

Norris Electric *News*

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Norris Electric Cooperative

8543 N St Hwy 130
Newton, IL 62448

Phone: 618-783-8765
or **Toll-Free:**
1-877-783-8765

Report an Outage:
1-877-783-3221

Office Hours:
Monday – Thursday
7 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Chairman

Gordon McClureJasper

Vice Chairman

Justin Parcel..... Clark

Secretary/Treasurer

Ted Helmink Cumberland

Directors

Ava LemmonCrawford

Brandon Graves Richland

Kurt HolscherCrawford

Gilbert Garbe Effingham

Scott Weiss.....Lawrence

Dan Strine Wabash

Dave Sheppard.....Jasper

Ron Viehman.....Lawrence

General Manager

Tamara Phillips



Norris Electric holds 86th Annual Meeting of Members

Members of Norris Electric Cooperative (NEC) packed into the gymnasium of Newton Community High School for their co-op's 86th Annual Meeting of Members, held on Saturday, Feb. 24. During the meeting, consumer-members were provided updates about the cooperative from its leadership.

Board President Gordon McClure welcomed members and explained plans for the co-op. He said last year, the NEC board and management team began working on a five-year work plan. It centers around the application of new technology and cybersecurity. "As we all know, technology is changing faster than you can implement it," McClure said. "We must focus on what we can do now [to] move us into the future."

He also discussed the concern of base-load power plants closing, explaining that

renewables are ok, but they don't replace the baseload energy lost from large power plant closures.

"As we recognize 86 years of the co-op, there have been many changes in people, technology, and equipment, and all these make a strong co-op," McClure said. "The board continues to stay focused on sound financial decisions to provide reasonable electric rates so NEC can deliver safe and reliable electricity to the co-op members."

During the manager's report, Tamara Phillips discussed the meeting's theme, "Powerful Past, Future Focused," saying that NEC's goal to provide safe and reliable electricity has remained the same since the co-op was founded in 1938.

"We understand the spirit that helped create this co-op must be continually nurtured," she said. "While times and technology will continue to change, our

Continued on 18A ►

Annual Meeting continued from 18B

commitment to you will not. ... Our team at Norris Electric is always looking ahead, exploring ways to innovate and utilize new technologies to improve our services.”

Phillips then discussed some of NEC’s accomplishments over the last year. In addition to moving into a new headquarters facility, the co-op completed 32 miles of line rebuild and continued to maintain right-of-way clearance and pole inspections, all to help continue to provide reliable electricity.

One current focus is the U.S. Department of Energy’s Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnership (GRIP) grant, which the co-op has applied for. The grant funds upgrades to enhance resiliency, especially in disadvantaged communities. If awarded, NEC would use this grant to replace its aging automatic meter-reading system.

“We are working hard to build a better co-op for you, our members,” Phillips said. “We hope you will join us as we work to continue the success of NEC, not only today but for years to come.”

Board Treasurer Ted Helmink reported that NEC had revenue of \$51 million, of which 63% percent was used to purchase wholesale power. About 32% of the total was used for operating expenses, depreciation

expenses and taxes. Another 3% included interest revenue and other non-operating margins.

“The remainder is a margin of about 2%, or \$1.5 million, that will be allocated back to our members,” Helmink explained. “These funds were used for construction projects and will be paid back to you in the future.”

During the meeting, Palestine High School student Addison McNair was introduced. McNair represented NEC in June 2023 during the annual Youth to Washington Tour. She thanked NEC members for their support as she shared her experiences while on the trip, seeing monuments, speaking with legislators, learning more about the co-op business model, and meeting students across Illinois and the U.S.

In addition, NEC also awarded four \$500 scholarships to high school seniors in attendance. The scholarship winners were Max Lewis, Oblong High School; Peyton Whitacre, Effingham High School; Kyle Kocher, Newton Community High School; and Alaina Kuhl, Newton Community High School.

The results of the election for four seats on NEC’s board of directors were announced. Ava Lemmon of Crawford County, Gordon McClure



of Jasper County, and Scott Weiss of Lawrence County ran unopposed and were re-elected to the board. Dave Thoele was newly elected to represent Effingham County in a contested election. All will serve three-year terms. Thoele replaced Gilbert Garbe, who retired from the board. He was recognized and thanked for his 18 years of service to NEC members.

After a call for new business and many prizes awarded, the meeting was adjourned. Members were then treated to fried chicken and pulled pork for lunch. All registered members in attendance also received a \$10 bill credit on their energy bill.



Garbe retires from Norris Electric board

This year we have a long-time director who is retiring from the Norris Electric Board of Directors. Gilbert Garbe from Effingham County has served on this board since 2006. During his 18 years, Gilbert achieved his Credential Cooperative Director Certificate, Board Leadership Certificate and Director Gold Credential status. Gilbert has been very dedicated to Norris in the past 18 years, only missing a board meeting when he was spending time in his second home in Florida. It takes dedicated men and women like Gilbert to help keep Norris Electric running smoothly. We will be losing a wealth of knowledge as Gilbert departs, but we are thankful he has given so much to the cooperative through the years.

Introducing the newest addition to the board, representing Effingham County: DAVE THOELE

Norris Electric is pleased to introduce a new member to our board of directors, Dave Thoele, of Teutopolis, Ill.

Dave and his wife Shae have been happily married for seven years, and have been blessed with three beautiful children: Max (5 years old), Mary (3 years old) and Vera (1 year old). As the owner and operator of TRACS Engineering, Dave is deeply involved in providing controls and automation services to industrial and municipal customers.

Dave holds a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from SIUC and graduated from Teutopolis High School. Dave is an active member of the Teutopolis Civic Club, Knights of Columbus and

the Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

His desire to join the board stems from a deep-rooted passion for community participation. He is eager to contribute his skills and knowledge to ensure that Norris Electric can continue to provide reliable, high-quality service while keeping electric rates affordable.

With prior roles at Ameren as a Plant Engineer at Newton Power Station and a Research and Development Engineer at Ameren's Technology Application Center, Dave has a strong background in the industry. Additionally, his current business involves providing engineering services, including substation and generator controls, for municipal customers.



Dave's background, skills and commitment to community service make him an excellent addition to the Norris Electric board of directors. We are confident that he will be a valuable asset to our organization and the community at large.



Ron Viehman



Dan Strine



Dave Sheppard

Three board members earn DGC

Three Norris Electric Cooperative board members, Ron Viehman of Lawrence County, Dan Strine of Wabash County and Dave Sheppard of Jasper County have recently earned their Director Gold Certificates. This prestigious certification is awarded upon completion of director education and training courses offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Viehman is currently serving his 20th year on the board of directors, Sheppard his 14th, and Strine his 10th.

Directors at Norris Electric Cooperative are required to possess a solid understanding of the electric utility business, governance skills and a working knowledge of cooperative principles. The cooperative's board of directors is dedicated to further enhancing this knowledge through NRECA training for the benefit of its members.

Norris Electric Cooperative commends Viehman, Sheppard and Strine for their unwavering commitment to the cooperative and its members.

HAPPY Retirement

Retirement

Carla Kistner

Carla Kistner has retired from Norris Electric Cooperative after nearly 38 years of service. She was originally hired in 1980 as a typist clerk and transitioned through the years to the Member Service Department. She left the co-op in 1989 to spend more time raising her two girls but was welcomed back in 1995 as a Billing Clerk in our Member Service Department. In 2005 she transitioned into the Engineering Department and was one of the first employees to master the AMR metering program. She has spent the majority of her time since 2005 in the Engineering Department as an Engineering Assistant. Carla plans on spending time with family and friends and will continue to be active throughout her retirement. Norris Electric would like to thank Carla, as she leaves behind a legacy of kindness and wonderful customer service. We wish her the very best.



Employee Recognition

Brianne Helregel

We are pleased to announce and recognize Brianne for her outstanding performance and dedication as she transitions to our Engineering Department at Norris Electric. Brianne joined the co-op in 2020 as a Member Service Representative and has since showcased exceptional skills and commitment, leading to her new role as an Engineering Assistant.

Brianne resides in rural Jasper County with her fiancé Jeff and their son Korbin.



WHAT DOES A LINEWORKER DO?

On any given day or night, in all kinds of weather conditions, lineworkers install and maintain overhead and underground electrical systems.

We entrust our lineworkers with your safety, so they hold a very important job. We also rely on their expertise to power our world.

SAFETY COMES FIRST

Lineworkers must commit to safety above all else for the benefit of those they serve (you!), fellow crew members and themselves. They spend thousands of hours in safety trainings each year and must learn and apply numerous safety regulations.

THEY ARE SPECIALLY TRAINED TO:

- Climb poles to service power lines in areas inaccessible by trucks.
- Stand in an elevated bucket to assess and repair overhead lines.
- Install poles, overhead lines and other equipment.
- Work on both energized and deenergized lines.
- Install and service underground lines.

