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West Central Electric Cooperative

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ElectricNews

West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. ~ Serving our members' needs since 1939

Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Sixth cooperative principle is alive and well as US linemen aid Bolivia co-op

Not completely sure of what he was getting into, but positive that he wanted to help people, West Central Electric lineman Brandon Steffen threw his name into the hat earlier this year for the Energy Trails International Project, a partnership between the Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives and the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives through the NRECA International Program.



The project was slated to take place Aug. 1-17 in northern Bolivia to bring electricity to the villages of El Torito and Dos de Junio. The local electric cooperative in Bolivia, Cooperativa Elctrica Riberalta, assisted the linemen in setting poles, stringing line and wiring houses in the villages to bring electricity to those who had been living without.

A whole new world

What is nearly half a world away seemed much farther to Steffen and his fellow linemen once they began to immerse themselves into the Bolivian village culture.

"How the people live and how primitive things are was definitely the most surprising to me," he said. "You know it's out there just like you see on TV where they don't have much, but to actually see it on such a large scale like this is pretty amazing.

"The villages weren't a whole lot different than the cities. There were more power lines in the city and more paved streets, but a lot of the houses were the same, just board houses," he said. "In the villages it was all dirt roads; no concrete, no brick, nothing."

Steffen said line work was challenging because it was like stepping back in time.

"The work was just like they did in the old days. They don't have a lot of equipment, and modernized tools, so the work was a lot of physical labor. That didn't surprise me, though," he said. "We don't have to climb like that anymore (in the



GAINING A REPUTATION AS 'THE PIED PIPER OF DOS de JUNIO...' The children of Dos de Junio always seemed to know when "Mr. Brandon" was in the village and came running.

United States)."

A different outlook

Telling his story, Steffen centered on one fact: "They're not at all like us," he said.

And, that is not necessarily all bad.

"There is no stress down there. You don't see anybody that looks stressed out or overly excited. Everybody just looks calm."

This proved to be a small hurdle when planning the work day. Crews would order the materials they needed for the day and then wait for their Bolivian counterparts to deliver them, sometimes waiting up to two hours for them to return.

"We're sitting here thinking, 'Com'on! Hurry up! We need this material. We'll just go get it ourselves!'" he said. "But they don't get in a hurry. It's like they know they are going to work that day, and if they get it done, great. If they

don't, they don't. Time isn't a big deal to them. Every day is a day to them and it just goes on, where we always seem to be on a time schedule for everything."

The Americans thought once their Bolivian co-workers saw what was needed each morning, the situation would be remedied, but the next day was more of the same.

"That's when we started realizing -- we think ahead; they don't. We think in the future. They think in the present. We did the same thing every day, so we thought they would have everything ready for us when we got there the next day. Nope. They weren't thinking about what we would need the next day, so every day it was the same routine," he said.

An unexpected lesson

That outlook, however, started to rub off on at least one of the Americans. Steffen said upon his return, he has

found himself starting to apply a little of that to his own life.

"Before, it was always, 'Hurry up and get here or go there, or get this done,' but part of me is still thinking about being down there and thinking, 'Man, it was nice not to have someone cracking the whip on me all the time,' he said. "Here, it's hurry, hurry, hurry."

Seeing people truly happy with what they have was another eye-opener, he said.

"For me, to see how they live with so little and they are so happy, it definitely humbles you and makes you think a little bit differently about certain things and situations," he said. "When you go to a place like that and, as bad as it looks, you realize they are happy. At first, you look at the situation and feel sorry for them, but after you have been there a few days, you don't really feel

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Sandra Streit, Director
Jeremy Ahmann, Director

Tackle efficiency projects for fall

Early fall is a good time to take stock of what energy-efficiency needs you have and get ready for winter.

Call your cooperative or check its website to find out what rebates and services it offers. You might qualify for some money back on an efficiency investment.

Check out federal tax credits for energy efficiency and renewable energy efficiency improvements at https://energy-star.gov/about/federal_tax_credits

If you haven't had an energy audit of your home, sign up for one through your cooperative or a reputable energy auditor. It will be money well spent because the audit should show you exactly where you are wasting energy.

Not interested in an audit? Then do the

following on your own:

Leaks — If you don't first fix air leaks, then money spent on insulating over the leaks will be wasted. Leaks in ceilings, walls, foundations, etc. are typically the greatest source of heating and cooling losses, according to the Iowa Energy Center. The U.S. Department of Energy says up to 30 percent of conditioned air can be wasted through leaks. So caulk and seal leaks around windows, doors and ducts and plumbing vents that penetrate walls, ceilings and floors. Add gaskets behind electrical outlets on exterior walls. In the attic, seal open wall tops, chimneys, furnace flues and duct, plumbing and electrical runs with spray foam or rigid foam board.

Insulation — If your house was built before 1980, chances are it isn't well-insulated. The North American Insulation Manufacturers Association has developed the following recommended levels of insulation for attics, ceilings, walls and floors, based on DOE and the International Energy Conservation Code data. Southern Iowa and northern Missouri are in Zone 5, mid-and southern Missouri is in Zone 4, and eastern Oklahoma is in Zone 3.

Ducts — Repair leaky ducts, though not with duct tape, which will dry out and pull away from the holes.

Furnace — Do a maintenance check-up of your heating system; if your furnace is decades old, it's probably time to replace it with a system that may be 50

to 60 percent more efficient.

Thermostat — Install a programmable thermostat to automatically turn down the heat when you're away or when you're asleep. For every degree adjusted, you save 1 to 3 percent on heating costs, depending on your heating source. Typically, you'll get your money back in a year.

Pipes — Heating water in an average home accounts for 16 percent of total energy costs, according to DOE. Insulating a conventional water heater tank to at least R-24 can reduce standby heat losses by up to 45 percent (make sure your warranty allows for the installation of a water heater blanket). Wrapping pipes can reduce heat loss

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ALERT TODAY, ALIVE TOMORROW: HEADS UP FOR FARM SAFETY

Stay safe around downed power lines. Consider all lines, equipment and conductors to be live and dangerous.



If the vehicle is on fire, or you must exit for other safety reasons, follow these steps:

- 1.** Jump clear of the vehicle. Do not let any part of your body or clothes touch the ground and the machinery at the same time.
- 2.** Land with feet together and hop away in small steps to minimize the path of electric current and avoid electric shock.
- 3.** Keep going until you are at least 40 ft. away.
- 4.** Call for help. Make sure no one gets within 40 ft. of the downed line.
- 5.** Do not re-enter the area or vehicle until emergency responders and your electric co-op crews determine it is safe.

Tackle efficiency projects now to save this fall

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and can raise water temperatures 2 degrees to 4 degrees hotter than uninsulated piles. This allows you to lower the setting on the heater to at least 120 degrees. For every 10-degree drop in water temperature, you can save between 3 and 5 percent in energy costs.

Storm doors and windows —

According to DOE, installing storm doors and windows over single-pane glass can save up to 50 percent in energy use. If you can't afford real doors and windows, plastic sheeting will do the trick for only a few dollars.

Shade — If you don't have shade on

the south, east and west sides of your house, plant trees that will later provide welcome shade in the summer. Fall is the best time to plant. Trees can reduce surrounding air temperatures as much as 9 degrees, and the air under a shade tree can be as much as 25 degrees cooler

than on a nearby blacktop, according to DOE. Mature trees, when properly positioned on the south, west and east, can save up to 25 percent on heating and cooling combined. A 6- to 8-foot tree will begin shading the first year and can shade a roof in 5 to 10 years.

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sorry for them. They are happy. They just live a different lifestyle. They are used to what they have and are happy with it."

Of course, they are happier now with electricity, Steffen said, but "they were happy before without it."

The Pied Piper of Dos de Junio

Steffen also ended up as a Pied Piper, of sorts. The Americans brought toys and candy to the children of the villages, and once they were over their skepticism of these strangers coming to work in their village, nothing could keep them away.

"They don't really have toys," he said. "I mean, there are some toys in the stores that you can buy, but most of

them aren't going to spend their money on toys."

Steffen described the two boys he watched one afternoon running around a house chasing each other and pulling cars behind them, racing.

"When we finally got them to come over to us, we saw the cars were made out of soda bottles, and they were really cool. That's what they were playing with."

Stefen brought small battery-powered flashlights and small battery-powered, light-up fans to give away. And when word got out that Mr. Brandon was in the village, the children flocked. Maybe it was the toys, but Rural Missouri Editor Jim McCarty had a different opinion:

"We are positive there are some kiddos in Bolivia who are missing Mr. Brandon Steffen -- and NOT just because he gave them some goodies, but because he gave them some time," McCarty wrote on one of his Facebook posts from Bolivia where he was covering the project.

Time to reflect

Now that he is home and has had time to reflect on the experience, Steffen said he would do it again in a heartbeat.

"It was a very eye-opening experience. More than anything, it wasn't so much the work. At first it was, 'This is what I do, and I am going to help these people and get them power.' But after you get down there, it is more learning their lifestyles and culture.

"The work part was great, too, because we got to show those guys how we work. We actually learned a little bit from their guys on doing some things," he said.

But perhaps the biggest lesson of all was being thankful for family and friends; a safe, warm shower; good food and clean water...and safe, reliable, affordable electricity.

"It was an amazing experience, but I sure was glad to get out of there," Steffen said after he had had a chance to spend a fun weekend getaway with his wife, Mallory and their young sons Jax and Mason. "To actually see all that in person, and be among it and have to live in it for weeks, it was like, wow."

Cooperatives Build

There are many ways cooperatives build a stronger rural America

Being part of a cooperative means being part of something special. West Central Electric Cooperative is celebrating National Cooperative Month in October, along with 40,000 other cooperative businesses serving more than 120 million people nationwide.

"Cooperatives Build" is the theme of this year's National Cooperative Month. "This year's theme is excellent, because there are so many ways that cooperatives help to build a stronger rural America," said General Manager Mike Gray.

Consider these ways that co-ops build:

Cooperatives Build Trust

Most co-ops strive to adhere to seven key cooperative principles, which combine to help build trust between the co-op, its members and the community. For example, the first principle is Voluntary and Open Membership, which means that we are a voluntary organization open to all people to use our services

and willing to accept the responsibility of membership. The second principle, Democratic Member Control, gives members a voice in the cooperative's

policies and decisions. Through the fifth principle, Education, Training and Information, we enable members to contribute to the development of our cooperative.

Cooperatives Build Community

The seventh cooperative principle is Concern for Community. Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through employee involvement in local organizations,

through charitable contributions to community efforts and through support for schools. Together, WCE employees spend an enormous amount of time

being involved in their local communities in many ways such as serving on local economic develop-

ment boards and committees, judging at area 4-H fairs, participating in school career days, volunteering to coach recreational sports teams or serving as leaders for 4-H and scouts.

Cooperatives Build Jobs

Cooperatives generate jobs in their communities, keep profits local and pay

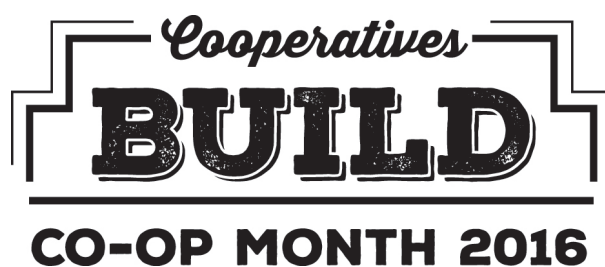
local taxes to help support community services. Cooperatives often take part in community improvement programs, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to benefit from the cooperative experience.

Cooperatives Build a Better World

Through all of the above ways, and more cooperatives build a better world. This idea is taken to extreme with the recent Energy Trails International Project through which linemen from cooperatives in Missouri and Oklahoma traveled to Bolivia to help their local electric cooperative energize villages where people have never had power.

With the seven cooperative principles binding these unique and diverse businesses, we can see that co-ops truly do build a better world.

For more information, visit www.coopmonth.coop.



**Don't forget to pick up your
FREE REFLECTIVE HALLOWEEN TREAT BAG
at your cooperative
offices in Higginsville and Oak Grove.**

From the Boardroom...

Regular meeting of the Board of Directors held July 28, 2016

The meeting was called to order by President Densil Allen, Jr. Robert Simmons, secretary of the cooperative, caused the minutes of the meeting to be kept. The following Directors were present: Max Swisegood, Clark Bredehoeft, Richard Strobel, Sandra Streit, Dale Jarman, and Jeremy Ahmann. Absent was Stan Rhodes. Also present were General Manager Mike Gray and General Counsel Shawn Battagler.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

After discussion, the agenda was approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The unapproved minutes of the regular meeting of the board of directors held June 28, 2016 were approved.

REVIEW OF EXPENDITURES FOR MAY

An itemized list of expenditures for June was presented to the board, and the payment of the bills was ratified.

APPROVAL OF REPORTS

The following June 2016 reports were approved: Operating Report (RUS Form 7) and Comparative Operating Statement including the Financial Statistical Report with month and budget comparisons and statistical data pertaining to operating revenue, expenses, margins, assets, liabilities, and KWH sales; Treasurer's Report and the written monthly Construction, Retirement, Maintenance and Operations Report.

SAFETY REPORT

Gray presented the safety report and reported 84 days without a lost-time accident.

MEMBERSHIPS

The applications submitted for membership in the cooperative were accepted and approved. Directors reviewed a list of requests for termination of membership in the cooperative which, along with their requests that their billings be deducted from their deposits and the remainder, if any, be refunded to them, were accepted and approved.

NRECA VOTING DELEGATE

Robert Simmons was named voting delegate and Dale Jarman, alternate, to the NRECA regional meeting.

N.W. ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE, INC. REPORT

Gray and Swisegood reported on their attendance at the N.W. meeting. Highlights included discussion regarding substation outages, solar issues, a new manager at North Central REC, an airplane striking a line and an AECL update regarding operations and sales.

DIRECTOR CONFERENCE REPORT

Board members reported on their attendance to the NRECA Directors Conference. They discussed a board culture assessment analysis, fiber networks and employment law issues.

ANNUAL MEETING

Gray and the board discussed details of the meeting and mail-in voting.

FACILITIES DISCUSSION AND BUDGET APPROVAL

Gray presented information on cost estimates for updating facilities and presented an estimated budget. The board approved a \$1 million budget for facility improvements.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Gray provided his Manager's Report for the month which included member satisfaction survey results, the governor's ham breakfast, a state fair donation request and a benefits update.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

MEETING ADJOURNED

FINANCIAL REPORT • <i>Statement of Operations</i> • June 2016			
	This month	YTD 2016	YTD 2015
Revenue	2,328,824	12,914,350	13,117,820
Power Bill Expense	1,439,253	8,188,406	8,191,242
Opertion & Maint. Expense	486,371	2,870,514	1,581,202
Depreciation Expense	166,540	990,893	948,195
Interest Expense	89,165	603,929	558,207
Total cost of Srvc. (Total Expense)	2,181,329	12,653,742	11,278,846
Operating Margins (Revenue less Expenses)	147,495	260,608	332,009
Other Margins	6,137	82,569	96,802
TOTAL MARGINS	153,632	343,177	428,811

Before winter sets in, do this...

Stock up on these efficiency supplies, noted by Popular Science:

- **Draft snakes** — Buy or make your own draft dodgers for doorways. Drafts can waste 5 to 30 percent of energy use, says the U.S. Department of Energy.
- **Furnace filters** — Buy a box of filters, enough to change them once a month during heating season. Or switch to a permanent, electrostatic filter that can catch about 88 percent of debris, far more than regular filters.
- **Plastic sheeting** — Buy a window insulation kit at your local hardware or discount store. Nearly invisible window

plastic will help your home hold in heat.

- **Caulking and weatherstripping** — Buy a supply to seal gaps that can leak as much as 30 percent of your annual energy use, according to DOE. Before you buy, see if you qualify for weatherization improvements through government programs such as community action corporations. Low-income households may get these supplies for free.
- **Pipe insulation** — If your water pipes aren't insulated, buy pre-slit pipe foam from your local home improvement store.

Save energy this fall at no cost

Here are a few changes you can make as the temperatures fall to save energy dollars without any financial investment:

- **Turn off the AC** — Even if heat lingers into the fall months, it won't be as intense as in the summer. So shut off the air conditioner, open up the windows on opposite sides of your house for cross-ventilation and cool down with a fan.
- **Reflect radiator heat** — If you have radiators in your house, place a sheet of aluminum foil between the radiator and the wall to push heat into the room.
- **Bleed radiator** — Before turning on the heat, bleed the radiator of air trapped in the coils to improve efficiency.
- **Rebalance heat registers** — If you have a forced-air system, redirect the air flow from summertime (higher in the house) to wintertime (lower in the house).
- **Change furnace filter** — At least

once a month during the heating season, change the filter. Dirty filters can over-work your furnace.

- **Clean out registers, radiators and heating vents** — Remove dust and dirt before cold weather hits.
- **Readjust thermostat** — For the heating mode, set it no higher than 68 degrees during the day and 55 degrees at night or when you're away for an extended period. For heat pumps, adjust downward by no more than 5 degrees to avoid activating the backup strip heating unnecessarily.
- **Check your fireplace** — Clean it to remove built-up creosote. Make sure the seal on the flue damper is as snug as possible. Caulk around the hearth. And if you're not going to use the fireplace at all, plug and seal the flue. Fireplaces are highly inefficient if they don't have an insert.

Locate leaks before cold sets in

The best way to measure air leaks in your home is through a blower door test that depressurizes the house. This test is typically part of an energy audit conducted by a qualified technician. Check with your cooperative to see if it offers energy audits or can recommend a vendor.

But even without a blower door test, here's how to find some air leaks, according to the U.S. Department of Energy:

- **Outside inspection** — On the outside of your house, inspect:
 - All areas where two different building materials meet, including all exterior corners, outdoor water faucets, where siding and chimneys meet and areas where the foundation and the bottom of exterior brick or siding meet
 - Exterior storm windows and doors to make sure they are securely fastened
 - Regular windows and doors – if you can rattle them or see daylight around them, you've got leaks
- **Inside inspection** — Inside your home, look for any cracks and gaps in the following areas:
 - Electrical outlets
 - Switch plates
 - Door and window frames
 - Electrical and gas service entrances
 - Baseboards

- Weatherstripping around doors
- Fireplace dampers
- Attic hatches
- Wall- or window-mounted air conditioners.
- Cable TV and phone lines
- Where dryer vents pass through walls
- Vents and fans
- Pipes and wires, foundation seals, even mail slots
- You also can do your own blower-door, pressurization test to find leaks. DOE says to:
 - Turn off all combustion appliances, such as gas-burning furnaces and water heaters, on a cool, very windy day; if you don't want to turn off the furnace, turn on all exhaust fans
 - Shut all windows, exterior doors and fireplace flues
 - Turn on all exhaust fans that blow air outside, such as your clothes dryer, bathroom fans, or stove vents, or use a large window fan to suck the air out of the rooms
 - Light an incense stick and pass it around the edges of common leak sites; wherever the smoke wavers or is sucked out of or blown into the room, there's a draft; you also can also use a damp hand to locate leaks — drafts will feel cool to your hand.