

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

LPEA

La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Shaping the future by building trustworthy community partnerships as an innovative, forward-thinking industry leader, delivering excellence in our member-owned cooperative.

JANUARY 2018

Durango's CSRs show off the Power of Giving ornaments, (standing) Jodi Patcheck and Jeanne Dittmar, and (seated) Donna Arriza, Amy Paylor, Aubrey Gillespie, Julie McIntyre and Cyndi Pierce.

The "power" of people



The 'heart of your power,' LPEA's marketing tag line reflects the company's "heart," and it was no more evident during the holiday season employees celebrated the holiday season giving back to our local communities.

As has become tradition many non-profit entities including the local food banks, Project Merry Christmas and the Salvation Army, were supported. But new in the repertoire past holiday season, the Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) "Powered it Forward" to help LPEA members who have had difficulty paying their electric bills with Power of Giving Trees in both Durango and Pagosa Springs. As of print deadline more than \$5,000 had been raised, with additional weeks until Christmas remaining.

"People come in to pay their bills and when standing in line they hear the person at the window struggling to pay their bill," says CSR Julie McIntyre, who initiated the idea with her fellow team members. "When they get up to the window, they ask if they can put some extra money on their account. People have been so caring and generous. It's so wonderful."

The Power of Giving Trees were adorned with ornaments that had varying dollar amounts (\$5 to \$100) on them, and any amount was valued. Community members were invited to select an ornament and bring it to the Customer Service window, and that dollar amount

was applied to the account of a fellow LPEA member. Being on the front lines every day, the CSRs do become with members who are financially challenged.

LPEA members contributing to the Power of Giving Tree received either an LED light bulb or LED nightlight for their generosity.

"Though LPEA has not raised its rates for 2018, other utilities have," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering and member relations. "We know firsthand that many people are having difficulty with even the most basic of necessities. The gift of electricity is definitely one that can be used and appreciated, and it was heart-warming to see our customer service representatives taking the initiative to help out our members."

In addition to the Giving Tree, LPEA members can throughout the year make arrangements to assist specific family members or neighbors with their bills, as well as non-profit organizations, by applying credit to their LPEA accounts.

"The Power of Giving doesn't need to be something that happens just around the holidays," adds Meier. "We can make arrangements for regular monthly credits to any account of your choosing. It can be a gift that keeps on giving."

To assist members in need with their electric bills, visit either the Pagosa Springs or Durango office during regular business hours, Monday-Friday.

Wills new Pagosa Springs District Manager



Jerry Wills has been promoted to the newly established position of Pagosa Springs District Manager, responsible for management of all LPEA employees and operations in Archuleta County.

Development of the new position is expected to increase efficiency and further service to LPEA's members.

Wills has served at LPEA since 1983, initially hired as a Meter Reader Collector. By 1985 he'd entered the cooperative's Apprentice Lineman Program and earned his Journeyman Lineman in 1989.

After working for several years on the line crews, he was promoted to Working Foreman, overseeing and supervising daily tasks, and ensuring the safety of a team of men in the field. He served in this position for nearly 22 years until his promotion to Pagosa Line Superintendent in 2015, where he oversaw day-to-day operations of all line crews based out of the Pagosa Springs office.

"LPEA is fortunate to have Jerry on our team," says CEO Mike Dreyspring. "This was such a natural progression because of his leadership and experience serving our Archuleta County members. I am excited to work with Jerry and see how he adds to LPEA's success in serving our members."

"Mountain Living" with LEDs

Lighting is an important consideration for retailers, and certainly was key to Sam Christensen who opened his Ultimate Mountain Living showroom in November 2014. The retail space at 858 Main Ave. in Downtown Durango features gaming tables and billiards as well as unique, high-end furnishings and patio furniture.



"When Sam started his business, it was drastically under-lighted, with only tinted windows in the entry," says LPEA Project Specialist Ray Pierotti.

"It was a real challenge," agrees Christensen. "I get very little natural light and with the high ceilings, my initially lighting just didn't work. I added additional track lighting, and still found it dark."

Knowledgeable about energy efficiency and conservation, and familiar with the savings possible with LED lighting [having installed LEDs in his home and enjoyed the rebate offered by LPEA], Christensen invested in retrofit of his store's lighting.

"I met Sam because he applied for a rebate, and I saw it was a residential rebate, not commercial," says Pierotti. "Something didn't seem right, so I gave him a call. Plus I'm a big fan of billiards, so I wanted to see his store."

Indeed, Pierotti recognized Christensen's problem as soon as he walked in. With the wide range of LED lamps available, Christensen had purchased BR30s, reflector bulbs that have only a 120 degree radius. The light wasn't reaching the walls or the floor.

Pierotti advised him of the commercial grade bulbs that would make the colors in Ultimate Mountain Living's showroom "pop." But there was one problem... Pierotti had processed the rebate on the original bulbs and had already thrown the boxes in LPEA's recycle dumpster.

In a move that could qualify as going above and beyond the call of duty, Pierotti returned to LPEA and climbed in the dumpster and retrieved all the boxes. Christensen was able to return the bulbs, get his money back and purchase lamps that have transformed his retail space.

Christensen invested \$1,163 in materials and received the LPEA commercial rebate of \$592.57. With the 3.8 kilowatts reduced, he will save \$1,409 annually on his electric bill, resulting in a return on his investment in the bulbs in less than six months.

"With a fast payback and the benefits of improved LED lighting, it's no surprise that more than half of Durango's downtown businesses are 100 percent LED," says Pierotti, who can be contacted at 970.382.7770 or rpierotti@lpea.coop. "I want to encourage retailers to call me first. I don't think I'll be crawling around the dumpster again."

College scholarships available

Annually LPEA offers a variety of college scholarships to area students, including the 4-year LPEA Scholarship and 2-year John Voelker Memorial Scholarship for vocational training. All students, including home school students, who receive electricity from LPEA are eligible to apply.

To assist with the application process and answer any questions, LPEA will host a special Open House for high school seniors and their parents, Thursday, Jan. 18, 2018, 5:30-7 p.m. at LPEA's Bodo Park headquarters. No r.s.v.p. is required.

Deadline for application is Mar. 1, 2018. For further information, contact Jeannie Bennett, 970.382.3505 or jbennett@lpea.coop. Applications available for download at www.lpea.coop.

LPEA Director Turner earns industry credentials



LPEA Board Member Jack Turner has completed the required courses and earned both his Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) and Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

"It is essential for all directors to keep abreast of the various issues that assist the cooperative make more informed decisions and do the best possible job of representing our members," says CEO Mike Dreyspring. Turner has served on the LPEA board since 2013. He is an educator and coach, and throughout his career has worked as a representative for rural and environmental interests.

The NRECA CCD program requires attendance and demonstrated understanding of the basic competencies contained in five core courses. The BLC is awarded following completion of the CCD, and requires more advanced courses related to board leadership. As noted by NRECA, the BLC is designed to ensure boards have a diverse set of knowledge and skills relevant to governing electric co-ops.

NRECA is the national service organization that represents the nation's more than 900 private, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provides service to 42 million people in 47 states.

New employees join Operations



Toby Allred



Brian Marshall



Decker O'Rand

LPEA's Operations Department has added three new employees to help better serve members. Journeyman Lineman Toby Allred has joined the line crews, with Brian Marshall named Storekeep. Decker O'Rand is a new Meter Reader Collector.

Toby Allred has been a construction lineman since 1999, traveling and working for various contractors throughout the country. He came to the electrical trade later in life, but had garnered hands-on experience in the military and as a longshoreman, as well as working in the oil fields and hauling cattle.

He apprenticed in the Pacific Northwest in Washington and Oregon under the IBEW Local 77, and earned is Journeyman Lineman in 2004. He and his family reside in Bayfield.

Brian Marshall, who is learning the lay of the land of the equipment, tools and materials vital to the linemen in the field as Storekeep, has resided with his family in Bayfield for 21 years, 18 of those working in construction supply sales with Colorado Fasteners. He served the southwest corner of Colorado.

Born and raised in Durango, Decker O'Rand has been looking forward to employment at LPEA for years, and found his opportunity as a Meter Reader Collector. Prior to joining LPEA and learning the new metering technology, he worked in construction.

Employment opportunities at LPEA are available at www.lpea.coop.

*Congratulations
Miranda!
Miranda Talbot, Bayfield High
School graduate, LPEA
Washington DC Tour student, and
daughter of LPEA's Operations Manager Justin
Talbot, has completed basic training with the US
Army. She is pursuing her studies in the Army's
nursing program.*



LIVE WIRES

Board meeting Jan. 17, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Jan. 17. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at www.lpea.coop. Public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting shortly after 9 a.m.

Application deadlines

High school juniors: remember application deadline is Monday, Jan. 8, 2018 for the following programs:

- The National Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington D.C., set for June 7-14, 2018.
- The Colorado Electric Education Institute Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp, set for July 14-19, 2018 at Glen Eden Resort outside of Steamboat Springs, Colo.

Round Up Grants

The LPEA Round Up Foundation Board awarded Round Up and Educational grants to Animas High School Interact Club, Community Foundation Serving Southwest Colorado - Colorado Gives, Durango Bluegrass Meltdown - Bluegrass in the Schools Program, and Sexual Assault Services Organization (SASO)

Holiday office closures

LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Monday, Jan. 15, 2018 in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.



Update on Tri-State Generation and Transmission

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LPEA

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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.

Chief Executive Officer:

Michael A. Dreyspring