

# WIEC NEWS

P.O. Box 338 ■ Carthage, Illinois 62321 ■ [www.wiec.net](http://www.wiec.net) ■ 800/576-3125

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Annual Meeting recap

Members of Western Illinois Electrical Coop. (WIEC) celebrated their co-op's 75th anniversary of service, discussed power supply and the potential co-op consolidation, and bid farewell to Manager Paul Dion during their annual meeting of members held at the Hancock County Extension Center on Thursday, June 27.

During last year's annual meeting, a potential consolidation with Adams Electric Cooperative in Camp Point was discussed. After careful consideration, the WIEC board determined that it was in the best interest of its members to remain an independent cooperative, and maintain its focus on members and not on growing in size. "Although we made this decision not to consolidate with Adams Electric, we plan to continue saving money through sharing services and personnel with them," said Board President Robert Gronewold.

Prairie Power, Inc. (PPI) is WIEC's power provider, and PPI President/CEO Jay Bartlett provided insight on President Barack Obama's (4718-34) announcement this week to use the federal Clean Air Act to reduce carbon dioxide emissions on both new and existing coal-fired power plants, which could shutter some plants and greatly increase consumer power costs. Bartlett said that although this is a concern, PPI has spent considerable time and energy to protect its members in the future. PPI has diversified

its energy portfolio to include renewable energy and is a stakeholder and purchaser of power from Prairie State Generating Campus in Marissa, the most energy efficient and cleanest.

Treasurer Janet Spory reported that margins for 2012 were \$409,326, which is allowing the co-op to return more than \$210,000 in capital credits to members who received service in 1979 and 1980.

Spory provided details about the co-op's participation in the USDA Rural Development Loan and Grant program to expand services and create new jobs in western Illinois. The co-op is in the final stages of receiving three additional economic development loans, which will assist in building a medical center on the Memorial Hospital campus, building a care/dementia center in Carthage and assisting the Prairieland Investment Group in renovating a portion of the former Robert Morris College campus to accommodate a pork production training facility. Spory said, "The bottom line is that these projects will keep good jobs here in our community, starting in the construction or renovation phase, continuing through the hiring or retaining of permanent employees."

After 39 years of service to WIEC, Manager Paul Dion will be retiring on December 1. During his report, Dion thanked the co-op members, the employees and the board for their support, assistance and understand-



During the Western Illinois Electrical Coop. Annual Meeting, Kent S. Flesner of West Point, left, was elected to the board of directors, and David Biery of Carthage was re-elected to the board.



With his retiring in Dec. 2013, this will be Paul Dion's last annual meeting.

ing. Dion's successor will be Tommie Long, the co-op's current manager of operations. In his remarks, Long praised Dion for his leadership, and said he looked forward to his new role at the co-op.

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**Western Illinois**  
ELECTRICAL COOP.  
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- **David Biery** —  
President, Carthage
- **Mike Ford** —  
Vice President, Lomax
- **Janet Spory** —  
Secretary/Treasurer, Sutter
- **Jay Morrison** —  
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer,  
Burnside
- **Kent Flesner** —  
Director, West Point
- **Rob Gronewold** —  
Director, Carthage
- **William Newton** —  
Director, Burnside

**STAFF**

- **Paul Dion** — Manager
- **Tommie Long** —  
Manager of Operations
- **Becky Dickinson** —  
Office Manager

**MAP LOCATION CONTEST**

Every month we are printing four member's map location numbers in the newsletter. If you find your map location number call the WIEC office by the 25th of the following month, tell us where it is and we will give you a \$10.00 bill credit. Keep on reading the WIEC News.

# WIEC Congratulated on 75 years of service by Illinois House of Representatives.

On May 29, Representative Jil Tracy introduced House Resolution # 423. This resolution congratulates WIEC on our 75th Anniversary.

*The resolution states,*  
"WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are pleased to congratulate the members of Western Illinois Electrical Coop. on the 75th anniversary of their cooperative; and

WHEREAS, Western Illinois Electrical Coop. was officially formed on August 1, 1938 in Carthage, Illinois, through the hard work and dedication of a handful of local residents wanting to improve living and farming conditions for themselves and their neighbors;

*It concludes.*

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we congratulate the members of the Western Illinois Electrical Coop. on the 75th anniversary of their cooperative; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to Western Illinois Electrical Coop. as a symbol of our esteem and respect.

This resolution was adopted on May 30th. "We thank Rep. Tracy for this honor. She has been friend to our co-op and has supported rural electric programs in Illinois," said Manager Paul Dion.

**WIEC will be closed on September 2 in observance of Labor Day.**



## Energy Efficiency *Tip of the Month*

When shopping for a new appliance, consider lifetime operation costs as well as the up-front purchase price. Refrigerators last an average of 12 years, clothes washers about 11, and dishwashers about 10. Check the Energy Guide label for the appliance's estimated yearly operating cost, and look for ENERGY STAR units, which usually exceed minimum federal standards for efficiency and quality. To learn more, visit EnergySavers.gov.

**Source: U.S. Department of Energy**

## As we celebrate our 75th Anniversary, we invite our members to join us as we take a look at our journey. This month we look back at WIEC's office staff and billing procedures over the years.

The computer age had a major impact in office operations. Personal computers have replaced manual typewriters at desks. With a few clicks of a "mouse", we can gain access to a member's past usage, tell members how many kilowatts of electricity they used yesterday and send copies of bills over the internet. The general billing duties that once took five ladies to complete can now be handled by two. But it wasn't always like that.

In the beginning, the office work was done manually with pencil, paper, and manual typewriters. Like most cooperatives, WIEC collected for monthly energy usage through self-billing. Co-op members would read their own meters, calculate the usage and amount due, then send in (3614-5) the bill payment. For many years that procedure went virtually unchanged.

Clarabelle Marshall joined the cooperative staff in August of 1965

and worked in the billing operations until her retirement in 1995.

"Back then we had four girls working in the office and while we did have adding machines, most of the work was done by hand," she said. "We always posted the accounts with a Burroughs billing machine."

"The biggest change that I've seen over the years was from self-billing to area meter readers. That made the billing so much smoother." Marshall said. WIEC divided up their service territory into 18 routes, with each route having its own person who read every meter in that route. They became the eyes and ears of the cooperative, as several times the meter reader would call the WIEC office with a possible safety hazard that needed attention.

The reading for each meter had to be entered onto the computer each month. For 3,500 meters, it took about 12 to 15 hours of constant data entry to complete. For many (4511-28-1) years, Ardith Murphy, who worked at WIEC from 1970 to 1998 and later, Donna Cramer, present Data Operator who began her career in 1975 to present, did this task each month.

After readings were entered, the task of checking and re-checking each account fell upon Marshall and later Karmen Metternich, who started at

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*Office then versus office now. Then, there was one typewriter to share. Today, Donna Cramer (and others in the office) has her own computer and a four-line telephone.*



*Bills getting ready to be mailed.*



*Karmen had to go through meter books like this each month before WIEC installed AMR.*



■ *“Annual meeting” continued from page 16a*

During the meeting, Kent S. Flesner of West Point was elected and David Biery of Carthage was re-elected to the cooperative’s board of directors.

Ten grand prizes of \$75 were given away. The winners were: Irene Sellars, Ross Wear, Darlene Neill, Darrold Bruns, Mary Bruns, Helen Vass, Allen Shay, Mary Ruth Thorell, Jim Bolton and Jacquot Brothers represented by Ed Jacquot. For more Prize winners, see page 9

Each registered member received a \$10 bill credit and a copy of “Architects of Rural Progress” a booklet highlighting WIEC’s past with pictures and stories.

After the meeting, the board had a re-organizational meeting with Dave Biery elected president, Mike Ford elected vice-president, Janet Spory re-elected secretary-treasurer and Jay Morrison elected assistant secretary-treasurer.



*Cupcakes were served in honor of WIEC’s 75th Birthday.*

■ *“Office” continued from page 16c*

WIEC in 1997 as Billing Coordinator. They wanted to assure accuracy and look for dead meters or other possible errors. During this time period, the bills were printed and processed in-house, which was a very time consuming process. The printing alone took about 90 minutes; the bursting took about 5 hours. Before mailing, the bills had to be grouped by zip code, with some being mailed in envelopes. Then they were taken to the Carthage Post Office for mailing. Over all from reading the meter to mailing the bills, the process took about 12 working days.

In April 2009, the bills took a new look going from a postcard format to a statement design. This gives the member more information, including historical usage, bar graphs and a return envelope. With the implementation of Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) in 2008, from the billing process is reduced to 4 days with two days to print and ready to mail.

Donna Cramer, data entry clerk, who began working at WIEC in 1975, tells “It’s so easy now to get the bills out every month. (4614-33) I think the member’s like the statement format.”

The way payments are being handled has changed in 75 years too. Although members are always welcome to come in and pay their bill in person, many drop their payments in the mail or the drop boxes outside the WIEC office. An ever-growing percent of the members take advantage of the Easy Pay program or enjoy the convenience of paying their bill with a credit card on-line or over the phone.

In April of 1977, the first computer

system was installed. In the first years, the co-op staff transmitted data from tape by phone lines to the computer company’s St. Louis-area office. “Then in the 1980s we went to an on-line system by phone,” recalled Paul Dion, longtime General Manager. “We had a dedicated line and were constantly in contact with them. In the late 1980s, we went to a satellite dish system and used that for a few years until the mid-90s when we went totally in-house with our billing and computer operations.”

In 2008, the cooperative began implementing the Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) system. The AMR system allows the co-op to read the meters at the office through the electric lines. The AMR gives a more consistent billing cycle, easier outage detection and more accurate billing. AMR also helps in explaining the specifics of a member’s bill when receiving a high bill complaint. “It’s so nice to have the data the member needs right on the computer, without having to search through the meter reading books. We can give them real-time information.” said Metternich. Overall, AMR is another way to help WIEC better serves its members.

“If you would have told me when I started here 40 years ago that a cooperative as small as Western Illinois Electrical Coop. would have the technology to read the meters here in the office over the electric lines, I would have never believed it,” said manager Paul Dion.

*To be continued ...*

## Welcome New Members

Jeremy & Stephanie Allen, Tennessee  
Sherry Coffey, Hamilton  
Ray Doak, Mt Pleasant IA  
Joseph L Foster, Mendon  
Dean & Erik Gerdes, Warsaw  
Joyce A Good, Memphis MO

Scott & Mindy Harn, Cuba IL  
William & Kay Haskins, Marietta IL  
Charles & Wanda Peterman, Carthage  
Midwest Extreme Hunting by Lisa M  
& Elliott M Handke, Carthage  
Kenneth C & Diane M Morris, Niota

David & Stephenie Russell, Basco  
Adam Smith, Gladstone  
Terry E & Sharon W. Whitledge,  
Fairbanks, AK