

MESA COUNTY'S RUGGED INDEPENDENCE

BY TOM WALCH CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The opening lines from Hank Williams, Jr.'s hit song "A Country Boy Can Survive" strike an eerily familiar chord to the state of our world today. The song is over 40 years old, and I'm exposing my roots a little. But if you're a country music fan, you know the song well and might agree with these thoughts from the opening stanza: Some people think it's the end of the world. Interest rates are near record highs. The stock market is struggling. And as drought conditions continue throughout the region, you could easily substitute the Colorado River for the Mississippi. But the song doesn't stop there. As the song title states, despite these challenges, country folks have a way of rising up — and not only survive, but thrive.

I don't reference this song's lyrics to bring anyone down, but to convey a message of hope — a message that is appropriate to recognize as we celebrate Independence Day. To me, it's an anthem for the kind of rugged independence that is deeply rooted here in Mesa County.

I have always marveled at the way country folks in the Grand Valley have survived — the way they have responded when the chips are down. This community has ridden an economic roller coaster for decades. The uranium bust, Holly Sugar's withdrawal, Black Sunday, coal mine closures and repeated downturns in the local natural gas industry have painted Grand Junction as a boom-and-bust town. The good news is that, so far, there has always been a boom to follow the latest bust. It seems that the busts always result from outside sources and events — things that are typically outside of the control of people here. The booms, on the other hand, invariably spring up from within.

How has Mesa County survived? Strong, independent people come together to create even stronger community institutions. Think Tim Foster and Colorado Mesa University; Christy Whitney and HopeWest; and Diane Schwenke and the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce. There are dozens of other examples: banks, hospitals and organizations dedicated to economic development, such as the Grand Junction Economic Partnership and the Business Incubator. The common thread is the "can-do" approach of community leaders here. Instead of looking to Denver

or Washington, D.C., for assistance, folks here take responsibility and take on problems with innovative ideas, boots-on-the-ground volunteer support, and financial backing from individuals and businesses that recognize an obligation to give back to the community. This is not always easy, but as the saying goes, "in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."

I like to think that Grand Valley Power has a part to play in our community's resiliency and independence. I don't think it is a coincidence that we are the oldest rural electric cooperative in the state. Grand Valley Power sprang up in the middle of difficulty. Eighty-six years ago, when Lower Valley farmers couldn't get electricity from profit-motivated utilities, they literally took matters into their own hands and started our cooperative. Being a local, homegrown, can-do business is part of our identity. We know that businesses with owners, employees and consumers who live and work here make our community special. The cooperative model fosters the blend of independence and collaboration that helps our business survive, even as we face unprecedented challenges.

These characteristics will be on full display at our annual meeting next month. Cooperative members will have the opportunity to engage with our team members and leaders; hear up-to-the-minute reports on cooperative successes and challenges over the past year; and elect directors who will guide us as we go forward. As we come together during these difficult times, I am confident we can find opportunities to

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Very professional meeting - extremely well done! The GVP staff did a fabulous job.

Annual Meeting Survey Feedback



TOM WALCH

ensure our business and our consumers not only survive but thrive.

We invite you to join us for Grand Valley Power's Annual Meeting on Thursday, August 4, at the Colorado Mesa University's Meyer Ballroom. Registration details will arrive mid-July in your mailbox inside the Annual Report. Also, be on the lookout for your board of director's election packet in the mail.

COMMENTS TO THE CEO

You are a member of a cooperative and your opinion does count. If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please let me know by writing to Ask the CEO, P.O. Box 190, Grand Junction, Colorado 81502, or send an email to me at twalch@gvp.org. Check our website at gvp.org.

BOARD MEETING NOTICE

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

The monthly agenda is 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 us know in advance and you will be placed on the agenda.

What to Expect

FREE Dinner

Giveaways

Live Entertainment

Business Update

\$2,000 in door prizes and more!



Look for this year's annual report and election ballot mid-July in your mailbox!



Annual Meeting
of the Members

Thursday, August 4
 5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Colorado Mesa University
 1100 North Avenue
 Grand Junction, CO 81501

MESA COUNTY'S RUGGED INDEPENDENCE

BY TOM WALCH CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

*The preacher man says it's the end of time
And the Mississippi River, she's a goin' dry
Interest is up and the stock market's down
And you only get mugged if you go downtown*

These are the opening lines from Hank Williams, Jr.'s hit song from 40 years ago. Okay, I'm exposing my roots a little, but even though most people find Downtown Grand Junction safe, substitute the Colorado River for the Mississippi, and these lyrics strike an eerily familiar chord. I don't repeat these lines to bring anyone down, but to convey a message of hope — a message that is appropriate to recognize as we celebrate Independence Day. Country music fans know the song's title is "A Country Boy Can Survive." To me, it's an anthem for the kind of rugged independence that is deeply rooted here in Mesa County. Williams, Jr., almost noted as much in the following lines:

*We come from the West Virginia coal mines
And the Rocky Mountains and the western skies
We can skin a buck, we can run a trot line
A country boy can survive
Country folks can survive*

I have always marveled at the way country folks in the Grand Valley have survived — the way they have responded when the chips are down. This community has ridden an economic roller coaster for decades. The uranium bust, Holly Sugar's withdrawal, Black Sunday, coal mine closures and repeated downturns in the local natural gas industry have painted Grand Junction as a boom-and-bust town. The good news is that, so far, there has always been a boom to follow the latest bust. It seems that the busts always result from outside sources and events — things that are typically outside of the control of people here. The booms, on the other hand, invariably spring up from within.

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Business Incubator. The common thread is the "can-do" approach of community leaders here. Instead of looking to Denver or Washington, D.C., for assistance, folks here take responsibility and take on problems with innovative ideas, boots-on-the-ground volunteer support, and financial backing from individuals and businesses that recognize an obligation to give back to the community. This is not always easy, but as the saying goes, "in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."

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DRONES IMPROVE RELIABILITY ALONG OUR LINES

BY CHRISTMAS WHARTON COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Grand Valley Power is continually working to maintain a safe and reliable system for our members. As part of that effort, inspection of our lines is a key task that our operations and engineering team performs.

There are many ways that GVP inspects the integrity of the lines and substations that feed 18,000 members with reliable electricity. The normal operating model for inspections has teams of our linemen or technicians in trucks and on foot. Depending on the terrain difficulty, crews are sometimes in helicopters. They often find problems, like wood poles splitting, trees overgrowing and circuits worn out by years of use. After identifying problems like these, GVP crews in the field report their findings and remediate the problem, document necessary upgrades, or note future construction recommendations.

As with many businesses today, efficiencies have improved over the course of years, especially with technology. With today's leading-edge technology, unmanned aerial systems — drones — allow GVP to conduct line and substation inspections more efficiently, covering larger areas and maximizing the reliability and integrity of its distribution system. Since October, the operations team began piloting drones to get a bird's eye view of the system.

“You get a perspective from the drone you just can't get from the ground,” says Bill Barlow, GVP's operations manager. “Using infrared imaging, you might see deterioration and cracked insulators. High resolution photos from above show what you wouldn't see from the ground. Using drone technology

helps increase the co-op's efficiency and reliability, allowing our crews to focus on providing our members with quality service.”

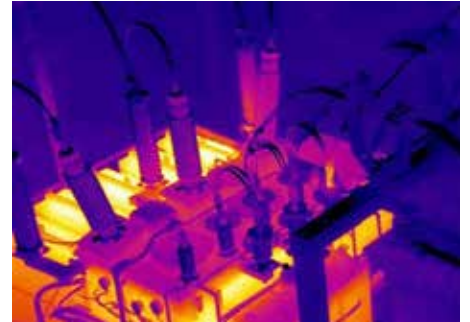
GVP contracted with drone service provider, UAV Recon, to assist in the inspection process of the distribution lines and substations. Using an unmanned drone allows crews to gather clearer, closer photos of the electrical infrastructure while having a considerably smaller impact on the environment. This saves time, frees crews and is especially helpful when ground access is blocked by debris or heavily-wooded areas. The goal is to harden the electrical grid and improve resiliency by identifying problems proactively, minimizing system downtime and even avoiding power outages completely.

But inspecting power lines involves more than flying a drone and taking pictures. Pilots of these drones need to know what they are looking for and how to operate in a hazardous environment. These operators take photographs that illustrate system conditions while simultaneously navigating around obstacles and managing turbulence. Similarly, experienced lineworkers need to be available to analyze and understand the same images captured by the unmanned aerial systems in the field. The collected data is used by GVP to engineer, maintain and upgrade existing power lines on and around members' properties.

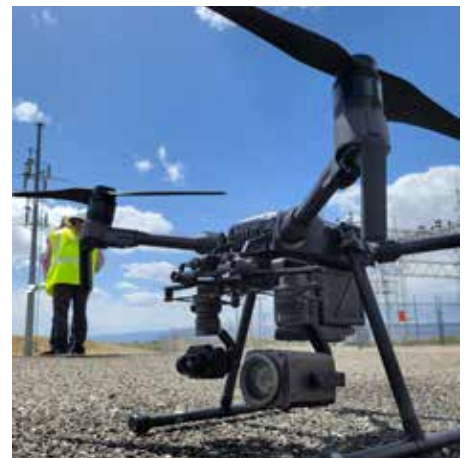
As for repairing any of the problems identified from drone footage, this will still require skilled lineworkers. “You still need humans to do the actual work, no matter how cool the technology,” Barlow says.



CHRISTMAS WHARTON



UAV Recon captures thermal images that allow us to identify components that are failing and invisible to the human eye. Replacing these components before failure helps prevent unwanted outages for members. The transformer above typically shows warmer components and professionally trained journeyman linemen identify and diagnose defects.



When introducing new technology to the electrical workplace, GVP has to think about the benefits that those services bring to our members. The goal is to harden the electrical grid and improve resiliency by identifying problems proactively, minimizing system down time and even avoiding power outages completely. Recently, UAV Recon helped to inspect the distribution system with safety and efficiency in mind.

CO-OP CALENDAR

- ★ July 11 - Beers for the Brave
- ★ July 11 - Operation Interdependence Care Package Supply Drive - GVP Drop-Off Opens
- ★ July 20 - Donuts for Dog Tags
- ★ July 29- Glade Park Movies Under the Stars

Scan for Event Info

CO-OP HOLIDAY OFFICE SCHEDULE

Independence Day (Jul. 4) - CLOSED



THE POWER OF ONE PERSON

BY DANA POGAR COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

It often takes one friend, one family member or even one stranger to change your life forever, and that was the case for two local students. Here are their stories.

CHEYENNE HOWATT

Meet Cheyenne. She was born in Willow River, Canada, a community shaped by infinite dirt roads, a single paved road and one general store. “To say that I grew up in a rural community is an understatement. I lived in a town with a population of 300 people and attended grade school with most of the town’s children,” Howatt said.



^ GVP Operations Manager Bill Barlow (left) and WCCC graduate Cheyenne Howatt celebrate at Colorado Mesa University's 2022 graduation ceremony at Stocker Stadium.

At age 12, Cheyenne left home and moved to Prince George, where she attended high school. After graduating, Cheyenne went back to Whitehorse, another small town in Canada, where she started working at a mechanics shop. This is where her interest in the trade industry began.

One summer day, Cheyenne found herself on a road trip from Las Vegas to Denver, where she stumbled across Grand Junction. “I remember driving to Denver and being surrounded by nothing but dirt and cacti. Then, suddenly, everything turned green, with mountains, trees and rivers everywhere! Shortly after that trip, the Western Slope became home,” Cheyenne said. From mechanical work in Canada to cosmetology in Grand Junction, Cheyenne has been there, done that, but always felt like

her story wasn't complete.

In the spring of 2014, Cheyenne was enjoying a beverage at the local Chili's Bar and Grill when she began a casual conversation with the gentleman next to her. “I asked him if he was in town for business or pleasure, and he said that he was teaching a course at the Hotline School. I became curious and asked questions about his career as a lineman,” Cheyenne remembered.

After an hour-long conversation with the stranger, Cheyenne left Chili's feeling optimistic. “For eight years, I drove past the Western Colorado Community College campus and came up with every excuse in the book as to why I shouldn't do it. Until one day, I put all my fears aside and applied to the program.”

Cheyenne started school at WCCC in August 2021, where she studied electric line work. “It wasn't easy. I worked the night shift at my job until 7 a.m., then went to class directly from work. By the time I got home from school, I had three hours to sleep until I had to be at work again,” Cheyenne explained. Even though it was difficult and stressful, she was dedicated to her education. Despite her busy schedule and constant lack of sleep, she was always excited to learn.

This is when she met the second stranger who changed her life forever. GVP Operations Manager Bill Barlow was at WCCC assessing students in the lineworker program. While mentoring and evaluating a class of over 60 students, one person stood out to him: Cheyenne Howatt. “She is a firecracker, and I knew she'd fit right into the trade,” Barlow stated. Soon after meeting her, Barlow offered her the opportunity to ride along with GVP crews.

While on the job, Cheyenne helped replace and set a pole, and even assisted in mounting a new transformer. “Matt, Zeb and Caleb are a great crew. They taught me so much in the short time that I was with them,” Cheyenne said. After the ride-along, Barlow and the crew agreed that Cheyenne had a bright future. This is when



DANA POGAR

Bill reached out to a local contractor and encouraged them to hire Cheyenne upon her lineworker program completion.

Cheyenne graduated from the WCCC Electric Lineworker program and plans to begin her career as an apprentice lineworker with a local contractor. “On day three of school, I knew that I was in the right place. However, after riding along with GVP crews, it all hit me and I knew I had found the career of my dreams. I can't thank Bill and Grand Valley Power enough for the opportunities they gave me, including my career,” Cheyenne shared.

Cheyenne hopes that with her skills as a lineworker she can make a difference in our community by delivering a service we all depend on: electricity.

COY SEARS

Meet Coy, a Colorado native and resident of the Loma community. “I've lived here on the Western Slope my whole life and was raised on a farm. I grew up wearing cowboy boots and was surrounded by many heads of cattle,” Sears explained. Growing up on a



^ Western Colorado Community College graduate and GVP scholarship recipient Coy Sears is excited for his road ahead after graduating from WCCC's electric lineworker program.

ranch, Coy was raised with a hard-working attitude and knew he wanted a career that physically and mentally pushed him.

In December 2021, Coy graduated from Fruita Monument High School but was still unsure of his future. However, one conversation with a close friend pushed him in the “bright” direction.

One day, Coy was practicing his roping skills with a few of his buddies — one of those people was GVP apprentice Hunter Henderson. After an evening of fun, Coy and Hunter began discussing the essential things in life, such as future goals, career endeavors and academic plans. Like many of us, deciding on what we want to do for the rest of our lives at 18 years old can be overwhelming. Coy was open to suggestions from his friends and family. “Hunter and I have known each other since we were little, and I’ve always looked up to him as a big brother, friend and mentor,” Coy shared.

That evening, the two men spent hours conversing about the electric lineworker industry. “Hunter had nothing but great things to say about WCCC’s program, the trade and apprenticeship at Grand Valley Power. Before I knew it, I was applying to WCCC and GVP’s scholarship program,” Coy said. Soon after, Coy was awarded GVP’s Electric Lineworker Scholarship, an

award that helps support the cost of tools and safety equipment.

In August 2021, Coy started school at WCCC, where he studied electric line work. He juggled several responsibilities during his studies, including work, school, rodeo and ranch duties. “Even though I was constantly on the run, I was always excited for school. So, when Monday morning came around, I was the first to arrive in class,” he said.

It wasn’t long after school started that his fascination with the lineworker trade sparked. Coy was seeking every opportunity to get on-the-job experience. This is when he reached out to his local electric cooperative, GVP, and met Operations Manager Bill Barlow.

Coy’s silent leadership and passion for the trade did not go unnoticed by co-op team members. After a bit of safety training, Coy was welcomed by crews to learn the many tricks of the trade. “I remember while working on Trevor’s crew, I learned how to put elbows on a 750-wire conductor,” Coy recalled. A few weeks later, Coy learned this same skill in class but was already ahead of the game because of his hands-on experiences at the co-op.

After his ride-along, Barlow saw Coy’s potential as a lineman and reached out to his co-op connections. “Coy is a very respectful

young man with a bright future. After watching him work, I put the bug about him in others’ ears in hopes of getting him an apprenticeship position,” Barlow said.

Coy graduated from the WCCC Electric Lineworker program and plans to begin his career as an apprentice lineman at a neighboring electric cooperative. He encourages those wanting to enter the field to stay motivated and open-minded. “In the lineworker industry, there are just as many ways to do one task as knots to tie. Whether you’re a newbie or have been in the field for over 40 years, you’re always a student,” he said.

You just read two incredible stories about two different people from very different walks of life. However, they both share one thing in common: It took one person with leadership and mentoring to encourage them in the direction they needed to go.

Please join us in congratulating both Cheyenne Howatt and Coy Sears on graduating from WCCC’s electric lineworker program. We wish you all the best in your career endeavors!

GLADE PARK MOVIES UNDER THE STARS PRESENTS:



OVER THE HEDGE

Sponsored by: 

Friday, July 29

Grill opens at 6 p.m.
Movie at dusk

Glade Park Volunteer Fire Department
16400 DS Rd.

- **FREE admission**
- Children's games and hay rides
- Food and beverage available for purchase
- Wildfire safety swag provided by GVP

GVP.ORG/HOMETOWN-PARTNERSHIPS

 All proceeds benefit the Glade Park Volunteer Fire Department



BEERS FOR THE BRAVE

JUL 11 | 3-9 P.M.

Kannah Creek Brewing Company
1960 N 12th St, Grand Junction, CO 81501

JOIN US FOR A CRAFT BEER AND SUPPORT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY. PROCEEDS BENEFIT ACTIVE MILITARY TROOPS AND VETERANS AT HOME.

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