

## “Power of Giving” The Perfect Holiday Gift



Durango employees (standing) Lonnie Tucker, Amy Paylor, Cyndi Pierce, Jeanne Dittmar, Ron Meier, Betsy Lovelace, Julie McIntyre and Denver Hutchins, and (seated) Jodi Patcheck and Aubrey Gillespie are in the spirit and ready to make a difference with the “Power of Giving.”



Pagosa Springs employees Renee Davis, Lorraine Gurule and Tracy Allen are excited the “Power of Giving” program is returning this holiday season. The LPEA program provides assistance to members who have difficulty paying their electric utility bills.

The ‘heart of your power’ is more than a catchphrase used by La Plata Electric Association, Inc. (LPEA). It’s an expression that comes from your electric cooperative’s “heart,” and its more evident than ever during the holiday season as employees celebrate giving back to our local communities.

The “Giving Tree” program began in 2017 as LPEA Customer Service Representative Julie McIntyre and her fellow team members observed and worked with members struggling financially to keep their electricity on during the holiday season.

“People come into our office throughout the year offering to help a family member, friend or neighbor, but this time of the year just seems magical,” said McIntyre. “Our cooperative members have donated more than \$15,000 to the “Giving Tree” program over the last two years to help more than 450 members struggling to keep their electricity on during the holidays.”

The LPEA Customer Service Representative (CSR) team is once again inviting the “Power of Giving” to assist members who have difficulty paying their electric bills. “Giving Trees” are now in place in both Durango and Pagosa Springs.

The “Giving Trees” are adorned with colorful ornaments highlighted with varying dollar amounts. Community members are invited to select an ornament and bring it to the customer service window, and that dollar amount will be applied to the account of a fellow LPEA member in need. “Donations of any amount will be accepted, and collectively they can make a big impact and positive difference in our local community,” said Denver Hutchins, customer service representative.

“We have seen families come into our office and let their children select an ornament from the tree to teach them about the power of giving to others,” added Renee Davis, customer service

representative. “It’s very emotional to watch the children ‘light up’ when helping those in need.”

Several local businesses and non-profit organizations in Archuleta and La Plata counties have made substantial donations to the “Giving Tree” program since 2017. “We are extremely thankful for the contributions made by our business members,” said McIntyre. “Last year we had an individual member visit our Durango office and drop-off a check for \$1,000 just as we were preparing to close for the holidays. The big-hearted donation was applied to numerous LPEA accounts during the holidays.”

As a thank you, LPEA members contributing to the “Giving Trees” program have the choice of a variety of gifts, including an LED light bulb or LED nightlight, for larger donors, blankets or emergency roadside packs.

“We know firsthand that members continue to have difficulty with even the most basic of necessities,” said Betsy Lovelace, customer service supervisor. “The gift of electricity is definitely one that can be used and appreciated by everyone during the holiday season. It’s heart-warming to see our CSRs taking the initiative to help our members. “Power of Giving” doesn’t need to be something that happens just around the holidays”

So, brighten someone’s day who may need a little assistance. Lighten the load for an elderly member on a fixed income. Generate a smile for a disabled Veteran, or illuminate the life of a close friend or family member as a gift from your heart. You have the “Power” to make a difference this holiday season.



## PORTABLE GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS



Severe weather can cause extensive damage to power lines. When a power outage occurs, portable and standby generators can be a great resource.

LPEA Operations Supervisor Justin Talbot reminds us that generators must be connected safely and used properly. The two biggest hazards are carbon monoxide poisoning and “backfeed.”

To prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, always place the generator outdoors and make certain it is vented to the open air. Never operate it indoors, in a confined area (such as a garage, shed, or similar area), or near windows and doors, even with fans running.

An improperly connected generator can “backfeed” electricity from a home to the power line. The same transformer that reduces power line voltage for home use - 120/240 volts - will increase generator voltage to 7,200 volts or greater, and send it into the path of a lineman working to restore power. This can be fatal.

Visit <https://lpea.coop/> generator-safety for additional generator safety information.



## Concern for Community Annual Green Chili Lunch Dec. 18



Mild, medium or hot? LPEA employees Amanda Miles, Jeannie Bennett, Suzy Bynum (retired), Jeannette Simpson and Charlene Sandoval are ready to provide your choice of green chili stews, tortillas or homemade corn bread, and a beverage for a donation of any amount (suggested donation is \$5).

In an effort to assist the Salvation Army over the holiday season, LPEA will once again host its Stuff the Red Kettle Green Chili Lunch on Wednesday, Dec. 18th at the cooperative’s Durango headquarters, 45 Stewart Street in Bodo Industrial Park.

The donations will be split between the Salvation Army and the Veterans Outreach Center in Bodo Park, dedicated to those who have served our country. No reservations are required for the lunch scheduled for 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Guests can enjoy a variety of green chili stews (featuring local Sunnyside meats and prepared by Bart’s Deli), tortillas or homemade corn bread, and a beverage for a donation of any amount (suggested donation is \$5). An array of homemade desserts will be available for an extra donation.

“Everyone is invited to attend the Green Chili Lunch at our headquarters on December 18th. We’ll have everything set up in the lobby and front conference room,” says Jeannie Bennett, public relations coordinator. “Not only will you enjoy a warm, hearty lunch, your donation will be used to support local residents and Veterans in need.”

The fundraising lunch coincides with the regular scheduled meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors. Directors will be joining the community effort, and they will be available to speak over lunch with cooperative members.



LPEA employees Cindy Pierce and Rachel Schur look forward to serving you a variety of green chili stews on Wednesday, Dec. 18th at LPEA’s Stuff the Red Kettle Green Chili Lunch.

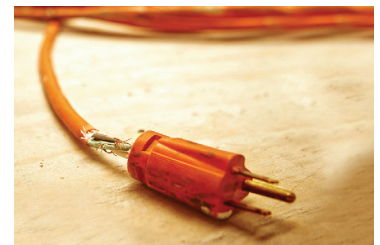


Save room for dessert! A wide array of homemade desserts will be available for an extra donation.

## Inspect and Protect

It is the season to inspect and protect. Extension cords are helpful tools in delivering power to your home’s indoor holiday decorations and outdoor holiday lights and inflatables. Check extension cords for damage. Replace - don’t attempt to fix - extension cords that have been cut or damaged.

Visit <https://lpea.coop/inspect-extension-cords-use> for extension cord safety information.



# LPEA Enhances Operations Team

Journeyman Linemen Michael Messier and Clinton Peak have been promoted to Working Foreman at La Plata Electric Association, Inc. (LPEA).

A Working Foreman is one of the four men who make up a hot crew, which works on LPEA's system in the field. Messier and Peak's responsibilities include supervising their crew, ensuring that their men know the scope of the job or project, and that they're doing it safely and efficiently.

"We congratulate Michael and Clinton on achieving Working Foreman status," says Justin Talbot, LPEA manager of operations. "Our working foreman are at the core of what we do and have a tremendous amount of responsibility."

Messier, 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 in 2013 and subsequently earned his Journeyman Lineman in 2017.

Clinton, a native of Ignacio, and current resident of Bayfield, graduated from the Northwest Lineman College in Meridian, Idaho in 2007. He worked as an Apprentice Lineman for a utility contractor before joining Denton Municipal Electric in Denton, Texas as a Journeyman Lineman in 2013 and LPEA in 2019.

Evan Moore has "journeyed out" and completed the LPEA Lineman Apprenticeship program, earning his Journeyman Lineman Certification. He joins the ranks of the professionals responsible for constructing and maintaining electric power distribution lines and facilities.

Moore was born and raised in Dolores, Colo. He pursued a secure job following high school graduation and looked to the electric utility industry. He enrolled in Mesa Hotline School in Grand Junction, and upon graduation, joined LPEA's Apprentice Lineman program in 2014.

LPEA's apprenticeship program is sanctioned by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers as well as the Department of Labor. The four-year apprentice program includes 8000 working hours on the-job, with mentor linemen in the field, as well as simultaneous scholastic study in the evenings, and written examinations.

In addition, furthering continuity in the Operations Department, Trey Buffalo has now been selected as an Equipment Operator. Born and raised in Salida, Buffalo came to LPEA in 2015 and has served in the field with the line crews since that time. Prior to LPEA, he served for eight years with Crossfire LLC, provider of oil and gas construction services, where he worked in construction with heavy equipment. As Equipment Operator, Buffalo works with the line crews, assisting in construction and repair of LPEA's lines in the field.

"Employer-sponsored apprenticeship programs are the best educational and training tools our industry ever invented," says Justin Talbot, LPEA manager of operations. "It's an excellent process for perfecting the professional and highly-skilled work trades our industry requires, and we are seeing this with the growth, training and transition of great guys like Michael, Clinton, Evan and Trey."

Looking for a promising, dynamic future? Electric cooperatives offer you a place to apply your energy, make a difference in your community and improve the quality of your life. We have opportunities in many diverse roles, ranging from information technology, communications, marketing and member services, engineering and operations, and community and economic development to name a few. Visit <https://lpea.coop/employment-career-opportunities> for employment and career opportunities with La Plata Electric Association, Inc.



Michael Messier, Working Foreman



Clinton Peak, Working Foreman



Evan Moore, Journeyman Lineman



Trey Buffalo, Equipment Operator

## LIVE WIRES

### Board meeting December 18, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 18, 9 a.m. at the LPEA headquarters in Durango (Bodo Park). The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop).

### Project Merry Christmas

LPEA will partner with Four Corners Broadcasting, to host a live radio remote on Saturday, Dec. 14, encouraging donations for Project Merry Christmas. Help deserving families in our community. Bring your new toys, blankets, canned goods or cash to LPEA's offices in Durango between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

### Round Up Grants

In November, the LPEA Round Up Foundation Board awarded Round Up and Educational grants to Community Connections, Pagosa Housing Partners, Project Merry Christmas, Powerhouse Science Center & MakerLab and Bayfield Early Education Program.

### Holiday office closures

LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 24 and 25, 2019, and Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2020 in honor of the Christmas holiday and New Year's Day celebrations. We look forward to serving your energy needs in 2020!





## Unclaimed Capital Credits

In an effort to make good use of idle funds left abandoned by former members of La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) as unclaimed Capital Credits, the cooperative's board of directors has awarded 20 new Educational/Special Project Grants totaling \$150,000 to non-profit organizations in its service territory.

### In Archuleta County:

- o Archuleta County Education Center
- o Archuleta School District JT50
- o Chimney Rock Interpretive Association (CRIA)
- o Foundation for Archuleta Education (FACE)
- o San Juan Historical Society - Pagosa Museum
- o Upper San Juan Search & Rescue

### In La Plata County:

- o Alternative Horizons
- o Animas Alano Club
- o Animas Museum
- o Community Treehouse
- o ELHI Community Center
- o Fort Lewis Mesa Fire District
- o La Plata Family Centers Coalition
- o Pine River Shares
- o Sacred Heart Church
- o Southwest Heath Alliance Care Needs Assessment
- o The Garden Project of Southwest Colorado
- o Wildfire Adaptive Partnership

### Serving both Archuleta and La Plata Counties:

- o Southwest Center for Independence
- o Disabled American Veterans Chapter 48

Capital Credits are LPEA's margins or revenues remaining after all expenses have been paid. Annually, the electricity payments made by members in excess of the cost to provide their electric service is placed into a patronage capital account in each member's name. When the cooperative is able, Capital Credits are returned to members. The dollars become "unclaimed" after three years, when LPEA cannot locate members deserving of the refund. The board has determined that these unclaimed funds should be invested in the community and thus established the Educational/Special Project Grants program.

## Plan for 2020 Board Elections

LPEA members interested in running for the LPEA Board of Directors are advised to begin their education about the cooperative and understand obligations and fiduciary duties of the directors. Visit the website, [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop), for policies and company information, plus interested candidates are encouraged to attend LPEA board meetings, typically held the third Wednesday of each month (though adjusted for holidays) beginning at 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. Election packets for those interested in running for a seat will be available Feb. 28, 2020, at LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs, as well as online.

Pursuant to LPEA bylaws, one-third of the director's seats are up for election annually, one from each of these districts: District 1 - Archuleta County, District 2 - South and West La Plata County, District 3 - City of Durango, and District 4 - North and East La Plata County.

Board candidates are required to be LPEA 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.

Ballots will be mailed to LPEA's full membership in April, and the results will be announced during the LPEA Annual Meeting, set for May 16, 2020, 10:30 a.m. at the Pagosa Springs High School.



LPEA Board Directors (standing) Davin Montoya, Tim Wheeler, Dan Huntington, Britt Bassett, Kirsten Skeeahan, Guinn Unger, Kohler McInnis and Rachel Landis, and (kneeling/seated) Jack Turner, Holly Metzler, Bob Lynch and Joe Lewandowski.



### Mission Statement:

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

### 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)

### Board of Directors:

Bob Lynch, President (District 1)  
Britt Bassett, Vice President (District 3)  
Guinn Unger, Secretary (District 4)  
Tim Wheeler, Treasurer (District 4)  
Dan Huntington (District 2)  
Rachel Landis (District 3)  
Joe Lewandowski (District 3)  
Kohler McInnis (District 2)  
Holly Metzler (District 1)  
Davin Montoya (District 2)  
Kirsten Skeeahan (District 1)  
Jack Turner (District 4)

### Chief Executive Officer:

Jessica Matlock

### Social Media:

La Plata Electric Association is on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

