



# Clinton County Connection

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Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

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Mike Johnson

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Plan to attend your  
cooperative's 73rd  
Annual Meeting  
Thursday  
March 17, 2011

## Membership, what is it?

Many of our members may not understand what it means to belong to an electric cooperative and maybe this article will assist in that understanding. Simply by receiving electricity from Clinton County, you are a member/owner of Clinton County Electric Cooperative – a business owned by the people it serves. Our goal is to provide you, the member/owner, with reliable, safe and reasonably priced electricity.

What are the differences between receiving electricity from Clinton County vs. electricity from an Investor Owned Utility (IOU) like AMEREN? Well, let's start with what is similar between the two entities and that is the basic product of electricity. To be honest, electricity is electricity, it doesn't matter if it is generated and delivered to you by an IOU or a cooperative - it is the same basic product. It lights your home, cools your home and runs all of your appliances in exactly the same manner. To me that is where the similarities end.

As I see it, there are three basic fundamental differences between an electric cooperative like Clinton County and an IOU. These are: (1) service, (2) ownership and (3) ability to engage in governance.

As mentioned earlier, one of our goals is to provide reliable electric service to our member/owners, and I personally think we do a better job than IOUs do in this area. I worked for an IOU for 20 years and they have a different philosophy or mindset. IOU's focus on earnings, rates of return and stock share price growth. In order to achieve those, most IOUs have closed local offices and centralized their operations into fewer locations. We, on the other hand, are located right here in the community. We are able to respond to your home or business in the event of an outage quicker than an IOU can. Since I have been here, I can't count the number of times we

have received phone calls from members saying that they are back in service, while their neighbors who are served by the IOU remain in the dark.

Generally, one of the areas that IOUs have an advantage over cooperatives is in regard to rates. Due to density, IOUs can spread fixed costs over more customers per mile of distribution line, when compared to Clinton County and most other cooperatives, which lowers cost of service. Determination of rates is also affected by other differences such as: (1) IOUs pay income taxes and Clinton County does not; (2) Clinton County's ability to get low cost financing; and (3) sheer size or economies of scale. In the grand scheme of things, Clinton County Electric is fairly small in the electric utility marketplace. Please remember our goal is not to be the lowest cost energy provider, but to be a reasonable cost provider, and I think we have and will continue to do that for our membership.

The second difference between Clinton County and the IOU is ownership. Clinton County operates on a not-for-profit basis for the mutual benefit of its owners. Any leftover monies (margins) are allocated to each member's capital credits account based on how much that member paid the cooperative for electric service. Generally, Clinton County budgets a fairly small margin. Margins are necessary to ensure the long term financial viability of the cooperative. There might be times when the cooperative has to charge rates that produce larger margins, but that will definitely not be the norm.

Your ownership is returned to you in the form of capital credit retirements. Each year, the board of trustees determines the portion of capital credits that will be returned, while ensuring the cooperative's financial health.

*(Continued on page 16b)*

## Membership, what is it? (Continued from page 16a)

The board of trustees is dedicated to continuing to return capital credits to the membership in the future. Be sure to keep Clinton County informed of your current address so that your check may be delivered when a capital credits return occurs.

To me the biggest difference between Clinton County and the IOUs is the ability to engage in the governance process. Clinton County is a democratically-governed electric utility owned by the members it

serves. You have a voice in running your cooperative by electing members of a board of trustees who provide oversight, governance and guidance for the cooperative. The trustees determine the general direction of the cooperative by setting policies, making financial decisions, and establishing goals. You can become a part of that process by attending YOUR Annual Meeting on March 17, 2011.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite the membership to

visit our website at [www.cceci.com](http://www.cceci.com). While you are on our website, please take the opportunity to sign up for E-Business; the button is on the upper left of your screen. All you will need is a Cooperative billing statement and a valid email address.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article and, as always, if you have any questions, concerns or comments, please email me at [johnson@cceci.com](mailto:johnson@cceci.com).



In our continuing efforts to provide our members and communities with superior services, CCEC is sponsoring a Lite 4 Bite program that began in November. Turn in two or more canned or other non-perishable food items into our office in exchange for a CFL light bulb! A maximum of four bulbs will be given to each membership, while supplies last (1,500 available). The food collected will be distributed to several food banks located throughout the CCEC service area. Please help us help others!

## Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc. Annual Scholarship Program

Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc. proudly sponsors seven \$500 scholarships annually. The scholarships are given to students based upon criteria set forth by the school they are attending. Please contact the guidance department at the following schools for more details: Carlyle High School, Central High School, Christ Our Rock Lutheran High School, Mater Dei Catholic High School, Mascoutah High School, Westclin High School, and Kaskaskia College.

## Cooperative Response Center

### *Our after hours call center*

Have you ever wondered how Clinton County Electric Cooperative handles outages after hours and on weekends? How do we handle call volume from hundreds of members at once and how do crews get dispatched to the outage?

Clinton County Electric recently entered into a contract with Cooperative Response Center, Inc. (CRC), a "service cooperative" based in Austin, MN, to handle these calls. CRC is a member-owned cooperative and Clinton County Electric is one of the member-owners. CRC serves over 200 rural electric cooperatives from coast to coast.

After-hours outage calls are forwarded to CRC where trained CSRs (customer service reps) answer the calls. As calls come in, CRC dispatchers begin assembling Clinton County's crews to restore the outage. CRC updates the crews with additional information as it comes in from members. Dispatchers at CRC maintain communication with the crews until the outage is fully restored. This communication is done for the safety of our crews.

There are times when the number of members calling to report outages exceeds the number of live CSRs available. In this case, an automated IVR (Interactive Voice Response) solution allows members to report their outage using touch-tones in response to the IVR prompts. Although there is not a

CSR to talk with in this instance, this outage information is still very important to us, and this data helps CRC and our crews quickly identify the source of the outage.

The efficiency of CRC or any outage reporting system relies on complete and accurate data in our phone number database, including our members' cell phone numbers. This data allows CRC to immediately recognize an incoming call (based on caller-ID) to a service address or location number. This capability allows it to quickly determine if the call is part of an outage already reported, or a brand new outage, possibly requiring an additional crew. Even before the call is answered, this feature begins working, and ultimately speeds up the time it takes to identify and restore outages.

In addition to outage calls, CRC is able to answer routine questions such as day-to-day inquiries, and it can even offer member-specific information such as balances due, due dates, recent payment histories, etc. CRC has been empowered to accept member payments over the phone during non-office hours, and post them to our billing system.

Because of this comprehensive and seamless call handling that CRC provides, it has become the back-up to Clinton County Electric, should there ever be a disaster or other event that leaves us unable to process calls from this office.



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## Interesting facts about Prairie State Energy Campus ...

- The chimney, standing at almost 700 feet tall is 70 feet taller than the St. Louis Arch and more than twice the height of the Statue of Liberty in New York.
- Each boiler building is approximately 290 feet tall and consists of 16,500 tons of structural steel, more than twice as heavy as the Eiffel Tower.
- Upon project completion, there will be 1,200 miles of cable installed, more than the distance from St. Louis to Green River, Utah. From the west coast to the east coast, the United States is approximately 2,660 miles across, only little more than twice the amount of cable at this project!
- More than 165,000 cubic yards of concrete will be used to build the plant – enough to fill more than 500 Olympic-sized swimming pools.
- Each unit will use approximately 400,000 gallons a minute of cooling water flow – enough to fill an Olympic sized swimming pool in 1½ minutes.
- There are 1,600 MW which will power approximately 2.5 million homes. With the average family size of 3.2, that means 8,000,000 people will benefit from the plant, or approximately the city of New York.
- Coal is produced from plants that died hundreds of millions of years ago in swamplands. The plants were covered by layers of dirt and water, which trapped their energy. The weight and heat of the upper layers turned the remains into what we know as coal today.
- Coal ash is a byproduct of coal combustion. Did you know it is used as a filler for tennis balls and golf balls?
- 120 miles of piping will be used to build the plant – enough pipe to reach from the plant to Springfield, Ill.
- The United States mines more than 1,000,000,000 tons of coal.

## Spotlight on Ralph

This month we are spotlighting employee Ralph Kuhl. Ralph serves as our Cooperative's Manager of Administrative Services. He received a Bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and is a Certified Public Accountant. Ralph started employment with Clinton County Electric Cooperative on Jan. 4, 1999. Previous to working for the Cooperative, he was employed by St. Mary's Hospital in Centralia for 10 years and worked at Rice, Sullivan & Company in public accounting for 8 years. Ralph stays very busy when he is away from work by serving in his 6<sup>th</sup> term as Supervisor of Breese Township and Treasurer of Clinton County Township Officials. He is also a St. Augustine Parish Finance Council member and serves as a member of



Ralph Kuhl

the Illinois Electric Cooperative Federal Credit Union Board of Directors. Ralph has been married to Marietta for over 28 years and they are the proud parents of Alicia (27), Courtney (25), and Alex (21). Feel free to call Ralph anytime, or send him an e-mail at [kuhl@cceci.com](mailto:kuhl@cceci.com), if you have any questions or concerns about your electric cooperative.

## Pay Your Electric Bill Online at [www.cceci.com](http://www.cceci.com)!

Simply visit our website at [www.cceci.com](http://www.cceci.com), click on **E-Business Solution** on the upper left side of the page and follow the prompts to pay your bill via credit card, debit card or from your checking account. You will need your account number when signing up for E-Business Solution, so make sure to have a copy of your electric bill in front of you for the initial set-up. You will have the opportunity choose recurring payment each month for your

electric bill, giving you peace of mind knowing it is paid on time! Once we have your email address, a notification will be sent to you via email each month letting you know your bill is available on-line for viewing. By signing up on our website, you also gain access to valuable information about your account history. Do not hesitate to contact us at 526-7282 or via email at [billing@cceci.com](mailto:billing@cceci.com) with any questions.

**IMPORTANT DATE • IMPORTANT DATE • IMPORTANT DATE • IMPORTANT**



Make plans to wear your green outfit and celebrate St. Patrick's Day with all of your friends and neighbors by attending **Clinton County Electric Cooperative's 73rd Annual Meeting** on March 17, 2011 to be held at Central High School in Breese. Registration will start at 6:30 p.m. with the meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m. **You don't want to miss the chance to see Trustee Ron Becker in his green sport coat!**

**IMPORTANT DATE • IMPORTANT DATE • IMPORTANT DATE • IMPORTANT**