

## LPEA employees: “Commitment to Community”



Public Relations Coordinator Jeannie Bennett, Engineering Clerk Charlene Sandoval and Billing Clerk Brandi Fassett (L to R behind the tables) serve up lunch to support the Salvation Army to (in order in line) COO Steve Gregg, CEO Mike Dreyspring and Manager of Staking Services Gayle Norman.

Many lives in La Plata and Archuleta counties were touched over the holiday season by LPEA employees' commitment to community and true "spirit of giving."

"This is my fifth cooperative," says CEO Mike Dreyspring who has been with LPEA for a year and a half, "and never have I seen a co-op's employees so involved in their communities. The culture of commitment to community is pervasive here. I'm very proud to work with these generous and caring people."

For the Salvation Army, LPEA organized the "Fill the Red Kettle Green Chili Lunch" (pictured above). Three types of chili plus cornbread, tortillas and homemade desserts were offered for a donation from community members. A record \$1,218 was raised to help meet the emergency needs of families and individuals in the area.

Through a payroll deduction, LPEA employees annually fund what is known as the co-op's "Santa's Helping Hands" program, and support Project Merry Christmas. In 2015, \$1,600 was raised.

"We were able to fulfill holiday wishes of 29 'angels' from the Project Merry Christmas Angel Tree at the Durango Mall," says Jeannie Bennett, public relations coordinator. "Fiesta Days and La Plata County Fair Royalty, plus assistants from Durango High School, helped us purchase gifts for the angels, ages 9 to 36."

In Pagosa Springs, the IBEW (Local 111) employees assembled and delivered 160 food baskets to shut-in

senior citizens and families in need, plus gathered 1,750 lbs. of food and \$425 in cash to support the county food banks.

In Durango, the IBEW unit looked to aid Meals on Wheels, raising \$800 in cash – a record amount, according to Dispatcher Rachel Killinen.

"We also donated 200 lbs. of potatoes to the Manna Soup Kitchen and created 85 goodie bags for the Meals on Wheels participants, with extra goodies going to the Senior Center," she says. "I feel so blessed to be a part of a work family that gives so much back to the community."

LPEA once again participated in the Festival of Trees, the annual fundraiser for Community Connections, which creates opportunities for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Festival visitors purchase "chances" to win the tree of their choice.

LPEA employees created a Woodland Creatures-themed tree, which was won by Kathy Tonnessen, executive director at Manna Soup Kitchen. She, in turn shared the tree with those less fortunate who depend on Manna's services.

"These charitable efforts aren't anything 'required' of our employees," says Dreyspring. "The projects are initiated by employees all on their own. LPEA as a company is very happy to support their efforts to improve the quality of life for our less fortunate members here in Archuleta and La Plata."

# All LED at The Palace

Paul Gelose, of The Palace Restaurant and Quiet Lady Tavern in Downtown Durango, never imagined he'd be so excited about light bulbs. But now that The Palace has "gone" 100 percent LED, he can't stop talking about them.

"I'm more ecstatic about light bulbs than I ever have been in my life," says Gelose, who this year celebrates 20 years as owner of The Palace. "With all the money I've spent in improvements over the years, it's the new lighting I get the most joy from."

With 7000-plus square feet of space, including two dining rooms, the tavern, three kitchen areas, restrooms and a full basement of nooks and crannies – plus an extensive ("lighted") patio, the lighting solutions spanned the gamut. The retrofit took three years, due to availability of products and bottom line cost.

"My first LEDs were the stringer [holiday] lights outside. Then I replaced all my incandescents," says Gelose. "Next was the fluorescent lighting in my kitchen. I can't tell you how much time I've saved not going back and forth to the store to get new bulbs – and that doesn't even consider installation time."

Project Specialist Ray Pierotti observes that The Palace kitchen is probably one of the best lit in Durango. The new LED fluorescents have already led to increased productivity, plus have enhanced the visibility for cleaning and safety, as well as reducing air conditioning, as LED lights emit little to no heat.

In the dining areas and tavern, which were the last rooms to completely retrofit, as decorative LED lighting is just coming to market, the light is now uniform, consistent and pleasing for patrons.

Gelose has also been able to solve previously problematic lighting issues – in example, the stained glass skylights, units that require labor of three to four employees simply to remove the glass to get at the lights. Originally lit by old fluorescents that would regularly burn out, he's now installed new LED strip lighting.



"In 20 years, for the most part, these have never been lit up, so now all these beautiful stained glass skylights can shine at night," he says, "and last for the next 20 years."

"With the retrofits, Paul has reduced The Palace's kW by 5.69," says Pierotti. "Materials and labor were \$7,509, but he received total rebates of \$1,422.50, which helps the ROI."

LPEA projects that Gelose's annual electric bill will be reduced by an estimated \$5,000. Gelose adds with a smile, "Even if the finances were a wash, I'm happy."

"It's money in the bank," says Pierotti. "It's ambiance, it's quality, it's consistency...it's great."

LPEA has given out more than a \$750,000 in LED rebates (which come directly from Tri-State Generation and Transmission) to 525 commercial customers, that have reduced energy consumption by nearly 3 megawatts.

**To further education on new technology and lighting "change-outs," Pierotti will host a "Lunch & Lights" workshop on Feb. 23, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Visit [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop) for additional information or RSVP to Pierotti directly at [rpierotti@lpea.coop](mailto:rpierotti@lpea.coop).**



# StoneAge employees "gift" electricity

It was a pleasant holiday surprise. Employees from StoneAge, Inc. dropped off a check at LPEA's Durango office, giving the "gift" of electricity.

"I didn't know who they were," says Donna Arriza, member relations representative. "But their donation ended up helping seven of our members pay their electric bills over the holidays."

The somewhat anonymous gift spawned an investigation, eventually uncovering the Order Accuracy Improvement Competition being held by StoneAge's Order Fulfillment Team. Even the senior staff at the manufacturing company had no knowledge of their generosity.

"The idea is, if we make our goal toward improving our 'metrics' – and the goal changes – then we do some kind of celebration or prize," says Candace Lemon of StoneAge. "For example, the first time we hit our goal, we brought in breakfast burritos for the team."

However, when hitting goal again in December, the team decided a donation was better use of the award, and ultimately they chose to help pay electric bills of those in need.

"Paying your electric bill sort of trumps everything," says Lemon. "How cozy and joyful of a Christmas can it be if you have that hanging over your head?"

"Most people don't realize the difference they can make in someone's lives by helping pay their electric bill," says Arriza. "It was such a generous thing the StoneAge employees did."

The gift of electricity can be made at any time during the year. Visit LPEA offices during regular business hours to donate.



The StoneAge Order Fulfillment Team: [front, LtoR] Josh Lau, Candace Lemon, Derek Duncan, Deanna Manzer; [back] Randy Burge, Jeff DeCelles. Not Pictured: Charlie Siegele, Ron Fadell, Mikaela Larkin

# Miles now Energy Advisor

Amanda Miles, who has served as Billing Clerk at LPEA since November 2014, is the new Distributive Generation Energy Advisor. Miles assumes the position held by Richard Archuleta who is retiring after 43 years with LPEA.

In her new position Miles will work with member who have installed or are installing net metered, distributive generation, such as solar PV, wind or micro hydro generation. When a distributive generation source is net metered with LPEA, it not only generates electricity for its location, but feeds excess generation back on to LPEA's distribution system.

"As a billing clerk with LPEA, Amanda worked on the finance and accounting side of our net metered accounts," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering. "She now will work directly with our members and renewable energy installers to facilitate an engineering review and ensure proper integration into our grid for safety and accuracy of reporting. If anyone is thinking about installing solar please call Amanda first."

"I'm very interested in renewable, distributive generation, in addition to customer service," says Miles. "So I'm excited to have been selected for this position. I look forward to working with our members to facilitate the net metering process, and help them understand their responsibilities as an electricity generator - all with safety in mind."



## Director elections up-coming

Four seats on the LPEA board of directors will be up for election in 2016. Those who may be interested in running are advised to begin their education about the cooperative and understand obligations and fiduciary duties of the directors.

"We encourage those interested to familiarize themselves with the organization through our web site, [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop), and to attend regular board meetings," says Mike Dreyspring, CEO. "The board meets the third Wednesday of each month beginning at 9 a.m."

Election packets for those interested in running for a seat will be available Feb. 22, 2016, on-line at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop) and at LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs. To be placed on the ballot, candidates must return completed petitions to either LPEA office by 1 p.m. on Mar. 11, 2016.

Director candidates must be cooperative member-owners and be permanent residents of the district for which they are seeking office. Ballots will be mailed to LPEA's full membership April 15, and the results announced during the LPEA Annual Meeting, set for Saturday, May 7 at Sky Ute Casino Resort, Ignacio.

## New board members at Round Up

Looking forward to being part of the "next million" granted by the LPEA Round Up Foundation to deserving non-profit organizations, Jenn Bartlett, Carmen Hubbs and Ellen Stein (LtoR) have been appointed to serve on the Round Up Board.

Round Up is the non-profit arm of LPEA, funded when members opt to "round-up" their electric bill to the next highest dollar. "Pocket change for positive change," Round Up has helped fund non-profit programs in Archuleta and La Plata counties for the past 20 years.

Grant requests are reviewed each month by the Round Up Board.

Sign up to "round-up" at [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop) or call 970.247.5786.



## LIVE WIRES

### Watch for member survey

LPEA wants your input! Watch for your member satisfaction survey to arrive with your paper or e-bill in late February/early March.

### Board meeting Feb. 24, 9 a.m.

The next meeting of the LPEA Board of Directors is set for Wednesday, Feb. 24, 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.

### Application deadline

High school seniors are reminded that deadline to apply for the variety of scholarships available through LPEA is Tuesday, Mar. 1. For more information or to download applications visit [www.lpea.coop](http://www.lpea.coop). Direct questions to Jeannie Bennett, 970.382.3505.

### President's Day closures

LPEA's offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed Monday, Feb. 15 in observance of President's Day.



## Director's Corner

# Greater harmony/renewables for Tri-State membership

BY JOE WHEELING | LPEA BOARD MEMBER | JWHEELING@LPEA.COOP

This time last year, I shared with you an update on our power supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, and the value LPEA receives from its membership in Tri-State.

Much like LPEA, Tri-State is a not-for-profit cooperative. Its 44 member electric systems, including LPEA, serve a diverse membership base across 200,000 square miles of the West. In fact, the member associations of Tri-State represent a geographic area that is 20 percent larger than the state of California, but thankfully with a significantly smaller population! Tri-State's member associations stretch from Wyoming's northern border with Montana to our nation's border with Mexico, and each cooperative see issues differently.

Still, each Tri-State member association appoints a director on the Tri-State's board and each director has an equal vote. These Tri-State directors have elected me to serve on the board's Executive Committee, which takes a deeper

dive into the issues facing the whole association.

This past year was pivotal for Tri-State's members. First, working together in the spirit of our cooperative principles and with great resolve, Tri-State's directors continued their support of the association's development of renewable resources by approving two utility-scale solar projects and one large wind project. Second, the Tri-State directors, with the support of member managers and member directors, came together to address and resolve longstanding wholesale rate design issues.

LPEA members should know that Tri-State's members do see eye-to-eye when it comes to growing the association's renewable energy resources. Since 2008, Tri-State has added nearly 250 megawatts of carbon-free, low-cost resources. These will more than double in the next two years, as in excess of 300 megawatts in new utility-scale wind and solar projects, as well as distributed generation projects, begin producing clean energy between 2016 and 2017.

Renewable energy already makes up 24 percent of the energy delivered by Tri-State and its members. With new projects coming online this percentage will increase, making Tri-State and LPEA among the top utilities in the country for renewable energy performance.

This past year, Tri-State's members also came together on issues of Tri-State's wholesale rate design and contract with its members. These issues are important to you as an LPEA member, as they affect LPEA's costs, your bills and how effectively together we deploy energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

Following the adoption of a distinctly different wholesale rate structure several years ago, the Tri-State board and membership revisited rate design in 2015. A committee consisting of local cooperative board directors, managers of cooperatives and Tri-State board directors worked together to develop a model of Tri-State's costs and recommended a new wholesale rate structure. Through this member-governed process, the committee came to a unanimous rate design recommendation that the Tri-State Board of Directors approved last September.

Like most cooperatives, the diversity of Tri-State gives it strength, but also makes issues of governance challenging. LPEA has a say at Tri-State, and with improved processes at the association, stronger communication and alignment with cooperative principles, our voice has a greater impact.

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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.

**Board of Directors:**  
Michael Rendon, President [District 3]  
Tom Compton, Vice President [District 2]  
Karen Barger, Treasurer [District 4]  
Jeff Berman, Secretary [District 3]  
Britt Bassett [District 3]  
Bob Formwalt [District 1]  
Mark Garcia [District 1]  
Bob Lynch [District 1]  
Kohler McInnis [District 2]  
Davin Montoya [District 2]  
Jack Turner [District 4]  
Joe Wheeling [District 4]

**Chief Executive Officer:**  
Michael A. Dreysspring

**Statement of Non-discrimination**

LPEA is an equal opportunity provider and employer M/F/ Disability/Veteran.  
If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

