

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

JUNE 2014

WATT'S INSIDE

- AMI: Myths & Facts
- Gottlob retires/Hubbs promoted
- Library book donation
- Forsythe retires
- LPEA Golf Tournament
- 2014 Scholarship Students

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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.

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, 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.



The future at our doorstep

BY GREG MUNRO | CEO | GMUNRO@LPEA.COOP

With so many things changing in our world, one wonders – at least I do – what the future holds for LPEA.

In my life-long career in the electric utility world, I have seen continual changes, most, if not all, due to innovation and new technologies. It is an exciting industry and I can see why my grandfather and father chose it for their careers, and I thank them for inspiring me to move in this direction as well.

Some people believe that the electric utility industry is stagnant and not innovative. I attribute that assumption to simply lack of knowledge. Lots of people go about their busy day and take for granted their instant (and nearly constant) use of electricity, and never even think about what magic it is and how it really has changed our lives for the better.

How we use electricity, how we produce electricity, and how we conserve electricity have always been the main focus of electric utilities, and that remains today.

LPEA has always moved forward in these areas, and will continue to do so. New technology and innovation has always been a driver of your cooperative, and that is exactly what makes this industry so exciting.

So what do I see for the future of the industry, including LPEA? Here are just a few thoughts:

- Local, Distributed Generation (DG) making up more than 50 percent of LPEA's needs.
- Energy usage per member staying pretty flat – the efficiencies that will happen will offset all the new electric gadgets and types of things that will enhance our lives even more.
- Electric rate structure will change, focusing more on making sure the LPEA grid is always in place, meets the needs of our members and is always reliable.
- LPEA will be more of a “grid provider” rather than an electric sales provider, and that will be more important to our members as not only will they need the grid to provide them with power, they'll need it to put power they produce back onto the grid.
- Coal-fired power plants will become cleaner, and will remain an important part of this country's electric energy source. Gas-fired generation will increase, giving this country time to bring on new types of completely clean generation, including new types of nuclear energy generation.
- LPEA members will be able to control their electric usage remotely from their smart pin. A smart pin will also be their phone, their music, their recorder, their camera, their telescope, and their writing device.

Most importantly, the future of LPEA will be in good hands with an outstanding, dedicated, and professional workforce, just like we have today.

Thank you for your valuable support of YOUR electric co-op. As I move on in my career, I will always remember my stop at LPEA as one of the best. ☀



LIVE WIRES

Board of Directors Meeting

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, June 18, 2014, 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. As per the LPEA By-laws officers and delegates to industry committees will be elected.

Lighting Workshop June 25

LPEA will host a free lighting technology workshop, "Lunch & Lights," 10:30 a.m. to Noon, on Wednesday, June 25, 2014 at the Ross Aragon Community Center, Pagosa Springs. All those interested in learning more about the seemingly ever-changing lighting technology, and saving energy and dollars through energy efficient lighting, are invited to attend. RSVP required as lunch will be served following the informational session. Contact Ray Pierotti, 970.382.7770.

Read CCL electronically

LPEA members are reminded that *Colorado Country Life* can be read electronically, on-line at www.lpea.coop. If you wish to opt out of receiving the "hard copy" magazine, contact LPEA's customer service, 970.247.5786 or visit LPEA's web site and click on "Your Co-op" and "Newsletter" to learn more. LPEA has a convenient email notification program that will alert you when the latest edition has been posted, so be sure to sign up. ⚙

Myths & Facts on AMI

LPEA, along with most utilities across the country, is currently replacing its meters with newer, "smarter" meters as part of an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system.

"In short, AMI meters will help LPEA help you," says Dan Harms, systems engineer. "They're already proving beneficial, streamlining efficiencies, and members with the new meters are monitoring their energy usage via LPEA's SmartHub on the web. But there's been a great deal of erroneous information out there and we want our members to know the facts."

Myth: Wireless technology is a health threat

LPEA's AMI meters use wireless technology to communicate – a small, 0.3 watt, 900 MHz radio that communicates readings once or twice an hour. A person would have to stand next to an AMI meter continuously for more than a year to receive the equivalent exposure one gets from a 15 minute cell phone call.

The American Cancer Society states that "There is no clear evidence at this time that RF (radio frequency) waves from smart meters (or other devices) can cause harmful health effects." (<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancercauses/othercarcinogens/athome/smart-meters>)

"The bottom line is," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering, "if you are concerned about radio frequencies, those emitted by your cell or cordless phones, microwaves, and fluorescent lights far outweigh the RF of the AMI meter."

Myth: Security threat with AMI

Security has also been cited as a concern. LPEA has a strict policy to maintain as confidential all members' personal information, and the data from the AMI system is no exception. LPEA's AMI system returns energy and voltage readings, which are necessary to manage today's complex grid.

"The AMI system does not return, nor does it have the ability to return, what you used the energy for," says Harms. "Contrary to internet lore, LPEA does not know when you're watching TV or doing laundry. LPEA also cannot control anything inside your home unless you request that we install a special control device to do so for an ETS heater or water heater."

Myth: Potential increase of fire/explosion

Some internet reports claim AMI meters increase the risk of fire and explosion, especially in homes with older wiring. All LPEA meters meet the safety requirements as outlined in the National Electric Safety Code.

"More than 1 million meters like the ones LPEA is deploying have been installed for many years across North America, with billions of hours of runtime, and not one fire," says Meier. "Electrical fires due to faulty wiring do occur, but they are no more likely to occur with an AMI meter than with any other electrical meter."

Benefit: Tools for managing electricity

As noted above, the AMI system sends hourly readings back to LPEA, information that LPEA members can view at www.lpea.coop by clicking on the secure SmartHub link.

SmartHub data allows members to make month-to-month comparisons and see how usage varies from day-to-day and hour-to-hour. This can help members understand their usage, and, ostensibly help reduce energy consumption. The information also helps LPEA representatives assist in troubleshooting abnormal usage.

Benefit: Rapid outage reporting

"Perhaps the biggest benefit you'll see with AMI is that the system immediately reports when there is a loss of power at your meter, helping LPEA to get the power back on more quickly," says Harms.

"The thing we want our members to remember is if you choose to hit the internet and do some research of your own, do try to find professional, peer-reviewed journals," adds Meier. "Think twice about taking the opinion of one person with a blog." ⚙

Gottlob retires – Hubbs promoted

In yet another example of LPEA promoting from within to fill positions of retiring senior staff, Gary Hubbs has been promoted to Working Foreman, filling the shoes of 40-year industry veteran Tom Gottlob, who leaves LPEA in early June.

As Working Foreman, Hubbs will inherit and supervise Gottlob's "Hot Crew" working as part of the cohesive team to maintain LPEA's system and keep the lights on.

Hailing from a multi-generational La Plata County family and a Durango High School graduate, Hubbs worked as an electric contractor for several firms in the region before joining LPEA as an equipment operator in 2000. In 2005 he entered the LPEA Apprentice Lineman Program and following four years of on-the-job training, he "journeyed out" in 2011 as a Journeyman Lineman.

"Life is good at LPEA," says Hubbs who most recently had worked the line crew in the Ignacio area, but now will be stationed out of Durango. "It was time for a change and I'm looking forward to the new challenges."

Originally from S. Dakota where he discovered the potential for line work at the Mitchell Area Vocational Technical School, Gottlob began in construction and went on to earn his Journeyman Lineman in 1981. He joined the line crews at LPEA in 1995 after approximately 20 years doing utility construction from S. Dakota to Dolores to Alaska. He was promoted to Working Foreman about 10 years ago.

"To me, considering the type of [dangerous] work we do, the safety program here is really topnotch, which is what it's all about for those of us in the field," says Gottlob who now has numerous "canyons to hike, mountains to climb and lakes to explore" in retirement. "It's been a great company to work for." ☀



Gary Hubbs and Tom Gottlob

FORSYTHE LAUNCHES RETIREMENT



As this goes to press, James Forsythe has launched his much deserved retirement from LPEA, and is likely on an adventure with his grandkids. Forsythe retired from Inventory Control Specialist in late May.

Raised in Bayfield, with time away for college in Alamosa and a stint in the U.S. Army, Forsythe came to LPEA originally as a Storekeeper in 2000 after the trucking company he'd been with for 22 years closed. He then served several years as an equipment operator working in the field with the line crews, but returned to the warehouse in 2003, again as Storekeeper until his promotion to Inventory Control Specialist in 2011.

"It's been great. Felt like home," says Forsythe, who notes that a lot of traveling is now on the schedule. "You couldn't find a better place to work in this area... I'd recommend to anybody when they see an opening here, to do their best to get here." ☀

HOLD THE PRESSES!

Just in:

LPEA will host a special energy efficiency and renewable energy systems grant education workshop featuring U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community and Economic Development Director Pattie Snidow, on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, 12:30-4:30 p.m. at LPEA's Durango headquarters. The workshop is in support of the USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Visit www.lpea.coop for details.



Some books for you...

Regularly the Colorado Rural Electric Association (CREA), the statewide trade organization supporting the rural electric cooperatives in Colorado, provides a variety of books for the co-ops to donate to libraries in their service territory. This year, the Ruby Sisson Library in Pagosa Springs was the recipient of approximately \$260 worth of new books, a mix of nonfiction and fiction, many by Colorado authors. At left, Manager of Corporate Services Mark Schwantes presents the variety of books from CREA to Jackie Welch, director of the Sisson Library.

TIME TO TEE-OFF ON JUNE 21!

LPEA will host its annual Golf Tournament at the Pagosa Springs Golf Course, Saturday, June 21. Space is limited and registration deadline is June 18.

Organized by LPEA's line personnel, members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (Local IBEW 111 26A) based in Pagosa Springs, the LPEA Golf Tournament is open to ALL community members and will benefit Archuleta County's Search & Rescue and local food banks.

The tournament is a four-person scramble, with four flights beginning with a 9 a.m. shotgun start, rain or shine. Entry fee is \$65 per person, which includes lunch, golf cart, prizes and more. The field will be limited to 36 teams. Hole sponsorships are available for \$150, \$500 and \$1,000.

Since the LPEA Golf Tournament's inception in 2003, the event has become a tradition and raised more than \$50,000 for a variety of non-profit entities in Archuleta County.

To register, for sponsorship opportunities, to volunteer, or for further information regarding the Tournament, contact Mike Alley, 970.749.0260 or 970.382.7721. ⚙️

LPEA selects 2014 college scholarship/award recipients

Recipients of the 2014-2015 La Plata Electric, John Voelker Memorial, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Tri-State Generation and Transmission scholarships have been announced.

The 30th Annual LPEA College Scholarships, two four-year scholarships (up to \$7000 annually or \$28,000 for tuition, books and fees) have been awarded to Bella Bussian, a senior at Durango High School, and Effie Nistler, a senior at Bayfield High School. Bussian plans to major in environmental studies at Colorado College, Colorado Springs. Nistler is heading to Brigham Young University, Utah, to study chemical engineering.

Sean McLaughlin, a senior at Durango High School and Dylan Pearson, a senior at Ignacio High School, have been awarded LPEA's 14th Annual John Voelker Memorial Scholarships, \$10,000 for two years, for vocational, technical school or junior college.

McLaughlin will enroll in the San Juan College School of Energy in Farmington to pursue a career in oil & gas and welding, while Pearson will attend Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell to study for a range of professions – auto mechanic, HVAC technician and grounds maintenance. LPEA's John Voelker Memorial Scholarship remembers former LPEA board member John Voelker, who was instrumental in creating the vocational scholarship. Voelker perished in the Egyptian Air plane crash in October of 1999.

Shane Bisogno, a senior at Durango High School, received the \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship. With plans to attend Arizona State University at Tempe, Bisogno will pursue a degree in mechanical engineering.

Jared Engelken, a senior at Durango High School, and Bryant Mitchell, a senior at Bayfield High School, each received \$500 scholarships from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association. Engelken intends to study engineering at University of Colorado, Boulder. Mitchell will pursue a career in the health care industry and attend the University of Arizona in Tucson.

"We had many qualified students apply this year, but have only so many scholarships and awards," said Jeannie Bennett, coordinator of LPEA's scholarship process. "All of our scholarship recipients are great students with exciting potential. At LPEA we are proud to be able to offer these educational opportunities."

Funds for the LPEA and LPEA/John Voelker Memorial Scholarships come from LPEA's unclaimed Capital Credits. Each year, LPEA endeavors to find "missing" members who are due a share of retired Capital Credits. Those funds unable to be returned to members are then put back into the community – in this case, into college scholarships.

For further information or for questions regarding future scholarship opportunities, contact Bennett at 970.382.3505, or jbennett@lpea.coop, or visit www.lpea.coop. ⚙️



Bella Bussian



Effie Nistler



Sean McLaughlin



Dylan Pearson



Shane Bisogno



Jared Engelken



Bryant Mitchell