



Carlee Boden serves chili to Steve Ward before the start of the Raft River annual meeting.

78 Years Powering the Community

Members were treated to information, food and fun at this year's annual meeting

By Dianna Troyer

Plans will be finalized this summer to set future electric rates, Raft River Electric Co-op interim General Manager Kurt Anderson told members at the 78th annual meeting at Raft River High School March 14.

"We're finishing up our fifth year without a rate increase, which is impressive," Anderson said. "This summer, we'll start the process of finalizing the projected rate increase and hope to maintain those rates for at least three years."

Rates have remained stable since 2013,

making it the longest period without a rate increase in the past 25 years.

"At this point, we are still working on a variety of cost controls and revenue structuring," he said. "We'll try to mitigate the rate increase as much as possible."

Prior to the meeting, Anderson said his background in hospital administration taught him to be ready for changes and shifting regulations before he was hired at the co-op as financial manager four years ago.

"Health care and the utility industry are both heavily regulated with so many outside pressures coming into play,"

Anderson said. "You always have to be prepared for new issues coming at you."

He encouraged members to use SmartHub to pay bills, report outages and analyze how their electrical use patterns fluctuate throughout the day to see if energy can be conserved.

Kurt praised the co-op staff for helping during the February floods by filling and delivering sandbags to homeowners.

"Our staff was impressive and jumped right in to help friends and neighbors," he said.

This year, instead of having a health fair during the annual meeting, a



From left, Kailee Smith, 6, plays with a balloon before the annual meeting. Nominating Committee Chairman John Zollinger registers Meshia Heaton. This year's annual meeting was Kurt Anderson's first as general manager.

blood screening has been scheduled for Monday, July 17, from 7 to 10 a.m. Members can have their blood drawn at the Raft River Electric Co-op building.

"We'll provide more information about that as the date approaches," Anderson said.

In concluding his meeting remarks, Anderson quoted Henry Ford, summarizing what co-ops are all about: "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

A nonprofit co-op is a great example of people working together to achieve a common goal, said Krinn McCoy, president of the board of directors.

"A co-op is the perfect tool to tackle tasks too big for one person," she said.

She emphasized the co-op does much more than provide power.

"It empowers us to improve the quality of our lives," McCoy said. "Think of the impact electricity had on lives years ago. It provided food storage, running water and boosted farm production."

The co-op provides power to 5,000 services in a 6,000-square-mile service territory in Idaho, Utah and Nevada.

"It's more than a power provider," she said. "It provides miles of line and hope."

CPA David DeCoria said the co-op's financial statements are fairly and accurately stated. His accounting firm audits the co-op's financial records annually.

"Your staff is doing a great job on your behalf," he said.

The co-op has total net margins of \$1.5 million, assets of \$51.8 million and total operating expenses of \$15.7 million.

When the audit was completed, \$300,000 in capital credits was disbursed back to members. Payments return patronage capital mainly from 1989 and a small percentage from 1990. Since 1994, \$7 million has been returned to members.

This year's guest speaker was Idaho Speaker of the House Scott Bedke, a rancher in the neighboring community of Oakley. He described financial issues affecting members.

"Due to flooding this winter, Idaho may be receiving about \$52 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to repair roads," Bedke said.

Another issue addressed during the spring legislative session was an

unanticipated increase in the amount of taxes collected, which enabled legislators to increase budgets in both the road and education systems.

In other business, Raft River High School senior Christian Lloyd thanked the co-op for providing high school sophomores and juniors with the opportunity to attend the Idaho Consumer-Owned Utility Association Youth Rally.

"We formed our own co-ops, toured the Capitol and still keep in touch with friends we made throughout the Northwest," he said. "It was a great experience."

Christian will return as a director at the weeklong event July 10 to 15 at The College of Idaho in Caldwell.

In final business, incumbent board members, who ran unopposed, will serve additional terms. Blaine Tanner of Grouse Creek represents District 3, and Larry Henson of Almo represents District 2. A representative is needed to fill a vacancy for District 5, which encompasses the Duck Valley Reservation.

At the end of the meeting, Leon Bendle won the 55-inch television grand prize. ■