

NEWS RELEASE FROM:
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CARLINVILLE – Members of M.J.M. Electric Cooperative celebrated the organization’s 80th annual meeting at Carlinville High School, Saturday, March 23. During the meeting, members were updated on rate changes, member satisfaction survey results, progress of the future headquarters building, service upgrades and the co-op’s commitment to the community.

President/CEO Laura Cutler addressed the crowd and referenced “Back in time...it’s 1939” with the Wizard of Oz as this year’s meeting theme. The movie, too, is celebrating its 80th anniversary.

The co-op recently received results of the biennial statewide member satisfaction survey. Cutler shared that the co-op has made numerous changes and upgrades, and the efforts are paying off. The co-op’s satisfaction score has improved by 12 points since 2011 to an 83, which is significantly higher than scores investor-owned utilities and municipalities received.

The survey results also indicated a trend of more members identifying as customers rather than member/owners, and that disparity continues to widen. Cutler said it’s an opportunity for the co-op to do a better job of educating why cooperatives are different. She showed a flow chart of the co-op’s hierarchy. At the top were the co-op members, with the board and co-op employees on levels below them. The membership is the reason for the co-op. She said, “While times have changed, our mission and outlook have not. Working together, we can accomplish great things for our community now and in the future. Our electric co-op was built by the community, belongs to the community and continues to be led by the community – that’s the cooperative difference.”

Though the groundbreaking for the new headquarters building was held late last year, the building project has been disrupted since mid-January due to weather. The estimated completion time for the building will be nine-12 months.

The co-op has applied for a USDA REAP grant of \$19,933 for the installation of a geothermal heat pump system. Once the building is completed, the co-op estimates it will receive additional energy efficiency rebates of \$25,000-\$30,000 for roof and wall insulation, interior lighting, office geothermal units and LED light poles from the Power Moves Program through Wabash Valley Power Association. Survey results indicated half the respondents supported the installation of an electric vehicle charging station. As a result, one is included in the building plan.

The co-op continues to update its system and right-of-way maintenance. Survey results showed that members appreciated the co-op's efforts to date. Two drones that were purchased last year are used to inspect lines and poles for potential issues. This saves labor charges and helps the co-op conduct preventative maintenance to avoid outages.

A way M.J.M. Electric demonstrates commitment to the community is through its student involvement. Cutler says, "We continue to support youth programs because we all know the youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow." M.J.M. Electric participates in Youth Day at the Capitol and Youth to Washington Tour, both sponsored by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield. It is also an investor in the Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program. CEO gives high school students the opportunity to start their own businesses and encourages them to stay in rural communities. The co-op's new headquarters facility will include a multi-purpose room that will host CEO classes among other community activities.

Phil Carson, immediate past president of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), addressed the crowd. He echoed Cutler's comments regarding the co-op's hierarchy, saying, "You get to be a family as part of the cooperative. You are what this co-op is all about and this group is trying to deliver electricity and other things to you so the quality of life you experience is better, and it is because of your electric cooperative."

Treasurer W. Kay Schultz provided the financial update. Though the members' service delivery charge was increased by \$5, with the new rate change, energy costs per kWh were reduced. Due to the hot summer and cold winter, however, more kWhs were consumed, driving members' bills higher. This increased revenue to the co-op by \$1.6 million more than in 2017. Total margins for the year were \$2,266,987, and total capital credits refunded through Dec. 31, 2018 were \$3,255,283. The co-op is in good financial condition, and the board plans to retire additional capital credits in 2019.

During the meeting, William Heyen of Gillespie, Marcie Tonsor of Jerseyville and W. Kay Schultz of Godfrey were re-elected to the co-op's board of directors, and State Representatives Avery Bourne and C.D. Davidsmeyer briefly addressed the crowd.

M.J.M. Electric Cooperative is a member of Touchstone Energy — an alliance of 730 local, consumer-owned electric utilities around the country. M.J.M. Electric is committed to providing superior service based on four core principles: integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community. The co-op serves more than 9,396 meters over 2,117 miles of line in Macoupin, Jersey, Montgomery, Bond, Fayette, Greene and Madison counties. For more information visit www.mjmec.coop. M.J.M. Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Photo outline:

Two area men and an area woman were re-elected to M.J.M. Electric Cooperative's board of directors during the organization's 80th annual meeting of members held Saturday, March 23 at Carlinville High School. The re-elected directors are (from left): Marcie Tonsor of Jerseyville, W. Kay Schultz of Godfrey and William Heyen of Gillespie.

