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Manager's Message

Another First for Graham County Electric Cooperative

Graham County Electric Cooperative experienced another first for the state of Arizona. On December 21, 2018, Pima Mayor C.B. Fletcher and Town Manager Sean Lewis were presented a check to help build a new manufacturing, sales and distribution facility to be occupied by Optimal Health Systems. This project was the first in Arizona to be funded through the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

GCEC Corporate Compliance Officer and Special Projects Manager Jenny Howard presented a \$375,000 check to Fletcher and Lewis. Santa Claus accompanied Howard during the presentation. The funding was made possible through the USDA REDL&G program, which is designed to help rural areas develop sustainable economies and create, enhance and/or preserve jobs. This project is a win-win-win.

Fletcher said he is ecstatic about how the different groups worked together to have the program come together.

"They can produce their own product here instead of hiring it out," said Lewis. "It just creates more jobs and allows them to work at a higher rate, so they can sell more and increase their tax base, which will help everyone."



Projects funded through the USDA REDL&G program do not cost GCEC's members anything. Funding for the REDL&G program comes to GCEC as an interest-free loan through the Rural Electrification Act of 1936. GCEC acts as a funding conduit for approved projects. Any costs associated with approved projects are borne by the loan recipient. The benefit for GCEC membership is increased electric sales, which helps keep rates down for all members. During the past six years, GCEC has experienced a 21 percent loss in electric sales due to municipal annexations of GCEC territory and installation of distributed generation.

This type of program offered by GCEC emphasizes the seventh cooperative principle, which states, "While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members."

This program is another example of GCEC's commitment to our mission statement: "We are committed to providing safe, reliable and efficient resources to enhance the lives of our members and the communities we serve."

Stay tuned for more good things to come.

—Kirk Gray