

# WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

**LPEA**

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

**AUGUST 2017**

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

## The “light bulb” went on at Hillcrest Golf Club

“If Hillcrest Golf Club is known for its ‘greens,’ then we ought to be truly green.”

So said Hillcrest Board Member Michael Brennan as the proverbial “light bulb” went on to the benefits of retrofitting the entire Hillcrest Clubhouse with energy efficient LEDs.

“This is a win-win success story on so many levels,” says Ray Pierotti, project specialist and LPEA’s ‘lighting guy.’ “I’ve been really excited to work with Michael and lighting contractor Jake Messier with Green Star LED. Every business should pay attention to the success of this project.”

Hillcrest started the process in 2016, replacing exterior lighting and fixtures in the cart storage room, but this spring, as Brennan notes, they went “whole hog.”

“We replaced more than 350 fluorescent bulbs,” says Brennan. “In truth, it looks like a remodel, but all we did was install LED lights.”

The 2017 project cost was approximately \$10,000. Through LPEA’s LED rebate program, for the nearly 13 kW reduced in power consumption, Hillcrest received a \$3,222 rebate.

“But the real genius is that Hillcrest took advantage of LPEA’s On-bill Financing Program,” says Pierotti. “They secured a loan – which is done in partnership with First

Southwest Bank – for \$7,500, which the club will pay back on their LPEA bill over the next five years. The monthly reduction in energy costs basically negates that loan repayment. But even if they hadn’t done the loan and paid on their own, Hillcrest would realize a return on their lighting investment in less than a year. This is crazy good!”

“We’re conservatively estimating that we’ll save \$4,000 a year in energy costs, and it basically cost me nothing to do the project,” says Brennan. “And Green Star did the work in three days, so interruption in business was negligible.”

In addition to the energy savings, Hillcrest has realized significant lighting improvement (to the point that staff has commented that they didn’t realize how dark it had previously been in various spots). Plus the club has noted added savings with labor and materials, as no longer do employees need to purchase and replace the old incandescent and fluorescent bulbs that continually burned out.

Next up for Hillcrest is LED retrofit in the club’s shop, located at the far end of the property, as well as possible installation of electric vehicle charging stations and roof-top solar to off-set about one-third of the club’s electricity usage.

“There are a lot of layers to this,” says Brennan, noting he took time with LPEA to get educated – through reading LPEA’s materials, and attending the Annual Meeting and Pierotti’s Lunch & Lights workshops. “All those pieces informed me so I could take the leap. I hope people wake up and say, ‘what am I waiting for?’”

“It is education,” echoes Pierotti. “And we are happy to help our members. In today’s environment, costs keep going up and a business can raise prices only so much, so the best thing is to cut your costs. This is one way to do it.”

Learn more about LED lighting retrofits and On-bill Financing at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop). Contact Pierotti directly at 970.382.7770.



Hillcrest Board Member Michael Brennan, project manager for the lighting retrofit, and Ray Pierotti bask in the glow of the club’s new LED lighting.

# Charge your EV at LPEA



To support cooperative members who have purchased electric vehicles, LPEA has installed two Level II ChargePoint electric vehicle charging stations at its Durango headquarters, 45 Stewart St. in Bodo Industrial Park, Durango. Four outlets are available for members to charge vehicles at no cost.

The EV LPEA charging stations are located along the north edge of LPEA's parking lot, clearly marked. The stations are safe, reliable and easy to use with an active ChargePoint card.

During business hours, consumers with any questions have an easy walk to the LPEA front office, where Customer Service Representative Donna Arriza is now an expert at charging, as she recently invested in an electric vehicle, participating in the 4CORE program with Nissan of Durango to purchase a new Nissan Leaf (electric vehicle) and embrace energy efficiency.

"I am thrilled with my new Leaf, and though there is a learning curve with an electric vehicle, it's amazing that I can come in to work and plug into the new EV station and be fully charged for the day," says Arriza.

To finance the charging stations, LPEA applied for a Charge Ahead Colorado grant, which provided the approximately \$12,000 needed for the station installation. LPEA also enhanced its electrical infrastructure at the location to make installation of the charging stations possible.

Level II EV stations advertise to provide a full charge for new generation electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles such as the Nissan Leaf, Chevy Volt, and Ford Focus in about four hours. Currently, "plugging in" to LPEA's charging stations is free.

# Mr. Mazur goes to Washington

BY SLOAN MAZUR | LPEA NRECA DC YOUTH TOUR REPRESENTATIVE

Sometimes it pays to listen to your mother.

Earlier this year, Mom told me about the LPEA's National Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington D.C. I applied by writing an essay about the importance of electricity in my life, and being that teenagers' lives do revolve around the use of electronics, this was not a difficult prompt.

Gratefully, I was selected as one of LPEA's representatives – an opportunity to see key aspects of American history, as well as everything from *National Treasure*. Needless to say, I was excited.

In June, I embarked on a road trip to Denver with my fellow LPEA representatives, Collin Jackson of Bayfield, Isaac Jordan of Ignacio, and Tate Hinger and Jesse Laverty of Pagosa. Nothing bonds people like a six-hour car ride, and by the time we made it to Denver, friendships had blossomed.



Sloan Mazur (front) with his D.C. Tour compatriots (LtoR) Jesse Laverty, Collin Jackson, Isaac Jordan and Tate Hinger.

While in Denver, we met up with students from other Colorado co-ops and toured Tri-State Generation and Transmission, which supplies electricity to 43 electric co-ops in Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Nebraska. (Yes, Tri-State powers four states, don't ask, just accept it and move on.) We also toured the state's Capitol and had the privilege to witness the Governor signing a bill into law.

It was a 4 a.m. wakeup call the following day, and us groggy teens were herded to DIA and onto the plane headed for D.C. The first thing I remember upon entering the city was the Washington Monument. The majestic stone obelisk towers over D.C.

Our first stop was the Capitol building where we received an informative and interesting tour... the first of so many. Later on, we attended a meeting that further demonstrated the purpose and importance of co-ops. That night, in our comfortable hotel rooms, sleep-deprived and excited for the week to come, no one took long to fall asleep.

During the days that followed, we toured a plethora of museums and memorials. I was touched by the Vietnam Memorial and awestruck by the Lincoln Memorial. In the National Aquarium, I stood inches away from sharks, and at a dinner theater I laughed while watching a spectacular play of *Beauty and the Beast*. I was even yelled at by a guard at the Smithsonian's Modern Art Museum for touching a piece. (In my defense it was a type wheel and why would the artist make a wheel if it wasn't meant to be spun?)

On the final day, we toured the National Library, which possibly has the most beautiful architecture and interior I have ever seen, and we had the opportunity to talk to our elected national representatives. I am so thankful that they took time out of their schedules to meet with us.

It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I will never forget. I learned so much and made friendships and memories that will never leave me. For all of this, I am extremely thankful to LPEA and everyone involved in the National Rural Electric Youth Tour.

# Love a Lineman: We have three new ones!

Riley Christensen, Michael Messier and Ty Mortensen have “journeyed out” and completed the LPEA Lineman Apprenticeship program, earning their Journeyman Lineman credentials. They join the ranks of the professionals responsible for constructing and maintaining electric power distribution lines and facilities.

“We congratulate Riley, Michael and Ty on achieving Journeyman Lineman status,” says Justin Talbot, manager of operations. “Our linemen are at the core of what we do. With this top-notch training program, LPEA can continue to provide our members with safe, reliable electricity.”

A hunter and fisherman, Christensen is from Monte Vista, Colo. He hails from a heritage of linemen, and is now the fourth generation of Journeyman Lineman in his family.

Messier, also an avid outdoorsman, born and raised in Del Norte, Colo., studied at Fort Lewis College and served with San Luis Valley Rural Electric as a meter reader awaiting the opportunity to enter an apprentice lineman program, which he embraced at LPEA.

The grandson of the family who owned Lori’s Family Dining locations in Durango, Mortensen was born and raised in Alamosa, Colo. Mortensen is also an Eagle Scout – experience that served him well in the lineman training, and a passion he wants to pass on to the next generation.

LPEA’s apprentice program is sanctioned by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers as well as the Department of Labor. The four-year apprentice program includes 8,000 hours working on-the-job with mentor linemen in the field, as well as three years of simultaneous scholastic study in the evenings, and written examinations.



Riley Christensen



Michael Messier



Ty Mortensen

## LPEA celebrates our college scholarship students

Jenna Engelken, a 2017 graduate of Durango High School, and Finlay Marshall, a 2017 graduate of Bayfield High School, have received the 33rd Annual LPEA College Scholarships, two four-year scholarships (up to \$7,000 annually or \$28,000 total for tuition, books and fees). Engelken will major in environmental engineering at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Marshall is heading to Fort Lewis College to study engineering.

LPEA’s 17th Annual John Voelker Memorial Scholarships – \$10,000 for two years for vocational, technical school or junior college – go to Carlos Solas Villalpando, a graduate of Durango High School, and Josiah Tessler, a graduate of Ignacio High School.

Solas Villalpando will attend San Juan College in Farmington to pursue a career in welding, while Tessler will also attend San Juan College to study diesel technology.

Emma Crowder, a graduate of Pagosa Springs High School, received the \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship. Crowder will attend the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.

Two additional Pagosa Springs High School graduates – Noah Haarmann and Adeline Thompson – each received \$500 scholarships from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association. Haarmann intends to pursue forestry and land management studies at Northern Arizona University. Thompson will advance her education in political science at the University of Denver.

## LIVE WIRES

### Board meeting Aug. 16, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Aug. 16, 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.

### Save the Date!

LPEA will host its annual Member Appreciation Luncheons in Durango, Sept. 14, and in Pagosa Springs, Sept 21, at the co-op’s offices, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Stay tuned for details.

### Closed for Labor Day

LPEA’s offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed on Monday, Sept. 4, in honor of Labor Day.

### LPEA at La Plata County Fair

Stop by the LPEA booth during the LPC Fair, Aug. 10-13, for updated information AND to spin the opportunity wheel for prizes!

### Round Up Grants

In July, CASA of the Southwest and Rainbow Youth Center received Round Up Foundation grants. Thanks to all who “round-up” their LPEA bill to support local non-profits.





# CREA: Why should LPEA belong?

BY KAREN BARGER | LPEA DIRECTOR, REPRESENTATIVE TO CREA  
KBARGER@LPEA.COOP

We've got a lot of acronyms in our lives these days, and LPEA is not immune to this crazy phenomenon. You may have heard or read "CREA" in conjunction with LPEA. What on earth is that, and why should you care?

CREA is the Colorado Rural Electric Association, an organization that works for US. I have the privilege of serving as your representative on the CREA board this year.

Working "cooperatively" dates as far back as human beings have been organizing in groups for mutual benefit, and this has continued to prove true today with LPEA and CREA. As a little background, CREA was organized in 1945 and is a statewide cooperative, serving a diverse

collective of electric co-ops, as well as Tri-State Generation and Transmission.

Through CREA, all of us as independent cooperatives, who retain control and ownership at the local level, share benefits as if we were operating as a larger utility operation. We have a greater voice. CREA exists as a united representative for its members and functions for our mutual benefit.

CREA is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of one representative from each of its member systems (so that's me from LPEA!). This member-control governance provides you, our members, a solid seat at the table when it comes to legislation and process.

The CREA staff works very closely with its members, Tri-State and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in implementation of a complete legislative agenda. This past spring, the first regular session of the Colorado General Assembly saw introduction of a staggering 681 bills. Not all of these bills had

relevance to electric co-ops like LPEA, but many of the bills could impact our rural communities.

Key issues and bills of interest included: Broadband, Energy Related statutes, Low income household energy assistance, Regional Transmission Organizations and the Colorado Energy Office. CREA and LPEA are there to protect your interests.

CREA represents Colorado's 22 electric cooperatives that serve nearly 1.5 million rural electric consumers living in more than 70 percent of the landmass of Colorado, reaching all four corners of the state and serving all or a portion of every county except Denver City and County. It's a tough job, but CREA endeavors to have all of our backs.

The whole big picture is somewhat mind-boggling, but I can assure you that it's "a good thing" to be part of this collective. And I'll be diligent in representing LPEA this coming year. Please contact me with any of your concerns.

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

