

# January 2018 Share Package

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# The Future of Cooperative Communication

*Ruralite magazine looks to improve and expand offerings based on consumer feedback*

Maybe it's the recipes. Maybe it's the down-home nature of much of the magazine's other content. Whatever the source, I've come to think of Ruralite as a reader's equivalent of comfort food during the 20 months or so that I've had the privilege of serving as CEO for Ruralite's parent company, Ruralite Services.

That notion was reinforced very early in my tenure here, when a lovely elderly woman had the misfortune of being in forward, not reverse, when she hit the accelerator on her Subaru. The result was that she drove into our building. Nobody was hurt, but the driver was visibly, and understandably, shaken by the incident. I didn't manage to calm her nerves until I handed her my business card.

"You work at Ruralite?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," I replied.

"I grew up on a farm in Eastern Oregon," she said. "We got your magazine every month, and I read it all the time."

From that point on, everything was right with the world—other than the damage to her car and our building. You see, I went from potentially nasty building owner to trusted friend and neighbor the instant she saw Ruralite on my card.

In different ways, that is the reaction to the Ruralite name that I—and our staff—get almost every day as we interact with readers of the nearly 50 Ruralite editions we publish for you, our precious readers.

That "comfort food" relationship isn't as easy to manage as you might think. Media, and how you consume it, have changed more in the past 15 years or so than any time since television's ubiquitous rise in the 1950s. Ruralite itself was born in that era and, with the help of wonderful staff here and just-as-fabulous staff from our utility partners, we have kept Ruralite vibrant and relevant for more than six decades.

As we move deeper into an age of instant—and increasingly digital—distribution and consumption of media, that drive for relevance takes on increasing urgency. What kinds of content do readers want from us in the future? Do you want more local stories? Should we change up any of the monthly features Ruralite delivers? How often, and in what format, do you want to receive the magazine?

These questions will be the subject of intense focus for our team in 2018. Early this year, we'll be launching a full-scale, third-party readership survey that will inform our content decisions and provide valuable insight into the kinds of advertising you like (and don't). Of course, the nature of research being what it is, most of you won't live in one of the 1,000 or so households randomly selected for our survey by our research partner.

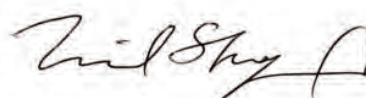
Then again, a survey isn't the only way we gather information from our readers. The staffs at our partner utilities are key sources of that vital data. But one of the best things that can happen is for us to hear directly from you.

So consider this a direct appeal from me and the rest of the Ruralite team: We'd love to hear from you about what you like and don't like in the magazine; what you want more of, or less. Do you still love the recipe pages as much as our past surveys say you have? Do you continue to enjoy the content on energy efficiency? Do you want more local feature stories? What do you think about our photo column? How do you feel about the Marketplace ads or the At Home section? Is Outdoor Pursuits a favorite, or is there something else we should consider? How about the Parting Shot photo—keep it or not? Let your opinions flow and imaginations run wild.

There is no need to wait for that survey that may or may not show up. Go ahead and drop me an email. Be as brief or as lengthy as you wish. I promise, we'll make your feedback a major part of the content and design conversations that are going to be a big part of our new year. Please use this email address: [feedback@ruralite.org](mailto:feedback@ruralite.org).

I'll be eagerly waiting to hear from you—probably with some real comfort food not far away.

With best wishes for a happy new year,



**Michael Shepard**  
CEO



**Michael Shepard**  
is CEO of Ruralite Services Inc. and Efficiency Services Group in Hillsboro, Oregon.

# Are Smart Thermostats Worth the Price?

**Q:** *We have an old dial thermostat. There seem to be a lot of choices for thermostats nowadays. Are the pricier, more tech-focused options worth the additional cost?*

**A:** Many new thermostats offer great technologies that do things thermostats of the past simply could not do. That said, it's certainly worth asking if these new thermostats can save enough money to justify the extra cost.

Let's start by looking at the three main options for thermostats: manual, programmable and smart.

The main benefits of a manual thermostat are that it's simple to operate and there are no batteries to replace. You just have to remember to raise and lower the temperature in the morning and evening, and whenever you leave the house.

The second option is a programmable thermostat. Typically, these allow settings for four periods each day. Some models can handle a different schedule for each day of the week. You control the settings so they suit your climate, schedule and temperature preferences. It is easy to change settings anytime.

The third option is a smart thermostat. A smart thermostat connects to your home's Wi-Fi network. After installation, you input the basics of your schedule and temperature. As you change the settings, the thermostat learns your schedule and adjusts to minimize energy use. You also can control it remotely using an app on your smartphone or tablet.

If your electric utility has a demand response program that offers discounts for using less power during peak energy-use hours, a smart thermostat can provide additional savings on your monthly power bill.

The move to smart technology is a significant investment—units can cost up to \$400. It's also important to note not all homes have the proper wiring in place to accommodate smart thermostats, so you may need to get professional installation.

Are newer, more expensive thermostats worth the extra cost? How much a thermostat can save depends on how much you spend on heating and cooling

your home.

You can estimate your heating and cooling expenses by examining your electric bills related to heating your home. Compare the bills for winter and summer to those for spring and fall. Most of the difference is likely due to heating and cooling. If that amount is more than \$900 a year, which is the national average, you have a better chance of a good return on your investment.

The second factor that determines how much you can save is how you operate your current thermostat. If you are conscientious about adjusting the temperature to save energy when you're leaving the house or going to bed, the new thermostat may not reduce your bills that much, even if you program it correctly or it learns your behavior.

Whichever direction you go, remember there are other ways you can use your thermostat more efficiently:

- Don't adjust the temperature drastically in hopes of making it heat or cool your home more quickly.
- Keep the temperature at or below 68 F while you are home during the day, and cooler during the night. During summer months, keep it at or above 78 F while you are home.
- Save up to 10 percent on your monthly heating and cooling bill by turning back your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees for eight hours a day.

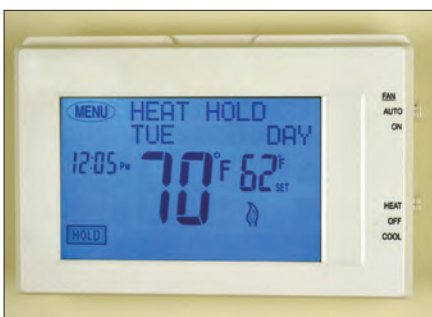
You might save even more by adding insulation or sealing air leaks. A professional energy audit is always the best way to identify your home's energy weaknesses.

As you make your decision, don't forget to look to your electric utility's website for advice, ratings and rebates. ■

*This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on efficient thermostats, visit [www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).*



**A manual thermostat is still a good option for people willing and able to give it frequent attention.**



**A programmable thermostat is only effective if it is programmed correctly.**



To ask a question, send an email to **Patrick Keegan** at [energytips@collaborativeefficiency.com](mailto:energytips@collaborativeefficiency.com).  
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# The Not-for-Profit Difference

*Cooperatives, municipals and PUDs exist to serve, not to profit from serving*

By Brandon Pomrenke

When it comes to power delivery and customer service, not all power providers are created equally.

If you receive electricity from the power grid, which most Americans do, then you belong to one of four utility types: investor-owned utility, cooperative, public utility district—sometimes called a people's utility district—or a municipal.

Public power, on the other hand, focuses its efforts on supporting the members and communities it serves. Rural electric cooperatives, PUDs and municipals are not-for-profit, which means they only need to generate enough margins to repay low-interest loans and cover costs for operations and maintenance, as well as any reserves required by loan agreements. Funds in excess of those costs are returned to the communities in several ways, including scholarships, low-income assistance programs, community investments and support of local events.

There is a reason those who buy their power from public utilities are more than just customers. They are the heart of public power: community members, neighbors and friends. They are the focus

## **Rural Electric Cooperatives**

Cooperatives formed out of necessity. IOUs determined rural communities were not worth the considerable investment necessary to build and maintain reliable power because of the low customer-to-mile of line ratio and the often

difficult terrain.

Farmers, ranchers, business owners and residents banded together to form their own community-owned entities and approached the federal government for start-up capital. This was made possible by passage of the Rural Electrification Act in 1936, which gave the government the ability to provide low-interest loans to communities to start electric cooperatives.

The same Seven Cooperative Principles that guided cooperatives in the early days still guide them now:

**1. Voluntary and Open Membership.** Membership is open to all who can use its services and are willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender or economic circumstances.

**2. Democratic Member Control.** Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Directors/trustees are elected from among the membership and are accountable to the membership.

**3. Member Economic Participation.** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, setting up reserves, benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the

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cooperative, and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

#### 4. **Autonomy and Independence.**

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.

**5. Education, Training and Information.** Education and training for members, elected representatives, CEOs and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Communications about the nature and benefits of cooperatives, particularly with the general public and opinion leaders, helps boost cooperative understanding.

#### 6. **Cooperation Among Cooperatives.**

By working together through local, national, regional and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs.

#### 7. **Concern for Community.**

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.

In short, cooperatives were formed by the members, for the members, and continue to be directed by elected board leadership.

#### **PUDs**

Public utility districts—referred to as people's utility districts in Oregon—may

not be owned exactly like the cooperatives, but they are represented by board of directors or commissioners so they have a say in utility leadership. Instead of annual meetings and board elections required by cooperatives, PUD board leadership is elected on the state ballot through county elections.

Like cooperatives, PUDs were formed to bring power and other utilities to underserved communities.

Board directors or commissioners must live in the subdivision district within the PUD service territory they represent to be elected to serve on the district's board. This gives the board a unique perspective into how the utility affects the community.

PUDs operate on a not-for-profit basis, promote energy efficiency and support their communities whenever possible.

#### **Municipals**

Municipal utilities are owned by a city or a similar incorporated community. Much like PUDs, munis may serve a combination of rural and suburban communities.

These utilities typically are governed by a city council or commission, or an appointed or elected utility board.

Board members/commissioners are residents of the community, which also makes them customers of the utility. Decisions they make that affect utility consumers also affect them.

A similarity shared by co-ops, PUDs and munis is proximity. Members and consumers can visit their utility because offices typically are nearby. Employees and staff are from the community. They

## Shareholders Drive Investor-Owned Utilities

Many people in large cities are familiar with the investor-owned business model. IOUs are owned by shareholders, who may or may not get their power from the utility. They may not live in or near the communities the utility sells power to. Because of that, shareholders do not have to worry how rates affect customers or what happens locally.

At IOUs, rates are set to cover the cost of buying and transmitting electricity, operations and maintenance, and to generate profits. Customers pay their utility bill each month, not quite knowing where the money goes.

Any profits go to the shareholders—the owners—to encourage investment and reward the risks they take for those investments.

Customers do not set policies that govern IOUs, either. Those are set by the shareholders and often are aimed at making the most profit. ■

have much more at stake than a customer service representative or manager who may live 100 miles away. Members of public power have the opportunity for face-to-face communication with the utility, often unlike an IOU.

There are differences that separate public utilities, but they share a common goal: providing safe, reliable, affordable power to those they serve. ■

## First Responders Among Us

*Apache Emergency Response Team holds first mutual training*

By J.D. Wallace

A flaming gas valve and heavy protective gear are nothing new for most members of the Apache Emergency Response Team. They practice fighting fires and rescuing their coworkers every year. But this time, on the week before Thanksgiving, they practiced with the other teams in the community that would also respond.

“It just really puts where the rubber meets the road to where you can really see the importance of why we have to take this seriously,” says Rebel Jones, auxiliary operator III and ERT member at Apache Generating Station.

He and Troy Pope, general maintenance mechanic and also an ERT member, ran the firetruck and kept ERT members with full oxygen tanks while fighting the blaze.

The drill simulated a natural gas explosion that started a fire at a damaged valve and left one person trapped behind the blaze. The team had to extinguish the fire before they could get to the patient, assess the injuries and remove that person from the area. Members of Advance Security, Sunsites-Pearce Fire District and a LifeNet helicopter crew also responded to Apache. ERT members and Advance Security evaluated the simulated patients and worked with Sunsites-Pearce and LifeNet to transport them to hospitals.

“Our team saw and had interaction with emergency vehicles coming in—and off-site,” says Buck Taylor, safety specialist for Apache. “We had communication with outside emergency people that we don’t typically have, so I thought it was beneficial. We want to do this again.”

Buck says team members were on the scene in four minutes and had water spraying in nine minutes. While in a real situation members of the ERT would respond from their work stations



in Apache, the team hit its target of responding in fewer than five minutes. Because of Apache’s location, ERT will be the first responders on the scene, well before outside agencies arrive from urban areas.

“It went better than I thought it was going to go,” says Dustin Meza, an auxiliary operator. “I actually feel really safe here. We’ve got some of the best gear here, so as far as fighting fires or rope rescues or anything else, we have some good gear.”

“It’s imperative that they’re able to respond and perform these skills in a timely manner,” says Shane Snyder with American Emergency Response Training, which provides the training at Apache each year. “They’re doing a great job. In terms of proficiency, they seem to be a little better at it each time we come to visit.”

“We have a great group of men willing and able to take care of any situation that might arise,” says Rebel. “We train



**Above, the LifeNet 8 helicopter approaches Apache Station as Dustin Meza waits for it to land.**

**Top, Tyler Clemson, general maintenance mechanic, and Cody McWilliams, control room operator, carry a stretcher to the simulated accident site.**

for the worst, but hope we never have it as a reality. Our instructors connect with us, providing us with thought-provoking discussions, and they do their best to prepare us for the worst.” ■

## Arizona G&T Cooperatives Plays Major Role in Establishing New Clinic

### Primary Care clinics are ground zero for rural health care

By Geoff Oldfather

Arizona G&T Cooperatives is playing a major role in establishing of a new primary care clinic in Benson that will provide regional health care services in an area suffering from a shortage of such facilities.

The Benson Hospital Family Health Care clinic was made possible through a Rural Economic Development Loans & Grants (REDL&G) program loan, a program administered by AzGT.

The REDL&G loan program provides low-interest, long-term loans specifically for rural entities such as hospitals that can't obtain or afford conventional financing, which usually costs much more than REDL&G financing. The United States Department of Agriculture provides the federal funds to AzGT for establishing the revolving loan program.

Ken Goranson, chief financial officer for Benson Hospital, says building the clinic would not have been possible without the REDL&G loan.

"To a rural hospital, it's important because it allows us to get funding we need without having to go to financial institutions with the time and effort it takes to get a loan approved, and also just some of the criteria a traditional financial institution may have which can limit our ability to get funding," says Ken. "A loan like this gives us more opportunities to grow, with the lower rates and the longer terms."

Benson Hospital Board Member Susan Willis, who is also president of the Southern Arizona Hospital Alliance, says the REDL&G program and AzGT's role in administering the loan make a big difference in providing health-care services.

"In recognition that rural health care is under resourced for primary care, first



From left, Dr. Maysa Alvavi, Ken Goranson and Ann Cook in one of the clinic exam rooms.

and foremost, it's essential that we have facilities where we can provide that care," Susan says. "As this vision that came from the Benson hospital was coming to fruition, you always have to say, 'How are we going to pay for it,' so this became a really helpful facilitator for us to get this up and running."

"There's no way to replace it, so without good primary care, chronic care management, all of those things, health care is far less efficient," says Susan. "Patients don't get what they need, patients get sicker."

Susan is also executive director for strategy at Tucson Medical Center.

Teresa Vincifora, Benson Hospital chief clinical officer, called the clinic a "turning point" for the community.

"We realized there was a need for primary care in this community," says Teresa. "We've had a hard time getting

primary care into the community, but we worked at it and were able to get nurse practitioners here, and we have also been able to bring in some physicians, so we're really excited."

Nicklette Johnston, nurse practitioner and clinic manager, is a Benson native who says the clinic is already seeing patients.

"It's very nice, we've had lots of patients coming in already," says Nicklette. "I have a lot of support from Benson Hospital, and a lot of people who back me up."

Willcox resident Jimmie Allsup drove to Benson as soon as he found out about the clinic.

"I like the small atmosphere, being able to come in, seemed like you get more attention," says Jimmie. "I don't go to the doctor often, but when I do, I really feel like I have something that warrants coming, and she was as concerned as I was. The service was excellent." ■

The Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence needed a new floor. The CPI Charitable Trust donated Operation Round Up money for the job.



## The Power of Operation Round Up

*A few spare coins can change a person's life*

By Adam Schwartz and Thomas Elzinga

It started as a simple idea 27 years ago at a co-op in South Carolina. Round up the co-op member's electric bill to the next dollar, then use it to do good work in the community.

Today, hundreds of electric co-ops throughout the country, including Consumers Power Inc. use this idea to help members and organizations close to home.

All co-ops adhere to the Seven Cooperative Principles, including "Concern for Community." The Operation Round Up program is the perfect embodiment of this core principle. The average co-op member donates \$6, with a maximum possible contribution of \$11.88 a year. This may not seem like a large amount, but when combined with 22,000 members, it makes a significant impact.

Each co-op decides how they want to operate the program, and most are governed by a board of volunteers different from the co-op's board of directors.

This ensures the decisions are made in the best interest of the community. For CPI, the Charitable Trust Committee selects the organizations that receive the donations.

The program is always voluntary, and members can change their minds about participating at any time. Once folks see the good work the program does in their community, they almost always keep contributing. The Charitable Trust has awarded \$14,282 in grants in 2017 and has awarded \$339,569 since its launch in 1993.

Through the years, thousands of dollars have been collected and distributed for a wide range of activities. This includes helping a family in need after a house fire. Assisting the local food pantry. Providing funds so the local fire department can get a needed piece of equipment. And dozens of other humanitarian efforts that bring electric co-ops even closer to the communities we serve.

For example, money was donated to Quilts for Caring Hands in Philomath to help those who are



visually impaired or have autism. Volunteers sew quilts for children who benefit greatly from tactile materials with sensory and perception difficulties. QCH provides the finished quilts to other organizations, such as the Old Mill Center in Corvallis, which in turn gives them to families with special-needs children.

The Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence received funding to help replace flooring in its emergency shelter. The shelter receives around 200 adults and children seeking safety. Due to the foot traffic since the original flooring was installed, it began to be unsafe. Donations helped create a safe space for these families.

Has someone in your family suffered from cardiac arrest? The Siletz Rural Fire Protection District requested and received money to help buy an automatic chest-compression machine. The devices help increase chances to save lives.

The Boys and Girls Club, whose mission is to enable young people to reach their full potential to become productive, caring and responsible citizens, also received funding to help provide BGC scholarships for children to participate in monthly programs.

These are just a few of the many local families and organizations that have received grants to improve their lives and our community.

While each co-op must respond to the needs of its members, one of the great attributes of co-ops across the country—and the world—is their willingness to share information about the programs that have been successful. Operation Round Up is a



perfect example of that cooperative spirit.

Consumers Power is pleased to offer Operation Round Up. We will continue to “borrow” ideas from other co-ops and welcome your participation. Please consider signing up with CPI’s Operation Round Up by visiting [www.cpi.coop/about-cpi/operation-round-up](http://www.cpi.coop/about-cpi/operation-round-up) or giving us a call at (800) 872-9036. Help us all show our “Concern for Community.” Sign up today to enter and help give back to the community. ■

**Clockwise from above, the Boys and Girls Club received Charitable Trust money to help with scholarships. The Siletz Rural Fire Protection District will use trust money to buy an automated chest-compression machine. Quilts for Caring Hands received trust money to help make quilts.**



# July

| JUNE 2018 |    |    |    |    |    |    | AUGUST 2018 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S         | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S           | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
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| 10        | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 12          | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 17        | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 19          | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 24        | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 26          | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |

A day of beachcombing reaps a bounty of sand dollars at Cape Meares, Oregon.  
Photo by Dana Carlson, Tillamook PUD, Oregon

**Ruralite**

| SUNDAY          | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY          | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|-----------------|--------|---------|--------------------|----------|--------|----------|
| 1               | 2      | 3       | 4 Independence Day | 5        | 6      | 7        |
| 8               | 9      | 10      | 11                 | 12       | 13     | 14       |
| ☾ Full Moon     | 15     | 16      | 17                 | 18       | 19     | 20       |
| ☾ Last Quarter  | 22     | 23      | 24                 | 25       | 26     | 27       |
| ● New Moon      | 29     | 30      | 31                 |          |        |          |
| ☽ First Quarter |        |         |                    |          |        |          |

# Your 2018 Ruralite Calendar is Now Available

Call or stop by to pick up next year's edition at your local Central Electric Cooperative office, while supplies last.

Redmond—2098 N. Hwy. 97, (541) 548-2144  
 Bend—61090 SE 27th St., (541) 389-1980  
 Sisters—220 S Pine St. Suite 101, (541) 549-5698  
 Call toll-free at (800) 924-8736

You can either call and order your calendar or make your request online at [www.ccc.coop](http://www.ccc.coop) in the News and Information section.

# Raptor-Friendly Lines

*CEC works to protect local bird populations*

**By Courtney Cobb**

To say electricity and animals do not mix would be an understatement. Central Electric Cooperative covers 5,300 square miles and has more than 2,200 miles of overhead distribution lines.

Consider how many times you have driven by overhead lines and seen raptors nesting near the top of a pole. The danger for the birds is real.

If a bird's wings simultaneously touch a power line and another point, which gives electricity a path to ground, an arc is created that could injure or kill the bird. Central Electric Cooperative has a long history of working with local conservation groups, and has its own policy to prevent birds from being harmed.

## **A History of Protecting Raptors**

CEC filed its articles of incorporation in 1940 under the U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines and started operations in 1941. Loans from the Rural Electrification Administration funded the poles and distribution lines used to serve the co-op members who repaid the loans through their rates.

From the start, CEC followed REA guidelines for the construction of its overhead distribution and transmission lines. Looking deep into CEC's archives, you will find as the cooperative expanded its overhead lines through the REA loan program, it continually updated guidelines to reduce harm to area wildlife. New policies put in place in the mid-1970s increased the emphasis on preventing harm to local and migrating birds, with an extra focus on raptor dwelling areas.

These guidelines called for the use of perches, longer cross arms and configuring cross-arm placements to increase the distance between the electrical phases. This line spacing prevents birds from being able to contact two lines at the same time.

"Measures like these helped to reduce harm to area raptors," says Brad Wilson, CEC director of operations.

Over time, the cooperative has adopted other protective measures,

**CEC Lineman Andy Burford installs a new nesting platform on Dodds Road in Bend.**

Photo by Jeff Beaman



Perches installed on many CEC power poles provide high spaces for birds to nest safely.

Photo by Jeff Beaman

which include adding protective devices to pole-top equipment installations, using nesting platforms and bird guard triangles where raptors have persisted in building nests, and erecting bird perches and bird guards on substation insulators where kestrel populations live.

Custom platforms placed on pole tops for osprey are 5 feet higher than the nearest power pole. Brad says this is because the birds instinctively build their nest at the highest point in their feeding territory.

Nesting platforms—such as those on Dodd Road and Ten Barr Road, or near Pelton Dam—are different perches. They are on adjacent non-infrastructure poles and located in the vicinity of the power line.

“The cooperative is serious about protection of the avian population around Central Oregon,” says Brad. “We have our own protection plan in place to make sure we regularly review federal laws around raptor protection while also proactively conducting corrective action on poles we deem as high risk for nesting birds.”

### **Protection Projects and Actions**

Every year, the cooperative monitors the effectiveness of its corrective actions on poles, and looks

at other ways it can improve on technique or protect raptors while still providing reliable service to members. The cooperative works closely with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, and non-governmental conservation groups in the area to help safeguard various species of raptors.

The cooperative worked with ODFW and the Central Oregon Chapter of the Audubon Society to build structures near the Bend sewage treatment plant ponds to improve habitat safety for eagles, falcons, hawks, osprey and owls.

CEC linemen and members have worked together for years to build and place new nesting platforms and poles for the American kestrel, also known as sparrowhawks, in areas around Bend, Sisters, Cloverdale and Lower Bridge.

Besides building and installing protective devices, CEC crews also receive training on remedies or reporting requirements if they find problem nests and injured or dead raptors in the field.

“We want to make sure we equip our linemen with the tools they need to not only protect themselves, but also to protect area wildlife,” says Brad. “Our crews know what policies to follow and who to contact in a variety of situations.” ■



More than 100 local residents attended a fundraiser to help those affected by the Underwood Fruit & Warehouse fire in October.

## Difficult Time Brings Community Together

*Bingen businesses and residents work together to raise money and gather basic necessities for those in need after a fire at Underwood Fruit & Warehouse put 200 people out of work*

**By Jeanie Senior**

The bad news came while an early morning fire that ravaged the Underwood Fruit & Warehouse facility in Bingen October 18 still was burning: Two hundred people would be out of work, a staggering blow to the local economy.

It was grim. But local businesses and residents stepped forward, and continue to help.

“The fruit packing industry is amazing,” David Bloxom posted on Underwood Fruit’s Facebook page two days after the fire. “Other fruit packing companies in the area are letting us pack pears at their plants. We are using their plants nights and weekends when they aren’t. This will allow us to pack and ship a majority of our inventory. It also puts about 60 of our employees back to work.”

The executive director of Washington

Gorge Action Programs—an agency that helps residents in Skamania and Klickitat counties during difficult times—set up an online GoFundMe site the day of the fire. By early December, 218 people had contributed money, bringing “Underwood Fruit Fire” close to its \$20,000 goal.

Soon after the fire, WGAP head Leslie Narramore recalls, the agency got a look at the scope of the economic impact. In about three weeks, the agency helped 80 families with basic needs, rent, electricity and heat.

People also responded when WGAP scheduled a fundraiser in November.

The event offered music, food, games for kids, a live auction, a bake sale and pie competition. Volunteers from WGAP, Rotary and the Mount Adams Chamber of Commerce pitched in to help.

Taqueria El Rinconcito Express in Bingen catered the fundraiser and offered



**Clockwise from above, Taqueria El Rinconcito Express in Bingen catered the fundraiser. Nine-year-old Hailey Talbert's winning pie sold for \$150—to her father, Tim. The Underwood Fruit & Warehouse fire in October put 200 people out of work. Community members and businesses, with a grant from Washington Gorge Action Programs, have raised more than \$40,000.**

a 50 percent discount on its food.

Brad Roberts, who owns the building that houses WGAP, provided the vacant two-story space where the gathering was held rent free.

Leslie saw the community come together to help one another while setting up the fundraiser.

"No one ever told me no," she said. "It was like, 'Yes, let's do this.'"

More than 100 people showed up—an impressive number on a Friday evening when a number of other community events were going on.

The pie contest was a last-minute addition. Competitors were asked to bring two pies: one for judging, the other to be sold.

Pie-bakers brought in a sumptuous display of pastries.

"We should have expected it," said WGAP board member Laurie Stanton. "People in this town show up."

The fundraiser brought in more than \$5,000. There was lively bidding for donated items, including a pair of Trailblazers tickets that prompted exciting auction activity. The top four pies, judged by Amiee Blevins of Sweetheart

Bake Shop in The Dalles, and Julie Vance, owner of Sweet Things by Julie, were sold at the auction.

Top bidder for the prizewinning pie baked by Hailey Talbert, 9, was her father, Tim, who paid \$150. Mike Mayfield's apple pie won the grand prize.

At the fundraiser, Skyline Hospital Foundation President Bob Weisfield announced the foundation board unanimously voted to grant \$25,000 to WGAP to aid victims of the fire.

"Thank you for doing all of this," Underwood Fruit Superintendent Ed Ing said at the fundraiser. "I am overwhelmed and my heart is so full. This community is amazing."

Among those he also thanked were members of the 15 Columbia Gorge fire departments, who, Ed said, did everything they could to keep people safe.

The facility will be rebuilt as soon as possible, Ed said.

"We intend to stay," he said. "This is our home. We're pretty confident there



will be something in place when the next crop comes on in August."

Meanwhile, WGAP bought supplies of laundry soap, toilet paper and other basics to have available. Donations of those items, as well as to the food bank, are welcome as the agency deals with the increased demand for assistance.

Going forward, WGAP plans to put on a series of financial literacy classes and provide one-on-one budget counseling, Leslie said. Skyline Hospital urges people with existing medical bills to work with the hospital and get enrolled in a payment plan so their bills don't go to a debt collection agency.

For now, half of the \$25,000 grant from the Skyline Hospital Foundation is in a separate account to be used for emergency medical needs, Leslie said, with the rest assigned to rent and utilities. ■



Nature Ridge Organic Dairy's 2,450 Holstein/Jersey crossbreeds produce close to 111,000 pounds of milk daily for Glanbia Foods' cheese.

Photo by Tyler Gilbert

## Organic or Processed: It's One or the Udder

*Three partners launch state-of-the-art organic dairy in Raft River*

**By Dianna Troyer**

Three times a day, the cows at Nature Ridge Organic Dairy in Raft River take a six-minute ride on a circular 60-stall rotating carousel as they are milked.

"Some of them like it so much, they don't want to get off," says Kevin Schroeder, one of three partners who opened the dairy in 2016.

"We're heading into our second lactation cycle," he says as he watches a morning milking from a mezzanine in the milking barn.

Cows wait their turn in a holding pen with a capacity of 330.

About 111,000 pounds of organic milk is produced daily for Glanbia Foods' cheese production. The dairy's 30 full-time employees care for 2,450 Holstein/Jersey crossbreeds.

"We like the components of a Jersey and the production of a Holstein," Kevin says.

He and his partners, Reed Gibby and Ray Robinson, opened the dairy to fill a niche market. Glanbia needed milk to supply cheese to the increasingly popular

organic food market.

The three partners brought their expertise to the new business. Kevin specializes in buying feed, and recycling and disposing of agricultural waste products.

Ray, a member of a co-op called High Desert Milk in Burley, owns dairies that milk 20,000 cows daily.

Reed, a local businessman, started a nearby pig farm.

"Reed found some ground that had been out of production for decades, making it ideal to develop as an organic dairy," Kevin says. "No chemicals or commercial



**Clockwise from top left, Kevin Schroeder is one of three proud owners of Nature Ridge Organic Dairy. Tyler Gilbert, pictured with chillers and a holding tank, manages the dairy. Thirty full-time staff help care for the 2,450 Holstein/Jersey crossbreed cows at the sprawling dairy. The 60-stall milking carousel is the highlight of field trips.**

fertilizers had been used on it.”

To be certified organic, the dairy complies with standards set by the Idaho Department of Agriculture.

“This is our first organic farm,” Kevin says. “We learned about the rules and regulations you have to comply with to be certified. Compared to a traditional dairy, production costs are a little higher, but you can sell the milk for a little more to offset that.”

All hay, grains and minerals must be certified organic. Affidavits documenting that information accompany each load of feed that arrives at the dairy. The business is routinely audited.

“Most of our growers are from southeastern Idaho,” says Kevin. “We buy corn in Nebraska due to the high

volume we need.”

Dairy cow nutrition is complex. “Heifers, lactating cows and dry cows have different diets,” Kevin says. “Most people don’t realize how precisely the ingredients of their diets are controlled.”

As a loader scoops feed from storage areas and places it in a hopper, a computer weighs the hay, grain, minerals and water to get the proper amounts.

When he began managing the dairy, Tyler Gilbert became familiar with organic regulations.

“It’s been a good learning experience,” Tyler says, citing a few of the rules.

Thirty percent of the cows’ diet has to come from fresh grass during the grazing season from May to September. The cows are rotated through different sections of

pastures on the 1,650-acre farm.

Organic standards prohibit use of medication other than vaccines. If a cow needs antibiotics, it is treated, separated from the herd and sent to a non-organic dairy. A cow’s tail cannot be docked.

Kevin is optimistic about the dairy’s future.

“We milked our first heifer in December 2016,” he says. “By the first week in January, we began milking about 100 more each week as they calved. By spring, we were down to calving about 50 to 70 a week.”

Kevin says the milking carousel is the most popular stop on field trips.

“We’ve taken a lot of students on a tour,” he says. “We want them to understand how their food is produced.” ■

# Promoting Suicide Awareness

*The grief of loved ones' deaths compels women to promote suicide awareness and grief counseling programs*

By Dianna Troyer

Having lost loved ones to suicide, Kim Bedke and Linda Steiner Schiers encourage people to talk about the issue, even if it may be uncomfortable.

"Suicide prevention and helping those who have lost a loved one are issues that need to continually be addressed," says Kim, federal programs director and principal at the Cassia Preschool Center in Burley. "We want people who are in pain to know they can get help, and taking their life is not an acceptable solution."

Linda, a registered nurse in Burley, says, "Talking about suicide can be a relief, and mentioning suicide will not increase the likelihood of suicide."

Kim says it is an issue near and dear to her heart because she lost two nephews to suicide: one a little more than two years ago and the other 32 years ago.

Linda's daughter, Andrea, took her life in 2011.

To help deal with their grief, Kim and Linda promote suicide prevention programs and share advice with those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Both women have found a way to help others.

Kim invited professionals to do a training program in a local school district. Linda established a foundation in memory of her daughter.

## Idaho Lives Project

In 2014, Kim asked the staff of the Idaho Lives Project to offer training to Cassia School District school staff and parents.



**Kim Bedke strives to make people feel loved and raises awareness that suicide is not an acceptable answer to solve life's problems.**

The project promotes the development of healthy relationships and helping people have a sense of belonging, strength, resilience and hope.

"They encouraged teachers to help students strengthen relationships with those around them," Kim says.

Studies show suicide is a complex issue not caused simply by depression. Often, when three circumstances occur simultaneously, a person's risk of suicide increases.

"You feel you don't belong, are a burden to those around you, and don't fear



**Linda Schiers, center, pictured with her daughters, Rachel, left, and Andrea. Linda says grief counseling helped her deal with Andrea's suicide, five days after this photo was taken, and made it a goal to increase awareness about suicide prevention.**

Photo courtesy of the Dragonfly Hope Foundation

death," Kim says.

Kim shares advice about talking to people who are potentially suicidal.

"Don't ask them if they're going to hurt themselves," she says. "In their mind, suicide is a way to relieve the pain."

Instead, express concern more directly.

"You should ask, 'Are you thinking of taking your life?'" Kim says. "It's a hard question. You can also give the phone number for a 24-hour suicide prevention hotline to connect the person to counselors who are trained to deal with suicide.

"It takes deliberate action among all of us to bring about awareness and prevention and to help family members who have been affected."

Kim says when a family member dies by suicide, the pain is compounded by of guilt and unanswered questions.

"The stigma that goes along with suicide also complicates the grieving process," she says. "The pain most definitely becomes less acute, but never really goes away."

To deal with losing loved ones to

suicide, Kim says she has surrounded herself with a support system of people who listen and embrace the pain with her.

"I've also become part of a support team for family members and friends who have suffered these losses," she says.

To ease the pain, Kim suggests keeping those who have taken their lives in conversations.

"I speak their names, so they will never become lost in the past," she says.

### **Dragonfly Hope Foundation**

To honor her daughter's life, Linda and her two children established the Dragonfly Hope Foundation. The foundation promotes suicide awareness and prevention.

The foundation also raises money for an annual college scholarship. Fundraising events include Kayak for Hope—an outing on the Snake River near Twin Falls—and a Christmas auction.

Linda says she hopes telling Andrea's story in person and through social

## **Help is a Phone Call Away**

Anyone with suicidal thoughts can find help 24/7 by calling the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline at (800) 273-TALK (8255).

Volunteers are devoted to reducing the state's suicide rate—the fifth-highest rate nationwide, according to hotline data.

In 2015, the most recent year statistics are available, 362 Idahoans died by suicide.

From 2011 to 2015, 102 Idaho children 18 or younger took their lives. Of those, 24 were younger than age 14.

Suicidal callers attribute their despondency to finances, deteriorating mental and physical health, chemical addiction and emotionally painful relationships.

While conveying acceptance and respect, hotline volunteers reassure callers, telling them they have the strength to find solutions to setbacks and problems. ■

networking, including the foundation's Facebook page, will help others.

Andrea, who was a psychosocial rehabilitation worker, did not fit the profile of someone at risk of suicide.

"She was 28, happily married with two beautiful children, and appeared to have a full, rewarding and happy life," Linda says. "Eventually, her perfectionist personality and stress anxiety disorder overwhelmed her."

Linda says grief counseling helped her deal with Andrea's death.

"Although grief never ever ends, over time you begin to find hope again, acceptance and peace in the loss of your loved one," she says.

Linda says she chose to move forward and turn tragedy into something more positive.

"We need to increase awareness about prevention, save lives and assist survivors of suicide loss," she says. ■



New-home construction has taken off in Pahrump in the last 12 months.

## Pahrump Economy Leads Way in VEA Territory

By Ginger Meurer

From his office on the second floor of the Nevada State Bank building, Nye County Regional Economic Development Authority Executive Director Paul Miller

### *Steady growth evident in Nye County*

reaches out to the world. “We’re all in this together,” he says of the task of attracting development to Nye and Esmeralda Counties. “Sometimes this is a monumental, magnificent type of accomplishment. But we continue to strive down that road to bang on the door and say, ‘Hey, look at us.’”

In the last 12 months more than 120 businesses looked to relocate or expand in the area, and Paul sees the road ahead



Jeremy Aguero

as a bright one for economic development.

As part of his sales pitch, he tells prospects, “We have water, we have power and land galore.”

Nye County has

364 square miles for potential development, according to numbers provided in a new video Paul distributes. With 34,000 residents and thousands of visitors, Paul says opportunities for success are plentiful.

Jeremy Aguero, a principal analyst with Las Vegas-based economic forecasting firm Applied Analysis, says the whole Nevada economy is rebounding.

“Unemployment is falling, job

formation is increasing, and the number of businesses throughout the state of Nevada has been improving. That’s a positive overall,” he says.

Jeremy says many people look to places like Pahrump in good times and in bad.

“Some people search for a community that’s more rural in nature,” he says. “And I think Pahrump can provide something along those lines in a very comfortable way, a mix of smaller-town feel, while still having access to a number of amenities.”

He adds that there are others headed to rural areas looking for value.

“They want to be able to buy and own a home, and the ability to do that in an area where prices are lower affords an opportunity that may not happen within the Las Vegas Valley. We know,



Paul Miller

for example, that entry-level housing is much more scarce today than it has been in previous years. Historically, that has created the opportunity for other communities to spring up, particularly ones in areas like Pahrump or in areas like Bullhead City and Laughlin, communities like Mesquite or Moapa.

“Do we see that happening with the same degree of fervor today that we did (during the boom)? No.

“But are we hearing more of it than we did at any point over the last five years? Absolutely.”

Paul says with the development of the Raiders stadium, he’s already seeing some companies turning their attention to outlying communities that are nearby but not as expensive.

“Because Vegas is going to skyrocket,” he says. “You’re going to have to really have money to operate your business in Las Vegas, and if you don’t, you’re going to be looking for another home.”

Nye County Planning Director Darrell Lacy says there was very little development from 2007 to 2012, but now that has changed. In 2016, he says there were 200 residential permits issued. That’s almost double the number of 2015, and it’s dramatically more than in lean years where the county may have issued 10 or fewer permits a year. The total number of permits for 2017 was not available when this story was written, but Darrell expected it to double 2016’s total.

“I wouldn’t say we’re booming, but we definitely have steady growth now,” he says.

Paul says part of that growth is



Pahrump is a rural community that has just about everything.

because Pahrump is a great place to live in and do business.

“It really is. It is that rural community that has just about everything you would want.”

Well, almost everything, he says. “We’re still lacking a movie theater. We’re going to get that in, that’s coming. But we continue to grow in areas that are needed.”

Paul and Darrell cite several big developments on the horizon, such as expansion projects at Spring Mountain Motor Resorts and Country Club and at Front Sight Firearms Training Institute.

Paul says there are also at least a couple multi-million-dollar projects he is not ready to announce. Plus, he says there are projects potentially headed to Round Mountain, Goldfield, Silver Peak, Beatty and more.

“I’ve taken a lot of people out here to find out things,” says Paul. “I’ve taken them on that long windy road out to some of these remote areas, and they are in total amazement of what the possibilities are,” he says.

Recent improvements have helped Nye County’s cause.

“We are fortunate. You’ve driven (Highway 160). It’s pretty quick,” Paul says.

He added that Valley Communications’ efforts to provide fiber internet connectivity throughout the county is also key to his sales pitch.

“It’s magnificent,” he says, adding that even for home businesses or employees working remotely for companies outside the area, high-speed communication is essential.

While transportation and internet are improving, Paul and

Darrell agree that the No. 1 hurdle the area faces is infrastructure development.

Nye County does not have a municipal sewer utility. Darrell says there are three private companies that serve the area, but there aren’t really many places where a business or developer could buy land and break ground right away.

“This is where we lose to other counties and Mesquite,” Paul says.

He says Mesquite put money into infrastructure development years ago with construction of lines for water, sewer and electricity and in some cases even speculative construction of foundations and buildings.

“I have very few roads that have water, sewer and power, and those are gold-mines,” Paul says. “But pricewise people know that. Those are some of the infrastructure issues we bump into when we try to get people to come to town.”

Despite those bumps, Darrell says the area, which is cheaper and not as regulation-heavy as Las Vegas, has a lot to offer.

“It’s a good place to do business” he says. “We’ve got lots of growth. For the kinds of businesses that fit here, we think it’s a good place to come.”

Paul says while he’s eager to bring in business, he’s also careful to bring in the right kinds of business.

“We try to bring in what is reasonable and will work in our area without destroying our resources or our community,” he says. ■

**Candice Mitchell, the Jobs for American Graduates program (JAG) specialist at Pahrump Valley High School, consults with a JAG student. Mitchell heads up "Something Positive," a non-profit organization used to train JAG students.**



**Jazmine Cook, a student volunteer, left, stands next to Jennifer Shockley, founder of Trojans Trunk, which allows students free access to the clothing.**

## Kindness of VEA Employees is Felt in the Community

*Fundraising efforts keep needy high school students warm*

**By Vern Hee**

As they have for nearly two decades, a group of Valley Electric employees is again helping families in need, this year by providing warm clothing and new shoes for students in the Pahrump area.

It started in 1999 by "adopting" a family as a project, says Carole Cusimano, VEA Purchasing Agent, who has headed up the effort since its inception. "At first we did it through Nye Communities Coalition. It would be a family in need, and Cheryl (Setzkorn) and I would collect donations around the holidays from VEA employees for that family. We would have a list of things for the families, and we would shop for them."

Carole says her charity work has morphed into helping at-risk high school students. Two years ago, Carole began working with "Something Positive Inc.," a non-profit started by Candice Mitchell, the Jobs for American Graduates program (JAG) specialist at Pahrump Valley High School.

"We give this non-profit money to buy brand-new

hoodies and sneakers for kids," says Carole. The clothing is given away by the high school at the Trojans Trunk, a store for students started in 2016 by Jennifer Shockley, the school's registrar. The store is open to students in need, and the clothing is provided at no charge.

The store has many uses. It is used by the students for emergencies, in case a student has an accident and needs something to wear. Students also come in to look for Trojans athletic gear for spirit week or for formals for dances. "The nice thing about this store is that you don't have to qualify for a program to use the clothing," Jennifer said.

Trojans Trunk is one of the projects that JAG works with, says Candice. Her students help with the stocking of the store.

"The students work a lot with 'Something Positive' and get valuable experience doing community service," Candice says. "At JAG, the students help out with various projects, learn to work as a team, and they learn leadership skills."

"I am not an outgoing person," says Clovis Townsend,



**VEA employees, front row from left, Rebecka Anderson and Amy Carlson. Back row from left, Matt King, Carole Cusimano, Allan McLard, Sean Couture, Victor Vallin and Cheryl Setzkorn.**

a JAG student. "But I started this class last year, and going through the leadership classes has made me talk more. I just got used to talking more. They had us read things in front of people and work in groups with other people."

Angela Hibbard, another JAG student, says the class has helped her with planning skills.

"I never really thought about the future until I took this class," Angela says. "The class has taught me about setting goals. It has basically helped me plan my life. I love working on the community projects. They help me get out of the house and keep me from just sitting at home."

Carole and the other VEA volunteers worked hard around Christmas, but the

work doesn't just end when the holidays are over.

Employee contributions from VEA were collected, and the proceeds will be distributed to Something Positive. "I also have collected slightly used clothing, too," says Carole. "We collect that all year long, and we still need jackets and coats for the winter."

Carole and Cheryl have worked as a team since the beginning, and for a long time it was just the two of them. The team has grown over the years, and so have the needs.

"I now have a group of people I call my elves," says Carole. They include Victor Vallin, VEA Purchasing Coordinator; Matt King, VEA Supervisor of Broadband Services; and Allan McClard, VEA Facilities Technician. New volunteers in 2017 include Rebecka Anderson, Accounts Payable Accountant; Grant Butler, Warehouseman; Sean Couture, Warehouseman; Roy Bell, Senior Power System Controller; Kristine Hosino, Customer Service Representative and Amy Carlson, Executive Administrative Assistant. ■

Parkland Light & Water

# Ruralite

JANUARY 2018





During the 2016 annual meeting, Electric Superintendent Dale Butcher, left, and Matt Cline explained to members the nuances of underground cables.

## PLW Staff Embraces Cultural Change

*The only constant is change, which is good for Parkland Light & Water Co. customers*

By Rick Stedman

Great customer service is essential for any successful business. It is important whether it is internal or external, because one cannot exist without the other. Managers and employees at Parkland

Light & Water Co. understand this concept.

Whether the issue is electrical, engineering, water or administrative in nature, PLW staff embraces a new positive cultural change within the ranks. Two areas of focus include increasing member participation and succession planning.

“We are focused on membership participation, and we do that in a variety of ways,” says General Manager Susan Cutrell.

One way utility staff can engage with several members at one time is during the annual meeting.

“Parkland Light & Water invites members to its annual meeting, which is always the fourth Tuesday in March,” Susan says. “At the annual meeting, members hear the company’s annual activities and financials, and have the opportunity to vote for board members. We try to make the annual meeting fun and enjoyable for participants by offering light snacks, giveaways and prizes.

Attendees seem to love the prizes!

“Also, we have ongoing discussions with members regarding our democratic process and their ownership in our company.”

“The new work environment created by our current management team is very successful, partly because we have an open-door policy that creates a more positive and efficient work place,” Electric Superintendent Dale Butcher says.

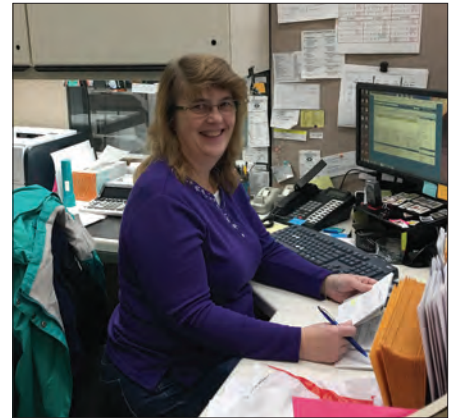
### Planning for the future

Succession planning—planning for the future—is another focus for PLW. With fewer than 30 employees, cross-training is a key element in providing consistent customer service. Dale Budzinski, PLW water superintendent, says the utility has adopted a five-year plan for succession training.

“We have employees who will retire within five to seven years, and we believe it will take about that long to train their replacements in the more technical areas



PLW Water Superintendent Dale Budzinski says employees get regular training that builds not only skills, but also confidence.



in the treatment department,” he says.

PLW also requires construction foremen to occasionally have each crew member run the crew for a day, which includes the paperwork.

“This builds confidence in each employee, and also gives them the opportunity to ask the foremen questions since he is still involved with the job,” Dale says.

Engineering Assistant Zeek Swanson shares his thoughts about PLW’s changes.

“Between embracing technology; encouraging employee input, growth, and education; and demonstration of employee appreciation, General Manager Susan Cutrell and the board have created a new culture appropriate for the 21st century,” Zeek says. “I am proud to be an employee of Parkland Light & Water. The new focus on staying relevant and up to date in our work methods, educated on our work environment and local environment, and where we fit into the process is proving to serve the company, employees and members quite well. It’s an exciting time to be involved, whatever your role.”

Susan says working her way up the ranks gave her an overview and understanding of the internal workings of the member-owned, nonprofit mutual.

Susan began her PLW career as an administrative assistant in 2001, and was promoted in 2007 to financial controller. The following year, she became manager of finance and administration operations, followed in 2016 with her promotion to general manager.

“I appreciate the opportunity to work

**Clockwise from above left, Customer Service Representatives Bob Koecke, Yo Wright and Karmen Rebman; Journeyman Lineman Brian Wahto; and General Manager Susan Cutrell.**

my way up within the company,” Susan says. “I believe the various positions have given me a better understanding of workflows, processes and challenges within different positions.”

Susan says she has learned a lot about the industry and staff during her tenure.

“It has always been rewarding working for PLW, as my beliefs and passion align well with the company’s mission and purpose,” she says. “Since taking over as general manager, there has been some internal restructuring due to retirements and succession planning, and aligning strengths with positions.”

Susan believes those changes continue to make the company more efficient.

“When you add in a positive internal cultural change, this increases synergies and efficiencies throughout departments. In addition to our very dedicated and talented staff, we are complemented by our professional and knowledgeable board of directors.”

Finance and Administration Manager Alex Anderson looks forward to PLW’s plans for the future.

“There is significant cross-training always happening, and we have several people who can do any task,” he says. “Parkland Light & Water offers excellent training opportunities for its employees. In essence, we are training current employees who will carry the torch into the future.” ■



# The Winners Are ...

*Four students have been selected to visit Washington, D.C., next summer*



Kayla Cervantes



Byron McDermott



Chaysen Babcock



Olivia Necochea

The scores have been tallied and congratulations are in order for four Hamilton High School juniors: Kayla Cervantes, Byron McDermott, Chaysen Babcock and Olivia Necochea.

The four were selected from among 26 students in Anza Electric Cooperative's service territory. Each one competed for the chance to travel to our nation's capital for an all-expense-paid, activity-filled week in June.

The Washington Youth Tour program brings together 1,800 ambitious high school students from across the nation for a history lesson not found in any textbook. They learn firsthand what it is like to be involved in the political process, develop leadership skills and learn about the cost of freedom as they visit memorials and other historic sites.

The inside view of our government opens them to new experiences, new friendships and a new awareness, providing a broader view of the nation and the world.

Each year, AEC has a contest for high school juniors. The contest has two parts: an essay on a specific topic and an interview with the cooperative's board of directors.

The essay requirement this year was to write a letter to one elected representative on either an issue that affects our community that they felt this particular individual might be able to assist with or

discuss an idea that would help bring jobs to the area.

The Youth Tour program was inspired by then-Sen. Lyndon Johnson at a National Rural Electric Cooperative Association meeting in 1957. He proposed a tour of the nation's capital for teens living in rural cooperative service areas as a chance for them to see "what the flag stands for."

In the past 50-plus years, the nation's electric cooperatives have sponsored more than 50,000 high school students for visits to their U.S. congressional delegations, energy and grassroots government education sessions and sightseeing in Washington, D.C.

Following are questions answered by this year's Youth Tour representatives.

## **What was the toughest part of the contest and why?**

**Kayla:** Since I was so nervous, the toughest part of the contest was trying to stay calm during my interview.

**Byron:** The hardest part of the contest for me would probably be interviewing in front of all the contest judges. I must say, it doesn't matter how many times you practice and practice an answer to a question, the second you walk in and sit down in front of six or more people all watching you intensely while you answer, you tend to be a tad nervous.



**The Marine Corps sunset parade is one of the highlights of the trip to Washington, D.C.**

Photo by Mike Teegarden

**Chaysen:** The toughest part of the contest was the interview. The reason it was so tough was because it was nerve-wracking having eight sets of eyes watching me. Thankfully, I realized that I just needed to be myself.

**Olivia:** The toughest part for me was probably the interview. I was extremely nervous going into it, and I knew it was going to be a close race.

**What did you think your chances of winning were?**

**Kayla:** Well, I actually did the math to find out my chances of winning, and it came out to be a 15 percent chance of winning.

**Byron:** Being completely honest, I didn't believe my chances of winning this contest were very high. There were a lot of very high-achieving kids entering in this contest, all wanting the chance to tour our great nation's capital. That being said, I can't tell you how excited I am that I am one of the lucky winners!

**Chaysen:** I thought my chances of winning were pretty good, due to there being only 26 kids who applied. Even though the competition was tough, I was able to win.

**Olivia:** I wasn't sure what my chances were because I knew my competition was going to be tough.

**What do you expect to get out of this trip?**

**Kayla:** I expect to develop more leadership skills, and learn about my country's history and capital.

Also, I hope to gain new friendships and come back with a broader view of the world.

**Byron:** I not only expect to meet some new friends along the tour, but I also expect to leave the trip with a whole new understanding and appreciation for our nation's history.

**Chaysen:** I expect this trip to be a life-changing experience. I have never been to Washington, D.C., before, so I hope to learn a lot and meet some new people along the way.

**Olivia:** I expect to grow in my leadership skills and in my knowledge of American history and have a greater appreciation for those who came before us.

**What do you most want to experience or see, and why?**

**Kayla:** I want to visit the Holocaust Museum, because I want to learn about one of the most significant events in history.

**Byron:** I mostly want to experience that "wow" factor through all of the learning I will be doing on the tour. Those certain parts of America's history where the second you learn about them you can't help yourself from going "wow."

**Chaysen:** The thing I want to see the most is the United States Holocaust Museum. The reason is so I can learn about the suffering they went through, and share my knowledge on the subject with my classmates.

**Olivia:** I would love to see all the amazing monuments and architecture in D.C., as I am considering becoming an architect in the future. ■



## Local Participating Businesses

**Mention or bring your Co-op Connections Card to get your discount!**

### Allied Electric

(800) 305-0544

50 percent off regular service call.

### NEW! Anza Pizza Factory

(951) 389-6155

Free breadsticks with purchase of any pizza.

### Anza Valley Outlook

(951) 763-5510

50 percent off classified ads (\$9.95) printed in Valley News, Village News and Anza Valley Outlook (25 words)

### Anza Village Market

(951) 763-4321

\$1 off purchase of \$25 or more. 50 cents off sales of \$15-\$24.99.

### Blackmore Electrical Inc.

(951) 763-5002

\$25 off service call.

### Brian Kennedy Construction - Concrete, brick, stone & block

(951) 763-0703

(909) 721-4350

10 percent off first project.

### Coach2Ride

#### Off-Road Instruction

(858) 382-1515

Free ATV training for kids 6 years through 17 years old. 20 - percent off all other classes.

### Cornerstone Custom Builders, Inc.

(951) 763-1257

For all your construction needs. Specializing in concrete, room additions, decks and patio covers.

10 percent discount off labor on any job.

### Dennis Does It Plumbing Repairs

(951) 763-5441

15 percent off service call.

### Dorothy's Salon

(951) 763-5483

20 percent off all services (hair, wax, facials, massages)

### ERA Excel Realty

(951) 763-2535

When we close a home escrow with you, it would be our pleasure to treat you to a wine tasting at a Temecula Winery of your choice (not to exceed \$100).

### Freedom Electric

(951) 763-0744

15 percent off service calls.

### Heritage Well Service

(951) 763-2210

\$20 off any service.

### High Country Nursery

(951) 837-1905

10 percent off plant stock for sales more than \$250; 15 percent off for sales more than \$1,000

### Hydrascope Engineering Co.

(951) 763-4875

\$1,000 off engineering and design when we do the work or 10 percent off posted machinery rates.

### NEW! Jacy Farm (Fruit Orchard)

(951) 837-0536

10 percent off on regularly priced items.

### JB Nursery

(951) 763-7688

25 percent off all purchases.

### La Cocina Mexican Restaurant

(951) 763-5155

Buy any combination plate, receive second combination plate half price. Not valid with any other offers or specials.

### Lorraine's Pet Supply & Pet Grooming

(951) 763-0033

\$5 off first groom. Save \$1 on nail trims.

### Marketplace Cooperative Inc.

(951) 744-0171

10 percent off all purchases to those who present their Co-op Connections card.

### Merrie's Massage

(951) 763-0232/

(951) 760-8046

\$5 off one-hour massage.

### Mountain Communities Telephone Directory

(951) 492-9822

Free red or black SUPERBOLD listing with any display ad or free black SUPERBOLD in the white pages with any display ad.

### NAPA Auto Parts - Anza

(951) 763-1400

Up to 45 percent discount on MSRP.

### Once Upon A Thread

(951) 760-9829

10 percent off all sales, excluding sale items.

### Packard Construction

(951) 763-4582

5

percent off labor.

### Peoplepedigree.com

(951) 763-9758

25 percent off regular rates, and a referral incentive program.

### Phatpuppy Art (Digital Art & Photography)

(949) 201-6499

15 percent off any digital art design or photo shoot.

### Rob's Horseshoeing

(619) 804-9239

50 percent discount on trims and shoeing - four hooves

### Sage Farms

(951) 663-3079

Join our CSA to receive free honey and eggs.

### NEW! Stone Equipment/ TYM Tractors

(951) 763-5427

8 percent off tractors

### The Jam Lady

(951) 763-9758

10 percent off regular priced items.

### The Midnight Rider

(951) 763-4790

\$500 discount per five-hour event.

### The Rental Center

(951) 763-0200

10 percent off any rental. U-Haul rentals not included.

### Wise Windows Tinting & Blinds

(951) 600-1515

10 percent off window film (tint) installation of 85 sq. feet or more. 5 percent off any size blind order.

### Wright Family Daycare

(951) 763-5416

15 percent off first three months.

### Yilberto's Taco Shop

(951) 763-4433

5 percent off any purchase of \$10 or more

**Visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop) for national deals or [www.connections.coop/anza](http://www.connections.coop/anza) for local deals.**

# A Big Rush to Transport Kasigluk's New Engine

Photos by Norman Miller.



“We have a blown engine” is a phrase our operations department hates to hear, especially in winter. This event just happened in Kasigluk. AVEC’s warehouse team jumped into high gear to ship a new engine out there. Days of bad weather complicated things as numerous flights were canceled and freight

shipments backed up. Finally a brief weather window allowed a Ryan Air fully-loaded Casa airplane (freight only) to fly to Kasigluk. Using steel pipes and chains the local crew unloaded the engine out of the plane and onto a skid they built using ingenuity and some scrap material they scrounged up.



The two-ton engine was securely lashed to the home-made skid.



A Bobcat pulled the engine to the power plant over an icy road.



Will Peterson and Edward Twitchell helped roll the engine up into the module the old-school way, using chains, steel pipes, a come-along, great teamwork and brute strength.



The hard-working crew of Victor Keene, Will Peterson, Edward Twitchell and Harold Pavilla celebrate moving the engine into place to await installation. A big thank you to all involved!



# Alaska Rural Energy *art contest*

Design the Program Cover for the 2018 Alaska Rural Energy Conference with an artistic answer to this question:

**What do you want your community's energy system to look like when you are 50 years old?**

**1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners will receive Amazon gift cards of \$50, \$30, and \$20, respectively. Winners will be selected by the 2018 Alaska Rural Energy Conference planning committee.**

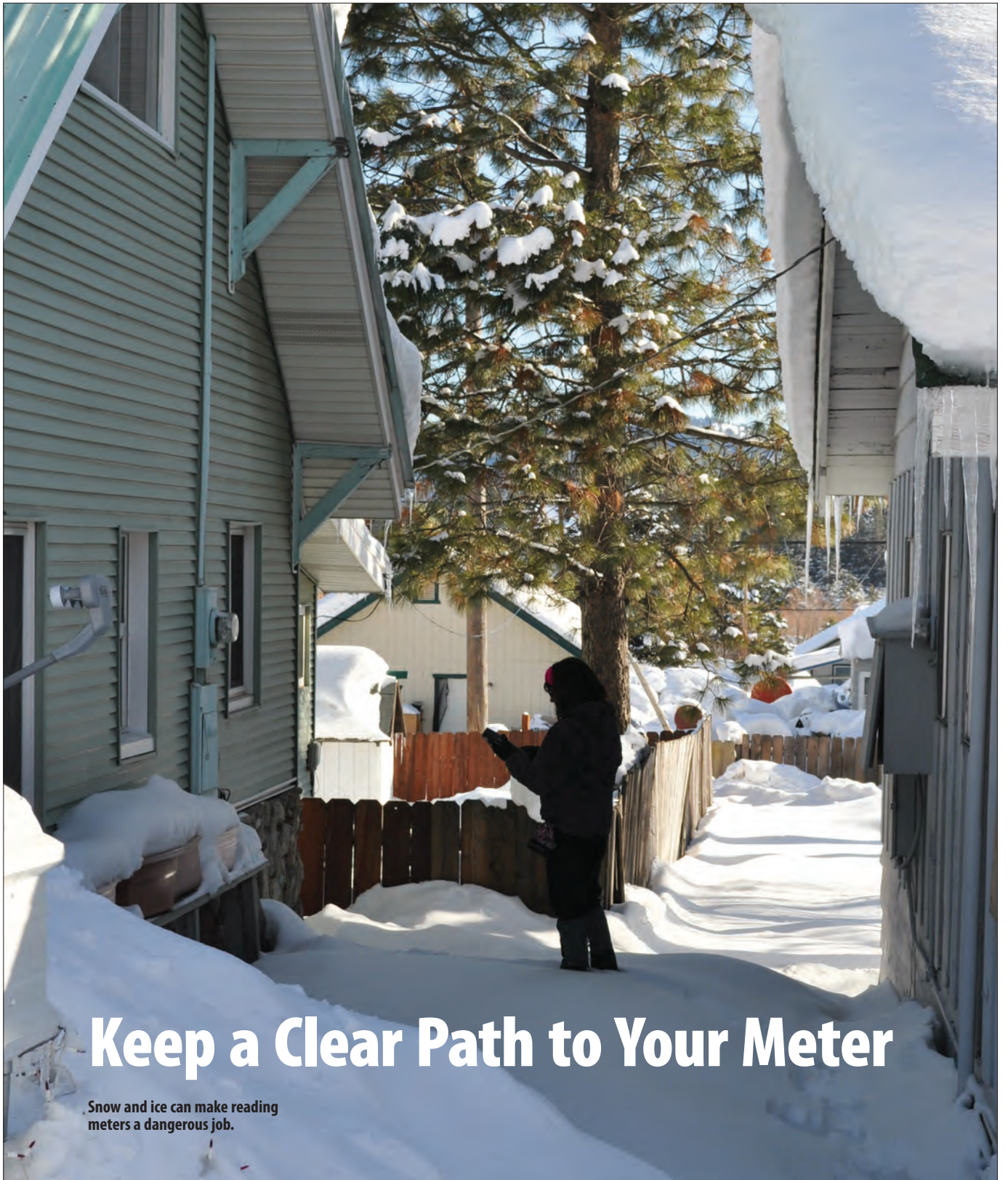
**To enter:** Alaska students in grades 5-8 are eligible to submit one entry each. Artwork should be 8.5 x 11 in size for easy reproduction. Entries should be mailed flat (folded or wrinkled entries will not be accepted) or emailed as a jpg file to the contact below by February 14, 2018 with a cover sheet (a separate jpg or pdf file if emailing) that includes the following:

1. Student name
2. Teacher name
3. School name
4. Community name
5. Local electric utility name
6. This statement, signed by the student and their parent/legal guardian: "I give my permission for this artwork to be used as the front or back cover of the 2018 Alaska Rural Energy Conference program."

**Mail or email contest entries by FEBRUARY 14, 2018 to:**  
Alaska Energy Authority, Attn. Karin St. Clair, 813 W.  
Northern Lights Blvd., Anchorage, Alaska 99503;  
[KStClair@aidea.org](mailto:KStClair@aidea.org).

**Teachers and parents**, please look to [www.akenergysmart.org](http://www.akenergysmart.org) for ideas on how to incorporate energy related lesson plans that dovetail well with the contest. More information about the 2018 Alaska Rural Energy Conference is available on the event website: <http://www.akruralenergy.org/>.

Contest sponsored by Alaska Village Electric Cooperative with support from  
Alaska Energy Authority and Alaska Center for Energy and Power.



# Keep a Clear Path to Your Meter

Snow and ice can make reading meters a dangerous job.

**By Theresa Phillips**

Living in a rural area comes with challenges—especially for those whose jobs take them outside and into the elements. Lassen MUD’s meter readers and fieldman know this all too well.

Toni Merrill, Lisa Hay and Cindy Elliott are LMUD’s meter readers and fieldman. They are committed to giving the best possible service to LMUD customers. It’s this drive that keeps them going and pushes them to overcome whatever challenges may lie in the field.

When it comes to dealing with challenging conditions, there’s not much veteran LMUD meter reader Toni, has not seen.

“Meter reading is tough on a good day, but throw in snow and ice and it turns dangerous,” says Toni. “A few days after a big snow storm, I was trying to get a read from a meter that was blocked by a 6-foot snow berm.”

The snow had slid off the home’s metal roof, blocking the meter. Toni had to climb the berm to look at the meter, and the slippery snow sent her tumbling.

Fortunately, Toni wasn’t injured. The home’s residents did not understand that by not clearing the path to the meter they created a hazard.

“Our biggest challenge really is clear access to the meter, says Cindy, a fieldman. “Especially gates. There are so many meters that are behind locked gates.”

Meter readers and fieldmen need access to your meter, regardless of its location. If your meter is behind a closed or

locked gate, please make sure LMUD personnel can get to it.

“I understand that people are concerned with privacy, but I’m just there to do my job, and usually it’s just a quick in and out,” says Cindy. “I’m focused on my job and not on the yard—mostly looking down, keeping an eye out for potential hazards. Most people never even know I’ve been there.”

Even though Cindy is focused on her work, she has, on occasion, noticed something out of the ordinary and averted a potential tragedy. She was once at a home where the dryer vent was clogged with lint and on the verge of starting a fire. Cindy let the customer know what was going on and they were able to correct the issue.

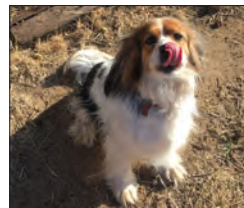
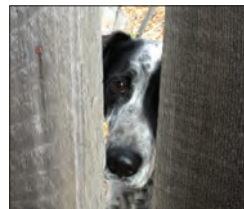
In addition to creating a hazard, if the meter on your home or business is not accessible, you are subject to an estimated read. LMUD Senior Customer Service Clerk JoAnn Villalovos, explains the estimation process.

“An estimated read is the average between your prior month’s electric use and the same month last year,” she says. “We take the two numbers and use the combined average. It’s usually pretty accurate, unless someone has done something different, like using electric heaters, or maybe they have a leaking water pipe. When the meter readers can once again read the meter, the bill catches up. We don’t like to estimate, but sometimes we don’t have a choice.”

Keeping the path to your meter clear is crucial. Clear access means an accurate reading for you and ensures the safety of Lassen Municipal Utility District’s employees. ■

## Meter Readers’ Best Friends

Lassen Municipal District meter readers meet lots of new friends while on the job. Here are a few of the friendly faces meter readers Toni Merrill and Lisa Hay see on a regular basis.



# The Magic of Electricity

*Third-graders learn how something they use daily is made and delivered to their homes*

Jay Elementary School third-graders got a behind-the-scenes view of what is involved in making the electricity they use every day.

Students learned how electricity is made and delivered to area homes and businesses during a November 8 field trip to PowerSouth Energy Cooperative—the generation and transmission facility for Escambia River Electric Cooperative. They toured the McWilliams Power Plant, the Gantt Hydroelectric Dam and PowerSouth headquarters in Andalusia, Alabama.

The first power plant built by PowerSouth was named after Maury A. McWilliams, the cooperative's first board president. The plant's first two coal-fired units began operation in the mid-1950s. The third unit went online in 1959.

Having used the plant to its full life expectancy, PowerSouth repowered it in 1996. It now includes a



Students observe control monitoring in the power plant with Matthew Fowler, PowerSouth's operating technician.

natural gas-fired 107-megawatt combustion turbine and a heat recovery steam generator that recycles exhaust heat to create steam. The steam is used by the plant's original units to produce electricity.

The repowered McWilliams plant provides 159 MW during winter and 149 MW during summer. At its winter peak, McWilliams generates enough electricity to power about 159,000 homes.

PowerSouth has two hydroelectric power plants: Gantt and Point A. Students visited Gantt, which is at the site of a former grist mill on the Conecuh River. The Point A plant is about 5 miles downstream near the town of River Falls, Alabama.

Both Gantt and Point A dams were built around 1923. PowerSouth bought the facilities in 1944.

The hydroelectric power plants combine for a generating capacity of 8

MW—enough to power approximately 8,000 homes.

Water is held in large reservoirs behind the dams, with hydroelectric power plants below. The dams create strong water flows, which move turbine blades that turn the rotor of an electric generator.

Gantt Lake covers a reservoir with a surface area of about 2,747 acres. The Point A reservoir covers a surface area of about 700 acres.

The plants are operated and monitored from on-site control rooms or a centralized control room at the McWilliams Power Plant. They operate only when river levels allow an adequate supply of water to turn turbines.

At headquarters, third-graders toured Energy Control and learned how electricity is transmitted from the generation plants to the homes in our area to power the many things we need and enjoy that require electricity. ■



Tammie Free and her students.



Jeff Kidd, PowerSouth's plant results coordinator, describes how falling water at Gantt Hydroelectric Dam is used to generate electricity.



Donna McMillan and her students.



Kim Cooley and her students.



Rhonda Adams and her students.



Shellie Macht and her students.



*Peace River  
Electric  
Cooperative wishes  
you a happy and  
prosperous  
New Year*

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