

## Protecting ALL our members



The Falfa Substation is one of the first to receive the TransGard animal protection fencing. Operations Manager Justin Talbot reminds members, given the high voltage at all substations that animals and humans need to take heed.

In 2014, LPEA got quite a bit of notoriety across the country as a photo of an albino raccoon electrocuted in the Bodo Park substation went viral. About 450 LPEA consumer-members, primarily businesses in the area, were knocked out of power because of the raccoon's unfortunate visit. It was essentially a final straw.

"Next to weather-related damage, animal intrusions are the most common causes of substation outages," says Justin Talbot, manager of operations. "Any variety of animal intrusion can cause problems, but our typical intruders are raccoons and squirrels who have for some reason chosen to try to keep warm on the top of energized transformers."

Now, LPEA has instigated what appears to be a solution to protecting the equipment and keeping consumer-members in power, while not injuring or killing wildlife.

LPEA has implemented and continues to budget for a program to install TransGard electric fencing around the large transformers in all the co-op's substations. A transformer within a substation is essentially the "off-ramp" for the high voltage energy traveling along the transmission lines to the area. The transformer "transforms" the power to lower voltage for safe delivery to the surrounding neighborhood. During the "transformation" process, however, the voltage is high enough to electrocute visiting animals.

In 2016, LPEA tested the new TransGard fencing in the Bodo substation, which has proven over the years to

be one of the most popular for local animals. Since then, LPEA has installed the fences in the Falfa [Florida Mesa] and Westside [Greenmount Cemetery area] substations, as well as the Piedra substation in Pagosa – all of which were identified as primary attractions for small wildlife. A schedule has been established and steadily the fencing will be installed in all of LPEA's 22 substations.

"It's a tight mesh fence that is energized with low voltage that essentially tells a critter that touches it, whoa, I'm not going there," says Talbot, noting that the fence surrounds the perimeter of just the transformer, which is within the locked, fenced substation, so there should be no human contact. "The TransGard fence is buried several inches into the ground, so even if a critter endeavors to bury under, they'll get a small deterrent jolt of electricity. It will not kill them."

Since placement of the fences at the initially targeted substations, LPEA has had no animal-caused outages, which Talbot notes is a win-win for all. While installation cost at each substation varies, Talbot assures that when evaluating the cost of an outage, loss of business and damage to the substation equipment, there is no comparison.

"The installations of the TransGard in each substation have now paid for themselves, three, four, five times over," he says. "It's a great safety measure to protect our consumer-members' assets, as well as ensure reliability and protection of our wildlife. We look forward to completing the project."

## Learning the “power” of electricity



Each year LPEA provides age-appropriate electrical education to students throughout Archuleta and La Plata counties. Closing out the 2017-2018 academic year was Safety Town, during which Distributed Generation Energy Advisor Amanda Miles visually demonstrated to some 120 area youngsters that even though electricity seems magic, it is extremely “powerful.”

“Safety is a key part of LPEA’s culture – both in-house and out in the community,” says Miles. “Starting safety education at a young age is very important.”

In addition to Safety Town, this year held at St. Columba, Miles and members of LPEA’s Operations team “take their show on the road” to schools and organizations. Beyond the in-classroom demonstration, Miles and LPEA’s line crews also offer dramatic arc demonstrations (typically for older students), featuring LPEA’s actual electrical equipment.

For more information or to arrange for a safety demonstration, contact Miles at [amiles@lpea.coop](mailto:amiles@lpea.coop) or 970.247.5786.

## Two long-time employees retire

This summer, LPEA says good-bye to two dedicated, long-time employees, Ray Pierotti and Curt Marlatt.

Pierotti has served LPEA for 20 years and is widely known as “LPEA’s Lighting Guy.” He has been instrumental in helping advance energy efficient lighting, most recently with LED retrofits, though throughout his tenure, he’s been consistently active in advancing customer service and assisting LPEA consumer-members.

Marlatt, now retiring from his position as Line Superintendent, originally joined LPEA in 1994 as a groundsman, and earned his Journeyman Lineman in 1998. During his tenure, he steadily advanced his career in the Operations Department to the supervisory position always helping to “keep the lights on.”

LPEA wishes both the best in their retirement.



Ray Pierotti



Curt Marlatt

## LPEA Scholarship students announced

Shealynn Baca, a 2018 graduate of Durango High School, and Carson Grose, a 2018 graduate of Pagosa Springs High School, have received the 34th Annual LPEA College Scholarships, four-year scholarships (up to \$7,000 annually or \$28,000 total for tuition, books and fees). Baca will major in engineering at Colorado School of Mines. Grose, while not finalizing his college election, will study civil engineering.

LPEA’s 18th Annual John Voelker Memorial Scholarships – \$10,000 for two years for vocational, technical school or junior college – go to Joshua Crawford, a graduate of Colorado Connections Academy, and Gabriella Chiles, a graduate of Ignacio High School.

Crawford will attend San Juan College in Farmington to pursue a career in mechanics, and Chiles will also attend San Juan College to study occupational therapy.

Trevor Bryant is the recipient of the 2nd Annual LPEA Lineman Scholarship. A 2018 graduate of Pagosa Springs High School, he will train for a career as a lineman at Western Colorado Community College. Bryant is the son of LPEA Serviceman and Journeyman Lineman Nathan Bryant.

Hailey Rose, also a graduate of Pagosa Springs High School, received the \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship. Crowder will attend Colorado State University, Fort Collins to study zoology

Bayfield High School graduate Sophie Turner and Animas High School graduate Isabella Simpson each received \$500 scholarships from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association. Turner intends to pursue engineering at Fort Lewis College. Simpson will advance her education in the biomedical field at the University of Denver.

For additional information on LPEA’s annual scholarships, contact Jeannie Bennett, [jbennett@lpea.coop](mailto:jbennett@lpea.coop).

*Top to bottom: Shealynn Baca, Carson Grose, Joshua Crawford, Gabriella Chiles, Trevor Bryant, Hailey Rose, Sophie Turner, and Isabella Simpson*



## The "Heart of your Power" "Fire" Power Giving Tree

Reprising the 2017 holiday program to "give the gift of electricity," LPEA's Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) once again invite community members to give a little to help a lot, and assist their friends and neighbors economically impacted by the 416 Fire in Durango.

"In spite of the most welcome rain we've received – and we hope we're on the other side of the fire – Durango and the region are just beginning to realize the economic impact of the 416 Fire," says Customer Service Supervisor Betsy Lovelace. "We don't even yet know how many people have lost their jobs because of fire furloughs, tourism cancellations, and reduction in people shopping locally. These are our impacted consumer-members who all of a sudden realize they can't pay their electric bills."

At LPEA's Durango office, CSRs have decorated a new mini-Power of Giving Tree, adorned with firefighting-related ornaments. Community members are invited to select an ornament and present it to the CSRs as their pledge. The dollar amount of their choice will be applied to the account of a fellow LPEA member challenged with paying their electric bill.

"Any amount is valued," says CSR Julie McIntyre, who initiated the initial holiday Giving Tree with her fellow team members. "We're concerned that it's going to be tough for some people to pay their bills over the coming months. At LPEA, we always want to try to do something to help."

In addition to the Fire Power of Giving Tree, LPEA consumer-members can also make arrangements to assist specific individuals or businesses with their bills, as well as non-profit organizations, by applying credit to their LPEA accounts. Contributions can be made anonymously.

"Any economic crisis in our community impacts those who have difficulty even meeting the most basic of necessities," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering and member relations. "When our businesses suffer, it's actually our people who suffer because of loss of jobs."

To support and for additional information, contact LPEA at 970.247.5786 or visit [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop).



Fire power behind the Giving Tree, Amy Paylor, Cyndi Pierce, Denver Hutchins, Julie McIntyre, Jodi Patscheck, Jeanne Dittmar, Betsy Lovelace and Aubrey Gillespie.

## LPEA to survey members

To help determine members' opinions of electricity delivery practices and reliability, plus better serve its members in the future, LPEA has contracted with NRECA Market Research Services to survey a sampling of households in La Plata and Archuleta counties. The telephone and online surveys are scheduled to begin July 30, 2018.

"The overall objective of the study is a continuation of our effort to measure current residential member satisfaction with the co-op and the trends over time," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering and member relations who is working with NRECA, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "Each time we have NRECA conduct a study we learn more about our members' evolving attitudes and opinions, and we use the information to shape the cooperative's practices and goals."

Survey telephone calls will be placed during evening hours, between 5 and 9 p.m. and no calls will be made on Sundays. More than 400 households will be arbitrarily selected and surveyed, and LPEA requests that those who do receive the calls or email notifications participate. The survey takes about 5 minutes, and responses are confidential.

Direct additional questions to LPEA at 970.247.5786.

## LIVE WIRES

### Board meeting July 18

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, July 18, 9 a.m. at LPEA headquarters in Durango. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop). All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

### Closed for the 4th

LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed on Wednesday, July 4, 2018, in honor of Independence Day.

### Save the Date!

LPEA will host its Member Appreciation Luncheons in Durango, September 12, and in Pagosa Springs, September 13, at the co-op's offices, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Stay tuned for details.

### Round Up Grants

The following organizations received Round Up or Educational grants, distributed by the Round Up Foundation Board of Directors, in June:

- CSI Team – Pagosa Springs High School Skills
- Sacred Heart Catholic Youth
- Aerospace Design Team – DHS
- Science Camp – Fort Lewis College





## From the President

# As we move forward

BY BOB LYNCH | PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS | BLYNCH@LPEA.COOP

It is always good to have board elections behind us and be able to focus on the important work of the LPEA board.

Our board, though often talked about as being divided or acrimonious, is made up of intelligent, thoughtful and committed members of our community who want the best for all members. It will be more important than ever to listen to all voices and incorporate all perspectives as we work to plan for a future at LPEA that will be as successful as its past.

One of the barriers to good thinking on any board is when we assume that we know what someone else is thinking, and we spend our energy firming up our own thinking rather than actively listening to another perspective. In order to address the challenges, and capture the opportunities we face at LPEA in the coming years, and to wisely make choices that will serve all members, we will need to hear all perspectives, question our own thinking and assumptions and consider new ideas that are different from our own. If you only listen to people with whom you agree, chances are that “new” thinking is unlikely to happen.

With respect to the future and planning for it, the LPEA board established a Long-Term Strategy Committee (LTSC) earlier this year to look at important trends in the electric utility industry and to identify issues and opportunities for LPEA. The committee was chaired by Dan Huntington along with me, Britt Bassett and Guinn Unger. The committee presented its report on June 18 for the full board and members to hear, post deadline for this publication. I won't try and provide an overview of the report content here, but I encourage

you to look at the report if you were unable to attend the meeting on June 18. The report can be found on LPEA's website.

There isn't any special magic that happens when a study group is formed, but the dynamic of having people with different perspectives working in a small group is easier and more productive. Also, by having committee members assigned to research specific areas, a deeper level of learning occurred. The LPEA staff of experts provided invaluable input and research of their own that was blended into the final report. Dan Huntington created an environment where learning, listening and openness to ideas made for a great experience. I think LPEA will benefit from more of this kind of work.

No decisions are made by the LTSC committee, but a set of recommendations will be considered by the full board. It is most likely that the impact of the report will be to strengthen and emphasize some elements of our current strategic plan.

A second outcome will likely be to narrow down the future trends and options that need to be studied further. One thing I will share based on sitting on the committee is that the cost of energy generation from many sources is decreasing dramatically. How we harness these resources and options to the benefit of all members will be one of our most important ongoing tasks.

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