

Hollywood Ending

A Haitian lineworker lands at
Bandera EC p.8

'A Luxury We Don't Have'

Succession planning at a small
co-op p.30

Global Thinker

How Cindy Hamilton averted a
ransomware disaster p.16

RE

RURAL ELECTRIC MAGAZINE

APRIL 2021
AN NRECA PUBLICATION



**NRECA's medical plan helped take
the edge off a rough year for co-ops**

MEETING THE NEED

More strategic together.

More experienced together.

More broadband connections together.

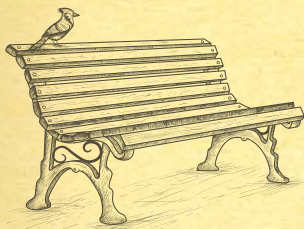
With 25 years of communications and marketing experience on dozens of fiber builds, we can anticipate what lies ahead for your cooperative. Your dedicated WordSouth team will help you develop a brand, train your staff, market your new broadband service and engage members in your mission.

LET'S GET STARTED!

WordSouth.com



Email marketing@pur.coop to request our "What to Expect When You're Connecting" ebook.



Mentone, Alabama,

AND WHY TRANQUILITY TOOK UP RESIDENCY HERE.

It's easy to picture the beauty of Mentone. Imagine sprawling tree lines draped over the southern Appalachians with an evening encore of orange and red sunsets. This is a quintessential view with quite the knack for appearing on many holiday cards. This is Mentone, Alabama (pop. 383). Quiet is the norm in this charming town nestled upon Lookout Mountain's summit, with frequent exceptions of symphonies conducted by chirping yellow-rumped warblers.

When summer clocks in, caravans of out-of-town SUVs roll in by the thousands for summer camps giving kids the chance to attach themselves to the wonders of nature. Front porches and cafés in Mentone invite friendly residents and vacationers to swap tales of the day (hints of Southern hospitality at its finest). Travelers pick this town as their summer destination for a true taste of tranquility, and perhaps a slice of Wildflower Café's lip-smacking tomato pie. Then once autumn moves in and the SUVs vanish one by one, leaves flip from green to orange while the mountain air shifts to being crisper. Despite all this change, the views remain as soothing as ever. It's peace and quiet served with a pitcher of sweet tea on the side. The way life should be.



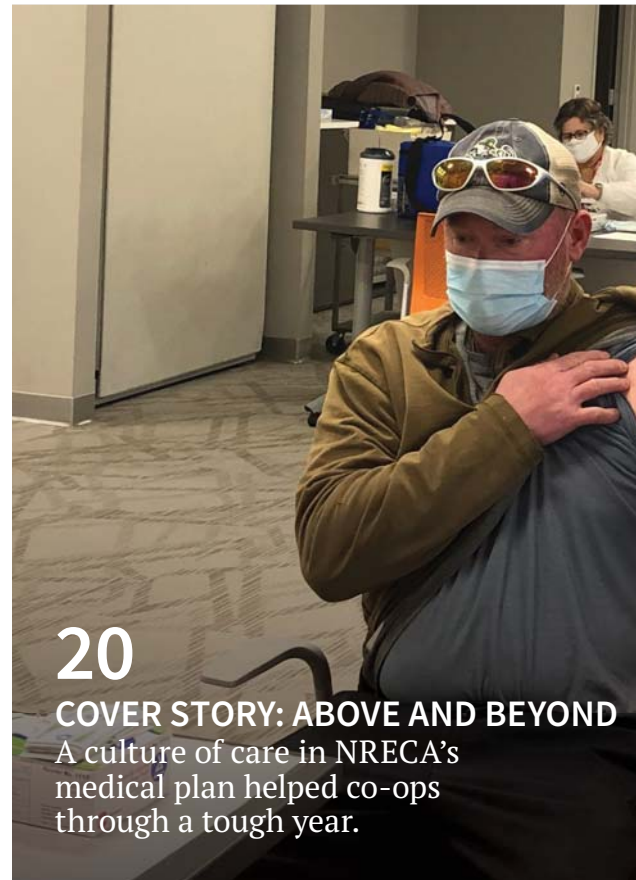
LIFE IS BIGGER *in a small town.*

CoBank believes in pursuing a deeper understanding and appreciation of rural America. Its people. Its heritage. Every town is indeed unique, so we must be well prepared to meet their unique needs and keep their stories going. See the difference we're making at CoBank.com/GoNR36.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 08** News + Analysis
- 14** Co-op Forum
- 16** Behind the Scenes
- 20** Cover Story
- 24** Public Policy
- 28** Co-op Shots
- 30** Thinking Big
- 32** Tech Insights
- 38** New Products
- 44** People
- 64** Closing Thoughts



20

COVER STORY: ABOVE AND BEYOND

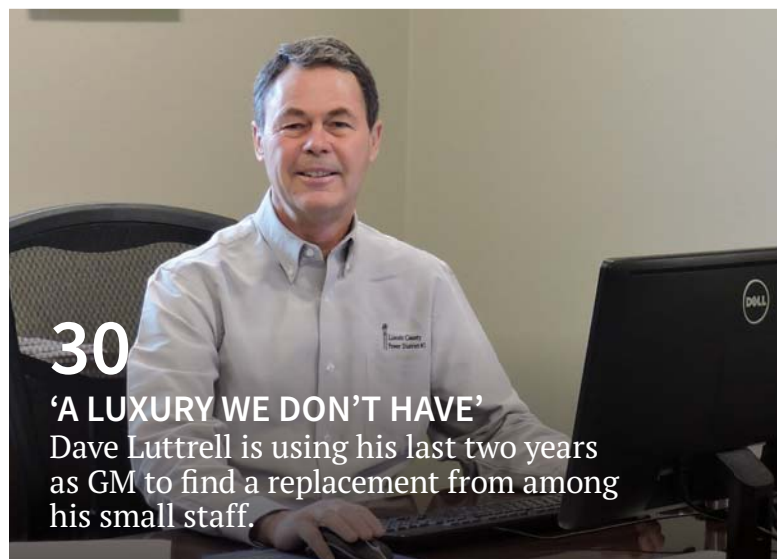
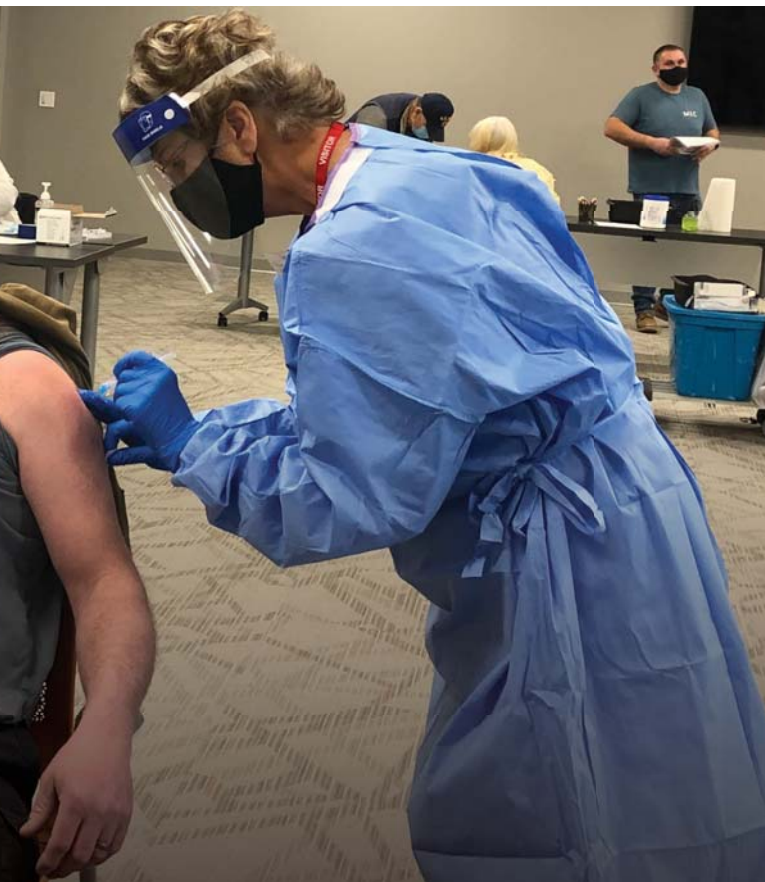
A culture of care in NRECA's medical plan helped co-ops through a tough year.



16

A GLOBAL THINKER

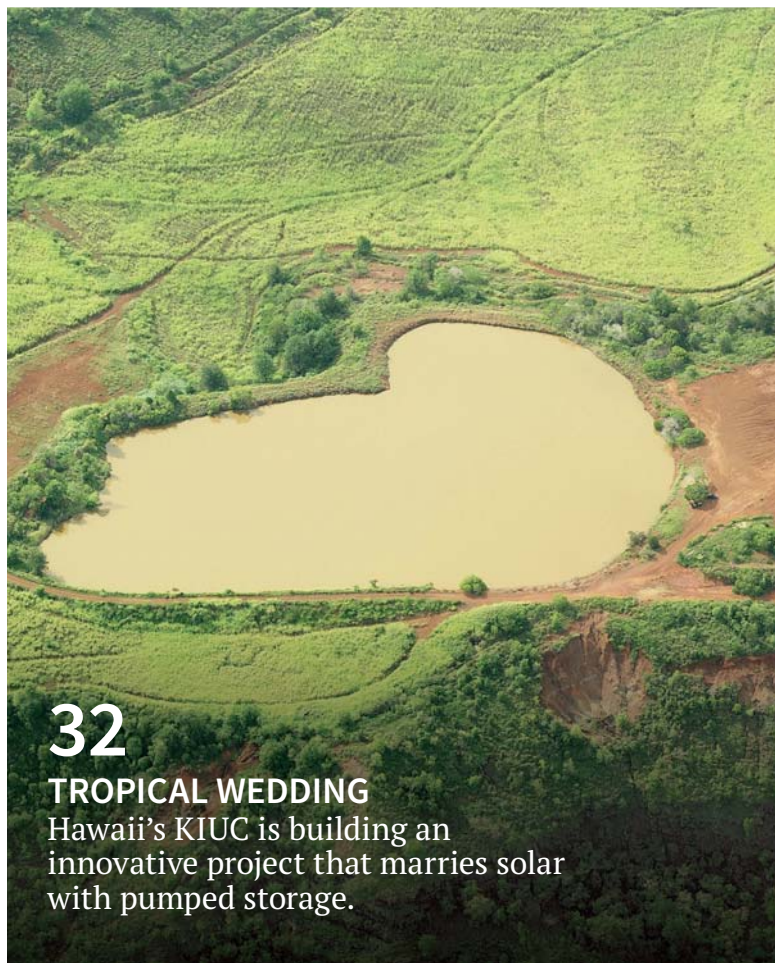
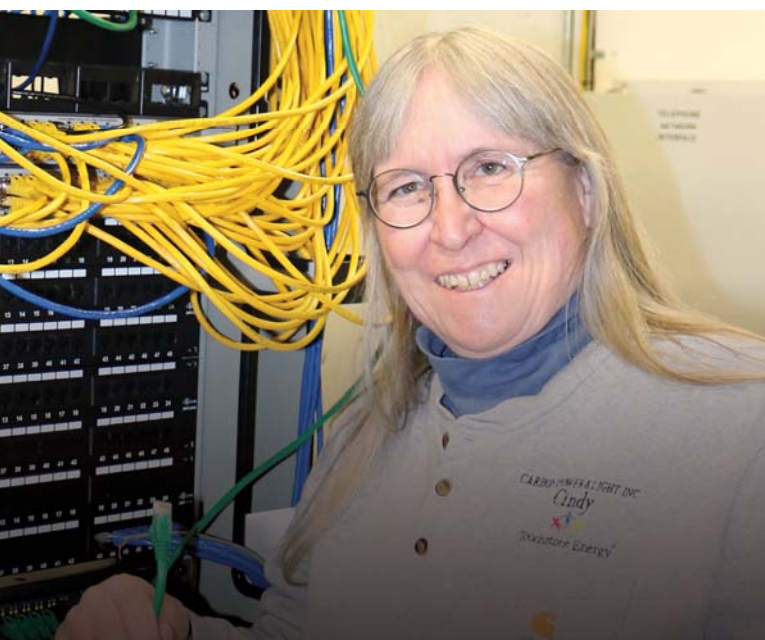
When a ransomware attack hit, Cindy Hamilton's quick response saved her co-op from a catastrophe.



30

'A LUXURY WE DON'T HAVE'

Dave Luttrell is using his last two years as GM to find a replacement from among his small staff.



32

TROPICAL WEDDING

Hawaii's KIUC is building an innovative project that marries solar with pumped storage.

NOTE TO READERS:

The Flashbacks column has moved online and is now called Then & Now. Visit cooperative.com/REMagazine.

This month:

RISING OUT OF DARKNESS: How Mississippi's Singing River Electric Cooperative got its start.

EDITORIAL & DESIGN

Editor

Scot Hoffman

Deputy Digital Producer

Matt Ringelstetter

Senior Specialist, Publications & Operations

Alison Cherryholmes

Contributing Writers

Cathy Cash

Todd H. Cunningham

Frank K. Gallant

Derrill Holly

Reed Karaim

Erin Kelly

John Lowrey

Victoria A. Rocha

John Vanvig

Senior Vice President of Communications

Scott Peterson

Senior Director of Editorial & Digital Strategy

Jessica O'Neal

Creative Director

Kevin Kepple

Senior Graphic Designer

Jen Wheeler

Graphic Designer

Riva Cho

Editorial Office: 703-907-5713 • remag@nreca.coop

ADVERTISING & CIRCULATION

Circulation Manager

Veronica Franco

Advertising Sales

301-829-6333 • Fax 301-829-6336

*This publication is audited by BPA Worldwide

Buyer's Guide

rebuyersguide.nreca.coop

Employment Advertising

cooperative.com/remagazine/advertise

Subscriber Services

703-907-6875

NRECA Expositions

703-907-6073



Rural Electric Magazine® (USPS 473-080) is published monthly by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, 4301 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22203-1860. Yearly subscriptions: \$39 per year for Gold Star Discount Program for NRECA members, \$43 for NRECA members, \$44 for EBSCO U.S. addressees, \$72 for non-members, \$92 for international addressees.

Periodicals postage paid at Arlington, VA, and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 2021 by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Arlington, VA ID 31484. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to RURAL ELECTRIC MAGAZINE, Attn: Membership Department, MEM8-160, 4301 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22203-1860.

Open for Business!

- **Nordic Sectionalizing Cabinets with pre-drilled holes, make it easy to install a variety of 15/25/35kV, 200-600Amp junctions with U-straps.**
- **Wide open access to the front and sides of the cabinet allow for unobstructed elbow connections to the junctions.**
- **Cabinets are covered with Munsell Green gel-coat, which contains UV stabilizer providing superior resistance to weathering and ultraviolet attack.**



NORDIC FIBERGLASS, INC.

Quality Products for the Electric Utility Industry

P.O. Box 27 Warren, MN 56762 Tel: 218-745-5095 Fax: 218-745-4990 www.nordicfiberglass.com



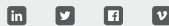


MILSOFT OMS SHINES DURING RECORD STORM SEASON

Power outages during large storms are unavoidable. Software outages are. Make sure you are prepared for the next large-scale outage event with Milsoft OMS.

In 2020, the U.S. endured 12 named tropical storms, including 6 hurricanes, 1,010 confirmed tornados, and over 100,000 thunderstorms. Milsoft is passionate about Outage Management, and our track record during recent storms proves it. Our support teams help prepare the utility for upcoming major events and are available 24/7 during the event to assist. Milsoft customers know that during times when an Outage Management System is needed most, Milsoft software is ready and available.

Your customers expect more, and they get more with Milsoft OMS
Find out more: www.milsoft.com • 800-344-5647



Providing Powerful Software for Power Systems Professionals Since 1989.
Engineering Analysis • Outage Management • GIS & Field Engineering • Communications • Enterprise Accounting & Billing
Financial Management • Work Management • Automated Customer Services

Dear subscribers:

Thank you all for being loyal readers, and welcome to the new, fully reimagined *RE Magazine*.

As employees and directors of America's electric cooperatives and public utility districts, *you* are the owners and the primary focus of this publication. And it's your thoughtful feedback that has informed every decision we made in this redesign.

Through surveys and interviews, you told us that more concise content is a better fit for your busy work lives. You said you wanted to see more advice and counsel from your co-op peers, more legislative and regulatory updates and a sharper focus on small and medium-size cooperatives.

Beginning with this edition of *RE Magazine*, you'll find a modern, more approachable design, plus shorter cover stories, more visual features, a forum for sharing co-op ideas and dedicated columns on public policy efforts and the unique challenges faced by smaller co-ops.

You'll also find all the features you asked us to keep, including People, New Products (formerly Marketplace), Closing Thoughts (formerly Commentary) and News + Analysis (formerly Plugged In).

Flashbacks is getting a new name (Then & Now) and a new home on the *RE Magazine* website.

As NRECA's flagship publication, *RE Magazine's* mission is to unite America's electric cooperatives by sharing your stories, highlighting industry trends and the experiences of your peers and providing a common touchpoint as members of a broad, diverse but tight-knit family.

Our editors and design team excelled at the challenging task of collaborating on a magazine redesign while working from home, and I am excited and honored to present the new *RE Magazine*. I trust you will find value in its pages. Let us know what you think.



Scott Peterson

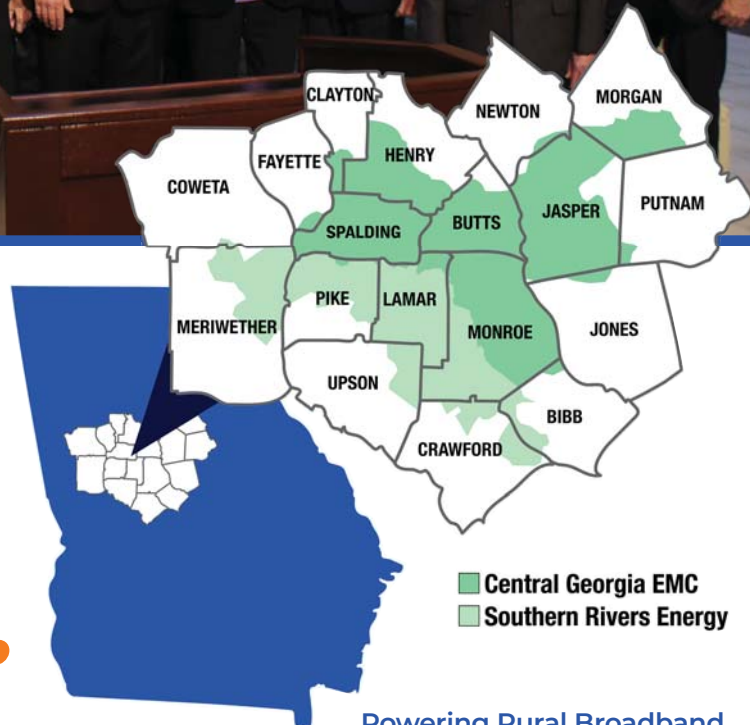
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

NRECA
Sr. Vice President for Communications



The future of rural fiber is *changing.*

Conexon is leveraging years of experience to launch internet service provider Connect to operate fiber networks for cooperatives and investors — starting with central Georgia.



Powering Rural Broadband Expansion in Middle Georgia

Conexon Connect's partnership with Central Georgia EMC and Southern Rivers Energy will deploy a 6,890-mile fiber network providing high-speed internet access to 80,000 middle Georgia homes and businesses.

CONEXON CONNECT PARTNERS
WITH ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES NATIONWIDE
to bring fiber broadband access to more than 2 million rural Americans

NEWS + ANALYSIS



Gimps Louis-Charles

A HOLLYWOOD ENDING

By Victoria A. Rocha

When electricity came to Cahess, Haiti, in 2013, Gimps Louis-Charles bought a DVD player and invited 40 people to his home to watch movies.

“It was a happy moment for me and everyone in my community,” says Louis-Charles, 31, a contract groundworker for NRECA International at the time.

That “flip the switch” moment set off a series of events for Louis-Charles that rivals any movie ending.

Today, he has a new life in the United States, where he’s a lineman-second class at Bandera Electric Cooperative (BEC) in Bandera, Texas.

Louis-Charles’s connection to BEC began in 2015 when he met volunteer lineworkers John Hernandez, Jay Raspberry, and Garrett Clark during an NRECA International job to extend lines to an orphanage in Caracol.

“He was willing to work and do whatever it took to complete the job,” says Hernandez, who’s now Louis-Charles’s foreman at BEC.

In late 2015, Louis-Charles was in Louisiana looking for a job in the industry. Hernandez found donors to help pay immigration attorney fees to obtain a work visa.

Louis-Charles landed the lineworker apprentice job at BEC in 2017.

“He’s a great, hardworking guy who’s given employees a perspective on how some people’s lives are harder,” says Bill Hetherington, the co-op’s CEO. “His story proves through hard work, resilience and effort, you can be successful.”

YAME 2: CO-OP CULTURE BUILT FOR CHANGE

By Derrill Holly

When NRECA and Touchstone Energy® Cooperative launched the Young Adult Member Engagement initiative in 2019, the response was strong, with thousands of visitors to the site and hundreds of resource downloads.

Developed with the help of dozens of co-op representatives, the first suite of YAME tools aimed to help electric cooperatives identify and meet the evolving expectations of their younger members.

“YAME helped raise the profile of the evolution that’s happening out there in the membership, the societal changes,” says NRECA’s Holly Wetzel, senior director of marketing and member communications. “I think co-op leaders across the country were starting to recognize the need to do things a little differently, and YAME really helped that message coalesce.”

Now, the two organizations have released the second set of YAME resources, this one focused on how co-ops can adapt hiring, onboarding and training processes to build an internal culture that understands and meets

“YAME helped raise the profile of the evolution that’s happening out there in the membership.”

— Holly Wetzel, NRECA

the evolving needs of their members.

According to Maura Giles, NRECA’s senior leadership communications manager, “the more than 70 resources in YAME Phase 2 are designed for communicators, human resources professionals, co-op leaders and anyone tasked with internal communications and/or the recruitment, onboarding or development of co-op staff.”

Visit cooperative.com to see YAME resources and read a Q&A about YAME 2 with Wetzel, Giles and Touchstone Energy® Cooperative Executive Director Jana Adams.

What Can a Microgrid Do?

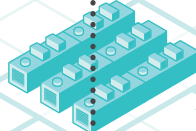
Lower costs for solar and other renewables, advances in energy storage, and an abiding desire to control power costs and increase reliability are making the capabilities offered by microgrids more attractive than ever.

Resilience

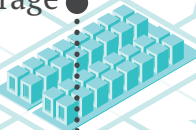
Microgrids improve resilience by disconnecting from the main grid during an outage and using local resources, including storage, small generators, and renewables, to keep power flowing to their communities.



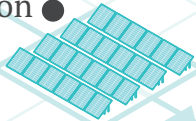
Gas or diesel generators



Battery storage



Distributed generation



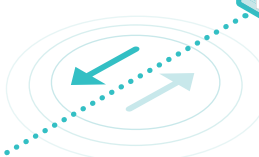
Microgrid controller



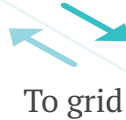
Co-op



Substation



Generation & transmission



Integration of Renewables

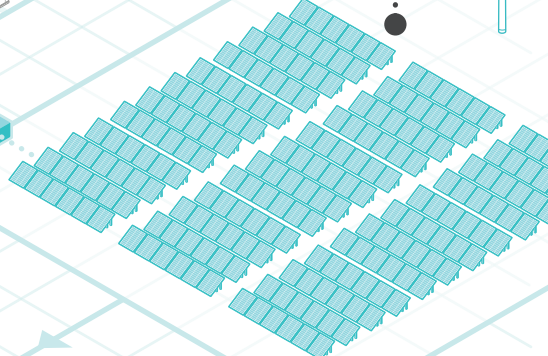
Distributed energy resources, primarily renewables like solar, wind, and battery storage, are key components of a microgrid. They offer a local generation source that can sustain the microgrid as well as send excess power to the grid.



Wind farm

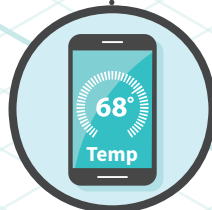


Solar array



Demand Response

Microgrid technologies offer co-ops additional flexibility in managing the use and cost of power on their systems.



A DAUNTING TASK IN NIGERIA

By Erin Kelly

NRECA International has signed a \$10 million, five-year contract to manage the operation of a struggling distribution utility in south-central Nigeria.

The contract is with Geometric Power, a private company that approached NRECA International about taking on the project.

NRECA International will face the daunting task of turning around a poorly run utility with limited resources, and a bill payment rate around 50% of the 165,000 households it serves, says Dan Waddle, senior vice president of NRECA International. The utility is based in the city of Aba.

“This is going to be an extremely challenging project,” Waddle says.

When work begins this spring, NRECA International will assign three full-time employees to the utility, supported by a technical team of 10 NRECA International engineering, commercial, and management specialists. They will evaluate the training needs of the existing utility team and design a program to build capacity and improve technical, commercial, and customer-service skills, Waddle says.

“Our goal is to make it a high-functioning utility that provides quality service and makes a profit,” he says. “This gives us an opportunity to determine how we can improve performance. It’s an important opportunity not just for us but for the power sector.”



ELECTRIC TRUCK DEMONSTRATION

By Erin Kelly

Electric cooperatives interested in promoting electric vehicle use can help their commercial consumer-members participate in a demonstration of the latest technology for electric freight trucks.

NRECA is co-sponsoring the three-week road show, which will take place in September in the United States and Canada and will feature up to 10 EVs, including delivery vans, medium-duty box trucks, and heavy-duty tractor-trailers.

Truck drivers will move freight throughout North America, across a variety of climates and geographies.

The Run on Less-Electric (RoL-E) demonstration is being conducted by the North American Council for Freight Efficiency (NACFE) and the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI).

“We’re sponsoring this to support our members in demonstrating at the local, state and federal levels and to commercial customers that co-ops are really interested in this technology and that we see its potential,” says Brian Sloboda, NRECA’s director of consumer solutions.

NACFE and RMI also will offer a series of virtual education events to bring together fleet operators, utilities and other industry stakeholders to learn more about electric trucks and how to work together to overcome challenges to their deployment. Registration opens, and the E-series schedule will be announced this month. Co-ops and their members can join in the educational events without participating directly in the demonstration.

Sloboda says NACFE is going to gather crucial data from the demonstration and will share “the good, the bad and the ugly. Their goal is to increase efficiency and reduce costs while improving the environment. Right now, it looks like electricity is the best path.”

Contact: Dave Schaller (david.schaller@nacfe.org); Mike Roeth (mike.roeth@nacfe.org); Brian Sloboda (brian.sloboda@nreca.coop).



YLC ALUM TAPPED FOR ICA HONOR

By Derrill Holly

A young electric cooperative leader who made a huge impression as Youth Leadership Council spokesperson at the 2017 NRECA Annual Meeting is making another big splash, this time on an international stage.

Sylandi Brown, 22, now a marketing and communications specialist with Middle Georgia Electric Membership Corp., has been chosen as one of the International Cooperative Alliance's "25 Voices," a cadre of young leaders helping promote the group's upcoming 33rd World Cooperative Congress.

"Through the NRECA Youth Tour, I had a great opportunity to learn about the cooperative business model and how our values and principles improve the quality of life of the people we serve," says Brown, who joined the Vienna-based distribution co-op after graduating from Valdosta State University last spring. "The '25 Voices' project gives me another opportunity to dive more deeply into what the cooperative identity means and how my co-op not only provides energy to our members but drives community and economic development."

The ICA's 33rd World Cooperative Congress will be held in Seoul, South Korea, in December. Throughout the year, the organization plans to recognize young people from around the world who are affiliated with co-ops that serve their communities.

"Sylandi and other members of 25 Voices are making an impact today in their communities, and this will give them the opportunity to learn from each other and make an impression on the world stage," says Zuraidah Hoffman, communications manager for the event. "This group of young leaders have valid and relevant roles to play in overcoming challenges the world faces today. Promoting the impact people like Sylandi and her co-op have in her community will give the cooperative movement a boost and the recognition that cooperative values benefit billions of people around the world."



NRECA TO FCC: CAN RDOF WINNERS DELIVER?

By Cathy Cash

NRECA is urging the Biden administration to review the winners of \$9.2 billion in federal funds for rural broadband to ensure they can meet their bid obligations.

"We stand up for the 42 million people we serve," NRECA CEO Jim Matheson says. "Broadband may be provided by electric cooperatives or someone else, but we must make sure the technology and the level of service are accurately reflected in the bids."

Matheson sent a letter in February to the Federal Communications Commission accompanied by a white paper from NRECA and NRTC describing concerns about certain winning bids in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I and offering remedies if an FCC review finds winners unable to meet their commitments.

The RDOF, the FCC's largest broadband auction to date, is expected to connect 5.2 million unserved homes and businesses. The money will be distributed over 10 years as winning internet service providers achieve certain coverage milestones.

Electric co-ops won bids totaling \$1.6 billion to serve nearly 1 million locations in 31 states.

Some RDOF winners offered lower bids with unproven technologies. These include fixed wireless companies that promise gigabit service in heavily forested or mountainous areas and a low-Earth orbit satellite delivery project still largely in beta-testing.

"There are a lot of winning bids we are concerned about," Matheson said. "This money is not there to fund a science experiment. It's to fund broadband for rural Americans."



Dixie Electric Power Association member Katherine McCardle Cole

HISTORY FROM A MISSISSIPPI PORCH

By Cathy Cash

Katherine McCardle Cole knows what it's like to witness history—twice—from the front porch of her southern Mississippi farmhouse.

That's where the 83-year-old was when Dixie Electric Power Association first strung power lines to her home when she was a child.

And that's where she was again in January, as a truck from the co-op's broadband subsidiary came up the hill. Katherine, who now relies on a wheelchair, asked her son Ricky to help her get there so she could watch the crew hang fiber-optic cable.

"She says, 'Boy, I want to see that,'" says Ricky. "She sat there and studied them awhile. Naturally, she had a couple of ideas on how they could be more efficient with their time. Then she said, 'I am just tickled to see that going up, because it is going to help all of us.'"

Ricky, who travels from Jackson to Ovett three days a week to work the family farm, says his mom is excited

for the life improvements broadband will bring—online doctor visits, good video quality for her favorite shows and enough bandwidth for her grandchildren to do their schoolwork.

But she's most excited about her grandchildren being able to stay for longer visits.

"Both have been virtual students since the pandemic began," he said. "Now they only stay a day or two, then they have to get back to Jackson to do their schoolwork. She's excited about the prospect of them being at the farm a lot more."

Randy Smith, general manager of Laurel, Mississippi-based Dixie Electric, says 600 households will soon have broadband service in this sparsely populated region dotted by blueberry growers, poultry operations and family farms. Another 1,800 have expressed interest in signing up.

"The response has been overwhelmingly positive," he says.

Being part of the history that Katherine Cole and so many other Dixie Electric members have seen is something Smith says he takes to heart.

"It's been said a number of times, if co-ops don't do it, then in lot of cases, it's not going to get done. We're excited about being part of the solution." **RE**



HITACHI **ABB**

HITACHI ABB POWER GRIDS

REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT WITH DIGITAL SUBSTATIONS

Seamless integration into eco-friendly
power initiatives

Integrate distributed energy resources and reduce carbon emissions — start here!
<http://bit.ly/Smart-Digital-Substations>

CO-OP FORUM

Each month, we'll ask a panel of electric cooperative leaders a question about an important industry issue or trend.



Mike Lammers

CEO/General Manager
Cedar-Knox Public
Power District
Hartington, Nebraska

SIZE

7,446 members

CO-OP WEBSITE

cedarknoxppd.com

ANSWER

At Cedar-Knox Public Power District, our board and employees take great pride in our customer service. The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges in communications across our organization that we had to address to continue that stellar service. While our employees did an excellent job learning to quickly adapt in finding alternative ways to communicate in areas of safety, operations and customer relations, we needed to assess a long-term solution.

These long-term challenges from COVID-19 only enhanced our strategic planning decision to move forward with new technology to help solve these areas of concern. We have taken this as an opportunity to advance with tablets to our fleet to help in all areas of our communications. This advancement in technology will provide a multitude of benefits to all areas of our business.

We see a need for enhanced communication not only for internal improvement but also as a future way to engage directly with consumers. Implementing software and applications to our fleet will provide that efficient link to complement our service that we look at as a fundamental piece of our daily operations. This is essential to continue our great customer service to the district.



Bryan Case

CEO/General Manager
Fall River Rural
Electric Cooperative
Ashton, Idaho

SIZE

17,253 members

CO-OP WEBSITE

fallriverelectric.com

ANSWER

At the onset of the pandemic, Fall River prepared for the worst, tightening our financial belts and putting into action a business continuation plan that allowed staff to easily continue to work either remotely or dispatched in small crews. We found operating in a semi-virtual world doable. Member businesses were impacted, and we saw an immediate reduction in energy sales by our commercial members.

However, with a new openness to remote work nationwide, the co-op experienced an influx of consumers using recreational cabins and summer homes as a new base of operations for their remote work. Members who now have the option to work from anywhere chose to migrate to their vacation homes. Fall River's service area is in the heart of year-round recreation near Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, hiking, camping, hunting, world-renowned fishing and ski resorts.

The co-op's sales to our residential members surpassed the decrease in sales we saw from our commercial members. Working remotely has resulted in a positive impact to Fall River and opens the doors to new opportunities for the co-op.

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE LASTING IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON YOUR COOPERATIVE?

To see more answers to this question, visit cooperative.com.



Jessica Matlock

CEO
La Plata Electric Association
Durango, Colorado

SIZE

43,963 members

CO-OP WEBSITE

lpea.coop

ANSWER

Times of conflict and change serve as a catalyst to reveal the heart of an organization. In some ways, the last year has not been an easy one for the LPEA team. We miss our face-to-face interactions with colleagues, after-hours social gathering, and in-person meetings with our members. But the last year has also been one of the most innovative, transformative and boundary-breaking in our co-op's 82-year history.

Internally, we've re-evaluated our processes and systems to dramatically increase flexibility. We now support more flexible work schedules, allow employees to work from home and have digitized our workflows. Most notably, our project management has undergone a digital transformation, improving efficiency and cost savings along the way.

Externally, our website is also in mid-transformation. When complete, members will be able to interact with us online (if they prefer) on everything from new service requests to rebates to energy assessments. We've hosted multiple virtual town halls to stay connected with our members, and our board and committee meetings are all livestreamed on Zoom and recorded for future viewing.

These evolutions will remain with us post-pandemic and will result in a better quality of service for our members, cost savings and more flexibility and job satisfaction for our employees.



Suzanne Lane

Executive Vice President/CEO
Kansas Electric
Power Cooperative Inc.
Topeka, Kansas

SIZE

G&T

CO-OP WEBSITE

kepco.org

ANSWER

One lasting change resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic involves our load, in the forms of both load growth opportunities and the possibility of permanent load decline. Because most of the nearly 300,000 consumer-members that our members serve are residential, we have seen increased residential load associated with folks working or learning from home.

However, because we also serve the agribusiness sector, the oil and gas industry, and a multitude of small businesses, the load decline—and other related impacts like job losses and reduced tax base—for these consumers could remain indefinitely or take years to recover.

A key significant opportunity for us resulting from the pandemic, if approved by Congress, involves the ability to refinance Rural Utilities Service debt. We currently have \$84.8 million in Federal Financing Bank loans, so if we are able to reprice these loans without penalty, we estimate a savings of about \$20 million to \$25 million. That savings can be directly passed along to our members and the rural Kansans they serve.

Another lasting change involves enhancing our members' experience. By incorporating technology, offering flexible work options and encouraging innovation, we have been able to efficiently and safely serve our members, providing them with the best experience possible during these unprecedented times. **RE**

BEHIND THE SCENES



A GLOBAL THINKER

Cindy Hamilton's expertise saved her co-op from a catastrophic ransomware attack

By George Stuteville

When the virus came, Cindy Hamilton rooted it out, isolated it, sought outside help, and stopped the infection from spreading at her small co-op in Wyoming.

This isn't a story about COVID-19.

It's about *Conti*—a vicious computer ransomware virus that's racked up hundreds of successful attacks around the world, forcing some companies to pay huge sums to criminal hackers who held stolen sensitive data hostage.

But that's not how it went down at Carbon Power and Light in Saratoga, Wyoming, where Hamilton serves as the lone IT professional.

The attack came on July 22 at 10:49 p.m. Hamilton had logged into the system from home to make sure everything was working properly.

"All of a sudden, this banner pops up saying the administrator wants access to the system. Well, I am the administrator, so I knew immediately it was some sort of breach," she recalls. "My first thoughts were to protect the system, the members' and the employees' data."

She could see it was a massive hack, compromising every component and computer in the network and locking out access to crucial data files.

She didn't panic. She reached out. Hamilton, 59, is well-known in the co-op IT community and has trained in NRECA's Rural Cooperative Cybersecurity Capabilities (RC3) Program. At one meeting, she became friends with Mike Hyde, IT manager at Northern Neck Electric Co-op in Virginia.

That night she texted Hyde. He reached out to his

Preventing Ransomware

Three key actions to combat malware attacks



Back up data

Archiving information regularly will aid in recovery from an attack.



Patch vulnerabilities

Keep all software up-to-date.



Use anti-virus software

Anti-virus and anti-spam software can head off an attack before it starts.

Source: NRECA

CONNECTING AMERICA'S HEARTLAND

Some say life is slower in the country – especially the Internet. But for us, this is where it all starts. And for more than two decades, we've invested millions in our US network. With new diverse routes between major hubs and high-speed connectivity in edge markets across the nation, we connect America.

Our number #1 Internet backbone, spanning 70,000 km and 126 countries worldwide, provides business-critical connectivity and an award-winning customer experience to the world's largest operators, content providers and enterprises. In fact, more than 65% of the global Internet routing table is directly connected to our global Internet backbone, AS1299. And now we can connect you.

friend Alan Harrington, an IT consultant and cybersecurity expert who runs ARX Systems, a network security firm based in Raleigh, North Carolina, that has worked with electric cooperatives on cybersecurity and technical issues.

Harrington immediately agreed to help. With Hyde, she had her team.

“Because of the attack happening at night, I was able to get my thought process into motion. I knew since our billing and accounting systems were off-site, no member data or financial information was compromised,” Hamilton says.

She also knew she had recent backups for almost all of the affected systems.

She was confident. But the assault infuriated her.

“I felt like I would have if somebody had robbed my house,” she recalls. “I am a part of this cooperative, and this system is a part of me—what I’ve helped build. I was going to get it back to what it was and make it better. That was my thinking.”

‘A PERFECT FIT’

Before joining Carbon 15 years ago, Hamilton had put in 24 years at UPS, starting in data processing and advancing to tech support. Along the way, she learned data skills, progressing from clunky mainframes to today’s smart, complex, speedy systems. The security of that job allowed her to raise two children as a single parent. It also paid for her college degree.

But she was commuting at least 85 miles from Saratoga to Laramie, driving mountain range roads that were treacherous in harsh weather.

“I told my husband, wouldn’t it be great if a computer job opened in Saratoga?”

Two weeks later, she learned Carbon had such a position. It was a perfect fit, she says, challenging her to learn utility data skills and serve members as a “help desk.” She did it all.

“I am the type of person who wants to know how something works and to know how to make it work if it falters,” she says. “I am a global thinker, not a linear thinker. I tend to look at the big picture, not pieces. This helped in my career, and it helped with the virus problem.”

TRANSPARENT ABOUT THE INCIDENT

For her counterattack on the virus, she charged into the co-op, unplugging cables and hitting off buttons.

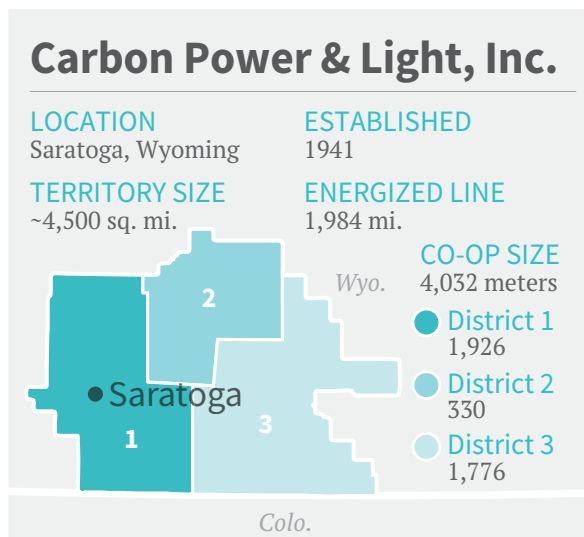
“It was like I became possessed to get it back running, rebuilt and protected from something like this ever happening again.”

She also texted General Manager Russell Waldner with the bad news.

Waldner notified the FBI, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Wyoming Department of Criminal Investigation and Wyoming Public Service Commission. The co-op also contacted Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, where it had cyber-liability insurance.

With Harrington’s help in restructuring the co-op’s domain, Hamilton formatted and restored physical workstations, deploying retired computers for temporary use and a crucial new component that Harrington had overnighted. The co-op only lost two days in accessing its critical systems, but it took several weeks, working 60 hours a week, to get every system restored.

They also preserved images of the infected data for the FBI to investigate.



“When we confirmed it was the *Conti* virus, all I could think of was how awesome was Cindy’s response,” Harrington says. “She singlehandedly protected several of the mainline business applications due to her fast action. I’d say she saved the company over \$300,000 and months of work by having these backups and routinely installing security patches.”

Waldner estimates that non-covered losses were about \$10,000.

An analysis revealed that a Carbon staffer had unwittingly unleashed the virus after clicking on an email that looked as if it had originated from a fellow employee.

In a chilling final episode, about two weeks after the attack, the hackers phoned the co-op directly, leaving a voicemail filled with threats to sell the information if the administrator didn’t respond.

Hamilton, following the FBI’s advice, never contacted the hackers.

Carbon was transparent about the incident, reporting it to members in its August 2020 newsletter.

“We don’t want to hide what happened. We think it’s important to be open so that others, particularly small co-ops like ours, can benefit from our experience,” Hamilton says. “You might think that if you’re small, hackers won’t bother with you. But they can, and they will.” **RE**

Superior Storm Response



- Storm Response
- Project Management
- Distribution Crews
- Secondary Crews
- Transmission Crews
- Storm Assessment Teams
- Man Camps



TEMPEST
Energy

Superior Storm Response



TempestEnergy.com

Phone: 985.250.9559 | Emergency: 985.259.5305

ABOVE and



BEYOND

A culture of care in NRECA's medical plan helped co-ops weather the pandemic

BY VICTORIA A. ROCHA

Until recently, employees of Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC) who fell ill while working in the extremely remote areas the co-op serves had two choices for care.

"They could have a prescription called into a local clinic at the closest hub community or go all the way back to Anchorage," says Meera Kohler, AVEC's recently retired president and CEO and Alaska's representative on the NRECA board of directors. "It's an hour in a jet, depending on where you're coming from. And you're not going to fly back just because you're feeling lousy."

More often, Kohler says, "you're going to stay where you are and fight it."

Situations like this are extreme but not altogether uncommon in the far-flung territories of many electric cooperatives. And they're what led NRECA to look for ways to broaden the reach of its medical plan.

"People were either putting off routine medical care or incurring increased expenses due to the lack of proximity," says Peter Baxter, NRECA's senior vice president of Insurance & Financial Services. "We knew we could do better for our membership, so we began evaluating a solution to meet this need."

After an analysis and a yearlong pilot program, the NRECA Medical Plan in 2018 rolled out Teladoc®, a service that provides access to board-certified physicians for non-emergency care through phone, web and mobile app.

This "go the extra mile" approach has been a defining characteristic of the teams that manage the NRECA Medical Plan since it launched in 1958, Baxter says.

"It's simply how we do business," he says. "It's part of our values."

Those values were evident this past year as co-op employees navigated the uncertainty and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Software and other systems were quickly put in place so NRECA teams could work from home while still responding to member needs. When the program's reg-

ular roster of conferences and other in-person meetings were no longer doable, virtual alternatives were created. And the volume of outreach to co-ops increased as NRECA communicated plan updates and resources in response to evolving federal pandemic response measures.

"Maintaining contact and outreach during the pandemic has been our No. 1 priority," Baxter says. "The importance we place on talking to—and listening to—our members is what makes us different."

'CO-OP INPUT IS HUGE'

As a West Coast field representative for NRECA, Erik Hayes often travels up to three weeks per month to talk to co-op management and employees about their benefit program.

Hayes is part of a system of client services teams that include Cooperative Benefits Administrators Inc., benefit service representatives and a call center based in Lincoln, Nebraska, that, in addition to their primary functions, act as conduits for information on co-ops' evolving service and coverage needs.

"Co-op input is pretty huge for us," says Hayes, who's been meeting virtually with co-ops from his home in Washington state since the pandemic began.

NRECA also has two advisory groups composed of member co-ops from across the country that meet twice a year with NRECA staff to discuss product enhancements and review plan or industry issues. Co-ops that serve on these groups frequently pilot programs before they're rolled out to the broader membership.

"We actively seek the feedback of our member co-ops through multiple channels so we can learn about the evolving needs of plan participants," says Krista Britton, NRECA's vice president of member benefit services. "We take that feedback and use it to implement plan enhancements specifically tailored to their unique needs."

Earlier this year, after reviewing medical claims data



Medical plan subscribers = **33,763**



Lives covered = **99,200**



Total medical claims = **4,374,821**



Total amount paid = **\$616,923,046**

2020 MEDICAL PLAN BY THE NUMBERS

and member feedback, the plan began offering access to the Joint & Spine Surgery Centers of Excellence to address the physical impacts associated with utility operations.

“This program is a great example of the kind of thing we’re always thinking about: how to evolve the plans to meet co-ops’ changing needs,” Britton says.

TAILORED PROGRAMS

Lake Region Electric Association in Webster, South Dakota, appreciates the regular contact and the fact that their feedback is treated equally with a workforce of just 21 employees. Despite the co-op’s small size, workers and family members can choose among several levels of coverage to customize plans.

“We probably rely on NRECA and their resources more so than a big co-op,” says Timothy McIntyre, the co-op’s general manager and CEO and a member of the NRECA Benefit Product Advisory Group. “The small co-ops pay the bills too, and they make sure the programs benefit large and small co-ops.”

Employees of the northeast South Dakota co-op “wear a lot of different hats,” says McIntyre, and NRECA’s constant outreach efforts are invaluable. “I can’t have one employee designated as a benefits administrator. My financial officer handles HR and benefits.”

GreyStone Power Corp. has offered the medical plan to its 260 employees since 2014 and helped pilot a successful weight loss program about three years ago.

“There’s been a great dialogue, and you really feel like your voice is heard,” says James Wright, the Hiram, Georgia, co-op’s vice president of corporate services. “It’s a huge win for the co-ops.”

Tailored programs build value, Baxter says, but equally important is affordability and cost stability. He says the plan has seen a major boost in both since 2014, when NRECA transitioned from a patchwork of local coverage providers to a national network through UnitedHealthcare. As a result, the plan has saved more than a billion dollars.

“This was a multiyear initiative that has resulted in a more competitive and comprehensive program that’s realizing substantial cost savings without sacrificing quality or customer service,” Baxter says.

EXTRA EFFORTS

Baxter says dozens of co-op leaders have reached out to him over the past year to thank him and the team

for their extra effort during the pandemic.

“I’ve spoken to a lot of folks who have said that with all the disruptions COVID has created, not having to worry about their employees’ health coverage has been a great relief,” he says. “Hearing that our members know they can rely on us, especially during extraordinary circumstances like we’ve seen this year, really solidifies that relationship.”

He says there have been several occasions during the pandemic where they made extra efforts to help co-ops.

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed in March 2020 and required health care providers to, among other measures, temporarily waive copays for COVID-19 diagnostic tests, associated provider visits and COVID-19 vaccinations. NRECA’s plan quickly implemented these and supplemented that with additional temporary measures, including waivers for telemedicine consultation fees and pharmacy refill restrictions.

In late 2020, NRECA drew on reserves in order to hold 2021 base premium rates for the Group Benefits Program at the 2020 level.

“We recognize the financial impacts from the pandemic that our members are facing now and in the coming months,” Baxter says. “This action allows us to provide some relief at a time when cash flow may be tight.”

Those and other relief elements, along with a noticeable increase in outreach to benefits administrators over the past year, have helped co-ops focus on the important things, like taking care of their employees so they in turn can serve the membership, says Stephanie Deal, director of human resources at Central Electric Cooperative, based in Parker, Pennsylvania.

“I was able to concentrate on the daily challenges I faced knowing my co-op’s employees didn’t have to worry about their benefit programs,” she says.

Now, as the race is on to distribute COVID-19 vaccines, NRECA is collaborating with advisers and vendors to provide educational information to plan participants and ensuring vaccine claims are paid at the in-network rate regardless of where the shot is administered.

“This past year has been a test,” Baxter says. “But what it’s shown us is that the NRECA Medical Plan is fully capable of adapting quickly and effectively to help our members even in the most extreme of challenges.” **RE**



Photo courtesy of Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Our sincere appreciation for the way you look out for your own safety as well as the safety of your co-workers and your community. Thank you!



FEDERATED RURAL ELECTRIC
INSURANCE EXCHANGE

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 
The power of human connections®


COOPERATIVE.COM

 NRECA Service Member since 1974

PUBLIC POLICY

By Erin Kelly and Cathy Cash

In the first months of 2021, NRECA focused on three key priorities:

- Reaching out to new members of Congress to get to know their staff and brief them about electric co-ops and our policy priorities.
- Helping shape the next COVID-19 relief bill to ensure electric co-ops are included in relevant aid provisions.
- Working with the Federal Communications Commission to ensure winners of Rural Digital Opportunity Fund grants can deliver on their broadband commitments.

“A new Congress, a change of administration and the pressing COVID-19 relief measures have been fairly all-consuming for our team,” says Louis Finkel, NRECA’s senior vice president for government relations. “But the outreach we and our co-ops do is well worth the effort, and we’re in a great place to be fully engaging at the executive branch agencies and on Capitol Hill.”

Finkel says the primary near-term legislative priority is urging Congress to pass the bipartisan Flexible

Financing for Rural America Act. The measure, which had bipartisan support in Congress a year ago, could save electric co-ops more than \$10 billion by allowing them to reprice Rural Utilities Service loans at current low interest rates without penalty. Co-op leaders and NRECA lobbyists are pushing for it to be included in an economic recovery package that Congress is expected to take up this spring.

On the regulatory side, NRECA is working to balance the Biden administration’s wide-ranging climate change goals to ensure they don’t have disproportionately negative impacts on electric co-ops and their consumer-members. On the horizon are Clean Air Act regulations, Clean Water Act rules and Endangered Species Act considerations.

“It’s always a busy time in Washington, but the sheer number of high-priority co-op issues in front of Congress and the agencies right now is remarkable,” Finkel says. “We’re going 100 miles an hour with no sign of a let-up.”

Finance



RUS REPRICING BILL:

NRECA is urging the new Congress to pass legislation that could save electric co-ops more than \$10 billion by allowing them to reprice Rural Utilities Service loans at current low interest rates without penalty. NRECA lobbyists are pushing for the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act to be included in an economic recovery package that Congress is expected to take up this spring or summer.

CONTACT

Hill Thomas
hill.thomas@nreca.coop

Broadband



RDOF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

A bipartisan group of 160 senators and House members is calling on the FCC to verify that broadband providers can give rural Americans the high-quality service they promise to deliver. They worry that some companies that made winning bids during the first phase of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction do not have the ability to carry out their plans.

CONTACT

Kelly Wismer
kelly.wismer@nreca.coop

COVID-19



LIHEAP INCREASE

NRECA is asking Congress for a \$10 billion increase in funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program to help struggling co-op members pay their electric bills during the pandemic. Lawmakers took a step in that direction in March, adding \$4.5 billion to the program as part of a sweeping COVID-19 relief package.

CONTACT

Billie Kaumaya
billie.kaumaya@nreca.coop

Generation



BULK POWER SECURITY ORDER ON HOLD

President Joe Biden has placed a 90-day suspension on a 2020 executive order and a subsequent ban on procuring foreign-made equipment for the bulk power system. NRECA is working with the Department of Energy to ensure electric cooperatives' concerns are met and to provide clarity for projects already in the procurement process.

CONTACT

Stephanie Crawford
stephanie.crawford@nreca.coop

Broadband



NTIA BROADBAND GRANTS MUST BE INCLUSIVE

An NRECA letter to the National Telecommunications & Information Administration asks that the new \$300 million Broadband Infrastructure Deployment grant program fund only proven technologies and that rural areas remain eligible even if they are covered by other federal efforts to bridge the digital divide.

CONTACT

Brian O'Hara
brian.o'hara@nreca.coop

Environmental



NRECA BACKS STATE CCR PLANS

NRECA is backing the Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to approve the coal combustion residual permitting program set forth by Texas. EPA's approval of the Texas CCR permitting procedure may help other states advance their programs to address this nonhazardous and reusable waste from coal-based generation, says Dorothy Kellogg, NRECA regulatory director for waste and water issues. "NRECA strongly supports protective management of CCR through state permits." EPA has already accepted CCR programs from Oklahoma and Georgia.

CONTACT

Dorothy Kellogg
dorothy.kellogg@nreca.coop

Environmental



CLARITY URGED IN ESA, LAND MANAGEMENT

NRECA is asking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service to finalize a proposed rule to clarify whether approved federal land management plans would be affected when new information on a listed species or critical habitat emerges. NRECA joined the National Endangered Species Act Reform Coalition in this effort.

CONTACT

Janelle Lemen
jenelle.lemen@nreca.coop

LAWMAKER PROFILE

SEN. TINA SMITH

By Erin Kelly



STATE: Minnesota

Sen. Tina Smith hasn't been in the Senate long, but she's already emerged as a champion for rural electric cooperatives and their members.

In 2019, her second year in office, the Democrat worked with her Republican colleague, Sen. Rob

Portman of Ohio, to lead Senate passage of the RURAL Act, which protected co-ops from the risk of losing their tax-exempt status when they accept government grants.

Smith is now leading efforts to pass the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act, which save co-ops billions by allowing them to reprice Rural Utilities Service loans at lower interest rates.

"Senator Smith believes in the cooperative approach

and the important role rural electric cooperatives have in supporting their communities," says Darrick Moe, president and CEO of the Minnesota Rural Electric Association. "She consistently takes time to work with us and listen to our concerns."

Smith was Minnesota's lieutenant governor when she was appointed to the Senate in 2018 after former Sen. Al Franken resigned. She won a special election later in 2018, then won re-election in 2020 to a full term.

"Senator Smith is one of the best friends that co-ops have in Washington," says Tim Velde from Minnesota Valley Cooperative Light & Power, a member of the statewide association board. "She gets the challenges that rural communities face and wants to help us overcome those challenges."

Smith says that small towns and rural areas play a key role in America's economic and social success.

"If you travel in rural America as I have, you can learn a lot from the people about resilience in tough times and coming together to solve even the most difficult problems in unique and innovative ways," she says. "Rural electric cooperatives and their members understand this and invest in the things that make rural areas prosper like economic development, expanding access to rural broadband, and recovering from weather disasters." **RE**

Viper®-ST Recloser

Pre-programmed

It's never been easier to
give your grid an upgrade.

Updating your recloser is vital to the reliability of your overhead protection. G&W Electric makes it seamless to switch to the advanced technology of the Viper-ST – a highly reliable and maintenance-free solution. Featuring various configurations and operation modes, the Viper-ST combines the time-proven reliability of electronically controlled, vacuum fault interrupters with the maintenance-free benefits of a solid-dielectric insulated device. And because we can pre-program and configure the Viper-ST control with our familiar relay interface and operating modes, your crew can get the latest technology in an easy-to-use and familiar complete system.



Find out more at gwelectric.com/viper-st

CO-OP SHOTS

FEBRUARY PHOTO CHALLENGE WINNERS THEME: BY MOONLIGHT



WINNER: A LINEMAN'S EVENING OFFICE

The northern lights dance in the distance as a Homer Electric Association crew works an evening outage in Kenai, Alaska.

Photo by Sam Clyde





RUNNER-UP: OUTAGE RESPONSE BY MOONLIGHT

A La Plata Electric Association crew was fixing downed lines after a storm when the clouds broke and the moon peeked through.

Photo by Jessica Matlock



UPCOMING CONTEST THEMES:

April:	Interesting Linework Tools
May:	Getting Fit
June:	Bridges
July:	Unusual Co-op Vehicles

Visit cooperative.com/REmagazine to see all the photos, read the contest rules, like your favorite shots, or enter some images of your own.

THINKING BIG

‘A LUXURY WE DON’T HAVE’

Lincoln County Power’s succession planning takes an innovative turn

By Erin Kelly

When Dave Luttrell decided in 2019 to retire as general manager of Lincoln County Power District No. 1 in Nevada, he knew he couldn’t just rush out the door.

Instead, Luttrell gave his board of directors more than three years’ notice, promising to stay on until October 2022. What’s more, he is acting as a coach and mentor in a new employee development program designed to ensure that one of his 20 staff members will be ready to succeed him when he leaves.

“In larger co-ops, you have many mid-level managers to choose from when selecting a new GM,” says Luttrell, who was hired 12 years ago to lead the Panaca-based co-op that serves about 5,200 meters. “That’s a luxury we don’t have. It’s a real problem that I think a lot of us face.”

Five employees—25% of the co-op’s staff—have signed up to take the training, which began in October and will last for eight months.

During that time, participants undergo an initial assessment of their leadership skills; develop basic knowledge such as business writing, business ethics, basic accounting and customer service; learn about power supply from their generation and transmission co-op; and complete assignments that include challenges such as load forecasting.

This summer, the employees will apply to the board to become assistant general manager—a temporary position that allows the selected candidate to continue working with Luttrell before he retires and to attend the NRECA management internship program next fall.

“It is a big commitment of time and money that our board was willing to take on,” Luttrell says. “Small utilities don’t tend to think strategically beyond the day-to-day. But when you think about it, we spend about \$50,000 to take a person and make them a lineman. We ought to be spending money to develop leadership for the future as well.”

The five employees—one woman and four men—who enrolled in the program include an administrative manager, an engineering and operations manager, an operations technician, an IT specialist and a lineworker.

“We got a really diverse cross-section of people,” Luttrell says.

Leigh Taylor, NRECA’s director of executive search, has played a key role in helping guide Lincoln County Power in its succession planning.

“WE SPEND ABOUT \$50,000 TO TAKE A PERSON AND MAKE THEM A LINEMAN. WE OUGHT TO BE SPENDING MONEY TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE AS WELL.”

INNOVATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CO-OPS

“Leigh helped us develop a very sound general manager position description, and she’s given me great advice and been my sounding board,” Luttrell says.

Taylor credits Lincoln County Power for taking on the challenge.

“The succession planning work that the Lincoln County Power board and leadership is doing today is incredibly helpful in the transition to the next GM,” she says. “Their understanding of the qualifications needed for success and the focused development of possible internal candidates creates a strong environment for the utility to meet the needs of the future.”

The program has proven so popular that it will continue even after a new GM is chosen.

“The response from employees has been, ‘This looks neat. I want to do it, too,’” Luttrell says. “Watching their five colleagues go through the training has helped all our employees realize that whoever gets the job deserves it.”


At the end of the process, he says, the board should have “multiple good candidates to choose from” to replace him.

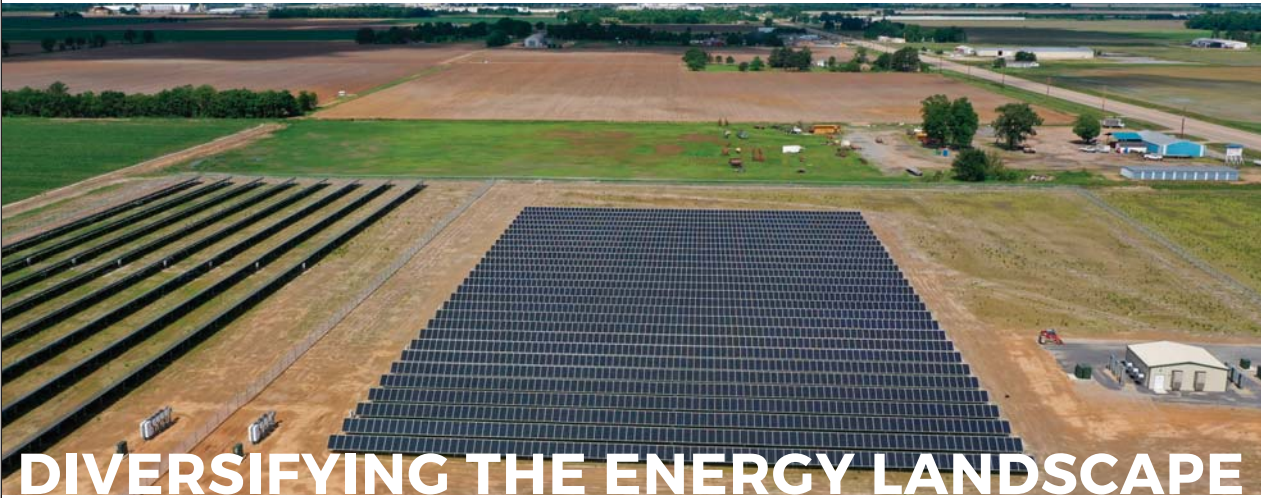
“My advice to other co-ops is, ‘Don’t underestimate the time commitment,’” Luttrell says. “Being a mentor to five people has taken a lot of my time. But at this stage, this is one of the most important things I could be doing.” **RE**



Lincoln County Power General Manager Dave Luttrell

Photo courtesy Lincoln County Power





DIVERSIFYING THE ENERGY LANDSCAPE

SOLAR POWER • BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE • ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS • MORE

Whether you are looking to save green environmentally or economically, you can **get the power** to do both with Today's Power. With more utility-scale projects commissioned than any other Arkansas-based company, we're confident we bring the expertise to design, low-cost and clean energy systems while creating economic development and committed partnerships. **We are your Energy Partner.**

DEVELOPING SOLAR PROJECTS FOR THE UTILITY SCALE | COMMERCIAL | MUNICIPAL | AGRICULTURAL | EDUCATION INDUSTRIES

CONTACT US: (888) 322-4275 OR [TODAYSPOWER.COM](https://www.todayspower.com)

TECH INSIGHTS

By Todd H. Cunningham

Cullman Electric Cooperative

CO-OP TYPE: Distribution **METERS:** 45,127

LOCATION: Cullman, Alabama

GOAL

Expand fiber connections between substations and some fiber-ready downline devices in order to create a smarter grid, expanding automation capabilities and ultimately increasing the reliability of electric service, and to provide members in the build zone with reliable, affordable broadband service.

SOLUTION

Designed and commenced a multi-phase program encompassing the substation and office

connection effort (requiring 246 miles of fiber) and the member-focused Sprout Fiber Internet initiative, run by Cullman's Cooperative Connections subsidiary (requiring 553 miles).

Phase 1 of the project began in June 2020, with the first co-op members connected in late January. Additional areas will come online as Phase 1 progresses; if it is successful, the co-op will proceed with additional phases, with the ultimate goal of making Sprout Fiber available to every co-op member.

CONTACT

Cullman Electric Cooperative, Brian Lacy, 256-737-3268.



“Drones are a tool that can capture better data, do it cheaper, and do it safer. It's a rare triple-win technology.”

—Kyle Gustofson, Great River Energy
UAS Program Manager

CONTACT

Great River Energy,
Therese LaCanne, 763-445-5710;
Skyward, Bill Stafford, 303-877-9003.

Great River Energy

CO-OP TYPE: G&T

LOCATION: Maple Grove, Minnesota

GOAL

A platform to manage all of the operations, aircraft and personnel involved in the co-op's growing drone program to expand use of the technology while mitigating risk.

SOLUTION

Retained Skyward (skyward.io) to provide in-person classroom and flight training to the co-op's team, using a "Train the Trainer" model to allow GRE personnel to run training programs of their own and deploy drones to company service centers located throughout its territory.

The co-op now uses Skyward's Drone Management Platform to oversee its entire drone operation, from flight planning and equipment management to requesting airspace access. GRE has 11 certified drone pilots and operates a fleet of 13 aircraft.

AT A GLANCE

- 34 Storage and hydro
- 35 N.C. microgrid
- 36 Smart inverters



Southwestern Electric Cooperative

CO-OP TYPE: Distribution **METERS:** 41,560

LOCATION: Greenville, Illinois

GOAL

Replace a legacy SCADA solution hindered by time-consuming installation, difficult and expensive maintenance and challenges in meeting NERC critical infrastructure protection regulations.

SOLUTION

Replaced the legacy system with a web-based SCADA solution to monitor and manage substation performance.

The system, from Orion Utility Automation, a division of automated substation solution provider NovaTech (novatechweb.com), offers streamlined installation and maintenance and provides engineers with a modern, easily configurable user interface.

CONTACT

Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 800-637-8667; NovaTech, Carlo Chatman (Power PR), 424-238-0429.

“A SCADA system really does not have an end. By its nature it is an ongoing modular effort that requires enhancements and upgrades in lockstep with the substation technology and performance.”

—Bobby Williams, Southwestern Electric Cooperative CEO

Dairyland Power Cooperative

CO-OP TYPE: G&T

LOCATION: La Crosse, Wisconsin

GOAL

Increase the availability of renewable energy from an efficient, sustainable facility to support the co-op's transition to a lower carbon future.

SOLUTION

Negotiation of a power purchase agreement for 51.6 MW of the output of the newly commissioned Tatanka Ridge Wind Farm. The facility is owned by Tatanka Ridge Wind LLC, which is jointly owned by Avangrid Renewables LLC and WEC Energy Group.

The deal marks the third collaboration between Dairyland and Avangrid Renewables on wind energy facilities.

CONTACT

Dairyland Electric Cooperative, Katie Thomson, 608-787-1323; Avangrid Renewables, Morgan Pitts, 503-933-8907.



Tropical Wedding

KIUC project marries storage and hydro



By Reed Karaim

Call it a match made in paradise.

Hawaii's Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) has signed a deal for a system that marries solar energy with hydropower, an innovative project that could herald future advances in energy storage.

KIUC is working with AES Corp. on the groundbreaking West Kaua'i Energy Project, which will use a large solar array to power pumps lifting water to an uphill reservoir during the day. The reservoir will feed hydro generation during the evening peak.

The combination shifts solar generation into hours when the sun is no longer shining but demand is high. Solar power during the day will be more than enough to run the pumps and will also feed into KIUC's grid during morning and afternoon shoulder periods.

Brad Rockwell, KIUC's chief of operations, says the project should generate about 24 MW of hydro overall and 35 MW of solar when completed in 2024.

"It will provide about 25% of our annual energy needs," he says.

As renewable generation continues to grow, storage is playing a larger role on the grid, mostly in the form of batteries.

"Lithium-ion is going to continue to be dominant," says Jan Ahlen, NRECA's director of energy solutions. "But there's a lot of different technologies, and I think that's a good thing. The storage industry is still developing."

Rockwell says KIUC's efforts make financial sense on Kaua'i Island, where every gallon of fossil fuel has to be shipped in across the ocean. But circumstances are unique to each electric co-op.

Nevertheless, he sees a lesson for the industry.

"There are a lot of people who say you can't run a grid on renewables or solar, but that's not the case," he says. "We've proven it can be done."



Fast Facts: West Kaua'i Energy Project

KIUC's solar-powered pumped storage system is the first of its kind in the world.

- Will supply **up to 25%** of KIUC's power needs
- Expected to be online by late **2024**
- **100-year** lifespan
- **35-MW** solar and battery system will power pumps
- Reservoirs hold nearly **400 million gallons**
- **24-MW hydropower** capacity from two generators
- Up to **54 hours of power** from full reservoirs

Source: KIUC

An ‘Eco-Village’ in N.C.

Co-op-served microgrid community is a test bed for tomorrow’s grid



By Reed Karaim

A glimpse of how residential microgrids could transform power distribution systems is on display at Heron’s Nest, a 31-home development under way in Shallotte, North Carolina, that will be served by Brunswick Electric Membership Corp., based in nearby Supply.

Heron’s Nest uses energy-efficient home design, 3 KW of rooftop solar on each house, a 75-KW community solar array with 255 KWh of battery storage, and controllable water heaters and smart thermostats.

In addition to providing distributed generation and demand response through water heaters, thermostats, and battery systems, the neighborhood can fully isolate in the event of a grid outage.

That’s important in coastal North Carolina, where Shallotte and Brunswick Electric are located.

“The area is very prone to hurricanes,” says the neighborhood’s developer Brian Adams. “Right now, we’re getting one a year that knocks out power for some period of time.”

Nicky Nance, Brunswick Electric’s key accounts and renewables specialist, says the co-op is interested in microgrids as a way to increase system resiliency.

Microgrids, while still rare, are slowly growing, but most are in places such as military bases that have critical reasons for being able to operate off the grid in the event of a power interruption. Heron’s Nest provides a different test of a microgrid’s potential, one more attuned to Brunswick Electric’s membership.

“It seemed like a good fit for us, because we’re a residentially driven co-op,” Nance says.

Adams says the goal was to develop an environmentally conscious “eco-village.”

“We’ve done our best to incorporate ... leading-edge technologies,” he says. “But we look at them and think they really should become the standard.”

“WE’VE DONE OUR BEST TO INCORPORATE ... LEADING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES. BUT WE ... THINK THEY REALLY SHOULD BECOME THE STANDARD.”

— Brian Adams, Developer

BONUS:

See microgrid infographic, **page 9**

Smart Inverters

The increasingly complex task of connecting DG to the grid



By Reed Karaim

Solar inverters used to have one job: convert DC power from photovoltaic arrays to AC for the grid. But the latest devices are taking on a lot more responsibility.

Today's smart inverters can provide voltage and frequency support and have control and communication functions that can help an electric utility respond to trouble on a system.

Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC), which generates its own power and runs an independent grid, has invested heavily in solar, with 65 MW of utility-scale generation and 32 MW of distributed rooftop solar.

Brad Rockwell, the co-op's chief of operations, says smart inverters have gone from being a challenge to an asset to grid management.

"In the old days, when you had these PV [photovoltaic] systems connected to the distribution system and there was a disturbance on the grid, you just wanted the PV to shut down," Rockwell says. "Now, our electric grid is dominated by inverters during the daytime, and we've had to ensure they don't trip offline. They actually stay online and contribute to resolving the fault."

KIUC has worked with Tesla on improving their solar inverters, including low-voltage ride-through capability.

The importance of smart inverter capabilities increases as the amount of distributed solar generation increases on the grid. And there have been steady improvements in inverter efficiency in recent years, which can reach 98 to 99% conversion rates from DC to AC, says David Pinney, NRECA analytics research manager.

Inverter evolution, he says, is part of an increasing reliance on power electronics, devices that can monitor and, in some cases, autonomously react to changing system conditions. **RE**

“IN THE OLD DAYS, WHEN ... THERE WAS A DISTURBANCE ON THE GRID, YOU JUST WANTED THE PV TO SHUT DOWN. NOW ... THEY ACTUALLY STAY ONLINE AND CONTRIBUTE TO RESOLVING THE FAULT.”

— Brad Rockwell, KIUC



RISE ABOVE

the Digital Divide.

**You have the Power. We have the Experience.
Together, we can bridge the Digital Divide.**

Bringing fiber broadband to rural America will eliminate the Digital Divide, and the electric cooperatives can make it happen.

FiberRise works exclusively with electric utilities to successfully fund, build, and operate fiber broadband networks. Using our comprehensive solutions and innovative technology, you can Rise Above:

- Financial Uncertainty
- Operational Challenges
- Competitive Pressures
- Reliability Concerns

With servant's heart values and a proven track-record of success, FiberRise is a win-win for you and your community.

Visit us at [Fiber-Rise.com/RiseAbove](https://fiber-rise.com/riseabove) to learn more.



NEW PRODUCTS



INTEGRAL DX
integraldx.com
sales@integraldx.com
320-269-3227; Montevideo, Minnesota

ALL-TERRAIN DIGGER DERRICK

Integral dx is offering an *all-terrain digger derrick (ATD)* that can access remote areas beyond the reach of traditional truck-mounted equipment. It's designed with all-wheel drive, three steering options, and side-to-side frame-leveling capabilities. The sturdy but compact unit can fit on a trailer that can be towed by a standard line truck. Lifting capacity of the boom is 6,000 pounds without the personnel bucket and 3,000 pounds with the bucket. The ATD is insulated to meet ANSI/ASSP A10.31-2019 standards.

NEW STEP DRILL BITS

Emerson's Greenlee is introducing an advanced hole-making solution with its new *GSB Series Step Bits* that feature an improved split-point tip for faster penetration and a patented split-step design to optimize chip load for a faster and smoother cutting experience with cordless drills. Progressive cutting edges on the bits provide balanced aggression to maximize torque efficiency and minimize stalling when using a cordless drill.



EMERSON
emerson.com
michael.farris@emerson.com
815-312-6839; St. Louis, Missouri

THERMAL IMAGING VIDEOSCOPE

FLIR Systems Inc. is introducing the new *FLIR VS290-32*, an industry-first videoscope that combines thermal imaging and a visible camera specifically designed for safer and more efficient inspections of hard-to-reach underground utility vaults. It is CAT IV 600 V safety rated for electrical inspections and has an IP67-rated camera tip and IP54 base unit to protect against dust and water. The device features FLIR's patented Multi-Spectral Dynamic Imaging (MSX), which improves image clarity, and an LED work light provides illumination.



FLIR SYSTEMS INC.

flir.com

pr@flir.com

800-322-3731; Wilsonville, Oregon

ElectriCom

Trust us to Build Your Future.



**Telecom - Power - Right of Way Services
Gas - Storm Team - Sewer Location**

electricominc.com 800.483.5941

NEW PRODUCTS



DOBLE ENGINEERING CO.

doble.com
dobleinfo@doble.com
617-926-4900; Watertown, Massachusetts

SOLUTION FOR HIGH-VOLTAGE TESTING

Doble Engineering Co. is introducing the *M7100* high-voltage (HV) asset analyzer, which conducts more than 10 different tests and can shave time off apparatus tests. It is the only HV analyzer on the market with two high-voltage leads, each capable of source and measurement. Once testing is complete, results flow from the instrument to Doble Test Assistant software, which provides real-time analysis, recommendations, and explanations.

HEAVY LIFTING DRONE

ZM Interactive's new *xFold* drone has a 1,000-pound capacity, interchangeable rotor configurations, and flight times up to eight hours. It's the only industrial unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that can easily switch between x4 (quad), x6 (hexa), x8 (octo), and x12 (dodeca) configurations. The new xFold Dragon can lift up to 1,000 pounds, while the Dragon Hybrid boasts a flight time of 1.5 hours on battery and over eight hours with a hybrid system. Pilots can swap configurations in minutes, including adding robotic arms for delivery, extinguisher ball droppers for firefighting, sprayers for agriculture, or sensors for 3D mapping. The aircraft are weather-resistant and made to fly in inclement conditions.



ZM INTERACTIVE

xfoldrig.com
415-251-8098; San Francisco, California

**UTILITY SOLUTIONS INC.**

utilitysolutionsinc.com

sales@utilitysolutionsinc.com

828-323-8914; Hickory, North Carolina

OVERHEAD DISTRIBUTION JUMPER

Utility Solutions Inc. is introducing the *Jumper Cuff—Temporary Jumper Holder*. The patent-pending device works on overhead conductors to reduce the risk of uncontrolled jumpers and keeps lineworkers outside minimum approach distance. It's made from a heavy-duty polymer and includes opposing hooks that are flared at the end to allow the holder to slide over a temporary jumper, bare conductors, or line hose.



VIGILANT

The Next Generation
in Battery Monitoring

When it comes to protecting your mission critical assets, **failure is not an option**. Vigilant is.

- Universal battery compatibility
- Clean & efficient installation
- IEEE/NERC compliance reporting
- A.I. battery analysis
- Web-based software with Modbus/SCADA
- Fleet Management Software
- Optional electrolyte level sensors
- Thermal runaway detection

For a swift installation, clean look and optimal performance, choose Vigilant and its Advanced Multi-Function (AMF) sensors that measure three important new parameters:



**Battery State
of Health (SoH)**



**Battery Risk
Factor (RF)**



**True Float
Current**

EAGLE EYE
POWER SOLUTIONS
Increasing Reliability. Decreasing Costs. Meeting Compliance.

Discover more about the Vigilant and how it can make you powerful.



SCAN ME

**SIEMENS SMART INFRASTRUCTURE**

siemens.com

eva-maria.baumann@siemens.com

49 9131 17 36620; Munich, Germany

HIGH-VOLTAGE LINE MONITORING SOLUTION

Siemens Smart Infrastructure is launching its new *PowerLink CM*, a condition monitoring solution for high-voltage AC and DC transmission lines. The device is designed to precisely locate faults in the transmission grid and continuously track line conditions. One device can monitor up to 310 miles of transmission line and conditions can be detected in powered, unpowered, or grounded lines. Operators can analyze status reports and optimize maintenance activities through the Siemens cloud-based MindSphere. **RE**

THIS MONTH'S ADVERTISERS

Advertisers are solely responsible for the content of their advertisements. Publication of an ad does not imply endorsement by NRECA or *RE Magazine*.

CoBank cobank.com/gonr36	1
Conexon conexonconnect.com	7
Eagle Eye Power Solutions eepowersolutions.com	41
Electric Power Systems Int'l Inc. epsii.com	50
ElectricCom electriccominc.com	39
Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange federatedrural.com	23
FiberRise fiber-rise.com/riseabove	37
Fujitsu Network Communications, Inc. fujitsu.com/us/rural-broadband	46
G&W Electric gwelectric.com/viper-st	27
Hitachi ABB http://bit.ly/Smart-Digital-Substations	13
Milsoft Utility Solutions, Inc. milsoft.com	5
Milwaukee Tool milwaukeeetool.com	45
NISC nisc.coop	C4
Nordic Fiberglass nordicfiberglass.com	4
NRECA Consulting Services cooperative.com/consulting	63

NRECA Executive Search cooperative.com/executivesearch	55
Pioneer Utility Resources wordsouth.com	C2
Power & Tel ptsupply.com	47
Rice Signs, LLC ricesigns.com	54
S&C Electric Company sandc.com/TS17	51
SEDC sedata.com/buildtomorrow/	C3
Tallman Equipment tallmanequipment.com	48
TECH Products, Inc. techproducts.com	50
Telia Carrier teliacarrier.com	17
Tempest Energy tempestenergy.com	19
Today's Power todayspower.com	31
Virginia/Georgia Transformer Corporation vatransformer.com	49
WESCO Distribution, Inc. info.wesco.com/your-trusted-partner-for-fiber-broadband-deployment	43
ZEF Energy zefenergy.com	52

Bridging the Digital Divide

The Leaders in Delivering FTTx and Wireless Solutions for Rural Broadband Deployments



48

FTTx Projects
Launched



26

As Complete
Supply Chain Provider



9

As Supply Chain
Services Provider



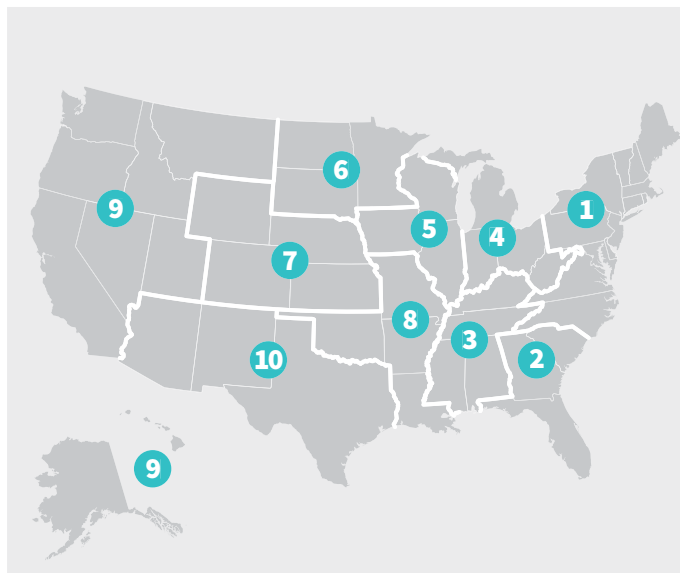
13

As Consultant Partner and
Supply Chain Provider

Over 100,000 miles of Rural Fiber Networks Deployed

Find out more on our capabilities, including RDOF projects, at
info.wesco.com/your-trusted-partner-for-fiber-broadband-deployment

CO-OP PEOPLE



REGION 1

Delaware
Maine
Maryland
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New York
North Carolina
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
Vermont
Virginia

REGION 2

Florida
Georgia
South Carolina

REGION 3

Alabama
Kentucky
Mississippi
Tennessee

REGION 4

Indiana
Michigan
Ohio
West Virginia

REGION 5

Illinois
Iowa
Wisconsin

REGION 6

Minnesota
North Dakota
South Dakota

REGION 7

Colorado
Kansas
Nebraska
Wyoming

REGION 8

Arkansas
Louisiana
Missouri
Oklahoma

REGION 9

Alaska
California
Hawaii
Idaho
Montana
Nevada
Oregon
Utah
Washington

REGION 10

Arizona
New Mexico
Texas

NATIONAL

A NEW SCIENTIST

Emma Stewart, a nationally known leader in energy and infrastructure research, has joined NRECA as its new chief scientist. Stewart, who holds a doctorate in electrical engineering from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, comes to the association from the U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, where she was associate program leader for defense infrastructure. She also managed the Grid Integration Group at DOE's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California and studied hydrogen fuel cells and other hydrogen applications at the department's Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico. Stewart also led the distribution planning, modeling and analysis consulting group at California-based BEW Engineering. "As an accomplished engineer, Dr. Stewart comes to NRECA with nearly two decades of demonstrated success in scientific research," said NRECA CEO **Jim Matheson**. "In particular, her leadership in grid modernization, data analytics, and defense-related projects will strengthen our insights and recommendations on current and future trends affecting electric sector operations." **Jim Spiers**, NRECA's senior vice president for Business & Technology Strategies, added that "she will be instrumental in helping electric cooperatives across the nation optimize and transform their systems in an evolving industry." Stewart said she is "excited for what the future holds for the association and electric cooperatives," adding that "co-ops play a signifi-

cant role in the energy revolution." She succeeds **Craig Miller**, who took a position as a professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

REGION 1

FALL'S NEW POST

North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Raleigh, has named **Amadou Fall** as the new COO of North Carolina Electric Membership Corp. (G&T), also in Raleigh. Fall has been CEO at the National Renewables Cooperative Organization (service), Carmel, Indiana, since that co-op was founded in 2008, and he previously worked at Carmel-based ACES Power. "He has worked with electric cooperatives throughout the nation," said **Joe Brannan**, executive vice president & CEO at both of the North Carolina organizations. "His breadth of market and industry experience will put us in a position of strength as we continue to navigate a changing environment and engage with the people and communities we serve." Also at the statewide, the co-op consumer magazine has won the Bronze Anvil Award for magazines in competitions sponsored by the Public Relations Society of America. "We're honored to be recognized for our work and thank the state's electric co-ops, as well as our engaged readers, for contributing to the success of the magazine," said **Warren Kessler**,



AMADOU FALL



CLEANER, FASTER HOLES


LINEMANS

**SHOCKWAVE Impact Duty™
Lineman's Auger Bits**

**LEARN
MORE**



or visit <https://qr.mke.tl/2ykxxk>



SHOCKWAVE 
IMPACT DUTY™

CO-OP PEOPLE

publications director.

Folks at Central Electric Membership Corp., Sanford, North Carolina, were saddened by the recent passing of **R.G. Wadsworth**, who served as a dedicated board member for 24 years until his retirement in 2014. "It is with a heavy heart that we at Central Electric are remembering one of our longtime, faithful, and dedicated board members," CEO & General Manager **Eddie Oldham** wrote in a tribute in the co-op's member newsletter. "Mr. Wadsworth was a great ambassador for the advancement of our rural communities as well as the farming and agriculture industries."

Josh Winslow, CEO at Brunswick Electric Membership Corp., Shallotte, North Carolina, has been elected to the board of the National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC, service), Lake St. Louis, Missouri. "NISC's support is critical as its members position themselves to be successful in an industry future that centers on data-driven business operations and management," Winslow said. "We are just beginning to realize the potential for ways we can leverage meter data to improve operations, finances, and member relations." Winslow succeeds **James Mangum Jr.**, CEO/general manager at Wake Electric Membership Corp., Youngsville, North Carolina, who had served on the board of NISC and one of its predecessor organizations

since 1994. "Jim's contributions to NISC have been many," said **Dan Wilbanks**, NISC president & CEO. "He has seen us through tremendous growth and has been a strong supporter of both NISC and the cooperative movement. I thank him for his contributions, and I'd also like to welcome Josh to our board. He is joining a great team, and we're very much looking forward to having him on our board."



FAFA BAKER

Fafa Baker, workforce planning & development specialist at Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, Fredericksburg, Virginia, has become the co-op's point person in its drive to become a community leader in diversity, equity and inclusion. The co-op "understands the value that is created when an organization encourages, embraces, and embodies a workforce that is made up of employees with a variety of experiences and perspectives," it said in a recent report on Baker's participation in Richmond (Virginia) Diversity Dialogue Day. As part of the event, led by the American Association of Blacks in Energy, Baker and other facilitators spoke with about 100 Richmond-area students about bias and prejudice.

"Our broadband build was a breeze. Thanks, Fujitsu."

FUJITSU

shaping tomorrow with you

Your community needs broadband—you need help navigating the unfamiliar terrain. With the strength, resources and experience of a global broadband leader, Fujitsu takes the weight and worry off your shoulders.

- Risk-sharing
- On-time, on-budget
- Total network and support systems integration
- One partner – complete accountability

More than a deep bench and turnkey capabilities, we give you a willing partner and experienced guide. With Fujitsu by your side, deploying and operating your broadband network is easier than you think. We not only get you—we've got you.

(888) 362-7763 | fujitsu.com/us/rural-broadband



© Copyright 2021 Fujitsu Network Communications, Inc. FUJITSU (and design)® and "shaping tomorrow with you" are trademarks of Fujitsu Limited in the United States and other countries. All Rights Reserved.



**Power
& Tel.**

FAFL

They're here.

STAY IN THE FIELD & GET HIGH QUALITY SPLICES

THE 90S FUSION SPLICER



More
Information:

www.ptsupply.com



MORE INFO



Call
Us:

1-800-238-7514



Email
Us:

marketing@ptsupply.com

CO-OP PEOPLE

“As a volunteer facilitator,” Baker said, “I co-led a small group of high-school students through virtual conversations.” The co-op also recently announced two promotions. **Shawn McDonough**, an 11-year employee and formerly director of project management, moved up to manager of the co-op’s Western Region. **Daniel Dewey**, who joined the co-op in 2004 as an apprentice lineworker, moved up from line foreman to director of operations & construction for the co-op’s Eastern Region. And **David Koogler**, vice president of member services & external affairs, was recently reappointed to the board of the GridWise Alliance, a national organization working to modernize the electric grid. “This

position gives member-owned electric cooperatives a seat at the table and a voice as important decisions are made about the future of the electric grid and the energy industry,” Koogler said.

More than three decades of service to Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, Mansfield, Pennsylvania, and its various subsidiaries will draw to a close when **Craig Eccher** retires as president & CEO next month. Eccher joined the co-op as manager of engineering services in 1990 and was named president & CEO of its jointly owned subsidiary, Wellsboro Electric Co., in 1999. He was named Tri-County Rural Electric’s executive vice president & COO in 2003 and moved into the

top job three years later. He’s also been co-president & CEO of C&T Enterprises, a subsidiary of Tri-County and Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Wysox, and president & CEO of Tri-Co Connections, Tri-County’s internet subsidiary. “The board appreciates his many years of service to the cooperative, as well as the long list of accomplishments he has achieved during his tenure as CEO,” said **Gerald “Arnie” Kriner**, who chairs the co-op’s board. Taking Eccher’s place is **Kevin Brownlee**, formerly the deputy city manager in Hot Springs, Arkansas, where he managed one of the state’s largest water and wastewater utilities. Brownlee’s more than 20 years of utility management experience also includes top management posts at electric co-ops in Arkansas and South Carolina. “We are fortunate to gain a leader with Kevin’s experience and talent,” Kriner said.

AT TALLMAN EQUIPMENT CUSTOMER SERVICE IS EVERYONE’S JOB



That’s why at Tallman a real person will always answer the phone. It’s just another way you can Trust Tallman.

TALLMAN
EQUIPMENT CO., INC.
EMPLOYEE OWNED

www.tallmanequipment.com

Call Toll Free: 877-860-5666 • International: 630-860-5666



REGION 2

‘GOD KNEW’

Hinson Mosley’s family thought they’d lose him before his first birthday, but he beat the pneumonia that nearly took him. Nearly nine decades later, he’s documented that unexpected life in an “authorized biography” by **Joy Waters Fowler**. The book covers his years of farming and his service in the Georgia House of Representatives, but it makes room as well for his 12 years of service on the board of Satilla Rural Electric Membership Corp., Alma,



HINSON MOSLEY

VIRGINIA - GEORGIA TRANSFORMER

POWERING BUSINESS GROWTH

Celebrating 50 years in the industry as a leading power transformer manufacturer, **WE know Transformers.**

Serving a broader market than anyone else, we have a proven record in providing the highest quality, most reliable, long-lasting **Transformers** available.

We're the largest supplier to Public Power in the U.S., producing more than 1,000 transformers annually across all markets.

We deliver success through:

Over 1,300 skilled, trained employees

The technology leader

Perfect execution

60 year life design



Roanoke, VA



Pocatello, ID



Chihuahua, MX



Rincon, GA

PRODUCT RANGE

47,000 MVA Annual Capacity



CHIHUAHUA, MX
15 MVA 115 kV
0.5 MVA 4.1 kV



ROANOKE, VA
30 MVA 138 kV
5 MVA 34.5 kV



POCATELLO, ID
100 MVA 230 kV
12 MVA 69 kV



RINCON GA
500 MVA 525 kV
30 MVA 115 kV

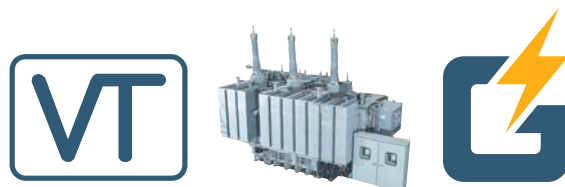


A Fifty Year Legacy of Transforming Power

800.882.3944

sales@vatransformer.com

vatransformer.com



VIRGINIA - GEORGIA TRANSFORMER
ONE SOURCE-ONE COMMITMENT

CO-OP PEOPLE

which he also represented on the boards of the Georgia Electric Membership Corp. (statewide) and Georgia System Operations Corp. (service), both in Tucker. The book, "God Knew," reflects this remarkable life, according to his friend **William "Dink" NeSmith**, president of Community Newspapers, Athens, Georgia. "As you turn the pages," NeSmith wrote in his blog, "you will discover why 'God Knew' is the perfect title. Just days into this world, pneumonia almost robbed the author of the next 88 years. Hinson is convinced the Lord had other plans. God knew, He really knew, where the Honorable Hinson Mosley was going in life."

Aiken Electric Cooperative, Aiken, South Carolina, welcomed two new employees and congratulated a third on his promotion recently. **John Crawford** joined the staff as a first-class lineworker, **Emily Foster** signed on as a human resources assistant, and **Chase Booth** moved up from warehouse assistant to apprentice lineworker.

Jim Duncan's long career at SECO Energy, Sumterville, Florida, will come to a close when he retires as one of its longest-serving CEOs early next year. Duncan, who joined the co-op as director of accounting & finance in 1979, recently informed his board of his plans to retire in January. He has held the co-op's top staff post since 1990 and has seen its membership grow



JIM DUNCAN

from 37,000 in his first year to more than 200,000 today. "Mr. Duncan has built a legacy of customer-service focus that will remain strong long after his retirement next year," the co-op said in announcing his plans. "With 43 years of service, Mr. Duncan has devoted his life to the cooperative's success for the benefit of its employees and members. He will be deeply missed."

Two staffers at West Florida Electric Cooperative, Graceville, have been recognized by their co-workers as Employees of the Year. **Patty Grantham**, supervisor of member services, was chosen as Administrative Employee of the Year, and **Wes King**, the co-op's geographic information system coordinator, earned the honor on the engineering & operations side. "My work family is very special to me, and I have made many close friendships during my years here," Grantham said. King said he was "honored and humbled to be selected by my co-workers, who are also my friends, for such a high honor." Three other West Florida Electric employees earned Outstanding Service awards: **Candace Croft**, **Wesley Duboise** and **Freddy Wood**.

TECH
PRODUCTS, INC.

SIGNS, TAGS & MARKERS

Substations Signs | Phase tags | Cable markers

1-800-221-1311
www.TechProducts.com

MADE IN USA SINCE 1948
A VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS

ELECTRIC POWER SYSTEMS
TESTING & ENGINEERING SERVICES

*Setting the
Standard of
Excellence in
the Power
Industry*

Electric Power Systems is a NETA Certified, Independent Electrical Testing & Engineering Organization. We offer technical expertise in engineering, field testing and electrical system troubleshooting & maintenance of equipment up to 765kV to utility, industrial and commercial clients. Our service area extends throughout the United States, with offices in all major regions of the country. Our team-oriented approach ensures availability of the industry's best technicians and engineers, 24 hours a day - 365 days a year.

www.epsii.com
800-296-6770

NETA **NRECA**

RELIC.

Fusing lateral lines belongs in a history book, not your reliability plan.

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE WITH S&C'S TRIPSAVER® II CUTOUT-MOUNTED RECLOSER

Truck rolls really add up. They take valuable time, energy, and money. With 80% of overhead faults occurring on lateral lines, fuses are no longer your best lateral protection strategy. S&C's TripSaver II Cutout-Mounted Recloser combines the best of both fuse-saving and fuse-blowing methods to improve reliability on laterals. It limits the need for truck rolls – and fewer truck rolls means a better bottom line.

Keep planning for the grid of tomorrow by maximizing your investments today.



See the difference at sandc.com/TS17

© S&C Electric Company 2016. All rights reserved.





Electric Vehicle Load Growth Done Right.



ZEF turnkey programs are designed for Coops and their members, from start to end.

>> utility@zefenergy.com
 >> 612.688.4596
 >> zefenergy.com

REGION 3

AREA'S NEW CEO

Karl Rayborn, former senior vice president & CFO at the Alabama Rural Electric Association (AREA, statewide), Montgomery, has succeeded **Fred Braswell** as its president & CEO. Rayborn is no stranger to AREA, having joined the statewide staff 25 years ago. Braswell's recent retirement closed out a 22-year run as president & CEO. "It's been an honor and a privilege to serve the members of Alabama's electric cooperatives through AREA," he said. "This is a great program with good people, and I will miss serving them."



KARL RAYBORN

Also at AREA, Braswell and another executive joined top officials from two of the statewide's member co-ops when Alabama Secretary of State **John Merrill** recognized the state's co-ops and other electric utilities for their heroic efforts to open the polls last November in the aftermath of Hurricane Zeta. "It was probably one of the three most devastating storms to ever impact our system," said **Steve Sheffield**, general manager at Clarke-Washington Electric Membership Corp., Jackson. "Honestly, we were so overwhelmed by the unexpected strength and damage of the storm that we didn't initially consider the impact on the polling sites across our system." But thanks to the efforts of his co-op, along with PowerSouth Energy Cooperative (G&T), Andalusia, and AREA, generators powered up to serve about half of the polling places in the co-op's territory. The emergency work earned them, two state agencies, the state's investor-owned utility and its municipal systems the National Association of Secretaries of State Medallion, which Merrill presented after the crisis passed. Joining Sheffield at the presentation ceremony were Braswell; **Cleve Poole**, vice president for economic development & legal affairs at Pioneer Electric Cooperative, Greenville; and **Sean Strickler**, AREA vice president for public affairs. The state's co-ops, Merrill said, "worked tirelessly around the clock to protect our democracy."

Staffers at Jackson Purchase Energy Corp., Paducah, Kentucky, congratulated three of their co-workers on their recent promotions. **Stefanie Horton**, who joined the staff in 2019 as a cashier, moved up to billing & automated metering infrastructure specialist. **Mark Brueggert**, who started as a technical services specialist two years ago and moved up to network administrator, advanced to manager of information technology. And **Joe Simmons** took a step up to line technician. The staff also welcomed **Tristen Sanders** into their ranks as a new engineering intern. And seven employees were honored for rounding major service milestones. They are **Terry Dublin** and **Kelly Russell**, 30 years; **Colleen Chatman**, 20 years; **Jeremy Goodman**, 15 years; **Sandy Duncan**, 10 years; and **Jose Lopez** and **Kristy Reed**, five years.

Brad Coppock has taken the reins as general manager at Powell Valley Electric Cooperative, New Tazewell, Tennessee. Formerly the co-op's senior engineer, Coppock takes over from **Randell Meyers**, who retired after 57 years at the co-op, the last 28 in the top job. Coppock joined the co-op as an engineer and was named senior engineer in 2013. "We appreciate Randell's 57 years of dedicated service to the co-op, with the last 28 doing an outstanding job as our general manager," said **Roger Ball**, president of the co-op's board. "We look forward to working with Brad. He is well qualified for the position, and we know he will do a great job."



ALONG THOSE LINES

Subscribe to
NRECA's Podcast!



Listen to important stories from co-op country about the issues that matter most to rural America and the energy industry. Search for "Along Those Lines" in your preferred podcast app.

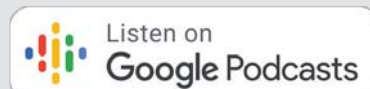
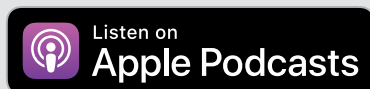


**DOWNLOAD
AT HOME.**



**LISTEN ON
THE GO.**

**Download or stream on your
computer or mobile device at:**



Also listen at:

electric.coop/podcast



Questions?

Reach out to us at AlongThoseLines@nreca.coop

REGION 4

THE FIRST SHOTS

Midwest Energy & Communications, Cassopolis, Michigan, became the first co-op in the state to run a COVID-19 vaccination event. Working with local public health officials, the co-op brought all its employees to headquarters recently to get the shot. "I'm happy to be part of the solution, and of so many in our employee family who took this brave step," said **Bob Hance**, president & CEO, who was among the 55 staffers vaccinated. "It's been a long and challenging year, and I'm hopeful this puts us on a path to some semblance of normalcy." The co-op planned to host a community drive-in session when the vaccine became more widely available, he said.



MICHAEL CHARBONNEAU

Michael Charbonneau has joined the staff at Indiana Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Indianapolis, as the association's new director of government relations. Formerly director of governmental relations for Northern Indiana Public Service Co., an investor-owned utility, Charbonneau

has also managed campaigns for candidates for state and federal office. He also owns a music production company. "Michael brings a strong work ethic and diverse expertise of the electric utility industry," said **Brian Christenberry**, the statewide's vice president of government relations. "His strong relationships with members of the lobbying community and the legislature make him a natural fit."



LESLIE BEARD

of marketing & member services. "Her experience, education and dedication to the cooperative will prove very beneficial in her new role," the co-op predicted in announcing her most recent promotion.

Her new co-workers at Ohio's Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Columbus, and co-op staffers across the state recently welcomed **Janet Murphy** into their ranks as the statewide's new manager of cooperative com-

Leslie Beard has climbed another step in her 20-year career at WIN Energy Rural Electric Membership Corp., Vincennes, Indiana. Now the co-op's COO, Beard started out as a customer service representative and moved to billing representative before becoming manager of marketing & communications and finally director

RE
RURAL ELECTRIC MAGAZINE

GOLD STAR Discount Program

Co-ops that subscribe 51%
of staff get the best price



For more information, visit
cooperative.com/remagazine/subscribe.

RS RICE SIGNS
Your Leader In Transportation Safety

- Traffic Signs
- Roll-Up Construction Signs
- Sign Stands
- Traffic Cones & Barricades
- Custom Street Name Signs
- Sign Posts & Hardware

Free Traffic Sign Catalog:
Call 888-728-7665

- or -

Visit www.RiceSigns.com

munications. She comes to the association after seven years with Duke Energy, one of the nation's largest investor-owned utilities. Also at the Ohio statewide, the recent retirement of **Ron Broyles** closed out a 42-year career with the association.

Employees, board members and consumers at Buckeye Rural Electric Cooperative, Rio Grande, Ohio, were saddened by the recent passing of **Michael Bullock**, the co-op's former general manager. Bullock, 79, held the post from 1998 to 2002.

REGION 5

'A HUGE VOID'

The recent passing of **Justin Hinnners**, a journeyman lineworker at Corn Belt Power Cooperative (G&T), Humboldt, Iowa, "leaves a huge void at Corn Belt Power," according to **Ken Kuyper**, executive vice president & general manager. "You could feel Justin's smile when he walked in the room. He was a great employee and an even better person." **Jeremy Stattelmann**, transmission superintendent, worked with Hinnners for the entire 11 years Hinnners was employed at the G&T. "Justin was more than just a lineman, he was our friend," Stattelmann said. "He will always be part of our family, forever." Hinnners was 36.

Ethan Hohenadel, regulatory specialist at the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Des Moines, has added an impressive new credential to his office wall. Hohenadel recently graduated with honors from the Mitchell Hamline School of Law at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Employees, board members and consumers at Heartland Power Cooperative, Thompson, Iowa, mourned the recent passing of **Richard Rosenberg**, president of the co-op's board. Rosenberg was elected to the board of Cedar Valley Rural Electric Cooperative in 1993 and became president in 1995. He retained that post when his co-op merged with Winnebago Rural Electric Cooperative to form Heartland Power in 1998. "Richard has had an immeasurable impact on the cooperative and the community," the co-op said in an obituary on its Facebook page. "He always put others first, even during his long, courageous battle with cancer. Many looked to Richard for his leadership, guidance and particularly his friendship. We will all miss Richard."

More than four decades of service came to a close with the recent retirement of **Mark Walsh** as a crew foreman at Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, Estherville, Iowa. Walsh signed on as a lineworker for Pocahontas Rural Electric Cooperative, one of Iowa Lakes Electric's predecessor co-ops, in 1980 and has been the Pocahontas and Emmetsburg service-area foreman for

Make Your Most Important Decision Your Best Decision!

NRECA Executive Search helps you find the leader you need to move your business into the future.

We start with you: We work with boards and hiring teams to establish the competencies needed for success.

We give you more: Our process includes up-to-date compensation guidance and predictive leadership assessments.

We don't stop there: With included extensive post-search consulting options, we continue to help your new leader and cooperative be successful!

ACTIVE/RECENT SEARCHES

Alabama Rural Electric Association • AL
Alger-Delta Electric Cooperative • MI
Barrow Utilities & Electric Co-op, Inc • AK
Indian Electric Cooperative • OK
Inland Power and Light • WA
McCone Electric Cooperative • MT
North Star Electric Cooperative • MN
Okanogan County Electric Cooperative • WA
Ouachita Electric Cooperative • AR
South Dakota Rural Electric Association • SD

cooperative.com/executivesearch



Leigh Taylor, Senior Principal, Executive Search
571-326-9547 | Leigh.Taylor@nreca.coop



CO-OP PEOPLE

the past 31 years. There's been a lot of change in line work over the years, he said—"If my computer doesn't work, I feel like I can't work," he joked—but one thing has remained constant. "No matter what project it was," Walsh said, "the employee team was always very hands-on, and everybody was on board, from the top down. Management always passed along information from new projects to cooperative financials."

Michael Geerdes has moved into the general manager's office at Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative, Grundy Center, Iowa, to succeed the recently retired **Vicki Daily**. Geerdes has worked at the co-op for nearly a decade and was member services manager before his recent promotion. "Michael has been an important part of the Grundy co-op for nearly 10 years," said **Larry Rohach**, president of the co-op's board. "With his cooperative knowledge, strong work ethic and commitment to our member-consumers, this board is confident he will lead Grundy County REC far into the future." At the same time, Rohach said, the board is sorry to see Daily leave. "Vicki has led Grundy County REC through some very difficult times, making the cooperative stronger and setting us up for a strong future. The board and the employees will miss Vicki, her enthusiasm and her commitment to our member-consumers."

Katie LaBree has joined the staff at Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative, Allison, Iowa, as business development manager. "I hope that I get to play a small part in creating opportunities for others, whether it's helping them start a business or creating jobs in rural Iowa," she said. "I can't imagine a better job." A Minnesota native, LaBree worked in economic development in North Dakota and two Iowa communities before joining the co-op.

Pam Langlay's recent retirement at Oconto Electric Cooperative, Oconto Falls, Wisconsin, wrapped up more than 40 years at the co-op in a career that took her from the front desk to marketing and communications to servicing the co-op's personal emergency response offering, and, finally, back to the front desk for the last seven years. Her favorite memory, she told members in a feature for the co-op's local pages, was when she won the statewide's **N.F. Leifer** Memorial Journalism Award in 2000 for her work on those same local pages. "It was my first year of writing for our local pages," she said. As for her favorite part of working at the co-op? "My co-workers," she answered promptly. "I work with them day in and day out. They became my family." That co-op family will miss her, according to **Byron Nolde**, general manager/CEO. "She has been here 42 years and has worked in or with every department," Nolde said. "Pam was always willing to take on additional duties and, most importantly, her attitude was always positive. It has been a pleasure to work with Pam throughout these years."

REGION 6

IVERSON ARRIVES

Terri Iverson has joined the staff at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (statewide), Pierre, as its new office manager and accountant. Iverson comes to the association after 28 years in state government, the last eight as budget & finance director for the state Department of Health.

Folks at Dakota Energy Cooperative, Huron, South Dakota, were deeply saddened by the recent passing of **Garry Dearborn**, a 26-year member of the co-op's board and its president since 2009. A retired farmer, Dearborn succeeded his father on the board of Ree Electric Cooperative following his father's death in 1994, the same year Ree Electric joined Beadle Electric Cooperative to become Dakota Energy in the state's first co-op merger. He also represented his co-op on the board of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (statewide), Pierre, and was the statewide's representative on the board of the South Dakota Value-Added Agriculture Center. "Garry valued education and sought out as many opportunities to learn about the cooperative and board responsibilities as possible," the co-op noted in an obituary, adding that he achieved Director Gold status under NRECA's board member training and certification program in 2016. "He was instrumental in challenging the board to do right for its member-owners," the co-op's obituary said. "We will always remember the value Garry brought to Dakota Energy Cooperative and its member-owners. His leadership and sense of humor will be immensely missed." Dearborn was 72.

His co-workers at Central Electric Cooperative, Mitchell, South Dakota, congratulated **Tony Roth** on his recent promotion from journeyman lineworker to Mitchell area foreman. Roth has worked at the co-op for 16 years. The co-op also said farewell recently to **Courtney Deinert**, who joined the staff in 2014 as administrative/communications assistant. She resigned as manager of communications to become director of religious education for Mitchell Catholic Parishes. Also at Central Electric, staffers mourned the recent passing of **Tim Johnson**, the co-op's staking technician and a 42-year employee. Johnson, 63, "will be remembered among his colleagues for his dedication to his work and love of his family," the co-op said in an obituary. Co-op employees and members were also saddened to learn of the passing of **Lloyd Oleson**, who worked at one of Central Electric's predecessor co-ops for 32 years before retiring as general manager in 1989.

Co-op staffers throughout Minnesota will miss **Eloise Thorson**, who retired recently as a customized training instructor at Central Lakes College in Brainerd. For more than two decades, Thorson worked with

the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (statewide), Maple Grove, to lead a variety of training programs that made her friends with co-op folks across the state. “Simply mention the name ‘Eloise,’ and most people in the electric cooperative community will know exactly who she is,” the statewide reported in its member newsletter. “Eloise has been part of the co-op family, and her leadership training has strengthened Minnesota’s electric cooperative network.” Thorson was familiar with electric co-ops before she started the training work; her husband, **Michael**, was on the board of Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative, Wadena, and he also served on the boards of Great River Energy (G&T), Maple Grove, and the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Mandan. “I loved seeing employees who went through the training become co-op CEOs, growing and developing in their leadership skills,” Thorson said. “That’s been my passion. I always told my classes, if there’s something that I can do to have a little bit of positive influence on those who are doing the really important stuff, then I feel like I’m doing something worthwhile.” She did something worthwhile for **John Twiest**, general manager at Arrowhead Electric Cooperative, Lutsen. “Her wealth of knowledge and understanding of the cooperatives and their purpose were exuberantly displayed in her classes,” Twiest told *MREA Report*. “I knew from the very first training I received from her as an apprentice lineman that she was, is, and will always be the true spirit of the cooperative.”

Al Haman has been named CEO at Runestone Electric Association, Alexandria, Minnesota. Haman had been serving as interim CEO for the past year and will continue to serve in his previous capacity of manager of operations & engineering as well.

The board of directors at Lake Country Power, Cohasset, Minnesota, has chosen **Mark Bakk** as the co-op’s new general manager. A 13-year employee at the co-op and most recently head of its finance & administration department, Bakk takes over from **Greg Randa**, whose recent retirement closed out a 41-year career there.

REGION 7

FIRST LADY

The board of directors at High West Energy, Pine Bluffs, Wyoming, welcomed the first woman into its ranks recently, after appointing **Kosha Olsen** to succeed **Jamie Fowler**, who resigned to care for an ailing relative. Olsen’s grandparents were among the co-op’s first members when it was founded in 1937, and her parents are still members on the farm where she grew up. She’s been a member since 2015. Olsen is the communications director for the Wyoming Stock Growers

Association and program director for the Wyoming Beef Council. “The board felt confident she would be an outstanding addition and bring a new and valuable perspective,” said **Brian Heithoff**, CEO & general manager. Olsen, who lives in the state capital of Cheyenne, said she was looking forward to representing “a thriving district populated with many members like me, people with young families who need adequate wiring, computing and energy for virtual employment. High West staff has done an excellent job of keeping their finger on the pulse of current trends and technologies. We should encourage a continued focus on balancing fiscal responsibility with forward thinking and new technologies.”



PATRICK MOONEY



TOM HOLLOPETER

Patrick Mooney will retire this month after 10 years as CEO at Intermountain Rural Electric Association (IREA), Sedalia, Colorado. As a practicing attorney in 1988, Mooney began representing the co-op in 1988 and became its general counsel 11 years later. He joined the staff as general counsel & deputy general manager in 2010 and moved into the top staff job the following year. “In Mooney’s decade as CEO, IREA has significantly improved its transmission and distribution system, introduced better customer service options, and invested in renewable energy sources,” the co-op said in announcing his retirement plans. Also at IREA, staffers mourned the recent passing of **Tom Hollopeter**, a system operator who joined the co-op staff as a lineworker in 2006.

Linnea Beebe shared more than two decades of memories with members of Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Beloit, Kansas, in her last column for the co-op’s pages before her recent retirement. Beebe joined the co-op in 1999 as a customer service representative and moved up to head the member services team in 2008. Her promotion, she recalled in her popular Watt’s Happening column, came just two months after a severe ice storm brought almost 100 mutual-aid lineworkers to the co-op and left some homes in the dark for almost two weeks. “I do not want to jinx Rolling Hills Electric,” Beebe wrote, “but I did happen to mention a few times that I didn’t want to see another ice storm before I retire.” Taking her place is **Catie Mellies**, who comes to the co-op with nine years of experience at a local agricultural cooperative. Also new to Rolling Hills Electric is **Loren Kraus**, who signed on

CO-OP PEOPLE

as an information technology specialist. Three members of the co-op's line crews celebrated major service anniversaries: **Scott Splichal** and **Jerry Roesti**, 20 years, and **Trent Webb**, 10 years. And the co-op was sorry to learn of the recent passing of two retired members of the boards of co-ops that later joined Rolling Hills Electric. **Lauren Roe**, 91, retired from the board of Jewell-Mitchell Electric Cooperative in 2001 after 23 years of service, and **Fred Elyea**, 84, served for 14 years on the board of NCK Electric Cooperative before retiring in 2004.

Martie Floyd, a board member at Pioneer Electric Cooperative, Ulysses, Kansas, has been named to the state's Cooperative Hall of Fame. A Pioneer Electric board member since 1999 and its president since 2019, Floyd "has given decades of service to cooperatives and his community," reported the member newsletter published by Kansas Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Topeka. Floyd represents his co-op on the board of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation (G&T), Hays, Kansas, and also serves on the boards of two grain marketing co-ops. "I have been ever-impressed with his vision and leadership abilities as we have navigated through some uncharted waters within the electric industry," said **John Jury**, a fellow Pioneer Electric board member. Added **Jim Bell**, another board colleague: "His leadership has given us the ability to better plan for the future."

Employees, board members and consumers at Sumner-Cowley Electric Cooperative, Wellington, Kansas, joined co-op leaders across the state in mourning the recent passing of **Max Lowrey**, who retired from the Sumner-Cowley Electric board in 2018 after 30 years of service. Lowrey succeeded his father on the co-op's board and served 15 years as its president. He also represented his co-op on the board of Kansas Electric Cooperatives (statewide), where he served as president from 2006 to 2008. Lowrey was 74.

Greg Swob, energy analyst & account manager at Midwest Energy, Hays, Kansas, has a honey of a side job, and his performance there is causing a buzz among his peers. Swob was recently recognized as Beekeeper of the Year by the Kansas Honey Producers Association, presented to those who go to extraordinary lengths to benefit the state's beekeeping community. What started as a hobby in college 42 years ago has blossomed into quite a business; Swob keeps 30 hives and helps farmers throughout the area by setting them in fields within 50 miles of his home. The award, he said, was unexpected. "This is an award that isn't made often," Swob said. "In fact, it's only been awarded 10 of the last 25 years. To be recognized by your peers is really a great feeling."

A board member at Holy Cross Energy, Glenwood Springs, Colorado, was among the three men killed while skiing in the state's San Juan range recently. In

addition to his 12 years of service on the co-op's board, **Adam Palmer** was a newly elected trustee for the Town of Eagle, and both the co-op and local government leaders were stunned and heartbroken over the three deaths. "Adam was instrumental in transforming our cooperative into a more community-centered organization, leading the responsible transition to a clean energy future," the co-op said in a mournful announcement. "We will miss his joy and enthusiasm and the positive spirit that he brought to every activity, no matter how great or small." In a joint statement, Eagle County and Town of Eagle officials said, "Our hearts are heavy with the loss of these three men."

REGION 8

POWER POOL POST



MARIA SMEDLEY

Maria Smedley, vice president of human resources & strategy at Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corp. (AECC, G&T) and Arkansas Electric Cooperatives Inc. (AECI, statewide), both in Little Rock, has been elected to the human resources committee that advises the board of the region's power pool. The six-member panel develops personnel policies, compensation and benefit plans for consideration by the board of the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), also headquartered in Little Rock. "Working with my colleagues to help SPP's members keep the lights on, today and in the future, by ensuring a talented workforce that is well-supported is a professional honor in which I take great pride, just as I do for AECC and AECI," Smedley said. "As an SPP member, AECC will benefit from my holding this role, too."

The Arkansas Business Publishing Group, Little Rock, and its weekly journal have named **Todd Townsend**, CFO at Ozarks Electric Cooperative, Fayetteville, as the state's CFO of the Year. Townsend, who also holds the same post for the co-op's internet, television and phone subsidiary, has worked at the co-op since 1996. "My proudest work accomplishments are building a really good small team in accounting and helping make the utility one of the most progressive utility providers in Arkansas," Townsend said. His boss said Townsend richly deserved the publication's recognition. "Todd's tireless efforts are the cornerstone of our high performance in our mission-critical areas," said



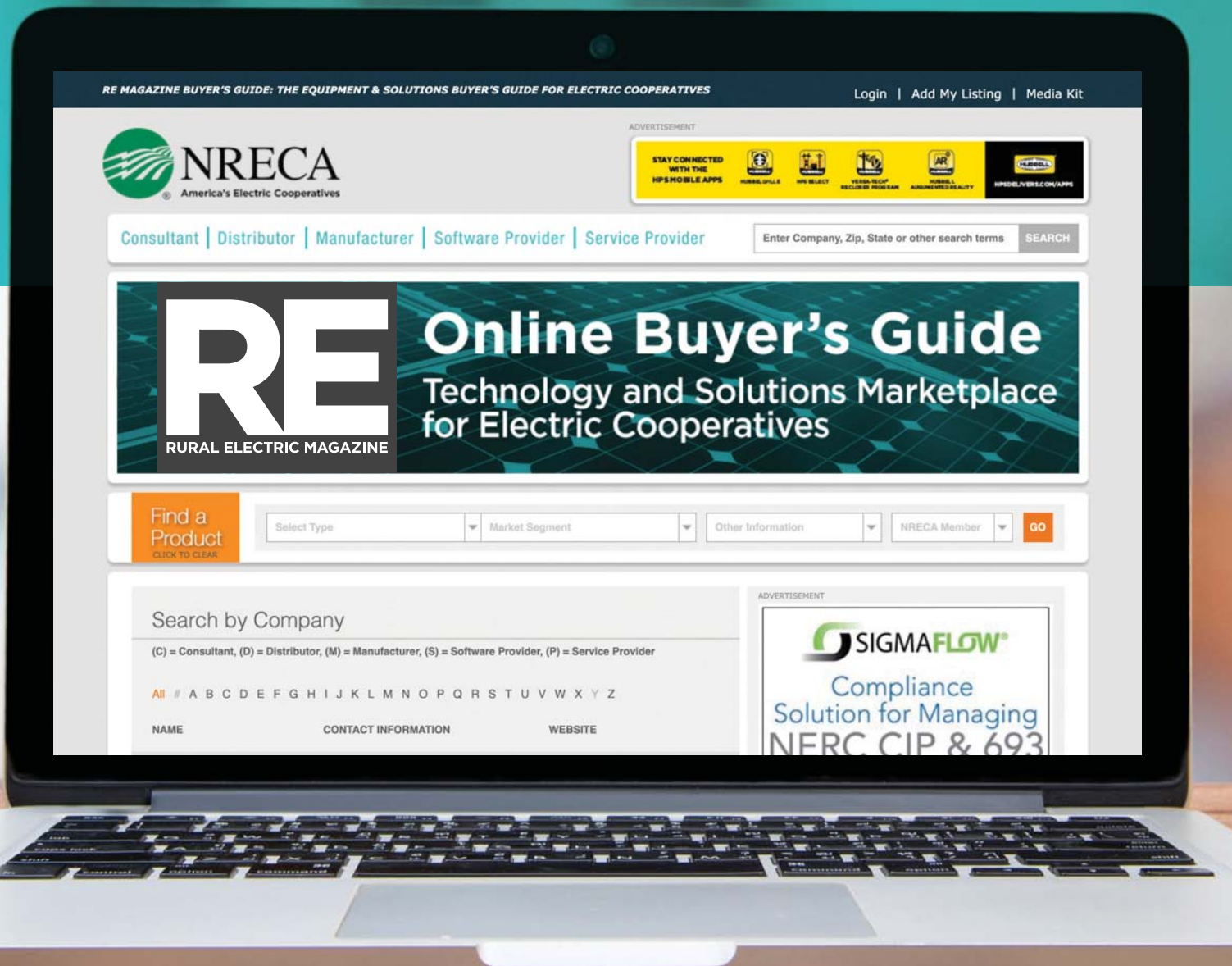
TODD TOWNSEND

RE

RURAL ELECTRIC MAGAZINE

Online Buyer's Guide

The only technology & solutions marketplace exclusively for electric co-ops



For more information, visit rebuyersguide.nreca.coop.

CO-OP PEOPLE

Mitchell Johnson, Ozarks Electric's president & CEO. "He is the driver of our success and is truly deserving of this honor."

The new multimedia specialist at the consumer magazine published by the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (statewide), Oklahoma City, is a seasoned media expert. **Lance Shaw** is an award-winning professional who comes to the statewide from the Spears School of Business at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, where he was a senior graphic designer, and he previously worked as the multimedia specialist at Central Rural Electric Cooperative, also in Stillwater. "Shaw has been eager to rejoin the electric cooperative industry and is thrilled to take on this new role," the magazine said in announcing his appointment.

Moving from the board to the general manager's office, **Brent Meador** has succeeded **Scott Copeland** in the top staff post at Northfork Electric Cooperative, Sayre, Oklahoma. A rancher and former bank manager, Meador served on the co-op's board for four years before his recent appointment to the general manager's job. "The board came to the conclusion that Brent is the person we need to guide Northfork through our current challenges and to move the co-op forward into the future," said **Jimmy Taylor**, president. Copeland retired recently after 29 years as general manager. **Brad Harrison** was appointed to take Meador's place on the co-op board.

The recent retirement of four veteran employees at Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Vinita, meant the loss of more than a century of combined experience at the co-op. The dean of the group, **Lindey Leforce**, was a 41-year employee who started out as a dispatcher on the night shift and ended up in management in the member services team. **Tim Mixson's** 27-year career took him from the line crews to operations manager and finally to safety & loss control manager. "I have shed blood, sweat, and tears while working at the cooperative, and would gladly do so again," Mixson said. "The laughter, friendships, and being a part of this family greatly outweigh anything negative I have encountered. I could write a book on the fun times and laughs I have had here. Some of these stories might be better off untold, or at the very least told only to a select audience, but



LINDEY LEFORCE



TIM MIXSON

are nonetheless very near and dear to my heart." **Darren Reed** spent his entire 24 years at the co-op as a chemical applicator for the right-of-way division.

"I feel like working out on the right-of-way for the last 24 years has kept me in shape," he said. And **Larry Cisneros** retired as staff professional engineer after 12 years at the co-op that also included a stint as engineering manager. "I will miss the employees and the family atmosphere," he said, adding that staff members "have a shared commitment to the cooperative membership and they love giving back to the community."

Jennie Tipton's recent retirement as executive assistant at Farmers' Electric Cooperative, Chillicothe, Missouri, wrapped up more than 33 years of dedicated service to the co-op. She worked for three general managers since starting as a cashier in 1987, working her way through administrative assistant as well as human resources and benefit duties until taking on support services for the board and general manager. "Jennie was an ambassador for Farmers' Electric," said **Rod Cotton**, general manager. "She cared about our members and served a key role in making our Area Youth Benefit Fund a success and an asset for the children of our communities. I'm pleased to take this opportunity to thank Jennie for her many years of contributions to Farmers' Electric." The co-op also announced two promotions recently, with **Lacey Capps** advancing from office supervisor to office services manager and longtime employee **Jack Shafer** moving up to engineering coordinator/dispatcher.



DARREN REED



LARRY CISNEROS

REGION 9

LEADERS RETIRE

Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative, Port Orford, Oregon, lost "two valued and appreciated leaders" with the recent retirements of CFO **Frank Corrales** and Operations Manager **Randy McDonald**. McDonald joined the co-op in 1988 as a meter reader and has led the operations team since 2015. Corrales came aboard in 2004 as controller and was named CFO in 2009. "Much of what we have built these past years is a direct result of Randy and Frank's leadership, vision and hard work," said board President **John Herzog**. "Thank you to both for

your longstanding commitment to Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative. You have made a lasting difference in this organization.”

The co-op family at Lane Electric Cooperative, Eugene, Oregon, was sorry to learn of the recent passing of **Jim Hill**, who was considered to be the co-op board’s “Elder Statesman” when he retired in 2013 after nearly four decades of service. He held every board officer position during his long tenure and earned the Life Membership Award from the Northwest Public Power Association (service), Vancouver, Washington, the year he retired. “As one of Lane Electric’s veteran directors, Jim shared his experience, wisdom and loyalty to Lane Electric and its members,” said **Debi Wilson**, general manager. “He gave 39 years of dedicated service to Lane Electric, making our employees and members his utmost priority.” Hill was 96.



JIM HILL

NorVal Electric Cooperative, Glasgow, Montana, recently saluted six employees and two board members for rounding major service milestones. Topping the list was **Mitch Griebel**, a staking engineer who’s put in 30 years at the co-op. The other honored employees were **Joe Odom**, 25 years; **Leila Seyfert**, 15 years; **Kyle Shipp**, 10 years; and **Kirk Capdeville** and **Gavin Krauth**, five years. In the boardroom, **Chris Christensen** and **Lee Risa** both marked 15 years of service.

Kevin Koss has joined the board at Big Flat Electric Cooperative, Malta, Montana. A lifelong rancher, Koss was appointed recently to fill out the term of the late **Clyde Robinson** and will be up for election to the post in October. “I will work hard to fill Clyde’s shoes and serve the members of Big Flat Electric to the best of my ability,” he said.

REGION 10

MOURNING HOBBS

Tohono O’odham Utility Authority (TOUA), Sells, Arizona, paid somber tribute upon the recent passing of **Darroll Hobbs Sr.**, its electric operations manager and longtime employee. Hobbs joined TOUA in 1987 and worked his way up the line crew ranks to become line supervisor in 2000. He was



DARROLL HOBBS SR.

only the third member of the Tohono O’odham Nation to rise to department head when he was named electric operations manager in 2014. “His experience in various aspects of the electric department was incredible,” the authority said in announcing his passing. “As a lineman, he shared that he was on call during monsoon season one year. The power went out, he did a 48-hour stretch racing from trouble call to trouble call to restore power, catching sleep when he could. This is a testament to the dedication he had for his work here at TOUA. ... Even though he will be missed, TOUA will continue to move forward in gratitude.” Hobbs was 56.

The board of the Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association (statewide), Tempe, Arizona, recently recognized two retired co-op leaders for their contributions to the organization. **Jeff Larson**, president of the statewide board, presented certificates of appreciation to **Kirk Gray**, retired CEO/general manager at Graham County Electric Cooperative, Pima, and **Emery Silvester**, retired administrative services director at Arizona Electric Power Cooperative (G&T), Benson.

Nearly 20 years of board service at Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative, Van Alstyne, Texas, came to a close with the recent retirement of **Ray Houston** as vice president of both the co-op’s board and the board of its Grayson-Collin Communications affiliate. A longtime rancher, banker, auctioneer and public servant in the area, he was also an alternate director for Rayburn Electric Cooperative (G&T), Rockwall, Texas. He earned Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certificates through NRECA’s director training program. He and his wife of 64 years, **Shirley**, live on a section of the ranch his great-great-grandfather homesteaded in 1838, where they plan to spend more time with their two daughters, seven grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

Folks at Rusk County Electric Cooperative, Henderson, Texas, mourned the recent passing of **Jerry Brown**, a member of the co-op’s board since 2002. Brown, 71, was the board’s assistant secretary/treasurer at the time of his death.

Two employees’ gold-standard service earned Golden Awards from their co-workers recently at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Aledo,



RAY HOUSTON



JERRY BROWN

CO-OP PEOPLE



DOUG LETZ



MIKE KOEHN



WESLEY SHEETS

Each year, staffers nominate candidates for the Golden Meter Award for outstanding employee service and the Golden Kleins Award for outstanding line work. **Doug Letz**, network analyst, claimed the employee service honor, and **Mike Koehn**, an apprentice lineworker, won the Kleins award. Also at the co-op, several employees were recognized for major service anniversaries marking nearly two and a half centuries of experience. The honorees were **Wesley Sheets**, 35 years; **Paul Carrell**, 30 years; **Don Dyer**, **Jody Pence** and **Jimmy Villa**, 20 years; **Danny Blackard**, **Regina Cota** and **Justin Johns**, 15 years; **John Bullock**, **Kevin Helton**, **Elijah Long** and **Lani Martz**, 10 years; and **Brice Bowden**, **Vicki Coker**, **Blake Creamer**, **Zack Nelson**, **Mark Pederson**, **Amy Pitmon** and **Tiffany Whisenant**, five years. And while they were celebrating long service, seven newcomers launched their Tri-County Electric careers. They are **Janet Rehberg**, vice president of engineering; **Dan Mugg**, director of business development; **Bobbie Baldwin**, cashier; **Brooklyn Garcia**, staking/field engineering technician; and **JT Larkin**, **Joseph Paddock** and **Jimmy Smith**, apprentice lineworkers. And Tri-County Electric Cooperative employees retired recently after decades of dedicated service. They are **Stephanie Sosolik**, member service lead, 45 years; **Tami Murphy**, director of member services, and **Debbie Pruitt**, member service representative, both 34 years; **Phil Loftin**, crew foreman, 29 years; and **Koehn**, the Golden Award-winning apprentice line-worker, 18 years. **RE**



JANET REHBERG



DAN MUGG

NEW EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

A MONTHLY COLUMN TO SHOWCASE A CO-OP NEWCOMER
BY MEGAN MCATEE



Ethan Schaecher GIS Specialist

Grand Valley Power,
Grand Junction, Colorado
Co-op employee since August 2020

Age: 30

Birthplace: Columbus, Nebraska

Hobby:

Anything outdoors. My wife, Halie, and I enjoy skiing, climbing fishing, camping and traveling.

Have you always been outdoorsy?

Most of my childhood was spent riding ATVs, camping, fishing and playing club soccer.

Most recent adventure?

I proposed to my wife on the top of Mount Shavano in Colorado.

How did you hear about the job at Grand Valley Power?

Through NRECA's careers page.

What were you doing before you joined the co-op?

I was a GIS and LiDAR technician in Denver completing projects for airports across the country. In 2017, I was a GIS technician at Nebraska Public Power District. It's there I learned about electric utilities and how they operate.

What do you like most about working at the co-op?

I love the rural co-op business model. I feel that I can make a positive impact both in the short term and long term. The daily tasks, my coworkers, the community, and the members make me excited to come into work every day.

Education

Bachelor's in Air Transport Administration from the University of Nebraska Omaha's Aviation Institute; master's in Geographic Information Science from the University of Denver

Some random facts about you

Despite my shorter height of 5'7", I worked as a bouncer at the age of 22 when I had braces. One of my life goals is to make it all 21 days on *Naked and Afraid* [Discovery channel series]. I still drive my high school vehicle, a 1997 GMC Jimmy. **RE**

Know someone who could be profiled?

Contact Megan McAtee at mcatee.megan@gmail.com.

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

President	Chris Christensen
Vice President	Tony Anderson
Secretary-Treasurer	Joseph Martin
CEO	Jim Matheson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

REGION 1

Jeffrey Wright, Rhode Island, Executive Committee Person • Barry Bernstein, Vermont • Michael K. Brown, Delaware • Kenneth A. Colburn, New Hampshire • Olin Davis, III, Maryland • Scott M. Hallowell, Maine • Gene Herritt, Pennsylvania • Thomas E. Madsen, New Jersey • Daniel Saulsgiver, New York • John Lee, Virginia • Curtis Wynn, North Carolina

REGION 2

Kelley Smith, Florida, Executive Committee Person • Norris Fowler, South Carolina • Galen Mills, Georgia

REGION 3

Kevin Doddridge, Mississippi, Executive Committee Person • J. David Hembree, Alabama • Mike Partin, Tennessee • Mike Williams, Kentucky

REGION 4

Randy Kleaving, Indiana, Executive Committee Person • Anthony A. Anderson, Michigan • Thomas McQuiston, Ohio • C.B. Sharp, West Virginia

REGION 5

Chuck Simmons, Wisconsin, Executive Committee Person • Phil Carson, Illinois • Marion Denger, Iowa

REGION 6

Lynn Jacobson, North Dakota, Executive Committee Person • Mark Hofer, South Dakota • Tim Velde, Minnesota

REGION 7

Randy Papenhausen, Nebraska, Executive Committee Person • Joe Martin, Colorado • Patrick Morse, Kansas • Reuben Ritthaler, Wyoming

REGION 8

Jeffrey Arnold, Louisiana, Executive Committee Person • Mel Coleman, Arkansas • Chris Hamon, Missouri • Timothy J. Smith, Oklahoma

REGION 9

Fred Nelson, California, Executive Committee Person • Bryan Case, Idaho • Chris Christensen, Montana • David Iha, Hawaii • J. Ingrid Kessler, Oregon • Meera Kohler, Alaska • Jeff Peterson, Utah • Carolyn Turner, Nevada • Steven Walter, Washington

REGION 10

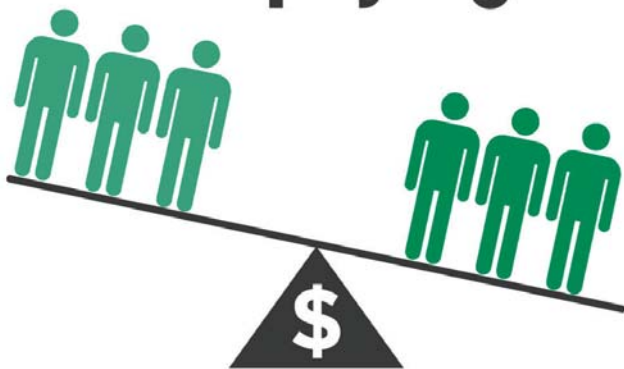
Curtis Nolan, Arizona, Executive Committee Person • Kerry Kelton, Texas • David Spradlin, New Mexico

NRECA MEMBERSHIP

1,471 organizations serving 42 million people in 48 states;
3 international members.

Visit our website at electric.coop.

Are you over or under paying?



Take the guesswork out of employee compensation.

NRECA Consulting Services

Because your people are your most important asset.

cooperative.com/consulting

CLOSING THOUGHTS



CHRIS CHRISTENSEN, PRESIDENT

At NRECA's Power-Exchange last month, I had the honor of accepting the (virtual) gavel from Curtis Wynn and beginning my term as the 40th president of our national association.

I'm eager to get to know the membership even better over the next two years and thought it best to start that process by telling

you a little about myself and my priorities as NRECA president.

My wife, Carol, and I are the parents of four children and live in northeastern Montana on a 700-head cattle ranch that has been run by my family for generations. I studied farm/ranch business management at the University of North Dakota-Williston and agricultural education at Montana State University. I was a high school teacher and FFA adviser for 13 years until I became a full-time rancher.

I have served on the NorVal Electric Cooperative board of directors for nearly 16 years and have been on the NRECA board for seven. I also serve on CFC's board of directors.

In looking back on my time as a teacher, I am reminded of the requirement for teachers to earn continuing education credits so they can keep up with the changes in that field. I believe the same is true for co-op directors and employees.

The electric cooperative business has evolved significantly since my first days at the co-op, and the pace of change continues to accelerate. During the next two years, you'll hear me talk about the need for continuing development of directors, general managers and employees to manage this complex industry and adapt.

To do this, co-ops must commit to three actions:

- Promote professional development of our workforce and leadership.
- Leverage new technologies.
- Enhance engagement within the co-op and with its members.

Promoting professional development supports employee retention and succession planning and ensures employees keep pace with trends in the industry and their job functions. Ultimately, this will maximize co-op investments in their workforce. It also nurtures the cooperative governing body, ensuring directors have the knowledge to best serve their membership.

Being attuned to emerging technology and the skill-sets required to effectively use it creates opportunity for co-ops to be more agile organizations, helping the co-op improve the quality of life for members and their communities.

Lastly, enhancing engagement with your members reinforces our connection to the community and maintains the co-op's role as a trusted partner. A prerequisite to that member standing is engagement within the co-op that drives exceptional morale and job satisfaction.

I look forward to working with my fellow board members, NRECA's leadership and the membership to focus on these areas. Together, we can ensure our boards, employees and members are prepared to capitalize on opportunities for progress and growth. **RE**

“During the next two years, you'll hear me talk about the need for continuing development of directors, general managers and employees to manage this complex industry and adapt.”

AWARENESS **TRANSFORMED.**



“ The value that NISC
brings to us is a full
software package so we can
very inexpensively and very
efficiently provide service
to our members. ”

~ **Patrick Grace**

CEO & GM

Oklahoma Electric Cooperative



your technology. **your** mission.
your success. **our** promise.

www.nisc.coop