their operations – a great deal of electricity is consumed to power water pumps.

How about the residential member who votes? Why do they vote? Let's detour here and see why a residential member doesn't vote. They perhaps don't realize they are a member-owner of an electric cooperative and that their vote counts. Or they may not know the candidates. Or, perhaps they trust the local co-op CEO so completely they don't feel the CEO needs a boss. [I've never heard that before, and probably never will, but I am speculating here as to why people do or don't vote.]

I surmise that most residential members vote because energy means something. It's not just about reliable, affordable power here in Southwest Colorado. It's also about our energy sources and the impact on our environment, right along with the water we drink and the air we breathe. Electric energy is more than just turning on our lights or the technology it powers – it's part of everything you do.

So, if you vote regularly in your co-op's annual election, thank you. I truly appreciate that my

bosses are paying attention to the business they own.

If, on the other hand, you haven't voted in an LPEA election, here are my 10 reasons TO vote:

10. It's simple.
9. It takes less than a minute to vote.
8. Your voice and direction count.
7. You can express yourself without involving social media.
6. When you see your elected director from your district, you can tell them you voted.
5. You can tell your local co-op CEO that you have your eye on him because you voted. [That really spooks CEOs].
4. Unless you tell someone, it's private.
3. If the vote results in a tie, you get the credit or the blame, depending on who wins the coin toss.
2. You have a say in the governance of your cooperative.

And the #1 reason to vote – you make your co-op better.

Watch for your ballots mid-April. Please vote. It does make a difference.

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

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. 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, 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.

