

# PARK SPARKS

DECEMBER 2023



## *The Spirit of Giving*



*As a proud member-owned cooperative, Park Electric adheres to seven cooperative principals. One of those principals is concern for community. In this time of giving, we would like to showcase our charitable works this year and give thanks for our members and the communities we serve.*

### INSPIRING A LOVE OF READING

facing educators today. Reading is a fundamental life skill and access to books for children can be difficult in rural communities. In many places, children only have exposure to books in their school library. Park Electric recently joined forces with Basin Electric Power Cooperative to help support the mission of getting children excited about reading. Through a matching donation fund set up by Basin Electric, Park Electric was able to provide a \$ 5,000 donation to the Shields Valley school system for their school libraries. This donation provides funds to purchase books for the collection and foster a unique reading program called the Mock Caldecott Reading Program.

Every year in January, the Shields Valley school district participates in the Mock Caldecott Reading Program. The Caldecott Award is a national award that recognizes outstanding illustrations in children's books each year. Across the country, various lists of potential

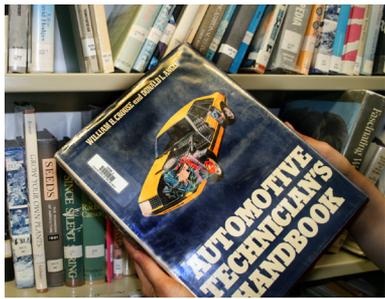
**H**ow can we inspire children to love reading? That's an important question

winners are assembled. By the end of the year, the lists converge and the top contenders emerge. The Shields Valley school uses this list of potential winners of the Caldecott honor and purchases two copies of each book in contention for the award. Throughout the month of January, the entire elementary school spends 20 minutes each day, meeting in peer groups and reading the nominated books. As they read through all the books, they learn about different artistic elements and engage in group discussions about the books. They decide, based on specific criteria, which is their favorite to win. The program challenges them to look at the whole book, not just the words on the page. At the end of the month, a large poster is created where students vote on their favorites to win. When the winners are announced, the entire school gathers to watch the ceremony live and celebrate their accomplishments. This program not only excites the children about reading but also provides them with lifelong memories of their favorite books.

*Books continued on next page...*

*Books Continued...*

For the past two years, a teacher has privately funded the Mock Caldecott Program by obtaining books for the children to read. The cost of supporting this program is approximately \$1500. The Park Electric board was approached by the Shields Valley school system, to whom Park Electric provides power. They asked for a donation to fund the Mock Caldecott program and to help update the library collection. The board chose to apply for the Basin Electric matching funds program for this educational expense. The matching fund program is available for electric cooperatives that are a part of Basin's power supply network. Basin agreed to make a donation of \$2500 and Park Electric made a matching donation of \$2500. The Park Electric donation came from the education fund, which comprises unclaimed capital credits. With the generous donation from both Cooperatives, the



Caldecott program will be fully funded, eliminating the teacher's need to pay privately for it. The additional money will be used to fill the library shelves



with new material. The librarian estimated that they would be able to purchase approximately 250 new books with the donation money. The new books will consist of high interest titles that the students will be collaborating with the librarian to purchase. Having additional books in the library that the kids are interested in further encourages them to read and use the library.

Generous donations for educational purposes spotlight Park Electric's commitment to giving back to our communities. Many rural school libraries lack full-time librarians and struggle with limited budgets to expand their collections. Public libraries are often inaccessible to rural students and the quality of their education can be partially attributed to the strength of their school's library. Investing in the future of our rural children is an investment in the future and Park Electric and Basin Electric are proud to help that mission.

## Managers Comments by Matt Haggerty

The Annual Meeting this year, for the first time since 2019, was able to be held indoors. The Board and staff of Park Electric were very happy to be able to meet our members in person again. We had a terrific turnout thanks to this return to tradition. After members worked their way through registration, they had the option to visit with PEC staff at our Rate Change table or our Net Metering table to ask questions. Seeing everyone gathering for the lunch was gratifying and we are thankful for everyone who attended. For those of you who were unable to attend, here is a brief rundown of the meeting:

Alan Johnstone called our meeting to order after a prayer from Lois Olmstead, and lunch was served. Our first speaker was our auditor, Travis Gerten. He

gave a positive report on the audit and highlighted the great job management and the board of trustees are doing. Following this report, Alan Johnstone gave his president's report. During his detailed report and slide show, he covered many topics including reliability efforts, FEMA funding, the boards' fiduciary responsibilities, and staffing of PEC. At the end of his presentation, the board honored retiring board member Melanie Roe for her 23 years of service on Park Electric's board, and 10 years of which she also served on Central Montana's board. (Central Montana is our wholesale power supplier.) Melanie, I want to say thank you from all of us for your commitment to guiding our coop and for your time spent representing Park Electric in the community and the region.

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*Managers Comments continued...*

Next, I gave my manager's report to the membership. During the reliability update, I provided the number of outage minutes for our system categorized by trees, underground faults, and all other causes. All three outage causes had a 30%-50% reduction in outage time from the year prior. These reductions are partially thanks to tree-trimming efforts throughout the system, continuous underground cable replacements, weather, and bird guards. We ended 2022 with 178 new services compared to 195 services the year prior. Our margins at the end of 2022 were \$375,000 compared to \$798,000 the year prior. The most important segment of my report covered the upcoming rate change in 2024. I went over the details of the rate change, as we have also published them in this newsletter and online. I ended my report by sharing that our coop was given an ACSI score of 92. This score was calculated from the responses from our members on the surveys they filled out. This score placed us in the top 5% of over 900 Touchstone Energy Cooperatives across the United States for our exceptional customer service. The biggest reason we were able to achieve such a high customer satisfaction score is due to the work that our employees and board do every day.

For this year's guest speaker, we brought in Chad Reisenauer of Basin Electric Cooperative. Chad spoke about base load generation and intermittent generation. He explained that baseload generation is a dispatchable resource that can be ramped up any time 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. His examples of baseload generation were coal, hydro, and natural gas. Intermittent generation, he explained, includes resources such as wind and solar. These generation sources are not always available, meaning that the wind does not always blow, and the sun does not always shine. He asked us to think about when the sun does shine, particularly in



the winter. During this time of the year, he reminded us, that baseload generation is what keeps the lights on. I felt this was a very powerful speech delivered by Chad from Basin, which is the largest generation and transmission coop in the US ranked by their plant assets.

Our second guest speaker was Mark Lambrecht, the Government Affairs Director for the Montana Electric Cooperatives Association statewide organization. He spoke about MECA's involvement in the legislative process. One example he talked about was how their efforts helped pass the Move Over Law, which aids linemen and emergency personnel across the state by requiring traffic to move over if they are working on or near state highways.

We concluded the meeting with election results, drawings, and questions. The election results were the following: Alan Johnstone was re-elected in District 1, Bert Otis was re-elected in District 5, and Bill Brownlee was elected in District 6, replacing Melanie Roe after she retired from the board. I took the time to answer any questions from the members in attendance, and Melanie announced the 15 \$2,000 Luck of the Draw scholarship winners, and the lucky grand prize winner of \$500 was also selected.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to attend our Annual Meeting this year.





# LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

# WAYS WE GIVE BACK



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# ENERGY STAR REBATES



# GRANTS FOR LOW INCOME MEMBERS



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- District 5 - Bert Otis 406-333-4802
- District 6 - Bill Brownlee 406-932-4356
- District 7 - Perry Anderson 406-537-4546
- General Manager - Matt Haggerty 406-222-3100

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