What Would Life Be Like Without Electric Co-ops?

BY TOM WALCH || GENERAL MANAGER || TWALCH@GVP.ORG

A couple of years ago I wrote about the holiday movie classic, “It’s a Wonderful Life” in this column. The lead character, George Bailey (played by Jimmy Stewart), falls on hard times and wishes he had never been born. On Christmas Eve, just when it seems the Baileys are over the hump, an absent-minded mistake by his uncle and business partner threatens ruin, raising the specter of bankruptcy and scandal. When George despairs, Clarence, a bumbling guardian angel, is dispatched to guide him through his challenges. Clarence provides a view of the world without George Bailey, using comic relief. George comes to see the value and strength of the community he helped build. The community comes through for George in the end.

As my years in the co-op world have deepened my appreciation for Frank Capra and Stewart’s masterpiece, it has also deepened my appreciation for the parallels of the underlying story line of the movie and the cooperative movement. The movie shines a light on the role of the community in building quality of life. I like to think that our electric cooperative has played a pivotal role in building quality of life here in the Grand Valley.

So what do you think life would be like if community leaders had not founded Grand Valley Power 79 years ago? Would it be a wonderful life?

Living in the United States in 2015, it is nearly impossible to imagine life without electricity. So many of our modern conveniences that improve the quality of our lives are dependent on electricity as the “fuel” to make them work. From the alarm clock that wakes us up, to the refrigerator that keeps our morning milk cold and fresh; the heating, ventilating and air-conditioning unit that keeps us cool in the summer and warm in the winter; the vacuum that lets us clean more efficiently and all those kitchen appliances that save us time and physical energy. Of course, so much of our entertainment, whether it comes from the television, radio or computer, depends on the kilowatt-hours that your electric co-op provides. Just think, there would be no smartphones or cell phones if there were no electricity.

Businesses of all kinds rely on electricity to produce and sell the products we need. So, it is no wonder that many electric co-ops feel that, while our primary product is electricity, we are really in the quality-of-life business. Besides providing highly reliable electric service, Grand Valley Power supports many community organizations, and our employees are involved in numerous community activities that enhance the quality of life in Mesa County.

As we celebrate the season that reminds us to be thankful for all that we have, it is important to remember the 13 billion people in the world who still live without reliable electric service. That is equal to about four times the U.S. population! Many of the things we take for granted living in the United States are much harder and more time consuming for people in developing countries around the world.

We are thankful that our community ancestors, a group of Lower Valley farmers, had the vision and foresight to do what needed to be done: joining with their friends and neighbors to form our electric cooperative. As the electric business of the 21st century continues to evolve, you can count on Grand Valley Power to meet all of your electric energy needs. More importantly, we are here to help improve the quality of your wonderful life.

Tom Walch
ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS

Win an all-expense-paid trip to either Washington, D.C., or a week at Leadership Camp in the mountains

For over 50 years, electric cooperatives have sponsored high school students from across America to visit the nation’s capital and meet their members of Congress. This year, Grand Valley Power would like to sponsor you. If you are currently a high school junior or senior, you could be part of this tremendous Youth Tour opportunity.

During your all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2016, you’ll have the opportunity to connect with more than 1700 high school juniors from around the United States. Students gain a personal understanding of American history and their role as a citizen by meeting their representatives and senators and exploring the sights around the nation’s capital. Don’t be surprised if you run into a former Youth Tour participant who is a congressional aide on Capitol Hill. Over 40,000 students from cooperatives across America, like Grand Valley Power, have participated in this unique program. It is an opportunity for an experience of a lifetime and to make some great new friends.

Or, you could win an all-expense-paid trip to Clark, Colorado, located just outside of Steamboat Springs in July. High school juniors from Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming will gather at a beautiful resort located along the Elk River and spend the week at an outstanding Leadership Camp. You’ll participate in activities to improve personal goals, set up and run your own cooperative and get an inside view of the state and national legislatures. There is plenty of time for swim parties, barbecues, dances and a banquet during the week. Many of the attendees call this camp a “life-changing” experience.

All you have to do to enter either contest is write a short essay telling us about yourself and what you would like to gain by participating in these opportunities. Drawings, photography, collage, a DVD or video, PowerPoint or another creative medium may be used in addition to your essay. You must also meet the following qualifications: Your parents or guardians must receive electric service from GVP, you must currently be a high school junior or senior and you must be at least 16 years old on or before January 1, 2016. Entries must be received or postmarked by January 4, 2016.

Attach or scan the entry form located on GVP’s website (www.gvp.org) along with your essay and send them to Grand Valley Power, Attn: Bill Byers, 845 22 Road, Grand Junction, CO 81505 or email it to wbyers@gvp.org.

Don’t miss out on these two great trips. Call Bill Byers at 970-623-8577 or go online to www.gvp.org, select My Community and then Youth Tour and Camp for more information.

GRAND VALLEY POWER WELCOMES TWO NEW EMPLOYEES

Grand Valley Power recently welcomed two new employees to its ranks. With low turnover, hiring new employees at the cooperative does not happen often.

Kit Mabley
Kit Mabley was hired as a journeyman lineman in the operations department to fill a position recently vacated by the retirement of longtime GVP lineman Zane Zibinski. Kit comes to GVP after 10 years of experience at Holy Cross Energy in Glenwood Springs.

Kit and his wife, Stephanie, are both natives of Gypsum where they grew up and attended school.

Kit began his training in Western Colorado Community College’s electric lineman worker program. Upon graduation, he began working for Holy Cross Energy as an apprentice lineman where he completed his apprenticeship training.

Coming from Colorado’s high country, Kit enjoys outdoor activities, such as hunting and fishing. Kit also does CrossFit training, which enhances his physical abilities and allows him to better perform his duties as an electric lineman.

Kit and Stephanie, who is a physical education instructor at Fruita 8/9 School, are expecting their first child on December 23. When asked if they were expecting a boy or girl, Kit said they were having a “Mini-Me.”

Mark Tucker
Mark Tucker was recently hired as an information technology technician and dispatcher. He works in both the IT department as the IT technician as well as with the operations department as the backup dispatcher.

Mark is a native of the Grand Valley, graduating from Palisade High School and Mesa State College with a degree in computer information systems. He worked for Community Hospital in the IT department for 13 years and was assistant IT administrator before coming to work for Grand Valley Power.

Mark and his wife, Vicki, a Central High School graduate, have been married for 7 years. They have two young boys and on Friday, November 13 a baby girl, Charlotte, joined the family.

Mark also enjoys outdoor activities, such as mountain biking, camping and hiking. Like most young parents, Mark currently enjoys spending his free time with his family.

GVP welcomes Kit, Mark and their growing families into the Grand Valley Power family.
Grand Valley Power’s **FAMILY SAFETY DAY**

Safety is not just a priority, but a way of life at Grand Valley Power. A career as an electric lineman ranks as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs year after year. Because of the nature of electric lineman’s jobs, safety is first and foremost in the minds of all GVP employees.

As Grand Valley Power continues to enhance the company’s safety culture, it is carrying electrical safety one step further by including GVP spouses, children and grandchildren. The company’s second annual Family Safety Day was held in October. The purpose of the Family Safety Day is twofold. The first is to demonstrate to GVP families the danger of the work that electric linemen do and the reason that electrical safety is a companywide mission. The second is to encourage the children and grandchildren of GVP employees to start learning about electrical safety for their benefit as they go through life.

GVP’s safety committee, made up of members from many departments, hosts the event. The linemen go to extra lengths to make the day entertaining and educational.

With safety as the watch word, anyone, regardless of age or skill level, who went for a ride in the bucket truck had to put on special safety harnesses. With a lineman at the control, many of those in attendance took the opportunity to view the world through the eyes of a lineman 60 feet in the air.

Those in attendance also viewed a live high-voltage demonstration. This always catches children’s attention as electricity becomes visible and alive through arcs and the accompanying sizzling sound that can be heard. The dangers associated with electricity become evident to the young eyes watching. This is the same demonstration that GVP gives to school groups, civic groups and those in attendance every year at the Mesa County Safety Fair.

Those attending the event were then invited to a barbecue of hamburgers and hot dogs prepared by the safety committee.

One last event before the day was over was to give the children in attendance an opportunity to handle hot sticks that linemen use when working on live pad mount transformers and overhead power lines. This was entertaining to watch as many of the children were outfitted with linemen’s rubber safety equipment. While the rubber goods were somewhat big for the children, those participating and watching had a memorable experience.

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**Toys for Tots**

Grand Valley Power is supporting the Toys for Tots efforts in Mesa County this year by being a collection point for the program. If you would like to donate a toy to make a less fortunate child’s Christmas a little brighter, drop it off at Grand Valley Power’s office in the Toys for Tots collection box in the lobby.

Toys for Tots is a national program sponsored by the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation and is supported by many individuals and businesses around the country. This effort provides Christmas toys to children whose families are economically disadvantaged.

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**2015 Capital Credit Retirement to be Distributed in December**

The Grand Valley Power Board of Directors authorized the retirement of more than $1,500,000 of capital credits to be paid out in December. This is one of the largest retirements of capital credits that the cooperative has made. Checks are expected to be mailed December 18.
GRAND VALLEY POWER SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE

Time is fast approaching for awarding scholarships for 2016. The board of directors has determined that the scholarships awarded will again be funded from unclaimed capital credits instead of being expensed as has been in the past. Each year there are capital credits that are never claimed by former customers and these funds can be used for education and charitable causes. Scholarship amounts have also been increased and a new scholarship added.

Grand Valley Power Scholarship
This year Grand Valley Power will award six $1,500 scholarships to students in Grand Valley Power service territory. These scholarships are granted for use at accredited colleges, universities and vocational schools for undergraduate education.

Applications are due for the GVP Scholarship on March 1, 2016.

Jack Broughton and Colorado Mesa University Scholarship
The Jack Broughton and CMU Scholarship awarded by Grand Valley Power was named to honor former Grand Valley Power General Manager Jack Broughton.

Jack was instrumental in helping to develop the mechanical engineering program at CMU in cooperation with CU-Boulder. A CMU student would receive a four-year CU mechanical engineering degree all delivered at CMU.

This $2,000 scholarship is not just limited to mechanical engineering majors. However, if a mechanical engineering major applies, he or she will be given additional consideration during the selection process.

This scholarship is renewable if the student maintains a minimum 3.0 GPA.

Applications are due for the Jack Broughton and CMU Scholarship on March 1, 2016.

Western Colorado Community College Scholarship
Grand Valley Power added an additional $1,500 scholarship this year for students attending Western Colorado Community College (WCCC). This scholarship is for use by any student who lives in GVP’s service territory and will be enrolled in any of WCCC’s program offerings.

Applications for this scholarship are due March 1, 2016.

Western Colorado Community College Electric Lineworker Scholarship
This is a $2,000 scholarship to Western Colorado Community College’s electric lineworker program. This is a one-year certificate program that allows graduates to enter apprenticeship programs at electric utilities, such as Grand Valley Power.

The electric utility industry is facing a shortage of lineworkers as the workforce ages. While this career can be dangerous due to the nature of the job, it is also one of high pay, good benefits and job stability. Grand Valley Power encourages high school graduates to look at this career path and would be happy to visit with any potential electric lineworkers.

Applications are due for the WCCC Electric Lineworker Scholarship on June 1, 2016.

Selection Process
After applications are received by March 1 for the GVP scholarships, the Jack Broughton and CMU Scholarship and the Western Colorado Community College Scholarship, a committee of educators appointed by the board of directors will review the applications and determine the winners. Winners will be notified in writing by April 1, 2016.

The same process will take place for the Electric Lineworker Scholarship applications after the June 1 deadline.

Scholarship applications can be picked up at high school counseling offices, CMU’s financial aid office, Grand Valley Power’s website, gvp.org, or at Grand Valley Power.

For more information or if you have questions, contact Bill Byers at 970-242-0040.

COMMENTS TO THE MANAGER
You are a member of a cooperative and your opinion does count. If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please let the general manager know by writing to Ask the Manager, P.O. Box 190, Grand Junction, CO 81502, or send an email to twalch@gvp.org. Or visit the website at www.gvp.org.

BOARD MEETING NOTICE
Grand Valley Power board meetings are open to members, consumers and public. Regularly scheduled board meeting are held at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the headquarters building located at 845 22 Road, Grand Junction.

The agendas are posted in the lobby of the headquarters building 10 days before each meeting, and posted on the GVP website. If anyone desires to address the board of directors, please let me know in advance and you will be placed on the agenda.

BEWARE OF PHONE SCAMS
Grand Valley Power consumers are being hit with a phone scam demanding immediate payment with a credit card or be disconnected. Grand Valley Power does not take credit card information over the telephone or give a specific time of a disconnect.

Grand Valley Power’s practice is to give a written disconnect notice on the consumer’s bill and then to give a courtesy telephone call of impending disconnect to give a consumer time to make a payment.

If any Grand Valley Power consumers receive a telephone call that they believe to be a scam, please hang up and contact Grand Valley Power’s office to verify your account status. Telephone payments are only accepted by calling 877-760-7435, and your account status can be verified by calling the office at 970-242-0040.