

A Moving Tribute

Memorial draws attention to safety and the needs of fallen linemen and their families

Each year, an average of 45 linemen lose their lives in the line of duty doing work often taken for granted, leaving behind families who depended on them.

Many more suffer severe injuries that make them unable to work and support those who count on them.

After experiencing his first fatality at the electrical line contracting company in Texas where he was CEO, Chad Dubea wanted to honor the man who died.

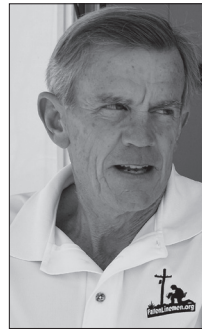
When he could not find a national place of honor for linemen, Dubea decided it was time to start one—not only to honor fallen and severely injured power linemen, but to help their families.

In 2013, Dubea donated \$250,000 to start the non-profit now known as Fallen Lineman Organization, headed by Executive Director Mike Boyd.

Boyd takes a memorial to linemen rodeos and safety gatherings to honor the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep the lights on, and draw attention to the importance of safety.

“We are in the process of securing a location for a permanent national memorial,” he says.

As part of a visit to Arizona in April, Boyd stopped at Graham County Electric Cooperative, providing information about the organization and



Mike Boyd

the message that safety is both a personal and corporate responsibility.

“I thought it was a really good presentation and a good service they are promoting,” says Graham County Electric Lineman Mitch Brown.

“There was a lot of information, some things we don’t usually hear about, like contacts,” adds Graham County Electric Lineman Trent Bingham. “As linemen, the danger of what we’re doing is always there in the back of your mind, but you don’t really want to talk about it.”

The electric line industry employs approximately 200,000 hardworking men and women and is in the top five for most dangerous jobs, says Boyd, who notes it takes another 150,000 workers to support these linemen and linewomen.

“Due to the aging infrastructure around the country and storms that devastate communities, these men and women are forced to work in extremely hazardous conditions,” he says. “They perform their duties without expecting recognition or praise with devout dedication. These men and women are proud to call themselves linemen.”

Fallen Linemen Organization recognizes the lineman trade for its 24/7 on-call dedication.

“Linemen work under unforgiving, hazardous



Right, a bronze statue of a lineman is part of the traveling memorial.

How You Can Help the Cause

The mission of the Fallen Linemen Organization is to help any electrical lineworker severely injured or killed on the job, and their family.

“It is always our goal to emotionally support the families, no matter their financial needs,” says Mike Boyd, executive director of FLO.

If you know someone who needs assistance—or have information about a fallen or injured electrical lineworker—contact Boyd at mboyd@fallenlinemen.org.

Fallen Linemen Organization accepts one-time and monthly recurring donations. The organization also is looking for people to spread the word about its outreach program, assist with fundraising or console a family in an area that loses a loved one. Fallen Linemen Organization is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

For details on how to donate or volunteer, visit www.fallenlinemen.org.



conditions, in extreme weather, wearing fire-resistant clothing, rubber gloves and sleeves,” says Boyd. “Being an electrical lineman is a skill that takes years to master, and requires tremendous physical stamina and knowledge. These characteristics set the electric utility lineman apart from all other trades. The men and women in this industry deserve the title of first responders just like police and firefighters.”

The organization is committed to memorialize fallen electrical lineworkers and care for their families by providing moral and financial support. But it also has a mission to improve safety for lineworkers.

As Boyd gathers information about lineworkers injured or killed on the job, he consolidates accident reports and shares them with safety professionals to make working in the industry as safe as possible.

“We started this organization to unite, recognize, support and memorialize all fallen linemen,” says Boyd, who has worked in the industry in various capacities for 42 years. “We base this organization on the heart of all linemen.”

Boyd followed a family tradition common among

lineworkers. His father worked in the industry for 56 years, beginning after his tour in the Navy during World War II.

His father-in-law also was a lineman. He survived many injuries, including a fall from a 60-foot pole. He crushed his hip and leg. After a year of rehabilitation, he continued his career.

Boyd says he worked for contractors at a time when fatalities and serious injuries were common. Under his watch, he says, he had to tell two families their sons were not coming home.

“This industry is a much safer place, but is still one of the most dangerous jobs in America,” he says, noting he is honored to lead the Fallen Linemen Organization.

Brent Wiltbank, safety and loss control coordinator for Graham County Electric, notes the value of Boyd’s visit to himself and his crew.

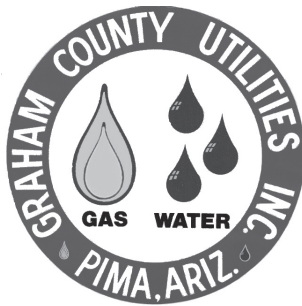
“The presentation reminded us of the importance of safety and of looking out for one another so that at the end of the day, we can all go home to our families,” Wiltbank says. ■

An Arizona lineworker in a solemn moment reading the mission statement of the Fallen Linemen Organization on the back of the traveling memorial.

Photos by Jim Donahue

GCU Annual Meeting is June 20

Three seats are up for election this year



The annual meeting of Graham County Utilities is Saturday, June 20, at 9 a.m. in the Pima school cafeteria.

Three directors will be elected to the nine-member board. Positions up this year are held by Larry Morris, Mike Crockett and Jim Bryce. Terms are for three years.

Unlike Graham County Electric Cooperative, GCU is not divided into districts. Candidates may reside anywhere on the system, as long as they receive either water or natural gas from GCU.

GCU's democratically elected board of directors is responsible for setting policy for the gas and water cooperative. Directors are committed

to policies that result in a safe and reliable system, fair rates, financial responsibility and superior member service.

Each year, GCU members can seek nomination for director positions through the petition process established by the cooperative's bylaws.

All GCU members in good standing and living within the co-op's service area may become a director, except for employees of the cooperative and those who are in any way employed or financially interested in a competing enterprise or business.

The GCU board meets the first Wednesday of each month. At times, directors are asked to represent the

cooperative at additional meetings.

If you are interested in having your name on the ballot, pick up a petition from the Graham County Electric Cooperative/Graham County Utilities office in Pima.

Twenty-five member signatures are required for each candidate petition. If two names are listed on a membership account, only one person is eligible to sign the petition.

The deadline for returning petitions is Friday, May 14, by 5:30 p.m.

Director positions will be filled when election results are announced at the annual meeting in June. ■

Director Responsibilities for Graham County Utilities

Mission and Purpose

The board regularly evaluates whether decisions and policies help the cooperative successfully further its commitment to serving our communities by providing excellent member services, and safe and reliable gas and water services at a competitive price.

Governance

The cooperative's board of directors approves and may amend business rules and rates, which govern the cooperative's dealings with members.

Legal and Ethical Accountability

GCU board members adopt and enforce policies, resolutions and actions governing ethical conduct, accountability and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Financial Oversight

The board of directors establishes financial targets and goals and approves the cooperative's budget. Board members also review and approve significant investments, loans and acquisitions, and the rates and terms for providing gas and water service to cooperative members. The board is responsible for evaluating periodic financial statements, reports and information, and considering internal control procedures.

Operational Oversight

The board discharges its duty to manage the affairs of the cooperative by delegating day-to-day management responsibilities to the general manager. The general manager is hired by and answers to the board. Board members consider and approve GCU business initiatives.

Code of Ethics

Directors should conduct themselves, personally and professionally, as well as in their representative capacity for GCU, in accordance with the highest moral and ethical standards.

Employee Spotlight

Bill Bolinger, foreman for Graham County Utilities, could borrow the popular movie title “The Hundred-Foot Journey” to describe the trip from where he began his career in the utility business 31 years ago to where he is today.

Bill journeyed across the street in 1989 when Graham County Electric Cooperative bought General Utilities.

The small gas and water utility was a family affair not only for the owners, the Fredricksons, but also Bill.

All of Bill’s life his father, Delford, was one of only a handful of employees. It was natural Bill would follow in his dad’s footsteps at General Utilities.

Bill is one of five GCU employees responsible for all aspects of operation of the gas system that serves natural gas customers from the west end of Peridot, east to San Jose, south of Artesia and north to Airport Road, excluding only the Safford city limits.

He is in charge of inspection and maintenance of 54 regulator stations where GCU takes delivery of natural gas from El Paso Natural Gas/Kinder Morgan. His duties include inspecting emergency valves throughout the gas system.

Bill and his crew also are responsible for operation of the water system that serves Pima and Fort Thomas. His certifications include arc welding and acetylene welding.



Bill Bolinger has spent the past 25 years of his career working for Graham County Utilities.

A hometown boy, Bill was born in Safford and raised in Pima, where he and his wife of 40 years, Ida Farrington Bolinger, raised five children.

Their daughter Stacy, her husband, Shane Baker, and their three sons are stationed at the Air Force base in Las Vegas. The rest of the kids have stayed close to home. Nick and Destiny live in Pima with their two daughters and a son, as do Shawwna and Joe Peterson and their two daughters. Leia is in Safford. Terry and her husband, Clint Neff, live south of Safford.

Bill’s co-workers describe him as a quiet, respectful, hard worker who is loyal, dependable and dedicated to whatever he is doing.

“He is hardworking and easy to get along with,” says Wes Reidhead, also a foreman



Bill, left, and Wes Reidhead add odorant to make the natural gas detectable.

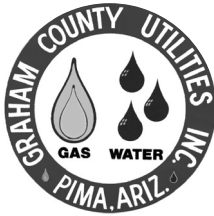
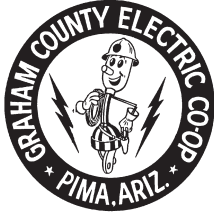
for GCU. “I’ve learned a lot of what I know from Bill.”

Manager Steve Lines says Bill’s work ethic is a model for all employees.

“Bill is old school when it comes to his job,” Steve says. “He gives the best he has every minute of every day, so that’s

just what we’ve come to expect. He’s going to be there every day and give 110 percent.”

Bill says the utility business has been good to him. As he looks toward retirement in a few years, he hopes to dust off his fishing boat and put it to use. ■



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Manager's Message

Graham County Utilities Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Twenty-five years in a dog's life is two lifetimes. To a teenager, 25 years seems like an eternity. Ask an 80-year-old, and he might tell you it was the time between going to bed one night and getting up the next morning.

Here at Graham County Utilities, we think 25 years is a big deal!

A little more than 25 years ago, Graham County Electric Cooperative was approached with the challenge of taking over the natural gas and water utility. General Utilities, as it was known back then, was a small family-owned and operated utility company, ready to sell out. Some concerned electric co-op members proposed that GCEC buy the company so members could have control over their gas and water. The challenge was met, and a separate utility cooperative was formed with its own board of directors. That decision paid off for the members. Control of the utility was put in the hands of those who use them, those who have the best reason to be wise stewards.

Please join us at our 25th annual meeting Saturday, June 20, at 9 a.m. in the Pima school cafeteria. It only comes along once. Who knows? There may even be a surprise or two in store.

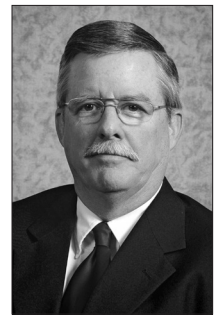
Do not miss out on the opportunity to participate in this one-member, one-vote process that sets co-ops apart from other business models.

The process of electing three new or incumbent directors has begun. Petitions for those wishing to run for seats are available and may be picked up in our office at 9 West Center St. in Pima. They must be completed and returned no later than close of business May 14. Incumbents running for re-election are Larry Morris, Mike Crockett and Jim Bryce.

Ballots will be mailed to all members in May and must be returned to the office by noon on June 18. As members, it is important to vote, even when candidates are unopposed.

Results will be reported by the election committee chairperson at the meeting. Board President Jeff Larson and I also will present reports.

Make plans now to celebrate with us! You will have an opportunity to share your opinions, concerns or even compliments, and may win one of the numerous door prizes.



Steve Lines