

Celebration of Cooperative Service

Happy Retirement! Happy Retirement! Happy Retirement! Happy Retirement! Happy Retirement!



Whitney Cheshier

Justin Stuva

David Stuva

Robin Stuva

Sandy Lex

John Lex

On Jan. 18, 2023, David Stuva retired as president/CEO of RECC and ended his 40-year career within the rural electrification industry. In December 2022, Sandy Lex retired after serving the co-op for 15 years, and her career highlights were featured in February's newsletter. Our cooperative would like to thank David and Sandy for their years of dedicated service.

David Stuva's 23-year tenure as President/CEO has been transformational. His ability to communicate directly with members, employees, directors and public servants has contributed greatly to the co-op's success. His networking skills have enabled the cooperative to create innovative solutions,

avoid turmoil and experience prosperity. David's influence can be felt internally within the culture, externally through reputation, and overall, with an atmosphere of professionalism.



Highlights

In 2017, David successfully led the cooperative's effort to secure a more competitive wholesale power contract. CEO Stuva's communication efforts were paramount in forming a relationship with NextEra Energy. The board approved a long-term contract with the Florida marketer and RECC members were rewarded with lower rates and long-term stability.

As the industry trends towards renewable energy, many cooperatives have chosen to increase their monthly facility charges to recuperate the true cost of providing electric service to members who self-generate with solar energy. Some of these cooperatives now have facility charges hovering around \$60.00 per month. While

David conceded that the higher facility charges were justified and accurately represent the costs of providing service, his philosophy of administering those costs differed. He believed that a portion of the delivery fees could be shifted or absorbed into the rate structure instead.

David argued that higher facility charges are counterproductive, penalize low-consumption members and disincentivize conservation. He also thought they were unfair because the members would have no control over the highest charge on their bill. In 2019, the Board of Directors agreed to a \$6.00 reduction. RECC's facility charge is now the second lowest of all Illinois electric cooperatives.





Member satisfaction is a key indicator of success and was exemplified by the cooperative's latest ACSI score. RECC received an overall satisfaction score of 89, a record high and a 12-point increase from 2004. The latest score placed our cooperative among the best in the nation.

RECC remains one of the leading co-ops in Illinois for the promotion of geothermal with more than 800 systems installed. The cooperative's share of electrically heated homes has also doubled, with 1,410 members choosing to heat their homes with electricity and take advantage of the Dual Meter Rate.

During Stuva's tenure, the cooperative's headquarters received substantial improvements, too. Avoiding the trend of new construction, David managed to modernize the 70-year-old building and improve the surrounding property. Ongoing changes included the installation of geothermal heating and cooling, high-performance windows, energy-efficient garage doors and an insulated roof. About 10 years ago, the old building received a much-needed new façade, and the outdated restrooms were recently replaced. Offices were remodeled

to accommodate new technologies and improve communications. Other areas of improvement included lighting efficiencies, ADA accessibility and infrastructure security.

David believed in the power of documentation. He made it a priority to record all easements with the county and touted the benefits of having franchise agreements with the towns or villages within the cooperative's service territory. He stressed the importance of documentation to his employees, staff and the board.

Stuva was well prepared and ready for a challenge. His greatest accomplishment may have been the elevation of RECC's brand and influence. Reducing electric rates from the state's highest to the lowest in a single year garnered attention in the industry and the appreciation of the membership.

Communications

David Stuva's communication efforts were legendary. His list of e-mail contacts was expansive, and he used social media to link co-op activities with the local community. He actively sought the perfect picture to punctuate a story. He circulated photos of vehicles draped in power

lines, tornados, ice storms, blizzards and the elusive albino deer.

In addition to social media, David utilized the co-op's website, e-mail, text messaging and Notify 24 to send out a personally recorded message to members who were or would be affected by an outage. He also understood that the perception of negativity could damage the cooperative's reputation. When members on one Glenarm substation experienced a rash of reliability problems, David sent a letter to each of those members, detailing each occurrence and explaining what was being done to prevent future problems. His timely communication was transparent, forthright and essential.

Technology

David was the first in the state to provide directors and employees with iPads. They have become the linemen's primary device for mapping and outage reporting. When surrounding co-ops began to explore this new technology, David shared the co-op's expertise and arranged for our staff to assist with their training.

He believed that technology allowed smaller cooperatives to offer the same essential services as larger utilities, with fewer employees. He established the Information



Technology Committee to assure that everyone was aware of the technology being considered and the effects it could have on employees. Projects benefited from this committee approach, including the adoption of the Outage Management System and the transition to the iPad-centric Mobile Workforce. That committee's input was also valuable when introducing Automatic Meter Reading, Meter Data Management and SmartHub to the membership.

COVID-19 brought new challenges. David's reliance on technology had prepared the board and his staff for video conferencing since most had been using iPads for several years. His foresight regarding technology and his recognition of its benefits helped keep the lights on and the employees protected during those uncertain times.

Annual meeting

RECC has maintained its annual meeting attendance with a concise meeting format. The presentations featured David's "Seamless PowerPoint," an all-encompassing production that eliminated inefficiencies. It consisted of a well-crafted script, stage timing and dual podiums. His goal was to share all pertinent information with the

membership and make the business meetings as efficient as possible.

In 2020, the pandemic led to RECC's first mail-in ballot election. Voter participation increased to 31 percent, which was 10 times higher than average. The following year, employees

assembled an annual meeting with pandemic restrictions. Having previously looked at the Route 66 Drive-In as a possible venue, the logistics were already in place. The FM transmitter replaced the "Seamless PowerPoint" presentation, but a quorum was reached and history was made. After the successful drive-in annual meeting, an encore was held in 2022.

Community

David's networking efforts led to RECC's successful campaign to build the GobNob wind turbine. He enlisted the support of Lt. Governor Pat Quinn and several government



agencies when planning the project in 2007. Two years later, Lt. Governor Quinn was the featured guest at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. The turbine was the first in our region and become a local symbol of renewable energy. In 2013, NRECA and the DOE named RECC "Wind Cooperative of the Year."

David encouraged his staff to get involved with the community, and his employees have judged 4-H projects at the Illinois State Fair, promoted co-op values at Farm Progress shows and participated in several local parades. A joint venture with CoBank's Sharing Success program has allowed RECC to award \$20,000 per year to local schools and food pantries through our Co-op Community grants.

He has been a strong supporter of the Touchstone Energy program, and RECC was one of 10 Illinois co-ops that formed Cooperative Balloon Associates, which developed and owns the TSE hot-air balloon. Stuva established the Cooperative Communicators Committee to discuss co-op issues with its members and promote businesses within the cooperative service territory. The co-op's visibility was extended once again with a recent membership in the Springfield Sangamon County Growth Alliance.



Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

3973 W. State Route 104
P.O. Box 19 • Auburn, IL 62615
(217) 438-6197
e-mail: recc@recc.coop
www.recc.coop

Find us on 

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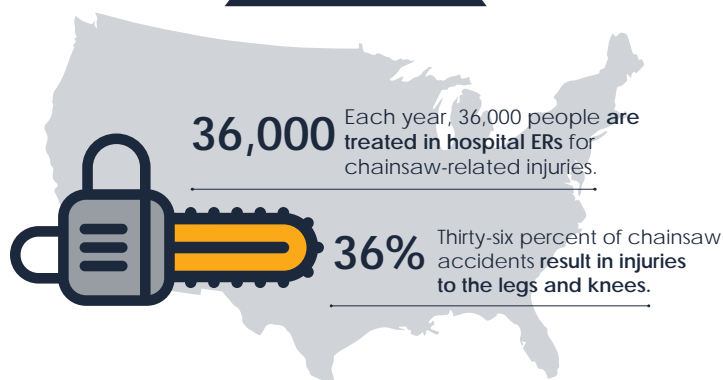
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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Chainsaw Safety

- STATISTICS -



The average chainsaw injury requires **110 stitches**.



The two most common places for injuries are the **front left thigh** and the **back of the left hand**.



One in five chainsaw injuries is from **kickback**.



Kickback is the single greatest cause of injury to **chainsaw users**.



Medical costs for chainsaw injuries amount to around **350 million dollars** per year.



Kickback, binding, and pull-in cause the most injuries from chainsaws.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- INJURIES -

Source: U.S. Product Safety Commission



Head Injuries
3,418



Upper Body Area
2,141



Arm and Hand Area
17,994



Leg Area
16,348



Foot Area
2,885

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