

Norris Electric

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News

Norris Electric holds 80th Annual Meeting

Norris Electric Cooperative celebrated its 80th anniversary during its annual meeting of members held Saturday, Feb. 10 at Newton Community High School. During the meeting, members were provided results of the board of directors' election and updated on the cooperative's finances, power supply and upgrades to its infrastructure.

Board President Gordon McClure thanked the audience for attending and explained that the purpose of an annual meeting is to announce director election results, hear reports regarding the co-op's activity during the past year and transacting other business. He also explained the role of the co-op's directors, who work to ensure the co-op's financial security, discuss and act on policy and procedures, and provide strategic leadership.

"The challenges today are more complex and numerous than ever before, and the best pathways won't always be clearly marked," McClure said. "It is therefore imperative that directors stay engaged, educated and enthusiastic to keep up with the changing of rural America today and tomorrow."

Treasurer Dean Dietrich reported that the cooperative is in good financial condition. The co-op's largest expense is wholesale power, which accounts for 63 percent of expenditures. The co-op allocated \$3,254,122 in capital credits to members and returned \$1.6 million in capital credits from various years to members.

Capital credits are unique to cooperatives. They are funds that remain after a cooperative's financial obligations have been met and are returned to members in later years.

Manager Tamara Phillips looked back at the accomplishments the cooperative has made during the past 80 years. "As I reflect on the forward-thinking of those instrumental in pursuing rural electrification all those years ago, it is amazing to me how different our lives would be without those pioneers leading Norris Electric," she said. "I feel it is our duty to try to keep that memory alive, as we will forever be indebted to them."

As in the past, the cooperative continues to look forward. Last summer, co-op leadership conducted a two-day strategic planning session. Through the session, they established a plan of goals and initiatives to analyze the headquarters facility and the distribution system to rebuild lines in the most crucial areas, while containing costs and keeping rates affordable.

Another way to keep rates affordable is through an 8.5-year power contract the co-op signed with Dynegy. Norris Electric has not raised rates since 2014, and no rate increase is planned for the foreseeable future.

Norris Electric completed line



During Norris Electric Cooperative's annual meeting, the following directors were elected or re-elected: From clockwise lower right are Manager Tamara Phillips, re-elected Directors Gilbert Garbe of Dieterich, Gary Buser of Palestine and Gordon McClure of Newton; and newly-elected Director Scott Weiss of Summer.

clearance work that will help reduce blinks and outages. "Last year we were able to complete 994 miles of tree trimming on our system," Phillips explained. "This is one quarter of our system. Our plan is to revisit each mile of line every four years."

Duane Noland, president/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), thanked the audience for the role they play in their co-op's democratic process. Noland commended the co-op's former and current leadership on its efficient use of resources, saying the co-op has the lowest rates of any cooperative in the state. He added that elected officials from the Norris Electric service

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"Annual Meeting" continued from 20a

area have been strong cooperative and AIEC supporters. Because of their support on the state level, both State Senator Dale Righter (R-55) and State Representative David Reis (R-109) have been recipients of the AIEC's Public Service Award, the association's highest honor.

State Rep. Reis addressed the audience, saying it's been a busy year in Springfield on many fronts. He discussed concerns over environmental regulations and renewable energy that are affecting base load electric power supply. Base load power represents 80 percent of electric power generated from coal, gas and nuclear plants.

"We have to provide base load power in this state, and in this country, because the wind doesn't blow all the time and the sun doesn't shine all the time," he said. "We have to create an environment at a pricing standpoint on which plants like ours here at Newton can operate." In closing, Reis presented Norris Electric with an Illinois House of Representatives resolution congratulating members

on the 80th anniversary of their cooperative.

In March 2017, 12 volunteer linemen, supported by 19 electric cooperatives including Norris Electric, traveled to Bolivia on a three-week project to help electrify four remote villages in Santa Cruz. The linemen worked with Bolivian linemen to electrify 62 homes and an orphanage. As part of the meeting, Norris Electric Journeyman Lineman Bill Fields gave an overview of the trip. Fields said, "Norris Electric is proud to be able to lend a helping hand to our sister co-ops, whether it be nearby or far away." He was honored with a plaque for his efforts.

During the meeting, the following directors were re-elected or newly-elected.

The re-elected directors are: Gilbert Garbe, Effingham County; Gary Buser, Crawford County; and Gordon McClure, Jasper County. Scott Weiss of Lawrence County defeated Dan Scherer of Lawrence County. Scherer was honored with a plaque for his years of dedicated service on the board.



From left: Representative David Reis (R-109) presents Norris Electric Cooperative Manager Tamara Phillips and Board President Gordon McClure with an Illinois House of Representatives resolution congratulating members on the 80th anniversary of their cooperative.

Tell Us Your Story!

As Norris Electric is celebrating 80 years of service, we are quickly losing those people who remember the lights coming on. This is when electricity was first delivered to them in the late 1930s or early 1940s. If you remember when electricity first came to your area, we would like to hear from you. Tell us of the excitement. Tell us how your life was changed. Tell us if you or your relatives were instrumental in getting electricity to your area. Share your memories with our readers. Mail your story to: My Story, Norris Electric Cooperative, 8543 North State Hwy 130, Newton, IL 62448 or email to questions@norriselectric.com. We will print as many as space allows.

Max E. Riker shares his story:

My Story by Max E. Riker, Robinson, IL

My age was 9. The location was three miles south of Stoy, IL, and then one mile west. The time, summer 1943, probably August. Member Lou Ella Riker.

The inspector checked the installation, gave it an OK and told my mother they would install the meter next week. Mother told him her oldest son was on furlough before going to war. She told him my brother had to leave on Sunday and this was early in the week. The inspector went to his truck, got and installed the meter. My brother got to see the home place lit up and not with a kerosene lamp for five or six days.

My brother was a co-pilot on a B-24 bomber. He perished in the war, but your inspector allowed him to see his home place with bright lights on his last visit home.

Lineworker Appreciation Day April 9, 2018



The power behind your power

By Anne Prince

As April arrives, it brings with it the showers that produce spring flowers. It also heralds the beginning of a potentially stormy season that can inherently include power outages. While Norris Electric Cooperative strives to provide reliable electricity to our members, there are times when Mother Nature has other plans. Most of us can ride out a storm from the comfort and convenience of our homes. However, there is a group of professionals that spring into action when the weather takes a turn for the worst – co-op lineworkers.

One of the most dangerous jobs

Braving stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers often must climb 40 or more feet in the air, carrying heaving equipment to restore power. Listed as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S., lineworkers must perform detailed tasks next to high voltage power lines. To help keep them safe, lineworkers wear specialized protective clothing and equipment at all times when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect them from electrical shock. While the gear performs a critical function, it also adds additional weight and bulk, making the job more complex.

In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes far beyond climbing to the top of a pole to repair a wire. They are also information

experts that can pinpoint an outage from miles away and restore power remotely. Line crews use their laptops and cell phones to map outages, take pictures of the work they have done and troubleshoot problems. In our community, Norris Electric lineworkers are responsible for keeping 4,094 miles of lines across eight counties working, in order to bring power to your home and our local community 24/7, regardless of the weather, holidays or personal considerations.

While some of the tools that lineworkers use have changed over the years, namely the use of technology, the dedication to the job has not. Being a lineworker is not a glamorous profession. At its essence, it is inherently dangerous, requiring them to work near high voltage lines in the worst of conditions, at any times of the day or night. During hurricanes, wildfires or storms, crews often work around the clock to restore power. While April is known for spring showers, there is also a day set aside to “thank a lineworker.”

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 9. So during the month of April, if you see a lineworker, please pause to say thank you to the power behind your power. Let them know you appreciate the hard work they do to keep the lights on, regardless of the conditions.

Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

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New Automated Phone System arrives at Norris Electric Cooperative

As part of our dedication to provide safe, secure service, Norris Electric is introducing a new automated phone system specifically for payments. Members can pay their bills over the phone with a debit card, credit card or e-check by using our new Automated Phone System. With this automated service, you enter your payment using the buttons on your phone's keypad. You can also use the system to check your account status, payment due date, payment information and account balance.

Why is Norris using the Automated Phone System?

Our cooperative is switching to this new system to comply with the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standard. PCI requirements represent a worldwide standard for processing payments that prevents credit card fraud and other data security breaches. Norris is committed to the protection of your personal information, and the cooperative must switch to this new automated phone system to keep accepting credit/debit card payments.

How will the Automated Phone System benefit me?

The new Automated Phone System increases the security on your account, providing more protection for your information than ever before.

How do I get started?

Simply call the office and verify that you have the correct phone numbers on your account. Once that is set up, you are ready to go.

While over-the-phone payments are required to be entered in the automated system, other questions about your service can still be directed to individual departments. Information and online bill payment service is also available at norriselectric.com or through our app on a smartphone.

We thank you for your cooperation as Norris Electric works to provide you with safe, convenient payment options.

Coming this Summer...

Norris Electric is restructuring our bills and going to a full-page bill. In the upcoming months, we will show you what your new bill will look like and explain how to read it. We are excited about this new format, and we hope that our members will be also.

If you want to go paperless, call the office and get set up on e-bills. Your monthly bill will be sent to your email, therefore eliminating all paper.