

MAY 2018

# CURRENTS

## Powering the Community

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Clint Woods logs GIS information on a power pole for Graham County Electric Cooperative.

DIANE JUNION





Office Communications Manager Diane Junion watches as Member Service Technician Curtis Whittle checks the pressure on a gas meter.

## Job Shadowing Leads to Better Employees

*Learning about other jobs at the utility helps employees collaborate more successfully*

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to do someone else's job? Some Graham County Electric and Graham County Utilities staff got a taste of just that recently by participating in job shadowing.

The inside office staff had a chance to go with outside crews, and outside employees worked in the office. Jobs being shadowed included gas and water connects, line locates, irrigation pump connections, disconnections, meter repairs, cashiering, billing, setting up new services and meter reading.

Lineman Ryan Botkins provided a tour of the GCEC/GCU plant offices and substation in Thatcher. He reviewed a typical morning "tailgate" meeting, as well as the storage facilities for the gas, water and electric utility equipment.

He reminded co-workers how difficult a lineman's job can be when the territory runs as far east as San Jose, as far west as Bylas, then south to Bonita and north of the Gila River.

It may take several hours to connect just one meter, depending on the travel time

if it is in a remote part of the county.

The office staff watched Ryan reconnect an irrigation pump.

"We need to know what size the irrigation pump is, which includes the horsepower rating and the voltage," says Ryan.

Linemen check the primary phase, the transformers, the secondary quadruplex hook-up and the customer's service panel. Once everything looks good, the fuse door is "closed-in" and the line is energized.

The "closed-in" task takes a steady hand and a long,

specialized pole called an extendo stick. The nonconductive fiberglass hot line tool extends up to 40 feet.

"The tool allows the lineman to energize transformers from the ground, out of harm's way," Ryan says. "It's a valuable tool that we depend on to get the job done."

With the meter plugged in and the line energized, readings are taken and everything is checked to ensure the voltage is good and the customer can use the pump.

Curtis Whittle is the member service technician. Member Service



**Above, Lineman Ryan Botkins does a pump connection while office staff observe. Top, Meter Reader James Ornelas observes Member Service Representative Stacey Perkins process a member payment.**

Representatives Tracy Botkins, LaDawn Hawkins and Stacey Perkins spent the day shadowing him.

His job involves connecting and disconnecting gas, electric and water services. On any given day, he could have a dozen service orders. This includes troubleshooting meter readings and changing out the registers.

“It is trying to figure out why the meter was not reading any usage when you know they are using gas,” Curtis says. “Dirt can get in the dials.

I have to figure out what the problem is. Sometimes it is a simple fix, but other times it takes a while.”

Appointments are scheduled for gas connections. The technician enters the home and ensures all appliances have closed gas valves.

“At the beginning of the day, I was a little scared of the gas, but spending the day seeing what Curtis did helped me to understand how important it is to take the proper steps to work with the gas to ensure the safety of everyone,”

**“It allows us to know how all of our jobs influence each other and how to work together and be a great team.”**

—April Johnson

Tracy says. “By the end of the day, it was less scary.”

When making a gas connection, water heaters and appliances must be checked before and after the gas meter has been connected. Pressure checks and lighting all pilot lights are part of the process.

Line Locator Jeannie Damron reviewed her job duties with April Johnson and Jeniffer Chesley. A special Blue Stake instrument is used when locating lines.

The user needs to be accurate in marking all underground lines. The lines are color coded: red is electric, blue is water, yellow is gas, green is sanitary sewer, pink is temporary survey and orange is communications.

After the lines are marked, additional markers can be placed. Nylon color-coded “whiskers” can be driven into the ground with the support of a 15-penny nail, in case painted lines are disrupted during excavation.

“We counted, measured, tagged poles and went onto construction sites,” Jeniffer says. “I never knew there were so many underground lines, and I was so intrigued by the locating process.”

“The machine can be very tricky, but Jeannie was able to show how to be accurate,”

says April.

Meter Readers James Ornelas, Lynette Jacobson, Briana Jacobs and Julie Garcia shadowed the office staff during busy times of answering phones, posting payments, providing information on accounts and answering questions from members and vendors. While providing excellent and friendly member service, accuracy is critical.

Everyone agreed it was informative to see what peers do at the co-op. Everyone was helpful, friendly and courteous to each other when going into members’ homes.

Whether inside the office or out in the field, a person’s job, can change at any moment. An outage can stop normal maintenance or constant phone calls can distract from input of a reconnect order.

“It allows us to know how all of our jobs influence each other and how to work together and be a great team,” says April.

“I could see how working in the outside elements could get difficult, as I was only out for one day, not in the middle of the summer or winter, and I got flush from the sun,” Tracy says. “We better appreciate those people that we work with every day.” ■



## GCEC Annual Meeting

*Technology speeds registration process*

When members arrived to the February 10 Graham County Electric Cooperative annual meeting, they were greeted with iPads instead of binders.

Signing in for the GCEC meeting was completely different, as members provided their service location address and were registered electronically.

“This is a first for the co-op,” says Office Manager Kim Larkey. “Using the iPads to access the membership database, the office staff was able to register the members quickly and efficiently.”

Once members were registered, they were provided goodie bags, door prize tickets and refreshments.

“I think the members were excited to see the co-op using the upgraded technology,” Kim says. “The new electronic registration made it so easy.”

Members didn’t have to find their names listed amongst a long list of names in numerous binders sitting on the table.

“It seemed like there wasn’t a wait to register those coming through the doors and we were able to start on time,” says Communications Manager and Administrative Assistant Diane Junion.

The Pima High School Show Choir opened the meeting with the national anthem. The audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance. After the business of reporting a quorum, reading of the notice of the annual meeting, proof of mailing and introduction of directors and guest, Election Committee Chairwoman Lynn Daley provided the election report.

2017 Washington Youth Tour students Leisel Griffin and Kayla West provided a short summary of their trip taken last summer. The 2018 student delegates are Camilla Larson from Safford, Brock Jones from Thatcher, and Hayden Ashby and Trae Nelson, both from Pima. They will travel to Washington,



**Above, Chris Claridge and April Johnson each won a new TV at the annual meeting. Middle, members checked in for the annual meeting using iPads. Top, the meeting is a great time to learn what the co-op is all about.**

D.C., in June.

Arizona Electric Power Cooperative’s CEO Patrick Ledger and Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Director Phil Bashaw provided updates on the electric industry, both in the political arena and in production. CEO/General Manager Kirk Gray provided local statistics and updates.

After a motion to end the business portion of the meeting, drawings for the door prizes began. Many members walked away with different items. Chris Claridge and April Johnson won the two TVs. ■



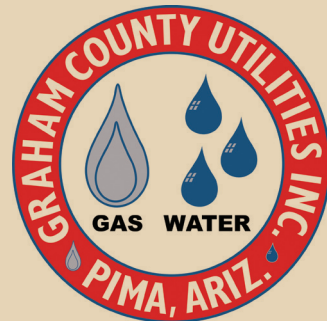
## Graham County Utilities Annual Meeting

As Graham County Electric Cooperative finishes its electric member annual meeting, the focus shifted to the annual meeting for Graham County Utilities, the gas and water company.

Join GCU on Saturday, June 2, at 9 a.m. in the Pima School Cafeteria to hear from CEO/General Manager Kirk Gray concerning issues facing the gas and water company. The election committee will provide results for the board of directors. GCU is directed by a nine member board elected by the member-owners. Each year, three seats are up for election.

The deadline for petitions for the board of directors was April 26. Ballots should arrive in your mailbox soon. Please take the time to exercise your right and responsibility as a member-owner to vote.

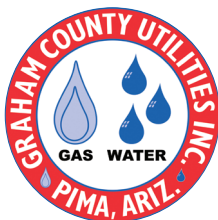
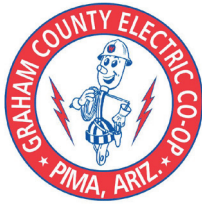
Join with family, friends, neighbors and the GCU staff on June 2 for utility statistics and information, socializing and, of course, great door prizes. ■



**When: Saturday, June 2, 9 a.m.**

**Where: Pima School Cafeteria**

**Why: To vote for board members and learn about issues facing the gas and water company**



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Secretary Jim Bryce  
Chris Claridge  
Tommy Clonts  
Stephen Hooper  
Gene R. Larson  
Reuben McBride  
Gerald Schmidt

**Graham County Utilities Board of Directors:**

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Vice President Steven Hooper  
Secretary Mike Crockett  
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**CEO and General Manager:**

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**Manager's Message**

# Long Road to Success

In the March 2017 edition of your Currents magazine, I said that by the time you read the Manager's Message, the Arizona Legislature should pass legislation exempting cooperatives from remitting unclaimed patronage capital retirements to the Arizona Unclaimed Property Division.

Due to an amendment to the Senate version of the bill, the House of Representatives did not pass the legislation in 2017.

But in adherence to cooperative principles, all the electric cooperatives in Arizona came together to push the legislation through the 2018 legislative session. On March 23, 2018, Gov. Doug Ducey signed Senate Bill 1412 into law. This allows cooperatives to use unclaimed patronage capital retirements for community programs whose purpose is consistent with our bylaws and approved by our board of directors.

Graham County Electric Cooperative Foundation Inc. was formed to administer these funds for our Youth Scholarship Program, Washington Youth Tour Program and Utility Assistance Program.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives is the



sixth cooperative principle. it states: "By working together through local, national, regional and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs."

A big thank you goes out to Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association and its tireless work in getting this legislation across the finish line. A special thank you to Phil Bashaw for all his efforts and professionalism during this two-year legislative process.

Once again, when cooperatives work with each other, we can collectively accomplish great things. We still have many obstacles facing rural cooperatives, but with the cooperative business model and cooperative member/owners we can make a difference in the communities we serve.

Stay plugged in through our social media platforms and our website for more challenges to come where we can collectively make a difference.

—Kirk Gray

*Graham County Utilities consumer water reports are now available for viewing on our website at [www.gce.coop](http://www.gce.coop).*