

Co-op Family Comes Together for 79th Membership Meeting

SYNDA SMITH HASN'T MISSED AN ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

in her 19 years as an employee of Coleman County Electric Cooperative, and she still looks forward to every one. She relishes the opportunity to see and meet members of the co-op in person.

“A lot of them, we only talk to them on the phone,” said Smith, the co-op’s office manager whose task during this year’s event was to help with registration. “Some people I see only once a year, and it’s here.”

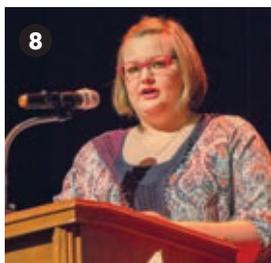
She said the meeting also offers a rare occasion to spend time with all her co-workers.

“It’s nice for us to get to visit with each other and work

together because we never get to do that,” Smith said.

That feeling of community and togetherness is what sets co-ops apart, and it’s part of the reason that 241 members of Coleman County EC, along with dozens of their guests, came to Coleman High School on July 14 for the cooperative’s 79th annual membership meeting. The members of the co-op are also the owners, and this event is their chance to participate in the business of their cooperative by voting on directors, listening to reports, and even indulging in ice cream, door prizes, and fellowship among friends, family and neighbors.

Members voted to elect Richard Lange of Norton, District 1; Les Dobbins Jr. of Coleman, District 4; and Brent McMillan of



1. Members receive hats and gift tote bags as they register.

2. Members of the Coleman County 4-H Club serve cookies, ice cream and punch to attendees.

3-4. Representatives from Wi-Power, which provides high-speed internet services, were on hand to answer questions.

5. Clint Gardner, Coleman County CEO/general manager, recognizes and thanks veterans during the business meeting.

6. Board President Bob Fuchs begins his annual report to the membership with a joke, as is tradition.

7. George Allison serenades the crowd before the business meeting begins.

8. Condensing 10 days of memorable moments into 10 minutes, Grace Bryan speaks about how Youth Tour was a life-changer for her.

9. Current and future CCEC members take in an electricity safety demonstration.

10. Coleman County EC members enjoy time with friends and family between bites of sweet treats.

Coleman, District 5, to the board of directors. Democratic Member Control is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that guide all co-ops, ensuring that members' voices are represented among CCEC's decision-makers.

McMillan replaces Anthony Strawn, who is retiring from the board after 24 years. The board's president, Bob Fuchs, acknowledged Strawn's commitment to the cooperative and thanked him for his steadfast service—noting that Strawn didn't miss a single board meeting in all those years. "Can you believe that?" Fuchs said.

Coleman County EC sold less power in 2016 than in 2015, a decline in kilowatt-hours sold of about 12.3 percent, but David Wright, the board's secretary-treasurer, assured members that the cooperative is still in solid shape.

"Coleman County Electric Co-op is in very good financial condition, and even though our kilowatt sales decreased for 2016, we remain financially stable," he said. "We were still able

to have a respectable operating margin at the end of the year of over \$324,000."

In fact, Wright said, the board once again voted to return capital credits to the membership, totaling about \$281,000 this year, including the capital credits that came from Golden Spread Electric Cooperative, CCEC's power supplier.

Fuchs explained that capital credits are part of the cooperative business model that ensure margins return to the owners—the members.

"It's what a regular company would call profits," he said. "We share those profits with you the members that own the co-op, so that's an advantage of being in a co-op."

In his report to the membership, Fuchs explained a \$5 increase to the customer charge over an increase in electric rates as the most fair way to ensure that the co-op can continue to keep up with the rising costs of maintaining its infrastructure.



1. Board members Darla Wise and Anthony Strawn, who retired from the board after 24 years, draw prizewinners' names at the close of the meeting.

2-4. Sixty-four door prizes were sent home with CCEC members.

“At the co-op, we try to be fair so that everybody gets the same shake,” Fuchs said. “If you raise the rate, you raise it a lot higher on the person that uses it more, and really the customer charge should cover what it costs to bring electricity to you, and the rate should pay for what you use.”

Fuchs said the co-op is investing in computer system upgrades and a new metering system, and that the board has discussed the idea of a community solar project.

Concern for Community is another of the Seven Cooperative Principles, and one way that Coleman County EC upholds its commitment to that value is by investing in opportunities for youth. The winners of several \$500 scholarships were announced at the meeting, and the co-op this year sent two high school students to Washington, D.C., for more than a week as part of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, which brings together teens from across the country to learn about our nation’s capital and rural electrification.

Grace Bryan of Winters and Shelbi Stephenson of Talpa attended Youth Tour in June. Both got to meet with Congress-

man Mike Conaway in his Capitol Hill office while there and toured the capital’s historic landmarks and memorials. Bryan gave a presentation about the trip at the membership meeting. She expressed her thanks to the board and membership for their support in funding the trip.

“I speak for every student who has had the privilege of going on this trip when I say it was the trip of a lifetime,” Bryan said. “It was a life-changing experience, and it won’t soon be forgotten.”

Coleman County EC is grateful for all its members, thanking those in attendance with gift bags, hats, and ice cream and cookies served up by members of Coleman County 4-H. More than 60 door prizes, including cash, gift cards and electronics, also were given away to members just for showing up.

After all, the members are part of the co-op family, too, Smith said.

“They enjoy the ice cream—and the cookies and the prizes, and it probably makes them feel a part of us—of the co-op family.”

Keys to a Safe Harvest

FOR NATIONAL FARM SAFETY AND HEALTH WEEK, SEPTEMBER 17-23, COLEMAN COUNTY Electric Cooperative would like to remind farmworkers that preparation and awareness are the keys to a safe harvest.

Harvest season is one of the busiest times of the year for farmers—and among the most dangerous. We encourage farm managers to share the following information before taking to the fields to keep themselves, other farmworkers and their families safe from farm-related electrical accidents.

- ▶ Start every morning by planning your day's work. Know what jobs will be near power lines and devise a plan to keep the assigned workers safe.
- ▶ Keep yourself and equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines in all directions at all times.



▶ As in any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods, into power lines. Remember, nonmetallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay can conduct electricity.

▶ Use care when raising augers or the beds of grain trucks. It can be difficult to estimate distance—especially in a mirror—and sometimes a power line is closer than it looks. Use a spotter to make certain you stay far away from power lines.

▶ Always lower portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level, under 14 feet, before moving or transporting them.

▶ Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting modern tractors, which are larger with higher antennas.

▶ Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. If power lines near your property have sagged over time, call the cooperative to repair them.

▶ Don't use metal poles when breaking up bridged grain inside and around bins.

▶ Use qualified electricians to make repairs on any electrical systems.

▶ If you are on equipment that makes contact with a power line, do not exit the equipment. When you step off, you could become the electricity's path to ground and receive a fatal shock. Wait until cooperative workers have de-energized the line and confirmed that it is safe for you to exit.

▶ If the vehicle is on fire and you must exit, jump clear of it with both feet together. Hop as far from the vehicle as you can with your feet together. Keeping your feet together can help prevent you from getting shocked.

Coleman County Electric Cooperative

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Operating in Brown, Callahan, Coke, Coleman, Concho, Runnels, Taylor and Tom Green counties

CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Clint Gardner

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Richard Lange, *District 1*

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Les Dobbins Jr., *District 4*

Brent McMillan, *District 5*

Darla Wise, *District 6*

Bob Fuchs, *President, District 7*



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colemanelectric.org

Happy Labor Day

Coleman County EC will be closed Monday, September 4, for Labor Day. Crews will be on standby in case of outages.