

More Powerful Together

Raft River leadership, staff and members celebrate 79 years of steady growth, development and success

By Dianna Troyer

With a “More Powerful Together” theme, Raft River Rural Electric Cooperative members celebrated the utility’s 79th annual meeting in March at Raft River High School.

Once considered a luxury, electricity has become a necessity for home and work, said Board President Krinn McCoy, who opened the general meeting.

“We expect the lights to come on when we flip the switch, and we expect our power to stay on during the best and worst conditions,” she said. “Reliable energy is critical to our way of life.”

The staff and board serve member-owners, who all share similar values: “saving money, supporting the communities we live in, watching our families, businesses, farms and ranches grow and flourish,” McCoy said. “When we team up to tackle our shared values and goals, we are more powerful together.”

Co-op employees face a daunting task: to continuously supply power along 2,348 miles of line across a service territory that is nearly 6,000 square miles in three states. Yet the co-op is much more than poles and wires, McCoy emphasized.

“Whether our employees are out replacing poles, wiring a pivot panel or new home, installing underground wire, answering a billing question or building



Raft River Rural Electric Cooperative’s 79th annual meeting offered members more than numbers and stats. As attendees arrived, guests were treated to displays and lively exhibits, such as the stationary bike pedaled by Luke Gardiner that generates enough power to illuminate a lightbulb.

a new substation, they are doing far more than meets the eye,” she said.

“Each step invests in our future and strengthens our relationships with our member-owners. Working together, we can create innovative energy solutions to make life better and easier in the future.”

General Manager Kurt Anderson reminded members that the co-op’s mission is to focus on safety, teamwork and

continuous improvement.

“Safety is and always will be our top priority,” he said. “As a team, we can accomplish far more than working individually. The electrical utility industry is always changing and advancing technologically. We need to be in front of what the industry brings us and what you, our members, want.”

For the first time in five years, electric



Left, John Zollinger registers Stacey Spaeth before the Raft River Electric annual meeting in March. Above, Brenda Anderson and daughter Kimball look at a poster explaining energy conservation tips.

rates will increase due to the Bonneville Power Administration's new rate schedule, Anderson said. Nearly 60 percent of the co-op's total operating costs come from buying power from BPA, which ultimately affects rates.

"BPA adjusts its rates every two years," Anderson said. "And although they have raised their wholesale power rates to Raft River Electric twice during the last five years, through cost-containment and hard work, we have been able to absorb those increases."

He said BPA attributed the rate increase to lower-than-expected demand for power, a declining forecast of surplus power sale revenues due to lower market prices and escalating costs of programs driven by legal requirements.

The new rates, which were implemented April 1, may be viewed at www.rrelectric.com. The increase applies to all rate classes within the system and ranges from 2.9 to 6.1 percent.

"The directors, management and employees are all acutely aware of the impact that rising electric rates have on our members," Anderson said. "We are working hard with BPA and our power supplier, PNGC, to help control the costs associated with getting you, our members, power."

system economically competitive concerning power rates, Anderson said RREC's staff and board members work hard with partners such as PNGC, legislators, and state, regional and national organizations.

As for the future, Anderson said the staff strives to implement a strategy that meets members' needs while securing the right mix of energy efficiency, renewable energy and new technologies.

In other business, Anderson said the board approved a general retirement disbursement of \$300,000 for capital patronage, covering margins in 1990. He encouraged members to register on the co-op's website to use the SmartHub app to report outages, monitor use and pay bills.

He praised Cactus Ward, who retired as the co-op's warehouseman at the beginning of the year.

"I want to personally thank him for over 33½ years of dedicated service to Raft River Electric," Anderson said. "He is a great advocate of what the co-op world is all about—family, community and service."

Whatever the future holds, Anderson emphasized, "We are more powerful together."

Certified public accountant David DeCoria said the co-op's financial

statements are fairly and accurately stated and comply with accounting standards.

In annual elections, unopposed incumbents will continue to represent their districts: Gary Jones in District 2, Stan Spencer in District 3 and McCoy in District 4.

Chris Harper thanked the board and co-op members for enabling teens to participate in the weeklong Idaho Consumer-Owned Utilities Association Youth Rally at The College of Idaho in July.

Harper will return in the summer as a director to help plan and supervise the rally.

"We learned so much about the power industry and careers," he said. "Teens from a juvenile detention center talked about their lives and the choices they'd made. We heard amazing motivational speakers, too."

The teens also made new friends, toured the state Capitol, went bowling and swimming, performed in a talent show and concluded the week with a banquet and dance.

"I will remember the week forever," he said.

In the evening finale, the grand prize winners were Robert and Dawn Briggs, who won a \$1,200 energy credit.

Anderson encouraged members with questions or concerns to call or stop by the co-op office. ■