As summer progresses, planning at San Isabel Electric turns to the Annual Meeting. This year’s Annual Meeting will be September 16 at John Mall High School in Walsenburg. Your cooperative is again planning for a great Member event that will provide informational updates, elections of Directors, and conducting the formal business of the cooperative.

San Isabel was formed in 1938 in Beulah by rural Members who wanted to electrify southern Colorado. After nearly 80 years, your cooperative is still carrying out the mission of serving the electrical needs of the Membership. Although San Isabel has grown substantially, and the electric industry is evolving daily, we are proud of our local roots and continued commitment to serving the Members as a not-for-profit utility.

The Annual Meeting is meant to be the formal business meeting that San Isabel convenes to conduct the business as required in the bylaws. Not many businesses are like San Isabel. As a cooperative, each Member is given an opportunity to provide input at the meeting, vote for Directors if your district has an election, and have direct access to the Board and management of the company.

Not only is your participation in the Annual Meeting encouraged, it’s what makes your cooperative stronger. In an era where many businesses want less transparency and participation, San Isabel continues to promote participation as the means of making the cooperative a better organization.

The agenda for the business meeting will cover activities for 2016. I’m happy to report that it was another productive year at San Isabel. With the exception of some very ferocious storms, reliability for all Members improved. Additionally, 2016 was another year without a rate increase.

San Isabel has been reporting to the Membership for the past few years that we don’t expect the need to increase our retail rates until 2020. The last increase was 2014, so that is a significant accomplishment and value your electric cooperative is delivering to the Members. I’ve stated at past Annual Meetings that our vision is to deliver on the promise of service and value for our Members. Our rate stability brings value to our Members and the forecast provides certainty that your cooperative is looking out for your best interests.

Recently, I heard a comment from the Membership stating that San Isabel is able to provide the rate stability because we aren’t doing any maintenance, which is why we’ve had so many outages during the winter storms and wind events. On the contrary, San Isabel’s construction budget that is exclusively focused on improving reliability, exceeds $3 million per year, and our standard operations and maintenance expenses exceed $3 million per year, just to keep our utility plant delivering the electricity you need. The weather, we’ve recognized in the last year, has been some of the most dramatic that many of our operations employees have seen in over 20 years.

As San Isabel Staff starts to make plans for the Annual Meeting, our excitement grows as the event gets closer. There are many details to arrange and a lot of work in preparation, but the opportunity to gather as a Membership organization is the capstone of our year.

Again, this year we are excited to report great news about 2016 and provide a forecast of our future expectations. I realize that a beautiful Saturday afternoon in September is hard to give up, but come to the meeting and participate. It will be worth your time.
The concept of the smart home is not as new as you might expect. In the late 1980s, as a product manager for Honeywell, I saw a real smart home.

Honeywell’s smart home contained impressive automation capabilities. Lighting, security, fire monitoring, temperature control and appliance use were all automated to adapt to occupant and environmental inputs.

But the learning curve for the user was steep. In one room, Honeywell engineers filled a closet, floor to ceiling, with programmable logic controllers (an industrial digital computer). Today, more than 30 years later, the world has the advantage of the internet and ubiquitous Wi-Fi. The development of these two communications capabilities spawned a proliferation in the number and type of devices that can be “connected” and used to create smart homes.

For those who feel they are not so savvy when it comes to technology, good news abounds. Most devices offer a simple setup. A typical process goes like this: power up the device, identify your Wi-Fi network from a list the device recognizes and type in your password. You’ll be connected and ready for action.

Even easier is the one-button connection using the Wi-Fi Protected Setup (WPS) feature of many routers. Fire up the device, press the WPS button and click the connect button in the device’s program. Best of all, most devices offer an app for your smartphone.

For those who are tech savvy, the sky is the limit. An abundance of inexpensive micro controllers and peripheral sensors and controllers support the creation of a smart home system from scratch. A programming approach termed IFTTT (If This Then That) enables users to connect different devices so an action or output from one generates some reaction in another.

I recommend swinging by one of the earliest purveyors of home automation goodness: Smarthome.com. These days, anything can be automated: lights, curtains, entertainment systems, door locks, garden watering, weather monitoring, appliance use and more. This website is a great place to see what is possible. Aside from being extremely cool and making life easier, a smart home can dramatically reduce energy consumption, especially for the major energy consumers in our homes like lighting and temperature control. Technically savvy or not, everyone should get their feet wet in the smart home pool.

Be sure to check with the energy experts at San Isabel Electric Association about programs related to smart devices.

Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.
JOHN MALL HIGH SCHOOL
WALSENBURG, CO
• 10:00 a.m. - Registration Opens
• 11:30 a.m. - (FREE) Lunch is Served
• 12:45 p.m. - Registration Closes
• 1:00 p.m. - Call to Order, Debbie Rose, Board President

Today, Members see with...
VISION
No Rate Increases, Until The Year 2020

How can I save money on my monthly electric bill?
Is solar right for me?
Are there rebates available to me?

How can I make my home more energy efficient?
Rising temperatures outside can mean increased use of your air conditioner and higher utility bills. With the aid of ceiling fans and ventilation in your home, you can maintain comfort while decreasing the amount of money you spend on utility bills.

Ceiling fans boost efficiency in both hot and cool seasons. Fans create a cooling breeze when moving in a counter-clockwise direction, resulting in a low-level “wind chill” throughout the room. When fans move in a clockwise direction, they force the warmer air that naturally gathers near the ceiling back down into the room.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, installing a ceiling fan will allow consumers to raise their thermostat temperature by approximately 4 degrees and still maintain comfort. By using a ceiling fan along with increasing a thermostat’s temperature by 2 degrees, EnergyStar.gov reports that a person can save 14 percent on air conditioner use throughout the cooling season. Although ceiling fans are effective in lowering energy usage, turn them off when you leave the room. Unless you are sitting directly under the fan to feel the “wind chill,” energy is wasted.

When shopping for a new fan, remember to look for an Energy Star model. These labels indicate that the fans operate with peak efficiency, using the most energy-efficient technology.

Paired with ceiling fans, natural ventilation can also increase energy efficiency by giving the air conditioner a rest. Although ventilation is not an effective cooling strategy for all climates, natural ventilation can work in climates with cool nights and regular breezes. For natural ventilation, close doors, windows and window coverings during the day, and reopen them at night.

Ventilation in the attic can also help reduce your air conditioner use. Attic fans can push hot air that accumulates in the attic out of your home. To maintain airflow, never block attic vents. For further help with your home’s energy efficiency, consider upgrading insulation in the attic.

In addition, seal air leaks with caulk or weather stripping to keep more of the hot air out and the cool air inside your house. Reducing air leaks also helps cut back on any moisture problems.

Even small steps in efficiency can help you reduce energy use and save money. Keep window shades and curtains shut on sunny days, cut back on your use of the oven and range and keep as many lights off as comfortable to help lower the level of heat in your house.

For more information on energy efficiency, visit EnergyEdCouncil.org.

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**Keep Curious Kids Safe**

Ensure your children are protected from the electrical service connection to your home. Keep ladders or long poles stowed and away from youngsters who might be tempted to use them to reach the wires connected to your house. If you added a room addition or deck, make sure the service connection remains well out of reach. Contact San Isabel Electric Association if you are unsure the distance is safe.