

# JO-CARROLL

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative  **HI-LINES**



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Michael Hastings

# October is National Co-op Month

### The seven cooperative principles

Voluntary and Open Membership

Democratic Member Control

Members' Economic Participation

Autonomy and Independence

Education, Training, and Information

Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Concern for Community

### Reader Prize

Each month we print the name of a Jo-Carroll Energy member who is eligible to win a monthly \$25 readership prize. If your name is printed in this month's edition, and not a part of any article, contact Jo-Carroll Energy and claim your prize no later than the 10th of the month following publication.

National Co-op Month in October is the perfect time to remember and celebrate what we've accomplished—all with a little cooperation. Jo-Carroll Energy's history, rooted in the REA movement, is part of an American success story. Rather than waiting for someone else at a big distant corporation to turn on the lights, rural neighbors stood together to power their own future.

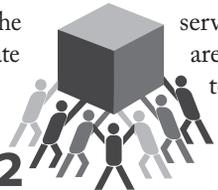
Jo-Carroll Energy is proud to serve a diverse membership and to be a part of America's cooperative network. Cooperatives thrive across the country with more than 29,000 co-ops and credit unions serving members.

Every October, cooperatives are recognized for those qualities that make the business model unique. An event that dates back to 1930, Co-op Month is a way for cooperatives to create awareness of the cooperative difference and to commemorate their history and achievements. In 2012, the celebration lasts year-long with the United Nations-sanctioned International Year of Cooperatives proclaiming that "Cooperative enterprises build a better world".

This theme reflects the contributions cooperatives make to members and their communities. A commitment to community is one of the seven cooperative principles. Building stronger communities—for the good of all—is at the heart of why people form cooperatives.

Cooperatives are special, and share distinctive characteristics: they are not-for-profit, have local democratic control and a commitment to supporting the communities they serve. Cooperatives are self-accountable and have no divided loyalties between those they

## 2012 International Year of Cooperatives



serve and stockholders. Co-operatives are about people and working together—the members, the board that represents them and the employees who provide service to them.

At Jo-Carroll Energy, not only do we have an obligation to provide reliable, affordable and safe service, we take it a step further. We believe we have a responsibility to support our members and enhance their quality of life.

As a member of Jo-Carroll Energy, you may already know that ownership is one of the best parts of being a co-op member. We encourage you to take some time to learn about our programs and services and to get acquainted with your board of directors, the co-op's employees and our programs and services. There's nothing more important to the health of your co-op in the future than your involvement today.

Our members have played an important role in the 74-year history and culture of Jo-Carroll Energy, and they continue to play an important role now and for the future. By working with your cooperative you can make a big impact on the communities we serve. Together we can accomplish more than we can individually.

Thank you for your efforts to strengthen our communities. We invite you to join us as we celebrate National Cooperative Month. Inside this issue you'll find details about member appreciation events we have planned for October. We can't think of a better way to celebrate co-op month than spending some time with our members. After all, our story starts with you.

## For your information

### Your Board of Directors:

**Joe Mattingley**  
*Chairman*  
District 2

**Chris Stadel**  
*Vice Chairman*  
District 4

**Marcia Stanger**  
*Secretary*  
District 3

**David Senn**  
*Treasurer*  
District 7

**Martin Werner**  
District 1

**Patricia Smith**  
District 5

**Thomas Lundy**  
District 6

**Russell Holesinger**  
District 8

**Larry Carroll**  
District 9

### Office Hours:

Elizabeth  
793 U.S. Route 20 West  
8 a.m. to 5 -p.m.  
Savanna  
103 Chicago Ave.  
8 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
1:30 to 4 p.m.

### Services and Billing Questions:

(800) 858-5522  
www.jocarroll.com

### For emergencies and outages call:

(800) 927-5252



### Jo-Carroll Energy Blood Drive

Monday, October 8  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
American Red Cross Bus  
Elizabeth Headquarters

For an appointment, call Elecia  
at 800-858-5522 ext. 1228  
or visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org)

Community members welcome!

The need is constant.  
The gratification is instant.  
Give blood.™

# Resume of Minutes

## Regular Board Meeting • July 25, 2012

The board met at the Cooperative headquarters in Elizabeth on Wednesday, July 25, 2012. The following is a summary of the meeting activities. The Agenda as modified and the Consent Agenda were approved.

**Chairman's Report**—The Chairman discussed use of the dashboard to track implementation of the strategic plan. He commented on the purpose of the Special Board Meeting held on July 16th.

**Dairyland Report**—Director Stadel discussed the July Dairyland Board of Directors meeting. He stated the Board visited the Dairyland nuclear power plant in Genoa and its ongoing dismantling.

**AIEC Report**—Director Senn commented on his appointment to Chair of the AIEC Resolutions Committee and the NRECA Regions 5 & 6 Resolutions Committee.

**APGA Report**—The CEO mentioned that there were changes coming with gas distribution.

**Monthly Committee Review**—Policy—Policy 108 entitled Board—President/CEO Relationship was approved as presented.

### CEO's Report

The CEO reported on the following in addition to his written report:

- **Financial Operating Report**—CEO, Michael Hastings, reported that the Cooperative had an unaudited margin of -\$79,132 for June.
- **Power Supply Report**—CEO Hastings reported on Cooperative activities related to both power suppliers, Interstate Power & Light (IPL) and Dairyland Power (Dairyland).
- **Power Plant Report**—Hastings stated that the Cooperative continues to work on the biomass plant attempting to reach out to possible partners.
- **Farmers Mutual Report**—The CEO described the need for a meeting to discuss how best to approach proceeding with the possibility of some joint effort with Farmers Mutual Electric Company.
- **Rentech Update**—The CEO reported that the substation is proceeding as planned.
- **Metform Update**—Hastings stated that

he continues to work on projects with Metform.

- **Rates**—Heidenreich reported that Pat Keleher, Energy Services Advisor, is still waiting for the final report on the cost of service study. Efforts on unbundling bills continue.
- **COO Report**—Buros reported on load swaps with IPL and Dairyland, a standard audit on compliance issues and the broadband program.
- **Culture of Excellence and Communications**—Sevey reported on the continuing efforts on the Culture of Excellence. She mentioned the success of the Co-op 101 program and that the Cooperative had placed a float in the Elizabeth Parade. Sevey reported that the Member Advisory Council will hold its first meeting soon.
- **Member Services**—Skien reported that she continues to work on net metering and other billing related concerns. She commented on the misleading nature of many power marketing phone calls.
- **External Affairs Update**—Cox reported on legislative matters and progress on the Thomson Prison.

### Board Issues

Board of Directors—Culture Training—The Board will meet with Caroline Fisher on September 6, 2012.

- **2012 Capital Credit Proposal**—Heidenreich presented a plan for paying capital credits to members.
- **Approve Confidentiality Agreement**—A Confidentiality Agreement was approved.
- **Discuss ACRE 2013**—The board discussed the ACRE President's Club.
- **Youth to Washington**—Heidi Weber introduced 2012 Youth to Washington participants, Codie Geisz and Jonathon Rasmussen.

**Reports/Meetings**—The Board heard reports on several matters and reviewed scheduled meetings.

**Consideration of Real Estate Matters**—Approved action on real estate.

**Adjournment**—The meeting adjourned at 1:40 PM.

## Co-op Month/Member Appreciation Days

# Help us celebrate! Co-ops build a better world

Join Jo-Carroll Energy in October as we celebrate the cooperative difference! This year is particularly special as we celebrate both National Co-op Month and the International Year of Cooperatives.

We've planned four special events during the week of Oct. 8. Here's a rundown of the week's activities.

### Member Appreciation Days

Plan to have lunch on us as we kick off the week with a Member Appreciation event at our Elizabeth headquarters on Monday, Oct. 8 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. We'll serve a light lunch featuring grilled hot dogs along with chips and a drink.

Guided tours of the Jo-Carroll Energy facilities will be offered throughout the event. Bring the kids along and have their photo taken with a bucket truck.

We'll also have drawings for a \$25 bill credit and a special gift basket for our younger members.

Oct. 8 is also the date for an

American Red Cross Blood Drive, sponsored by Jo-Carroll Energy at the Elizabeth office. You can find more information about the blood drive on page 16b.

The celebration moves to our Savanna office on Tuesday, Oct. 9 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. where we'll serve lunch, hold drawings and offer bucket truck photos.

### Open house events

Oct. 7-13 is also National Public Gas Week, and we're taking the co-op celebration to our natural gas service area later in the week.

We'll be talking about the value of having a locally owned natural gas cooperative, and we'll provide information on the environmental and cost benefits of using clean, reliable and affordable natural gas.

Jo-Carroll Energy and Sand Prairie Wireless will host an open house from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 10 in the town triangle at Erie. We'll fire up the grill

for more hot dogs, and you can visit with us for demonstrations of Sand Prairie Wireless high-performance Internet service and information about our natural gas service area.

A second open house will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 11 at the Senior Center in Fulton.

### Light Up the Holidays food drive

You can help us help others by bringing along a donation for our annual "Light Up the Holidays" food drive. Each year employees and members provide donations of nonperishable food and other items that benefit nine food pantries in the cooperative's service territory.

The food drive continues throughout October, November and December with collection boxes at both our Elizabeth and Savanna offices.

We hope to see you at one of our Co-op Month events. Visit our website ([www.jocarroll.com](http://www.jocarroll.com)) and our Facebook page for updates.

## Petitions now available for 2013 elections

Nomination petitions are now available for the 2013 Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Director elections.

Three positions on the board will be filled during the 2013 election. Districts included are: District 1, now represented by Martin Werner of East Dubuque; District 2, now represented by Joe Mattingley of Scales Mound; and District 4, now represented by Chris Stadel of Hanover.

Any Jo-Carroll Energy member residing in the district of a director whose term is expiring, including the incumbent director, may petition for nomination as director. Members interested in being elected to the board of directors may pick

up a nomination petition at one of Jo-Carroll Energy's offices or download a petition from the cooperative's website at [www.jocarroll.com](http://www.jocarroll.com).

The petition must be signed by at least 25 Jo-Carroll Energy members residing in the district for which a director is to be elected. Petitions must be filed at Jo-Carroll Energy's headquarters no earlier than Nov. 13, 2012 and no later than Feb. 14, 2013.

In order to qualify to have their names placed on the ballot, all nominees must participate in an orientation process provided by the attorney for the cooperative assuring that all nominees fully understand the expectations and responsibilities of directors,

including but not limited to: time demands, educational expectations and fiduciary duties.

All eligible candidates will be announced in the 2013 Annual Meeting Book, on the cooperative's website and in the cooperative's newsletter, Hi-Lines (found inside Illinois Country Living magazine).

Complete details on director qualifications and the nomination procedure can be found in Jo-Carroll Energy's bylaws. The bylaws are posted on our website at [www.jocarroll.com](http://www.jocarroll.com). Those without Internet access may request a copy by calling (800) 858-5522. The 2013 Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, April 13 in Elizabeth.

# Membership important aspect of co-op business model

Jo-Carroll Energy board chairman Joe Mattingley understands the importance of membership. Democratic member control with a board of directors elected by the membership, a hallmark of not-for-profit cooperatives, is one of the most important aspects of the co-op business model, according to Mattingley.

“The cooperative business model encourages membership involvement, and it encourages being highly involved in the community wherever it can be,” Mattingley said. “We have a board of directors that is from our own hometowns, not a board of directors that is governing an organization from 200 or 1,000 miles away or even from another country. We know what the local issues are.”

“Just because we’re from Scales Mound, Elizabeth or Argo Faye doesn’t mean we can’t get good, positive advice to make fantastic decisions,” he added. “When we have questions, we get help as needed. We don’t hesitate to make sure the decisions that are made are correct based on proper data.”

Active involvement in membership organizations is a common thread throughout Mattingley’s life. “My entire business career has primarily been for the betterment of members, representing a member constituency,” he said.

As general manager of The Galena Territory Association, Mattingley works for a board of directors. Through his interest in horses, he is an appointed director on the U.S. Equestrian Federation. He was appointed to the Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Directors in 2006, and was elected as the District 2 representative in 2007. Now serving his second term as a director, Mattingley



has been chairman for four years. His focus as a Jo-Carroll Energy director is making sure what’s done is in the best interest of the members on all levels—from power supply on the electric distribution side to making sure the co-op is diversified and leverages services via natural gas and broadband services.

The cooperative’s SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) system is an illustration of that philosophy. “We have this system that can be used not only to communicate with substations, but tie in with broadband internet,” Mattingley said. “We had to have this backbone of a communications system, and hooking on a broadband system made sense and to help offset the expense for our members.”

Making sure that the member’s voice is part of the board’s decision-making process is a primary part of a director’s role, Mattingley said. The board is the bridge to the membership making sure the proper decisions are made for the betterment of them and their co-op.

Jo-Carroll Energy’s new member advisory committee is one

way the co-op is reaching out to its members, he noted, adding an informed and engaged membership that understands the co-op business model is essential as the board makes decisions now and for future. An advocate of involvement in the state and national cooperative associations’ resolutions process, Mattingley works hard to make sure Jo-Carroll Energy participates at both levels.

“In order for us to drive policy, to make sure what’s done is the best for our members, we have to be involved in the process,” he said. “We’ve had so much success on the resolution side on the state level, and the reality is we’re making a lot of inroads on the national side as well.”

Equally important is grassroots level legislative participation, especially with the challenges the board is facing for the future. Power supply is one of those concerns.

Noting that the economy is cyclical, Mattingley said that while currently flat, the economy is going to rebound. When it does, power supply will be paramount. He pointed out that many of Jo-Carroll Energy’s power suppliers’ generation assets are aging and that higher regulatory standards also must be met.

“I’m not anti-regulation, but regulation needs to be compatible with what our generation standards are,” he said. “We need a way to retire the old but make sure we have new technologies to meet the needs of the future as the old plants go away.”

“Having a proper risk management plan on the power supply side in the future is absolutely key in order to keep power affordable for our members,” he added. Good relationships with natural gas suppliers

and Internet bandwidth suppliers are equally important.

Turning to strategic planning, Mattingley noted that the board is active in wanting to do mergers and consolidations with other cooperatives to help level the costs of administration and overall expenses.

“If we merge with another co-op we can get better power supply contracts, flatten costs of general administration and lower expenses through coordinated work plans to achieve the best benefit for everybody involved,” he said. “Safety regulations are generally the same no matter whether you’re a 6,000 member co-op or a 200,000 co-op, and the overhead costs are the same. In today’s business economics you can flat line your overhead per member as you become bigger in most instances due to advanced technologies.”

He continued that safety regulations and compliance are a key factor in this tactic. “The simple fact is we have to have one person dedicated to that major task alone because if it is not done right we can be charged thousands of dollars a day for being out of compliance,” he noted. “It’s extremely important, and just one reason others may want to merge with us. We already have this backbone in our administration, and combining would save everybody money.”

Mattingley observed that keeping rates affordable for electric, natural gas and broadband and having these services readily available will help drive economic development in the counties the co-op serves.

“We need to be a part of economic development and to make sure our rates encourage development, along with encouraging workforce development. The more economic development we have the less expensive the rates will be down the road,” he said. “In the end that’s the key.”



## Joe Mattingley, District 2

A Jo-Carroll Energy member himself since the late 1990s, the cooperative’s board chairman Joe Mattingley grew up on co-op lines. Born in Springfield, Mattingley grew up in Scales Mound where he moved with his mom—a Jo-Carroll Energy member since 1979—while he was in the fifth grade. He attended Scales Mound schools and is a graduate of the Scales Mound High School. Active in Future Farmers of America, he combined that with a family interest in equestrian activities to win the state FFA horse proficiency award.

Following high school, Mattingley served in the U.S. Navy for four years as a medical corpsman, learned to be a farrier and attended auctioneer school before starting college. After receiving an associate’s degree from Highland Community College, he went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree with an emphasis in business from Columbia College at Freeport.

Mattingley’s business career began at Top Block and Brick in East Dubuque, followed by a

six-year stint at Ferrellgas in East Dubuque where he ultimately managed the company’s propane plants throughout northwestern Illinois. When the general manager position opened at The Galena Territory Association, he applied and has held that position since 2005.

Equestrian pursuits have been a lifelong interest for Mattingley, a participant in the first World Equestrian Games in Stockholm, Sweden in 1990, he returned 16 years later to ride again in the games at Aachen, Germany. Today, he serves on the U.S. Equestrian Federation board of directors, the national governing body for equestrian sport that reports to the U.S. Olympic Committee.

While Mattingley says equestrian events can be a tough thing to do, it is also fun. He and his wife, Michelle, have made a living with it on the 138-acre farm where they live with their son, Joseph. Michelle is also highly involved in endurance riding, and is a two-time endurance champion herself.

## Fire Prevention Week

# Take Steps to Prevent Electric Fires: October 7-13 is Fire Prevention Week

A home fire is reported every two minutes in the United States. Those fires destroy homes and valuables and take lives. Electrical fires are particularly destructive and deadly. Jo-Carroll Energy encourages you to observe Fire Prevention Week, October 7-13, by learning how to prevent electrical fires:

- If electronics spark, you regularly experience shocks, or the lights flicker when you plug in electronics, you have an electrical problem. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home. If your home has never had an inspection, consider getting one, especially if you live in an older home.
- Switch plates and outlet covers that are discolored or warm to the touch indicate a problem and should be checked out. Immediately shut off light switches that are hot to the touch. Have them professionally replaced.



- Cords should not be under rugs, used in high-traffic areas, or tacked to the wall.
- Children and pets should know outlets, cords, and plugs are not toys.
- Use light bulbs that are rated for the fixture. If you use a light bulb

with a higher wattage than specified, the light can overheat and start a fire.

- If you are putting a nail into a wall, know what lies behind the wall. A punctured wire could shock you immediately, or cause a fire in weeks, months, or years. Some electronic stud finders can be used to locate wires and avoid them.

Even if you do everything possible to prevent an electrical fire, you should still have a plan if a fire does happen. Have smoke alarms, and be sure their batteries work. Know two ways to exit your home, and designate a meeting place for your family.

For more tips on electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## Advisory council to hold first meeting

Jo-Carroll Energy's newly formed Member Advisory Council will meet for the first time on Tuesday, Oct. 30 at the cooperative's headquarters in Elizabeth.

The council is made up of member volunteers from all director districts who meet a total of eight times during their two-year terms.

Openings are still available on the member advisory council. Members interested in serving should call Jo-Carroll Energy at 800-858-5522 or visit [www.jocarroll.com](http://www.jocarroll.com).

**It took years to make it a farm . . .  
It takes one call to keep it safe.**



No one digs more dirt than America's farmers. The soil on your farm is rich with nutrients and minerals . . . and underground utilities. Utilities that you, your family, friends and community depend on every day.



Excavation projects can create safety hazards. Plan to DIG SAFELY when beginning these projects. Call JULIE at 8-1-1 to notify utility companies that may be affected by the excavation. Take care in farming, plowing and excavating.

**CALL BEFORE YOU DIG**



**Jo-Carroll Energy**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative   
The power of human connections®

# Energy Detective can help find savings

Does your home have hidden leaks? If so, you could be spending more on energy than you should. Make an appointment with Jo-Carroll Energy's Energy Detective to help you investigate savings.

A drafty house, rooms that are too hot or too cold and the resulting high energy bills are common issues for homeowners. Installation of a new heating or air conditioning system, buying replacement windows or adding more insulation may fix part of the problem, according to John Scott, the cooperative's energy advisor and resident Energy Detective.

"You really need to find out where

your home is inefficient before you can make improvements that make a difference," Scott said. "For better results, you need an integrated, 'whole-house' approach that looks at your house as a system."

Our Energy Detective can provide residential members with a whole house, low-cost energy analysis. Jo-Carroll Energy offers both a walk-through energy assessment and a whole house energy audit.

Jo-Carroll Energy now also offers a residential energy efficiency loan program, available to members who own an existing home that is their primary residence and is served by

the cooperative and who receives a monthly electric or natural gas bill.

Call 800-858-5522 or visit our website at [www.jocarroll.com](http://www.jocarroll.com) for more information about all these programs or check out our short You Tube video about The Energy Detective.



## — Energy assistance —

# Home heating energy assistance available

Two agencies have funding available through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to assist low-income residents with their winter heating costs.

LIHEAP is a state and federally funded energy assistance program for low-income families, in which heating bill payments are made on behalf of households.

Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency (NICAA) has funding available for the residents of Jo Daviess County while the Tri-county Opportunities Council can assist residents of Carroll and Whiteside counties.

Seniors and people with disabilities were able to begin applying for winter heating assistance through LIHEAP on Sept. 1. Households with children under the age of four and under can apply beginning Oct. 1. Starting Nov. 1, all income eligible households may apply

Clients are served on a first-come, first-served basis until funding is exhausted.

When applying for assistance, the following documentation is required:

- Proof of gross income for all household members for the 30-day period prior to the application date.
- A copy of current heat and electric bills issued within the last 30 days (if energy bills are paid directly). Top portion must be attached.
- A copy of a rental agreement (if renting) showing that utilities are included, the monthly rental amount and landlord contact information.
- Social Security Cards for all members of the household.
- Medical Card from Illinois Department of Human Services.

A single-person household can qualify with a monthly income of up to \$1,396; a two-person household up to \$1,891; a three-person household can earn up to \$2,386, and a four-person household \$2,881. Income requirements increase by \$495 for each additional person.

Benefits are paid directly to utilities on behalf of eligible households. The exception is households whose heating costs are included in their rent.

If you reside in Jo Daviess County, call for an appointment: NICAA, Freeport office, (815) 232-3141 or (800) 883-1111, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

If you reside in Carroll or Whiteside counties, call for an appointment: Tri-County, Rock Falls office, (815) 625-1172 or (800) 323-5434, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## Jo-Carroll Energy

793 U.S. Route 20 West • P.O. Box 390  
Elizabeth, Illinois 61028-0390



## Vincent Earthmoving, Elizabeth

“This business has been around forever,” states Bill Vincent, owner of Vincent Earthmoving in Elizabeth. Under many previous owners and names, Vincent Earthmoving was—and still is—a solid asset to Elizabeth and the greater Jo Daviess County area.

Vincent began his relationship with the business he now owns as a dairy farmer and part-time employee. When the opportunity arose, he made the decision to invest further. Vincent bought 50 percent of the business in 1992 and completed the purchase in 1999, thus changing the ownership and the name.

Vincent Earthmoving provides many services to the area including bulldozing, excavating, trenching, hauling rock, laying asphalt, soil conservation work, pond construction and a variety of landscaping expertise. The business has grown since Vincent purchased it, from four employees to today’s nine.

“The guys are fun to work with and there is a great atmosphere



here,” admits Angie Roberts, office manager at Vincent Earthmoving who recently celebrated her five-year anniversary with the company.

“Everybody really enjoys what they do. That is why we plan to be here for a long time,” says Vincent. When you do what you love, you do it well, and the employees at Vincent Earthmoving have proven this to be true in their quality of work and service.

Going beyond the expected, Vincent Earthmoving is one of the few U-Haul Neighborhood

Dealers in Jo-Daviess County. Their location on US 20 is a registered 24-hour drop off location for U-Haul trucks and trailers as well as a rental facility. Many customers have rented their U-Haul vehicles to move back and forth from college or move patio furniture. One customer even transported his boat with a U-Haul.

Whatever it takes, they do anything to provide quality service to the customer. From digging a pond or, hauling limestone to a local farmer to providing storage transportation, Vincent Earthmoving is truly a local service, serving the community it loves.

*Jo-Carroll Energy members may receive 5% off of a load of gravel, with a limit of two per year. You may contact Vincent Earthmoving at 815-858-2024 to schedule your next project or rent your next U-Haul. Business hours are Monday through Saturday 7am to 5pm at 1480 US Route 20, Elizabeth, Illinois.*

## Happy Birthday, Willie Wiredhand!

Willie Wiredhand, the beloved mascot of electric cooperatives, turns 62 this October. It’s a fitting birth date—National Cooperative Month—for the stalwart yellow figure, who became the embodiment of the fighting cooperative spirit and the symbol of dependable, local, consumer-owned electricity all over the world. Willie came to life in 1950, created by the late Andrew “Drew” McLay, a freelance artist working for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), in collaboration with then-RE Magazine editor William Roberts.

Willie Wiredhand came to symbolize more than cooperative friendliness—he is the true embodiment of cooperative spunk, willing to stand up for consumers in the face of impossible odds against the entrenched might of huge investor-owned utilities. The phrase “He’s small, but wirey” became part of the trademark Willie was granted by the U.S. Patent Office in 1957.

Willie’s role has continued to evolve over the decades. When the 1970s ushered in an energy crisis, he donned a sweater and hopped on a bicycle, caulked windows and weather stripped doors in new ads

pushing energy conservation and efficiency tips. Later, he became more of a pop-art celebrity, appearing on novelty items like coffee mugs and watches.

But no matter his persona, Willie Wiredhand has been a recognizable and dedicated friend to millions of electric cooperative consumers, faithful and enduring for decades. Happy birthday, Willie!

