



MARCH 2017
AN NRECA PUBLICATION

RURAL ELECTRIC MAGAZINE

EXODUS

Co-ops confront a wave
of CEO retirements

'LIFE ON THE LINE'

Travolta lineman
movie release p. 10

BRIGHT IDEAS

Cost-saving lighting
advances p. 30

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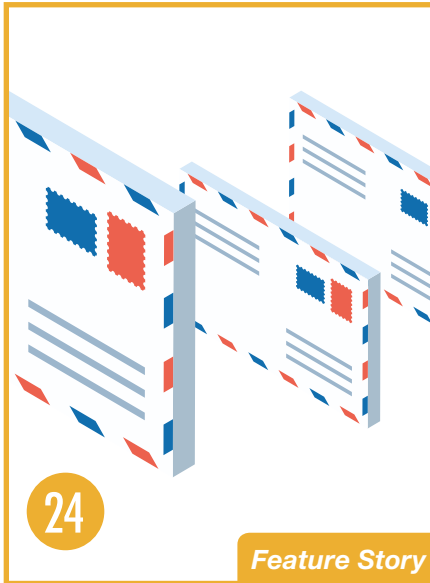


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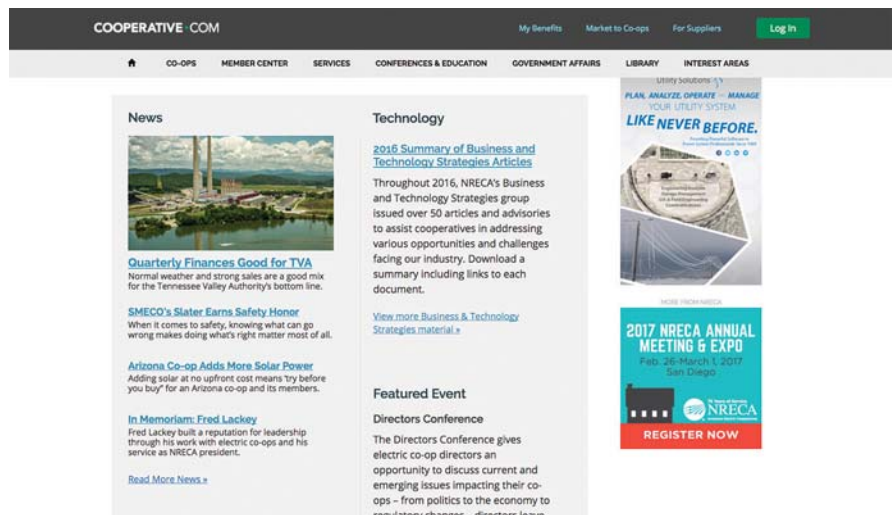
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WHAT'S NEW ONLINE?



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THE KIDS WHO ELECTRIFIED HIGHWOOD, MONTANA

BY FRANK K. GALLANT

It started with 13 eighth-graders brainstorming in a rural Montana school and culminated with a co-op throwing a switch that changed their lives forever.

The teacher had told the boys and girls about a statewide good-citizenship contest with the theme of community betterment. The prize was \$100, a lot of money in 1938.

Forty-seven years later, on a sunny spring morning in 1985, one of those eighth-graders, now a 60-year-old rancher, recalled what happened next: "Rural electrification was hot then," Miles Swan said. "We met with Carl Gunderson—he was the superintendent of schools in Highwood—to see what might be a project we could work on. A water system was out; the town wasn't incorporated. A sewer system was voted down; it wouldn't affect the whole community. We talked about telephones, but everything seemed to center around electricity."

Lucille Walker, a cook at the Highwood Cafe, remembered the gas lamps in school and in Charlie Berkner's butcher shop. She also remembered the noisy gasoline generator behind Ben Gossack's general store and the one in Community Hall.

The students decided to write to the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) in faraway Washington, D.C., and ask about electricity for Highwood.

The REA responded and said, yes, Highwood was the kind of place the agency helped, but only if the community got behind the effort.

The nearest REA borrower, Sun River Electric Cooperative, was 70 miles west in Fairfield. Halfway between was Great Falls, "the Electric City," which got lights and power in 1912 when the first of four hydroelectric dams on the Missouri River was

completed. At night, the ranchers and dry-land farmers in the Highwood area could see the glow of those city

lights, but they knew it was a pipe dream to think they would get cen-

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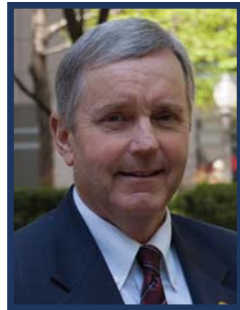
PHIL CARSON, PRESIDENT

At the 2017 Annual Meeting in San Diego, I had the honor of standing before the membership of NRECA to accept the ceremonial gavel from Mel Coleman and begin my term as the 38th president of our association.

I'm eager to get to know you better over the next two years, and I thought it best to start that process by telling you a little more about me and my priorities as president.

My wife, Joyce, and I are the proud parents of a grown daughter and live in southern Illinois on land farmed by my family for generations.

I studied agriculture at Southern Illinois Univer-



And just like in our institutions of government, we must continually challenge ourselves to ensure the policies and strategies we adopt for our cooperatives reflect the evolving nature of our membership and industry.

That's why I'm excited to support the efforts of the recently announced member task force on governance sponsored jointly by NRECA and CFC.

One of the great strengths of the cooperative movement is our grassroots, bottom-up culture, and I welcome the opportunity to draw upon the collective wisdom and experience

“[W]e must continually challenge ourselves to ensure the policies and strategies we adopt ... reflect the evolving nature of our membership.”

sity, and following my graduation, discerned a call to ministry. I heeded that call and earned a master's in biblical studies from Covenant Theological Seminary near St. Louis.

After seminary, I returned to my family's land and spent the next 25 years as a grain and dairy farmer.

I began the next chapter of my life at age 50, when we sold our herd and I stepped into the pulpit of a small Presbyterian church in Nashville, Ill.

I've served on the board of Tri-County Electric since 1998 and was elected to the NRECA board in 2006.

In addition to serving as a director of my electric cooperative, I sit on the board of the Egyptian Telephone Cooperative in Steeleville, Ill., and have previously served on other community boards since the early '80s.

We all understand and celebrate the democratic values of the cooperative movement, but even after more than three decades of service on various boards, I still marvel at this quintessentially American ideal of citizen service.

of our 900-plus members to identify governance practices that keep our co-ops strong and our members engaged.

I also hope to use my experience in the rural energy and telecommunications industries to help address our generation's greatest rural economic development challenge: the urgent need for true high-speed broadband service at affordable prices in the communities we serve.

It took decades to bring electricity to rural America, and a key element of our success in that mission was the unrelenting discipline of rural leaders who worked hard and demanded action from their elected officials until the problem was finally solved.

I'm eager to work with Jim Matheson as he completes his first year as CEO of NRECA and continues to provide steady leadership to our association through times of significant change.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me as president of our association. I look forward to serving you. **RE**



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LIFE ON THE LINE



Photo courtesy Napa Valley Film

Chad Dubea (right) with writer Marvin Pearl (left) and producer Philip Glasser

FROM LINEMAN TO MOVIE PRODUCER

On his company voicemail, Chad Dubea asks callers to leave a message and to “please thank a lineman. Without them, there wouldn’t be any power. And thank a mechanic as well. Without them, your trucks wouldn’t be running.”

Whenever he can, Dubea champions line crews’ courageous work and daily sacrifices, especially during major storms and disasters. In 2013, he funded the startup of the Fallen Linemen Organization, a charity that raises money for wounded line crews and their families.

The year before, his fleet-maintenance company co-sponsored Drivin’ for Linemen 200, a NASCAR truck race at Gateway Motorsports Park in St. Louis.

Now, Dubea, 39, can add “executive producer of a Hollywood movie” to his linemen tributes.

Released to theaters in November 2016, *Life on the Line*,



John Travolta as Texas lineman Beau

an action drama starring John Travolta, tells the story of linemen, the hazards of line work, and the profession’s hidden side: the toll the job’s long hours can take on families.

It’s now available for streaming through services like Amazon video, Vudu, Google Play, iTunes, and Netflix.

“It’s the greatest job in the world, and I want to give back to an industry I love,” Dubea says of being a lineman.

Dubea sold his power line construction company to help finance the \$12 million film. Through business connections, he met screenwriter Primo Brown, who wrote the film’s original script. Brown researched the industry by attending safety training and compliance meetings at Dubea’s company.

“I learned what it takes to become a lineman and understood how important safety is on the job,” he says. “Being a lineman is an extremely hazardous occupation, and the brave individuals that keep our lives energized have my utmost respect.”

Dubea’s experiences with the movie had flashes of glamour. On a moment’s notice, he flew to the Cannes Film Festival in France, where he lunched with Hollywood film executive Harvey Weinstein in hopes of landing a distributor. He also met the movie’s star.

“John Travolta is extremely sincere. Anyone he met, he’d write or call back,” Dubea says. “He really gained an appreciation for what these men, women, and families deal with on a regular basis.”

—By Victoria A. Rocha



Photo courtesy Big Rivers Electric Corporation

Big Rivers Corp. in Kentucky won a contract to provide power to nine municipals.

BIG RIVERS ELECTRIC TO SUPPLY POWER TO 9 MUNIS

The Kentucky Public Service Commission has approved Big Rivers Electric Corporation's 10-year contract to sell excess power to nine small cities, all members of the Kentucky Municipal Energy Agency (KyMEA).

"We're excited to finalize an agreement that benefits Big Rivers Electric, our member-owners, and the KyMEA," says Bob Berry, president and CEO of the Henderson, Ky.-based G&T. "It's another positive step toward locating long-term buyers for our surplus power."

He adds that the contract "will help stabilize power prices and ensure competitive rates" for the G&T's members: Kenergy Corp., Henderson; Jackson Purchase Energy, Paducah; and Meade County RECC, Brandenburg. Together, these distribution co-ops serve about 115,000 retail consumers living in 22 western Kentucky counties.

The deal lifted a burden pressing down on Big Rivers Electric since it lost two large aluminum smelters as customers, one in 2013 and the other in 2014. The smelters accounted for nearly two-thirds of the G&T's revenue at one time, and the co-op was forced to shutter a coal-fired power plant to cut its losses.

Beginning in 2019, the G&T will supply 100 MW to the cities of Barbourville, Bardwell, Benham, Corbin, Falmouth, Frankfort, Madisonville, Paris, and Providence. Up to 50 additional MW could be supplied later in the contract.

SEDC ACQUIRES ATS

Co-op created Southeastern Data Cooperative (SEDC) has acquired Applied Technology Solutions (ATS) in a move that will create a combined entity with more than 500 employees and over 530 utility clients nationwide.

RB Sloan, president and CEO of SEDC, says the acquisition "made sense because both companies share a common culture and are dedicated to delivering the next evolution of utility software."

Atlanta-based SEDC and ATS provide electric cooperatives and other utilities information technology solutions to manage daily operations, including CIS/billing; accounting; customer engagement; data analytics and advanced visualization; engineering and operations applications; and cybersecurity.

SEDC has two other subsidiaries: Futura Systems Inc., which specializes in GIS technologies, and Arista Information Systems, which offers bill print and mail services.

ATS CEO Scott Woodward says the combined company "will be able to provide a suite of products that will be unmatched in the industry. To say we're excited is an understatement."

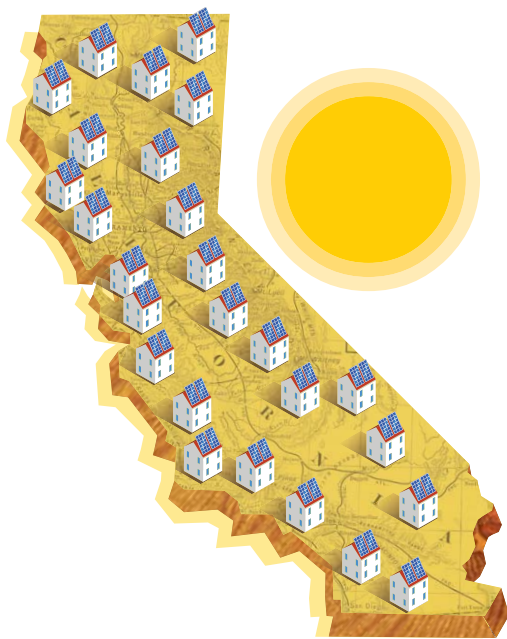


Left: ATS CEO Scott Woodward Right: SEDC CEO RB Sloan

SEDC was formed by electric cooperatives in 1976. ATS, based in Castle Hayne, N.C., was formed in 1996 and has multiple electric cooperative clients. Both are NRECA service members.

"This is a significant move for two long-time NRECA affiliates that do extensive work with electric cooperatives," says NRECA CEO Jim Matheson. "I look forward to seeing the benefits it provides to our members and their consumers."

—By Victoria A. Rocha



A PREVIEW IN CALIFORNIA OF SOLAR'S FUTURE?

On Thursday, December 15, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), the giant California utility, reached a milestone that could have a dampening effect on the state's solar energy boom.

On that sunny San Francisco day, rooftop solar panels on homes and businesses could, for the first time, produce 5 percent of PG&E's peak demand.

Since then, any residential customer hooking up a new array must pay a one-time \$145 interconnection fee as well as a small monthly surcharge and switch to a time-of-use rate. All solar installations made prior to December 15, however, are grandfathered for 20 years.

The California Public Service Commission approved these changes in January 2016, putting an end to the days of net metering. Although one key element remains the same: PG&E will continue paying customers the same rate for their excess solar power regardless of when their solar system was installed.

San Diego Gas and Electric was the first California utility to cross the 5-percent-solar threshold, doing so in June 2016.

Both investor-owned utilities had argued that solar customers, by producing their own power while still connected to the grid, did not pay their fair share of grid costs, such as line and substation maintenance, meaning non-solar customers were, in effect, subsidizing their neighbors' electric rates.

Before December 15, PG&E reportedly had more than 275,000 customers with their own solar arrays and were adding 6,000 a month. These arrays could generate more than 2.4 gigawatts of power, roughly the equivalent of two nuclear plants.

BLUEGRASS SOLAR GETS GREEN LIGHT

The Kentucky Public Service Commission has given the green light to East Kentucky Power Cooperative (EKPC, G&T) to build a 32,000-panel solar farm on behalf of its 16 member cooperatives.

Members of the 16 co-ops have an opportunity to pay \$460 to license a panel for 25 years and would receive credits on their monthly electric bill for the energy produced.

The 8.5-MW project, dubbed Cooperative Solar, will spread across 60 acres in EKPC's headquarters city of Winchester, Ky., making it one of the largest solar farms in the state. Sixteen miles east of Lexington and adjacent to I-64, the project will be a very visible expression of the 16 cooperatives' commitment to renewable energy.

Construction is scheduled to begin this spring, and the array should be ready to generate commercial power by fall. The estimated cost is \$17.7 million. EKPC plans to finance the project by issuing New Clean Renewable Energy Bonds to take advantage of federal incentives that can offset much of the interest expense.

"For electric co-op members who are interested in harnessing renewable energy for their home or business, Cooperative Solar is the easy, affordable option," says Tony Campbell, EKPC president/CEO.

\$1 MILLION TO PROTECT VULNERABLE HABITAT

A \$1 million grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is helping Pedernales Electric Cooperatives (PEC) protect the natural habitat beneath its transmission and distribution lines.

The money will be used to research and write a 30-year habitat-conservation plan for the protection of 34 species across 5 million acres of PEC's Texas service territory.

"There is no doubt that the Texas Hill Country is special and that it provides a unique habitat for various wildlife," says Pedernales Board Director Amy Lea SJ Akers. "This grant will allow us to ensure that even as we work to expand and maintain the cooperative's electric system, we're doing everything we can to protect the Texas Hill Country and the habitat it provides."

Under the plan, PEC will also purchase or buy offsets for comparable habitat outside its rights-of-way where necessary.

In 2008, the co-op hired an outside firm to identify vulnerable species. The document it produced has guided the staff over the last half dozen years and is being used as a starting point for the new plan.

According to Alyssa Clemens Roberts, PEC's vice president for communications and business services, these species include the American bald eagle and two small songbirds, the golden-cheeked warbler and the black-capped vireo, as well as the Jollyville plateau salamander, a 2-in.-long amphibian native to streams and caves near Austin.



Photo courtesy San Miguel Power Association

A GRID Alternatives volunteer installs a solar panel

GREEN SOLAR POWER IN A BROWNFIELD

Sixty low-income consumers of Colorado's San Miguel Power Association (SMPA) will soon see their monthly electric bills drop as credits from a 200-kilowatt solar project in rural Norwood, Colo., kick in.

The array spreads across a closed landfill and was assembled last November by volunteers from the Nucla-based co-op and its partner GRID Alternatives. The

Colorado Energy Office, Energy Outreach Colorado, the Telluride Foundation, and EcoAction Partners also were involved.

"I myself got to put up a couple of panels," says Alex Shelley, the co-op's communications director.

Five other NRECA members in the state have developed solar projects with GRID Alternatives, an Oakland, Calif.-based non-profit that makes renewable energy and job training accessible to underserved communities.

GRID Alternatives received a \$1.2 million grant from the Colorado Energy Office in 2015 to partner with utilities to implement low-income community solar projects. Each project is a pilot with its own twist. SMPA's is that solar subscribers also enroll in the income-eligible weatherization program, helping to offset both electricity and home heating costs.

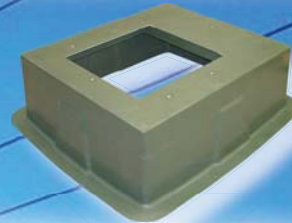
SMPA CEO Brad Zaporski says the co-op has been looking to increase its renewable energy portfolio in a way that makes the resource available to a greater portion of its membership. Repurposing an old landfill, or brownfield, is a nice environmental benefit, he says.

"We are excited to join with our partners to reduce our carbon footprint while also reducing the financial burden of high electric bills on local families in need," says Rube Felicelli, president of SMPA's board of directors.

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Dry Fork Station

Photo by Tim Velder/Powder River Energy

IN HOT PURSUIT OF A CO₂ BREAKTHROUGH

A team of innovators and investors that includes employees and directors of an Iowa electric co-op has advanced to the second round of the \$20 million Carbon XPRIZE, a worldwide competition to find practical uses for carbon dioxide (CO₂) in power plant emissions.

Dave Stevens, director of operations at Harrison County REC in Woodbine, Iowa, is one of the team leaders for Earth Energy-American Green Gasoline (EE-AGG), a joint venture partnership of companies based in Iowa and Texas. He says the EE-AGG team is one of 13 moving forward on the coal emissions track in the competition and one of 21 teams on the natural gas emissions track.

Round-two teams must demonstrate their innovative technology at pilot scale using either a real or a simulated flue gas stream. They will be scored over a 10-month period on how much CO₂ they convert and the net value of their products.

Round-two judging is scheduled for the fall of 2017. The five teams with the highest scores in each track will go on to compete in the final round of the five-year competition, which started in September 2015. For the finals, the demonstrations will take place at actual power plants, one of which will be Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Dry Fork Station in Gillette, Wyo.

Real progress on CO₂ in power plant emissions won't occur, industry experts say, until a robust market emerges for connecting breakthrough technologies that use greenhouse gases in industrial processes.

According to an EE-AGG news release, these competitors are converting CO₂ into products as varied as enhanced concrete, biofuels, toothpaste, nanotubes, fish food, and fertilizer. EE-AGG's product is methanol, Stevens says, which can be used to make plastics, carpets, and paint and is also an important input for biodiesel production. **RE**

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THE NEW DEMOCRACY

IT'S TIME TO RETHINK HOW WE REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF OUR MEMBERS

BY ADAM SCHWARTZ



Let's face it. The recent presidential election, no matter which side you were on, was a bruising, at times uncomfortable, exercise. But as hard as it was to go through, it was democracy in action, and that's a good thing.

When the election was over, it got me thinking about how well cooperatives do democracy and

how important it has been to our success over the years. I also started pondering how the imperative of fulfilling our cooperative principle of "Democratic Member Control" is evolving.

I use a classic definition of democracy: a form of governance in which power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected representatives under a fair and equal system. That definition varies from the legal and tax definition, but it's a helpful and understandable reference.

Throughout our history, we've followed the letter of this definition—we've vested the power to determine the direction of our co-ops in boards of directors that are composed of members and elected by members. Co-ops that make special efforts to publicize board elections, encourage members to run, and make voting convenient and accessible take that definition a step further.

However, what I've seen in recent years is that following the letter of democracy may no longer be adequate.

Our memberships are changing. They're getting more demographically diverse and savvier about what services they want. These new expectations mean we should go further to better serve and represent our members. The classic definition of democracy still stands, but now there is a *spirit* of democracy that goes beyond this.

The spirit of democracy takes many forms—for example, actively seeking the input and opinions of members, sharing appropriate information with them, and involving them as much as possible in setting the co-op's course.

What I'm describing is a familiar concept: *member engagement*.

Engagement today means things like surveying members to understand their needs or conversing with them using communication channels they're comfortable with, whether

that's in person, over the phone, via e-mail, or on social media.

Many co-ops are working to adopt both the letter and the spirit of democracy. Sometimes the process or the results can be frustrating. But following our natural inclinations as co-ops to serve our members can help keep us on track.

I truly believe there is a desire, particularly among young members, to engage with us. This point was driven home at a recent Thanksgiving dinner where I was speaking with the college-age nephew of a friend. I told him what I do for a living, and he was shocked: "Are there really electric companies owned by the customers and only the customers?" I said, "Yes, and there are roughly 900 of them in the country." His reply? "Cool. How do I start one?"

It is not enough anymore to just put a sign out saying, "All are welcome." We should go to the members and personally invite their participation. For some co-ops, this "new democracy" may be a challenge, but think about what success looks like:

- An informed membership helping to guide the direction of the co-op
- Members who will fight for their co-op
- Long-term success for our co-ops while showcasing how democracy can work

The cooperative business model is in the midst of a renaissance that can help enhance and advance our democracy. The pace of this change will accelerate as we bring on the next generation of co-op leaders. By encouraging participation, and even a bit of debate, with our members, we show them how our new democracy works and where they fit in. And that's something that will benefit us all. **RE**

Adam Schwartz is the founder of The Cooperative Way, a consulting firm helping co-ops succeed. He is an author, consultant, educator, speaker, and member-owner of the CDS Consulting Co-op. You can follow him on Twitter @adamcooperative or e-mail him at aschwartz@thecooperativeway.coop.

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CEO TURNOVER

Manager retirements bring upheaval and opportunities

By Reed Karaim



In 2012, SEMO Electric Cooperative was facing the end of an era. The co-op's general manager had decided to retire after 21 years in the top job.

Human resources experts know that workplace change always brings some staff anxiety, and that is often exacerbated when the change comes at the very top. But rather than view the impending transition negatively, SEMO's board decided to view it as a chance to take a fresh look at the whole co-op.

"We used it as an opportunity," says Rick Faulkner, president of the Sikeston, Mo.-based co-op's board. "It gets you to look at things with a different perspective, and I think that's very important because we all get comfortable with who we are and what we're doing."

That challenge is one that a significant number of electric co-ops are or will be facing in the near future. An NRECA survey last year of 893 cooperatives found that 25 percent of CEOs were already eligible for retirement and that 50.7 percent would be eligible within the next five years.

The potential turnover is made even more dramatic

by the length of tenure of many CEOs. Electric cooperatives enjoy a stability in staffing and management that has become increasingly rare in the modern economy. When a CEO decides to retire, it often means the end of a management approach stretching back decades, with a co-op culture and a way of doing things that have become deeply ingrained.

A co-op's culture may be generally healthy and successful, but even a well-functioning organization can benefit from the jolt of new energy that comes with a successful transition, says Martin Lowery, NRECA executive vice president for member and association relations. He takes a positive view of the coming changeover in the co-op community.

"It's the opportunity to bring a new generation of leadership into the cooperative program," he says. "I'm full of optimism in that regard."



DAUNTING PROSPECT

Still, the prospect of replacing an established CEO can be daunting. The temptation, employment experts say, can be to take the easiest route: hiring someone the board is already familiar with, often from within.

Strong internal candidates deserve serious consideration, says Ken Holmes, NRECA director of executive search. (*See sidebar 'In or Out?' page 23.*) But, he adds, turning to a familiar face without wider consideration means a board forfeits an important chance to take stock of both the co-op and the board's relationship with management.

"One of the things we talk to boards about in our initial conversations is, 'What level of change do you think needs to take place or would you like to take place?'" Holmes says.

Board members often initially indicate they're satisfied with the way things are going, he says, but deeper introspection frequently reveals areas where they would like to see change or new opportunities they think the co-op should explore.

"They realize there's an opportunity for a new look at the organization and new directions without throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater," Holmes says.

To do that, the board has to be willing to take a clear-eyed look at both how the co-op and the board function,

says Michele Rinn, NRECA senior vice president for human resources.

"The hardest conversations are up front," she says. "The relationship that the CEO has with the board is critical. If the board isn't really honest with itself about governance practices, how it operates, and what it really wants from that CEO, and if the board doesn't develop a profile, including the background and the experience they want, to fit that role, they're going to find themselves going into a difficult situation."

The board needs to extend that scrutiny to co-op operations. "They have to have an idea of what is going on within the co-op itself," Rinn says. "What are the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce? What are the key challenges and goals for the next five years? How should the CEO interact with the community? A thorough assessment process is critical to ensure you hire the right leader."

'PRIME OPPORTUNITY'

For the SEMO board, the self-assessment included acknowledging what was going well. "We were strong financially," Faulkner says. "We didn't want to lose that."

But the board also realized it wanted to make a shift in culture. "We wanted someone that was a very good communicator, able to bring about some positive

changes in that area—more communication between the employees, management, and the board," Faulkner adds. "That was our number-one consideration: communication."

Sean Vanslyke, the new general manager hired by SEMO, says that by establishing priorities, the board made it easier for him and other candidates to understand exactly what they were looking for from a manager.

"They were clear in their expectations," he says. "They were looking for somebody who could provide improved communications internally and externally and continue to build on the good things that were already occurring at the cooperative."

The result has been a successful transition of co-op leadership. Vanslyke has fulfilled the board's mandate through a series of steps, using a blog to communicate regularly with members, establishing individual development plans for each co-op employee so expectations and opportunities are clearly conveyed, and even working with the board to invite all the employees to some board meetings, creating a new level of transparency and understanding.

Faulkner says it all proves that a transition can provide a "prime opportunity" to make positive changes. "You can change the role of your employees," he says. "You can change the culture of your co-op. You can even change the culture of your board."

THE PROCESS

Still, even when a board knows what it wants in a new co-op leader, the process of finding the right person for the job can be challenging, notes Pat Mangan, NRECA director of governance education.

“This is not something to be underestimated in terms of time,” he says. “The number of applications you’ve got to sort through, the confidentiality requirements, the need to establish a procedure for handling all the paperwork, making the calls—some boards take it on themselves and find that it’s a heck of a lot more work than they expected.”

For those reasons, employment experts say there is value in turning to a consultant for assistance. “We strongly recommend that they work with an outside person, because it’s very hard for a board to take on the search on their own,” Lowery says. “We’re not saying only use NRECA, but in every case, it’s really helpful and healthy to look for outside support in conducting a search.”

Some boards shy away from the cost of hiring a consulting firm, but “it’s likely you’re going to have that CEO for 20 years ... so being willing to make the proper investment in the search process is really important,” Lowery says.

In 2015, Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, based in Mattoon, Ill., began a search for a new president/CEO when M.L. “Chris” Christman announced his retirement after 36 years at the co-op.

Deborah Albin, Coles-Moultrie board vice chair, says there were mixed feelings among board members about how to proceed and whether hiring a search firm was necessary.

The board eventually decided to engage NRECA executive search, which Albin believes was a wise decision. “By using the national search firm, we got the very best candidates that were interested in us, and we didn’t have to deal with a lot of the initial steps,” she says. “They did all the initial screening, handled all the paperwork. It just saved all of us a lot of problems.”

Albin says hiring a consultant helped the board stay focused on its priorities and identify candidates that were a good fit. “We had several that were high contenders,” she says. “The caliber of those we had come through was just fantastic.”

Both Faulkner and Albin say the board shouldn’t feel rushed when it comes to deliberating among the final candidates. “You really need to give a lot of thought to applicants,” Faulkner says. “You need to spend some with applicants and be as specific as you can with questions, and really watch their reactions carefully. You need to watch their body language, so to speak, to see what they’re comfortable with.”

One of Coles-Moultrie’s priorities was making sure the co-op, which had just installed smart meters, was taking full advantage of the technology. “We knew there were a lot more capabilities,” Albin

says. “We didn’t expect [the new CEO] to be the expert on that, but we needed him to know where to go and who to talk to to get that done.”

Kim Leftwich, who the board hired as new president/CEO after interviewing several candidates, had wide-ranging experience in the utility industry and was also a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, giving him the combination of managerial and technical experience the board was looking for, Albin says.

ONBOARDING

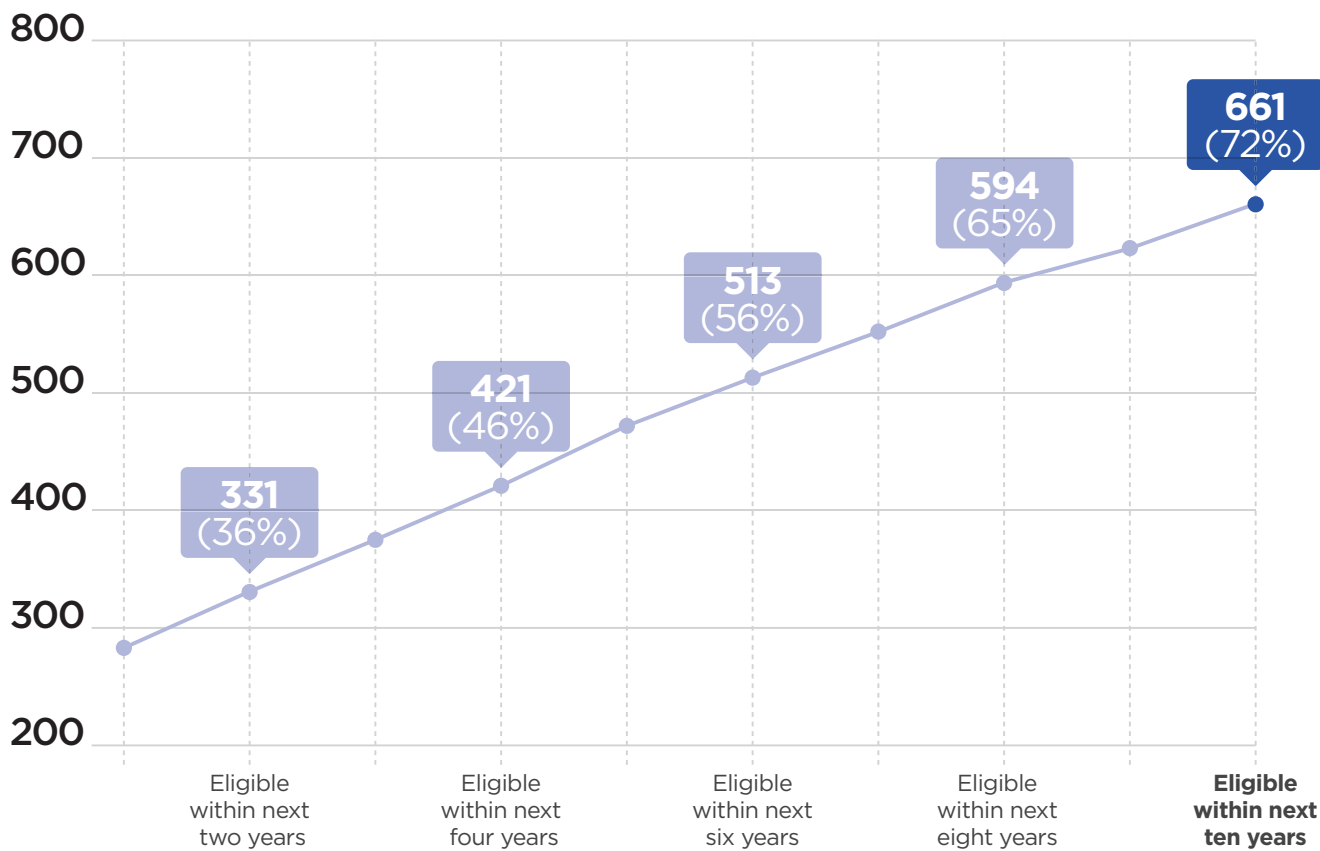
Identifying senior co-op employees who embrace the latest technological advances is critical, Lowery says.

“We’re going to see extensive re-engineering of the grid, and that’s going to require new thinking among our engineers and leaders as to how one looks at the potential of significant distributed generation resources, the Internet of things, and much more control by consumers managing their energy needs,” he says. Cooperatives will need to embrace a generation of co-op leaders with “an understanding of how emerging technology can make a difference in the efficiency of our system and improving the relationship with our consumer-members.”

Mangan points out that the challenge presented by a significant transition in senior employees goes beyond CEOs. “We know we’ve got 60 percent of our workforce at or facing retirement age over



Number of CEOs eligible for retirement



Source: NRECA Insurance and Financial Services

CEO Vacancies

Recent data on retirement eligibility for electric cooperative staff show that within the next 10 years, 72 percent, or 661, of the 915 co-op CEOs will be old enough to retire, by far the largest number among co-op jobs.

the next five years, and that's going to be a major transition," he says. The transition to a new CEO provides a co-op an opportunity to find a leader who can help manage employee turnover with an eye toward the future.

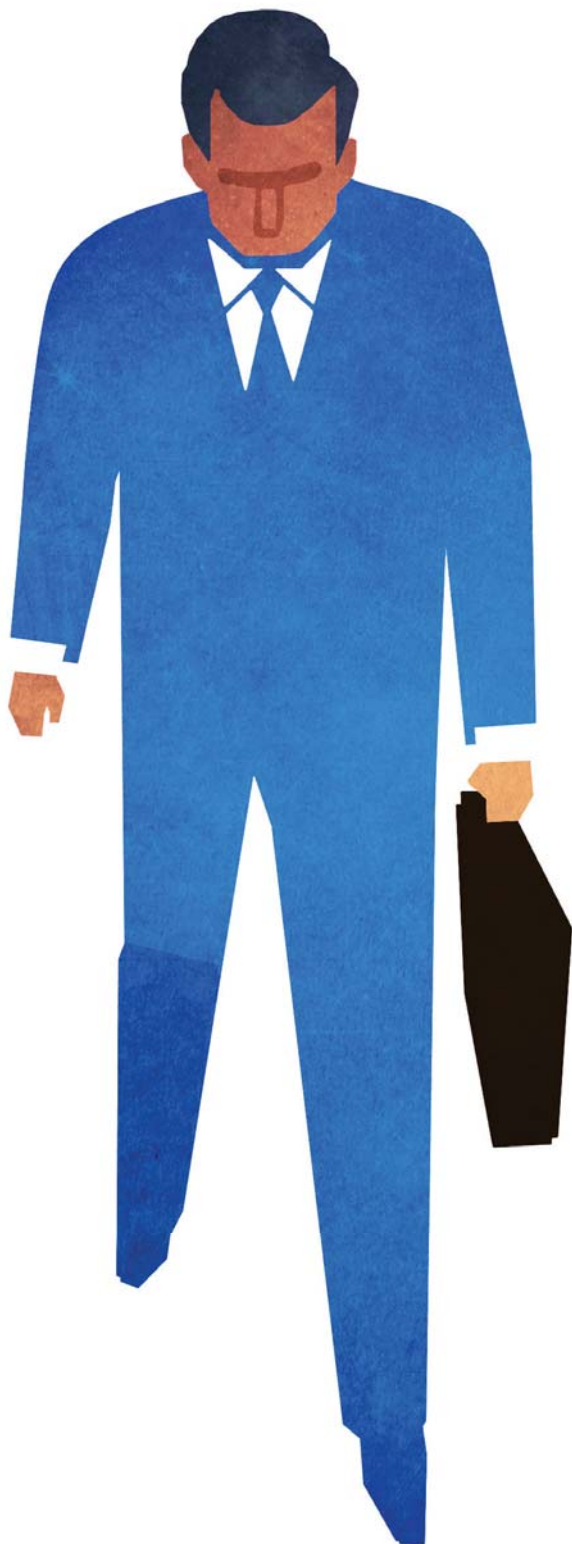
Rinn emphasizes that the board's role in the process doesn't end when a new top manager is hired. The board needs to establish an onboarding process that continues into the early tenure of the new CEO to help him or her succeed. "Give the CEO some guidance. What's the plan for the first six months? Explain to the staff why you hired this person and what you're asking this person to do as he or she is walking in the door," she says. "When you give the CEO goals, make sure you explain them to the staff."

Mangan says co-ops often have strong internal cultures that can take some time to figure out. "The bottom line is a co-op is welcoming a new member to the family," he says. "You've got culture issues. You've got introductions that need to be made. It really needs to be done in a deliberate way to ensure that this new person feels comfortable, feels informed, feels welcome."

Holmes says boards need to recognize that their legacy is tied to the success of the new CEO or manager. "I tell directors, you own this manager," he says. "And you really need to do what you can to make sure the communication is there so everybody's on the same page, especially if you're going to go through some changes." **RE**

IN or OUT?

Where to look for CEO candidates



Hiring a new manager presents an electric cooperative board with a common question: select from within the co-op or look outside?

Staying within the co-op itself, or the co-op network more broadly, has the advantage of bringing on someone who understands the business model and unique culture of cooperatives.

“They’ve already got the goodwill of people within the co-op,” says Michelle Rinn, NRECA senior vice president for human resources. “They already know the ‘skeletons in the closet’ and the relationships that exist. There’s a sense of continuity.”

If a cooperative has a clearly articulated sense of where it wants to go, she adds, that continuity can be an asset. But employment experts say the answer is far from clear-cut.

Ken Holmes, NRECA’s director for executive search, estimates that only about half of internal CEO hires are successful.

“There are great individuals who’ve come up through the ranks and been promoted from within and done a super job,” he says. “But more than 50 percent of the time, from what I’ve seen, the heir-apparent situation has not worked.”

One main reason, he says, is that it can be hard for the new CEO, the board, and other employees to adjust to the change in status of someone they already know.

Rinn concurs. “Someone who has risen up from within the ranks, they go from being a colleague to being a leader, and the transition can be difficult,” she says. “They almost need to start every relationship with a clean slate because people already know who you are, and they’re going to view you through that short lens. They’ve already decided what your strengths and weaknesses are, so that limits you.”

Holmes says even if there is a strong internal candidate at the co-op, someone who has been groomed for the top spot, there are significant benefits to conducting a search and interview process.

First, it indicates to the co-op’s members that the board is taking seriously its responsibility to find the best candidate for the job, not simply following the path of least resistance. Secondly, it helps to legitimize the elevation of the internal candidate if he or she succeeds in an open process that includes more than one applicant.

“If they do get the job, they come in with so much more credibility,” Holmes says. “The board learns a lot about themselves. They learn a lot about the co-op. They learn from the candidates. They get new ideas from those people, even if they don’t end up hiring them. There’s a tremendous amount of value that they’re going to receive by going through the process.”

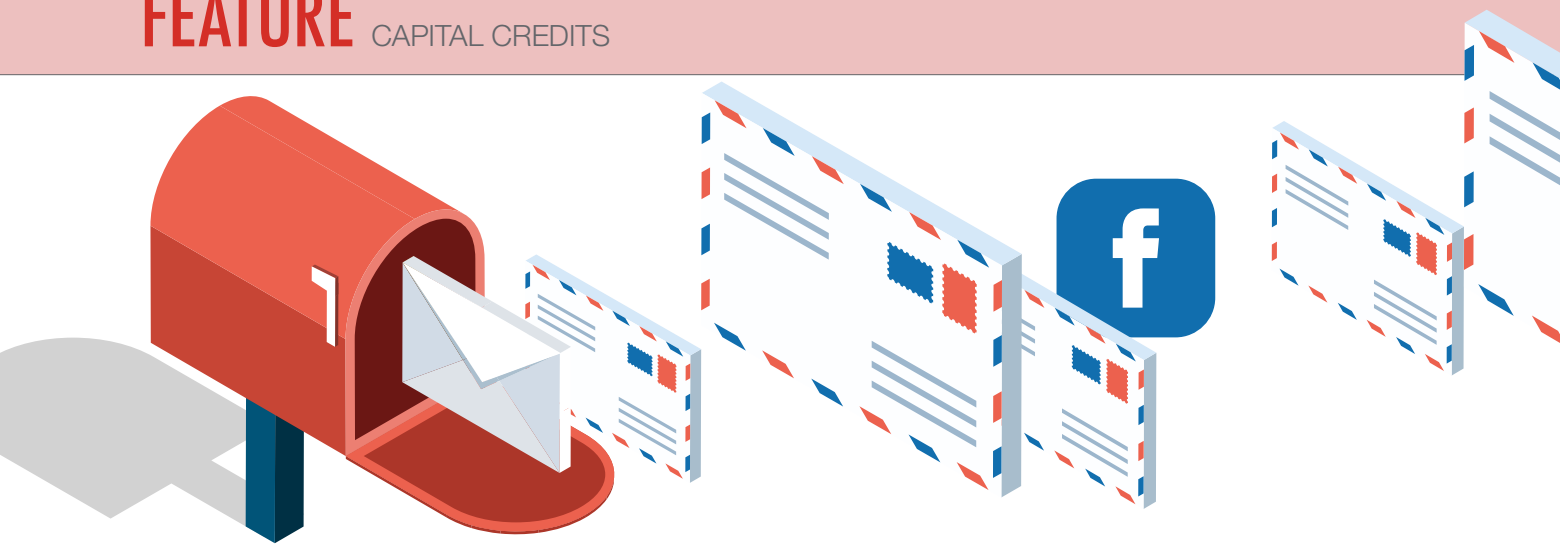
Martin Lowery, NRECA executive vice president for member and association relations, says the key to evaluating a potential new manager, particularly an external candidate, is to see beyond the technical and managerial aspects of the job.

“You want to really probe for values as opposed to simply competencies,” he says.

Look for candidates who are open to co-op principles like democracy, cooperation, self-help, and member ownership, he adds.

“If a person can talk about examples of how they can support those values, it’s likely going to be a good match.”

—By Reed Karaim



CLAIMING THE UNCLAIMED

GETTING RETIRED CAPITAL CREDITS TO LONG-LOST MEMBERS CAN BE AN ART

BY VICTORIA A. ROCHA

As a longtime member of electric, telephone, and food cooperatives, Renee Beasley Jones is proof that it's a good idea to give your co-op your new address each time you move.

Over the years, the communications and public relations manager at Kenergy in Henderson, Ky., has relocated several times to different states for her former husband's job.

"We always let co-ops know where we moved because sooner or later, we would get our checks," she says.

Those checks are retired capital credits—previously allocated financial margins given to co-op members.

"I lovingly call each check that followed me 'found money.' It was a delight to open the mailbox," Jones says. "I remember one check was large enough to buy a table and chairs for a patio at a house we bought after moving to Iowa from North Dakota."

In a perfect world, former members would notify their co-ops each time they move. But people get busy, and if they move a lot, the task could fall between the cracks. It's an issue that several co-ops have taken up: claiming the unclaimed.

Billing/Collections Supervisor Carol Krumlauf at Cherryland Electric Cooperative in Grawn, Mich., has combed through websites, social media sites, and data search software to unearth former members with about \$550,000 in unclaimed capital credits since 2013.

"Getting it in people's hands emphasizes that being a cooperative member is different than being a customer of an investor-owned utility," says Krumlauf, a 32-year employee. "It's a way to say 'thank you' to our members

for being a part of our cooperative family, even if it's in the past."

DETECTIVE SKILLS A PLUS

Boards of directors at each electric co-op decide if and when to retire capital credits. Nationwide, since 1990, co-ops have retired nearly \$13 billion to members, according to an NRECA analysis.

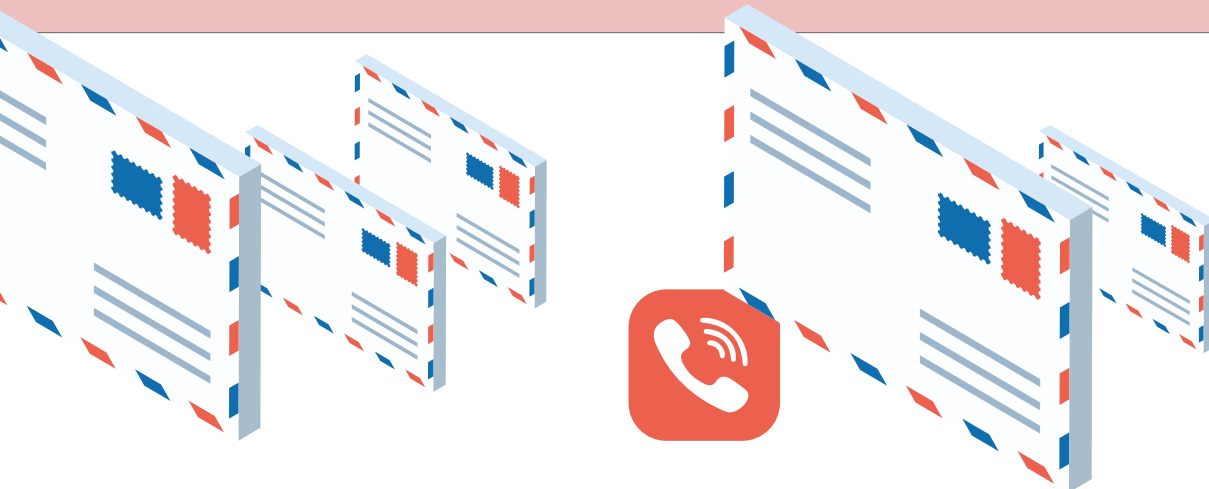
The search for long-lost members can require endurance and good detective skills.

"Every time we retire, more names are added, and every time we 'escheat,' names are removed," Krumlauf says, referring to the practice of reverting property—in this case, money—to the state when it is unclaimed.

Her investigative approach might not work for every co-op, but Krumlauf sifts through co-ops' membership databases for intelligence on the former member: a birthdate, an old address, a previous employer, or other details. Any findings are clues used in online searches for business names; county property records for addresses of seasonal accounts; or state and local government sites of unclaimed property, to name a few.

Intelius, a data search software package, has helped find former members. Krumlauf likes Legacy.com too.

"When I am going through the unclaimed list, I find people who have passed away, and I try to locate the next of kin to request any unclaimed capital credits," Krumlauf says. "They may also have future capital credits that could also be retired at that time."



PUTTING IN 'EXTRA EFFORT'

Bon Homme Yankton Electric in Tabor, S.D., has returned about \$9,800 in unclaimed capital credits in the last 12 months by cranking out snail mail to former members and publishing missing-persons lists in co-op publications and legal notices in the local newspaper.

"We go to the extra effort to contact families instead of waiting for them to contact us," says Nicole Einrem, the co-op's office manager. "If we are aware a member has passed away and we have contact information for someone to represent the estate or family, we send a packet to them. We also send reminders to the estate contact before doing a general retirement if no one has officially claimed the capital credits."

For cases involving uncashed checks, Einrem follows up with letters to addresses in the co-op's membership database.

"If the post office returns the letter, now we know. If not, they may have simply lost or had not cashed their check for another reason," she says.

'DO WE OWE YOU MONEY?'

At Tipmont REMC in Linden, Ind., a banner on the co-op's

website says it all: "Do We Owe You Money?"

"I thought that would be an attention-getter," says Rob Ford, the co-op's communication director.

The site has a real-time search feature where members can find out if they have retired capital credits and, if so, the amount. Another click allows them to claim previously unclaimed retirements.

"It's worked out very well," Ford says. "Members are able to initiate the claim on their schedule, and the information sent to our staff is more complete, making the verification process easier."

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Under the 1995 federal Uniform Unclaimed Property Act, retired capital credits are presumed abandoned if unclaimed by the owner within a period between one and seven years.

"Some but not all states have enacted the uniform act or a similar or successor act," says Ty Thompson, NRECA vice president and deputy general counsel for director and member legal services.

Legal requirements for locating former members and notifying them of unclaimed capital credits retirements vary by state, he adds, as do the actual practices used. And while one

practice may work for one co-op, it may not work for another.

"We are not aware of a national standard or best practice for locating or notifying former members," Thompson says.

And then there's the issue of what ultimately happens to unclaimed capital credits. Statutes in 34 states permit electric cooperatives or their charitable entities to retain unclaimed capital credits, with some limiting use of those funds. In the other 13 states where co-ops operate, there are no such statutes, and the unclaimed capital credits escheat to the state.

A 'WONDERFUL' GIFT

Co-op employees say it can be hard to explain to members why their electric utility is sending them money.

When Krumlauf sends a letter to former Cherryland Electric members asking them to verify information, she notes the amount of the unclaimed capital credits to avoid confusion.

"People are just really surprised that we would look for them," she says. "And very thankful."

The check that helped Kenergy's Jones buy the patio furniture? That came from a telephone cooperative in Hazen, N.D., where Jones had been a member from 1981 to 1994.

"I still have the patio furniture," Jones says. "Capital credits are wonderful." **RE**



The Power of Pink

How a hard hat of a different color is helping 3M and the American Cancer Society® support breast cancer awareness

By Sabrina De Veylder
Global Business Development
Manager, 3M

For Travis Fambrough, a power lineman for the GreyStone Power Corporation electric co-op, wearing his hard hat is about more than protecting his head from on-the-job dangers. It's also about raising awareness for a cause very close to his family.

"Many of my friends and family members have battled cancer, but when my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008, it hit home on a whole new level," he said.

Fambrough's mother Melissa has now been cancer-free for six years. To honor her fight and support other women facing the disease, he wears a 3M™ Pink Hard Hat to work each day. Not only does the hat give Fambrough excellent protection against head injury, it gives him a daily reminder of his mother's strength. To show their support, Fambrough's co-workers have also joined him in wearing pink.

"I think of my mom every time I put my hat on, and when I see all my fellow linemen wearing pink

hard hats while we're working, it's pretty neat," he said.

Fambrough's crew isn't alone. Since they were first introduced by 3M in 2014, thousands of electrical workers around the United States have supported breast cancer awareness by wearing pink hard hats. They symbolize the significant advances made by the American Cancer Society over the past two decades. During this time, breast cancer deaths have dropped by 34 percent and 1.5 million lives have been saved.

These positive outcomes have been driven by improvements in awareness — including efforts to promote regular breast cancer screening and develop more effective treatments — that are

championed by the American Cancer Society.

“Breast cancer awareness is very near and dear to my heart, and I am proud to wear my pink hard hat in memory of my mom Joyce,” said Kirk Behrman, Electric & Water Superintendent, Village of Deshler, Ohio. “Now every time I wear my hat, I know my mom is smiling down proudly as I honor her memory and support every mom, grandma, aunt, sister, daughter or wife that has been taken too soon as well as the brave ones that battle every day to win their fight and someday find a cure.”



Kirk Behrman
*Electric & Water Superintendent
Village of Deshler, Ohio*

3M™ Pink Hard Hats combine comfort and performance, offering an adjustable ratchet suspension and lightweight fit that is easy to wear all day long. What’s more, its low-profile design means sight lines aren’t compromised, helping you stay safer and more productive. When used according to 3M’s instructions, these hats help guard against injuries caused by small falling objects and bumping into stationary objects such as pipes, branches or exposed electrical conductors. They are appropriate for use by electrical workers in the utility, industrial and construction industries.

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Coastal Electric Cooperative staff formed a human ribbon and showed their support for breast cancer research by donning 3M pink hard hats and pink shirts.

3M is a proud supporter of the American Cancer Society. 3M supports breast cancer research with a contribution of \$15,000 in 2016 to the American Cancer Society. ACS does not endorse any service or product. 3M is a trademark of 3M Company. American Cancer Society is a registered trademark of the American Cancer Society, Inc.

JANUARY 2017 PHOTO CHALLENGE WINNERS

Congratulations to Chelsea Gengenbach from Dawson Public Power District for “Merry Morning” (below), winner of the January 2017 *RE Magazine* Photo Challenge with the theme “Christmas Lights.”

Congratulations as well to Ryan Monroe from Canadian Valley Electric Cooperative. His image, “Snowman Wonderland” (right), earned runner-up honors in the competition.



Merry Morning

A shiny Dawson Public Power District bucket truck shows off its Christmas parade lights in a Lexington, Neb., field.

Photo by Chelsea Gengenbach

The March contest theme is “Innovative Line Design.”

Visit REmagazine.coop to see all the photos, read the contest rules, “Like” your favorite shots, or enter some images of your own.



Snowman Wonderland

The annual “Snowman Wonderland” display at Reynolds Wellness Center in Seminole, Okla., features lights, tram rides, and a 65-foot Christmas tree.

Photo by Ryan Monroe

BRIGHT IDEA

LED CHANGE-OUT HELPS TANNER ELECTRIC ON TRUCK ROLLS, BOTTOM LINE

BY JOHN VANVIG

Tanner Electric Cooperative prides itself on being a good corporate neighbor to the 4,700 or so consumer-members it serves in the suburbs east of Seattle. But that neighborliness sometimes comes at a price, and the co-op's generous but increasingly cumbersome and costly policy on outdoor lighting was a clear example.

The co-op maintains neighborhood lighting under a range of ownership and operating agreements with homeowners groups, municipalities, and neighborhood associations throughout its service territory. Varying provisions covering who owns what can complicate their helpful approach, but those questions are generally manageable.

More aggravating, and expensive, was the mish-mash of lights themselves: a bewildering array of energy-hungry halogen and mercury vapor fixtures, differing ballasts, and balky, temperamental photosensor controls that required all-too-frequent servicing.

"I'd been running a truck probably one or two times a week, and that's being conservative," says Jim Anderson, the co-op's manager of operations & engineering. "It costs us probably \$100 an hour to run a truck with one guy in it, and if it's a busy street, you need to send a flag-man along too. I could spend, for one light in a busy area, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$400."

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) looked like a promising answer to most of his problems, Anderson recalls. "I started poking around and looking at LED solutions to see what was right for Tanner," he says. "I knew they were out there, but I didn't know if they would be right for us."

He called another Washington co-op and was told to look into Evluma (evluma.com), a lighting design and manufacturing company based, conveniently, just outside of Seattle.

"If I've got a problem, I can get hold of somebody," Anderson says.

Tanner went with Evluma's AreaMax LED package. The lights dramatically cut energy use, have photo-sensor controls that reduce maintenance trips, and boast

a projected service life that far exceeds the two to three years Anderson was getting out of the older models dotting Tanner Electric's territory.

"When I looked at these, with a 20-year lifespan, it was definitely a no-brainer," he says.

Evluma's AreaMax replaces 100- to 200-watt fixtures with 40- or 70-watt LED units. Its "Photocontrol Failsafe" option backstops sensors and greatly reduces service stops.

PAYBACK IN FIVE YEARS

Anderson put together a cost-of-service study for Tanner Electric's general manager and board of directors that provided some eye-opening statistics and projections:

- The average annual energy use of the old lights was 786 kWh; the LED replacement units would use 172 kWh.

- Changing out an estimated total of 400 lights would cut the co-op's neighborhood lighting use from more than 314,000 kWh to less than 69,000. The cost of that power would drop from about \$28,300 to less than \$6,200.

In addition, promotional packages from the vendor and a conservation rebate from Tanner Electric's wholesale supplier, the Bonneville Power Administration, would shave a bit off the cost of changing out the old lights across the co-op's territory.

As a result, according to the bottom line of Anderson's light-changing study, "Payback will be reached in an estimated five years."

"If I can get the cooperative's money back in five years, it works very well," he says. "Then, at the end of five years, we'll address lighting rates accordingly."

Anderson says they had one small stumble early in the change-out effort.

"When we started to put this in, we set out to do what we thought was going to be the full system," he says. "We estimated 400 lights. When we actually got in there and



Tanner Electric LED street light

Photo by Cathleen Shattuck

MEET A MAG MEMBER

KEVIN SHORT



Kevin Short has been general manager at Anza Electric Cooperative in Anza, Calif., for less than five years, and he's already put his co-op on track to get more than a third of its energy from renewable sources by the end of this year.

But then, he's been at this for a long time. He specialized in photovoltaic installations and wind turbines as owner of Short Electric contracting from 1989 to 2006, and he brought that interest in renewables to Anza Electric when he joined the co-op as manager of member & energy services in 2006.

More recently, Short has shared his long experience with NRECA's Business & Technology Strategies unit as a member of its Renewable & Distributed Energy Member Advisory Group (MAG).

"I was interested in serving on this particular MAG because of my background in renewables and energy efficiency," he says. "I feel the utility industry is on the verge of substantial change as more distributed energy and storage become mainstream thinking."

Anza Electric is well on its way, with a hydro-power contract, a solar farm of its own, and 5 MW of solar power coming soon from its G&T, Arizona Electric Power Cooperative. And Short has found that his MAG work helps him stay ahead of the curve.

"The interaction with the group has been extremely helpful to our efforts," he says. "Knowing how Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative [in Hawaii] has learned from their storage battery deployments has enabled us to fast-forward to a possible deployment of our own in the near future."

started replacing them, it turned out to be closer to 480."

The co-op also had to do a bit of member education as the new lights rolled out.

"It was kind of a learning curve for us, educating members on the different kind of light. A lot of people aren't used to having the true, white light you get from LEDs. But they grabbed on really, really quick."

Anderson had helped pave the way toward that understanding with a sly approach to the installation campaign. The first light he and his crews replaced was right outside the home of one of Tanner Electric's board members.

"The first thing I do," he says, "is try to get the board on board with me. So I went right out to a board member's house. I also put them in at intersections where members had complained about poor light."

One of the unit's features helps address member concerns, he adds: The intensity of the LED units can be changed with a touch of a button on an iPad.

"When people say, 'Oh, it's too bright,' we could actually go out there and dim it down," he says. "If we get a member who doesn't want the light, all we have to do is go out there and turn it off. It definitely gets rid of a big headache for the service guys."

But the majority of members by far have approved of Tanner Electric's new approach to neighborhood lighting, Anderson says. The new lights "have just met with really positive feedback."

'GOOD STEWARDS'

Other than a mandate to be Dark Sky compliant, the co-op is exempt from any conservation targets to meet environmental or regulatory goals. But Tanner Electric and its members have goals of their own.

"Tanner's not obligated at this point through any regulation," Anderson says. "But we consider ourselves to be fairly good stewards, trying to help our members on conservation, and this helps with that. We can say, 'We're doing our part on energy conservation'" with the co-op's new LED approach to outdoor lighting.

"Now, we can say to our members, 'We're trying to conserve as much as we can and also give you the best solution we can provide,'" Anderson continues. "This can do it and also give a payback. That looks good for Tanner, and we feel good doing it. And I know our members appreciate it as well."

And then, of course, there are all those truck rolls that don't have to happen because a finicky light somewhere is acting up again.

"These lights actually maintain themselves," Anderson says. "Manpower is big for us; it's a large part of the budget. If I can free up that time, it opens up a little more time for service work that's more essential than changing a lightbulb." **RE**

A CUT ABOVE

SOUTHSIDE ELECTRIC'S LOUIS URBINE TAKES A FLYER ON AERIAL TRIMMING

BY JOHN VANVIG

The springtime line patrol is getting underway at Southside Electric Cooperative in Crewe, Va., a 55,000-meter co-op that runs from the forested foothills near Roanoke to the marshy lowlands south of Richmond.

More than 2 million trees shroud the co-op's right-of-way corridors, and this is the time of year when Louis Urbine and his vegetation management crew are checking every inch of those spans for overhang threats. With a couple of in-house staffers and on-call contractors, he's planning a summer's worth of work to prevent tree-related outages.

But this time around, Urbine has a new tool at his disposal. Last year, he took a flyer, literally, on clearing his right-of-way with a helicopter. And he liked what he saw.

"We were able to cut almost 26 miles in three days with the aerial trimming, compared to 12 miles in three weeks of climbing," he says.

Urbine chose a particularly critical stretch of line for his helicopter pilot project.

"We had one circuit that we had planned that's going to serve a new hospital," he says. "I wanted to bulletproof that circuit as good as I could. That was an awesome project for us, just from the standpoint that it was our first experience."

Southside Electric even posted a short video of the helicopter work on the co-op's website. (*Visit REmagazine.coop to see the video.*)

The clip shows the chopper zipping along, a long string of radial blades dangling on a flexible framework, shearing the heavy, leafy canopy into a uniform wall of foliage well back from the line.

That takes a pilot who knows the job, Urbine says, and his helicopter contractor had just the guy.

"Jeff Pigott, who flies for Aerial Solutions, previously worked as a lineman," Urbine says. "He knows both sides of the business and is a very skilled pilot. One day, he cut a limb probably 4 inches in diameter. It was laying across all three lines. He moved the helicopter sideways and pulled the limb off the line. It's a very efficient way to do things."

And for Urbine and Southside Electric, efficiency pays

off when it comes to clearing rights-of-way. From paper and lumber companies' pine plantations to wild forests on mountain slopes to wet, sandy terrain that Urbine describes as "not a swamp, but close," there's a lot of wood reaching for the co-op's lines.

"We have about 6,200 miles of primary line and another 60, 70 miles of transmission," Urbine says. "Our tree density on the right-of-way is about 2,175,000 trees, and that puts us at a very high tree exposure compared to other utilities. We are an extremely rural cooperative, and vegetation management is huge for us."

Urbine works with Davey Resource Group to keep track of hazard trees on or just outside the co-op's right-of-way corridors, and keeping those line-threatening snags in check is a monumental task.

"Hazard trees will always be an issue at the cooperative," Urbine says. "We had five crews here [in 2015], and in the past two years, we cut over 11,000 hazard trees, but there's potentially more than 2 million more of them."

Southside Electric members appeared to be receptive to the helicopter trimming, Urbine says.

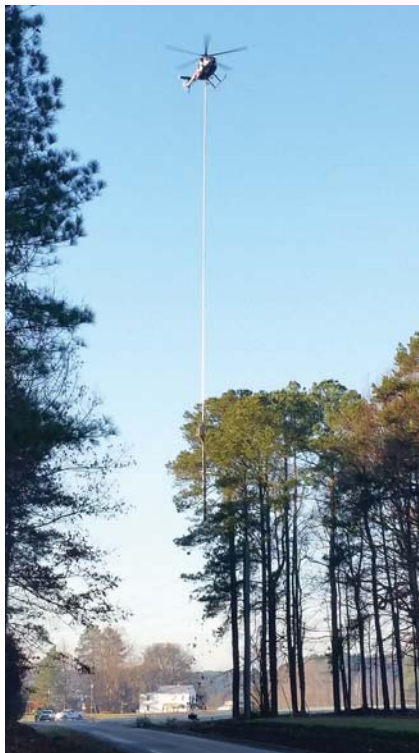
"The membership was overall supportive," he says. "We made a concentrated effort to make sure we provided notification prior to any member near the trimming, and most were curious, even excited, to see it take place."

In the end, he says, bringing in a helicopter with what amounts to a giant chainsaw swaying beneath it is a less

drastic right-of-way tactic than it might seem at first glance.

"As with anything, it has its place," he says. "For rural cooperatives like Southside Electric, I think it's a tool that you need in your toolbox." **RE**

Know someone RE Magazine could profile for our "Front Lines" column? We're looking for co-op operations and member services staffers, from meter readers to lineworkers to engineers, who make things work at electric co-ops nationwide. Contact us at remag@nreca.coop, or you can reach writer John Vanvig directly at johnlvanvig@yahoo.com or 360-624-4595.



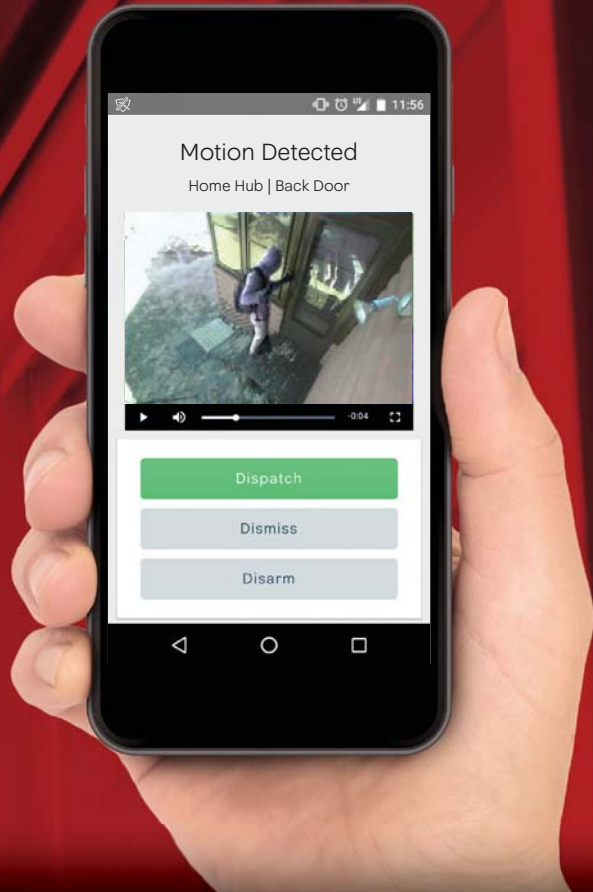
Aerial trimming in Southside Electric service territory

Photo by Louis Urbine



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BY TODD H. CUNNINGHAM



An AES battery storage facility

KIUC EFFORT COMBINES SUN POWER, BATTERIES

Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) in Lihue, Hawaii, has completed a power purchase agreement for the output of an innovative plant that will combine solar energy with battery-based energy storage for what the co-op terms "optimal balancing of generation with peak demand." The facility will consist of a 28-MW solar photovoltaic array and a 20-MW five-hour-duration energy storage system.

KIUC and its project partner, Colorado-based AES Distributed Energy (aesdistributedenergy.com), say the combination will be the largest solar-plus-utility-scale-battery system in the island state and one of the biggest battery systems in the world. AES Distributed Energy will be its long-term owner and operator.

David Bissell, KIUC president and CEO, says energy from the project will account for 11 percent of the co-op's electric generation, increasing the co-op's renewable-sourced generation to well over 50 percent. He estimates that the project will reduce the co-op's fossil fuel use by more than 3.7 million gallons annually.

Additionally, at 11 cents per kWh, the project's delivered power will cost significantly less than the oil-fired power now in use.

Pending state and local regulatory approvals, the project is expected to come on-line by late 2018.

Contact: Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative, Beth Tokioka, 808-246-4348; AES Distributed Energy, Brandi Davis-Handy, 317-261-8423.

SCADA UPGRADE FOR VIRGINIA CO-OP

BARC Electric Cooperative, Millboro, Va., is aiming to increase operational control and boost power reliability by deploying a new SCADA system.

The platform, Survalent ONE from Ontario-based Survalent Technology (survalent.com), has a dual-redundant configuration that will add resilience to BARC Electric's energy distribution system, which serves more than 13,000 members in five Virginia counties.

The system's SmartVU Interface application allows the co-op's operations staff to visualize data, and its Replicator application and Multispeak® interface help share data between enterprise platforms.

"BARC is a progressive utility that's creating a smarter electrical grid, leveraging a significant ongoing investment in a high-speed fiber broadband network," says Steve Strauss, Survalent regional vice president.

Contact: BARC Electric Cooperative, Mike Keyser, 800-846-2272; Survalent Technology, Steve Strauss, 317-435-8371.

IVR SOOTHES SAND MOUNTAIN CREDIT CARD CRUNCH

Sand Mountain Electric Cooperative's decision to accept credit card payments had an unwelcome side effect: out-of-control processing challenges with skyrocketing call volumes, leaving the Rainsville, Ala.-co-op hard pressed to serve its members.

But it's found a solution: an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system from software developer SEDC (sedata.com).

When the system went live in May 2015, "it took a huge load off cashiers, who no longer needed to key in data manually, one [member] at a time," says Lisa Greeson, Sand Mountain Electric's supervisor of information systems. The new system allows the co-op to accept "an infinite number of phone calls simultaneously," she says, adding that a member calling the IVR number never faces a busy signal, is put on hold, or needs to be transferred.

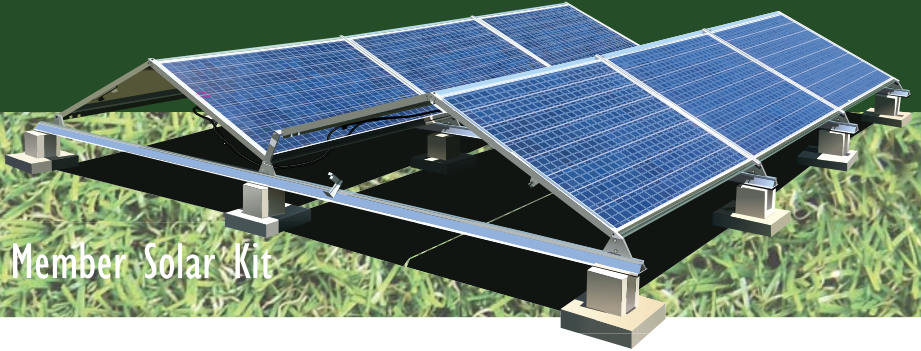
Sand Mountain Electric's extension of IVR services to prepay and debt-management accounts has also meant a dramatic reduction in cutoffs, as prepay members can opt into text message alerts when their balance reaches a certain level.

Contact: Sand Mountain Electric Cooperative, Lisa Greeson, 877-843-2512; SEDC, Robin Vogt, 770-414-8400, ext. 2643.

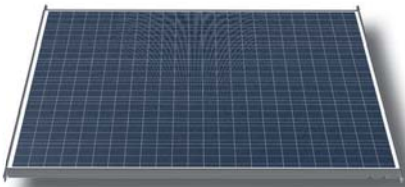


Today's Power

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Photo courtesy Hancock-Wood Electric

Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative staff celebrate the opening of the co-ops' OurSolar project.

HANCOCK-WOOD HOLDS SOLAR GRAND OPENING

North Baltimore, Ohio-based Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative is harvesting the sun at its OurSolar community solar array, a project that President and CEO George Walton says was launched in response to members' calls for more renewable energy resources. The co-op was the first Ohio co-op to subscribe all 304 available panels and did so within two weeks.

Members subscribed to the energy output of up to 10 panels, at an average cost of less than \$2 a month per panel. The subscription cost is 9.44 cents per kWh, about 2.4 cents more than current average generation cost. A waiting list is available for those who wish to participate as current subscribers move off the list.

The OurSolar project was funded by Hancock-Wood Electric's G&T, Columbus-based Buckeye Power; Hancock-Wood will maintain the facility. The co-op worked with the G&T's leadership to find credits, rebates, and incentives.

Contact: Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative, Diana Hersch, 419-257-5011.

BENTON REA REINFORCES CYBER ATTACK DEFENSES

Benton Rural Electric Association (REA) IT Manager Jeff Bastow estimates that his co-op is hit by a cyber attack an average of once per second. This persistent threat, combined with the co-op's processing of credit card payments on its corporate network, puts a premium on keeping cyber defenses up to date.

Bastow says the Prosser, Wash.-based co-op has launched a system that provides round-the-clock vigilance and identifies about 10 percent more cyber issues than the co-op's previous firewall, "which could be crucial."

The system, N-Sentinel Monitoring from N-Dimension Solutions (n-dimension.com), allows staff to fine-tune firewall policies; increases visibility and insights into potential cyber security issues; and offers access to experts who can provide IT staff with guidance on reducing risk, Bastow says.

Contact: Benton REA, Jeff Bastow, 800-221-6987; N-Dimension Solutions, Denise Barton, 408-219-3403.

DAIRYLAND POWER ADDING UTILITY-SCALE SOLAR

Dairyland Power Cooperative in La Crosse, Wis., has finalized agreements for three additional utility-scale solar generation projects, bringing the total number under contract to 15 and the total solar power generation in the G&T's system to 20 MW.

A 2.5-MW array will be at Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative, Cornell, Wis., and a 1-MW array will be at Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, Centuria, Wis. The third, a 1.3-MW project, will be at Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, Postville, Iowa.

The solar arrays will use tracking systems that follow the path of the sun to increase energy production; all are expected to be operational in early 2017.

Dairyland President and CEO Barbara Nick called the G&T's solar portfolio "an exciting example of our commitment to providing safe, reliable, and sustainable energy far into the future," adding that the two Wisconsin projects will nearly double the solar generation in the state.

The power purchase agreements for the three new projects, and 11 of the 12 previously announced, are with Chicago-based SoCore Energy (socoreenergy.com), which will install, own, operate, and maintain the facilities.

Contact: Dairyland Power Cooperative, Craig Harmes, 608-787-1310; SoCore Energy, 877-762-6731. **RE**



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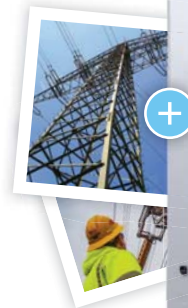
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GRID SENSOR OVER CELL NETWORK

Sentient Energy line sensors and Grid Analytics System are now certified for large-scale deployment on AT&T 4G LTE cellular networks. Equipped with high-resolution oscillography, the sensors detect faults and fault precursors on electric power lines and enable the safe integration of rooftop solar and other distributed energy resources into the grid. MM3 sensors with wireless connectivity do not require any pole-mounted equipment and provide important grid operations information in near real time.

Contact: Sentient Energy, Burlingame, Calif., 650-523-6680; info@sentient-energy.com; sentient-energy.com.



LED STREETLIGHT

EnGen Technologies just launched its *EnGen 4*, an innovative self-powered street/area lighting solution that can be located anywhere within a span and doesn't require a pole or transformer. The LED light radically reduces street lighting installation costs and logistical restrictions. The EnGen 4 is 11.5 lbs., operates on lower line amperage, and can be installed via hot stick to live power lines in 10 minutes or less. A capacitor leverages the line's electromagnetic field to power the LED.

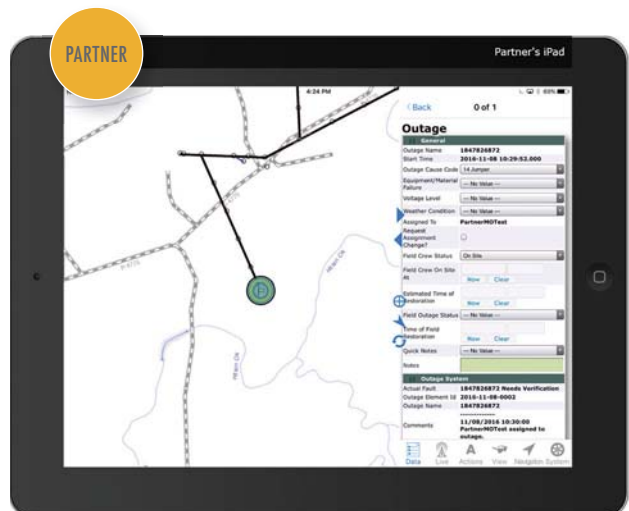
Contact: EnGen Technologies, Beaverton, Ore., 503-292-8682; fax 503-292-8697; robert@engen-tech.com; engen-tech.com.



EASIER OUTAGE ASSIGNMENT

Outage assignments and resolutions are a little easier now with **Partner Software's** *Mobile Outage application*, which provides outage location, outage data, and communication between field personnel and the office dispatcher. It displays real-time outage data geographically in the Partner Map Viewer and makes use of network connectivity to allow editing and sharing. While connected, data is transferred immediately so crews are instantly up to date. As a non-web-based system, it integrates with Milsoft's DisSPatch and Star Energy's PYXIS OMS and is available on laptops, on Windows devices, and in the iOS environment.

Contact: Partner Software, Athens, Ga., 800-964-1833; rcatanise@partnersoft.com; partnersoft.com



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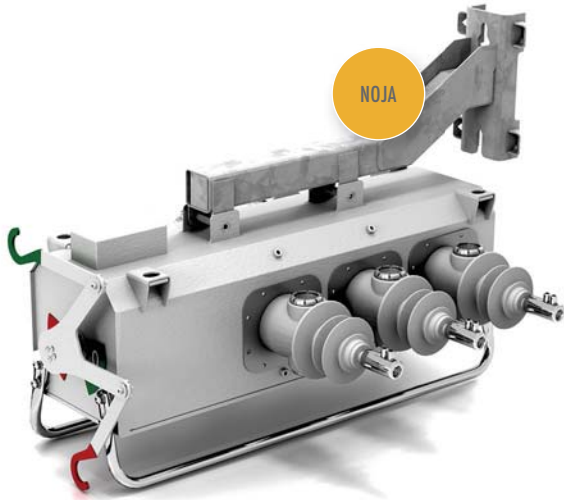
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LOAD BREAK SWITCH

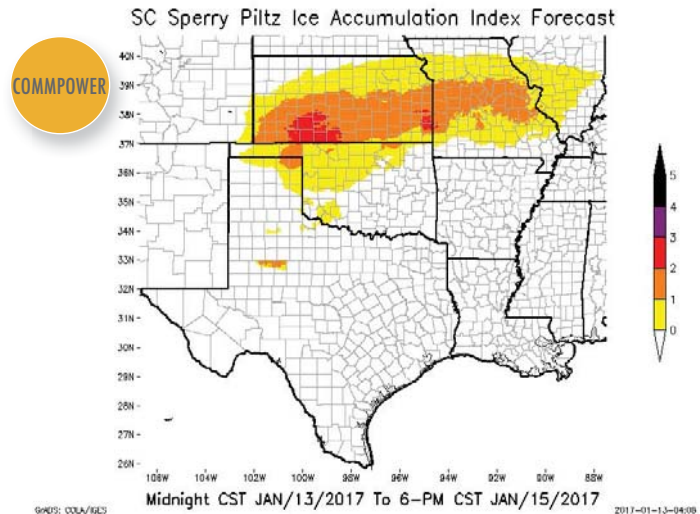
The soon-to-be-commercially-released *VISI-SWITCH* load break switch from **NOJA Power** combines the reliability of enclosed circuit breakers with a patent-pending visible air isolation gap that is popular with maintenance staff because it improves safety. The general-purpose unit features vacuum interrupters with solid dielectric to eliminate environmentally damaging sulphur hexafluoride (SF6) gas and a unique drive mechanism to ensure safe sequencing and operation. *VISI-SWITCH* enables three-phase, medium-voltage distribution network manual isolation and a rated maximum voltage of 15.5 kV, a rated continuous current of 800 A, and a short-time current withstand of 16 kA (for 3 seconds).

Contact: *NOJA Power, Alpharetta, Ga., 844-665-2797; sales@nojapower.com; nojapower.com.*

ICE OUTAGE-FORECAST MESSAGING

CommPower Inc., a 30-year-old messaging, alerts, and notifications company and original inventor of the NOAA Weather Radio, has teamed up with SPIDI Weather Solutions LLC to add *iNOTiFY* to the Sperry-Piltz Ice Accumulation (SPIA) Index, a forecasting service specifically for predicting power outage risk from the combination of ice and wind. The SPIA Index website provides alerts up to 72 hours ahead, mapping the severity of the outages that could be caused by an ice storm. With *iNOTiFY*, SMS-based automated messaging alerts can be sent to appropriate service crews and managers. Lightning alerts and a “fire spread index” are being added next to the forecasting service.

Contact: *SPIDI Weather Solutions LLC, Guthrie, Okla., 405-627-7754; sid.sperry@spidiweather.com; spia-index.com*



RELAY WITH DISTANCE PROTECTION

Basler Electric's latest addition to its *BEI-11 Multi-function Protective Relaying system* features distance protection for feeder and transformer protection applications. The BEI-11f now includes distance, overexcitation, and directional power protection, and the BEI-11t now includes distance, sync-check, and reclosing functions. All Basler products use BESTCOMSPlus PC software.

Contact: *Basler Electric Company, Highland, Ill.; 618-654-2341; basler.com.*



DIELECTRIC RUBBER SAFETY BOOT

Skellerup Footwear's *Quatro Dielectric Steel Toe* is a 100-percent-waterproof, hand-laid, premium rubber dielectric 15-in. safety boot. Ergonomically designed to lock in the foot and prevent heel slip, it has a wide-fitting ComfortForm steel toe cap and removable Quatro Comfort System innersole. Every boot is tested after manufacture at 20 kV for three minutes in water, as per ASTM F1116, and has a traceable serial number for personal protective equipment management and control.

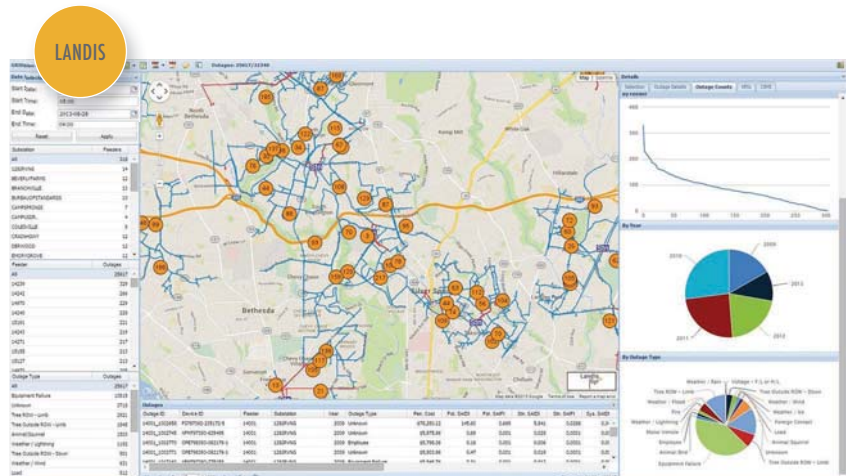
Contact: *Skellerup Footwear USA, Falconer, N.Y., 855-253-0920; customerservice@skellerupfootwear.com; skellerupfootwear.com.*



RELIABILITY PLANNER

Landis+Gyr's new *Reliability Planner application* is part of its Advanced Grid Analytics platform and offers the ability to calculate and display reliability performance indicators and measure improvement. The application was built to help utilities prioritize and strategically improve grid reliability planning in an accurate, efficient, and cost-effective manner. In addition, it delivers an analysis of past outages and mitigation options, allowing engineers and operators to better plan, anticipate, and respond to network interruptions.

Contact: *Landis+Gyr, Alpharetta, Ga., 218-562-5195; dan.jacobson@landisgyr.com; landisgyr.com.*





HAZARD AREA FLOODLIGHT

Lumenox has released its *LPX6 explosion-proof ATEX/IECEX-approved high output LED portable floodlight* for providing temporary portable lighting in Zone 1, 2, 21, and 22 gas and dust environments in oil and gas, petrochemical, aviation, marine, utility, and other hazardous areas. Powered from either 115 or 230 VAC, the light output, generated from an array of 16 high-efficiency LEDs, is 5,800 lumens at a color temperature of 5,000 degrees K. LPX6 is IP66-sealed against the ingress of water or dust, allowing it to be used in harsh environments. Operating lifetime is in excess of 75,000 hours.

Contact: *Lumenox Limited, Warwickshire, UK, +44 (0) 1789 860000; sales@lumenox.co.uk; lumenox.co.uk.*

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NISC <i>nisc.coop</i>	C2		

PATCHING WOODPECKER DAMAGE

Battling woodpecker damage to poles can be expensive and frustrating. **Crosslink Technology's** *Pecker Patch* is a polyurethane compound for repairing wood utility poles damaged by woodpeckers, insects, or rot. The company's focus was on lineman safety and ease with which the product could be dispensed under the sometimes difficult conditions faced by repair crews.

Contact: Crosslink Technology Inc., Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, 800-563-3769, 905-673-0510; crosslinktech.com.




GRID IoT SOLUTION

Schneider Electric launched its *EcoStruxure* architecture and platform to enable end-to-end internet of things (IoT) solutions. Developed in partnership with Microsoft, Intel and others, EcoStruxure is an open and interoperable system and IoT platform built to safely and efficiently provide connectivity from customers to the grid. With advancements in IoT, mobility, sensing, cloud, analytics, and cyber security technologies, the platform delivers energy management and automation that scales for building, grid, industry, and data center customers.

Contact: Schneider Electric, Andover, Mass., 978-502-9607; david.smith.us@schneider-electric.com; schneider-electric.com. RE

All items in "Marketplace" are based on information provided by vendors. Mention of a company, product, or service by name does not imply endorsement by RE Magazine or NRECA.—Scot Hoffman, Editor



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NATIONAL MOURNING WATTS

Co-op leaders and friends across the country were saddened by the recent passing of **Carolyn Herr Watts**, a determined rural electric advocate who spent three decades representing co-ops and their consumers in Washington, D.C., and Raleigh, N.C. Watts served as a senior legislative representative at NRECA from 1978 to 1995, when she moved to the U.S. Department of Energy. A year and a half later, she was named senior vice president of corporate relations at the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Raleigh, where she served until retiring in 2008. A recipient of NRECA's prestigious **Clyde T. Ellis Award**, Watts earned mournful social media tributes from other rural electric stalwarts. "She was tenacious, gracious, strategic, savvy, smart as a whip, and a person of great grace and humor," **Jeff Almen**, manager of industry relations at National Information Solutions Cooperative (service), Lake St. Louis, Mo., wrote on Facebook. Added **Meera Kohler**, president/CEO at Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, Anchorage, Alaska, and the state's representative on the

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NRECA board: "Carolyn was a treasure and a good friend. Rest in peace, Carolyn. You will be sorely missed."

REGION 1 WILLIAMS PASSES

Co-op leaders across the country mourned the recent passing of **Jack Williams**, a longtime member of the board at Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO), Hughesville, Md., who represented his state on the NRECA board as well as co-ops nationwide as the association's board president. Williams served on the SMECO board from 1958 until his retirement on January 1, 2006, and was its secretary-treasurer for nearly 40 years. He was elected to the NRECA board in 1976 and rose to become its president for a two-year term beginning in 1989. Reporting on his retirement from the SMECO board in 2006, the co-op's employee



Jack Williams

newsletter recalled that Williams and his wife, **Marjorie**, bought a recreational vehicle while he was NRECA president and drove it across country to the association's regional meetings. "Each day that we traveled," he told his co-op's newsletter, "we stopped at the office of the local electric co-op so I could speak with the general manager. It was very beneficial and rewarding for me to meet not just the statewide co-op leaders, but also the others who worked for the co-ops." During his SMECO tenure, Williams also represented his co-op on the board of the Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Glen Allen, Va., and served on the board of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC, service), Dulles, Va. Williams was 95.

Mildred Hooe celebrated her recent employment milestone at Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative (NOVEC), Manassas, Va., by reflecting on a half-century's worth of memories. She started as a temporary employee to help Prince William Electric Cooperative, one of NOVEC's predecessor co-ops, through a billing-system change. "When this job was completed," Hooe remembered, "the general manager, Mr. **Reuben Hicks**, pulled up a chair beside my

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work table and asked if I would like a permanent job with the company. To me, this was one of the most exciting days of my life—to be offered a job I never asked for. I accepted and went to see [Office Manager] Mrs. **Elizabeth O’Neil** the following morning. She said something to me that I have never forgotten over the 50 years of employment with NOVEC. She said, ‘Mildred, remember your job starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 5 p.m. That does not mean walking through the door at 8 a.m., it means being at your desk and ready to work.’” That first job as a file clerk, paying \$1.67 an hour, led to a promotion to billing clerk, then billing supervisor and acting call center supervisor. Hooe, who now works as a customer account specialist, said the co-op has always been “a very interesting place to work.” A few other NOVEC employees celebrated service milestones recently: **James Pickett**, 45 years; **Paul Carothers**, 30 years; **Kent Cassell** and **Chris Goisse**, 25 years; and **Jade Angeles** and **Priscilla Knight**, 10 years. Three others, meanwhile, have just begun their NOVEC careers. **Aaron Church** signed on as a field service technician, **Abouzar Rahmati** joined the staff as a protection engineer, and **Alicia Stokes-Tyler** is a new customer service representative.

Central Electric Cooperative, Parker, Pa., has promoted **Janet Guthrie** to manager of member services. Guthrie, who joined the staff in 1995, previously served as an assistant billing & collections supervisor. She graduated from NRECA’s **Robert I. Kabat** Management Internship Program

two years ago. Also at Central Electric, 11 employees recently marked service anniversaries amounting to more than two centuries of experience. They are **Jeff Murray**, 40 years; **Randy Bernard**, **Scott Best**, and **Eric Terwilliger**, 35 years; **Lisa Hoover**, 25 years; **Brice Stewart**, 15 years; **Dawn Larimore** and **Josh Wallin**, 10 years; and **Matt Bartley**, **Justin Hovis**, and **Caitlin Kriebel**, five years.

NRECA has presented its prestigious **J.C. Brown** CEO Communication Leadership Award to **Curtis Wynn**, president/CEO at Roanoke Electric Cooperative, Ahoskie, N.C. Award judges pointed to Wynn’s leadership in expanding Roanoke Electric’s communications channels to more than 30, including a co-op blog, e-newsletter, mobile apps, and various social media platforms. He launched the co-op’s “Straight Talk” forums that bring Wynn face to face with members throughout its seven-county service territory. “Leading an electric cooperative requires commitment to reaching out to all the members, meeting them where they are and urging them to become engaged,” said NRECA CEO **Jim Matheson**, who presented the award. “Curtis Wynn is a leader and innovator committed to improving the lives of the people he serves. I applaud Curtis for his contributions to his co-op, to our industry, and the larger community, in North Carolina and internationally.” Wynn also serves as secretary-treasurer of the NRECA board.

John Coffey has been named senior vice president & COO at Blue Ridge Energy, Lenoir, N.C. Coffey takes



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John Coffey



Lee Layton

over from **Lee Layton**, COO since 2005, who will retire later this spring as senior vice president & executive consultant. A 29-year utility industry veteran, Coffey comes to the co-op from Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative, Mt. Crawford, Va., where he was vice president of engineering

& operations for the past 11 years. “We’re excited to welcome John to Blue Ridge,” said **Doug Johnson**, CEO.

REGION 2 HABIB’S NEXT STEP

Participation in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour four years ago triggered an interest in public service that led **Phillip Habib** to become the youngest elected official in South Carolina following last year’s voting. Berkeley Electric Cooperative, Moncks Corner, S.C., sent Habib, 20, to the 2013 Youth Tour, NRECA News reported, and when he saw that no candidate had filed for Berkeley County soil & water commissioner, he mounted a last-minute write-in campaign. “I was actually filling out my absentee ballot, and I noticed that there were no filed candidates for the office,” Habib told NRECA news, adding that his thought was, “Hey, nobody’s running for this. Why can’t I?” He could, and did, and won the office with 463 votes. No surprise there, according to **Van O’Cain**, director of public & member relations at the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina (statewide), Cayce. “He’s a natural leader with a unique ability to make friends in a second,” O’Cain said. “It was clear to me from the very

start of the Washington Youth Tour that Phillip would do well if he chose to go into public service. I’m proud of what Phillip’s accomplished at such a young age, but not surprised.”

Richard Dennison, a trustee at SECO Energy, Sumterville, Fla., has earned Credentialed Cooperative Director status through NRECA’s rigorous director training and certification program. “I applaud Mr. Dennison’s efforts to learn more about electric cooperative governance and cooperatives themselves,” said **Ray Vick**, the co-op board’s president. Dennison has been a SECO Energy board member since 2015. “By continuing my education, I can keep abreast of industry advancements and continue to work for our members,” he said.

Two line technicians at Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative (CHELCO), DeFuniak Springs, Fla., earned the gratitude of an elderly member and his neighbors with a small act of heroism recently. **Sean Dunn** and **Derek Tabor** encountered 93-year-old **Ken Snoblin** after



Sean Dunn



Derek Tabor

Snoblin had become disoriented during a stroll through the neighborhood. “When he approached Mr. Tabor and Mr. Dunn, he was totally exhausted from walking so long,” **James Buchanan** wrote in a thank-you note to the co-op. “They assisted Ken, which resulted in their contacting me. ... He was very thankful for the assistance he had received from the CHELCO workers. For their assistance, Ken, his family, and mine are truly grateful.” The co-op also announced a job change and two new hires: **Kevin Campbell**,


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a marketing representative since 2007, was named an engineering representative, while **Lori Brown** came aboard as an administrative support specialist, and **Sean Divilbliss** signed on as a mechanic helper. And Trustee **Jim Bishop** has earned Director Gold status through NRECA's director training and certification program. **Burt Cosson** received his Board Leadership Certificate under the same program.

REGION 3 A PICKWICK FIRST

Bill Jackson recently celebrated 50 years of service at Pickwick Electric Cooperative, Selmer, Tenn., becoming the first employee in the co-op's history to reach the half-century milestone. Jackson started out on the right-of-way crew, moved to meter reader and meter order man, and now supervises consumer records and accounts.

A temporary job at Caney Fork Electric Cooperative, McMinnville, Tenn., turned into a two-decade career for **Brenda Clayton**, who retired recently as cashier/receptionist in the co-op's Spencer office. "I will really miss the members, the people I have worked for all these years," Clayton said. "They are absolutely some of the best people I know." Taking her place at the co-op is **Lesa Bouldin**.

Employees and fellow board members at Wiregrass Electric Cooperative, Hartford, Ala., congratulated two trustees for earning advanced certification under NRECA's director training program. **John Clark Jr.** and **Tracy Reeder** both received their Board Leadership Certificates recently.

PowerSouth Energy Cooperative (G&T), Andalusia, Ala., said farewell to a retiring employee and welcomed a new one recently. **Dana Elliot** retired as a customer service representative after 12 years on the staff, while **Danny Barnes** joined the crew as an evening custodian.

REGION 4 A VETERAN RETIRES

More than three decades of dedicated service to Steuben County Rural Electric Membership Corporation, Angola, Ind., drew to a close with the recent retirement of **Neal Knox** as one of the co-op's most seasoned linemen. "He didn't need maps; he knew the system like the back of his hand," the co-op said in announcing his retirement in the member newsletter. "There's not a line I haven't worked on,"



Neal Knox

Knox said in the newsletter article. "I've talked to a lot of customers throughout my 31 years, and I would want them to say that I've led by example. That's how I want to be remembered, as someone that was here to help, someone that was here to serve people." Storm recovery efforts were among the toughest days he spent on co-op lines, both at home and in distant mutual-aid efforts, he added. "It's a dangerous job," Knox said. "But there's nothing more rewarding than working after a storm or an ice storm and everyone is cheering and giving you high fives because they've just gotten lights back on. I can't tell you how many times that has happened. People are just elated to get power back."

Trustees at Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative, North Baltimore, Ohio, took note recently when the co-op sent its third Electric Cooperative Youth Tour participant within four years to NRECA's Annual Meeting as a Youth Leadership Council delegate. No other Ohio co-op has managed the feat, Hancock-Wood Electric reported. "We are proud of our rural members who are raising extraordinary young people who have accomplished so much before their 18th birthdays," said **George Walton**, president & CEO. Trustees **Marlene Barker**, **Dave**

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Corbin, James Demler, Tom Dierkscheide, Ed Ingold, Tom Kagy, Bill Kale, Knut Lahrs, Gordon Miller, and Tim Phillips moved to recognize the co-op's three Youth Leadership Council members: **Rachel Wenzinger, Ryan Wenzinger, and Olivia Velasquez.**

Employees, board members, and consumers at Paulding Putnam Electric Cooperative, Paulding, Ohio, were sorry to learn of the recent passing of **Darwin "Hook" McClure**, a retired trustee and board president at the co-op. McClure was 81.

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Portland, Mich., mourned the recent death of **Wayne Swiler**, who served for nearly four decades on the co-op's board. He also represented his co-op on the board of Wolverine Power Cooperative (G&T), Cadillac, Mich.

REGION 5 XPRIZE ADVANCE

Some heavy electric co-op involvement is behind a carbon-conversion project that recently advanced in a worldwide competition. Earth Energy-American Green Gasoline (EE-AGG), an Iowa-based private venture developing a gasification process, made it into the second round of the \$20 million NRG COSIA Carbon XPRIZE competition to find ways to capture, convert, and re-use carbon emissions from power plants. EE-AGG's board includes **David Stevens**, director of operations & coordinator of

economic development at Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative, Woodbine, Iowa; **Mary Zahner**, the co-op's senior accountant; and **Curtis Mether**, a former member of the co-op's board. **Larry Ramsey**, a current member of its board, sits on EE-AGG's advisory board.

Employees, board members, and consumers at Prairie Energy Cooperative, Clarion, Iowa, lost a dedicated director with the recent death of **Doyce Pringnitz**, a member of the co-op's board since July 2009. Pringnitz, 64, had recently earned NRECA's Board Leadership Certificate. "He was dedicated to doing his best for the membership, with a goal of good service and affordable rates," the co-op noted in *Energy in Touch*, its member newsletter. "His leadership and service to Prairie Energy will be missed." The co-op also recently recognized four employees for reaching major service milestones. They are **Steve Jackson**, 25 years; **Lori Demuth** and **Darren Johnson**, 15 years; and **Tanner Riedesel**, 10 years.

Tim Bohnhoff has added office manager duties to his member services coordinator portfolio in becoming office & member services manager at Norris Electric Cooperative, Newton, Ill. Bohnhoff has worked at the co-op for 10 years, "and with his background and knowledge in the energy industry, he is a valuable asset" to the co-op, according to a recent edition of *Norris Electric News*, the co-op's member newsletter. The newsletter also reported that **Blake Kuhl** joined the staff as an apprentice line clearance man.

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REGION 6 BENCO'S NEW CEO

One veteran is succeeding another at the top of the organizational chart at BENCO Electric Cooperative, Mankato, Minn. **Dave Sunderman**, the co-op's former COO and 24-year BENCO Electric employee, was named CEO to succeed **Wade Hensel**, who will stay on as general manager until he retires next month after 40 years at the co-op. "Dave will bring a wealth of knowledge about the cooperative and the electric industry to the position of CEO," Hensel said. Board President **Scott Johnson** noted that Sunderman has been active in the community since joining the co-op as member services manager in 1992. "Dave has many years of serving in the Mankato community through his involvement in Greater Mankato Growth, Rotary, serving as a member of the Mankato

School Board, and many other organizations," Johnson said. "Dave oversaw economic development for the cooperative and worked with forming relationships with our commercial and industrial accounts. He also was active in promoting BENCO and the cooperative's position with policy-makers on the state and national levels."

Her new co-workers at Central Electric Cooperative, Mitchell, S.D., have welcomed **Heather Wiczorek** into the ranks as the co-op's new administrative assistant.

North Central Electric Cooperative, Bottineau, N.D., has promoted **Tyler Liebelt** to line crew foreman. Liebelt is a 10-year employee at the co-op. Joining the co-op's line crews, meanwhile, is **Josh McNea**, a Bottineau native who signed on as an apprentice lineman recently after spending two summers at the co-op as a seasonal part-time employee.

KEM Electric Cooperative, Linton, N.D., paid a final tribute to the late **Adolph Feyereisen Jr.**, a retired director who passed away recently at 80. Feyereisen, who retired from the co-op's board in 2012 after 30 years of service, also represented his co-op on the board of the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Mandan, including stints as president and vice president. He received the statewide's Cooperative Leadership Award in 2005.

REGION 7 BOARD DEPARTURES

Two longtime board veterans have retired at Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, Buena Vista, Colo. **Phil DeLuca** served on the co-op's board for 39 years, serving in all of its officer positions and representing his co-op on the board of the Colorado Rural Electric Association (statewide), Denver. **Arlic Riggs** was a board member for



Phil DeLuca

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23 years and served as secretary and vice president. “Losing Arlie and Phil will leave a big gap in the board’s institutional knowledge base that won’t soon be replenished,” said CEO **Paul Erickson**. “Their unselfish leadership helped shape the co-op into what it is today.” Taking their seats on the co-op board are **Dennis Dlugokinski** and **Donald Kaufman**.



Arlie Riggs

Ryan Peacock has been named substation maintenance foreman at La Plata Electric Association, Durango, Colo. A Durango native, Peacock has been at the co-op since 1998. He worked as a lineman and serviceman before advancing to working foreman in 2014 and shifting to substation maintenance in April 2016.

Staff and trustees at Prairie Land Electric Cooperative, Norton, Kan., have said farewell to **Gilbert Berland**, whose recent retirement from the co-op’s board wrapped up 33 years of dedicated service. Berland was elected to the board of Norton-Decatur Electric Cooperative in 1983, and he was that co-op’s president when it merged with Northwest Kansas Electric Cooperative in 1997. The combined board promptly elected him to continue as president. Berland, who became a Credentialed Cooperative Director in 2001 and achieved Director Gold status in 2015, also represented

his co-op on the board of Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (G&T), Topeka. After 33 busy years as a co-op trustee, Berland is keeping his retirement plans simple. “My plans are to enjoy the kids and grandkids,” he said.

Employees, board members, and consumers at Doniphan Electric Cooperative Association, Troy, Kan., mourned the recent passing of **Arlan Mitchell**, who served on the co-op’s board for 11 years before taking over as its general manager in 1998. **James Currie**, general manager at Brown-Atchison Electric Cooperative Association, Horton, Kan., has taken on the top post at Doniphan Electric as well, although the two co-ops have no merger or consolidation plans.

REGION 8 TURNING TABLES

When her co-workers at Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative Corporation, Ozark, Ark., voted her Employee of the Year, **Lynn Culver** handed compliments back to them. “I am very fortunate to get to work with such a great group of people,” the engineering clerk and 28-year co-op employee said. “It is an honor for me to be Employee of the Year because I was chosen by my co-workers.” She deserved that honor, according to CEO/General Manager **Al Simpson**. “She is hard-working and understands professionalism,” Simpson said. “She is often the first contact for new members and always greets them with respect, and she

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is very willing to get them started in the right direction with Arkansas Valley.”

Folks at the Thomas Hill Energy Center, a power plant owned by Associated Electric Cooperative (G&T), Springfield, Mo., have said farewell to **Mike Green**, who retired recently as a mechanical maintenance supervisor after 36 years on the G&T’s staff. And while Green was wrapping up his Associated Electric career, **Steven Wood** was celebrating 35 years on the staff. Wood also works at the Thomas Hill Energy Center as a control room operator.

Hayley Leatherwood, multimedia specialist at the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Oklahoma City, and its consumer magazine *Oklahoma Living*, was recognized recently with the state’s NextGen Under 30 Award. She accepted the award from Gov. **Mary Fallin** at a recent banquet at which former U.S. Rep. **J.C. Watts** was a featured speaker. “We’re proud of Hayley’s accomplishments and her contributions to Oklahoma’s electric cooperatives,” said **Chris Meyers**, the statewide’s general manager. “She is creatively driven and very passionate for her craft. We are fortunate to have Hayley as part of our co-op family.”

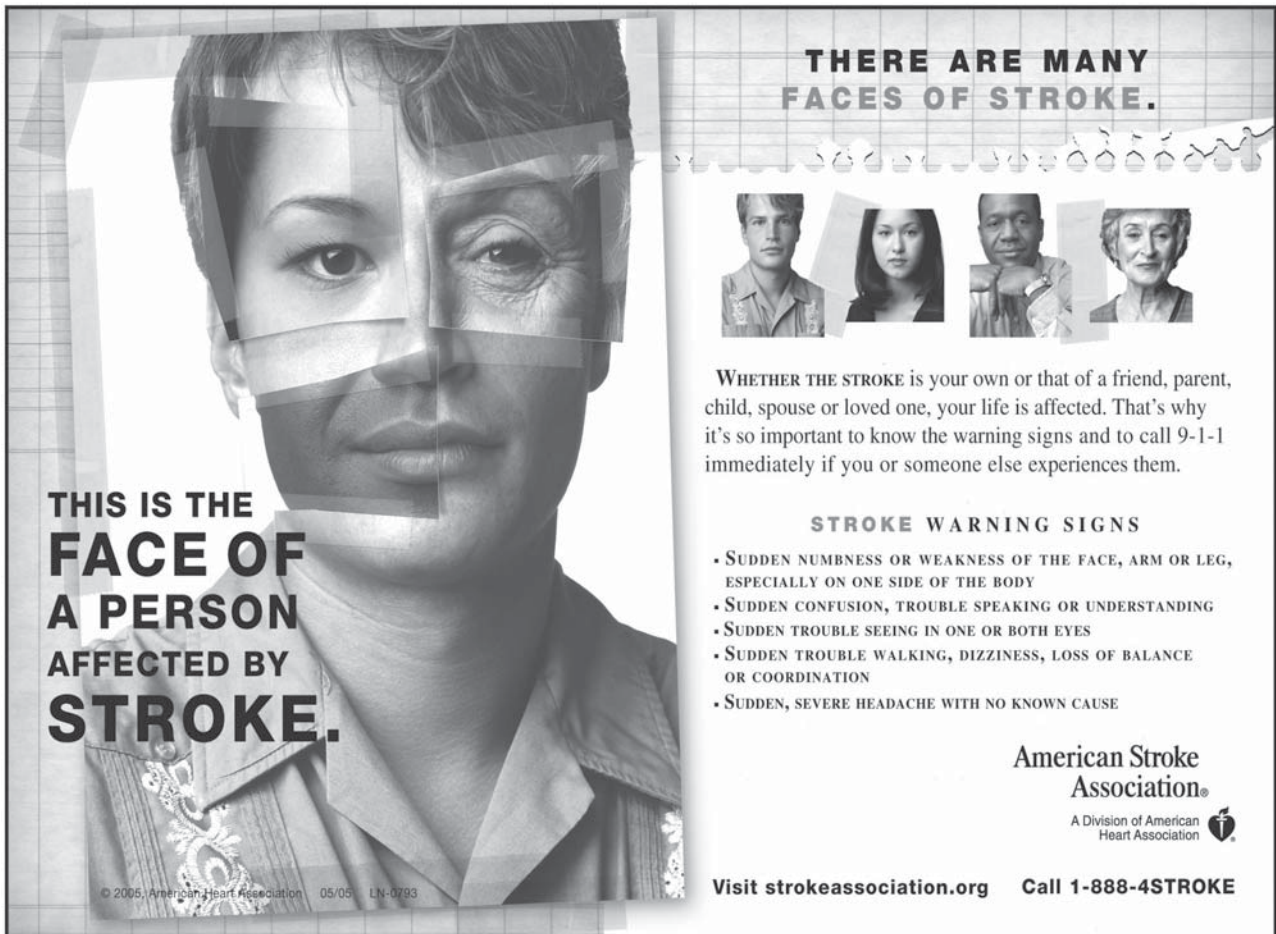
Two board members at Cimarron Electric Cooperative, Kingfisher, Okla., have received training certificates from NRECA’s rigorous director training program. **Amie Reed** recently earned her Credentialed Cooperative Director designation, and **Robert Yeoman** received his Board Leadership Certificate. The co-op also recognized 12 employees with a

combined total of nearly two centuries of service. Receiving their pins were **Sheryl Weaver** and **Ronnie Wilczek**, 40 years; **Jan Turner**, 35 years; **Mike Meyer**, 20 years; **G.R. Kirkpatrick**, 15 years; **Josh Koehn** and **Janette McDonald**, 10 years; and **Rodney Johnson**, **Chris Kubat**, **Kacy Powell**, **Eric Roberts**, and **Brandon Shirey**, five years.

REGION 9 ADVANCING AT AVEC

Staffers at Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC), Anchorage, Alaska, congratulated two co-workers on their recent professional advances. **Leland Rogers**, a seven-year AVEC employee, became the far-flung co-op’s sixth journeyman lineman after completing his apprenticeship. And **Aimee Chase** earned her Professional Engineer license after three years at AVEC.

The recent retirement of **Dale Evans** as operations manager at Goldenwest Electric Cooperative, Wibaux, Mont., closed out a 42-year career at the co-op. “He can visualize nearly every homestead and power line in the 1,100-mile system,” **Sharon Dietz** reported in a farewell feature in *Hi-Lines*, the co-op’s member newsletter. More impressive, General Manager **John Sokoloski** told *Hi-Lines*, is Evans’s role in the co-op’s remarkable 60-year record of no lost-time accidents. “Dale Evans deserves a lot of credit,” Sokoloski said. “He was crew foreman for a lot of those years.”



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Two staffers, one a newcomer and the other a long-time employee, are settling into their new jobs at Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC), Lihue, Hawaii. **Beth Tokioka** joined the co-op recently as its new communications manager. A former public information and communications



Beth Tokioka

officer for Kaua'i County, she serves on the boards of the local Chamber of Commerce, the United Way, and the Kamehameha Schools Association of Kaua'i. "Her experience and knowledge of our island community will be an asset," said **David Bissell**, president & CEO.



Maile Alfiler

And **Maile Alfiler** has moved up to member services manager after 11 years as member services operations supervisor. A Kaua'i Island native and 27-year KIUC veteran, Alfiler has also worked in the co-op's accounting and information technology departments.

REGION 10 ABEYTA PASSES

Central New Mexico Electric Cooperative, Moriarty, N.M., lost a dedicated trustee with the recent passing of **Leandro Abeyta**, who had served on the co-op's board since 1993. Abeyta, 86, was a high school teacher and coach who "enjoyed sports, hunting, golfing, traveling, and having a good meal," according to his obituary in the *Albuquerque Journal*.

Terry Buttram closed out a 36-year career at Otero County Electric Cooperative, Cloudcroft, N.M., when he retired recently as the co-op's operations manager/COO. Buttram joined the co-op in December 1980 as an apprentice lineman and was its working foreman in 1999 when he was promoted to operations manager.

Employees, board members, and consumers at Columbus Electric Cooperative, Deming, N.M., were deeply saddened by the recent death of **Edward Elbrock**, president of the co-op's board and a director since 1979. "He was a good friend to many and a tremendous force for good within our cooperative," the co-op said. "We're committed to working hard to achieve those EE's from you every day. He wouldn't have it any other way."

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative, Kaufman, Texas, recognized its senior accountant, **Judy Brown**, when she notched 50 years of service without a lost-time accident, but Brown herself was less impressed. "I've managed to walk the stairs, up and down, and never stumbled," she joked. She's added another safe year since then, and she told *Texas Co-op Power*, the consumer magazine published by Texas Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Austin, that she finds that statistic more surprising than her safety record. "I was just a young, young thing," Brown told the magazine. "They just put me to work. I certainly didn't figure I'd be here 51 years—or 51 years at any one job." **RE**

FLASHBACKS

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tral-station electricity anytime soon. Montana Power, the investor-owned utility, certainly wasn't going to do it for them.

But those 13 teens ignored that sensible adult outlook and spent the winter of 1938-'39 doing what they later told their contact in Washington was their biggest hurdle: "getting their parents and the people in town interested in electricity."

Swan's dad, "Torchy," was the exception. After a community meeting in February that drew people from miles around, he went to work for the kids.

"Our ranch was seven miles out of town on the South Bench," Miles Swan told Marty Erickson, editor of *Rural Montana*, over coffee at the Highwood Cafe. "We knew what electricity could do since we had a 32-volt light plant.

"I went out night after night with my dad when he signed up people in the North Bench and Shonkin areas. Dad had to explain everything to prospective co-op members. Each pitch took an hour or more, but dad said he could sign up three people a night from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Of all the people he talked to, only two didn't sign up."

At first, Swan recalled, REA required three consumers per mile, but his father and his classmates wrote to Washington and got that cut by two-thirds. "To tell you the truth, it stretched it to get one person per mile."

The kids, Torchy, and some other prominent adults, including Gossack, who was chairman of the school board, met with the general manager and board president of Sun River

Electric. Later, they agreed to apply to REA for a \$69,000 loan to build a line to Highwood from the co-op's nearest substation.

Walker's father, Fred, pitched in once construction began. He took time away from the family's farm to haul line poles with a tractor.

What began in an eighth-grade current events class brought modern lights and power to a 500-square-mile area in 1940, an accomplishment that made the \$100 contest prize seem like kids' stuff, even to the boys and girls themselves.

"We started out to win a prize, but we don't care about that now," the class said in one of their many letters to REA. "All we want is electricity for our town and community and to make it just as good a place to live as any other in the United States." **RE**

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