

# MORGAN COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2021



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## MCREA Mission

Morgan County REA, a member-owned cooperative, is dedicated to serving our members by providing safe, reliable energy with a strong tradition and vision for the future.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## The Power of Cooperatives: Then and Now

BY MADDIE POLLART  
COMMUNICATIONS &  
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MADDIE POLLART

October is National Co-op Month and it's a great time to look back on electric cooperatives and the role they have played in our community. With over 800 electric distribution cooperatives in the United States, it is hard to imagine them all being tied to our area in some way. That is, until you meet Jo Ostwald, a longtime resident of Morgan County and the daughter of former administrator of the national Rural Electrification Administration, Dave Hamil.



Jo Ostwald, Fort Morgan, holds a photo of her father and former REA administrator, Dave Hamil.

Ostwald's father played an instrumental role in electrifying the rural areas that continue to be powered by cooperatives such as Morgan County Rural Electric Association today. Hamil served his home state as a legislator and Speaker of the House. He was also appointed Director of Institutions in 1963, after losing Colorado's race for governor.

Ostwald recalls her father's effort to bring electricity to the Hamil Bros. Ranch north of Sterling, which he and his brother, Don, purchased in the late 1930s. At the time, Public Service had offered to bring electricity to the farm for \$10,000 — nearly half of what the property had cost. Hamil knew there must be a better alternative, so in 1939 he went door to door trying to convince his neighbors to join what would later become Highline REA.

"The farmers told Dad that they didn't need electricity," Ostwald said. "They figured they had been getting along without it just fine and had no need to pay the \$5 fee to put it in."

Hamil soon realized he was selling to the wrong half of the household.

"The farmers' wives, on the other hand, wanted refrigerators and electric lights," she recounted. "Dad said they would go to their bedrooms and retrieve \$5 worth of cash from beneath the mattress; money they had made selling eggs and cream. Then they would come back and pay to join the REA."

Hamil continued to advocate for rural electrification throughout his entire career. In 1956, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior — an old college friend of Hamil's — suggested that Hamil serve as national REA administrator under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Hamil soon moved to Washington, D.C., to take the job.

"Dad enjoyed when Eisenhower would call him into his office because the president had a ranching background," Ostwald



President Nixon signs new REA direct loan program in 1973 as, from left, William Erwin, assistant secretary of agriculture; **Dave Hamil, REA administrator**; and Earl Butz, secretary of agriculture, witness the signing. Photo from records of the Rural Electrification Administration, Record Group 221; National Archives at College Park, MD.

recalled. “They would talk a little REA, just to make it official, and then the president would talk cattle with Dad.”

Eisenhower. Nixon. Ford. Carter. Hamil worked under four presidential administrations. However, the job was not always easy and some administrations were not always supportive.

In December 1972, President Nixon signed an executive order temporarily eliminating REA funding. Fortunately, Hamil had played a significant role in establishing the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, now known as CFC, a few years before Nixon’s order. CFC was able to help many cooperatives survive during this time, but changes still needed to be made.

While Nixon terminated direct REA loans, severe ice storms across the country caused damage to many co-op systems. Oswald also recalls the need to retrofit lots of existing line during this time, to accommodate improvements in farming technology.

“It was going to take a lot of money to redo all that line, and Nixon and Congress didn’t like giving money to the REA,” Oswald said. “Because it was so difficult to try and convince the Nixon administration to fund REA, my dad actually offered his letter of resignation to the Secretary of Agriculture at the time, Earl Butz.”

What happened next is a true testament to Hamil’s value to the REA and electric cooperatives across the country.

“Butz told my dad, ‘Dave, I think we can work this out.’ He wouldn’t accept the resignation. Instead, he made a call to Hubert Humphrey of the Senate, and within a few days a direct loan program was reinstated,” Oswald said. “Dad said it was one of the fastest bills he had ever seen go through.”

It was this commitment to rural America and understanding of its needs that made Hamil such a well-respected individual. Perhaps these attributes also played a part in his being inducted into the Cooperative Hall of Fame in 2001.

The cooperative model works the same way today as it did in 1939 when Dave Hamil was going door to door asking neighbors to join the local REA. Cooperatives still exist to serve and fulfill a common need among members.

Morgan County REA, a member-owned cooperative, is dedicated to serving its consumer-members by providing safe, reliable energy with a strong tradition and vision for the future ... and the membership fee is still just \$5.



## OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH: STOP BY MCREA!

To celebrate National Co-op Month, MCREA encourages all its consumer-members to participate in Stop by Your Co-op. This will run throughout the month of October.

Simply come visit us at the MCREA office in Fort Morgan. You can sign up and enter to win our Stop by Your Co-op giveaway, including a grand prize gift basket, as well as consumer-member bill credits for runners up. There will also be lots of different MCREA items available to those who stop by.

While you are at the office, take some time to talk with our MCREA employees and learn more about what your co-op is doing for you. We enjoy getting to know our members and sharing what we do.



# MCREA Joins Community at BBQ with the Blue

MCREA was happy to be part of the first annual BBQ with the Blue in downtown Fort Morgan on August 10. The event was established to replace National Night Out while still promoting local police departments. (Clean Harbors Environmental Services acct. #xxx2700) Though it was an inaugural affair, hundreds of community members attended to enjoy the fun, free food and live music.

MCREA had its power line safety demonstration on display, which always proves to be a favorite among both kids and adults. The display shows what happens when people, animals or vehicles come in contact with a power line. It teaches important safety lessons and electricity awareness. People also enjoyed



Member Services Manager Rob Baranowski performs a power line safety demonstration at BBQ with the Blue in August.

receiving MCREA hats and other items.

MCREA is glad to have been part of such a successful event and hopes to continue participating in years to come.

The safety demonstration is available for schools and other events. Please call the member services department if interested.

## MCREA AT THE 2021 MORGAN COUNTY FAIR

It's no secret that fair season is a big time of year in the service area and MCREA was excited to be a part of the 2021 Morgan County Fair in Brush. The member



Fallyn Gregersen with her market lamb. Photo courtesy of Dustin Price Photography.

services department hosted a booth at the hamburger fry and Catch-It contest on August 4, which always proves to be a crowd favorite. Community members complimented MCREA crews and described how impressed they have been with the co-op's response time and service in the area.

MCREA also participated in the fair's Junior Livestock Sale on August 5, and sponsored the barbecue that took place beforehand. The association was happy to buy a market lamb sold by Fallyn Gregersen, of the Long Meadow 4-H Club in Wiggins.

The sale is a great way to support local youth and the hard work they put into their projects all year. MCREA is already looking forward to taking part in the fair next year.



### October 2021 Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Old, uninsulated and improperly installed exterior doors can waste energy and money. Shut the door on wasted energy by weather stripping and sealing all exterior doors. If you have an old exterior door, consider replacing it with a newer, energy efficient model.

Source: [energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov)

## MCREA WELCOMES NEW JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN



▲ Zeque Chenoweth  
Journeyman Lineman

Morgan County REA welcomes Zeque Chenoweth as its newest journeyman lineman. Zeque attended line school at Western Nebraska Community College in Alliance, Nebraska, and previously worked at Y-W Electric Association in Akron.

Zeque may be the newest employee at MCREA, but he is no stranger to the association, as he previously completed an internship with MCREA. He looks

forward to this new career opportunity and the chance to continue a profession that presents new challenges each day.

"I like all the different tasks that the job requires," he replied, when asked about his favorite part of being a journeyman lineman.

We are happy to welcome Zeque to the team at MCREA!

## SEND IN YOUR REBATES SOON

Morgan County REA wants to notify all its consumer-members that certain rebates will be expiring at the end of this year. Tri-State Generation and Transmission will retire some products and appliances from its *Beneficial Electrification & Efficiency Products* list, which describes products qualifying for rebates. (Lisa Murray acct. #xxx2000)

### What does this mean for you?

MCREA recommends that members send in rebates for newly purchased items by the end of December. All rebates filed before January 1, 2022, will qualify for existing rebates.

We also just added a rebate for induction stoves when newly installed or replacing a gas stove, and 2022 will bring a new rebate on battery-powered riding lawn mowers.

As always, MCREA's member services department is available to help with rebates and other energy efficiency questions. Please call 970-867-5688 or stop by the MCREA office.

## WHAT IS HEAT TAPE?

Safe  
Electricity.org®



## PROTECTING WATER PIPES WITH HEAT TAPE

Although not adhesive, heat "tape" acts as a heating pad for exposed pipes. There are two installation methods. The first and least common method is when the tape is hardwired to a home's electrical system and has its own breaker(s). In this case, the tape should be installed by a licensed contractor.

The second installation method uses heat tape that plugs directly into a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlet. This type of tape typically allows you to control the temperature.

If you are considering installing heat tape, extra care should be taken.

- Due to its potential to overheat and cause a fire, do not use heat tape on pipes behind walls or ceilings. It should only be used for exposed pipes, such as those found in your crawl space or outside your home.
- Select the right kind of tape for your pipes. If you use tape designed for PVC on metal pipes, it will not be as effective; if you use heat tape designed for metal on PVC pipes, it can melt them.
- Always purchase heat tape that is backed by a reputable testing lab, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and do not use tape, cords or plugs that are damaged or worn.
- Unplug the heat tape in the spring.



**Win  
\$25 Off  
Your  
Electric Bill**

Each month Morgan County REA gives two lucky consumer-members a chance at a \$25 credit on their electric bill, just by reading *Colorado Country Life*.

Congratulations, Kelly Pelton (acct. #xxx6400)! You saw your name in the August issue and have received a \$25 credit on your bill. Sorry, Gabriel Andrade (acct. #xxx0700). Your name was hidden in the August issue of *Colorado Country Life* but you did not call to receive your \$25 credit. There are two more MCREA member names and their account numbers hidden somewhere in this issue. If you find your name and account number, call MCREA member services at 970-867-5688 by October 29 to claim a \$25 credit on your bill.