

WEC CO-OP CURRENTS

Vol. 68, No. 2

The newsletter of Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., East Montpelier, Vermont.

March/April 2007

Caring Broadly, Acting Locally

Yearly Report on WEC's Community Fund

The winter of 2006-2007 started out as a mild one in central Vermont, but that didn't cause a drop-off in attendance at the Worcester Community Kitchen. The cost of heating fuel may have been lower because people were using less of it, but other expenses took its place.

And then when the worm turned in mid-winter, and we really got a Vermont winter, attendance at Worcester's neighborly public buffet kept right on going.

"The need is greater than ever," said Kathy Meninger, coordinator and founder of the Community Kitchen and the Worcester Food Shelf, which have served townspeople since 1992 and 1997, respectively. "The cost of living still goes up. If you're working paycheck to paycheck and you get to the end of the month and find you need a new tire for your car or the kids need a dentist, the Food Shelf is there to help tide things over."

So is the Community Kitchen. Meninger says the Kitchen, which operates out of the Worcester Town Hall in the village on Route 12, serves

an average of about 30 people at each meal, folks she characterizes as "a diverse segment of people very representative of our community," including families, senior citizens, single parents with their children, and others. Not everyone comes out of a sense of economic need; indeed, the Community Kitchen answers a social need just as fully. Many of the people who show up do so to have a chatty sit-down meal with friends and acquaintances. The volunteers respect people's privacy, welcoming everyone without asking (or caring) why they're there or whether they're from Worcester or another community.

The Kitchen serves lunch every Wednesday (12:00 noon to 1 p.m.) and on the third Saturday each month. It also provides meals for folks who are homebound, which people can request by contacting Kathy Meninger at 223-2848.

The Food Shelf operates on the same schedule as the Community Kitchen, but is open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on those days.

continued on page 5



Dr. John Matthew, President of the Health Center in Plainfield. WEC members contributed to the Center's capital campaign in 2006 through Washington Electric's Community Fund.

Try Out a Compact Fluorescent at Home? "No Way! Well, Maybe..."

By Erika Mitchell

There's no way I'd ever use one of those horrid compact fluorescent bulbs in MY house," a friend remarked recently.

Hunh? Didn't she know how much

money she was wasting by using old-fashioned incandescent light bulbs?

"Those ugly compact fluorescents don't fit in my lamps," she added.

Curious, I asked, "Why do you feel

continued on page 2

Inside

Vermont Legislature casts a wide net looking at energy, conservation and climate change issues. See Manager's Report, page 3.

Familiar faces offer their services for the Board of Directors. With Annual Meeting approaching, incumbents Bernstein, Cheney and Folsom are the official 2007 candidates. Get reacquainted on page 4.

Faster returns. When members lose their power, at least they're getting it back more quickly, a positive trend revealed in WEC's 2006 System Reliability Report. Page 8.



The Health Center in Plainfield must double its space because of the demand for its services. Read more about the Health Center's capital campaign on page 5.

Vermont's traditional old homes are lovely, but emit more than their share of CO². In an age of global warming, their owners can remedy that situation. Page 6.

Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

Compact Fluorescents

continued from page 1

this way?"

"I tried a compact fluorescent bulb eight years ago," she said. "It stuck out of the shade and its flickering gave me a headache."

"That sounds awful," I commented, "but not all compact fluorescents are like that. You've never complained about headaches at my house, and we use only compact fluorescents."

Surprised, she protested, "I've never noticed any compact fluorescents in your house. How did you get them to fit in your lamps?"

I explained to her how CFL technology has improved, how there are now CFL bulbs in many sizes and shapes, from small curly bulbs that will fit in table lamps, to globes for ceiling fans, spot lights, and even flame-shaped bulbs for chandeliers. I also noted that manufacturers have fixed the flickering problems.

"That old compact fluorescent bulb never seemed bright enough," my friend complained.

"Perhaps you needed a stronger bulb," I noted. "Just like with incandescent light bulbs, fluorescents come in different brightnesses. You need to choose one powerful enough

for your task. Generally, a 13-15 Watt fluorescent bulb is good for a table light, but to light up an entire room, you will probably want something stronger, like 20-25 Watts. If you want to replace an incandescent with a fluorescent bulb, check the wattage of your current bulb, divide by four, and that will tell you about what strength fluorescent bulb to buy."

My friend responded, "But compact fluorescents are really dim if you try to use them where it's cold."

"True," I agreed, "they have different temperature ratings. Some start quickly in cold temperatures, and some don't. But even those that don't will brighten up eventually. They're great for porch lights that get left on all the time."

"Even so, I can't use fluorescent bulbs," my friend continued.

"Why not," I asked. "They'll cut your lighting bill by 75 percent!"

My friend explained, "I have SADD – Seasonal Affective Disorder. In winter, I get depressed without full-spectrum light."

"That's tough," I nodded. "But compact fluorescent bulbs also come in daylight models. They're a little more expensive, but not much more than full-spectrum incandescent bulbs."

"What about the environment?" my friend asked. "Aren't compact

fluorescents full of mercury?"

"Well," I conceded, "they do contain a small amount of mercury, so they should never be thrown out in the trash. Instead, you need to recycle them. But compact fluorescents can actually reduce our exposure to mercury, since they save so much electricity. It's coal-fired electric plants that are depositing mercury and acid rain in our lakes, so the less electricity we use, the better for

our lakes."

"Hmm," my friend muttered, deep in thought.

Guess what I'm giving her for her birthday—a six-pack of those cute new curly bulbs!

Erika Mitchell is a Co-op member from Calais. This article first appeared in The World.

**A bright idea:
CFLs make a
good gift any
time of year
— even when
you're giving
them to yourself.**

*"Those ugly compact
fluorescents don't fit in my
lamps," my friend complained.
Oh, really?"*



Co-op Currents

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WEC is part of the alliance working to advance and support the principles of cooperatives in Vermont.
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The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Deborah Brown, 802-223-5245.

Members Write

Co-op Currents welcomes letters to the editor that address any aspect of the Co-op's policies and operations, or any matters related to electricity. Readers can write to Co-op Currents, P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651. Letters to the editor will not be published in the Annual Meeting (April) issue.

'Sweet Sorrow'

Editor, Co-op Currents:

Recently I moved off WEC's lines after being a member for almost 54 years. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the staff and particularly the line workers for their efforts over the years. In the 1950s we had many more outages than later. No matter when I've had contact with the crew, they have been unfailingly informative, patient and respectful.

When I served on the board, the in-house staff extended themselves above and beyond the call of duty and never were annoyed by my questions or requests for information. Dean and Janet explained finances, while Alan

and Denise kept me informed about other "workings" of the Co-op.

With much appreciation to all the people who make up WEC, both past and present. Sincerely,

Rita Edwards, Chelsea

Editor's note:

WEC is sorry to lose Rita Edwards as a Co-op member, and we note with appreciation that Rita gave her time and efforts in return, serving on the Board of Directors from 1987 to 1989. The employees she refers to are former staff members Dean Shattuck, Janet LaRochelle, and Alan Heath, and Denise Jacques, who is now Director of Administrative Services.

Manager's Report

Legislature Eyes Energy Issues; U.S. Co-op Movement Budges, Too

By Avram Patt

As I write this at the end of March, the Vermont Legislature is at "crossover" time, when bills being worked on by either the House or the Senate must get passed and sent to the other chamber, or see no action this year. The session started out with presentations by a number of Vermont and national experts on climate change and the connection to energy generation and use, and both the Senate and the House have been working on major bills. It is too early to predict the final form of legislation that will be passed this year, but here is a quick summary of the major bills of interest:

- H. 520.** The House Natural Resources and Energy Committee has crafted a bill with a number of separate provisions designed to further promote energy efficiency, and to significantly increase the amount of electricity we get from renewable sources both large and small. The bill contains provisions that encourage or mandate development of a variety of new sources ranging from commercial wind farms to smaller-scale biomass and "micro-hydro" facilities. It expands the size and broadens the definition of "net metering," (on-site renewable generation intended primarily for the electric customers' own use.) It supports "inclining" rate structures that encourage conservation, and it asks the Public Service Board to investigate and report on the feasibility of having all utilities install "smart meters" that allow customers and utilities to track their energy usage in real time. The bill also has a provision that would offer wind developers such as UPC, the developer of the proposed Sheffield project, some predictability regarding property taxes.
- S. 94.** While the House has focused primarily on electricity thus far, the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee has introduced a bill dealing with thermal efficiency. Vermont has been a leader in electric energy efficiency, but the fact remains that in almost all Vermont homes, electricity is not the largest energy use, and our state has one of the oldest housing stocks in the nation. Fuels used for heating, hot water, cooking, clothes drying and other purposes typically account for the greatest energy use and cost in most homes, and we have done very little



to conserve and use these fuels more efficiently. S. 94 proposes to expand the role of Efficiency Vermont and to transfer the significant successes Vermont has achieved in electric efficiency to the non-electric arena. While there is broad agreement on the goal, there is controversy over whether to create some sort of charge or tax on fuel companies (or their customers) to fund this initiative, as there has been on the electric side for many years.

- S. 189.** This bill, which AARP and other organizations have advocated for, would establish a program to assist lower-income Vermonters who cannot afford their electric bills. It would be funded by a flat monthly surcharge on electric bills (\$1 residential, \$3 commercial and \$100 industrial).
- H. 248.** The Douglas administration has proposed a major initiative to bring high-speed internet access (broadband) and cell phone service to the rural parts of the state that don't yet have these services. As many (not all) WEC members know, that's us! This bill, which appears to have broad bipartisan support, establishes a public authority and public financing mechanisms for bringing service to the boonies. It also defines some roles that electric utilities will play in supporting the expansion of the necessary infrastructure.

Energy Issues Nationally

Earlier in March, I attended the annual meeting of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), held this year in Las Vegas. This event is really a 10-day convention involving several related conferences and meetings of national organizations serving the electric co-op community, as well as a large electric utility trade show. It brings together about 12,000 people from the more than 900 co-ops around the country.

NRECA is a democratic organization whose policies are determined through a year-long process with lots of grassroots involvement at regional meetings and in various issue committees. For several years, I have represented Vermont on NRECA's Region I Resolutions Committee which has delegates from 10 states. For the past two years, I have also chaired that committee and have been Region I's representative to the national Resolutions Committee. This national committee finalizes the package of proposed resolutions voted on by the

full membership, after a year of input and discussion among all the issues committees and regional committees.


I'm not much of a gambler and spending five or six days in Las Vegas was an ordeal. (There are only a few cities with convention centers and hotel facilities that can handle events like NRECA's). I came home with a \$2 net loss in the casinos, and did not see the headline performer at the hotel where I stayed (Barry Manilow).

But I did return with some good news about changes in the rural electric co-op world (a.k.a. "the heartland"). For many years, electric co-ops have generally been reluctant to embrace energy efficiency, conservation, renewables and other alternatives to fossil fuels and nuclear energy. While WEC actively supports much of what our national association stands for and they provide us with many vital services, this has been one area where WEC has been, along with a few others, in a distinct minority. But the winds of change have been blowing, and over the past few years the message at NRECA events has increasingly started to include new ideas.

This year, renewable energy and climate change was what everyone was talking about, as well as efficiency and conservation. Many electric co-ops in the rest of the country remain invested in coal (although they are committed to cleaner coal technology) and along with many others, feel that new nuclear plants are part of the answer to reducing carbon emissions and global warming.

But the climate change message this year was front and center: While many co-ops have already become actively involved in wind projects, landfill gas plants like WEC's, farm methane, and alternative fuels from agricultural crops, the rest of the co-ops must move aggressively in that direction.

The same goes for efficiency. It was a central theme from the keynote speakers, government officials, panelists at breakout sessions, and in hallway conversations. One co-op manager I know remarked that I must be feeling pretty good about all this and that they should get me a t-shirt that says "I told you so!" I have enough t-shirts, but the NRECA annual meeting was gratifying nevertheless. Las Vegas is not exactly a paragon of wise energy use and environmental concern. Turning off the lights is a foreign concept there, and there were no high-efficiency bulbs in my hotel room, as there are in most other hotels these days.

But I was heartened by the changes happening in the electric co-op community, which means that the nation may be ready for change too. 

Right-Of-Way Reclearing Projects Scheduled

Affected Members with 'Special Trees' Should Call the Co-op

For the Period Through Spring/Summer 2004

The Co-op will continue working to improve service reliability by reclearing power-line rights of way in the areas described below. Right-of-way reclearing normally involves removing trees and pruning vegetation for 15 feet on either side of a single-phase distribution line, and for 25 feet on either side of a three-phase main distribution line. Except where noted, all of these projects involve single-phase lines, those carried by poles without cross-bars. Reclearing projects often involve a tap. That's where a single-phase line takes power from another line.

Throughout the year, post cards are mailed to members notifying them that right-of-way maintenance is to take place. Also, WEC's automated message-delivery system will place a phone call (if a phone number is on file) to all households affected by such maintenance projects up to two or three weeks before work on the property is to begin. Calls will be placed in the evening when most members are likely to be home. If no one answers, Co-op staff will attempt to reach that member during the day.

Because the evening calls are automated, they cannot hold the line if, for example, a child answers. If you believe you may have received a call from WEC, please call during office hours to check. If you have a tele-zapper you will not receive our automated calls successfully so please notify us at WEC so we can delete you from our calling list. If you are notified that a portion of your property is to be recleared and you especially hope to save any particular trees that are within the right-of-way, call the Co-op.

The Co-op's Right-of-way Management Coordinator Mike Myers, also a forester, will be happy to talk with you about any problems.

Calais	Dugar Brook Road and cross country line to Bayne Comolli Road.
Orange	Two Phase Line along Route 302 from Tucker Road to Orange Heights.
Calais	Number 10 Pond and Foster Hill Road, line to Foster Homestead.
Corinth	Camp Munn Road.
Duxbury	Birch Road Line.
Roxbury	Winch Hill Extension at David Copeland's (RO 101-F) to Selby Jones, Bull Run (RO 76-A-1).
Chelsea	Washington Turnpike and Pepper Roads.
Peacham	Green Bay Loop near intersection with Great Road.
Cabot	Short tap to Van Hees (CA 68-K-2).
Newbury	Bowen Road and vicinity.
Duxbury	Dowsville Road.
Moretown/Waitsfield	Lines from Moretown substation to Moretown Common into Waitsfield including Hathaway Road, South Hill Road and Fred Howes Rd.
Middlesex	Shady Rill Road and line behind Town garage and Rumney School.

2007 Annual Meeting Set to Return to Barre Elks Club

Three Candidates for WEC's Board of Directors

Three member/owners of Washington Electric Cooperative have come forward as candidates for the Co-op's Board of Directors in 2007. If elected, each will serve for three years, their terms ending in 2010.

Every year three seats on WEC's nine-member board expire, providing the membership an opportunity to elect one-third of the board that makes leadership decisions for the member-owned cooperative, and oversees management and staff. This year the directors whose terms will expire at the time of the Annual Membership Meeting

(they remain board members until that event) are **Barry Bernstein** of **Calais**, **Kimberly Cheney** of **Middlesex**, and **Roy Folsom** of **Cabot**. All three of these incumbents are seeking re-election, and no additional candidates came forward this year to contend for board positions.

The election of directors is performed by ballots sent to each Washington Electric Cooperative member by mail in the weeks prior to the Annual Meeting. **When your ballot arrives, check the accompanying materials to determine when the deadline is for posting your votes by mail.** Members who attend the

Annual Meeting can vote there if they wish, rather than by mail. The meeting, which includes dinner, will be held at the Barre Elks Club, the same location as last year. The date is Tuesday evening, May 22. (A schedule of events for the Annual Meeting, and a coupon for the dinner, will be printed in the next issue of *Co-op Currents*.)

Voters can write in the names of other Co-op members who are not official candidates on their ballot, if they choose. Candidates run at-large because Washington Electric Cooperative is not divided into districts. The three

candidates who receive the most votes are the winners.

Printed below are brief biographical sketches submitted by the candidates, which contain information on each person's background and involvement with the Cooperative or other avenues of community service. The April/May "Annual Meeting" issue of *Co-op Currents* will feature their responses to questions about issues related to board service. It will provide readers a better sense of the interests, viewpoints and experience of the three candidates.

Report of the 2007 Committee On Candidates

The 2007 Committee on Candidates convened a teleconference on Tuesday, March 27, at 7:00 p.m. to review the petitions and qualifications of those members who have submitted their names as candidates for the Board of Directors. This year, three (3) members of the Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. submitted their names as candidates for the three (3) Board positions to be filled. The Committee on Candidates hereby

affirms:

- that each candidate submitted a valid petition in accordance with Article III, Section 3A of the Bylaws;
- that each has signed a statement of affirmation indicating that they:
 1. have been a member of the Co-op in good standing for at least six months;

2. are residents of Vermont;
3. are not employees of the Cooperative;
4. do not have a conflict of interest as defined in Article III, Section 2 of the Bylaws; and
5. have received and understand the responsibilities and time commitments required of a director.

Therefore, the Committee determines all of the candidates to be qualified for

the position of director in accordance with the Cooperative's Bylaws, and hereby presents the following official listing of candidates for the Washington Electric Cooperative 2007 election of Directors:

Barry Bernstein
Kimberly Cheney
Roy Folsom

2007 Committee on Candidates:

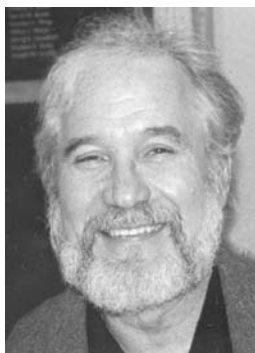
Carl C. Demrow
Michael Duane
Brian Howes
George Malek

John Reynolds
Scott Skinner
Donna Sprake
Charlie Wanzer

Barry Bernstein

Residence: I live on Bliss Road in East Calais, and have owned a home there since 1976. I have been an owner-member of WEC since 1971.

Profession: I am a partner and president of Better World Energy Ltd., the Northeast representative for Messersmith Mfg. Inc., a leading manufacturer of automated wood chip heating plants for schools and commercial/industrial use. I have also been involved in consulting and management for profit and nonprofit organizations for 42 years.



Community Service/WEC: I have served on the WEC Board of Directors since 1997 and been the president of the Board since November 1998. I also serve on the

Board and Finance Committee of Woodbury College in Montpelier, and the Board of ILR Inc., of Northampton, Massachusetts, a disability-rights organization specializing in ADA technical assistance and training.

I served as a Board member and treasurer of both the Hunger Mountain Co-op, Montpelier, and the Buffalo Mountain Co-op, of Hardwick. I also was a cofounder of the Vermont Center For Independent Living, in Montpelier, and served as its executive director (1978-1982, 1992-1993). I was a co-incorporator and officer of the former CVTA, a nonprofit agency providing transportation services to central Vermont elders, people with disabilities and others, from 1980 to 1985.

Kimberley B. Cheney

Residence: I have lived at 143 South Bear Swamp Road in Middlesex since 2000. Before that I lived in Montpelier for 32 years.

Profession:

Attorney. I graduated from Yale College in 1957, served four years in the Navy, Lt. USNR. I graduated from Yale Law School in 1964.



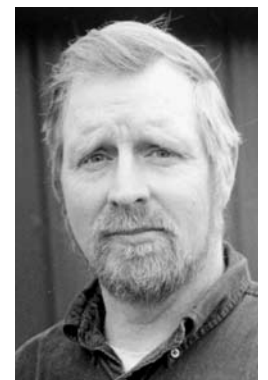
Community Service/WEC: I served as Washington County State's Attorney, Vermont Attorney General, Chair of the Vermont Labor Relations Board, and a Board member of the Vermont State Employees Credit Union.

Roy Folsom

Residence: I am the proprietor of Crooked Brooks Farm on U.S. Route 2 in Cabot, where I have resided since 1985.

Profession:

Dairy farmer – although my philosophy has always been that I'm a businessman first, a farmer second. Our farm is run as any business, with an aim for being profitable.



Community Service/WEC: Served on the Town of Cabot Planning Commission, 1991-1996, and as its chairman in 1995 and 1996. From 1992 to the present, I have been a member of the Cabot Zoning Board of Adjustment, and became chairman of that board in 2000. Member of the Caledonia County Farm Bureau and delegate to the Vermont Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, representing Caledonia County. I was appointed to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board by Governor Douglas in 2005.

WEC's Community Fund

continued from page 1

The schedule for both services will increase to two Saturdays a month by spring, Meninger hopes, and if that aspiration comes true Washington Electric Co-op will have played a role. The Worcester Community Kitchen and Food Shelf was the recipient in December of a grant from WEC's Community Fund, which donates to community organizations, nonprofits, and local government projects throughout the Co-op's service territory of 41 central Vermont towns. In Worcester, the select board last year requested that groups contribute \$50 annually in lieu of a regular charge for using the town hall, and Washington Electric's modest grant arrived – unsolicited – just in time to cover that cost.

"It was absolutely stunning," said Meninger. "It met our obligation to the town with a lot left over for ongoing expenses like bleach and dish detergent. It will help us provide a second Saturday much sooner than we had anticipated."

Twice as generous

Unsolicited grants are a new thing



Worcester residents come together for lunch and conversation at the Community Kitchen.

for WEC's Community Fund, and they are a result of Co-op members' steady increase in donations since the fund was initiated in 2003. Last year (2006) was the fund's fourth operational year, and

at the beginning of 2007 WEC General Manager Avram Patt filed his annual report to the Board of Directors on its status and activities.

Late in 2006, Patt wrote, "it became evident that . . . we were likely to finish the year with a sizeable balance [in the fund]. The Members & Markets Committee agreed with a recommendation to make unsolicited donations to ten local community-based food shelves in December."

A summary of the 2006 Community Fund recipients appears below. It reveals contributions to pantries and food shelves in Tunbridge, Chelsea, Duxbury, Groton, Hardwick, Marshfield, Montpelier, the Mad River Valley, and Woodbury/Calais, in addition to Worcester. The 47 grants extended in 2006 mostly ranged from \$100 to \$800, with a very few carefully selected \$1,000 grants. In all, the fund donated \$19,464.75 in 2006.

The Community Fund is financed by the voluntary contributions by Co-op members of their annual capital credit refunds. For most members those refunds are modest – in the \$10-\$40 range – but WEC provides them as credits on people's November electric bills, so in that sense they are substantial and the members' contributions of them is a generous and caring act.

Those autumn contributions provide money for the following year's Community Fund activities. In 2003, members contributed \$14,803.64. In 2004 they contributed \$17,455.34. In 2005 the total was \$22,108.28. In November 2006 people's contributions given in lieu of capital credit refunds came to approximately \$28,000, so with the roughly \$2,500 of unspent monies that will be forwarded from the 2006 fund, WEC will have more than \$30,000 to contribute to community causes this year.

In other words, the Community Fund has doubled since its inception. Since it is made up of contributions from regular,

hard-working Vermonters who happen to belong to a small, customer-owned electric utility, that's something to be proud of.

Ambitious expansion in Plainfield

Food shelves and local meals programs are the ultimate "bootstrap" operations. On the other end of the spectrum is The Health Center, located in Plainfield where it serves multiple generations of families from Cabot, Calais, East Montpelier, Marshfield, Plainfield, Woodbury and other local communities. The Health Center is in the midst of a \$2.1-million capital campaign to double its space (presently 9,600 square feet) and its team of more than 30 health professionals and administrative staff, in order to cope with a 600-percent increase in demand for its services.

Still, The Health Center is a nonprofit organization, and needs all the help it can get to achieve that goal.

"We serve a tremendous portion of Washington County and beyond, including our six-town catchment primary area," said Ann Loecher, community relations and development coordinator for the healthcare facility that opened on the Goddard College road in Plainfield in 1973 and moved to its present location just off Route 2 in 1978.

"One reason we were so excited to receive the Washington Electric grant is because our constituencies are one and the same. It was very meaningful to be recognized in that way; it's really what 'community' is about."

One might also say that "community" is about truly serving the needs of people in the area – especially healthcare needs, which have become either unavailable, too costly, or both, for millions of Americans and thousands of Vermonters. Primary care physicians throughout the state are finding their practices full to the point where few are able to accept new patients. The Health

continued on page 7

2006 Contribution Summary, WEC Community Fund

CONTRIBUTION RECIPIENT	NOTES
BARRE HOMECOMING COMMUNITY CAPITAL STUDIO PLACE ARTS LADD FIELD COMMITTEE, WORCESTER VT HISTORICAL SOCIETY PREVENT CHILD ABUSE- VT PROJECT GRADUATION U-32 PROJECT GRADUATION SPAULDING HS WORCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY KINGDOM COUNTY PRODUCTIONS	community event business start up loan program arts programs & exhibits recreation area improvements Vt History Expo, Tunbridge Montpelier walk-a-thon substance free celebration substance free celebration rehab of historic schoolhouse bldg support of school tour of film
CVCOA BLIZZARD BAGS JACQUITH PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOC OF VT RECYCLERS GROTON RECREATION COMMITTEE KELLOGG HUBBARD LIBRARY FIRST NIGHT MONTPELIER CV ADULT BASIC EDUCATION TUNBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY VERSHARE CABOT COALITION	emergency kits for the elderly Marshfield summer concert series youth environmental summit playground improvements community library programs New Years event literacy programs community library programs small town civic group community calendar
ORANGE CTY PARENT CHILD CTR PLAINFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY THE HEALTH CENTER, PLAINFIELD B.Y.S.A. HOCKEY PEOPLE'S HEALTH & WELLNESS CLINIC CENTRAL VT HOME HEALTH & HOSPICE CV SPECIAL OLYMPICS CHELSEA PUBLIC LIBRARY GOOD BEGINNINGS GREEN MTN FILM FESTIVAL FRIENDS OF THE WINOOSKI STUFF A TRUCK TUNBRIDGE COMMUNITY FOOD SHELF CHELSEA COMMUNITY FOODSHELF DUXBURY ELF'S SHELF GROTON EMERG FOOD SHELF HARDWICK FOOD PANTRY ONION RIVER FOOD SHELF MONTPELIER FOOD PANTRY VALLEY FOOD PANTRY WOODBURY/CALAIS FOOD SHELF WORCESTER FOOD SHELF MAD RIVER VALLEY COMM FUND TURNING POINT CENTER SUGAR MAPLE PRESCHOOL CENTRAL VT COMM ACTION WASHINGTON CNTY 4-H	family services ad in calendar capital campaign for expansion scholarships for youth program health services for uninsured support of local events community library support for parents of newborn children Montpelier event local environmental org. employee shopping for Barre foodshelf local emergency assistance mtg place for people overcoming addiction W. Topsham non-profit support of emergency services youth leadership programs



Home Performance Evaluation A Good Way To Start Spring

By Bill Powell
Director, Products & Services

Fossil fuels burned to heat members' homes have increased in cost by more than 250 percent since 2000. One-sixth of Vermont's carbon dioxide emissions are attributable to home heating.

So if you have not taken a recent look at your heating costs (and the emissions they cause), perhaps you should. Reducing your fuel emissions means less fuel burned – and more money saved.

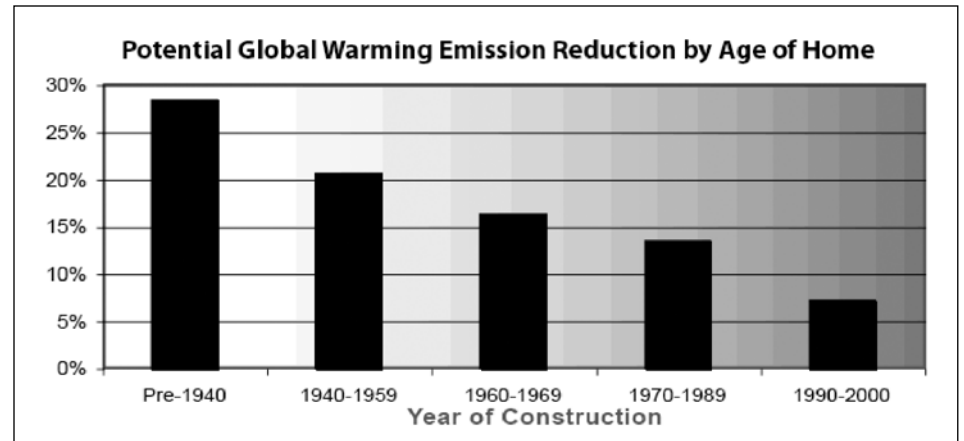
If you're ready to address your whole-house energy use, start by contacting the Co-op. We encourage you to call us with questions not only about your electricity usage, but all fuel use. Call WEC at 1-800-932-5245.

Partnering with certified local contractors, we can help you arrange for a home evaluation that will lead to recommendations for steps you can

take to lower your fuel use and costs. Fuel-switching, and/or reducing your emissions and consumption, will require changes to your home energy systems – and as we know, such changes require a financial investment that pays off in terms of money saved down the road. Become informed, and act with the expert knowledge of home energy specialists from Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®, and Efficiency Vermont (1-888-921-5990).


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- **Health and Safety.** Improved air quality due to proper ventilation, reduced excess moisture, and related mold. Reduced chance of the release of hazardous gases from combustion appliances.
- **Reduced Energy Costs.** Up to 30-percent decrease in annual

energy costs.

As we leave winter behind us, it's a good time to freshly evaluate your home's energy performance, and the many ways that a poor performance can negatively affect you, your investment, and your family members. The Co-op is ready to help you get started. 

Outage Times Dip

continued from page 8

lines. The problem was compounded by Mt. Knox experiencing two prolonged outages caused by GMP transmission-line faults.

"There will always be a worst-performing circuit," Weston points out. "The key is to keep looking at the root cause and how we can spend our dollars to maximize the best effect toward reducing the number and duration of outages. That's what we strive to do."

Challenges ahead

WEC's strategies for addressing reliability challenges are included in its 10-year Long Range Plan (LRP), and its four-year Construction Work Plan (CWP), which is approved and funded by loans from the federal Rural Utilities Service. Tasks identified in these plans include upgrading older power lines, replacing deteriorated poles, and installing "capacitors" which help maintain the quality of electricity as it travels long distances through the lines to reach people's homes. The current work plan, which included building a new substation at Maple Corner - a project that was completed in 2006 - is entering its final year. One of the tasks on hand for 2007 therefore will be developing a new four-year Construction Work Plan, with the assistance of Consulting Engineer Dan Crocket. Once approved by the Board of Directors it will be submitted to the RUS, hopefully to be in place as we start our new construction


cycle in 2008.

And finally, an often overlooked means for reducing outages is ensuring that the poles that support the power lines and electrical equipment remain solid and safe. In 2006 WEC undertook a comprehensive pole-inspection and -treatment program, carried out by United Pole Technologies. Approximately 2,240 poles - or 10 percent of the 24,000 on the Co-op's system - were examined

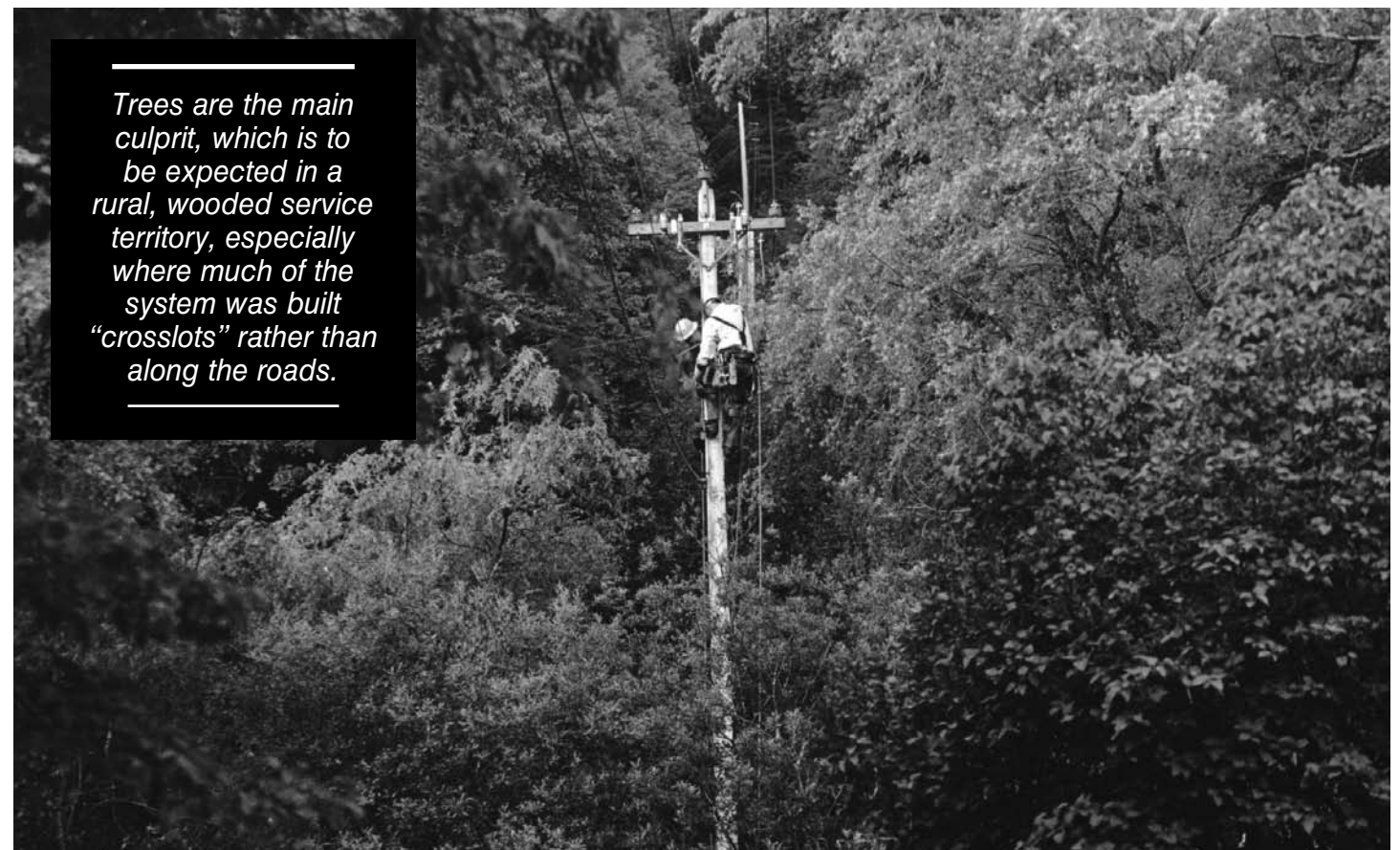
and treated; roughly 2 percent to 3 percent were condemned and eventually replaced. That program will continue in 2007.

Maintaining and improving an electric system 1,286 miles long, in often-difficult Vermont terrain, takes constant analysis and adaptation. But recent reliability reports indicate a trend, which is that WEC has been reducing its numbers for

"consumer-hours out."

"The indices point in the direction that duration of outages is not our biggest problem," Weston confirms. "Our crews are very responsive and we're getting better at locating faults more quickly so we can fix them. The bigger challenge is the frequency, now: preventing outages from occurring, even though they are short in duration." 

Trees are the main culprit, which is to be expected in a rural, wooded service territory, especially where much of the system was built "crosslots" rather than along the roads.



Community Fund

continued from page 5

Center distinguishes itself by accepting virtually everyone who comes through the door – and with an enviable level of care and professionalism.

That includes Medicaid patients, who face an additional barrier in the health care marketplace: many doctors have capped their Medicaid clientele because the government's reimbursement is inadequate. They are welcome at The Health Center, which provides physical, dental and mental-health services.

"We don't believe in turning people away," said Loecher. "We have a sliding-scale fee structure. Seventy percent of the Center's dental patients are Medicaid clients, and 45 percent of our medical patients are Medicaid. That contributes to our 600-percent growth."

So does the quality of care. Loecher points to studies revealing lower overall health care costs ("for the population's

degree of illness"), fewer hospital days, and less utilization of costly specialist care in the central Vermont region, attributable to a significant degree to the services provided in Plainfield.

Thus, directly and indirectly, Health Center has made an enormous difference for people in the Co-op's service territory, which is why Washington Electric was eager to make a difference for The Health Center in its capital campaign.

Ground rules


The Community Fund is governed by carefully written rules, policies and principles. Donations must go to organizations that are "financially viable" and "broadly supported in the communities they serve." They should either be very local (ball fields, libraries, senior-citizen groups) or widely available and beneficial to people in central Vermont (Adult Basic Education, the People's Health & Wellness Clinic, Vermont



The Worcester Community Kitchen serves lunch at noon every Wednesday.

Institute of Natural Sciences). The Co-op's aim is to spread the benefits of the Community Fund equitably throughout WEC's service area. It does not give to religious or political organizations.

The Community Fund is an example

of the adage that a little can go a long way. Members will have a chance to stock up the fund for another season next fall, when Washington Electric initiates its 2007 capital credit refund program. 

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2006 System Reliability Report

Outage Times Dip; ROW Work Effectively Targeted To Remote Sections

Outage statistics are the acid test for electric utilities. Companies can boast that they're "on every day" (Green Mountain Power Corp.), they're the largest utility in the state (Central Vermont Public Service Corp.), or they provide the highest percentage of electricity from sources with low environmental impact (Washington Electric Co-op). But for most consumers such attributes rank behind reliability: power they can depend on.

With that in mind: In 2006 WEC achieved a 38-percent reduction in "consumer-hours out" from its rolling five-year average. As WEC Operations Director Dan Weston puts it, that made 2006 "not an outstanding year, but moving in the right direction."

"Consumer-hours out" counts every hour that any WEC member spent without power. The Co-op tracks this statistic both including and not including major storms, and provides the information in a comprehensive annual System Reliability Report to the Vermont Department of Public Service (DPS). Co-op Currents summarizes the report for WEC readers each spring. Statistics that exclude major storms are considered more important because they are better indicators of the true condition of the utility's electrical system. (A powerful storm will damage any rural electrical system, and how many you get in a 12-month period is a matter of luck and meteorology.)

Going into 2006, WEC's five-year average for consumer-hours out (excluding major storms) was 129,627 hours. During 2006, WEC members experienced 80,860 hours without power.

The System Reliability Report records other factors, as well. How many total outages were there (again, excluding major storms)? The answer in 2006 was 826 separate outages. The average for the previous three years was 852.

Regarding major storms – defined for these purposes by the DPS as a storm that causes 10 percent or more of a utility's customers to lose power for 24 hours – WEC's service territory suffered only one such event in 2006, a February storm with wet, heavy snows and high winds. A couple of storms in June and October approached but did not meet that definition – although they did impact a relatively large number of Co-op members.

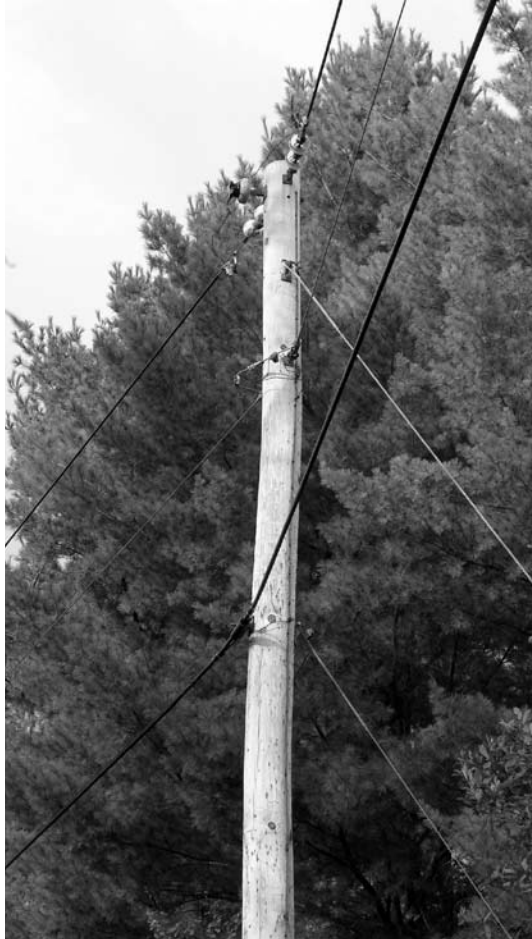
Reasons being

The three main sources of system downtime for the last several years have been fallen trees, problems on the GMP transmission lines that provide power to most of our eight substations, and poorly

made "cutouts" (a fuse mechanism) that unfortunately were installed by the thousands on the Co-op's electric system a decade ago.

Trees are the main culprit, which is to be expected in a rural, wooded service territory – especially where, historically, much of the system was built "crosslots" rather than along the roads. WEC patrols its transmission lines and major (three-phase) feeders to scout out and remove "danger trees" from the right-of-way before they have a chance to fall and damage the lines. Therefore, tree-related outages are generally creatures of bad weather. In 2006, trees were responsible for 38 percent of all WEC outages, and 56 percent of consumer-hours out.

The second-leading cause for total hours out was faults on the Green Mountain Power transmission lines, responsible for nearly 19 percent of WEC's consumer-hours out in 2006 (15,085 of 80,860). That was worse than



the five-year average of 10.6 percent.

This is a frustrating problem. Our substations can't operate without electricity, so when the transmission lines go dead every member connected to the substation – hundreds or thousands – loses power.

However, the 2006 report describes a notable success on this front, which benefits our members served by the South Walden substation. Washington Electric, GMP,

and the municipal utilities in Morrisville and Hardwick (which are also affected by the transmission problem) worked together to install remote-controlled switches at targeted points on GMP's system. The switches enable GMP to isolate outages so power can be restored to WEC members from an alternative direction and reduce outage times from (potentially) hours to minutes. GMP and WEC have made similar improvements to transmission lines that supply our Moretown substation, and the

companies also plan to address the lines serving WEC's Mt. Knox substation.

"My sense is that GMP is making a sincere effort to improve the reliability of the lines that feed our substations," says Weston.

A significant contributor to outage numbers that WEC is responsible for was intentional outages, scheduled to enable Co-op linemen to replace those A.B. Chance (the company name) "cutouts." We have reported before on this problem. Like other utilities around the country, WEC installed them in the 1980s and '90s, only to find that their porcelain construction eventually tends to crack due to moisture and extreme temperatures.

Company-initiated outages, usually to replace cutouts, accounted for 20 percent of WEC's non-storm-related outages last year. Dan Weston puts it this way: "We take a short, planned outage in order to prevent a long, unplanned outage."

However, there is progress to report regarding this longstanding problem. Cutout failures declined by 26 percent in 2006 from the previous year, as the remaining number of A.B. Chance devices dwindled. And Operations Director Weston sees light at the end of the tunnel.

"We have included cutout replacement as a major part of our work plans for several years, and I think we're now ahead of the curve," he says. "Hopefully within five years it won't be the norm to experience more than a handful of outages due to them."

'Musical substations'

Just as the System Reliability Report identifies problems, it also tracks progress. Recent reports revealed that members served by WEC's Jackson Corner substation in Williamstown experienced the most consumer-hours out of anyone on the Co-op's system. Circuits from that substation traverse 200 miles of some of the Co-op's most remote and difficult terrain. In response, WEC targeted those circuits for increased right-of-way (ROW) trimming and line maintenance, and reliability has improved.

"The Board of Directors approved a Vegetation Management Plan that increases the resources we can put into right-of-way management and targets those efforts to the worst-performing areas," explains Weston. WEC will spend \$508,000 on ROW management in 2007. It is also investing in additional fault indicators, which minimize patrolling to find the source of outages and thereby cuts down on outage duration.

Jackson Corner's place on the list as the most problematic part of the territory was taken in 2006 by the Mt. Knox substation (near the intersection of Routes 302 and 25 in Topsham) – and particularly Circuit 2, which carries power toward Corinth. It has many of the same characteristics as the rural Williamstown lines – hard-to-reach, high-altitude power

continued on page 6

Outage Analysis, 2004-2006

