

# SOUTHEAST COLORADO POWER ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2024



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**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**



# NEW YEAR, NEW CHALLENGES, AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

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



KEVIN BRANDON

One challenge Southeast Colorado Power Association (SECPA) is facing in 2024 is increased wholesale power rates from our supplier Tri-State Generation and Transmission. SECPA has been able to keep rates steady since 2015 in part because Tri-State has been able to keep its rates steady and even had slight decreases in rates over the last couple of years.

With the unprecedented increases in material costs, fuel, labor, and most everything else Tri-State uses in its business, it is no longer able to absorb these cost increases. Therefore Tri-State found it necessary to raise wholesale electric rates to all its member cooperatives, including SECPA.

While SECPA has not had a rate increase since 2015, we have experienced all the same increases in expenses as Tri-State, and now with the added expense of the rate increase from Tri-State, we are forced to take a hard look at our rates that we charge to you, our members.

Remember: As a cooperative, SECPA does not set rates with the purpose of making a profit. Cooperative rates are designed to cover the expenses of the cooperative with any excess margins allocated back to the membership in the form of capital credits. These allocated capital credits are then eventually retired and paid back to the members on a schedule approved by the board. As we analyze the need to raise rates, please know that as a

cooperative, if we do find it necessary to raise rates, we will keep the increase as low as possible to simply cover the expenses of the cooperative and not generate a profit.

## You have the power.

Now on to new opportunities in 2024. One opportunity available to members of SECPA is to vote for, or even run for election for the SECPA Board of Directors. Electric co-ops are democratically controlled by the members they serve, which means you have a say in who governs the co-op. By voting in the annual director election, you can weigh in on the leaders who will make important decisions about the future of the cooperative and our local energy needs.

The SECPA Board of Directors is made up of community-minded individuals with different skill sets. We rely on them to help us make more informed decisions on long-term priorities and investments. SECPA has seven directors who live in the co-op's service area. We consider them the eyes and ears of the community because they provide their unique perspective on various local issues.

This year's annual meeting and election will be held on April 25 in La Junta at Inspiration Field. Please watch the mail for your invitation and ballot. We would love to see you there. If you can't make it, be sure to fill out and mail your ballot to ensure your voice is still heard.



*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

*\*WIN Keith Doak acct 404060001*

## SECPA \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIPS

Southeast Colorado Power Association (SECPA) is once again making scholarships available to area high school Seniors. **Students' parents must be members of SECPA.**

SECPA is offering ten \$1,000 scholarships and administers through Tri-State, an additional two \$1,000 scholarships. Eligible applicants must be a high school Senior graduating in 2024 who plans to attend a two or four-year college, or trade or other non-traditional secondary educational institution.

Students interested in applying for the scholarships are asked to submit the completed SECPA application form (available on the SECPA website at [secpa.com/scholarships](http://secpa.com/scholarships)) with a school transcript, letter of recommendation and a short essay on the benefits of cooperative membership.

**Applications for the SECPA scholarships are due no later than FEBRUARY 12, 2024.**

**For additional information, please visit the SECPA website or contact Debbie Howard at 719-383-1314.**

# ACCEPTING PETITIONS FOR SOUTHEAST COLORADO POWER ASSOCIATION (SECPA) 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 at right.

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

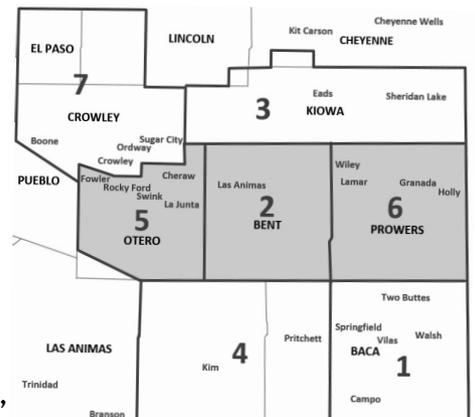
### To be eligible to be a Director:

- 1** a person 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 p.m. January 8, 2024.**

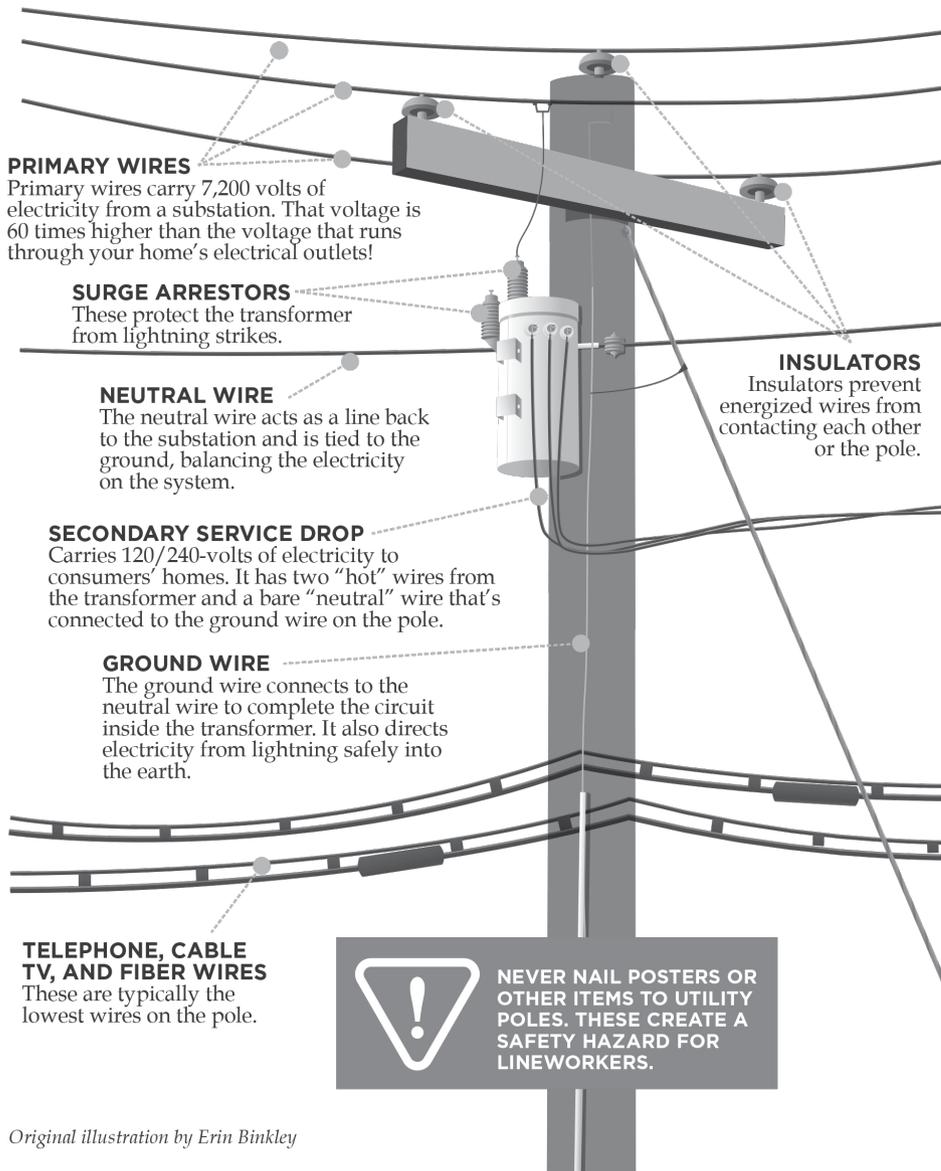
**Petitions are available in all SECPA offices, at <https://secpa.com/director-petition>, or by emailing requests to [debbieh@secpa.com](mailto:debbieh@secpa.com).**

**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).**



# WHAT'S ON THAT POLE?

This illustration shows the basic equipment found on electric utility poles. The equipment varies according to the location and the service they provide.



Original illustration by Erin Binkley

## 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 Blake Gale.



## Victory Garden Survives Storms, Produces Thousands of Pounds of Food for Families in Need

BY ANNE BOSWELL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR | ANNEB@SECPA.COM

When Veronica and Joel Jacoby decided to feed people, they had no idea what was ahead of them. It all started when an established food pantry in the Lamar area closed. The couple was approached to keep the pantry open in 2014 and they have been

feeding folks ever since. After the successful completion of its nonprofit status, Sparrow House Ministries was born.

"We serve Lamar and Prowers County, but it extends into Bent, Baca, and Kiowa counties. In April 2023, we were serving about 800 people each month and as of

October the pantry now feeds more than 1,600 people each month," Veronica explains.

With the number of people served doubling over a short six months, the addition of something new was a welcomed blessing: A community garden they named "Victory Garden."

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## Victory Garden Survives Storms, Produces Thousands of Pounds of Food for Families in Need

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Now that the season is over, it's like asking the coach how the season went. The Jacobys, Southeast Colorado Power Association members, are proud of how it went. It was certainly a great need. "We have no farmers market and buying produce is extremely expensive. It's our number one need as we serve a lot of diabetics. It's easy for us to get fillers like pasta, mac and cheese but fresh produce is hard to get," they say.

There was space in the back of the pantry location at 3rd and Cedar streets in Lamar, so why not build raised garden beds and let stuff grow? Veronica credits the idea of the garden to Joel. Together with community volunteers, they created rows and rows of soil, carefully planted seeds, and waited.

Meanwhile, Veronica set out to write grants for funding. She sent one to the Colorado Garden Foundation, which awards one major grant each year to a Colorado nonprofit. Sparrow House Ministries earned the grant in 2022. The funds helped improve the garden, train volunteers, and make plans for future expansion.

Any gardener would love to produce something their first year, but Victory Garden went above and beyond to feed the local community.

"We started in late June and early July, but we've distributed over 2,000 pounds of produce," Veronica says proudly.

And you might remember that southeast Colorado was pummeled with several crop-damaging hailstorms. Victory Garden remained safe from hail and allowed Sparrow House to add roughly 500 pounds of fresh produce to pantry packages.



Victory Garden's harvest helps people experiencing food insecurity enjoy fresh produce.

Joel admits he doesn't feel the success of the bounty is due to any special gardening skills he or his wife possess. He credits the community for helping with the project. "It is beneficial to have resources; a good friend out at Prowers Farms, mixed soils for us," he explained. The garden is 100% organic and no chemicals were used.

Veronica adds they had the help of an agronomist along the way. The plans for the upcoming 2024 growing season include adding a greenhouse to extend the growing season.

Sixteen-year-old Timothy Berndt volunteers at the Victory Garden. Veronica brags that he is very helpful, learns anything, and helps anywhere. She believes it's important that younger people learn how to participate in growing food.

"That's been refreshing because not only is our intent to give food to families in need, but we're looking at future generations. We want it to be a learning experience for young people," she says. "And in an age where everything is digital, there's something important about getting your hands in the dirt again. There's something to that, and learning how to grow food."

Raised garden beds at Sparrow House Ministries grow produce to feed local communities.



Timothy has had his hands in the dirt before, in a home garden; but Victory Garden was a larger scale for him. "Peppers! Peppers everywhere!" he exclaimed.

"It's giving back to the community and helping people who need it. I enjoy doing this kind of work." The teen loves the feeling of giving food to people who might not have had anything good or fresh for a while.

The history of the name "Victory Garden" dates back to President Herbert Hoover, who encouraged Americans to grow food to supplement rations during the war. "That was our thought," Veronica says. "We have a yard here by the church — it not only supplements what we're giving out, but also has the emphasis on volunteerism. It was just the perfect fit."

Sparrow House Ministries is located at 907 South 3rd Street in Lamar. The website encourages anyone needing food help to text or call 719-468-6999

Volunteers harvest fresh vegetables at Victory Garden in Lamar.

