

# SOUTHEAST COLORADO POWER ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 2023



## MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 521  
La Junta, CO 81050-0521



## STREET ADDRESS

27850 Harris Road  
La Junta, CO 81050



**ph** 719-384-2551

**tf** 800-332-8634

**fax** 719-384-7320

**web** [www.secpa.com](http://www.secpa.com)



[facebook.com/secpaonline](https://facebook.com/secpaonline)

**Our primary mission** is to provide high-quality, reliable electric service at a reasonable cost to our members, improve their quality of life through new technologies and services, be a visible and active member of the community and serve our members with respect, courtesy and responsiveness.

SOUTHEAST COLORADO  
POWER ASSOCIATION IS AN  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER  
AND EMPLOYER



# THE SEASON OF GIVING THANKS

BY KEVIN BRANDON CEO  
[KEVINB@SECPA.COM](mailto:KEVINB@SECPA.COM)



KEVIN BRANDON

Somehow, this year has flown by, and the holiday season is upon us already.

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving later this month, I took some time to reflect on the many things we at Southeast Colorado Power Association (SECPA) are thankful for.

First off, I am thankful for all the wonderful employees who work at SECPA and its communications subsidiary SECOM. Every day, these employees go above and beyond to keep the lights on and the internet connected for our members and customers. The storm damage that our systems suffered this summer was unprecedented, as multiple damaging storms, including tornadoes, rolled through our territory throughout June and July. Throughout all these storms, our employees worked day and night in all kinds of weather, including sweltering heat and sometimes in waist-deep water to restore electricity to our members in the shortest time possible.

Our linemen weren't the only ones working hard to get power restored. Behind the scenes, everyone was busy taking outage calls, procuring materials and resources, scheduling crews, and taking care of the day-to-day business of running the co-op. I am proud of each employee and their effort this year, and I am very thankful for them.

I am also thankful for you, our Members and Customers. During the storms I mentioned above, I was amazed at how patient and supportive you all were. We

had many offers of tractors and equipment to pull our trucks around through the muddy conditions. Without this help, we would not have been able to restore power as quickly as we did. We also had several folks show up with food and drinks for our crews, which was greatly appreciated by all! Thank you for your positive comments and thank you messages on social media during these storms.

Another thing I am thankful for is that SECPA is a cooperative, which means it is owned and governed by its members who live right here in the communities we serve. Any margins generated by the company are allocated to the members as capital credits and paid back to the members as those capital credits are retired by the board, instead of going to out-of-state shareholders. The seventh cooperative principle is "Concern for Community," and SECPA is thankful to be a part of and contribute to our great communities throughout southeastern Colorado.

In November, we also celebrate Veterans Day. We are thankful for all the veterans who have served to keep our great nation free, and we are especially thankful for our many employees who are veterans.

This is just a short list, but we have so much more to be thankful for.

From all of us here at SECPA and SECOM, Happy Thanksgiving!

*happy thanksgiving!*

*Offices closed Thursday, November 23, in observance of Thanksgiving Day.*



## New District 5 Board Director Appointed

Michelle Gardner has recently been appointed to the Southeast Colorado Power Association (SECPA) Board of Directors. Gardner is a lifelong resident of Otero County. She was raised on her family farm just outside of Rocky Ford. She and her husband of 20 years, Matthew, live outside of Swink where they are raising their two children, Jennifer and Jake. Gardner helps her husband and his family on the Gardner farm, where her favorite job is baling hay. She is employed by Farm Credit of Southern Colorado as an appraisal assistant.

Gardner is involved with 4-H and FFA and serves as an Otero County Council Leader and a 4-H Club Leader. She is also the president of the Swink FFA advisory committee. She is actively involved in supporting agriculture politically and cares deeply for her community. In her free time, which isn't much, Gardner enjoys reading and quilting. She is very excited to be sitting on the SECPA and SECOM boards.

Save the date!

## SECPA's Annual Meeting

Southeast Colorado Power Association will hold its Annual Meeting on Thursday, April 25, 2024.

*Please join us at Inspiration Field,  
612 Adams, La Junta, Colorado 81050*

Cash prizes are given away throughout the meeting!

### BOARD DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

The following board positions are up for election:

District 2 – Bent County

District 5 – Otero County

District 6 – Prowers County

**5 p.m. – Registration**

**6 p.m. – Dinner**

**6:45 p.m. – Meeting**



## YOU COULD BE A WINNER THIS MONTH

If you find your name in this issue as follows (WIN\* your name, your account number), please contact Southeast Colorado Power Association at 719-384-2551 or 800-332-8634 to receive a credit on your next power bill. **Last month's winner was Jordan Wollert.**



## ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS & SENIORS

Win a trip to  
Washington, D.C.,  
or a week at Leadership Camp  
at Glen Eden Resort!

Each year, Southeast Colorado Power Association (SECPA) sponsors two students to attend the Washington D.C. Youth Tour held June 17-23, 2024. High school students who are 16 by June 1 **AND WHOSE FAMILIES ARE SECPA MEMBERS** are eligible to apply to go on the trip. Youth Tour provides students with an eight-day adventure that offers in-depth exposure to the electric cooperative network while exploring our nation's Capital. The selected student's expenses — including airfare, lodging, meals and all tour admission fees — are paid for by SECPA. Activities during the trip include tours of the U.S. Capitol, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, war memorials, Arlington National Cemetery, the National Archives, the White House and several Smithsonian Museums. A Potomac River dinner and dance cruise, visits with Colorado's U.S. senators and representatives, and the chance to connect with students nationwide are also part of the experience.

If you're not chosen to attend the Washington, D.C., trip, you may be the recipient of a trip to Leadership Camp held at Glen Eden Resort, located just outside of Steamboat Springs. At this camp, held July 13-18, 2024, students from Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Wyoming gather at a beautiful resort on the Elk River and spend the week at an outstanding leadership camp. Students participate in activities to improve leadership skills. There is also time for swim parties, barbecues, whitewater rafting, and dancing. Many of the attendees call this camp a "life-changing experience."

**For more information and to apply, visit our website at [secpa.com/youth-programs](https://secpa.com/youth-programs) or contact Debbie Howard at 719-383-1314.**

**Applications must be received by December 30, 2023. Mail to ATTN: Debbie Howard, SECPA, PO Box 521, La Junta, CO 81050.**

## Cooperation Among Cooperatives Helps Bring Gigabit Internet to a Small Rural School District

BY KEVIN BRANDON CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

In 1998, the Southeast Colorado Power Association Board of Directors voted to form Southeast Communications, or SECOM, as a division of SECPA to create a new fiber optic communications network in southeastern Colorado. This network was created to bring high-speed digital communications capabilities to the rural areas of southeastern Colorado because the directors saw a need that no other communications companies were willing or able to provide in the area at that time — much like the original founders of SECPA did back in 1937 when they formed the cooperative under the Rural Electrification Act to bring electricity to these same unserved parts of southeastern Colorado.

Fast-forward to today — SECOM is now a wholly owned subsidiary of SECPA and has grown well outside the SECPA service territory. SECOM began working with the Primero School District in Weston, Colorado, back in 2019 when the school reached out looking for options to bring high-speed internet access to the school and its 186 students. Weston and Primero School are 23 miles west of Trinidad (SECOM's nearest fiber connection) up Highway 12, also known as the Highway of Legends National Scenic Byway. SECOM was up for the challenge and began the process of designing and building a high-speed network capable of multi-gigabit speeds to serve the school. The build included attaching fiber optic cable to nearly 10 miles of overhead electric lines owned by fellow electric cooperative San Isabel Electric Association. *\*WIN Lillian Laney, acct 2302670002*

There were many delays due to COVID-19 and the resulting supply chain issues, but in early 2023, construction began with the goal of completion in July before the start of school in August. When SECOM performed the initial engineering studies, results showed that many of the poles would need to be replaced with taller poles to maintain the required clearances. When talking to SIEA's engineering and operations staff, it was discovered that most of the taller poles were backordered for at least three to four months. After SIEA and SECPA were unsuccessful in trying to source these poles from alternate vendors sooner, it seemed like the project was stalled again.

That's when SECPA/SECOM Chief Executive Officer Kevin Brandon and SECOM Chief Operations Officer Scott Monarco arranged a lunch meeting with SIEA CEO Ryan Elarton to brainstorm ideas to help move the project along, such as the possibility of SECPA crews helping SIEA crews if needed, due to an already heavy workload for SIEA crews. Elarton was very supportive of SECOM's efforts, and very much wanted the project to succeed. He commented that the school and its students and staff were San Isabel Electric members, and he was excited about the learning possibilities that having quality internet access would provide.

"We are proud to be part of our local communities and to work together with our neighbor electric co-op SECPA/SECOM to bring fiber to the students and staff at Primero School" Elarton added.

After the meeting, the SECOM and SIEA engineering teams continued to meet and develop creative solutions to allow the construction to continue and still meet all the clearance requirements without having to wait three to four months for poles. As

## YOUR CO-OP NEWS

it worked out, SIEA already had work crews in the area completing a project and could move right on to the work required to prepare the poles for the SECOM fiber.

Much of this build on SIEA's lines was across beautiful but rugged terrain that required fiber crews to climb the poles, carrying the fiber cable and hardware up with them, because much of the route was not accessible by bucket truck. Bill Larkin, owner of Starfire Communications (SECOM's construction partner on the project) quipped, "I need to thank SECOM — I'm in the best shape I've been in for years after having to climb all these poles."

In the end, SECOM had a few more delays in obtaining the required highway crossing permits but has now completed the project, and the staff and students at Primero School are enjoying dedicated gigabit internet access ... something not available at many larger schools. Primero School Superintendent Jeanine Duran stated that they are operating much better since getting fiber internet in their district. "We just don't seem to be getting calls about the service being out, and we're very happy," she said.



SECPA and SECOM are grateful for all the help from SIEA in making this project a reality. This is just one example of how cooperative principle number six, "cooperation among cooperatives" helps improve the lives of our members.

# ACCEPTING PETITIONS FOR SOUTHEAST COLORADO POWER ASSOCIATION BOARD DIRECTOR POSITIONS

SECPA board positions up for election in 2024 are District 2 - Bent County; District 5 - Otero County; and District 6 - Prowers County. See map below.

Director elections are for three-year terms, beginning April 2024 and ending March 2027 for District seats 2 and 6. The District 5 seat will complete the remainder of the term ending March 2026.

### To be eligible to be a Director:

- 1** Must be a SECPA member and bona fide resident of the district he or she is to represent.
- 2** Cannot be employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or business selling electric energy or supplies to SECPA.
- 3** Cannot be an employee or have been an employee of SECPA or its subsidiary within the preceding five (5) years.

- **Petitions must be signed by 15 bona fide members in the nominee's district and must be returned no later than 5:00 p.m. on January 8, 2024.**
- **Petitions are available in all SECPA offices, online at [secpa.com/Director-Petition](http://secpa.com/Director-Petition), or by emailing your request to [debbieh@secpa.com](mailto:debbieh@secpa.com).**
- **Return petitions to Debbie Howard at any SECPA office; mail to SECPA, ATTN: Debbie Howard, P.O. Box 521, La Junta, CO 81050; or email to [debbieh@secpa.com](mailto:debbieh@secpa.com).**

