

MARCH 2015

C^Wurrents

Beekeeping: How Sweet It Is

Threatened honeybees important
to the economy and agriculture

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Employee Clyde French checks the boxes at Frank Bowler's beekeeping operation in Geronimo, Arizona. Frank once had 1,800 hives, but now has 250. Each hive houses 50,000 to 150,000 bees. He moves his bees around to pollinate oranges, mesquite and cotton.

PHOTO BY CAMERON HUMPHREY

Currents

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ARIZONA'S GENERATION AND
TRANSMISSION COOPERATIVES
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DUNCAN VALLEY
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Spring Clean to Increase Savings

Adding a few items to your list of spring chores can help make your home more energy efficient and deliver electric bills that won't make you sweat when temperatures soar.

- **Start with your air conditioner.** Spring and early summer are good times to make sure your air conditioning unit is ready to work when you flip the switch. Give your unit a do-it-yourself cleaning. Shut it off, and clear away leaves and yard debris. Inside the unit, clean or replace filters that can restrict air flow and reduce overall efficiency. Dust the fan blades if you can do so safely. Make sure air can flow freely over the inside and outside coils, and vacuum registers to remove any dust buildup. If you have not done so recently, hire a professional to inspect and service your unit.

- **Check weather stripping.** When using window units, ensure weather stripping is in place. It should be between the middle of the top window pane and the bottom pane.

- **Check out your roof.** See how well your roof has weathered the winter. Few things can shorten the life of your home faster than a roof leak. Even a minor one can damage your attic insulation before you know it. A roofing professional can assess and repair leaks and loose or missing shingles. Clear gutters, too.

- **Make your electric utility a resource.** The energy advisers at your utility can help



you determine the right steps for your home, including whether an energy audit will help find more savings. You also can visit www.TogetherWeSave.com to find out how little measures around the house can add up to big energy savings as temperatures outside climb. ■



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Threatened honeybees are important to agriculture and the economy.

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Four Headed to Washington, D.C.

Students win the opportunity to visit the nation's capital, participate in democracy and discuss keeping electricity affordable

Keeping electricity affordable in rural America is on the minds of four lucky high school juniors selected for the 2015 Washington Youth Tour.

Each year, Graham County Electric Cooperative provides four local juniors an opportunity for a weeklong, all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C.

The competition requires students to take a written test and write a 350-word essay on an assigned topic.

Finalists are interviewed by a panel of judges.

This year's essay topic was "Keeping Electricity Affordable in Rural America in the Face of New EPA Regulations on Coal Power Generation."

Just a few months ago, GCEC asked for your help with this hot topic. These students now have the opportunity to speak with their congressional representatives about energy in a rural setting.

Adrienne Wakefield

"There are a few alternative resources for producing energy, but none currently are as affordable and easily accessible as coal and other fossil fuels," Adrienne wrote. "Changing the source of electricity in rural America would be very beneficial to our environment, but it would take a lot of extra money to make that change. We need to implement these changes wisely to balance these benefits and the effects to our economy."

The daughter of Shawn and

Candace Wakefield, Adrienne has been trying to make a difference in her community, volunteering in Make a Difference Day and Earth Day.

Her hobbies include sports, music, outdoors, reading and art. She is junior class president at Thatcher High School and is involved in many activities, including Show Choir, Spirit Club, National Honor Society and her church.

Adrienne's achievements include Personal Progress Award, 2013 Freshman of the Year, President's Education and Honor Roll, and eighth-grade salutatorian.

Her plans include attending a four-year university to become a teacher, with an elementary or secondary education certificate.

Adrienne says she loves to be around people, and anticipates the trip will be fun and educational.

Abigail Montierth

"While these are respectable reasons to reduce power plant emissions, the EPA seems to have overlooked how these regulations might affect citizens of the U.S., especially those living in rural areas," Abigail wrote. "I know that as long as we stand together as citizens of the U.S., energy can remain affordable for rural Americans and we can still improve the environment. We can, and should, stand up for affordable energy."

Abigail is the daughter of Brad and Jeanette Montierth.

Her reference letter stated, "Abi is a very hardworking individual who is never afraid to ask questions or offer responses to questions."

Abigail serves in many leadership positions, including in her Young Women's church group, Safford High School Interact Club and Secretary of Interact service club.

She is in the top 10 of Safford High School's class of 2016 and has received a superior ranking for the Arizona Study Program, which includes a written theory test and playing piano pieces and techniques for a judge.

Once she graduates from High School, Abigail plans to attend Northern Arizona University and is eligible for the Resident Lumberjack Scholars Award. She wants to complete a bachelor's degree in chemistry and receive a master's in physician assistant studies to be able to become a physician's assistant and work in a clinic.

Abigail says she is outgoing and willing to try new things and get out of her comfort zone to learn and make the most of any experience.

That is why she will make a great representative in Washington, D.C.

Kevin Reed

"The EPA needs to develop more flexibility not just on a state level, but also consider the situation of each plant," Kevin wrote. "One-size-fits-all just doesn't work for this

Our Ambassadors

Each of these students is involved in the community and wants to make a difference. It was a hard decision for our judges to pick only four students, but these youth will be great ambassadors for Graham County Electric Cooperative in fighting for our electric issues. They will learn the importance of being active participants in our democracy and how they can contribute to rural America. Congratulations, recipients, and have a great trip in June.



Adrienne Wakefield

problem, especially when dealing with rural communities. Each plant is in a different stage and is working to decrease emissions in their own way. Change has to happen, but reasonable progression.”

The son of Rita Reed, Kevin loves camping and cooking for his mom. His passions include public speaking and being spontaneous.

He loves finding out more about a person and has a business career goal.

His reference letter stated, “Kevin continues to have an excellent work ethic and diligently works on anything he is asked to do. Kevin is invaluable when working in a group setting as he is a true leader. Last year Kevin won first place in marketing at the Arizona FBLA State Leadership Conference. This qualified him for the FBLA National Leadership Conference. At this conference, Kevin received the Building Better Business Membership award. This is given to an outstanding Arizona FBLA National Leadership Conference attendee.”

Kevin’s career goal is in the



Abigail Montierth

area of marketing research analysis or corporate law. Either would come in handy when faced with the economic restrictions from the EPA’s new regulations.

Besides being a geometry peer tutor, Kevin participates in sports and enjoys cheering on his Thatcher High School team. He is a member of Graham County’s Students Against Destructive Decisions and Students Taking a New Direction organizations, and has traveled the state advocating against alcohol and tobacco use.

Kevin is anxious to travel to Washington, D.C., to support Graham County Electric on important issues.

Shane Skinner

In his essay, Shane provided data and stated, “The expense would be passed on to consumers. In addition, 68 coal plants are scheduled to close due to these new rules. Since electrical costs are based on supply and demand, it doesn’t take an economic genius to realize that consumers will be adversely affected. Since everyone in the Gila Valley



Kevin Reed

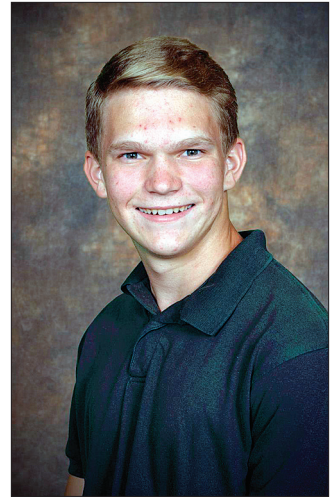
is a coal-powered electricity consumer, this hits very close to home.”

Shane, the son of Randall and Wendy Skinner, attends Thatcher High School.

Shane’s hobbies and interests include running, reading, gardening, building, playing the piano, singing in show choir, working at Caboose Frozen Treats, weightlifting, engineering, chemistry, physics, history, farming, missiles and submarines.

His reference letter stated, “Shane always presents himself well. He is an outstanding student who performs at a high academic level in advanced classes. Shane has shown himself to be ambitious, dedicated and dependable. He will accomplish all his future goals, and is a great example to me and all those who know him.”

Shane enjoys learning and meeting new people. His goal is to attend a university and major in engineering, followed by an internship and a career in the Department of Defense as a mechanical engineer, specializing in creating new, innovative, smart weapons. ■



Shane Skinner



The Sweet Life

What began as a couple of days' work turned into 50-plus years as a beekeeper

By Diane Curtis Junion



Frank Bowler's association with bees spans more than 50 years.

Photo by Diane Junion



Above, a few of Frank's 250 hives. Below, a peek inside at the bees.

Photos by Cameron Humphrey



Frank Bowler of Geronimo has had his share of bee stings. It comes with the job.

"You learn how to work them," says Frank, who has worked with bees for more than 50 years. "Some days I never get stung, but I've had 20 to 30 bee stings in a day, too."

Frank kind of fell into a career as a beekeeper. He was sitting with friends at Granny Blakes in Ft. Thomas drinking a beer when Bud Kenson asked him if he wanted a job for a couple of days. He needed help working his bees at Black Rock. At the time, Bud had more than 2,000 hives.

Frank had been a lumberjack on Mt. Graham, cutting logs at Cutter and San Carlos. A log rolled over his big toe and broke it, so he was having a hard time making money.

In his short stint with Bud, it was clear Frank was good with the bees, so Bud talked Frank into taking half of his hives. Each hive houses 50,000 to 150,000 bees.

After a few years, Bud sold the rest of his hives to Frank.

Frank processed 5 gallons

of honey a day, working the hives seven days a week.

"You never get caught up," he says, noting that at one time he had 1,800 hives.

Frank now works 250 hives, with the help of Clyde French and Cameron Humphrey.

At the peak of his business, Frank sold his harvest to Sue Bee Honey, shipping six semi loads—208,000 pounds of honey—to Anaheim, California, to be processed annually. He now works with two different vendors.

Moving the hives around for pollination is challenging, Frank says, noting when he moved them to the Gila River bottom area, the bears would break them open. More than 125 hives were destroyed.

Now he moves them to Mesa or California around orange fields in March or April. They stay about a month, then come back to the mesquites. They are moved to the cotton fields on July 4.

Frank says the bees produce better on long-staple than short-staple. They pollinate in the cotton boll of short-staple.

With long-staple, the bees are attracted to a sweat gland on the underside of the leaf.

Frank and his wife, Marilyn, have four grown children—one who is allergic to bees. Frank says he had to rush his daughter to the doctor when she went into anaphylactic shock from a bee sting.

A life member of the Safford Elks, Frank was exalted ruler when the club was the place to go for dances and entertainment in the Gila Valley.

"You can make something that is really good (honey) out of a beehive," Frank says, explaining why he continues as a beekeeper. "You're out on your own and there is pride in what you do and in the product you produce." ■

Celebrating 70 Years of Service

Graham County Electric Cooperative hosted members Saturday, February 14, in the Pima School cafeteria to celebrate 70 years of providing electricity to the community.

As members signed in, they received a tote bag with a blanket, hat and other goodies, along with a ticket for door prizes at the end of the program.

Committed to starting on time, President Reuben McBride welcomed members and dignitaries, and promised to keep the meeting running quickly.

After the invocation and a patriotic video, McBride led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Secretary Tommy Clonts provided information regarding the annual meeting notice, proof of mailing and meeting minutes.

Election Committee Chairwoman Lynn Daley reported results for the three districts. Only one district was uncontested. For District 1, incumbent Jim Bryce retained his seat, defeating Larry Morris, 193 to 160. For District 2, Gerald Schmidt ran unopposed and retains his seat. For District 3, Jerry Kempton narrowly retained his seat, defeating Mark Claridge, 92 to 89.

Guest speakers included Arizona Electric Power Cooperative CEO Patrick Ledger and Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative CEO John Wallace. Both mentioned the recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ruling on coal-fired production of electricity.



By 2020, Arizona must reduce emissions by more than 50 percent. They also thanked the audience for their participation in telling the EPA this is an undue hardship.

In a video, NRECA CEO Jo Ann Emerson thanked folks for making their voices

heard and helping in the EPA regulation fight.

GCEC General Manager Steve Lines showed pictures of the cooperative when it was founded and compared it with changes that have occurred during the past 70 years.

The co-op's original office

Above, Dick Berryhill presents a door prize to Vernon Stinson. Left, GCEC's Brent Wiltbank and daughter Ella at the safety demonstration board—one of the annual meeting features.

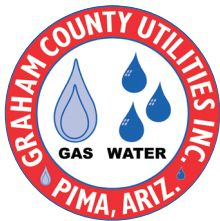
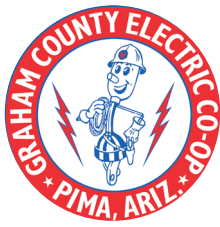
Photos by Geoff Oldfather

now houses the Pima Museum and is across the street from the co-op's current office.

Some audience members shook their heads as they remembered what it was like when they were kids.

Lines noted the co-op retired some capital credits in 2014. He also recognized Dick Berryhill, GCEC's electric system superintendent, who will retire before the next annual meeting with 41 years of service.

The program closed with the presentation of door prizes. Susan Bernstein and Jed Claridge won televisions. ■



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Manager's Message

Trees and Power Lines

We need both of them, but just not together

With springtime fast approaching, we need to remind everyone about tree growth and power lines.

We enjoy and need trees in our lives because of the many things they provide. Trees are an important part of our existence here on earth because of the role they play in nature. They also provide a home to wildlife, shade for us in the summer and, in some cases, delicious fruit for us to eat.

The other thing we need are power lines. We rely on power lines to get electricity into our homes, businesses, schools and hospitals.

The cooperative always tries to improve reliability to its electrical grid so there are minimal power interruptions, such as blinks and outages. With overhead power lines, the power flows many miles along the wires on the top of the poles to your home. When things cause that power to be diverted from the wires into the ground, it short circuits the system, causing blinks or outages.

Trees under or near power lines can cause such problems.



When they grow into the wires, or the trees are close enough to touch the wires when the wind blows or if a tree falls during high winds, it can tear down a power line.

A big concern Graham County Electric Co-op has with this tree/power line problem is safety. People can be injured by touching a tree that is touching a high-voltage power line. Climbing a tree near a power line is hazardous. This is one reason the co-op visits schools and has a booth at the fair with our safety display, teaching kids about power line safety.

Another issue is line loss. One part of line loss is the electricity that goes through these trees and into the ground when they touch the power line. Even though that electricity never makes it to your home or business, GCEC still has to pay Arizona Electric Power Cooperative for providing it. All of our members actually pay for it.

This is why GCEC has

an aggressive tree-trimming maintenance program. Our crews are always trimming in different areas in Graham County so we can keep trees and power lines separated.

We ask our members to please be understanding when our crews ask you for permission to trim a hazardous tree near or on your property. We also encourage our members to look up before planting trees, and avoid planting near or under overhead lines.

We also offer our services to members who want to safely remove a hazardous tree near a power line.

Let's all enjoy the beautiful trees here in our valley and also keep enjoying the comforts electricity provides. The only way we can do this is to keep the two separated.

Trimming trees responsibly helps us keep the lights on, keeps your power costs down and provides a safer electrical system. Thank you.

Steve Lines
General Manager