

SOUTHEAST COLORADO POWER ASSOCIATION

MAY 2024

**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.comfacebook.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



GROW YOUR SUMMER ENERGY SAVINGS

BY KEVIN BRANDON CEO | KEVINB@SECPA.COM

One of my favorite things about summer is the opportunity for fresh, homegrown food, whether it's shopping at the local farmers' market or sharing the abundance of garden tomatoes with a neighbor. It's amazing how just a few seeds, some fertilizer, and water can turn into a bounty.



KEVIN BRANDON

When I think about energy efficiency, I think about that bounty of food, and how with just a few simple actions, you can use less electricity and reap the rewards of energy savings.

You don't need to be a farmer or botanist to know that plants need water — just like you don't have to be a lineworker or engineer to know that adjusting the thermostat or turning off lights can reduce your monthly electric bill. In fact, if you read Southeast Colorado Power Association's (SECPA) publications regularly and follow us on Facebook, you know there are a lot of things you can do at home to save electricity and money.

Summer months bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. But why? Cooling your home accounts for a large portion of your monthly energy use, and the hotter it gets, the harder your air conditioner works to keep you cool.


I would like to share a few ways we're here to help you save — not only during the dog days of summer, but throughout the year.

One of the great things about being part of SECPA is that we're locally owned by you, our members. So instead of making profits, we can focus on helping our community. That's why we've developed incentives and programs to help you keep your money in your wallet.

SAVE MONEY WITH THESE EASY INCENTIVES:

- **REBATES** – SECPA offers lots of ways to give you money back for efficient equipment you purchase, like heat pumps, water heaters, high efficiency motors, and outdoor power equipment to name a few. Many of our rebates can be claimed by simply filling out a form. Find a list of all our rebates at www.secpa.com/rebates
- **TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR USE** – Use our Smarthub app to track your energy use. You can monitor your usage and identify patterns. You can also use Smarthub to view and pay your bill online. Go to www.secpa.com/smarthub for all the details.
- **WAYS TO PAY** – If you're having a difficult time paying the higher bills that come with increased used in the summer, contact us to learn about our budget billing option.

Most people don't know everything about electricity, and that's why we're here to help you. There are no investors making profits here. Just knowledgeable people with local jobs, working for our neighbors to ensure there is electricity available when you need it. Contact us and we can work with you to find more ways to save energy — and money.



MEMORIAL DAY
REMEMBER AND HONOR

SECPA offices are closed Monday, May 27 in observance of Memorial Day.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY | TIP OF THE MONTH

Looking for an easy way to manage home energy use? Smart plugs are inexpensive and offer convenient solutions for scheduling and controlling your favorite electronic devices.

With smart plugs, you can easily manage your coffee maker, lighting, home office equipment, video

game consoles, and more. Smart plugs can help you manage devices through a smartphone app, your home assistant, or voice control. By conveniently powering off or scheduling devices, you can save energy (and money).

Source: energystar.gov

5 WAYS TO SAVE THIS SUMMER

When summer temperatures rise, so do our energy bills. Here are a few ways you can reduce energy use and grow your summer savings.

1. Raise your thermostat.

The smaller the difference between the indoor and outdoor temp, the more you'll save.

2. Install window coverings

like blinds or light-blocking curtains to prevent indoor heat gain during the day.

3. Seal leaks with caulk and weatherstripping

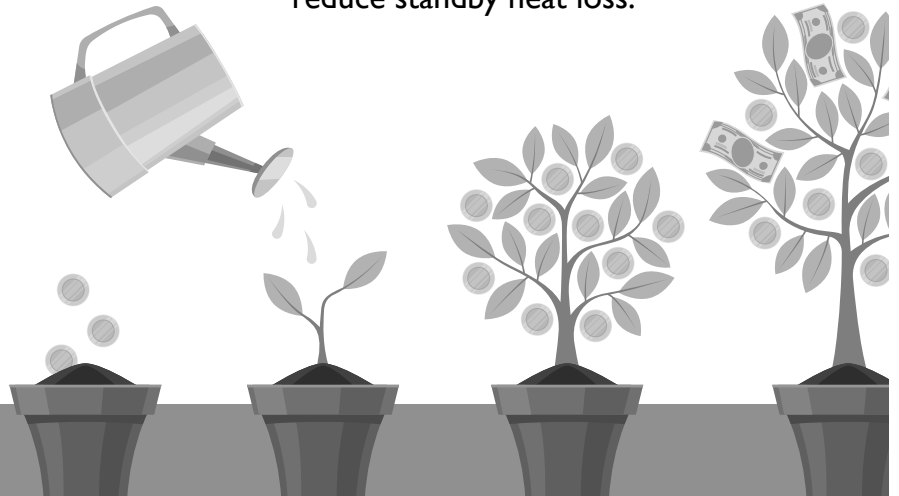
around windows and exterior doors. Air leaks force your air conditioner to work harder and run longer than necessary.

4. Run ceiling fans

for additional cooling but turn them off when you leave the room.

5. Lower your water heater thermostat

to 120 degrees to reduce standby heat loss.



Source: Dept. of Energy

Internet that fits your way of life in Southeast Colorado

YOU COULD BE A WINNER!



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.

Southeast Colorado Students Prepare for Overseas Adventure

BY ANNE BOSWELL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR | ANNEB@SECPA.COM

After 19 years at Las Animas High School, English teacher Dave Armstrong feels one of the best ways for students to learn is to travel. “The most amazing thing about travel is not only to see everybody doing the same things that you do in a different place but to watch the world turn in a different way from a different perspective,” he said.

Dave is the advisor, host, and sponsor of the LA Travel Club. The club began in 2014 as a way to connect students from Bent County and Southeast Colorado to the world. The club has taken five trips in the United States: Boston, New York City, Washington, D.C., Williamsburg, and Gettysburg.

And this summer, they’re “crossing the pond” to tour Europe. Dave and students will visit Switzerland, France, and Spain. It is a trip of a lifetime for many students from the small Southeast Colorado community.

“It’s an amazing, life-changing opportunity to see and meet new people, experience new traditions and cultures, and to be able to say ‘Yeah, I did that,’ when it shows up as a question on Jeopardy,” he said.

Dave and the 34 students signed up to go this summer have been fundraising. It’s been a little easier to raise those funds thanks to the club’s 501(c)(3) status. The City of Las Animas, Las Animas Light and Power, and the Bent County Health Care Center all donated enough funds for \$900 to be taken off of cost of the trip: \$5,000 per student.

“Travel changes you,” Dave said passionately. “It causes students to speak from experience instead of what other people have told them. It makes them stronger students. I feel they’re more successful when they go out into the world. Academically and culturally, they thrive because they have a better idea of who they are when they get home.” (WIN* Terry McMillian acct 2165xxxxx)

In 2014 when Armstrong sat down with Las Animas School District leadership to brainstorm ideas to get students engaged, he never imagined he would have so many funny stories to share. Or maybe he did know. He recounts a 2021 trip to Iceland. When COVID-19 derailed their 2020 plans to travel to Europe, they were offered a chance to take a trip to Iceland instead. He beams when he talks about that trip: how beautiful it was, how friendly the people were, and the experiences the group will never forget.

“There might’ve been some 2 a.m. scooter rides around Iceland — you know, joyrides ... or rumors of it anyway. What happens in Iceland stays in Iceland,” Dave joked.

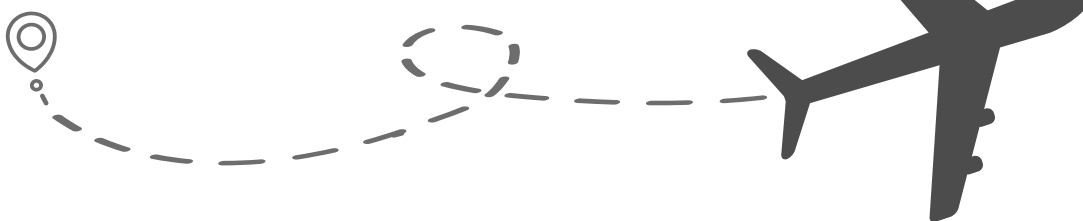
The club is still accepting donations to help defray the students’ cost for the trip. If you, your business, club, or organization wants to help, mail a check to LA Travel, c/o David Armstrong, 17 6th Street, Las Animas, Colorado 81054.



▲ LA Travel Club students and advisor, Dave Armstrong, make lots of memories in Iceland in 2021.



▲ Students in the LA Travel Club visit the sites in Washington, D.C. in 2018.



Horses Offer Kids Unique Learning Experiences

BY ANNE BOSWELL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR | ANNEB@SECPA.COM

“Horses are really just therapists without the student loan debt,” Arianna Suto, a horse lover, Ph.D. student, and a small business owner said. She founded Equine Elegance LLC, an equine-assisted learning venture because she felt that pairing people with horses just makes sense. Although she admits it’s been a lifelong dream of hers, she experienced a need firsthand which propelled the idea to become a reality.

“Since I was a little girl, I always wanted to open a therapeutic program for children with special needs. I have an uncle who has autism, and it always had a special place in my heart, especially learning how to incorporate a partnership between an individual with special needs and horses,” Arianna said. “But what really got the spark going is my youngest son, Oliver, who has autism and pica. I tried numerous services for him, but nothing was really working out very well for him.”

Arianna’s son was interested in watching her with her horses, so she decided to try to encourage a relationship between him with his own horse. It was a good decision.

“That’s really what opened up the door for him, where he finally became verbal. He used to be nonverbal, he used to be very self-harming, and had a lot of sensory needs. Since he’s had his own pony, a lot of those needs have simmered down. He’s verbal now, he can read, he can write, he interacts when other kids come out here — he’ll actually volunteer to help them out.”

Her work as a doctoral student also follows this trail. Arianna is doing her thesis on equine therapy and its effectiveness for children on the autism spectrum. She is expected to graduate in June 2025.

“This is kinda a dream come true.”

Arianna works with children and adults at Equine Elegance. She offers clinics throughout the year on managing emotions, addressing anxiety, building self-esteem, and identity. She also offers riding clinics for those who enjoy horseback riding, which, she adds, is a confidence builder all by itself.

Growth happens in the most surprising ways during the clinics. “We do paintings on the horse — finger painting on the horses to express our emotions or be creative, and we make dream catchers or canvas art.” She explained that art is helpful when kids can’t express how they feel verbally.

One of the students at the equine-assisted learning center is six-year-old Kambri. Kambri’s mom, Jordan, explains they take part in the learning programs and the riding program.

Kambri’s assigned horse is a small Shetland pony named Ella that is just enough horse for Kambri’s small stature. Jordan mentions the two have been very good for each other. Kambri was born prematurely

and weighed just one pound and six ounces at birth. She was diagnosed with failure to thrive but is growing now.

“She had a long way to go, she’s now almost 30 pounds and very independent,” Jordan said.

For most people, it would be scary watching your tiny

child ride on a large animal. But Jordan sees it differently. “Her horse, Ella, is not like any other horse; she’s very, very gentle and very in tune with Kambri,” Jordan explains. “It’s kinda crazy to see — if Kambri moves in her saddle, she’ll stop. It’s cool to see how in tune they are with each other.”

Their relationship and what they’ve built together is clear to see when Kambri and Ella interact. “Being able to watch her grow and experience that is an amazing thing in and of itself,” Jordan remarked.

Arianna’s goal is to be able to help more children like Kambri. She’s focused on Equine Elegance having an indoor riding arena with a bathing station, a lounge room, stalls, and an office. She would love to employ a small staff, including a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, and a physical therapist.

“Not only would it help the community with more jobs out here, but it will also help parents get the services that are very scarce down here. For my son, we go to Colorado Springs or Denver [for services],” Arianna said. “I’m hoping to bring it all here and have it all come together around an equine therapeutic approach.”

Growing Equine Elegance means that multiple therapies could be incorporated into one session. Arianna also wants to be able to make her services affordable; she applied to make Equine Elegance a nonprofit organization. With nonprofit status, she will be able to apply for grants and offer services to more families in southeast Colorado.

As of late March, Arianna was only about \$800 away from making this dream become a reality. Fundraisers to help meet this goal are planned this spring, and a calendar the students made featuring pictures of them with the horses is already in circulation to raise money.

Find more information about Equine Elegance, LLC on Facebook, or email equineelegance37@gmail.com.



■ Arianna Suto supervises six-year-old Kambri riding Ella the horse.