

# CLAY ELECTRIC

CLAY ELECTRIC  
CO-OPERATIVE, INC.  
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FLORA, ILLINOIS

## NEWS

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## From the Manager

By Ed VanHoose

**H**ello! I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself, and address some of the things Clay Electric is looking at to continue to provide the same excellent level of service you have come to expect.

I have to thank John Meng, former Manager of Clay Electric, for all of his years of service. Under John's leadership your cooperative has maintained some of the lowest comparative rates in Illinois, while also implementing a forestry plan and upgrades to the plant to see increased reliability.

Hopefully, many of you have begun to see the fruits of that labor by experiencing fewer blinks and outages. In particular our restoration times have lessened to a great degree. It is my hope to build upon the legacy John leaves here at Clay Electric, continuing the forestry program, as well as looking for new ways to continue to enhance the reliability of your electric system.

Just to give you a little of my background, I come from the information technology (IT) world. Most recently, I worked for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield, where I helped cooperatives with issues like cyber security compliance and technology planning. My time with the AIEC exposed me to the many different facets of the cooperative business model, which has led me to Clay Electric.

Where else can I work directly

for the people I serve, and have an impact upon a local community the way a cooperative does? If you are reading this, and haven't thought about it before, let me say it plainly: You're the boss! When you are a member of a non-profit electric cooperative like Clay Electric, you own the cooperative. So, you can be sure I'm going to take your concerns very seriously.

So, what do I have planned for the near future?

Your cooperative is in very good shape, both financially and with the employee base. However, I see some opportunities for technological advancements. For instance, did you know we have a geographical information system (GIS) in place? That means, we can quickly process work orders in a more efficient manner than simply using paper maps. The system provides detailed information for every location. My plan is to expand the usage of the GIS to help improve reliability of your service.

Clay also has automated meter reading (AMR). With the AMR system, we have become much more accurate in billing, but there is a potential to move to an automated metering infrastructure (AMI) in the future.

When used at its fullest potential, AMI can offer many benefits:

Improved system-voltage monitoring can lead to better regulation, improved capacitor and regulator placement and more accurate voltage-drop analysis. Improved

load information leads to better load studies and analysis, resulting in improved planning and system design. Improved reliability monitoring can lead to improved outage response, proper system-protection analysis and ultimately, a decrease in outages and outage time, raising reliability indices. Improved monitoring and information flow can also lead to better management of critical assets such as transformers and capacitors.

Distribution-automation tools implemented via AMI networks provide for real time interrogation and control of remote intelligent electronic devices (IEDs). The information and reporting tools available within AMI systems can allow for targeted vegetation management and line patrol, prioritizing and controlling maintenance spending. Last, engineers can use the systems to pinpoint system losses, and once identified, reduce them.

Basically, it all comes back to more reliable, more efficient, service for you.



*Ed VanHoose*  
Manager

# Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting

**Regular meeting May 27, 2014**

**T**rustees present were: Frank Czyzewski, Bill Croy, Neil Gould, Frank Herman, Kevin Logan, Bob Pierson, Richard Rudolphi, Danny Schnepfer and Greg Smith. Also present were Executive Vice President/General Manager John Meng, Successor General Manager Ed VanHoose, Cooperative Attorney Melanie Pearce, and SIPC CEO Don Gulley.

The invocation was given by Bob Pierson.

**Heard** a presentation from Don Gulley, CEO of SIPC concerning status of demand, performance of Prairie State, a new prospective SIPC member, legislative and regulatory trends, and Strategic Planning topics. Mr. Gulley then left the meeting.

**Approved** the minutes of the regular meeting held April 21, 2014.

**Accepted** 17 new members for service.

**Canceled** 14 members no longer receiving service.

**Approved** work orders in the amount of \$53,429.41.

**Accepted** the disbursement list for the month of April, 2014.

**Heard** a report by Trustee Logan concerning the regular monthly AIEC Board Meeting. He disbursed for review the AIEC Executive Summary and Reviewed the AIEC 2014-15 Budget.

**Discussed** possible attendees to the AIEC Annual Meeting and Directors Conference. Appointed Kevin Logan as Director, and Richard Rudolphi as Alternate to the AIEC, and Appointed Frank Czyzewski as Voting Delegate and Danny Schnepfer as Alternate to the AIEC Annual Meeting.

**Discussed** possible attendees for an upcoming AIEC training course.

**Heard** a report by Trustee Herman concerning the recent SIPC Board meeting, including recent policy revisions, Strategic Planning, and Disbursed SIPC Administrative and Finance Dept. Summary.

**Resolved** appointment of Ed VanHoose to Director of SIPC Board.

**Approved** Gen. Mgr. Meng's report as to financial standing, and heard reports on the Budget Model that was presented at the April Regular Board meeting, and Power Cost Adjustment and the effects toward purchases and budget, the Iola Circuit project, the paperless Board Meeting initiative, the transition of the SEDC server, and the Marathon Project.

**Informed** of the upcoming visit of Federated Insurance Representative Steve Shaffer.

**Approved** the extension of Draw Period for a CFC loan as recommended by Gen. Mgr. Meng.

**Approved** two Purchase Power Agreements for two members in the form as presented.

**Adjournment.**

## Youth to Washington 2014

**G**eorge Bonham, Meredith O'Brien and Taylor Warner represented Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc. in Washington, D.C., during the annual "Youth to Washington" Tour, June 13-20. This event, sponsored by the electric and telephone cooperatives of Illinois since the late 1950s, is an introduction for rural youth to our democratic form of government and the cooperative business model.

The students met with Congressman John Shimkus and were among 75 rural Illinois youth leaders selected for the trip. The Illinois students joined more than 1,600 young leaders from across the country from 44 states. In addition to the Capitol, they also visited Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery, the Washington National Cathedral, several Smithsonian Museums, The U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the World War II Memorial, memorials to Presidents Lincoln, Jefferson, Washington and Roosevelt, the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, the Newseum and a number of other historical sites.

Juniors in high schools that are within the service area of Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc. are eligible to participate in the annual program.

Pictured from l-r: O'Brien, Congressman Shimkus, Warner and Bonham.



# Your role in Co-op Nation

*There is a reason we say member, not customer*

*By Adam Schwartz*

Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. [www.cecicoop.com](http://www.cecicoop.com) (CECI) is connected to a network of cooperatives. You might be thinking, “Really? How does that work?” CECI is a member of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, [www.aiec.coop](http://www.aiec.coop). We do this to keep in close contact with our ‘sister’ utilities and to stay up to date on how to best serve you. They are there to assist with local training, legislative issues affecting us in Springfield and when we have a severe outage, we can call on them to assist in getting your electricity back on as soon as possible. This is one of the ways we live up to our seven cooperative principles, which includes “cooperation among cooperatives.”

CECI is also a member of Southern Illinois Power Cooperative, (SIPC). This is the organization that produces the power that we buy at the wholesale level and enables us to provide safe, reliable and efficient power to you at the lowest possible cost. SIPC is also a cooperative, and we hold a seat on the organization’s Board of Directors to represent your interests.

But wait--there’s more! CECI is also a member of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) [www.nreca.coop](http://www.nreca.coop) that unites electric cooperatives in the 47 states we serve. NRECA provides important benefits such as representing our interests with federal lawmakers and the Administration (the executive branch of our government). NRECA also provides health and retirement benefits to our employees, as well as training for board members and employees.

NRECA is a member of both the National Cooperative Business Association [www.ncba.coop](http://www.ncba.coop) and the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) [www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop), which is made up of a wide range of cooperative



businesses including those in agriculture, banking (credit unions), health care, housing, purchasing and many others in more than 80 countries. Many of these businesses represent some of the best known global brands in the world.

In 2013, the ICA released the “Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade” designed to promote the cooperative business model as the best way to meet both the economic and social needs of individuals and communities.

The report (which is available for free at [www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop)) describes the five key areas that all co-ops emphasize:

- Participation (member engagement)
- Sustainability (how we help our communities prosper)
- Identity (making sure people understand and showcase the cooperative business model)
- Legal Framework (making sure laws and regulations help, not harm our ability to operate for your benefit)
- Capital (ensure we have the money we need to finance our operations)

Member owners like you at CECI have a role to play in all of these areas, but it is Participation (member engagement) that is criti-

cally important. We strive to have members actively participate in our governance through voting or running for our board of directors.

Back in the early days of CECI we never could have existed without the active participation of all of our members. While technology and reliability have improved, we still need you to be involved. In many ways, it is more important than ever that you feel like you belong to our co-op.

Margaret Mead, the cultural anthropologist, once said, “Never doubt the ability of a small group of people to change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” CECI is connected to a world full of people who believe in the cooperative principles and values, and we need you to be connected to us by more than just the electric line. So, get involved. Come to our annual meeting in September, and make your voice heard. Together, we can make Co-op Nation stronger than ever.

*Adam Schwartz is the founder of The Cooperative Way a consulting firm that helps co-ops succeed. He is an author, speaker and member-owner of the CDS Consulting Co-op. You can follow him on Twitter @adamcooperative.*

# Teach your children well about electrical safety

**E**lectricity is a dynamic power source. We live our lives surrounded by it, but sometimes we forget just how dangerous electricity can be. Many home electrical fires, injuries and electrocutions can be prevented when we understand and practice electrical safety. This is especially true for our youngest co-op members.

Throughout the year, not just in May during National Electrical Safety Month, Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CECI) offers many value-added benefits to help teach youngsters about electricity. We participate in the Clay County Farm Bureau sponsored Farm Safety Day Camp, and also at local Fire Department Meetings with our Live Line Demonstration. We educate all different ages of people about the hazards and dangers of electricity. We show them the dangers around back yard swimming pools, grain augers, and even accident scenes. But as your child's first and most important teacher, perhaps it's time to have a talk with your sons and daughters to reinforce those lessons. Let us know if power lines are

near trees where children will be climbing.

Start at an early age, teaching them about the physical dangers associated with electrical components and how to handle electrical plugs, outlets, switches and other devices. Keep in mind, talking to your children about electrical safety should also include fun activities and facts about the basics—what is electricity, the need to respect its power and how to use it efficiently as they study, work and play.

As we all know, kids will be kids. Getting them to show interest in some of these lessons won't be easy. Just remember that what your children learn from you today can be a lifesaver later when they encounter potential hazards like downed power lines in their path, play hide-and-seek behind those big metal electrical boxes in the neighborhood or are tempted to clamber up a utility pole.

Gather your youngsters around the kitchen table or on the front porch—some of the best teachable moments about electrical safety can happen in and around your home. Look around. There are plenty of opportunities to demonstrate safety that are as close as the electrical outlet on your living room wall. For example, show young children how plugs work, and let them know that even if they are curious about the slits of an electrical outlet, nothing else should be placed inside. Each year about 2,400 children end up in the emergency room after suffering injuries caused by inserting objects—paper clips, pens, screws, nails, forks, hair pins, coins and more—into electrical receptacles. That's about seven children a day who sustain injuries ranging from electric shock to burns.

But this isn't the only electrical mishap that impacts youngsters. Our reliance on electronics and gad-




Photo courtesy of SafeElectricity.org

gets have left both youngsters and their parents at risk when they overcrowd electrical outlets, continue to use frayed wires, place devices near liquids or leave electronics on for long periods of time. Some of the same guidelines CECI offers to protect adults also help protect children. We should all set good examples for our youngsters.

Supplement your lessons at home with resources galore; including those provided by CECI. Get on the website [www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org) for several educational tools. The Electrical Safety Foundational International ([www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org)) is among the many national organizations offering free kits, videos and interactive online tools that make learning and practicing electrical safety fun for you and your children. And as they grow older, remember to keep teaching them about the power of electricity and how to use it safely.

*B. Denise Hawkins writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.*

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