

# NEWS, NOTES & VIEWS 03/19

## Meet Your Board of Directors

*Julia Eberlin,  
Vice President*



Julia Eberlin joined the Illinois Electric Cooperative Board of Directors in 1999, becoming the first woman to hold the position. Asked if she knew what she was getting into by joining the board, she replies, "Absolutely not, but I wanted to do a little more...I thought that being a board member was a good chance to serve the community." However, Julia's 20-year run as a Director has not been her first exposure to community service. Professionally, she was an educator for 28 years, teaching English in Milton, Brussels, Calhoun, and Marquette Catholic in Alton, as well as working with the University of Illinois Extension.

While she officially retired from education in 2013, she maintains a strong interest in writing and editing. Additionally, Julia assists her husband, Dan, with farming, and at his office at Country Financial Insurance in Hardin. They live in Brussels.

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## Illinois Electric Cooperative

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In 1999, when approached about joining the IEC Board, Julia was already quite busy with her career and her family. Yet, the opportunity to serve her community and its people was not something she was willing to abandon. As the first woman on the board, she brought a completely new perspective to the table. For Julia, it is her “people perspective” which she believes she provides to her role as a Director. “I think about the people the electricity goes to at the end of the lines, and the impact of our decisions on those people.” She believes this quality has served her well in her position.

After two decades on the board—becoming the third-longest serving Director—Julia has seen herself grow into her position. Rather than focusing on one’s personal needs, Julia says, “I think you just think about things a lot more globally.” She has definitely noticed this change in perspective. As a teacher, she recalls when snow days were a thing of joy. Now, as a Director for a cooperative providing electricity and internet services to widespread area, Julia no longer sees snow days as a cause for celebration, but as a reason to worry—for co-op members and employees alike.

The time Julia has spent on the Board of Directors has provided her with several rewarding moments and points of pride. She finds it rewarding to serve with her fellow Directors. “The people who are on the board are just outstanding... We have a lot of good people, and that’s on the board and across the co-op.” Julia is also particularly proud to have been involved with the construction of a wind turbine in Pike County, as well as in the ever-developing area of solar energies. Additionally, she is happy to be able to provide fiber optic internet to communities in Scott County, and looks to where these technologies may be able to go next. Overall, Julia believes the cooperative has done a lot of good work in a lot of areas, which is something to be proud of and feel very good about.



Julia Eberlin speaking with fellow director Julie Rhoads prior to a monthly board meeting.

In the future, Julia sees obstacles Illinois Electric will need to confront. An aging electric system in need of continuous upkeep will keep the co-op extremely busy. A declining population will also pose a significant challenge to the cooperative. The risk of losing a younger population base—the next generation of area residents—is a widely-discussed concern across the co-op. Julia believes the best way to keep people in the area is to increase the reach of better, more dependable internet services. “Our first job is always to make sure we have safe, reliable electricity,” Julia says, “And this is closely followed by reliable internet services, as well as opportunities for economic development in our communities.” Though challenges exist, they are not ones which the cooperative is not capable of tackling, and Julia believes Illinois Electric will be able to position itself to do just that.

Ultimately, Julia's tenure as a Director has been notable in many ways. Whether it was in 1999, when she became the first woman to sit at the board table as a Director, or today, as she serves as the third-longest serving Director 20 years later, Julia's board membership is one to remember. At the end of the day, it all comes down to her community, and the communities in the surrounding areas. "I definitely feel more connected to the communities we serve," Julia says. And, while her work as a freelance editor and an IEC Director keep her well-occupied, it is not only these which demand her time. Julia is currently completing the 200 hour Yoga Alliance teacher training with plans to offer classes in her area. However, at the end of the day the jobs she is most happy to take on are as a mother to her three grown daughters, as well as a grandmother to her three grandchildren.

*This article on Julia Eberlin is the fourth in a series of written profiles on Illinois Electric Cooperative's Board of Directors, which have been compiled and written by Noah Sellars, one of our college interns.*

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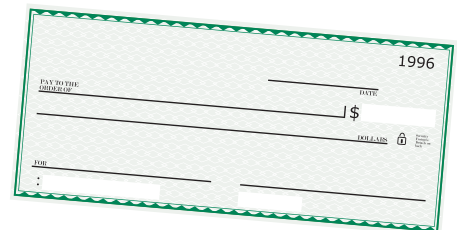
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