

Culture of Leadership

BY RYAN ELARTON GENERAL MANAGER

Serving our members' needs and improving the overall member experience requires a solid internal company culture. At San Isabel Electric, we focus on building leadership skills while creating a team and family environment across the organization. Each one of us has a leadership role, whether formally in a supervisory role, or informally while working together on crews, in departmental teams or directly serving our members. And in our personal lives, each of us has a leadership role in our families or in serving our communities.

Creating a team environment built on basic family values and leadership fundamentals fosters service and accountability. The phrase, "I'm either teaching this or letting this happen," is present with SIEA employees and creates our accountability standard. Said another way, "Have I (anyone as a leader) instructed and trained employees to perform a certain task or behave a certain way or am I ignoring a problematic situation hoping it will get better?"

I had the privilege of hearing Tim Tebow speak at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual meeting recently. He is known for his prowess as an athlete and his commitment to serving those in need through the Tim Tebow Foundation, specifically focused on helping MVPs. As a team-focused athlete, Tim worked to be the most valuable player, not for selfish gain, but because he knew by being the best he could be, he would help his teams achieve greatness. Later however, he realized he was chasing the wrong MVP, and began focusing his efforts to help a different set of MVPs: the most vulnerable people. I'm proud to say that San Isabel Electric's board

and employees share in this effort. That's done by helping members through a difficult situation; through our board's donation and scholarship programs; and providing Christmas gifts from our own pockets to member families who are struggling.

Tim gave what I consider to be the best speech I've ever heard about leadership. He shared that lasting leadership comes through four basic attributes: respect, vision, belief, and passion. Trust breeds respect, and trust must be earned. While we may not always agree with those around us, if we open our hearts and allow ourselves to earn and gain respect, we become better leaders. Vision paints the picture of where we are going and how we get there. But vision without belief often becomes stagnant. Belief brings light to the vision and motivates others to follow that vision. Passion is more than being excited, motivated, or hyped — passion requires suffering and commitment, giving of oneself for the cause. And passion breeds compassion, caring for people.

We all find ourselves in a leadership role from time to time. Through respect, vision, belief, and passion, we can best help those around us.



RYAN ELARTON



▲ Dennis Briggs (left) is congratulated by San Isabel Electric General Manager Ryan Elarton at a quarterly employee meeting in March.

Meet San Isabel Electric's Newest Journeyman Staking Engineer: Dennis Briggs

San Isabel Electric congratulates Dennis Briggs on attaining his journeyman staking engineer certification. This is no easy task, as it requires 3 years of work as an apprentice staking engineer. Engineers must also complete a 23-book course curriculum and field testing.

Dennis has worked for San Isabel Electric for seven years. Prior to working as a staking engineer, Dennis worked as Storeroom Clerk and a Tree trimmer.

Dennis, your efforts in acquiring this certification will undoubtedly lead to great success in your career and make a positive impact on the work you do.

SIEA Wishes Susan Zanolini a Happy Retirement

A friendly voice and face that helped San Isabel Electric members for the last 18 years is saying farewell to San Isabel Electric this month. Susan Zanolini is retiring. She worked as a Member Services Representative at every current office location and also worked in the Billing Department. In her retirement, she looks forward to spending more time with her family, including seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Suzy, may you find joy and fulfillment in the years ahead and may the memories of your time with us remain a cherished part of your legacy. Thank you for the passion you show in serving our members. Congratulations on a well-deserved retirement!

Susan Zanolini and SIEA General Manager Ryan Elarton share a moment of gratitude and farewell. ▶



New RV Park to Open at Local Golf Course

People who are not from the area may not realize Walsenburg is home to a hidden gem. Lathrop State Park is Colorado's only state park that has a golf course. This spring, another treasure is coming to the area: A new, 10-site RV park at the Walsenburg Golf Course.

The golf course is literally hidden right now. It shares an entrance with Lathrop State Park, which also is not very visible from the highway or city. They've both been there since the early 1960s, but there are only a few signs in Walsenburg and along the highway letting people know they both exist.

Lathrop State Park itself is a hidden gem in southern Colorado. It's nestled in the shadow of the Spanish Peaks and features RV and tent campsites, two lakes for boating, fishing and water recreation, a horse trail, and a free archery range.

The 9-hole golf course has a restaurant, mini-golf, and a driving range. The course is open to the public and does not require a state parks pass or membership to play a round or visit. Guests of the new RV campground who want to visit the state park will need to purchase a pass to access Lathrop State Park.

"It's kind of unbelievable that our state park is the only one that features a golf course," Walsenburg Golf Association President Gary Vezzani said. And that's not the only thing that sets this new RV park apart from others. "We may be the only, or one of a few, RV campgrounds in the state that features a golf course," he said.

The new RV campground is situated about 100 yards from the golf course clubhouse with beautiful views of the Spanish

Peaks and Martin Lake. In addition to having easy access to the golf course and state park, other campground amenities include access to the clubhouse and restaurant, and golf cart rental.

The new RV campground will be open for both extended and

nightly stays. Each pull-through gravel site is equipped with 50-, 30- and 20-amp electric service, free high-speed Wi-Fi, and its own picnic table. Leashed pets are also welcome.

Rates are set at \$36 per day for electric campsites. The association is working to put together packages that bundle the RV park fee, green fees, cart rental, mini-golf, driving-range access and perhaps even some state park access. It is anticipated that campsite reservations will open next month.

"It'd be great if we get booked up right away, but we just have to see how it goes," Vezzani said. He also noted that there's enough space to expand the golf course RV park by 30 or 40 additional campsites in the future if there is enough demand.

The Walsenburg Golf Association was formed in 1965, the same year the golf course was built. The association's sole purpose was to operate and maintain the golf course for the good of the community. Huerfano County has helped fund the course since 2015, donating about \$15,000 a year to help



▲ The golf course at Lathrop State Park has beautiful views of the Spanish Peaks. Soon, the area will have a campground to enjoy.

with fertilizer costs and sprinkler equipment, among other items.

"The course is run mostly by volunteers. Without them and the county, this course wouldn't exist. As our volunteers are getting older, we have less and less help. We need the course to be able to sustain itself now more than ever before," Vezzani said. Lathrop State Park suggested the association add campsites for an additional revenue stream and to meet an increasing need in the community, which the state park could not fulfill.

The new campground was made possible by several significant donations and contributions:

- Huerfano County donated the gravel and \$75,000 in cash in the last two years.
- Walsenburg Sand & Gravel donated their operators and equipment to install the gravel.
- San Isabel Electric, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, and Tri-State G&T donated \$7,500.



Good to Know

Keep the Keep Colorado Wild State Park Pass on your vehicle registration so you can access Lathrop State Park when you stay at the new RV campground. Each Colorado vehicle registration and renewal now has a State Parks Pass automatically

added to the renewal fee. The \$29 price point is more than half off the \$80 price tag of the annual state parks pass. Plus, the pass will give you access to all 43 state parks and boost funding for natural resources in our great state.

- Two local electricians, Don Sage and Mike Zanolini, donated 100% of the labor to install the electric pedestals.
- The five members of the golf association have spent countless hours on the project, including Randy Bryan, a former SIEA employee.

Vezzani expects it will take a few years for people to discover the campground and for the association to build a clientele of folks who come back every year to camp, golf, and enjoy the surrounding amenities.

It's a wonderful dream, but right now he's focused on the task

at hand: finishing construction. And even more importantly, he's focused on making sure the RV campground creates enough business to support itself and the golf course.

Vezzani hopes the park will attract families and retirees who love golf, enjoy being on the water and want to stay weeks or months at a time.

This exciting addition to the Walsenburg Golf Course is predicted to have economic benefits for the area. Developers look forward to serving local patrons as well as attracting golfers, campers and outdoor enthusiasts from across Colorado and beyond.



2023 ELECTRIC SAFETY POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

Thank you to all the students who entered SIEA's third annual safety poster contest! We also want to give a shoutout to the teachers and parents who helped them.

Students were asked to draw a poster that displays a clear, creative, and colorful picture of: "How do you and your family stay safe at home when around electricity?" For inspiration, students, parents, and teachers were directed to a video about hidden electrical dangers around the home. Cash prizes were awarded in each division.

First Place Prize: \$100 cash

Preschool & Kindergarten: Wyatt Duran, Primero, Kindergarten
 1st – 3rd Grade: Angel Garcia, Primero, 1st Grade
 4th – 5th Grade: Braelynn Beard, Aguilar, 5th Grade

Second Place Prize: \$50 cash

Preschool & Kindergarten: Amy Wheeler, Aguilar, Kindergarten
 1st – 3rd Grade: Parker Bradford, Aguilar, 3rd Grade
 4th – 5th Grade: Uriah Shine, My Tech High, 5th Grade



Scan this QR code with your smartphone to see the winning posters!

Third Place Prize: \$25 cash

Preschool & Kindergarten: Amaina Portrey, Aguilar, Kindergarten
 1st – 3rd Grade: Samuel Wheeler, Aguilar, 2nd Grade
 4th – 5th Grade: Elias Bobian, Peakview, 4th Grade



▲ First place winners Wyatt Duran (left) and Angel Garcia show off their winning artwork.



▲ Second place winner Uriah Shine (left) and third place winner Elias Bobian.



▲ Prize winners from Aguilar Elementary School. Left to right: Samuel Wheeler, Braelynn Beard, Amaina Portrey, Amy Wheeler, Parker Bradford.

ETS: IYKYK

Congratulations to San Isabel Electric member Patty Knupp, the winner of our first “For the Love of ETS” photo contest. Of the 281 votes that were cast for the 26 entries in the contest, Knupp’s picture of her “labr-a-cat” Eddie sleeping on top of “his” electric thermal storage heater received 133 of the votes. Knupp and Eddie won the grand prize of a \$100 bill credit. Each member that entered the contest and posted a photo received a \$15 bill credit.

“I call him ‘your highness’ now, since he just won \$115 for me,” Knupp said. “I saw the post on Facebook, and thought ‘what do I have to lose?’ I could win \$15 to \$100, why not try? Eddie’s always laying on the ETS, being cute in front of the window.”

Before we say more about the contest — what is the deal with ETS heaters? Why do their owners love them so much? #IYKYK (that means “If you know, you know,” in millennial speak).

Knupp knows. Two ETS heaters were already installed in her home in the Greenhorn Valley area when she bought it 20 years ago. “What the heck are these things?” she thought when she first saw them. She didn’t know if they worked, if they were going to be expensive or if they were going to be reliable. Though different from what she was used to, she soon figured out that they were going to offer a lot in many ways.

ETS heaters have sold themselves since SIEA began offering them in early 90s. Most new ETS heaters are sold by word of mouth. New owners are so enthralled they can’t help but tell their friends and loved ones about how their ETS heater helps save them money, how reliable they are and how well they work to heat their home or business.

They’re also inexpensive. The room units, like the two Knupp owns, cost between \$1,500-\$2,500 each. In addition to the two ETS heaters, Knupp’s home utilizes a wood

stove and passive solar.

Here’s the not-so-secret secret. ETS owners get nearly half-price electricity during off-peak hours for everything else in their home or busi-

ness that’s connected to the same meter. There are 14 hours of off-peak electricity September through April (11 p.m. to 7 a.m. and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) In the summer, there are seven off-peak hours (11 p.m. to 7 a.m.)

Off-peak rates are only available to SIEA members who have installed ETS heating, an electric vehicle charger or a battery storage unit approved by the co-op.

Knupp absolutely believes her ETS heater helps cut her energy costs all year long, because she’s become more mindful of how she uses electricity in other parts of her home. “I set the timer on my dishwasher every time, so it runs during off-peak year-round,” Knupp said. “Same with the laundry. When my brother visits and asks to do laundry, I tell him sure, but only after 11 p.m., during off-peak.”

ETS heaters also save members money because electricity rates per kilowatt hour are also much more stable compared to natural gas and propane prices. Natural gas and propane prices change frequently, but SIEA has increased rates only once in the last nine years.

ETS heaters don’t just save members money at their individual home or business, they also help keep rates down for all co-op members because the heaters use electricity only during the hours when electricity is less expensive.

“San Isabel Electric is a distribution cooperative, meaning we buy most of the electricity we sell to our members from power suppliers. Electricity is cheaper for SIEA to purchase during hours when there is less demand. The co-op’s cost of service is lower when



▲ Patty Knupp’s winning photo of her cat Eddie asleep on the ETS.

more people use electricity during off-peak hours, when there is less demand,” SIEA Communications Manager Paris Daugherty explained. “When the co-op’s cost of service is lower, it helps everyone because it means SIEA can keep rates stable for members.” ETS heaters are even more beneficial to the entire co-op when people convert from a gas heating source to ETS.

Now, back to the contest. The photo contest had countless people talking about ETS. SIEA received more than 100 new inquiries about the heating systems in January and February. Are you talking about your ETS, too? For a limited time, SIEA is offering unlimited \$100 referral credits for every new completed ETS install. The co-op must approve the referral, and the install must be completed in the year 2023. There are some additional restrictions that apply. For more details about the unlimited \$100 referral credit program and program restrictions, visit siea.com/ets, call 800-279-SIEA, or email empower@siea.com.

Say yes to ETS and you can experience the same benefits described by Patty Knupp and what thousands of SIEA members experience daily: a warm, safe home heating option that helps save money on your energy bills. Get started at siea.com/ets or call us at 800-279-SIEA. We look forward to helping you make the switch.

See all the entries in the “For the Love of ETS” photo contest at siea.com/showusyourheater.