July 2020 Share Package
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Should You Replace Old Windows?

Q: I recently moved into an older home that's definitely not efficient. What upgrades should I consider?

A: Prepare yourself for a bit of sticker shock when you get your first bid to replace windows. Before you replace your windows, consider a few factors.

Curtains are an affordable strategy to increase comfort and reduce energy use. PHOTO BY SCOTT VAN OSDOL

Increased Comfort

The chill you feel near your windows when it's cold out is likely due to radiant heat loss. When you're near a cold surface, such as a window, you can feel chilled even if the temperature inside your home is warmer than 70 degrees.

The inside surface of an inefficient, single-pane window will be much colder on a winter night than that of a double- or triple-pane window.

Window coverings are one approach to increase comfort in your home. Curtains and blinds reduce radiant heat loss in the winter and can block unwanted heat gain in the summer.

Another aspect to comfort is the sun. If you have cold winters but lots of winter sunshine, you might enjoy the comfort and warmth of the sun streaming through your windows on a cold, clear day. If that's the case, you should take this into consideration as you ponder window replacement.

Some windows are better at letting the sun's heat into the home than others.

Appearance and Function

If your windows are older, new wood- or vinyl-framed windows can act as an exterior facelift. But keep in mind, if you own an older home with classic wooden windows, vinyl replacements might look out of place. It's possible to buy new windows that match the style of some older wooden windows, or you could decide to apply a little elbow grease to get them back into shape. Wooden windows, even if they were built before 1960, can last the life of the home.

Windows can provide ventilation, which sometimes improves comfort more cost-effectively than air conditioning. Windows also need to be cleaned occasionally. If your existing windows don't provide ventilation or they are hard to clean, replacing them could solve these problems.

Resale Value

Windows are a major point of interest for most prospective homebuyers, which is why we often hear window replacement is good for resale value. But a 2019 study by the National Association of Realtors found that on average across the U.S., installing new vinyl windows costs about $22,000 per home, but only increased resale value by $16,500. Only 4% of real estate agents said the new windows helped close the sale.

Energy Savings

Homeowners often believe the best way to reduce energy use is to replace their windows, but this is rarely true. Companies that sell new windows sometimes advertise greater energy savings than the new windows can actually deliver.

The amount of energy you save really depends on the efficiency of your existing windows compared to the efficiency of the replacement windows. An energy auditor can estimate potential savings, but most audits show that there are much more cost-effective efficiency investments than replacing windows.

On average, according to Energy Star, replacing single-pane windows in a 2,000-square-foot home with Energy Star-certified windows can save $125 to $340 a year, depending on where you live. At this rate, it would take a decade or more to pay off your initial investment.

Replacing old windows can provide a number of benefits, but it's a costly endeavor. By considering these factors and how long you plan to live in the home, you will be able to make the right decision. ■

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more energy tips, go to www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.

Select an Efficient Toilet to Lower Water Bills

Q: What are some toilet options that save water, but that still flush well?

A: There are several inexpensive do-it-yourself options you can try first to improve your existing toilet, but it's probably best to just install a new water-saving model. Toilet-flushing typically accounts for 30% of a household's water use.

If you want to try to improve your existing toilet first, install an inexpensive water dam kit. Flexible panels made of plastic or thin sheet metal fit across the bottom of the toilet tank. These reduce the water volume in the tank, so less water is used each flush. By moving the kit to different positions in the tank, you can adjust the water use to get an effective flush.

Most hardware and home center stores sell replacement water-saving flapper valves for the tank. They are designed to close before the tank totally empties to save water per flush. Select an adjustable valve and give it a try. You may be able to target an effective water-saving flush, but not always based on the toilet internal design.

Depending on how old your toilet is, it may be designed to use 3.5 or 5.0 gallons of water per flush. The average family can save up to $100 a year in water costs by installing water-saving toilets. I recently replaced a 3.5 gpf toilet with a 1.6 gpf toilet that cost less than $60 at The Home Depot. This can provide a payback in less than one year.

The standard for new toilets is a maximum of 1.6 gpf. Many new toilets use only 1.28 gpf, and some are as low as 1.1 gpf. With the new internal water flow designs, they flush effectively with smaller amounts of water.

There are techniques and kits to reduce water use for old toilets, but they sometimes require double-flushes for solid waste.

A standard gravity-type 1.28- or 1.6 gpf-toilet is your best choice for your master bathroom. It flushes effectively and is reasonably quiet. Two-piece (tank and bowl) models are usually less expensive than more stylish one-piece models. They are also easier to handle in two pieces. The only drawback is that the gap between the two pieces is harder to keep clean.

Dual-flush gravity models use either 1.1 or 1.6 gpf for liquids or solids, respectively. On some, you push the handle up or down depending on the flush volume needed. On others, there is a dual push button on top of the tank.

For a new first-floor half bathroom, consider installing a pressure-assist model. The incoming water compresses air in an internal tank. This compressed air creates a forceful, rapid flush. These are common in public restrooms. The flush is louder than with a gravity model, which should not be a problem on the first floor.

If you have several men in your family, consider installing a small wall-mounted urinal in a half bathroom. These use less than 1.0 gpf and flush quickly. To save space, some models are designed to collapse into the wall and are hidden when not in use.

If your house is built on a slab, or when putting a toilet in a basement, it can be difficult to install the drain. In this case, use a macerating toilet that grinds up waste and pumps it upward—up to 15 feet—to an existing drain. These toilets are expensive, but less costly than installing a new drain. ■

This is a standard two-piece toilet that uses 1.28 gallons per flush. Its design simplifies assembling the tank to the bowl section. PHOTO BY EARL KENDALL

For more information or to ask a question about energy savings, go to www.dulley.com.

A Public Power Conversation

Meet Scott Simms, executive director of the Public Power Council

A lifelong resident of the Pacific Northwest, Scott Simms grew up in Snoqualmie, Washington. After graduating from Washington State University, he handled energy-related accounts and initiatives at public affairs firms. He then spent six years as chief spokesman at Portland General Electric—Oregon's largest investor-owned utility.

In 2006, Scott joined the Bonneville Power Administration, most recently serving as manager of long-term power planning and then director of communications. He was hired as executive director of the Public Power Council in June 2019.

Scott's backcountry horseback trail rides with his parents and their friends in the 1970s and '80s left a lasting impression.

"I remember at a really young age seeing those giant BPA transmission towers and asking the adults where those lines went," Scott says. "Our family also participated in cattle roundups next to the Columbia River. I am as amazed today as I was then at just how large and powerful this river is. Looking back on those memories, it's impressive to me to think how much the adults around me knew about the Northwest's grid and the hydro-dominated power system we have, as well as the inherent value these assets provide to everyone in this region."

Scott says he learned early in his 20-year energy career the need to get results for the time he spent, and still carries that mindset. "What can we get done that's meaningful for our members with the annual investment they make in our operating budget?" he asks.

COVID-19 and the Region's Energy Use

The Public Power Council surveyed its members to find out how the pandemic impacts their operations and communities, and how PPC could seek relief on their behalf. Results show average energy use has dropped 3% to 10%. Although residential consumption has varied, with more folks working from home, commercial and industrial users—from restaurants to manufactured goods—show reduced consumption due to less demand for certain products or social-distancing policies that keep customers away. Some sectors, including certain food processors, have increased demand due to changes in consumer behavior, such as more meals consumed at home.

Armed with that information, PPC formally asked the Bonneville Power Administration to temporarily pause the agency's Financial Reserves Policy surcharge. The $30 million a year line item in BPA's rates helps the agency build up its "bank account" to weather financial ups and downs.

"While our members support the policy overall, now is a time for community relief," Scott Simms says. "We are hopeful to get this for our members so they can pass it on to their customers. This is a direct example of the work PPC does in partnership with public power utilities."

Why should end users of electricity from consumer-owned utilities care about the work of the Public Power Council?

Serving as an economic engine of the Northwest, BPA and its rates affect pocketbooks of residents and the vitality of businesses and job creation in the region. PPC works to keep BPA's rates as low as possible while ensuring we preserve the value of the reliable federal power system that supplies electricity to Northwest public power communities. PPC initiatives range from holding BPA accountable for its costs of programs and expenses and helping it be more efficient to protecting BPA from outside threats, such as occasional efforts to break up the agency and sell it off piecemeal.

Capitalizing on opportunities to market surplus Northwest power elsewhere in the West is an important evolving issue for public power customers. PPC is working to ensure attributes of the federal system—such as being fast-ramping, carbon-free and available 24/7—are properly valued in electricity markets. If successful, these efforts have the potential to lower BPA's rates.

The bottom line is PPC helps Northwest consumer-owned utilities and their communities be properly represented and protected regarding all aspects of their reliance on the federal power system.

What insights do you bring to your job from your background?

As a consultant charging clients by the billable hour I learned it's not enough to try. You have to deliver results. This continues to be my career compass. I see the budget for our operations from our members' annual dues as their investment to get results.

I understand from my work at PGE and BPA the difficult job our consumer-owned utility members have. PPC is a small, highly technical organization of analysts, policy specialists, legal and communications experts that work in unison with our members to build strategies and advance initiatives on behalf of Northwest public power tied to the costs of the BPA power system and grid.

What is a top issue that affects the supply and price of power?

A big variable is the cost of federal fish and wildlife mitigation costs largely borne by public power customers. PPC and its members have a strong interest in the effectiveness and cost of programs funded through rates BPA charges its customers. This includes support for science-based, cost-effective programs that help BPA meet its obligations for fish and wildlife mitigation.

Fish and wildlife costs are roughly 25% of the total BPA bill to customers, including operations costs and reduced operational flexibility from increased spill at the dams.

Even with success in other areas of BPA cost management, ever-escalating fish and wildlife costs could threaten near- and long-term economic sustainability. PPC is taking targeted steps to properly align cost responsibility for fish programs and recognize the region's shared stake in the financial health of BPA.

Scott Simms, executive director of the Public Power Council, with his daughter, Ella, and wife, Erika, near their home overlooking the Columbia River. They enjoy exploring the outdoors, hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter.

As fish and wildlife costs rise, and courts consider ordering dams to be removed, how do power generation interests best advocate for a more balanced, science-based approach?

I would like to have honest dialogue around the holistic view of our river system and salmon health through the "All-H" approach to management: habitat, hatcheries, hydro and harvest. We used to be better at talking about these factors together as part of the salmon life cycle, but now it feels more disparate. If we can get all of the facts and science-based actions and results on the table, we can move toward more productive conversations based on those facts.

Time and again, public power steps up and pays for its share of mitigation. Public power alone should not be responsible for financing all of the new demands.

What BPA proceedings should consumers be monitoring?

Recently, BPA and its federal partners concluded a public comment process on a draft Environmental Impact Statement on how the Columbia River Basin should be managed. It was heartening to see citizens and businesses from all corners of the Northwest provide comments at webinars and in writing. Members of public power shared concerns about impacts to power production, local economies, river navigation, irrigation, environmental impacts and other factors.

It is crucial for customers who have first rights to BPA power to respond to calls for comment. When the dust settles, we are the ones who have to live with the consequences to our communities.

More and more, we are seeing single-issue special interest groups from across the country—even the globe—helicopter in with their opinions and then move on. No one knows our communities better than we do, and the tradeoffs and balancing we strive for as public power communities. It's important for public power and its communities to stand up and be heard.

Tell us how the Hydropower Flows Here program came about while you were director of communications at BPA.

We heard loud and clear from Northwest public power that BPA should invest in showcasing the benefits of hydropower. I challenged my team to go beyond convention, and they delivered. The images and tools used are consumer-focused—photos of people and places in the Northwest, not the usual images of dams and transmission lines. We looked at consumer product marketing and thought, "That cola company doesn't show the making of soda, it shows the end result of people enjoying the soda. We need to do that."

The campaign has the potential to educate people—especially those new to the Northwest who arrive with a preconceived notion or lack of correct information—about the tremendous value of our hydro-dominated system and the great quality of life it supports.

To learn about the program, visit www.bpa.gov/hydroflowshere.

What most occupies your thoughts day in and day out?

I am constantly mindful of the cost pressures our member utilities are under, and that they feel those cost pressures directly from the citizens and businesses they serve.

Being from a small Northwest town myself, I feel a sense of duty and purpose to do what I can to seek balance and fairness for the people of this region who are served by public power. I think constantly about people struggling to make ends meet, the sacrifices they make and how there are a lot of decisions and policies dreamed up and decided without their direct involvement.

It's hard for a consumer-owned utility to have a strong voice in some of these matters on their own, but a united public power can move mountains. I am grateful for the PPC member utilities, via their communities, who have invested in PPC since our inception in 1966 to advocate on their behalf in both cost oversight of BPA and preservation of the value it provides to the Northwest. ■

A Small, Modular Power Source

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy, a group of small utilities looks toward a nuclear option

By Ginger Meurer

As aging coal plants are retired, electric cooperative and municipal members of Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems plan to fill the void with a first-in-the-nation small modular nuclear reactor project. The Carbon Free Power Project features 12 modules, each capable of producing 60 megawatts of energy on demand.

The $4 billion facility—which has financial support from the U.S. Department of Energy—will be sited at the Idaho National Laboratory near Idaho Falls.

It is expected to be operational by 2027.

Nuclear will join wind, hydropower, solar, waste heat and fossil fuels in the resource portfolio of UAMPS, which provides wholesale electric energy to 47 municipals and cooperatives in California, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

"Our members are very much committed to replacing coal power with carbon-free electricity, with renewables and nuclear power," says UAMPS spokesman LaVarr Webb. "There's a very strong commitment to reduce pollution, to reduce carbon emissions and to go carbon free.

"The challenge, of course, is that renewable energy is intermittent. The wind doesn't blow all the time, and the sun doesn't always shine. We need firm 24/7, 365-days-a-year energy that will be on all the time and that can really complement and enable the solar and wind projects. We do plan to do more renewable projects, but we have to have that backed up by energy that is 24/7."

That's where the small modular reactors come in. Each of the 12 modules will sit in its own containment vessel, sharing a water-filled, below-ground pool, ready to operate independently on demand. If only a little power is needed to back up a wind project, one can be activated. All 12 can be fired up for maximum output of 720 MW.

"It is challenging to integrate intermittent renewable energy into a system that requires energy to be available, on demand, at all times," says Doug C. Smith, general manager for Lassen Municipal Utility District, based in Susanville, California. "Batteries may be a part of the solution, but they are not practical for supplying energy for long periods of time when intermittent resources are unavailable, and there are still environmental and safety concerns with current technologies."

Smith says small modular reactors can fill this gap, ramping up quickly when renewable resources are not available.

As UAMPS members investigated avenues to secure nuclear power, Webb says they quickly ruled out building the gigantic plants of the past. They turned to NuScale Power—an Oregon-based company developing small modular reactor systems.

"It is vastly different than the traditional large, gigantic nuclear projects that cost tens of billions of dollars," Webb says. "Very few of those are being built anymore. This is the next generation nuclear, which is smaller and safer."

The U.S. Navy uses similar devices to power submarines and aircraft carriers.

"They have safety features built into the projects," Webb says. "If something really bad happened—say, like a major earthquake, and the plant had to shut down—it would cool automatically and wouldn't require any operators or outside electricity."

UAMPS member utilities can choose to participate in specific projects. Not all are part of this project.

Idaho's Lost River Electric Cooperative joined UAMPS about a year ago specifically to participate in the Carbon Free Power Project, says LREC Manager Brad J. Gamett.

As a full-requirements customer of the Bonneville Power Administration, 100% of LREC's wholesale electric power needs are supplied via BPA contract—most, if not all, generated outside Idaho, Gamett says.

Citing the Energy Information Administration, Gamett says more than two-thirds of Idaho's power comes from out of state. Producing more power closer to home is a draw, he adds.

Although LREC likely will continue to get the bulk of its power from BPA, the co-op wants to diversify its resource portfolio and support the project because of its proximity to the co-op's service territory.

"It would be a game changer for eastern Idaho," Gamett says. "It would be the largest single generation source in the state of Idaho and a major employer regionally."

The plan has had some critics, particularly a clean air group in Utah, which prefers renewables and criticizes the economics of the small modular reactors. But Gamett says he hasn't seen much public

NuScale's control room simulator prepares operators to monitor the small modular reactors.

The upper third of a NuScale Power module prototype in Corvallis, Oregon. Two-thirds is underground. A traditional nuclear reactor can be 208 feet high and 131 feet wide. A small reactor is closer to 76 feet high and 15 feet wide. PHOTOS COURTESY OF NuSCALE POWER

resistance to the plan in Idaho.

"There's been a shift in public perception of nuclear power in general," he says. "A lot of major environmental organizations are starting to shift support toward nuclear because the environmental footprint is actually smaller than it is overall with solar and wind installations."

Ken Dizes, general manager of Salmon River Electric Cooperative, says member reaction to the project essentially in "the backyard" of the Challis, Idaho, cooperative has been far more favorable than negative.

As a full-requirements customer of BPA, SREC already is predominantly carbon-free, thanks to its reliance on hydropower.

Dizes says participation in the UAMPS project is inspired by more than just the goal to reach for carbon-free options.

"We believe that nuclear energy should be part of the energy resource portfolio embraced by the world," he says. ■

LMUD Looks to Boost Reliability, Reduce Costs

Lassen Municipal Utility District currently has one point of connection to the electric grid, and "We experience frequent outages, sometimes lasting for several days or even weeks," says General Manager Doug C. Smith.

Usually, LMUD turns to the Honey Lake biomass generator to avoid extended customer outages, but Smith says adding a new interconnection to the eastern side of its service territory will improve reliability—and, through a supply arrangement with Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems—reduce long-term costs.

"Because there are a large number of members, UAMPS can achieve an economy of scale that we cannot," Smith says. "Their business model allows each member to choose whether or not to participate in each individual project, as well as the level of their participation. They also provide power scheduling and resource planning services that have value for us. They have a lot of expertise on their staff that we, as a small utility, can take advantage of."

Smith says that is vital to his Susanville, California-based utility—especially in an ever-changing California utility market.

"Costs have increased dramatically for a lot of utilities, especially smaller ones," Smith says. "Our transmission costs have increased about 400% over the past 15 years, and it appears that trend will continue, especially given that transmission improvements are necessary to address wildfire issues. The expertise UAMPS provides is important to help us navigate that changing landscape without passing unnecessary costs on to our customers."

Smith says LMUD likely will end its power supply relationship with the Western Area Power Administration once the new interconnection is completed.

"They have been a great partner for us," Smith says. "It's ironic that we will be giving up a low-cost, carbon-free resource when we stop taking deliveries from the Central Valley Hydro Project. This is a below-market-priced resource, but the reality is that the cost of transmission to get the energy delivered to us is now higher than the cost of the energy. We believe there will be more economical opportunities through the new interconnection."

Being water wise saves money as well as the environment. NATALIALEB/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Tips to Save Water During a Hot Summer

As the heat ratchets up, so does water use—costing homeowners money and doing no favors for the environment.

Amy Jo Detweiler, a horticulturist with Oregon State Extension, compiled the following tips to help you conserve water and save on summer water bills:

- When selecting new plants, look for options that use less water, such as native globe mallow, black-eyed Susan, sedums, blanket flower, lavender and coneflower. Once established, these plants require minimal irrigation. Group plants together based on their water use for maximum water conservation.
- Consider putting colorful bedding annuals in pots or hanging baskets where you can provide water directly, rather than watering the entire garden.
- Hand watering and automatic irrigation can be adequate if you are an efficient water manager. Monitor how much water is used and adjust it for warmer and cooler periods. Water in morning or late evening to reduce evaporation.
- If using automatic irrigation, consider drip emitters in clay-type soils and micro-sprays in sandy soils. Provide adequate moisture to the plant's entire root zone.
- Soaker hoses are an alternative. Hook them to an automatic timer so you don't forget to turn off the water. This works for vegetable and ornamental gardens.
- Encourage deep-rooted landscape plants by watering deeper less often. Look for clues to water stress, such as slight wilting or a dull, transparent look of the leaves. Adjust your watering accordingly.
- When you plant new shrubs and trees, provide a long soak from a hose to saturate the soil deeply in the immediate area. Repeat this process several times, especially during dry periods, to give your new shrubs and trees the resources to grow strong and deep roots that will require less water in the future. ■

Choose Wisely, Save Water

Horticulturist Amy Jo Detweiler recommends these plants for water-wise gardens:

▶ Cinquefoil (Potentilla fruticosa). This compact deciduous shrub grows about 3 feet tall and 5 feet wide and sports sunny yellow flowers from June until frost. Best in full sun, but tolerates light shade. Hardy to zone 2.

▶ Globe blue spruce (Picea pungens 'Globosa'). This small conifer with striking silver-blue foliage grows slowly to 5 to 6 feet. Plant in full sun for best color. Hardy to zone 2.

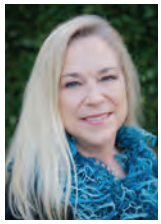
▶ Manzanita (Arctostaphylos). This large genus of evergreen shrub varies from 2 to 12 feet. Interesting in all seasons, with hanging clusters of bell-shaped white to pink flowers in late winter to early spring. Hardiness varies by species and cultivar.

▶ Ninebark (Physocarpus opulifolius). Domes of white flowers in early summer show beautifully against the mid-green foliage of this 6- to 10-foot deciduous shrub. It has the added attractions of superb fall color. Hardy to zone 2.

▶ Serviceberry (Amelanchier). This shrub has it all: showy white flowers in early spring, edible purple-red berries that attract birds, and stunning red and yellow fall color. Wants full sun to perform its best. Grows 6 to 10 feet depending on the species. Hardy to zone 2.

▶ Snowberry (Symphoricarpos). In spring, small, bell-shaped blooms appear at the end of branches on this 5-by-6-foot deciduous shrub. The best part, though, are the white berries in fall. Birds love the berries. Bees, hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to the flowers. Plant in full to partial sun. Hardy to zone 3.

▶ Wayfaring tree Mohican (Viburnum lantana "Mohican"). Flat-topped clusters of white flowers come out in spring and are followed by fruits that start out pink, turn to red and then black. This 7-by-8-foot rounded deciduous shrub turns deep purple in fall. Give it full to partial sun. Hardy to zone 3.



Kym Pokorny is a communications specialist for Oregon State University's Extension Service. Previously, Kym worked for The Oregonian, most notably covering gardening and horticulture.

Water, fertilize and mow properly for a healthy, weed-free lawn. KURHAN/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Spiff Up Lawns After A Tough Summer

Lawns languish in the heat of summer unless showered with water. But don't worry, the grass is not dead. Come fall when the rains start again, grass greens up quickly, says Alec Kowalewski, turf specialist for Oregon State University's Extension Service.

While letting your lawn go dormant in summer isn't bad, lack of irrigation allows pesky weeds to gain a foothold. Regular wear and tear can cause compaction within a lawn, which leads to brown or bare spots.

Now is a good time to whip your lawn back into shape, but starting over usually isn't necessary.

"Try renovation before putting in a new lawn, because it's difficult to get a stand of grass established," Alec says. "If you have something to begin with, go with renovating."

What you start with can vary from addressing a few brown spots to a desert of weeds to hardpan soil. Assess your lawn's level of neediness, then proceed with a regular renovation or a no-holds-barred one. Most often, a regular tuneup is all that is needed.

Once your lawn is established, follow Alec's three steps to a healthy lawn that will outcompete those weeds: water, fertilize and mow properly.

Water 1 inch a week, but don't do it all at once.

"If you look at the roots, the majority are in the top 1 inch of the soil," Alec says. "The deeper you go, the fewer roots there are, so watering more than a quarter-inch at a time is a waste. Irrigate more frequently with less amounts when it's not raining."

Fertilize four times a year. Apply on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day and Thanksgiving.

When mowing, never remove more than one-third of the grass at one time. That means if the lawn is 3 inches long, cut only 1 inch. Cutting more than one-third weakens the lawn, leaving it vulnerable to weeds and diseases.

"Increase the height of the grass as tall as you can stand it," Alec says. "If you mow it to an inch, you're decreasing rooting depth and stress tolerance."

Mow once a week in spring and fall, less often during summer and winter. Consider leaving clippings where they fall. They break down quickly and resupply much-needed nitrogen. The more often you mow, the easier this is to do. Don't, however, leave clumps of clippings sitting on the lawn. ■

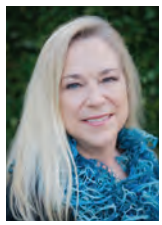
Steps to Renovate a Lawn

For regular renovation:

- ▶ Do a pH test. Either take a sample and send it to a soil lab, or buy a test kit at a nursery. If the pH is below 6.0, add lime.
- ▶ Remove weeds by hand or with a broad-spectrum herbicide.
- ▶ Aerate lawn with a machine available at rental shops. Pay attention to bare spots or compacted areas. Rake off plugs of soil removed by the aerator.
- ▶ Fertilize with a product that has plenty of nitrogen, low or no phosphorus, and a medium level of potassium. Check the fertilizer label and choose something with a high first number (N), low second number (P) and medium third number (K)—such as 20-2-6.
- ▶ Overseed at the recommended rate, going a little thicker on bare spots. Use a drop seeder for even distribution.
- ▶ Water daily unless it rains.

For major renovation, do the steps above and add the following:

- ▶ Mow lawn as short as possible before starting.
- ▶ Before aerating, dethatch the lawn with a dethatching machine or power rake to expose as much soil as possible. Run the machine across the lawn twice, in opposite directions. Remove loosened thatch before changing direction.
- ▶ After seeding, mulch with a thin layer of sawdust, bark dust or compost. A quarter inch is enough; don't overdo it or seed will have a tough time germinating.



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The New Notion of Electricity

Environmental groups and public utilities join forces on an innovative energy future

By Paul Wesslund

When it comes to electricity, it's time to think bigger. By looking at electricity in a new light, we can reveal surprising ways to make our lives better—from saving money to helping the environment.

Keith Dennis, vice president of consumer-member engagement for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, agrees with this approach.

During the past four years, he has been part of a group promoting an approach to electricity that unites utilities and environmental advocates; redefines the meaning of energy efficiency; and reduces costs. That new way of thinking is catching on. He says "it's become a bit of a movement."

Beneficial electrification is a tongue twister that refashions our notion that electricity is something we buy to run our refrigerators and charge our phones. It is a concept that reveals new ways energy can improve our quality of life—from our everyday lives at home to the more effective operation of the nation's electric grid.

Electricity and Environmental Goals

Dennis explains beneficial electrification this way: Think about your gasoline-powered lawnmower. Maybe you love it. Maybe the size of your mowing job takes longer than a battery lasts. On the other hand, thinking through the advantages of an electric mower could uncover surprising reasons.

No more gas cans to fill and store in a garage. You don't have to worry about gas fumes or yank a cord hoping the motor will start up this time. An electric mower is quieter, less intrusive on neighbors and family in the house or on the porch.

From there the benefits go global. An idle mower plugged in for recharging becomes part of the electric grid.

In the future, with enough mowers plugged in, timing could be coordinated so the charging happens when people are using the least amount of electricity, perhaps in the middle of the night. That would allow electric utilities to operate more efficiently, evening out electricity use over a 24-hour period. If you're concerned about the environmental effects of your energy use, more and more of your electricity is generated by wind and solar energy.

That renewable energy trend is part of what led to one of the nation's leading environmental groups to become part of the beneficial electrification movement. The National Resources Defense Council has worked with NRECA to form the Beneficial Electrification League.

In 2018, the NRDC published a report outlining a broad plan to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions during the next 30 years. A key part of that plan calls for using electricity for a bigger share of our energy consumption—a lot more. The NRDC plan calls for increasing electricity's contribution to all end-use energy from about 20% today to 45% in 2050.

The NRDC sees four main ways beneficial electrification can reduce greenhouse gases:

- Renewable fuels generate a rapidly growing share of electricity, which means using more electricity emits less greenhouse gases.
- Electric cars are more efficient at converting energy into motion, plus, the increase of renewable energy to generate electricity means a rise in the share of electric cars would lead to a drop in

ILLUSTRATION BY PETOVARGA

greenhouse gas emissions.

- Heat pumps are far more efficient than natural gas or oil furnaces. Other electric technologies in industry and new buildings can create more efficiencies.
- The smart grid uses digital technology to coordinate electricity use across the nation's power lines. Smart thermostats, electric water heaters and even electric vehicle batteries could be linked to make the most effective use of energy.

NRDC data shows a more aggressive pursuit of energy efficiency, renewable energy, electrification of end uses and an enhanced power grid can put the U.S. on the path to cutting its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050.

Conservation Is Not Efficiency

Dennis describes the NRDC's support of beneficial electrification, saying, "When they do the math, they find out that electrification of more things is the answer. It's one of the only pathways to a low-carbon future."

Beneficial electrification shows the need to rethink what energy efficiency means, Dennis says, noting it's not conservation. As initiatives such as the federal government's Energy Star program help consumers save money on the most efficient electric products, and the advantages of beneficial electrification become more well-known, he says energy efficiency can actually mean using more electricity.

"When people talk about energy efficiency, they don't necessarily take into account the systemwide benefits of electricity," he says. "There's a big opportunity for electrification to meet many objectives: saving folks money, reducing environmental impact, increasing the quality of life and helping the electric grid." ■

To learn more about beneficial electrification watch the animated video by the Beneficial Electrification League at www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=20&v=HDCKmAJzoV8&feature=emb_title

Ride Electric

By Maria Kanevsky

Ten years ago, electric vehicles were a rare sight, but today, they are on roadways across the country. Advancements in battery technology have led to smaller, more efficient batteries, which has opened the door to new forms of electric transportation, or e-transportation.

One new form of electric transportation is the electric scooter. It is inexpensive and some are foldable, making it easy to carry and store. Several electric scooter rental companies offer their services in many major cities, making it easy to find a scooter to use for a limited time. However, electric scooters' small wheels are only meant to be ridden on paved surfaces such as sidewalks, and electric scooters' limited range and speed make them unsuitable for long-distance travel.

Electric bicycles offer the same ease of use as traditional bicycles, but travelers can ride longer distances without being as fatigued.

Some of these forms of e-transportation can be used for recreation in addition to everyday use. The electric skateboard has more power than a normal skateboard, and the user can still perform tricks while riding. There are even electric roller skates.

For those looking for more exciting forms of e-transportation, many innovative options are being developed. One is the electric unicycle, which is a self-balancing device. You can speed up and slow down by leaning forward or backward. It is easy to store or carry around. Because of its large wheel, it can travel on a variety of terrain, such as grass, gravel, curbs and even potholes. It's relatively difficult to learn how to ride a unicycle, so keep that in mind.

For even faster speeds, there is the electric motorcycle. Compared to gas-powered motorcycles, their electric counterparts offer increased performance, less maintenance and lower fuel costs. Although they are much quieter than gas-powered models, electric ones cannot drive as far, which may make them less appealing for longer road trips.

Since these technologies are relatively new, they are more expensive than their conventional counterparts. Before buying, do your research.

34 Ways to Use Electricity

F A C L F H F O H Z F W F Q D K L D G S P J R C V R
F T D M E D I C A L E Q U I P M E N T O S A I P U X
S H O W E R P K Y M V X A J C N M V W H T A A T G J
S M N O I T A C U D E E N I L N O X T R H X B S R S
N E V O U F W Z R X P T G U A X T E O S G H L P A A
U E H R A E M B P E V A W O R C I M U O I R O M Y Y
Y P J E T S G G G S M M X U S H Z H L U L R W A C N
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I P T A V G B R E H S A W S E H T O L C I Q Y D H W
O R U H J U U D F T E N V U Z M M Z X E L M E J P W
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C F T F W X R F S M E T S Y S Y T I R U C E S G N G

Air conditioning
Bath
Blow dryer
Ceiling lights
Clothes dryer
Clothes washer
Computer
Dishwasher
Email
Fans
Freezer
Furnace
Heat pump
Holiday lights
Hot water
Icemaker
Lamps
Medical equipment
Microwave
Online education
Outdoor lights
Oven
Phone charger
Power tools
Printers
Radio
Refrigerator
Security systems
Shower
Stove
Video games
Watch movies
Watch TV
Water pump

How Much Is it Worth to Me?

Most residential consumers think about their electric service only when their lights go out, and perhaps when their monthly bill arrives. It's easy to undervalue something rarely noticed until it is not there. Take a moment to think about what your life in this modern world would be like without electric service and ask, "How much is safe, reliable electric service worth to me?" ■

Capital Credits

There Are Benefits to Membership in Your Electric Cooperative

The Benefits of Membership

Capital credits are one of the most unique and rewarding benefits you enjoy as a member of an electric cooperative. Golden Valley Electric returns funds to members based on their electric service purchases.

One of the cooperative advantages is that we provide our members with "at cost" service. Other utilities, such as investor-owned utilities, maximize their profits from their customers for the purpose of paying dividends to their stockholders. At GVEA, there is no stock to be purchased or sold – our members are the owners of the business.

Because GVEA is a not-for-profit cooperative, any funds left over at the end of the year are returned to members. These funds are called capital credits.

Capital credits are only assigned for a year in which GVEA earns margins. Since capital credits are a member's share of the margins, no credits are assigned for a year with no margins. Also, you would not earn capital credits for any year that you did not purchase electricity from GVEA. The amount of your capital credits varies from year to year, depending on margins and how much electricity you bought in a given year.

Allocation vs Retirement

Assigned capital credits are the amounts allocated to each member who purchased electricity from GVEA during a given year.

While the credits are assigned to members, they are retained by the co-op for a period of time – currently 25 years. They are reinvested in the system for projects and maintenance, such as building substations or replacing power lines.

If we refunded the total amount of allocations, we would have to borrow that amount of money and repay it with interest. This is because we operate "at cost" and there are no profits to take these funds from.

Retirement of capital credits is not automatic. GVEA's Board of Directors must specifically authorize each retirement after considering the financial impact to the co-op.

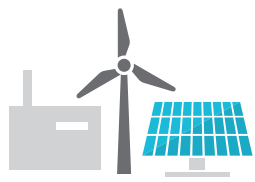
When capital credits are retired – currently in 25 years – GVEA issues a refund to you.

In 2019, Golden Valley returned $3.5 million in capital credits to members who had service with us in 1994 and prior years.

How it works

1 GVEA tracks how much electricity you use during the year.

2 Each year, after expenses are paid, GVEA calculates the leftover funds (margins).



3 The margins are used to pay down any debt, invest in facilities and projects and are allocated to members as CAPITAL CREDITS based on how much electricity they used.

4 Depending on financial conditions, GVEA retires (returns) CAPITAL CREDITS to members at a future date.

Capital Credits Q&A

What if I had service at more than one location at the same time?
Members with multiple accounts for different locations will receive a separate capital credit notice for each account.

Do I have to be a Golden Valley customer for an entire year to earn capital credits?
No. Capital credits are calculated based on your total purchases during the year. If you are billed for service for even one month, you will have accumulated some capital credits, assuming GVEA earns margins that year.

How often will I receive an assignment notice?
Active members receive an assignment notice annually in July.

Can I apply assigned capital credits to my bill?
No. Assigned capital credits may not be used to pay current bills. Your electric bill is due now, whereas you may not be entitled to receive your capital credits for many years.

Are capital credits taxable?
For individuals, capital credits are generally not taxable. For businesses (which includes rentals) according to Internal Revenue Service guidelines, members receiving capital credits checks in excess of $600 are required to complete the IRS Form W-9. We suggest seeking the advice of a tax professional for specific questions.

Will I receive a refund if I have an outstanding debt with GVEA?
The amount of your capital credits check will be reduced by any unpaid bills you may have with GVEA for disconnected accounts.

What happens to Capital Credits of a deceased member?
The capital credits of a deceased member may be paid without waiting for a general retirement. However, these estate payments are not automatic. A representative of the estate must provide proof the person requesting the refund has been appointed by a court, executor or administrator of the estate, along with a copy of the death certificate. A check will be issued to the estate. The refund amount will be reduced to reflect the early retirement of the account.

What if I move out of GVEA's service area?
If you leave GVEA's service area, make sure to keep a current address on file with GVEA. Your capital credits remain on the books until the board authorizes their retirement and we want your refund to reach you.

Have more questions?
Visit www.gvea.com/resources/capitalcredits
or email us at capitalcredits@gvea.com
or give us a call at (907) 451-5625 or 1-800-770-4832 (GVEA)

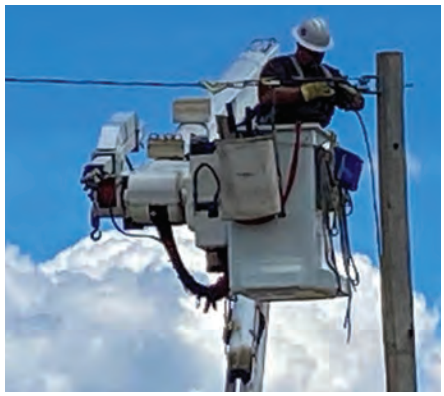
GVEA
Golden Valley Electric Association
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Giving Back, Celebrating, Protecting our Communities

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative has continued its mission to keep the lights on, keep our employees, members and the general public safe, and give back to the communities we serve. Here are just some of the ways OTEC is adhering to the cooperative principle of Concern for Community.

RIGHT: Our dedication to keeping your lights on never wavers. Our crews worked all night to restore power to thousands of members after a storm in early June. PHOTOS COURTESY OF NATHAN WLSON, LEFT, AND OTEC.

BELOW: OTEC has donated $24,000 to more than a dozen local organizations, kids' programs and first-responder agencies, including the La Grande Fire Department, Harney District Hospital and the Grant County Food Bank. PHOTOS COURTESY OF OTEC



LEFT: OTEC has been busy with work-in-kind projects to help our communities, including setting new poles and power lines for the Haines Stampede Rodeo—one of the few events still scheduled to be held this summer due to the pandemic. PHOTOS COURTESY OF OTEC

BELOW: OTEC was proud to honor the class of 2020 by taking part in graduation parades in John Day and Baker City. PHOTOS COURTESY OF TANNI WENGER, LEFT, AND OTEC

Lighting the Way

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative presents trade and lineman school scholarships to these local students

Tristain Pogue—Baker City

Lineman School Scholarship
Northwest Lineman College

"I want to thank Oregon Trail Electric for helping me achieve my dream and goals in getting the training to be able to get into a rewarding career in the power-delivery industry."

Luke Barnes—Baker City

Lineman School Scholarship
Northwest Lineman College

"I have always been inspired by working outdoors and with my hands. I spend as much time as I can outdoors, and this is the perfect career for that. I got the opportunity to job shadow the linemen who work for OTEC during my senior year, and that sealed the deal for me. The OTEC group was an amazing group of people to spend the day with, and the hard work on the hardest-snowing day of the year was spectacular. I enjoyed every minute of working with them. This scholarship puts me on a path to a career that I know I will enjoy and love."

OTEC's trade and lineman school scholarships are open year-round. Apply today at https://otec.coop/scholarships.

Opie McDaniel—John Day

Trade School Scholarship

"I have grown up working on my grandpa's ranch. I've developed many hands-on skills doing ranch work. I have operated a swather the last six summers doing custom haying. This September, I plan on going to Nampa, Idaho, to run equipment. I'm very thankful that I was selected for this scholarship."

Tayler Wood—Baker City

Trade School Scholarship

"This scholarship will help me tremendously. I am currently enrolled in a trade school esthetics program. I am now one step closer to achieving my goal of becoming a licensed esthetician and bringing new skin care services to Baker County."

Cole Furtney—Baker City

Trade School Scholarship
Baker Technical Institute

"I'm a second-period general electrical apprentice and proudly work for Arros Electric. I truly love what I do and it's a perfect fit for my personality—having a fast-paced job where I can be proud of the technical work I do. I plan on finishing the last two years of my apprenticeship classes at BTI and sticking around the area after I get my journeyman card. I'm truly honored to have been chosen for the OTEC scholarship."

Modern Materials

Anza Electric makes long-term upgrades to grid

Ductile iron power poles, fiberglass crossarms and wildlife protection devices are some of the innovative components part of a long-term upgrade project by Anza Electric Cooperative.

"Our goal is to improve our system over time in a responsible and cost-effective way," says Operations Manager Brian Baharie. "These new products are the type of technology that will provide improved performance, endurance and stability for the entire network, while at the same time making it more fire resistant."

Ductile iron poles have been around since the 1990s, but recent improvements in design and composition now make them the industry standard. They can be fabricated to uniform strength, coated for weather and moisture protection, and

weigh less than standard wood poles.

Local residents who endured the lengthy power outage during the Cranston Fire don't need an explanation of the benefits of increased fire resistance. As for wildlife, woodpeckers and other birds find that they don't fit the bill, and boring insects—the bane of wooden poles—find ductile iron truly boring. They simply can't penetrate them.

Mammals—most often bobcats and domestic cats—will find climbing the iron poles extremely difficult. Their claws will have a hard time gaining traction.

"Fungus has a next-to-impossible success rate at establishing itself in the ductile iron," Brian says, noting it is an issue with wood poles. "Fungi won't have much fun in these new poles."

Ductile iron poles have a life expectancy of 60 to 75 years, and they don't experience strength degradation during aging. They also are flexible during wind and ice storms. Rather than breaking, the poles bend, preventing "cascading"—the domino-like collapse of several poles in a line.

What about the aesthetics of these new poles?

"People should not worry about how these ductile iron poles will look over time," Brian says. "Once they start to oxidize, they will look more and more like the current wood poles that they are replacing."

Plans to replace existing wood poles is based on need.

"There are roughly 10,000 power poles in our service area," Brian says. "We are going to identify those poles that are compromised or nearing the end of their life expectancy and replace those as they come up."

ABOVE: Lineman Sandy King demonstrates pole-top equipment covers that keep animals safer. OPPOSITE PAGE: Anza Electric is moving to ductile iron power poles for better fire resistance and strength.

How are they going to identify those poles?

The California Public Utility Commission requires an intrusive inspection of poles every five years, Brian says.

"That gives us some useful information," he says, "but we also have an experienced, knowledgeable line crew, and those guys can usually tell if a pole is going bad just by a simple inspection. Pounding on the pole with a hammer can tell them if the pole is rotting or hollow. Drilling a hole into the pole can confirm that as well."

Ductile iron poles cost about 20% more than wood poles, but that cost is defrayed by all the benefits they provide, Brian says.

So far, Anza Electric has installed about 30 of the new poles. AEC hopes to to buy and install several hundred more in the next five years.

"We are discovering that these lighter but stronger poles are easier to install than the wooden type," Brian says. "And they take less time. That is also a plus."

Fiberglass Crossarms

Crossarms—the short, horizontal boards near the top of the poles—hold the wiring and insulators essential to transmitting power. The technological advantages of fiberglass over wood make them preferable.

"The benefits of the fiberglass crossarms are that they are higher strength, resistant to fire and longer lasting," Brian says. "We are planning to replace the crossarms on every new ductile iron pole we install."

Wildlife Protection Devices

Wildlife can create problems for power lines and other equipment. Raptors—owls, eagles and hawks—and mammals can find their way up near the insulators and wires. Occasionally, they can damage the equipment and themselves.

When affixed over the insulators and crossarms, these new high-grade plastic coverings give animals more protection—a benefit to them and the electrical systems.

"Electrocution is rare but it does happen occasionally," Brian says. "And that is a shame because these raptors and animals are essential to controlling an already unbalanced rodent population. We plan to install these covers on all poles where recurring animal contact is possible."

What does the long-term upgrade project say about Anza Electric's ongoing effort to provide quality service to its members?

"Anza Electric Cooperative is dedicated to the safe and efficient distribution of electric energy to our members," General Manager Kevin Short says. "This means that we are always working to improve the quality and reliability of our system in the most cost-effective manner possible.

This long-term improvement project will guarantee decades of reduced outages and lower fire risks at the lowest-possible cost impact for our community. We are grateful for the trust and confidence that our members have placed in us." ■

Here Comes the Sun

KEA solar array is nearly done

By Matt Bergan

The Kotzebue Electric Association solar project kicked off in March, but experienced a temporary shutdown due to COVID-19. The project resumed in May and is expected to be complete in July.

Alaska Native Renewable Industries was hired by KEA to build a 576-kilowatt solar array co-located with KEA's wind turbines. The photovoltaic system consists of eight 66-kW arrays. Each array replaces a decommissioned 66-kW wind turbine. The project cost was reduced by using the existing wind turbine power, shelter and communications infrastructure.

ANRI, based in Huslia, Alaska, has a strong commitment to local hires.

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE PAGE: An Alaska Native Renewable Industries crew installs photovoltaic modules on racking.

LEFT: Pallets of PV modules are staged along rows of racking.

The crew working is more than 90% local. The rest of the project team is from rural Alaska, Huslia and Hughes.

ANRI anticipates having the PV array complete and producing power this month. ■

What Do the Declaration of Independence and Electric Cooperatives Have In Common?

By Rob Roedel, Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas

When Benjamin Franklin signed the Declaration of Independence, he is credited with saying, "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

No wonder Franklin was also the founder of the first successful cooperative in the United States. He organized the Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire in 1752.

The principles behind the Declaration of Independence that form the basis of American democracy are also the beliefs that form the basis of cooperatives.

A cooperative is owned and democratically controlled by the people who use its services. Each member has one vote, regardless of their equity in the company; that is, wealthy members cannot buy more control and everyone has an equal say. This is in contrast to investor-owned businesses where only shareholders have a vote in how the business is run and even among shareholders, some have more votes than others, depending on their number of shares.

The Declaration of Independence also declares the equality of the rights of its citizens and gives people the right to organize to secure their futures when their rights are infringed upon.

At the time the Declaration of Independence was written, democracy was an untested idea, but the founders of our country were determined to make it work.

So when you celebrate the many liberties and rights we enjoy with our families and friends on July 4 this year, think about those principles that inspired our Founding Fathers. They also inspired the founders of rural electric cooperatives, who were determined to provide reliable, affordable power to secure the future of rural communities.

Alaska Village Electric Cooperative has always operated under the principles of democracy, and is dedicated to fulfilling the promise to serve its members today and in the future. ■

Maintenance is the Key to Reliability

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A new line of poles is nearly ready to replace a stretch in need of repair. A damaged pole is marked for repair with orange flagging tape. A Sundance PPI crew member tests the base of a power pole for rot.

Depending on climate and soil conditions, power poles can last anywhere from 25 to 50 years or longer when pressure-treated with a preservative to protect against rot, fungi and insects.

When poles are found to be compromised during the routine testing process, they are flagged by a yellow tag or an orange ribbon, depending on the severity of damage.

On behalf of Graham County Electric Cooperative, Sundance PPI annually tests 10% of the system. GCEC receives a report from Sundance after pole testing is completed. The report summarizes the poles that have been tested and the ones that need to be replaced. It also notes system maintenance work that is needed, such as fixing a broken insulator or tightening loose hardware.

The operations department reviews the list of compromised poles and orders replacement poles. Repairs are prioritized based on level of damage and pole location. The rest are fixed as soon as possible, as time allows.

GCEC takes a proactive approach to replacing aged or weathered infrastructure to maintain the integrity of our system and ensure the safety of all.

Other System Improvements

Management has developed a five-year work plan that includes the Hillcrest to San Jose project. Crews will begin work in late 2020 or 2021. The project will replace and upgrade 9.97 miles of distribution line and ensure more reliable power for members. ■

Join the List!

Join MEC's broadband initiative

Signs are going up around town to "Join the List" for Mohave Electric Cooperative's project to bring high-speed fiber broadband to MEC's service territory.

Transworld Communications, in partnership with MEC, will build the fiber network and provide internet service.

The "Join the List" message asks members to pre-register to let us know they are interested in the service when it becomes available.

It's easy to pre-register at MEC's website, mohaveelectric.com. Pre-registration is not a commitment or contract, but is important to the next steps for the project.

When members pre-register, they are helping TWN and MEC identify the areas of member interest, an important consideration for planning the phases of construction and deployment.

As the internet service becomes available in an area, members who pre-registered will be notified.

It's a modern-day version of members coming together to help fill a need in the community—just like they did to form Mohave Electric Cooperative in 1946.

Fast forward to now, and MEC's partnership with TWN on the fiber broadband project.

"TWN also recognizes the importance of reliable broadband service in rural communities, and demonstrates the same commitment and values that are important to MEC and its members," says Tyler Carlson, Mohave Electric Cooperative CEO.

The broadband initiative was initially considered when members expressed strong interest in MEC taking on the project. A survey confirmed the level of interest, and was followed by a feasibility study and approval by MEC's board of directors to move forward.

Tyler says MEC has cleared several hurdles in the project. Recently, Arizona Senate Bill 1460 passed the legislature and ensures Arizona electric cooperatives have the legal foundation to operate a broadband program.

"We're making progress, but there's still a lot of work to be done," Tyler says.

Several pre-construction steps are underway, including system design, environmental review and permit requirements. More information and updates are available at MEC's website, mohaveelectric.com. ■

MEC is partnering with Transworld Communications to bring high-speed internet to the area. Sign up now so we know which areas are most interested in the service.

Visit
mohaveelectric.com
to join the list

A Little Help From Our Friends

Mohave Electric Cooperative's board of directors and management thank Arizona Sen. Sonny Borrelli and Reps. Regina Cobb and Leo Biasiucci for their efforts in May to bring SB 1460 to a vote by the Arizona Legislature.

"Their leadership got the job done to make sure this bill was passed," says Mohave Electric Cooperative CEO Tyler Carlson.

The legislation is necessary for MEC's broadband project to move forward. SB 1460 passed the Arizona Senate earlier, but was stalled when the House of Representatives cut back on activities due to COVID-19.

"We thank Sen. Borrelli, Rep. Cobb and Rep. Biasiucci for recognizing the need for high-speed broadband in rural communities and taking the right action to support our members," Tyler says. ■

Sen. Sonny Borrelli

Rep. Regina Cobb

Rep. Leo Biasiucci

#EssentialService

Escambia River Electric powers the community through the pandemic

ELECTRICITY POWERS OUR LIVES. This has never been more evident than during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we navigate this unprecedented time, EREC is committed to keeping the power flowing 24/7, when it matters the most.

We know that after a sufficient supply of food and water, electricity is the No. 1 thing you need to maintain normalcy in your lives—even in the midst of a pandemic.

That starts with our generation and transmission cooperative, PowerSouth Energy Cooperative, which took extreme measures to ensure its workforce stayed healthy and its power plants functioned as needed so our cooperative could continue to provide reliable electricity to our members.

We want to offer a special tribute to medical professionals, first responders and all essential workers serving on the front line during the pandemic. Thank you for your dedication and sacrifice. We tip our hard hats to you!

EREC implemented safety measures as well to protect our members, employees and the community. We closed our lobbies and encouraged remote options for electric service such as email, phone or online at www.erec.com. Social-distancing parameters for our employees included separating our line crews with rotating work schedules and dividing office departments into shifts so they could practice social distancing even when in EREC facilities.

Most of you probably did not realize these safety measures had been employed because it did not stop our cooperative staff from taking care of business as usual.

From the safety measures we implemented during the quarantine through our office complying with the phases of re-opening our state, power delivery has been a seamless operation. Employees continued to provide an essential service—to make sure the power was flowing and our members' needs were met.

At EREC, we know our community depends on reliable electricity to power their lives. During the pandemic's safer-at-home order, electricity supported our members whether they were homeschooling their children or working remotely from a home office. Reliable electricity was also a vital resource for our frontline heroes—doctors, nurses and other first responders—as they provided critical care.

As we often see in times of crisis, our community pulled together to help, encourage and be supportive of each other during this pandemic. Like gold that has been tested in fire, our community has come through stronger and more resilient.

We assure you, our member-owners, that whether we face a pandemic, a hurricane or any other crisis, our commitment to your energy needs will not waver. Our priority will always be safe, reliable and affordable power delivery to the communities we serve. ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Dawn Roberts works Escambia River Electric Cooperative's drive-thru, which remained open throughout the safer-at-home order. Daily work on the power system continued seamlessly throughout the COVID-19 quarantine. Rhonda Marshall and other employees worked in shifts, which allowed for social distancing in the office.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Matthew Reynolds works to provide the essential service of electricity during the pandemic.

A Word About Water

15 Ways to Conserve in the Home

Save money on your bill while also preventing water pollution

Water conservation has become an essential practice in all regions, even in areas where water seems abundant. In addition to saving money on your utility bill, water conservation helps prevent water pollution in nearby lakes, rivers and local watersheds. To conserve water in your home:

- Check faucets and pipes for leaks. A small drip from a worn faucet washer can waste 20 gallons of water a day. Larger leaks can waste hundreds of gallons.
- Don't use the toilet as an ashtray or wastebasket. Every time you flush a cigarette butt, facial tissue or other small bit of trash, 5 to 7 gallons of water is wasted.
- Check your toilets for leaks. Put a little food coloring in your toilet tank. If the color appears in the bowl within 30 minutes without flushing, you have a leak that should be repaired immediately. Most replacement parts are inexpensive and easy to install.
- Use your water meter to check for water leaks. Read the house water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, there is a leak.
- Install water-saving showerheads and low-flow faucet aerators. Inexpensive water-saving low-flow showerheads or restrictors are easy to install. Low-flow means it uses less than 2.5 gallons a minute.
- Put plastic bottles or a float booster in your toilet tank. To cut down on water waste, put an inch or two of sand or pebbles inside each of two plastic bottles to weigh them down. Fill the bottles with water, screw on the lids and put them in your toilet tank, safely away from the operating mechanisms. Or buy an inexpensive tank bank or float booster. This may save 10 or more gallons of water a day. Be sure at least 3 gallons of water remain in the tank so it will flush properly.
- Insulate your water pipes. It is easy and inexpensive with pre-slit foam pipe insulation. You will get hot water faster and avoid wasting water while it heats up.
- Take shorter showers. To cut down on water use, turn off the shower after soaping up, then turn it back on to rinse. A four-minute shower uses 20 to 40 gallons of water.
- There is no need to keep the water running while brushing your teeth. Turn off the water after you wet your toothbrush. Fill a glass for mouth rinsing.
- Rinse your razor in the sink rather than running water. Fill the sink with a few inches of warm water to rinse it.
- Automatic dishwashers and clothes washers should be fully loaded for optimum water conservation. Most makers of dishwashing soap recommend not pre-rinsing dishes, which is a big water savings. With clothes washers, avoid the

For optimum water conservation, wash full loads only. If you must wash a partial load, adjust the water level to match the size of the load. PHOTO BY SCOTT VAN OSDOL

permanent press cycle, which uses 5 gallons for the extra rinse. For partial loads, adjust water levels to match the size of the load. Replace old clothes washers. New Energy Star-rated washers use 35% to 50% less water and 50% less energy per load. If you are in the market for a new clothes washer, consider buying a water-saving front-load machine.

- Minimize use of kitchen sink garbage disposal units. In-sink garbage disposals require lots of water to operate properly, and add considerably to the volume of solids in a septic tank, which can lead to maintenance problems. Start a compost pile as an alternate method of disposing of food waste.
- When washing dishes by hand, do not leave the water running for rinsing. If you have a double basin, fill one with soapy water and one with rinse water. If you have a single-basin sink, gather washed dishes in a dish rack and rinse them with a spray device or a pan of hot water. Dual-swivel aerators are available to make this easier.
- Do not let the faucet run while you clean vegetables. Rinse them in a stoppered sink or a pan of clean water. Use a dual-swivel aerator.
- Keep a bottle of drinking water in the fridge. Running tap water to cool it for drinking is wasteful. If you are filling water bottles to take on outdoor hikes, consider buying a LifeStraw personal water filter, which enables users to drink water safely from rivers, lakes or any available body of water. ■

Keep It Safe

Fireworks Must Stay Clear of Power Lines

Can't wait for the professional fireworks display—the one local firefighters supervise so nobody gets hurt?

You are taking a risk by lighting your own.

Even legal fireworks can be dangerous. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, Fourth of July revelers report 9,300 fireworks-related injuries a year. Firecrackers are responsible for 1,600 of those. Next-worst are bottle rockets and sparklers, which burn at about 2,000 degrees.

If you put on your own backyard show, stay away from power lines. Light fireworks in open areas where you cannot even see any power lines.

Keep safety top of mind this Fourth of July. Have children enjoy the fireworks show as spectators, not participants.

If your fireworks get tangled in an overhead wire or create a spark on one, call 911 and Escambia River Electric Cooperative immediately. Do not try to solve the problem yourself.

Here are additional fireworks safety tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Keep a bucket of water nearby in case of fire.
- Children should be spectators, not participants, in the show. Never give children fireworks or sparklers.
- Read and carefully follow directions and warning labels. Most injuries result from improper use.
- Keep spectators at least 20 feet away and not downwind from where the fireworks will be set off.
- Light fireworks only on a smooth, flat surface away from all flammable materials, including dry leaves.
- Never try to relight malfunctioning fireworks. ■

Shuttle Service Offered Between Jay and Century

Northwest Florida Rural Health Network, in conjunction with ITL Services of Pensacola, provides round-trip shuttle services between Jay and Century. Services are provided Monday, Wednesday and Friday, excluding holidays. Round trips are scheduled at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. starting at Jay Medical Complex/Jay Hospital. Riders are transported to Lakeview Center and Century Medical Center, with immediate return services to Jay Medical Complex/Jay Hospital. The cost is $2 for one-way trips and $3 for round trips. For more information, contact Northwest Florida Rural Health Network Inc. at 850-675-4787, Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Use Energy Wisely

Take a Vacation From High Power Bills

Soaring temperatures and stuffy summer nights can cause electric bills to skyrocket. This summer, take a vacation from high electric bills by making your home—and your family's habits—more energy efficient.

Early morning or late evening are the best times to run large appliances such as your dishwasher. Turn off the dryer cycle to help keep your power bill in check this summer. PHOTO BY SCOTT VAN OSDOL

Keep Your Cool

Air conditioning helps most Americans beat the sweltering summer heat. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, air conditioning accounts for as much as 50% of the average household electric bill.

Proper maintenance and smart use of your home's cooling system will help keep your electric bill in check.

First, make sure your air conditioner's external unit is clean and free of debris. Clear away dead leaves or overgrown plants and weeds to enable the unit to perform as it should.

Second, change all of the air filters inside your home quarterly, or more often in homes with allergy sufferers or smokers. Fresh filters not only reduce the strain on your cooling system, but improve the air quality in your home.

Third, DOE recommends you set your home's thermostat as high as possible while still maintaining a comfortable environment for your family during the summer.

Bumping the thermostat up at least 2 degrees can make a noticeable difference on your power bill. Investing in a programmable thermostat can lead to even greater savings by automatically adjusting it so the cooling system runs more often when you are at home and less often when you are away.

Made in the Shade

Windows are not only great sources of natural light in your home, but great sources of heat during the summer.

Take advantage of curtains, blinds and shades to make your windows and home more energy efficient.

These window coverings offer low-cost, stylish solutions to shield the sun's rays and keep the interior of your home cool and comfortable.

Proper weather stripping and caulking around window panes and casings will also improve the function of your windows by keeping the cool air in and the hot air out. Solar film applied to your home's windows will further repel the summer heat.

Daily Grind

Today's appliances are more energy efficient than ever, performing better and using less electricity. Despite their functionality and efficiency, most major household appliances give off heat when in use.

During peak daytime temperatures, the residual heat from appliances can put an unnecessary strain on your home's cooling system and send your power bill soaring.

Cooler temperatures in the early morning or late evening make these ideal times for running the dishwasher or washing and drying clothes.

When possible, turn off your dishwasher's dryer cycle. This prevents even more residual heat from warming your home and saves on your power bill.

Washing your clothes in cold water and hanging them outside to dry also will help reduce your household energy consumption. ■

As your summer heats up, go online to **www.erec.com** *for more ways to lower your power bill. You can also visit* **TogetherWeSave.com** *to learn how little changes around the house can add up to big energy savings on your electric bill.*

Serving a Community in Need

Golden Corral owners look past their own fears to feed hungry families in Lake Placid

By Tahlia Warrick

On Friday, March 20, an executive order aimed at protecting citizens from COVID-19 restricted all Florida restaurants to take-out and delivery service only.

Glades Electric Cooperative member Ray Tharp, owner/operator of Golden Corral in Lake Placid, had anticipated the order and rallied his staff to attempt the transformation from a buffet-style dining experience to an entrée-only take-out option.

"We started handing out menus a week ahead of time to help raise awareness that we were offering take-out," Ray explains. "We had employees on the side of the road with signs trying to get take-out business. We ended up barely breaking even that first day."

Despite their diligent efforts, Ray and his team did not see the results they wanted or needed to maintain business.

Ray shifted his focus to a more immediate concern: what to do with all the food.

"We had so much food left over at the end of the day, so I figured I'd just make a Facebook post and we'll just see if there are any families in need since a lot of people got laid off on Friday," Ray says. "I think we gave away over 60 meals in just 15 minutes, and there were still families lined up."

Ray and his wife, Claudia, had serious concerns for the welfare of their business and the consequences the decline could cause for their family. Despite their fears, they refused to ignore the obvious needs of others in their community.

"I was worried about how I was going to feed my own family, and there are all these people lined up needing to do the same thing," Ray says.

As Ray wrestled with the uncertainty around him, one conversation with a close friend changed the trajectory of his efforts and focus for the nearly two months that followed.

Packaged meals wait on a cart outside the Golden Corral. In keeping with social-distancing guidelines, only the number of meals needed for each family was placed on the table.

"A friend of mine came in to see how I was doing, and I broke down," Ray says. "I was just torn up that I had to turn people away. I told him, 'I know for $100, I could feed 100 families,' and he handed me a $100 bill and said he was buying dinner the next night."

As with all of his public communications during the pandemic, Ray took to Facebook to announce the meal donation.

Ray and his family prepared and packaged 100 meals. The need in the community was evident as a line began to form outside Golden Corral. Meals were quickly disbursed that evening.

What took Ray by surprise was the second line that formed. Via Facebook and telephone, local individuals and businesses—including Glades Electric Cooperative—took notice of Ray's efforts and reached out, wanting to donate.

With a steady flow of donors funding the meals, Ray, Claudia and their daughter Emily, 13, worked each day to prepare the food to distribute to families lined up

ABOVE AND LEFT: Claudia, Emily and Ray Tharp package 200 meals to distribute to community members on April 23—the night Glades Electric Cooperative sponsored the meal giveaway. All of the meals were gone in less than nine minutes.

outside Golden Corral each night.

"There have been nights—like the night Glades Electric donated—where the meals were gone in eight or nine minutes," Ray says.

Each evening, Ray posted on Facebook, thanking the donor who sponsored the night's meal and reminding the community that free meals were available at Golden Corral for those who needed them.

"We keep it light and friendly out there (when we give out the meals)," Claudia says. "We don't want anyone to feel embarrassed. I think that's why people keep coming, because they feel comfortable. We don't want anyone to be hungry because they didn't feel like they could come out."

From March 25 through May 5, the Tharps distributed up to 200 free meals each day.

As restrictions in Florida lifted on restaurants in early May, Ray and Claudia shifted their attention back to their own business.

However, the Tharps' dedication to their community did not waver. They made plans to continue providing free meals, while allowing another local business to distribute them.

"There are a lot of giving hearts in our community and a lot of people willing to help out their neighbors," Claudia says. ■

Glades Electric Joins the Effort of Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Across the Glades Electric Cooperative service territory, families have been affected by economic hardships brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

GEC recognized these challenges and worked to support the communities in various ways. From giving away hams for Easter at the Moore Haven office to donating to local food banks, GEC has sought out opportunities to help neighbors.

Concern for Community is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles, so when GEC learned about the meals Golden Corral owners Ray and Claudia Tharp were preparing for hungry families in Lake Placid, we were inspired by their example.

GEC is proud to serve members like the Tharps. Like so many others in our community, they work tirelessly and unselfishly to serve their neighbors.

OPERATION UP ROUND

Sometimes it Takes Our Village

Leah Suarez, executive director of Our Village Okeechobee, takes stock of food supplies in the organization's pantry.

Okeechobee nonprofit shifts its focus to reducing hunger

By Tahlia Warrick

On New Year's Eve 2014, Leah Suarez underwent back surgery. Nearly eight days later, after unexpected complications that drastically lengthened her recovery time, she awoke with a new mission for her life.

Leah wanted to improve and restore Okeechobee by coaching, mentoring and supporting individuals. Her vision became the nonprofit Our Village Okeechobee.

The nonprofit organization is dedicated to providing "comprehensive spiritual, cultural, social, health and educational experiences."

That includes sponsoring play groups for young children, collecting school supplies, promoting mental health activities, hosting family nights, and offering support groups for teen parents and those who have suffered sexual abuse.

Fast forward to 2020. Our Village's main office has transformed into a food pantry.

"We don't usually do food at all," Leah says. "We really believe that we have to change the course of behavior for people and get them to a level of self-sufficiency, and that looks different for everybody.

"It's done more through coaching, mentoring, tutoring and relationship-building."

When Leah saw the need in her community amid the coronavirus pandemic, she decided to temporarily change her focus to reducing hunger among the most vulnerable communities in Okeechobee.

"We had kids at home on spring break, which is already hard on parents in terms of food insecurity," Leah says. "Then people were getting laid off by the end of that week. I knew that it was going to be a crisis quickly."

Despite the change in focus, Leah remained diligent in maintaining the nonprofit's standard of "giving a hand up, not a hand out."

Leah and her team of volunteers frequently help clients when issues arise with their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits or their unemployment applications.

Our Village does help meet immediate needs, but the organization's focus is to teach individuals skills they can use to support themselves.

Our Village Okeechobee volunteers Alice Watson, left, and Randy Tucker prepare a box of food supplies for a family in need.

When Glades Electric Charitable Trust donated $2,500 to Our Village Okeechobee, Leah jumped to action with a voucher program to feed those in need while teaching them to maximize the resources available to them.

"We designated the donation from Glades Electric to go toward the program with Ferrell's Market," Leah says. "We can give out 208 of those vouchers with the money that Glades provided."

The produce market in Okeechobee is one of few produce markets in the state that offers SNAP Fresh Access Bucks. FAB is an incentive program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that offers qualifying SNAP participants a value match for the produce purchased at the market. For each purchase, a SNAP customer receives the same amount of money in tokens for their next purchase at the market.

> *"We can give out 208 of those vouchers with the money that Glades provided."*
>
> LEAH SUAREZ

"What we did was make these little cards that we issue as a voucher," Leah says. "We negotiated with Ferrell's for a 10-pound bag of chicken leg quarters, and the rest of it, depending on the price of chicken any given day, they would get $5 to $6 worth of produce free, and receive the FAB incentive when they redeemed their voucher."

The voucher program provided an immediate benefit for those in need of assistance, and armed them with useful tools and knowledge to help them support themselves in the future.

"People first come to us, and we provide dry goods," Leah says. "We give them the voucher to use at the market. It's really good because it teaches them how to utilize those double SNAP benefits and gets them eating a fresher, healthier diet." ■

In response to the pandemic, Glades Electric Charitable Trust contributed to food pantries in GEC's four-county service area. Our Village Okeechobee multiplied the impact through its voucher program, truly providing a hand up to its neighbors.

Youth Tour Reflections

Louisiana alumni share how the life-changing trip helped shape who they are today

Caroline Bourn met Alex Talberg during the 2011 National Rural Electric Youth Tour trip. They married last year. PHOTO COURTESY KES WEDDINGS/KAREN E. SEGRAVE

Alex Talberg, web developer
Caroline Bourn Talberg, school teacher
Year attended: 2011
Current location: Boulder, Colorado

Alex and I went on the Youth Tour nine years ago. I had just finished my junior year in high school and Alex had just graduated. We sat beside each other for the entire bus ride to Washington. You can really get to know a person on a 16-plus hour road trip. We became inseparable as we explored the Smithsonian and took silly pictures with monuments. By the end of the week, he had—in the most adorable way—asked me to be his girlfriend at the All States Dance. I said yes, and we dated all through college. Last year, Alex and I got married on June 15, the eighth anniversary of the night of that dance.

These days, Alex and I live in Boulder, Colorado. I am a Montessori primary teacher. Alex has been taking classes to become a web developer and is busily building websites for his portfolio. We have two loving dogs named Bonnie and Clyde. We still love long road trips. We have had many adventures together, and we have plans for many more.

Youth Tour meant a lot to both of us. We remember it often and fondly. Thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone who made that amazing opportunity available to us and so many other young people. ■

Chance Salter, ag environmental specialist
Year attended: 2010
Current location: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

The Washington Youth Tour is one of my fondest memories of my high school career. It is hard to nail down one favorite memory because the entire trip was so incredible. If I had to choose a memory it would be getting the opportunity to tour the White House. Youth Tour provided me with that opportunity that I probably wouldn't have had otherwise.

Currently, I am an agricultural environmental specialist with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry. In February, I assisted with a utility arborist recertification at DECMO's headquarters in Greenwell Springs. Youth Tour really helped to prepare me for the career path I'm on today. When you attend Youth Tour, you interact with other delegates from

Louisiana's 2015 Youth Tour delegates spell out "LA" with their fingers on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

all over the country with different backgrounds throughout the week. That early experience helped me become more comfortable meeting and speaking with new people, which is a major part of my career today. I truly appreciate ALEC giving me this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. ■

Clayton O'Callaghan, athletics academic counselor/assistant cross country and track and field coach

Year attended: 2012

Current location: New Orleans, Louisiana

I loved getting to tour Arlington National Cemetery. It is a place with so much history dating back to the beginning of the United States. Seeing people that gave their lives for our freedom is something that humbles me because I would not have had the opportunities I have had in my life without their sacrifice.

Growing up in a small town where I knew the majority of people in the town, I was always one that stayed in my comfort zone and was shy around people I didn't know. Spending time with other kids my age that I did not know personally forced me to get out of my comfort zone and interact with people I didn't know well. This experience showed me that I could find something in common and get along with people I did not really know well.

To this day, I still use the lessons I learned on this trip. As a collegiate track and field coach at the University of New Orleans, I spend a lot of time recruiting potential athletes. To be successful at this you must be able to interact with and find something in common with the recruit that makes you stand out among other coaches. I truly believe that without the experiences I gained through Youth Tour, I would not have the successes that I have had up to this point in my life. ■

Continues on page 10

Continues from page 7

Father Daniel Duplantis, 2nd Lt., USAF
Year attended: 2010
Current location: Thibodaux, Louisiana

I'm a big airplane enthusiast. The Air and Space Museum definitely influenced my decision to join the Air Force as a chaplain.

Youth Tour really provided me with my first exposure to how our government works besides learning about it in school. The whole experience inspired me to stay informed on the issues facing our country, especially since many of these issues have pastoral implications in my ministry as a clergyman.

I've been to D.C. 11 times since my Youth Tour trip, and each trip really builds on the foundation set by the Youth Tour trip I took with the Louisiana group.

I was ordained a Catholic priest for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux on June 6, 2020, and am currently a chaplain candidate in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. ■

Daniel McFarland, administrative fellowship Johns Hopkins Medicine
Year attended: 2010
Current location: Baltimore, Maryland

I vividly remember being selected to be a part of Louisiana's 2010 Youth Tour cohort and realizing that such a selection would ensure my ability to finally travel to Washington, D.C. Throughout my life, I recall unique opportunities that other kids would dream of, and this one was one of them.

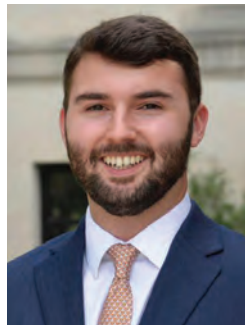
Life never ceases to surprise me. I still remember the names and a few memories I had with each of them. In fact, I reconnected with Yen Nyguen due to mutual friends within the last year. We exchanged stories and memories made during this trip as if it had occurred within the last year.

Studies have proven the correlation of positive exposures at a young age to the success acquired in one's life. By no means am I assuming that I am one of the most successful people in the United States, but I do acknowledge the unique opportunities that have been presented to me over the course of my life. This experience was one that I do not take lightly as I know a wide array of kids across the United States yearn to visit our nation's capital and experience the unique presence it provides.

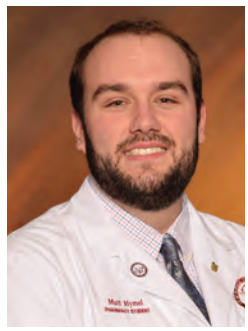
My gratitude to both the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives cannot be expressed enough, as their support of this initiative had a significant impact on my life and many others just like me. ■

Daniel Bosch, law student
Year attended: 2010
Current location: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

My favorite memory from Youth Tour was the bus ride up from Louisiana and the group tour of the monuments on the National Mall. Youth Tour gave me my first real exposure to government and, specifically, to Congress. It motivated me to seek out opportunities while in college to intern for a U.S. senator and to pursue a career in government. I worked at the legislature for four years while in undergraduate school and at the Louisiana Secretary of State's office while pursuing a master's degree in public administration. I now am completing my last semester of law school at the LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center. ■



Matthew Hymel, pharmacist
Year attended: 2011
Current location: Houma, Louisiana



There are so many favorite memories, from the tours to interacting with students from across the country, but the most impactful was meeting with staff from the House of Representatives member who represented my home district. I was able to advocate for policies that would have beneficial effects for electric cooperatives.

Youth Tour made me appreciate the cooperative movement and its impact in my community. My family has been involved in my local co-op for some time. My great-grandfather and great-uncle served on the board of directors, and my mother has been at SLECA for over 25 years. Youth Tour made me appreciate the grassroots effort of the cooperative movement, and that sentiment has followed me into my career today.

I graduated in May from the College of Pharmacy at University of Louisiana Monroe and am starting a job at a Medicare Advantage health care plan in Birmingham, Alabama. I will spend my work day advocating for members by developing policies that ensure they receive high-quality and cost-effective health care. I hope to eventually become involved in developing health care policy at the government level.

I truly thank Youth Tour for showing me the impact individuals have when they join together in advocacy for their cause. ■

Jeff Morrow, WAFB-TV weekend weather
Year attended: 2002
Current location: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

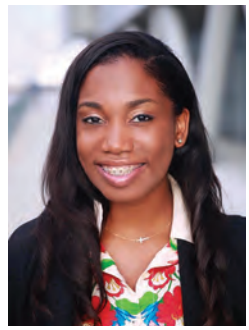
I was interested in law when I went on the Youth Tour trip. For me, the highlight was having the opportunity to visit with all my Congress people, see firsthand how the federal political process works and get a chance to ask questions of these esteemed leaders.

The other thing I remember was the bus ride there and back. It was so much fun getting to know all the youth of the Louisiana delegation as we all came from different walks of life. I also remember our bus broke down in the middle of the night on the ride back to Louisiana. Switching buses might not have been fun to most, but it certainly made the end of the trip memorable!

I enjoyed the experience so much I've volunteered my time on a number of occasions to judge or speak for the DEMCO Youth Tour selection banquet. It feels good to be a part of this awesome experience. ■

Kayla Mims, director of operations and development for Louisiana Budget Project
Year attended: 2011
Current location: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

My favorite memory about Youth Tour was traveling to Washington, D.C., on a charter bus. It was truly an experience, to say the least. At that time, that was the farthest I had ever traveled outside of Louisiana. I would do it all over again.



Youth Tour helped me become a tad familiar with Washington, D.C. I now travel there often for work. We learned so much about electric co-ops. I know how important they are around the world, and I do not mind sharing that knowledge with others. Most importantly, it opened me up to meeting new people.

I come from a small town (Fordoche). Prior to Youth Tour, I had not met many new people. I was able to meet people from various states. This was my first experience of true cultural differences, and I can honestly say this helped prepare me for college and the real world.

I currently work at Louisiana Budget Project. I graduated from Louisiana State University with a bacelor's in communications studies. I am a graduate student at LSU, where I will graduate in Fall 2021 with a master's in public administration.

Upon graduation, I plan to open a rehabilitation center for those struggling with addiction, mental illnesses and transitioning out of prison back into society. ■

Continues on page 16

About Washington Youth Tour

Washington Youth Tour is an annual, weeklong, all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital open to high school students from participating electric cooperatives across the country.

Political leaders, accomplished authors and business leaders—including Apple CEO Tim Cook—are proud Youth Tour alumni.

The program began 63 years ago when future president and then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson urged national electric cooperative leaders to bring young people to Washington, D.C.

"If one thing goes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents," Johnson said at the 1957 annual meeting of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

In Johnson's home state of Texas, cooperatives heeded his call, sending groups of young people to work during the summer in his office.

In 1958, a cooperative in Iowa sponsored a weeklong tour of the nation's capital for 34 students. Later that year, a busload arrived from Illinois. Other states followed, and by 1959, Youth Tour totaled 130 students.

NRECA began coordinating activities among the states in 1964, suggesting representatives from each state arrange to be in D.C. during Youth Tour week. That year, cooperatives from 12 states sent about 400 young people. Today, nearly 2,000 delegates and their chaperones attend Youth Tour every year.

Six Louisiana cooperatives participate: Beauregard, Claiborne, DEMCO, Jeff Davis, South Louisiana and Washington-St. Tammany. They send delegates to Washington, D.C., as a reward for academic achievement through a writing contest, to educate students about the role of electric co-ops in the national economy, foster an appreciation for the democratic form of government, expose students to the sights and sounds of our nation's heritage, and build their leadership skills so the students may make a difference in their communities.

If you are a high school student from a participating electric cooperative, check your co-op's website or call and ask to talk to your co-op's Youth Tour coordinator about eligibility requirements and the application process. For general questions about the program, contact Addie Armato at the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives at aarmato@alec.coop, 225-293-3450 or 800-355-3450 ext. 118.

Continues from page 11

Sayle Sanson, recent master's graduate
Years attended: 2013 and 2015
Current location: Hattiesburg, Mississippi

I recently graduated with my master's in professional accountancy from the University of Southern Mississippi.

I attended Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., twice, during the summers of 2013 and 2015. I met some exceptional new friends and made a handful of memories through these experiences.

Washington, D.C., is one of my favorite places to travel and explore, so getting the chance to sightsee with other students my age from around the country was an opportunity of a lifetime!

One of my favorite memories from the trips was listening to Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic medalist and two-time world champion in wheelchair basketball. His presentation, "If you can't stand up, stand OUT," will always be one to remember.

Some of my other favorite memories are running around Washington, D.C., to take fun pictures with the monuments throughout the city, and meeting Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy in his office and getting to sit in his chair.

These trips leave a never-ending impression on the students who attend and lifetime friendships. ■

Whitney McElroy, teacher
Year attended: 2012
Current location: Grayson, Louisiana

My favorite memory from the Louisiana Youth Tour was getting to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It was a beautiful memorial to one of the world's most tragic events, and it's something I still talk about with people today.

I also made some of the best friendships while on this trip, and for that I am so grateful.

Youth Tour gave me an opportunity to travel and experience history. I have been able to see monuments and memorials that many people haven't, including Ford's Theatre, the Albert Einstein statue, the Smithsonian museums and Arlington National Cemetery. These are places that most people in Louisiana don't have the chance to see. Youth Tour gave me those experiences for free.

Today, I am an English teacher trying to inspire my students to get out and live the world firsthand. I try to find them opportunities such as these so they can get the chance to really absorb history and just see somewhere different. ■

Yen Nguyen Morvant, tax CPA
Year attended: 2010
Location: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

I have been a tax CPA with Postlethwaite & Netterville since 2016.

I was selected as a Youth Tour delegate for DEMCO in 2010. There are many reasons that made DEMCO's Youth Tour special to me. I am grateful it was an opportunity to build meaningful relationships with many friends.

I also got to know my future husband, who was chosen as a delegate and went on DEMCO's Youth Tour in 2011. My husband and I have been married for five years. We love reading and learning about history.

Youth Tour was a wonderful experience. During the trip, I and the other students had an amazing time learning about the capital and exploring its many museums, monuments and historical sites. One experience that was particularly sobering was Arlington National Cemetery and The Tomb of The Unknown Soldier. The visit left a lasting impact on me, and it opened my eyes to the incredible sacrifices that were made to keep this country free. ■