

Count Us In! We work to serve our community

BY VIRGINIA HARMAN GENERAL MANAGER

As Mountain Parks Electric Board President Liz McIntyre said at the July 13 Board meeting, “Concern for our community is a co-op principle we hold dear.” One way this is exemplified is by financially supporting community projects through the Unclaimed Capital Credits Fund.

In April, the MPE board of directors streamlined the process of reviewing donation requests so that projects seeking more than \$5,000 would be considered by the board three times per year — in March, July, and November. During its July meeting, the board completed the first review of applications under this new process. The board approved funding toward five worthy projects that will touch many members across MPE’s service area.

During the deliberation, board members shared key principles they considered when reviewing the Unclaimed Capital Credits Fund requests. The principles that rose to the top of the discussion were: keeping a focus on education while also expanding opportunities for other initiatives that address community needs; helping those who need it most; and impacting the most people in our community. Moving forward, the board plans to continue to formalize its review process to ensure these limited funds are providing the greatest impact. We will share more information about the recently funded projects as they progress. Please visit mpei.com/donation-request for more

information and to access the online donation request form.

In addition to funding specific requests from members, funds from unclaimed capital credits are also used to support our annual scholarship program, driver education programs, and Youth Tour. We hope that by funding these youth-focused programs, we will ensure the success of the next generation of MPE members.

Operation Round Up is another way those with the greatest need are assisted by MPE. The program is supported by a vast majority of MPE’s members who volunteer to round their electrical bills up to the next dollar. The fund is managed by a volunteer board of directors. Unfortunately, although we know the need is there, incoming applications for available funds have been so few that the volunteer board has recently had to cancel some bi-monthly meetings because of a lack of applications to consider. MPE and the Operation Round Up board strongly encourage individuals and organizations in need to apply for these funds through the new online form at mpei.com/operation-round-home. There is also a form to sign up to contribute to the fund, either through the monthly roundup or with a one-time donation. Please see page 10 for an Operation Round Up spotlight showing the reach of the program through a partnership with the Mountain Family Center.

Beyond our co-op’s local contributions,

MPE staff also helps find other funding sources to support our community. We pursue grant opportunities to help keep your rates stable and improve reliability of our services. We also work in partnership with community organizations and institutions to support their grant efforts. As you’ll read on page 8, we are excited to announce that a federal grant of \$100,000 was recently awarded to the collaborative effort of Sustainable Grand, MPE, and the East Grand School District for a “Sun to Bus to Grid” project. Similarly, MPE worked closely with the YMCA of the Rockies – Snow Mountain Ranch on a federal grant application for a community solar array. If this exciting project continues to advance and is awarded, solar electricity generated on Snow Mountain Ranch property could benefit households and nonprofits most in need in our community.

These are just a few examples of how MPE demonstrates a concern for community. If you already contribute to Operation Round Up, thank you. If you do not, we hope that you will consider contributing if you can. Please remember that these programs are available to our membership, and we hope that you will consider applying if you have a need.



VIRGINIA HARMAN



Thanks to MPE and its partners, one of the first electric school buses in the state of Colorado arrives at the West Grand School District in March 2021. The recent “School to Bus to Grid” collaboration plans to build on East Grand School District’s recent EPA grants for electric school buses.

Area Collaboration Earns \$100,000 Grant to Plan School Bus Electrification

Sustainable Grand, Mountain Parks Electric, and the East Grand School District were recently awarded a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) for their collaborative “Sun to Bus to Grid” project.

The project aims to build upon the East Grand School District recently-awarded two EPA grants for electric school buses, according to Todd Budin, executive director of Sustainable Grand, an organization that works to advance energy efficiency, electrification, and clean energy in Grand County.

“Since our current wholesale power supplier uses mostly fossil fuels, we would like to power those buses with a large solar array on the bus barn. This ensures that we’re not continuing to create greenhouse gases to power those buses,” Budin said.

The bus batteries will also be used as virtual power plants during the grid’s peak demand periods, reducing the need for natural gas and saving MPE expensive peak demand charges.

Budin said they also hope to explore how the “batteries on wheels” could be dispatched for disaster response. He referenced the 2020 East Troublesome Wildfire in which electric lines were damaged. “Our response personnel could really have used a large battery to power a mobile micro-grid,” he said.

This is a two-phase grant, with the first \$100,000 prize winners working to develop partnership and financing strategies to support efforts in rural communities to improve their energy systems and advance clean-energy demonstration projects. Of the 160 nationwide applicants for the first phase of the grant, 67 were awarded. The Granby collaboration was only one of four in Colorado to earn grant funds. The project team intends to use the funds to work with a consultant to model the energy usage of an electric fleet, as well as the solar and vehicle-to-grid interaction.

For winners selected in the second phase of the grant, \$200,000 will be awarded for project implementation.

This project is just one example of how MPE continues to build on its history of collaborating with nonprofits and other entities throughout its service area in Grand and Jackson counties.

“We are really excited to be a part of this team and learn about the vehicle-to-grid capabilities, as well as the demand response opportunities that the electric school buses provide,” MPE Power Use Advisor Chris Michalowski said.

MPE is also a member of the Beneficial Electrification League, which works with hundreds of electric cooperatives and municipal utilities across the country.

“Mountain Parks Electric’s early adoption of an electric school bus served as an example to people of how electric school buses work exceptionally well in snow and on mountainous terrain. Now, with this vehicle-to-grid project, we look forward to sharing the results to help scale this exciting technology,” BEL President Keith Dennis said.

OCED grant application reviewers agreed that the key concepts behind this project could have broad implications.

“Reviewers also felt that this was a very innovative concept. If it works, it could see widespread replication and an interesting concept with a well-thought-out plan,” OCED reported.



MOUNTAIN PARKS ELECTRIC, INC.
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative



Mountain Parks Electric Clean Power Program Taking Applications for Clean-Energy Grant

The Clean Power Program seeks partnership proposals for large-scale solar or clean-energy projects.

Since 2011, Mountain Parks Electric has provided rebates on local renewable energy installations through the Clean Power Program. This year, the Clean Power Program is offering community members, local business owners, and nonprofit organizations the chance to apply for an accelerator grant to help support clean-energy projects in the MPE service territory.

The Clean Power Program has the potential available funds to contribute a total of up to \$30,000. It is hoped that through these gap-closing funds, the Clean Power Program can help advance local projects. For this round of funding, the Clean Power Program aims to expand its impact beyond individual residential solar and renewable projects to larger-scale projects suitable for commercial uses.

Proposed projects should:

- Advance the transition to clean power and energy efficiency.
- Include large-scale or renewable projects connected to the grid.
- Be ambitious for the presenting organization and demonstrate public benefit.
- Be innovative and/or have community educational value.

Any community members, local business owners, and nonprofits looking to apply are encouraged to submit a letter of interest of up to 500 words by 5 p.m. on October 1, 2023.

The letter should:

1. Describe the desired project and requested contribution amount.
2. Describe the sponsoring organization.
3. Describe how the project will meet the organization's energy transition goals.
4. Describe the public good, innovative, and/or educational value added by the project.
5. Describe the planning work done to date on the project and expected project timeline.
6. Describe the project budget, available funds, and other partnerships/funding already committed.
7. Describe planned public events, outreach, and visibility anticipated with the project.

Email letters of interest to MPE Power Use Advisor Chris Michalowski at cmichalowski@mpei.com.

To participate, applicants must be a Clean Power Program contributor by making a monthly contribution through their electric bill. To become a Clean Power Program contributor, complete the form at mpei.com/clean-power-program-contribution-form.

MPE established the Clean Power Program in 1999, providing an opportunity for its member-owners to support renewable energy. The program is funded by voluntary contributions and is administered by a volunteer advisory committee of MPE members that meets quarterly.

Board Approves Moving Net Metering True-Up to March

At its July 13 meeting, the Mountain Parks Electric Board of Directors approved revisions relating to three tariff issues, effective August 20. These revisions include a change in the net metering true-up schedule, the addition of a standby rate, and adding the state-required interconnection.

Net Metering Rate 330.00 was revised to change the annual true-up date for crediting of excess member-generated electricity from December 31 to March 31.

A Standby Service Rate, 202.13, was added for members who may want to supply all or part of their own load while having MPE provide supplemental or standby service. This does not apply to net metering service.

The new interconnection tariff continues to have no charge to members who are applying for interconnection capacity less than or equal to 25 kilowatts. Two additional levels were added, per state requirements, with the following application fees:

- Level 2: between 25–100 kW – \$600
- Level 3: greater than 100 kW – \$1,000

A system impact study is also required by the state for all Level 3 interconnection applications. MPE will provide a nonbinding, good faith estimate of the cost of any required feasibility, system impact, and facilities studies as a part of the proposed study agreement.

New On YouTube!



Scan the QR code to see the latest episode.



Operation Round Up Assists Thousands Through Mountain Family Center

BY HELEN MORTON SEDLAR MOUNTAIN FAMILY CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Mountain Parks Electric Operation Round Up program continues to help families in our community who are struggling to make ends meet.

At-risk, lower-income households continue to experience hardships. Previous long-standing problems, especially for this demographic, have been amplified by inflation. Most pandemic relief programs have come to an end, and many families have been grappling with inflation rates, which are higher than they've been in the past three decades. Mountain Family Center confirms this with food pantry visits trending 22% higher when compared to numbers through June 2022. The organization's grocery expenses have also tripled since 2019.

MPE now has online forms for organizations and individuals to apply for Operation Round Up funds. Visit mpei.com/round-up.

Higher grocery and fuel costs also affect a family's living situation. On an annual basis, 900-plus local households typically need assistance from Mountain Family Center for groceries, rent, water, electric, and/or other heat sources to remain safely housed.

When families or senior citizens live on fixed incomes, inflation and other rising costs make it nearly impossible for them to keep up with their basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. According to a recent Gallup poll, 71% of households making less than \$40,000 per year are experiencing hardships, and 42% consider their hardships severe. Studies and polls continue to show that lower-income households living in rural communities are struggling more than households living in urban areas. This is where MPE's Operation Round Up program makes a difference.

In our community, soaring rental prices paired with inflation at the grocery store have created enormous financial deficits for many



MPE's Operation Round Up partners with Mountain Family Center to assist more than 2,000 community members over the last decade.

families; they simply cannot catch up. Other households may have one financial event, such as a car repair or a medical bill, that puts them behind. Each quarter, MPE distributes a percentage of its Operation Round Up funds to Mountain Family Center. The Operation Round Up dollars are then used for rent or other household needs that can create a financial buffer for families; thereby averting a potential housing crisis. This partnership has existed for more than 10 years and has provided assistance to more than 2,000 community members.

Mountain Family Center gives a tremendous shout-out to MPE for the level of support that they continue to offer to our community.

District 1 Director Runoff Election Results



RYAN ZORN was announced as the winner of the MPE 2023 District 1 Runoff Election at the continuation of the MPE Annual Meeting on August 10. In the runoff, Zorn had 349 votes (51.6%) and Joe Smyth had 328 votes (48.4%). Thanks to Kristen Taddonio, who served as District 1 Director since 2019.

2023 FALL EVENT CALENDAR

Visit mpei.com/community-events for more information and updates.

SEPTEMBER

- **Wednesday, September 6**
Member Appreciation Event
MPE headquarters warehouse parking lot during business hours
- **Tuesday, September 12 | 8–10 a.m.**
Districts 6 & 7 Coffee with Your Co-op
Mid Town Cafe*, Granby
- **Tuesday, September 19 | 8–10 a.m.**
District 4 Coffee with Your Co-op
Big Shooter*, Kremmling
- **Thursday, September 21 | 8–10 a.m.**
District 2 Coffee with Your Co-op
Bake Haus 232*, Winter Park
- **Tuesday, September 26 | 8–10 a.m.**
District 5 Coffee with Your Co-op
The Hub*, Grand Lake

OCTOBER

- **Tuesday, October 17 | 8–10 a.m.**
District 3 Coffee with Your Co-op
River Rock Cafe*, Walden
- **Thursday, October 19 | 8–10 a.m.**
District 1 Coffee with Your Co-op
Sharky's Eatery*, Fraser

*Tentative



WAYS TO \$AVE

BY LINDSAY MCCANN
MEMBER SERVICE SPECIALIST

Wash and Dry

- Wash clothes in cold water. Roughly 90% of energy used by washing machines is for hot water.
- Wash only full loads so water is not wasted.
- Clean the lint filter on your dryer; clogged filters drive up drying costs.