



## The “power” of electricity

*Journeyman Lineman Archie Ribera demonstrates how electricity can arc as it goes in search of the ground.*

Photo: Indiana Reed

Safety is paramount at LPEA, and to help members learn more about the “power” of electricity, LPEA line crews and staff offer a variety of presentations – including Electrical Hazard Awareness with “live” equipment.

Designed for middle school to adult, the safety session features the visually dramatic Arc Demonstration, as pictured above with Journeyman Lineman Archie Ribera. Ribera and the line crews in Durango recently organized the “Arc Demo” for LPEA employees to increase their knowledge and help them “visually” realize what electricity can do to the human body.

“We don’t want to frighten anyone, but we do want folks to know why electricity demands such careful respect,” says Justin Talbot, manager of operations. “We hope by reaching out to our members, we can eliminate any accidents due to ignorance.”

LPEA had an opportunity to witness firsthand the benefit of school education when several years back, in the midst of winter, then 12-year-old Bayfield resident Dustie Turner knew how to respond to a downed line in her Forest Lakes neighborhood, as she had participated in two Electrical Hazard Awareness/Arc Demo trainings presented by LPEA.

Seeing a downed line in the snow, Dustie remembered that it could still be energized because the snow

insulates the line.

“As we go into winter, we want to remind our members to stay far away from downed wires, especially when they’re laying in the snow,” says Curt Marlatt, line superintendent. “Picture throwing a pebble into a still pond, and how the ripples generate outward. That’s exactly what electricity does in snow.”

Dustie took control of the situation, instructing her friends to stay away from the line and ushering them to their nearby home. She then used her friend’s phone to call her mother, Jill Turner, who was working at the Upper Pine Fire Department, and reported the downed line. The fire department secured the area and alerted LPEA.

“We respond immediately when a line is reported down,” says Talbot. “It might turn out to be a non-electrical line, but in keeping with our priority to ensure public safety, any downed line is assumed to be live until determined otherwise.”

The line in Dustie’s neighborhood was indeed still energized and could have caused serious injury or even death had anyone come in contact with it. Dustie’s knowledge of what to do when faced with a potential electrical hazard, and her ability to put that knowledge into action, kept her and everyone with her safe.

To arrange for an Electrical Hazard Awareness presentation, contact LPEA 970.247.5786.

## Homegrown... “Solutions” on lighting 24-7

Walk into Durango’s Fitness Solutions 24-7 mid-day, and the lighting appears completely natural... difficult to tell the difference between the ceiling lights and the open windows and doors.

Much of the appealing ambiance is a result of the lighting change out from old, yellowed fluorescents to new T-5 LED bulbs throughout the 7,000 sq. ft. gym. A financial commitment, but one that founder and owner Don Roberts now confirms made perfect sense – beyond the appealing lighting.

Roberts had been a personal trainer since his graduation from Fort Lewis College, and gradually grew his business, taking the big step to renovate the old K-Bob’s restaurant in Centennial Center in 2008. Cognizant of energy efficiency and “green” alternatives since opening Fitness Solutions, Roberts did all he could do at the time, including installing floors of recycled rubber, low-flow water fixtures and even about 2.5 kW of solar on the roof. He also enrolled in LPEA’s Green Power program to off-set the gym’s electricity usage with renewable energy, and signed up for the LPEA Round Up Foundation to give back to the community.

Today Fitness Solutions enjoys 450 to 500-plus members, depending on the time of year, who take advantage of the opportunity to work out any time of the day or night. Indeed since opening, Fitness Solutions has never been closed, even on holidays.

*Don Roberts was one of the first in LPEA’s service territory to invest in all T-5 LEDs for Fitness Solutions, and the Big Ass Fan™ uses less energy than individual floor fans.*



Such extended hours have an impact on utilities, especially electricity usage, and as LPEA is just a few blocks away, Project Specialist Ray Pierotti had Fitness Solutions on his radar. After seven years, the initial light bulbs in the gym were reaching estimated life, so Pierotti anticipated Roberts would repeatedly be pulling out the tall ladder in coming months to change bulbs. The time for investing in long-life LEDs was opportune.

In July, Fitness Solutions replaced 41 fluorescent fixtures with new LED T-5 lamps. Total cost was \$5,125, but the expense was reduced to \$3,320 after an LED Rebate from LPEA of \$1,805. Pierotti estimated that the return on investment is less than six months.

The big excitement is, however, the actual savings Roberts is now realizing. “Comparing September 2014 to 2015, the kilowatt hour usage dropped from 400 to 222.5 per day, about 40 percent,” says Pierotti.

Running the dollars, with lights on 24 hours per day, Roberts’ cost of electricity dropped from a daily average \$48.77 in 2014, to \$27.88 this past September. If numbers hold, Fitness Solutions will realize a savings of more than \$7,500 on the electric bill annually.

“When I got that first bill, I said, ‘Oh my gosh,’” says Roberts. “People need to look at the bigger picture. It’s a lot of money up front, but businesses need to think about how much they’re going to save in the long run. You’re making money after basically six months. And the fact that I’m doing something that is environmentally friendly is even better.”

Learn more about LPEA’s LED lighting program at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop), or contact Pierotti at 970.382.7770.

## Remembering Jerry McCaw



In August 2015, LPEA lost one of its own as cancer took the life of former Board Member Jerry McCaw. Elected to the LPEA Board in 2000, he served LPEA members for 15 years, including as president, yielding his seat in the 2015 election.

Born in Durango, McCaw attended grade school at the Oxford Grange and graduated from Ignacio High School. He went on to Fort Lewis College and Colorado State University, earning a degree in Civil Engineering, after which returning to the family farm and to work for the Soil Conservation Service for the next 37 years, assisting farmers and ranchers implement conservation and irrigation practices.

McCaw served on the Basin Co-op and the Ignacio School boards as well as on numerous local and state advisory committees, and as a member of the Cattlemen’s Association, Habitat Partnership Program for La Plata and Archuleta counties and the National Cattle Feeders’ Association.

In April 2014, the La Plata-Archuleta Cattlemen’s Association named him Cattleman of the Year – an honor he was quick to share with Lora, his high school sweetheart and wife of 48 years at his death.

In McCaw’s memory, donations may be made to the La Plata-Archuleta Cattlemen’s Association, P.O. Box 2524, Durango, CO 81302.

# Zubia hired, Lynch promoted

LPEA has added Journeyman Lineman Fernando Zubia to the line crew in Durango, with Journeyman Lineman Steve Lynch promoted to Substation Maintenance.



Fernando Zubia

Originally from Paso Robles, Calif., Fernando Zubia came to LPEA from Novinium, an innovator at the forefront of the underground cable rehabilitation market. Well-rounded in the electric utility business, he earned his Journeyman in 2013 in Florida, serving with Irby Construction Company, a leader in power line and substation construction.

Steve Lynch joined LPEA in 1995, having started in the trade in 1984 as a Groundman and working throughout New Mexico. He earned his Journeyman Lineman in 1990, and served on LPEA's line crews for 15 years. An Equipment Operator based out of LPEA's Pagosa Springs Office for the past five years, Lynch is now responsible for maintaining LPEA's substations and regulators, ensuring the equipment that transforms high voltage transmission to reduced voltage for distribution on LPEA's system.



Steve Lynch



## Round Up supports CERF

In an effort to help spur community support for those economically impacted by the release into the Animas River from the Gold King Mine, the LPEA Round Up Foundation granted \$4,000 to the Community Emergency Relief Fund (CERF).

"As an organization that exists to support our community members, the Round Up board felt it was important to take a leadership role in helping those impacted by the river situation by contributing to the emergency fund," says Robin Duffy-Wirth, Round Up board president. "We could move quickly to help people who are in need."

The LPEA Round Up Foundation provides grants to non-profit organizations throughout La Plata and Archuleta counties. It is funded when co-op members round-up their LPEA electric bills to the next higher dollar, "Pocket Change for Positive Change."

The CERF has to-date helped provide financial relief to some 65 raft guides who lost jobs with no notice when the Animas River closed. The relief fund is housed with the Community Foundation serving Southwest Colorado, a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity designed to serve the local community through various endowment funds and grants. Working with the Community Foundation preserves the integrity of the process of fund distribution and provides contributors with a tax deduction.

To donate directly to the CERF, checks may be made payable to "Community Foundation-Community Emergency Relief Fund" and mailed to the Foundation at P.O. Box 1673, Durango, Colo. 81302. Credit card donations made via the Community Foundation web site, [www.swcommunityfoundation.org](http://www.swcommunityfoundation.org).

## "Voltage" for LPEA awareness

To support members with environmental responsibility in mind, LPEA has explored purchase of electric/hybrid vehicles for employees who are regularly in the field serving members. The first vehicle is now in use, a 2015 Chevy Volt, driven by LPEA Project Specialist Ray Pierotti, pictured right.



## LIVE WIRES

### Board meets

**Oct. 21, 9 a.m.**

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2015, 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop). All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

### "Sight-In Days" for Hunters

LPEA will once again sponsor "Sight-in Days" at the Durango Gun Club outdoor range. Plan to sight your scopes for hunting season free of charge on Oct. 8-9, 15-16 and 29-30. The range will be open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. each day.

### "Lunch and Lights" set

LPEA will host a free lighting information workshop, Tuesday, Oct. 13, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at LPEA's Durango headquarters. Reservations required as lunch will be served, 970.382.7770.

### Time for "Fall Back"

Daylight Saving Time ends November 1. Enjoy an extra hour of sleep! Be sure to set your clocks back, and Time-of-Use customers, make sure your ETS and water heater timers are reflecting the accurate time. Questions? Call 970.382.3506.



# From Human Resources Cooperative Careers and Culture...

BY LINDA LOOMAN | LPEA HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR | LLOOMAN@LPEA.COOP

What makes a career within a cooperative different? I believe it is our culture. Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same core principles and values, adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance. There are **Seven Cooperative Principles**. I'd love to share with you a few of those principles and how we use them at LPEA to shape our culture.

The 5th Cooperative Principle is **Education, Training, and Information**. In addition to providing education and information for our members, LPEA provides education and training to our managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to LPEA's operation and development. As you can imagine, there is a lot to know!

Training runs the gambit from on-the-job to webinars, conferences and monthly training at safety meetings. LPEA is proud to offer several types of joint

apprenticeship programs with the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) that are registered with the Department of Labor. These apprenticeships include lineman, staking engineer, meter technician and dispatcher (system operator). We're also looking at developing additional apprenticeships to accommodate emerging technology.

Our current Operations management team – Justin Talbot, Curt Marlatt, Bret Cochrane, Darrick Robinson and Jerry Wills – are all former Journeyman Linemen who went through an apprentice program before moving up through the ranks. These programs are the foundation for “growing our own” and providing great career opportunities. It's an exciting time at LPEA as employees retire and others have room for advancement. Sprinkle in an assortment of new employees looking for their opportunities, and the stage is set for success.

LPEA utilizes our 6th Cooperative Principle, **Cooperation among Cooperatives**, in a multitude of ways. Training often occurs through our statewide group, CREA, and our national organization, NRECA. Rather than being on our own, we are able to join with other electric cooperatives to learn of best

practices, emerging technology, safety initiatives, and other critical pieces of our industry.

A current initiative at LPEA is the implementation of a Human Resources Information System. We contacted our accounting software vendor – also a cooperative – and asked for their recommendation on a system that would integrate with our current system. We then contacted other electric cooperatives who used the software to ask how it was working for them. Benefits of this new technology will include a Candidate Portal to help us continue to recruit the best employees, and an Employee Portal for improved communications, onboarding, training paths and benefits management.

The 7th Cooperative Principle, **Concern for Community**, has led us to the fabulous scholarship opportunities offered by LPEA. Fortunately for us, several of these highly-talented scholarship recipients have found careers at LPEA: our Controller Rachel Gilman; Systems Engineer Dan Harms; and Staff Engineer Jake Wills. As this article goes to print, a fourth scholarship recipient has been offered a position at LPEA. Local talent and training – it's a key to serving you.

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

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**Statement of Non-discrimination**  
LPEA is an equal opportunity provider and employer M/F/ Disability/Veteran.  
If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

