



Coleman County EC Celebrates 80 Years at Annual Meeting

VIRGINIA SCHWARTZ SAYS SHE'S BEEN ATTENDING COLEMAN County Electric Cooperative annual meetings for 60 years as a member.

When she was younger, the event served as the high point of a night on the town. "There would be a carload of us that would come and eat out and make a big deal of it," she said.

But now, "I come to get the goodies," she joked, alluding to the attendance gifts and door prizes the co-op gives to members who show up for the event. But in all sincerity, she admitted, it's the sense of community among co-op employees and members that has drawn her to the meeting through the decades.

"They're all friends," said Schwartz, a retired teacher. "They're just good people, friendly."

Now, at 88 years old, Schwartz doesn't get out as much as she used to, so the meeting represents a welcome opportunity to chat with old friends, catch up with some of the now-grown students she taught back in the '60s and '70s, and meet with

Coleman County EC employees and directors—a group for whom she has high praise. "This is an excellent association," she said. "They are the best."

The annual meeting is also a chance for Schwartz—and all members of Coleman County EC—to exercise Democratic Member Control, one of the seven guiding principles of the cooperative business model, by voting for representatives on the board of directors. At this year's meeting, July 13—Coleman County EC's 80th—the members voted to re-elect two incumbent directors to additional three-year terms: David Wright of District 3 and Bob Fuchs, District 7.

CCEC's directors are also members of the cooperative. In his address to the 272 members at the meeting, Fuchs, who is board president, explained why that's such a fundamental aspect of the co-op's business model. "We have a great board, and we try to work hard for everyone's benefit," he said. "If you all get benefits, we get benefits the same way."

The member's voice, Fuchs continued, is also a fundamen-



1. Runnels County 4-H members serve snacks and refreshments to members.

2. Clint Gardner, Coleman County EC CEO and general manager, and D'Ann Allen, Golden Spread EC member relations specialist

3. Averi Ransberger tells attendees about her Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

4. Anaka Grace sings the national anthem.

5. Billy Don and Darlene Fairies chat with a TransWorld Network representative about internet service.

6. Winners of \$100 cash prizes are, from left, James Eggemeyer, Bledsoe Ford, Richard Chambliss, a St. Boniface Church representative and Tracy Rankin.

7. Kelly Smith, right, a first-class line-man for CCEC, hands out hats as part of attendance gifts for members.

8. Bob Fuchs, CCEC board president, addresses the annual meeting audience.

tal part of another of the Seven Cooperative Principles: Autonomy and Independence. “We at Coleman County Electric maintain our autonomy by entering into agreements with organizations and raising capital under terms that ensure we carry out the vision and meet the needs of our members,” he said. “We honor the trust of our membership through judicious use of funds, knowing that integrity rivals electricity as our most precious resource. Without the confidence of our membership, we cease to operate effectively.”

Mark Schwartz, president and CEO of Golden Spread Electric Cooperative, which provides the electricity that CCEC distributes, echoed that admiration for the principles that guide co-ops.

“I am a pure believer in the co-op model,” Schwartz told the audience. “I love the way it works. I love who we work for and how we work for you and what our incentives are. At Golden Spread down to all the employees at Coleman, the incentive is to lower your rates, to give you the best service possible—and there’s no other motivation for us to be doing what we do.”

Schwartz went on to share a video update on exactly what Golden Spread EC is doing to ensure quality service and how his co-op is adapting to changes in the energy market, particularly in the realm of wind and solar power.

“Promoting electrification has the potential to provide many economic and environmental benefits to our local com-

munities,” said Larry Shields, member accounts manager at Golden Spread EC, in the recorded message. “Our generation plan is centered around taking advantage of the vast renewable energy resources.”

2017 was a historic year for Golden Spread EC, Shields said. Over the past several years, the generation and transmission cooperative has invested in new power plants to replace power it was purchasing from other suppliers. Last year, for the first time in its history, the co-op began supplying power to all of its members without direct purchases from investor-owned utilities.

GSEC also is focused on expanding information technology services to its members, growing its load and continuing support for distributed generation—when consumers produce their own electricity using the wind or the sun.

“Golden Spread anticipated the rise of renewable energy, particularly from the plentiful wind and solar resources of our area,” Shields said. “That’s why we have fast-start generating units that can supplement the renewable energy in times of peak demand.”

This year, Golden Spread EC will return more than \$234,000 in capital credits to Coleman County EC, whose board of directors voted to retire an additional \$50,000 in capital credits. Capital credits represent each member’s share in the cooperative’s margins, and when any margins are left over after all expenses have been paid, the co-op’s board can decide



1. Olivia and Hannah Jefferson enjoy the putting green.

2. Colter and Chantz Adams and their mom, Jenn, watch the electricity display.

3. One of the 10 lucky kids to win \$20 in cash

4. A member enters her name in the drawing for a chance to win prizes.

5. Members James and Sharlyn Nall win a prize.

6. One of the winners of beautiful plants



to return that money to members. The total retirement of \$284,154 will be applied as credits on current Coleman County EC members' electric bills.

Wright, the board's secretary-treasurer, outlined other good news about the co-op's financial status. "Coleman County Electric Cooperative is in very good financial condition," he said. "The kilowatt-hour sales increased for 2017 by approximately 8 million kWh and an increase in revenue of \$1.2 million." That increased usage provided CCEC with an operating margin of more than \$1.3 million at the end of the year.

Reliable electric service and capital credits retirements aren't the only ways Coleman County EC members benefit from their cooperative. CCEC also actively supports the communities it serves—upholding the cooperative principle of Concern for Community.

CCEC recently renewed its participation in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., where local students join hundreds of other teens from across the country to learn about rural electrification, meet their congressional representatives and explore the nation's capital.

Averi Ransberger was one of CCEC's representatives on this year's Youth Tour. She gave the annual meeting audience an overview of her trip, which included her first airplane flight, visits to numerous museums and monuments, a day on Capitol Hill and the making of lifetime friendships.

"Having to say goodbye to the people who I had grown closer with in [those] seven days than I have with people that I've grown up with since kindergarten was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do," Ransberger said. "I would like to thank everyone who made Youth Tour possible: the sponsors, co-ops, participants—just anyone who had a hand in this amazing event. I also want to extend my gratitude to the parents who let their children not only apply but go on this trip, because, rest assured, y'all have raised amazing people that give me hope for our nation's future."

CCEC also supports young people through its scholarships, which were awarded this year to 10 local students.

Of course, the annual meeting wouldn't be complete without prize giveaways. Ten kids won \$20 bills. Dozens of members went home with prizes such as household appliances, kitchen gadgets and potted plants. Five lucky members each won \$100 in cash.

At its core, Coleman County EC's 80th annual meeting was a celebration of the members and their collective participation that has allowed the cooperative to endure through the decades—an achievement that Schwirtz applauded.

"Congratulations to Coleman County for 80 years," he said. "It really is a testament to the co-op model, and more so than that, it's a testament to its members. If it wasn't for the model and you, Coleman County wouldn't be here for 80 years. ... That's an amazing achievement."

Be a Good Neighbor to Power Lines

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOU PROBABLY DON'T THINK ABOUT its power lines. It's easy to overlook their presence, but power lines can pose serious electrical hazards if forgotten.

Trees can be a power line's worst enemy. Strong winds and storms can blow trees over or break branches, pulling down power lines from poles or supporting towers. It is possible for the line to remain energized and potentially electrify the tree and nearby objects—especially when wet.

Arcing or flashovers between power lines and trees also can cause damage and danger. A voltage surge on a power line from a nearby lightning strike can cause a tree to become electrified, as well.

During warm weather or when power lines carry heavy electrical loads, they can heat up and stretch, making the lines longer. Thus, power lines can sag as much as 15 or 20 feet, bringing them even closer to trees.

The electric current caused by arcing or flashovers between power lines and trees easily can injure or even kill an individual caught nearby. It is important to pay attention to power lines in your neighborhood. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

Always make sure to look for power lines nearby before you begin to cut down any tree or trim branches. If a tree falls into a power line, do not attempt to move it. Contact Coleman County Electric Cooperative immediately.

Treat all power lines as energized. Never climb or attempt to handle a tree that has a limb caught in a power line. There may not be any visible evidence that the tree is electrified or dangerous, but that doesn't mean it's not.

Make sure to maintain required clearances between equipment and power lines. Keep equipment and yourself at least 10 feet away from power lines at all times.



Coleman County Electric Cooperative

3300 N. Highway 84 • P.O. Box 860
Coleman, TX 76834

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

CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Clint Gardner

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Vacant, District 1

Roger Kruse, Vice President, District 2

David Wright, Secretary-Treasurer, District 3

Vacant, District 4

Anthony Strawn, District 5

Darla Wise, District 6

Bob Fuchs, President, District 7

Contact Us

CALL US AT

(325) 625-2128 local

1-800-560-2128 toll-free

AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCY

1-800-560-2128 toll-free

FIND US ON THE WEB

colemanelectric.org



Power Tip

Look for LED products and fixtures for outdoor use, such as on pathways, steps and porches. Many include features like automatic daylight shut-off and motion sensors.