

WATT'S UP

AT LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

LPEA

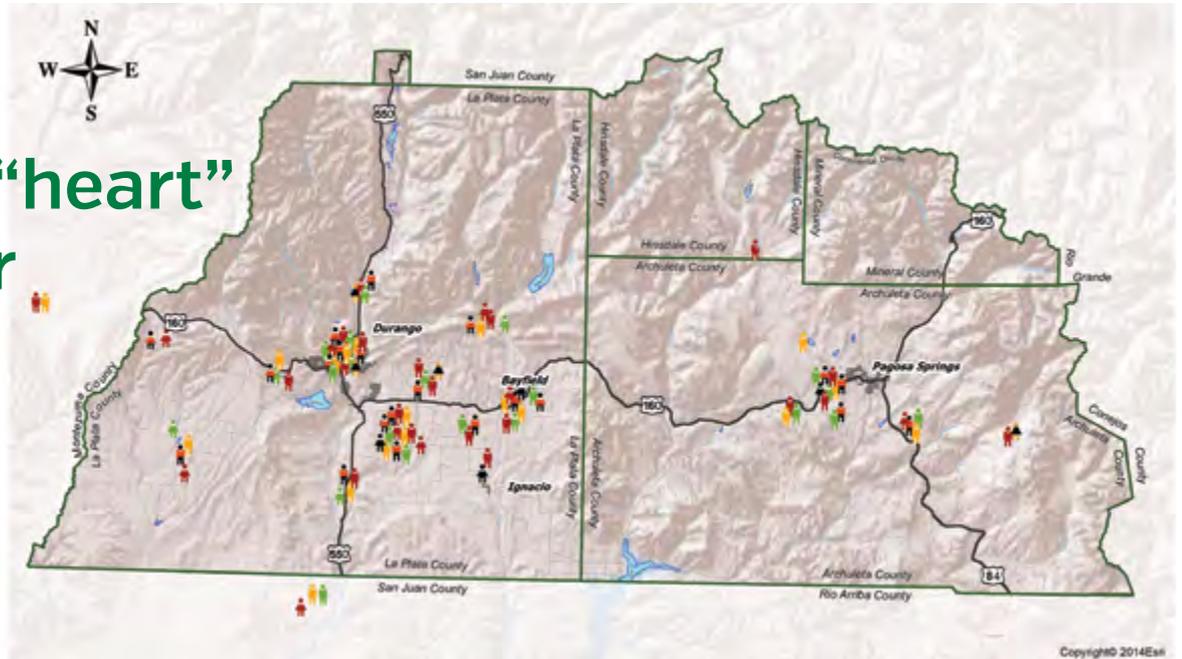
La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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

SEPTEMBER 2018

Living in the “heart” of your power



We're "The heart of your power..."

As with all organizations, developing a marketing tagline that "speaks" about the business is important for corporate identity. Thus LPEA initiated "The Heart of Your Power," which embraces the cooperative's identity on a number of levels.

"Yes, it references LPEA's core business, which is distributing electricity to cooperative consumer-members, making sure you can power your smart phone and turn those lights on," says Ron Meier, manager of engineering and member relations. "But it also references our people. We are you. We're all right here – the people at LPEA are at the heart of your power."

Indeed, from operations [the line crews and dispatchers who are "on" 24-7], to finance and member services, to engineering, plus those looking to the future, who continue to explore and implement advanced technology and new ways to provide electricity more efficiently and in an environmentally responsible fashion. Lots of personalities, a multitude of skills – LPEA wouldn't be anything without its people.

And LPEA's "people" represent the entire service territory. Some consumer-members might assume the co-op is Durango-centric, as the corporate headquarters are located in Bodo Park, Durango. But LPEA also serves consumer-members in Archuleta County from the Pagosa Springs district office staffed by employees who are part of communities in that area. The "people" truly live throughout the region, as is referenced in the above graphic.

"We literally went through the personnel list to see

where everybody lives," says Meier. "We work together and generally know who lives where, but we never put it all together. As indicated in the graphic, prepared by our talented GIS folks Don Short and Misty Fredrickson, LPEA's employees reside and represent essentially every residential community in our service territory."

In La Plata County, a good number do reside in Durango and Bayfield proper, but many call Hesperus, the Dryside and Durango West, as well as, Bondad, Oxford and Ignacio, Florida Mesa, Grandview and northeast toward Vallecito home. Similarly in Archuleta, the greater concentration is near the town, generally due to the abundance of wilderness area and the San Juan National Forest, but employees live as far north as the Hinsdale County Line, and south on Hwy 84 and east toward Conejos County. Several others even live as far afield as south in the Farmington area and west in Mancos.

In addition to being actively involved in volunteer endeavors in their communities, LPEA employees are also LPEA consumer-members, and thus are valuable resources for their neighbors. Most all maintain personal electric service accounts, and understand the concerns their friends and neighbors have with reliable power deliver, cost and concern for the environment.

"Bottom line is, all of LPEA's employees are invested in this region and care about their communities, plus available to assist in any way they're able," says Meier. "We've got more than 33,000 consumer-members with in excess of 43,000 meters, 109 employees, and two locations, but LPEA is ONE cooperative at the heart of your power."

New Right-of-Way Agent



LPEA has named long-time electric utility professional Johnnie Walker as the cooperative's new Right-of-Way Agent. She is working with property owners on right-of-way negotiations to allow LPEA easements for its equipment, while also overseeing environmental and cultural studies on pending construction.

Born and raised in Farmington, Walker launched her career in 1979, joining Farmington Electric Utility as a Meter Reader, though she quickly advanced into the apprenticeship program for the electric meter shop.

Taking time off to raise her children, she returned to Farmington Electric as a Line Patroller and back-up Groundman, a position she held for eight-and-a-half years, working in the field and learning the core of the system.

In 2008 she initiated her training as an Estimator, a position comparable to LPEA's Staking Engineers, and served until July 2018, when the LPEA Right-of-Way Agent position became available.

"I was ready for a new challenge," says Walker. "The resources here at LPEA are amazing, and the efficiencies and productivity very good. I'm very pleased to be here."

Golf Tourney benefits ASPIRE

Though initially scheduled June 16, the 2018 LPEA Golf Tournament was necessarily cancelled due to thunderstorms in Pagosa Springs [remember, "When thunder roars, go indoors."]. However, the rescheduled July 21 event proved exceptional, with \$15,000 in proceeds benefitting ASPIRE Medical Services and Education.

Organized by the Local 111 Unit 26A International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Archuleta County, the Golf Tournament enjoyed a full complement of 140 golfers on the links at the Pagosa Springs Golf Club.

"We are so grateful to LPEA, the Union members, and golf tournament sponsors and participants for their incredible generosity," says Marcy Mitchell, ASPIRE executive director. "This money directly helps provide prenatal care and parenting classes to hundreds of young parents in our community... Our goal is to help every child born in our community to achieve proper physical, emotional and social milestones in the first few years of life... We do not receive any government funding, so donations from individuals and organizations such as LPEA are key to accomplishing our mission."



LPEA Golf Tournament organizers Daron Selph, Equipment Operator Garrett Hammer, LPEA Board Member Mike Alley, and Journeyman Lineman Jeremy Matney [far right] present tournament proceeds to ASPIRE's Executive Director Marcy Mitchell and Development Coordinator Kristi Smith.

LPEA supports CERF

In an effort to help spur community support for those economically impacted by the 416 Fire, the LPEA Board of Directors authorized a \$25,000 donation to the Community Emergency Relief Fund [CERF]. The CERF provides short term, financial support for necessities such as food, utilities and gasoline.

"As a community-based cooperative, the board felt it was important to take a leadership role in helping those impacted by the fires by contributing to the emergency fund," says Bob Lynch, LPEA board president. "We could move quickly to help people who are in need."

LPEA's contribution was granted from unclaimed Capital Credits. Capital Credits are in essence LPEA's margins or revenues remaining after all expenses have been paid. Annually, the electricity payments made by members in excess of the cost to provide their electric service is placed into a patronage capital account in each member's name. When the cooperative is able, Capital Credits are returned to members. The dollars become "unclaimed" when LPEA cannot find members deserving of the refund. The board has determined that these unclaimed funds should be invested in the community.

Through community support, the CERF has amassed more than \$300,000 in donations to assist businesses and employees financially impacted by the fires. Phase 1 provided bridge funding to approximately 150 community members. Efforts continue to assist those impacted by the mudslides that have followed the fire.

The relief fund is housed with the Community Foundation serving Southwest Colorado, a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity designed to serve the local community through various endowment funds and grants. Working with the Community Foundation preserves the integrity of the process of fund distribution and provides contributors with a tax deduction.

To donate directly to the CERF for this and future community emergencies, checks may be made payable to "Community Foundation-Community Emergency Relief Fund" and mailed to the Foundation at P.O. Box 1673, Durango, Colo. 81302. Credit card donations made via the Community Foundation web site, www.swcommunityfoundation.org.



Join us for lunch!

LPEA will host two complimentary luncheons for all consumer-members, Wednesday, Sept. 12 in Durango, 45 Stewart St. [Bodo Industrial Park], and Thursday, Sept. 13 in Pagosa Springs, 603 S. 8th St.

"The luncheons are an opportunity for us to get together, get to know each other, talk about your concerns, and remind us all of the spirit of being part of a cooperative. We truly enjoy meeting and talking with our members in person," says Mike Dreyspring, LPEA CEO.

All LPEA consumer-members – those who pay their electric bills to LPEA – are invited to drop by either LPEA office between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on the scheduled luncheon dates. No reservations are required.

The casual buffet meals will be catered in Durango by Back Porch BBQ and in Pagosa Springs by Smoken MOES Un-Real BBQ. The Bar D Wranglers will perform in Durango with Tim Sullivan serenading in Pagosa Springs.

Members are asked to park out front at both offices, though handicapped parking will be available, and parking attendants will direct those requiring assistance. Golf cart "shuttles" will also be available for those who don't wish to walk across the LPEA facility yards to the lunch locations.



Don't be fooled by SCAMMERS

LPEA continues to caution its consumer-members to NOT be fooled by impersonators who claim to be from LPEA and threaten disconnection for lack of payment. The attempts take a variety of twists, but a pattern has emerged with the scammers targeting area businesses, requesting immediate payment via a GreenDot prepaid credit card, claiming the account is delinquent.

LPEA does not make phone calls threatening to disconnect anyone's electricity unless immediate payment is made, as with the prepaid credit card or providing payment authorization over the phone. When an account is past due, LPEA consumer-members receive a series of written notices and are given adequate time to settle their bills before any disconnect would take place.

Anyone receiving a questionable phone call demanding immediate payment, should record a call-back number from the scammer, then hang up and call LPEA directly to verify any issues with the account. If a call is blatantly fraudulent, LPEA members are advised to call the local authorities.

LPEA's Member Services Department can be reached during regular business hours at 970.247.5786 or 888.839.5732, for clarification of any billing questions.

LPEA consumer-members can also review account status at any time online at www.lpea.coop, and click on the SmartHub icon.

CO-OP MEMBERS

Ask...

Q: I've invested in an Electric Thermal Storage – ETS – heating system, and it's been great, but I'm wondering what maintenance I should be doing.

A: Good proactive thinking. This is the time of year to address your ETS, before you fire it up and start heating those bricks.

Foremost, while the breaker is off, vacuum behind and around the heater, and remove any items that may have found a summer home on top or to the right-hand side of the ETS. To take a step further, for maintenance and safety, contact a local electrician familiar with ETS, who will make a house call and remove the front panel for further cleaning and any repairs.

LPEA has a list of electricians who work with ETS units, so please give us a call, 970.247.5786.

LIVE WIRES

Board meeting September 19

The LPEA Board of Directors will hold its regularly scheduled meeting Wednesday, Sept. 19, in Pagosa Springs at the Ross Aragon Community Center. The agenda will be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at www.lpea.coop. All members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

LPEA offices closed

In honor of Labor Day, LPEA offices in Durango and Pagosa Springs will be closed on Monday, Sept. 3.

Round Up Grants

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

- Merely Players
- Rise Above Violence
- Pine Tree Youth Circle
- Bayfield Early Education Programs [BEEP]
- Chimney Rock Interpretive Association [CRIA]
- Fort Lewis College Writing Center





La Plata Electric Association, Inc.
ROUND UP FOUNDATION

Small Change, Big Difference

BY BRIGGEN WRINKLE | 2018 ROUND UP FOUNDATION BOARD PRESIDENT

I am Briggen Wrinkle, the Board President for La Plata Electric Association's Round Up Foundation and the Executive Director of the Community Foundation serving Southwest Colorado.

I work with nonprofits in Southwest Colorado every day to help make the sector stronger and more sustainable. The Community Foundation brings in professional development, workshop and capacity-building opportunities – which is just a fancy way to say we bring in resources that help nonprofits get the job done. I can assure you that Round Up is a lifeline for new and established nonprofits alike. Round Up supports more than 60-80 nonprofits a year that in turn help thousands of our LPEA members.

Let me take a minute to refresh your memories about La Plata Electric Association's Round Up Foundation. The beauty of the program is its simplicity. The LPEA Round Up Foundation, a nonprofit organization, receives the donations from our members who round up their bills to the nearest dollar – on average, about \$6/year. Also, members can choose Round Up Plus, which rounds up to the nearest dollar plus a few bucks determined by the member.

Since 1997, LPEA's Round Up program has raised almost **\$2 million**. Currently we have almost 15,000 members participating in Round Up and Round Up Plus. While this is amazing participation, we are always looking for more members to join us and increase grants given to the local nonprofit community.

The LPEA Round Up Board, made up of representatives from each of LPEA's districts, meets monthly to review grant applications from nonprofits in La Plata and Archuleta counties and makes grants to support our community needs.

If you don't already Round Up, please make the move to Round Up today. You can Round Up to the nearest dollar or add a few bucks a month with our Round Up Plus program.

The Round Up Foundation's first grant of \$1,000 was to the Manna Soup Kitchen. We are still a strong partner with Manna and many other nonprofits in our community. The Board grants to a variety of organizations including health and human services, early childhood education and care, youth programs, arts and veterans. The Board takes great care to support programs that are fiscally responsible and have solid leadership.

While individually the contributions are small, over time those pennies really add up. Last year, the Board granted \$100,000 to local nonprofits.

Since the Round Up Board is all volunteers and supported by LPEA staff, there is no overhead cost, which means all Round Up donations go back to the community. However, we always have more requests than we have dollars to give, so the Board has to make hard decisions and often can only partially fund requests.

When you Round Up, you are supporting the local nonprofits with the extra filter of the Board review. Since we meet monthly, we often see projects that need quick turn around like youth groups and teams that need financial support to compete in regional or national competitions.

A few cents can create a lot of change when you Round Up.

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La Plata Electric Association, Inc.
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

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

Board of Directors:
Bob Lynch, President [District 1]
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Tim Wheeler, Treasurer [District 4]
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Rachel Landis [District 3]
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Kohler McInnis [District 2]
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Chief Executive Officer:
Michael A. Dreyspring