

25 Years of Dedication to our Board & Membership

Julia Eberlin's announcement of her retirement from the Illinois Electric Cooperative's Board of Directors brings a moment of reflection on her impact over her 25-year tenure. From joining the board in 1999 to becoming Vice President, Julia has shown dedication and passion to the co-op's mission to improve the quality of life of the membership all along the way.

Julia's path to the board was somewhat serendipitous, sparked by a call intended for her husband that instead captured her interest. Julia reflected on the decision: "It seemed like a great opportunity to serve the community and learn something new." Her curiosity and willingness pushed her to step into a role that a woman had never held. Before Julia joined the board, no electric co-op in the state had a female board director.

One of the more memorable accomplishments of the co-op during her tenure is the dramatic improvement in the cooperative's reliability. She takes pride in the progress made. The co-op's SAIDI (System Average Interruption



Duration Index) went from 24th, the lowest in the state, in 2007 to consistently ranking among the top five for reliability. This achievement reflects infrastructure upgrades and a broader commitment to safety and excellence.

Over the last 25 years, Julia witnessed unique challenges, each met with

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Illinois Electric Cooperative

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resilience and a commitment to the cooperative's members. The Flood of 2019 in Calhoun County made her commute to meetings in Winchester an alternative route adventure, and the COVID-19 pandemic required swift adaptation and innovative thinking. Julia's recount of these times emphasizes the collective effort and leadership that guided the cooperative through. With COVID-19, Julia gives special recognition to Randy Long, who took on the general manager role during the pandemic, showcasing the strength and adaptability of the cooperative's leadership. "It was amazing how quickly everyone adapted to Zoom and a drive-up for our Annual Meetings. Randy Long had just been hired as manager, and we kidded with him a lot about the baptism of fire he was undergoing in his first year, but in all seriousness, nobody knows what it was like to walk in his shoes during those uncertain and chaotic times," Julia recognized.

As she reflects on her time with the cooperative, Julia's hopes for its future are clear. She envisions a cooperative that continues to prioritize its members, innovate, and adapt to the changing landscape of the electric industry and political policy. Her emphasis on member engagement and sensible decision-making speaks to her always recognizing the member at the end of the line.

Central to her time on the board has been the unwavering support of her family and friends. She expresses gratitude to those around her for the past 25 years. "Thank you to my family: my husband, Dan, my girls, Liz, Emily, and Adrianna, and Marilyn, my girls' caregiver, when they were young. All of them picked up the slack at home and allowed me to be a part of this organization," Julia added.

As Julia thought about her decision to retire from the board, she recounts, "When I started on the board, four generations of my family lived on coop lines. My girls were two, eight, and ten at that time. My grandpa, using his pair of horses, had helped string the wires in the initial build in Pike Co." Julia continues, "Today, my grandpa is gone, and my girls are grown and don't live in the territory, but three generations of my family still live on the lines. I guess my point is time marches on, and it's time for me to let somebody else take a turn. I think it's been a pretty good run."

Though she often jokes, "If only we had a crystal ball," Julia is excited about the possibilities the future holds. Her desire to continue learning and serving others reflects a lifelong commitment to growth and community service. Julia is reminded of her morning prayer as she contemplates her next steps, from writing to teaching yoga and visiting her grandkids. "When I say my prayers in the morning, I ask for opportunities to use the gifts I've been given to serve others, and those opportunities have appeared."

On behalf of everyone at Illinois Electric Cooperative, thank you, Julia, for your dedication to the co-op and membership.



Illinois Electric Recognized at Safety and Energy Conference

Safety is of utmost importance, especially in the electric industry. To further safety education, lineworkers, supervisors and warehouse personnel from electric co-ops across Illinois gathered in Springfield to attend the annual Safety and Energy Conference Jan. 31-Feb. 1, hosted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC).

The conference focused on safety and leadership in the energy industry, and attendees received relevant training to keep them informed and safe while on the job. They learned about mental health and dealing with trauma, explored the use of drones for infrastructure inspection, learned about strategies for success in a multigenerational workplace and much more.

During the conference, safety leadership awards were presented to recognize individual and cooperative-wide commitment to safe work culture. Illinois Electric Cooperative was recognized with a 2023 award for Best Lost Time Rate and a 2023 award for Best Incident Rate.

The AIEC Cooperative Safety Leadership Awards recognize safety awareness and reward cooperatives that demonstrate safety leadership, promote safety culture, and go above and beyond normal safety expectations.

Accepting the awards from left to right: Apprentice Lineman Kaiden Davis, Loss Control Supervisor Brenda Bettis, Service Technician John Heaton, and Warehouse Supervisor Andy Nash.

Employee Spotlight

Contina Savage

Member Service Representative

About the Employee

Contina Savage, a resident of Winchester, is deeply passionate about making a positive impact in her community. With her husband, Tim, by her side for 34 years, Contina finds joy in serving and talking to members of her community, especially through her work. She values the opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives, describing it as her favorite aspect of her job.

Contina dedicates her time to her family and community service outside her professional life. She and Tim cherish their moments together, spoiling their grandsons and embarking on trips whenever possible. Their commitment to serving others extends to their active involvement in the Pittsfield Assembly of God, where they both play a significant role. Contina and her husband, Tim, also coordinate the Winchester Food Pantry, illustrating her dedication to helping those in need. Contina also enjoys walking, reading, and decorating in her downtime.



Contina Savage with her husband Tim (center), their son Nic, daughter-in-law Breanna, grandson's Holden & Hudson, son Noah as well as their extended family from Ohio, nephew Zac, his wife Casey, grandnieces Alexandra & Arianna and her sister, Cecilia.

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