

# WEC CO-OP CURRENTS

## 2010 Community Fund Report No Shortage of Great Ideas

Washington Electric Cooperative's Community Fund is capitalized by members and former members voluntarily donating their annual capital credit refunds, rather than taking those amounts as deductions from their November electric bills – or, in the case of former members, waiving the checks that would come to them as refunds. It's a way we can all make small contributions that add up to support worthy causes in central Vermont. You can make the choice on an annual basis or sign up to have your capital credit refunds diverted automatically to the Community Fund. Contact the Co-op to learn how.

Maybe central Vermont isn't really such a special place. Maybe communities everywhere have generous, resourceful people who find interesting and innovative ways to help each other. If so, there's hope for the world after all.

A way to get clued into the inspiring things that people in our area are doing is to consider the roster of programs and organizations each year that apply for and receive donations from Washington Electric Cooperative's Community Fund. The fund is financed by current and former WEC members voluntarily contributing their annual capital credit refunds (more on WEC's Community Fund below).

The list of Community Fund recipients in 2010 appears on page 5, but consider just two of those organizations. The Hardwick Area Food Pantry Inc. – a volunteer agency with one employed staff member – helps individuals and families who do not have enough to eat obtain at least three days worth of healthy, nutritious food

each month, a mission it has pursued since 1987. And while that's laudable by itself, a deeper look at the way the Hardwick Area Food Pantry is interwoven with the region's burgeoning local-food and –agriculture movement, and with the network of food-security programs provided by the Vermont Food Bank, reveals not only kindness but quick minds at work. These are people determined that no good food resource should fall through the cracks, and they can spot resources most of us wouldn't notice.

Then there's Vermont Horse-Assisted Therapy in Middlesex. VWHAT doesn't take credit for inventing the kind of therapy it has offered now for three years, which helps improve the lives of Vermonters who are dealing with a range of physical, developmental, or emotional challenges. According to Executive Director Sarah Seidman, several European countries instituted horse-assisted therapy programs in the 1950s, years before they caught

*continued on page 5*



Jean-Francois Millet's classic 1857 painting, *Les Glaneuses*, depicts peasant women "gleaning" useful scraps after the wheat harvest in 19th-century France. Innovative Vermonters have revived gleaning in fields and supermarkets to provide our needy neighbors with nutritious supplements to packaged food at places like the Hardwick Food Pantry.

### President's Message

## The Realities of WEC's Rate Increase *A Bullet We Couldn't Dodge*

By Barry Bernstein

On March 15, the Vermont Public Service Board's hearing officers, Ed McNamara and Andrea McHugh, conducted a public hearing at the Old Brick Church next to the WEC office in East Montpelier. The hearing was to allow members of our Co-op an opportunity to testify and express their concerns in regard to our 23.81-percent rate increase that went into effect provisionally in January. We appreciated members – around

20 of them – taking the time to come out on a Tuesday night to speak. The meeting was also attended by our Manager, Avram Patt, myself, Vice President Roger Fox, and Director Roy Folsom. Geoff Commons, attorney for the Vermont Department of Public Service, was also present.

One of the major concerns expressed was that the Co-op should have been better prepared to anticipate the increase and to phase it in over a number of years. The

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### Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

### Inside

**A vote on Hydro Quebec.** Your Co-op has been involved with negotiations for a new long-term contract between Vermont's major utilities and Hydro Quebec. Because of certain provisions, WEC's participation must be approved by a membership vote if the PSB okays the contract – and this might be combined with our Annual Meeting vote. Please read the Manager's Report on page 3.

**Three candidates for your Board of Directors.** We've been having widely contested elections with lots of candidates in recent years. In 2011 only the board members whose seats are expiring are running. Bless 'em. Page 4.

**Attention Landlords and Tenants:** The Co-op recently enacted a new practice you will want to be aware of if someone is moving. See page 6.



Volunteers hang out the "Open" banner at the Hardwick Area Food Pantry three mornings a week – a good cause aided by WEC's Community Fund. Page 1 story continues on page 5.

## President's Message

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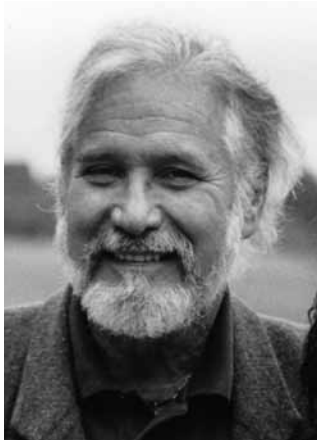
members present also expressed their concern about the increase coming in the middle of the winter when usage is highest and our members are in the middle of such tough economic times.

Your Board of Directors and management did not relish asking for an increase of this magnitude. However, as difficult as the decision was, we are elected by our Co-op membership to address the realities we face and make sure that we are in a condition to provide reliable electric service for some 10,000 WEC members.

Yes – We were, like everyone else, totally caught off guard by the “Great Recession,” and under those circumstances our forecasting that had indicated we would need a smaller rate increase sometime in 2012/2013 did not hold up. We started alerting the Co-op membership to the upcoming need for a rate increase and the potential magnitude as the economic crisis unfolded. We discussed it at our last two annual meetings, at community meetings, and several times in *Co-op Currents* as the situation became more dire.

We realize that does not lessen

the impact or the pain felt by almost everyone with a rate increase of this size. I want our membership to know that your Board of Directors and management have not sat idly by while events unfolded. We cut expenses where we could without jeopardizing service. We offered early-retirement packages to our employees on two separate occasions, and as a result had two senior staff members retire in 2010. We will continue to explore cost-saving options and take advantage where we can.



Barry Bernstein

Members attending the meeting raised the question of why the Board of Directors did not spread this large increase over a period of years. The basis of the Board's decision was, in part, that the PSB does not allow us to project anticipated future costs and ask for a rate increase before the money is needed. Any rate filing must be based on “known and measureable changes,” and calculated from a full test year of actual revenue and expenses, which for this rate increase request was the 2009 calendar year.


In addition, mortgage requirements from our lenders impose an obligation to meet certain financial benchmarks

each year, and if we're not going to be able to meet them, ask for a rate increase. The Board also considered the significant cost of filing, and the costs of short-term borrowing, which would have forced us to ask for an even higher increase.

The rapid drop in revenue derived from our selling of Renewable Energy Certificates (known as “RECs”) accounted for fully half of the rate increase we have requested. Their value declined steeply and suddenly, resulting largely from the economic crash that caught everyone by surprise, including your Board of Directors. The impact was a 50-percent loss in the certificates' value in 2010 (we had been earning \$2 million a year from the REC sales) and a drop of almost another 50 percent in 2011. While we knew that at some point REC sales would decline, the extremely rapid drop in revenues for us was not something we could have projected; nor was it something that

your Co-op had control over.

We have been able to keep our rates stable at WEC for the past decade. In the last five years that has been primarily because of REC sales and a stable supply of low-cost power from the electric-generating plant we constructed at the landfill in Coventry, Vermont. Our power output from Coventry will increase, but our REC sales will continue at a depressed price.

We hope to be able to avoid rate increases of this magnitude in the future. We heard our members' concerns, expressed at the PSB public hearing, and as WEC members ourselves we share those concerns. Our filing for a rate increase and the basis for our request will be thoroughly investigated by the Vermont Department of Public Service, and a final decision on the actual increase granted will be made by the Vermont Public Service Board by October. 



Approximately 22 Washington Electric Co-op members attended a public meeting hosted by the Vermont Public Service Board on Tuesday, March 15, to provide comments to the PSB regarding WEC's rate increase. WEC's management and Board were also represented, but the PSB's purpose was to hear from Co-op members. At the table in front are PSB hearing officers Ed McNamara and Andrea McHugh.

## 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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### Editorial Committee

Avram Patt Donald Douglas David Magida Will Lindner

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.**

## Mathematical Boo-Boo

Editor, *Co-op Currents*:

I imagine I'm not the first to point out a mathematical error in your latest *Co-op Currents* (January 2011). On page 5, you quote Wikipedia as saying “The average American home uses 11,040 kWh of electricity per year. Unplugging a modern TV when not in use could save as much as 9kWh per year . . . a savings of only 0.08 percent.”

Aside from taking any data from Wikipedia with a grain of salt, I agree with the mathematical computation: 9 is indeed .08 percent of 11,040. The error, however, is in the next sentence: “Your reaction might be, ‘Eight percent works for me!’ Eight percent and .08 percent are not the same thing; eight percent is equivalent to the number .08, whereas .08 percent is equivalent to the number .0008 – quite a difference.

Can you tell? I'm a math teacher! And I do agree that all of that phantom power can add up!

— Chris Ditmeyer, Plainfield

The editor responds: Actually, Mr. Ditmeyer was the first and only person to point out our mathematical error. We thank him for doing so.

## Manager's Report

# Annual Meeting Voting Could Include A Vote On New Hydro Quebec Contract

*Also: Updates on Smart Metering and Net Metering*

By Avram Patt

There are a few issues coming up of significant long-term importance to Washington Electric Co-op. We will provide much more information on these through *Co-op Currents* and other communications means in coming months, but I'd like to begin making our members more aware of these matters now – especially as one issue in particular may require a member vote perhaps as soon as at our Annual Meeting on May 25.



### WEC's participation in a new Hydro Quebec contract

Hydro Quebec presently supplies around 20 percent of our energy needs, and the current HQ contract ends in 2015. Early last year, it was prominently announced that Vermont utilities had reached an agreement with Hydro Quebec for a new long-term power supply contract. The agreement was initially negotiated by Central Vermont Public Service and Green Mountain Power. However, WEC and other Vermont utilities, early on, had reserved the option of participating in such a contract once an agreement was reached.

As we reported last July, WEC's board and management, assisted by our power supply consultants at La Capra Associates, reviewed the terms in detail in the context of our own future power supply needs (which are quite different from other Vermont utilities'). The WEC board approved going forward with it, and we have been participating with all of Vermont's utilities in obtaining Public Service Board approval for the proposed contract.

The PSB must review major long-term out-of-state power supply contracts under the same provision of Vermont statute that also covers electric-generation projects (like our Coventry plant, or a wind farm), as well as transmission line and substation projects. The statute requires that after the PSB gives its approval, an electric co-op's membership must also vote, as WEC's members did for our Coventry project and for our present Hydro Quebec contract.

The proposed new contract would begin in 2016 and end in 2038, and that very long-term commitment to a reliable power source is one of its main attractions. It will be competitively priced, as well.

There are also some provisions that are specific to Washington Electric Co-op that the PSB is reviewing separately from most of the other utilities. Because of our Coventry landfill gas plant, as well as the power we will get from First Wind's project in Sheffield, WEC does not actually need more power right away in 2016.

But we will need it a bit further down the road. We have also been looking for a way to lessen the Co-op's risk in the event there is a temporary shutdown at Coventry (such as the fire that occurred a year after the plant started). Through an arrangement with Vermont Electric Co-op, we will pass our small share of this large contract to VEC in the earlier years, and will be able to take all or part of our share back when we start to need it. VEC will also be paying for the cost of the power during the time we are not taking it. However, we are reserving our share to meet our future needs at terms that all of Vermont's utilities have found to be favorable. It's a "win-win" for both co-ops.

If the Public Service Board approves WEC's participation in the new Hydro Quebec contract, we will then ask our members to vote to approve it as well. If the PSB approval is issued according to schedule, we will include information and mail-in ballots in the voting materials mailed to all members for our May 25 Annual Meeting. (If the PSB's decision is delayed, we would need to have a special vote.)

We wanted to call our members' attention to this matter because a member vote may be coming up soon.

### Smart Grid and Smart Meters

If you follow the news, you may have noticed reports about the "smart grid" and "smart meters." Although there is a lot more to the concept of a smart power transmission and distribution grid than just having smarter meters at your home, this is the change that will have the most immediate and noticeable effect on our Co-op and on member households and businesses. We will provide much more information starting later this year.

"Smart meters" are automated digital devices that – rather than being read

once a month at your location by our contracted meter readers for billing purposes – are capable of constant two-way communication directly with the Co-op. They can also provide you with far more information about your own usage throughout the month. WEC is participating in a statewide American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, or "stimulus") project to convert most of Vermont to Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) in the next few years. While we have been looking at AMI technology for more than 10 years and would have likely made the move at some point, the ARRA funding did in fact "stimulate" us to accelerate our planning for this.

Smart meters will save the Co-op money and provide some real improvements in service at the same time. Most immediately, smart meters will reduce our cost of billing. Because there is a two-way communication channel connecting every meter with the Co-op office, electric usage can

be monitored on an almost constant basis, and you will be able to see not just how much electricity you used over a month but also when you used it. For some members (perhaps of most interest to business or other high-use accounts) smart

meters may also provide you the option of managing the time of your usage in order to make use of lower-cost off-peak power. By being linked to every meter, WEC will also be able to make significant further improvements in outage response and other electric service quality and reliability areas.

There are different types of communication technologies being used by different utilities for communicating with the new smart meters. Some utilities are employing a wireless technology. WEC has chosen a "wired" technology, which means that the communication with the meter will occur over our own power lines.

The WEC board has given its preliminary approval to going forward with the conversion to AMI, and after finalizing our plans we will provide you with much more information about what this major technology improvement will mean for you. In the meantime, if you do have questions, please contact me or Bill Powell at the Co-op.

### News from Montpelier and Washington


As members know, WEC has a

longstanding commitment to a cleaner and more sustainable energy future. We participate in the legislative process at the Vermont Statehouse as energy-related bills are debated and acted upon. We stay abreast of national developments through a range of industry information sources and through national electric co-op networks.

This session, the Vermont Legislature is working on a bill (H.56) that takes further steps to promote renewable energy sources, particularly small-scale ones. As I write this, the bill has been voted out by the House Natural Resources & Energy Committee but has not yet passed the House. It will still need to be acted upon by the Senate. The bill makes a number of changes to the law regarding net metering, to encourage individuals, businesses, and groups to generate some of their own power at their locations, with particular emphasis on solar generation. The bill would also add a monthly "Clean Energy Support Charge" of 55 cents to each Vermont ratepayer's bill to support the statewide Clean Energy Development Fund.

Also of interest to many WEC members are the efforts to expand access to broadband internet service to all Vermonters, which includes legislation being considered this year that we are monitoring as well.

At the national level, efforts to move toward renewable energy have slowed down, and I do not expect that there will be any meaningful positive action to address climate change in the near future. I recently attended the annual meeting of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. I represent a region of 10 states on NRECA's Resolutions Committee. On most issues, we find a lot of common ground with co-ops across the country, but when it comes to environmental and climate change issues and renewable energy, I am often in the minority. There are more than 800 rural electric co-ops in the country, and unlike Vermont and the rest of New England, many of them are very dependent on coal for electric generation.

While I believe WEC's positions on these matters, as developed by your Board of Directors, reflect the opinions of the majority of WEC's members and Vermonters generally, when I leave Vermont to meet with others in the same business I am reminded that there is still a great deal of resistance to tackling these critical issues. 

## 2011 Annual Meeting Set for May 25 at Montpelier 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 2011. If elected, each will serve for three years, their terms ending in 2014.

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 consumer-owned electric utility, 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 **Donald Douglas of East Orange**, **David Magida of Middlesex**, and **Marion Milne of Washington**. 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 Montpelier Elks Club. Reservations are required for dinner, but not for the meeting itself. A dinner-registration coupon can be found on page 8 of this issue of *Co-op Currents*, and will be included in the next (April) edition as well. The date of the 72nd Annual Washington Electric Cooperative Membership Meeting is Wednesday evening, May 25. A schedule of events will appear on page one of the next issue, which is the official Annual Meeting issue, of *Co-op Currents*.

Voters who choose to do so can write in the names of other Co-op members who are not official candidates on their ballot. Board candidates run at-large because Washington Electric Cooperative is not divided into districts.

Printed below are brief biographical sketches submitted by the candidates, in which they introduce themselves and provide information on their background and involvement with the Cooperative and other avenues of community service. The April "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 candidates. 

## Donald Douglas

**Residence:** I live in East Orange at 21 Douglas Road. We have been here since 1981 when we bought our house. I have been a



Co-op member since 1978. I can be reached at home at 439-5364, or by e-mail at dondougl@gmail.com (please note that my e-mail address is missing the s from my last name).

**Education/Profession:** I graduated from high school in Kokomo, Indiana, and went to college in St. Louis, Missouri, and then graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin. I traveled extensively in South America before moving to Vermont from Cochabamba, Bolivia. I have been delivering the mail as a rural carrier since 1979. My 90-mile route serves mostly Co-op members, which gives me many opportunities to speak with members and answer questions.

**Community Service/WEC:** I have been an active member of my community since moving here in 1981. I was a volunteer fireman for 14 years. I was the vice-president of the Orange County Court Diversion Board. I have been a high school soccer referee, and I worked with Central Vermont Refugee Assistance to provide transportation and temporary housing. I have been a member of Washington Electric Cooperative's

Board of Directors since 1999 and have served as the Treasurer of the Board since 2000. I am seeking another term because I enjoy the challenge of helping to chart our best course of action through the difficult energy future that I see ahead. I have the time, interest, and the energy to devote to serving on the Board.

## David Magida

**Residence:** I have lived on the Center Road in Middlesex, and been an owner-member of WEC, since July 1986.



Members are welcomed to contact me by phone at 223-8672 or by email at vtmagida@aol.com.

**Education/Profession:** I graduated from Middlebury College in 1979 with a degree in Environmental Economics. Since that time, my professional life has focused on the management of large operations in higher education. I have been the Chief Administrative Officer at Norwich University for the last 18 years. My responsibilities include the management of most support services and all construction/renovation projects. Among my duties at Norwich is a focus on energy management, conservation, transmission, and procurement. The Norwich team has helped to make

the Norwich campus one of the more energy-efficient campuses in the country. Our efforts include the installation of two electricity co-generation units. Our construction projects have been recognized for their environmentally sensitive and energy efficient designs.

**Community Service/WEC:** I am completing my first term as a member of the WEC Board of Directors. My involvement in the community also includes having served as a trustee for the Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, serving as an elected auditor for U-32 for three terms, chairing the Building Committee for the Rumney School expansion/renovation project, and coaching more than three dozen youth sports teams.

## Marion Milne

**Residence:** I am proud to be a resident of the Town of Washington, Vermont, where I have lived with my husband, Donald, for almost 50 years.




I have been a member of the Co-op all of that time. We raised our four children here and have eight wonderful grandchildren.

**Education/Profession:** I earned a B.A. from Goddard College as an adult. I started Milne Travel in Barre in 1975, where I am still involved.

**Community Service/WEC:** I have held various offices in the Town of Washington, including Justice of the Peace, and have been a library trustee for the last 30 years. I served in the Vermont House of Representatives from 1994 to 2000, was a ranking member of the Ways & Means Committee, and in 2000 I was named Woman Legislator of the Year. I also served for six years on the Judicial Nominating Board, and was chair during my last four years.

I was an outreach worker and manager of the Barre office for Central Vermont Community Action. I have served in many other organizations throughout the years, including as chair of the Green Mountain United Way campaign twice and president of its board of directors. I was the first woman president of the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce and was named Businesswoman of the Year by the BPW (Business & Professional Women's Foundation). I am past president of the Community of Vermont Elders, serve on the Commission of Women and the Governor's Commission on Healthy Aging, and have been a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Board for the last two years. In 2010 I was honored by being named Citizen of the Year in the Town of Washington, together with my husband.

I was first elected to the Co-op Board in 2003 and have tried to serve the members' interests to the best of my ability. 

Installing low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators can save from 25 percent to 60 percent in water use.

## Community Fund

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on in the U.S. But Seidman and her part-time staff are devotees of these programs that combine treatment and sport. Their clients include children with autism, children and adults with conditions such as cerebral palsy and Parkinson's disease, survivors of sexual abuse, and many others.

VHAT has special plans for the money it received in 2010 from the WEC Community Fund, and Seidman, a Washington Electric Co-op member herself, is grateful to her fellow WEC members for contributing to the fund and thereby to the wellbeing of the people she works with.

## Hardwick Area Food Pantry

A going concern now for 24 years, the Hardwick Area Food Pantry, Inc. serves residents of Hardwick, Walden, Craftsbury, Stannard, Greensboro, and Wolcott. The pantry is open three days a week at a small building constructed for it by St. John's Episcopal Church. (The Food Pantry is not church-affiliated, although its origins were there. Community Fund policy prohibits donations to religious or political groups.)

The Food Pantry's hours are noon to 2 p.m. on Mondays, and 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Thursdays and Saturdays. The building, attached to the Episcopal Church, is located at 39 West Church



Staffing the Hardwick Area Food Pantry on a recent Saturday morning are (from left) volunteers Chris Aubuchon and Artemis Vasiliadis, joined by a member of the Food Pantry's Board of Directors, Jeannette Brochu.

facility as well, where they are frozen and made safely available to organizations like the Hardwick Area Food Pantry.

"We pick out what we want, and pay by the pound," says Ruth Gaillard. "That gives us higher-quality food, like fruits, vegetables, meats, and eggs, and gives our clients healthier options."

In other ways, too, the Hardwick Food Pantry is tapped into the local-foods movement – a movement that is too often priced outside the capabilities of low-income Vermonters. It's a good fit for Washington Electric Co-op's Community Fund, which seeks to help people in and around our service territory improve their quality of life.

## Vermont Horse-Assisted Therapy

"There's nothing like establishing a relationship with a 1,000-pound animal where you can feel empowered and learn to be assertive without being aggressive," says VHAT Executive Director Sarah Seidman. "In our work with people, we're hoping that some of these non-verbal skills can translate into their relationships with their peers and teachers."

Seidman is describing the value of horse-assisted therapy for people with autism and those who have experienced sexual abuse. Horses – commanding presences because of their sheer size, yet at the same time, gentle creatures – offer safe opportunities for autistic or traumatized riders to come ever so slightly out of their shells.

The therapy offered at Pease Farm Stable is also valuable for people dealing with other kinds of challenges.

"We've worked with people from age four to age 80," says Seidman. "We've worked with a woman whose leg was amputated at the knee, and a wonderful guy with cerebral palsy who was our first fully wheelchair-dependent client, so we now have a wheelchair ramp that goes directly to a horse."

"The horses," she adds, "are such amazing partners."

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Street.

Ruth Gaillard, president of the 12-member board of directors, says that the board, volunteers, donors, and the Pantry's sole employee – coordinator Angela Grace – share a common goal: "to provide food, that most basic of essentials, to our neighbors in times of distress."

Unfortunately, "times of distress" seem to be lingering in this difficult economy. In January 2011 the Pantry served 103 households, totaling 328 people, including 127 under age 18 and 25 people aged 65 or older.

"We think [the need] has grown over the last couple of years," says Gaillard. "We have more people coming in who are working people but who can't quite make it, especially toward the end of the month when their funds are running low. We're also seeing more seniors and people on fixed incomes."

The need is such that the Pantry must adhere to policies regarding its usage.

"We try to be generous, but also fair," Gaillard explains. "We need to use our resources wisely, to make sure we always have food on the shelves when people come."

People are welcome once a month, and can take away enough food for their families for three days. ("That's hard to gauge," Gaillard admits, and there is no intrusive level of scrutiny.) People must fill out a form – a requirement because the Food Pantry receives and dispenses federal U.S. Department of Agriculture

commodities – regarding the size of their families, the ages of their children, and their estimated income. "We don't investigate people's responses, and we preserve confidentiality," Gaillard says. These measures are necessary to ensure that the Pantry can fulfill its mission.

The food comes from the Vermont Food Bank in Barre, the USDA, and donations from individuals, for example from boxes located in grocery stores.

"Other things, we have to purchase," says Gaillard, "and that's where donations like the generous contribution we received from Washington Electric Co-op come in."

The story might end there, in some other place or at some other time. But central Vermont is home to a vigorous

"localvore" movement and the Hardwick Food Pantry's hometown might be considered its epicenter. The Vermont Food Bank is also strongly involved – and these efforts have made fresh, local, nutritious foods an important part of the Pantry's offerings. Canned goods are the staple of most community food shelves, but there's more on the menu at Hardwick thanks to organizations like the Center for an Agricultural Economy and its Food Access Fund, and involved businesses like High Mowing Seeds.

The Food Access Fund raises money through donations and grants; it assists the Hardwick Area Food Pantry to purchase local vegetables, meats, and bread. The Pantry's clients benefit, and so do the local growers and bakers whose products are purchased.

Another inspiring tale is of "the gleaners" – volunteers who revive a centuries-old rural custom of going into the fields after the harvest and finding perfectly good fruits and vegetables that are not considered "marketable" and would otherwise go to waste. "Gleaning" was begun in 2004 by volunteers in Lamoille County; the following year they created Salvation Farms to sponsor the effort. Their work has been embraced by the Vermont Food Bank, which built a facility in Wolcott equipped to clean, process, and store the gathered produce. Volunteers have now brought the gleaning tradition into the 21st century; with the cooperation of groceries and supermarkets, they

are finding meat products nearing their "sell-by" dates and securing those for the Wolcott



Student Joel Marshall of East Montpelier demonstrates his balance at the trot with the help of leader Samantha Scribner of Middlesex and Gretchen, a patient and gentle Belgian-Morgan cross owned by Sarah Slatter of Moretown.

## 2010 WEC Community Fund Contributions

### Contribution Recipients

Chelsea Public Library  
Community Capital of Vermont  
Farm First Program  
Newspapers in Education  
Groton Community Club  
The Governor's Institute of Vermont  
Friends of the Winooski River  
Washington County 4-H  
Blake Memorial Library  
Montpelier Alive (First Night)  
Calef Memorial Library  
Lotus Lake Discovery Center  
Earthwalk Vermont  
Barre Heritage Festival  
Upper Valley Services  
Home Share of Central Vermont  
Mad River Valley Rotary fundraiser for community groups  
While Rock Productions (video)  
Peacham Historical Association  
Plainfield Historical Society  
VT Horse-Assisted Therapy  
Kellogg Hubbard Library  
Jaquith Public Library  
CV Adult Basic Education  
CV Council on Aging  
Statewide Environmental Education Programs  
VT River Conservancy  
Plainfield Co-op capital campaign  
VT Center for Independent Living  
Growing Local Festival  
Cabot Coalition  
BYSA Hockey Program  
Family Center of Washington County  
People's Health & Wellness Clinic  
Chelsea Public Library  
Green Mountain Film Festival  
Central VT Community Land Trust  
Hardwick Area Food Pantry  
North Branch Nature Center  
WEC Sponsor of National Guard Families - XMAS  
Stuff-A-Truck  
CV Community Action Council  
Washington County Court Diversion  
Bradford Public Library  
CV Council on Aging

# Comings And Goings, And Your Co-op Meter

## What Landlords, Tenants, and Homeowners Should Know About Disconnections

Thinking of moving? Winter is on its last legs, and Shawna Foran, a Washington Electric Co-op member services representative, says this is the time of year she begins hearing from people who have made plans to move out of their house or apartment.

Are you a landlord with a rental property in WEC's service territory? Have you heard from tenants who are planning to move? Or – of more immediate concern – have people already left your rental unit?

In either situation – landlords or tenants – it's important to know how the Co-op deals with transferring accounts and/or disconnecting the electricity. Because that practice has changed. It used to be that the Co-op would allow the power to remain on, at least for a while, if a property became vacant. The idea was to make things convenient for a landlord who might want to use

the power during an intermittent period between tenants, perhaps to clean or renovate, or even just to show, the rental house or apartment.

That can still happen, but only if the power is in the landlord's name.

However, landlords frequently prefer to have their tenants take responsibility for their electric bills, which means having the power in the tenant's name. Under the Co-op's new procedure, in place now for about a year, WEC will shut the power off three business days after the tenant has called to discontinue service. The Co-op's member services representatives often encourage tenants to contact their landlord about the power (that is, if the member services rep is aware that it's a rental unit when the tenant calls to terminate service), but it's a communication that must take place between the tenant and the property owner.

WEC's change in practice came at the suggestion of the Vermont Public Service Board (PSB), which felt that without the firm three-day rule the Co-op was putting itself at risk of extended periods of energy usage when there was no one paying for it (a cost that would be absorbed by the membership).

The thrust of this practice and others regarding electric accounts is that it must be clear to Washington Electric Co-op who is taking responsibility for the account at any residence or business. If no one is taking clear responsibility WEC will disconnect the power within three business days.


### Everyone's got a stake

Tenants who have the electric account in their name have a stake in communicating their plans with the member services department. When they call to tell the Co-op they are leaving, they are asked to read the meter on the last day of their occupancy and report the reading to the Co-op. When a technician goes to the home or apartment to disconnect the power he will also read the meter, and if the tenants' reading was apparently accurate they will be charged in their final bill only for the power they used up to the time they left (and not for the extra three days). If they don't report their last meter reading WEC will bill them for all the power the meter registers up to the time the Co-op discovers their absence (perhaps from an unpaid electric bill) and disconnects the meter.

It's equally important for landlords to understand the policy. For example, if a tenant leaves during winter and WEC shuts off the power after three days, the landlord may be taking the risk of pipes freezing and bursting in an unheated unit. And in all times of the year the landlord might want to take security concerns into consideration, even if it's just having lights on in the empty house or apartment.

That's why everyone has not only an obligation, but also a self-interest, in keeping WEC informed about the status of an electric account. Mostly, everyone does, says Foran. WEC will not get into the business of tracking down landlords when a property is vacated; in fact, if the electric account for a rental unit has been in the tenant's name, the Co-op might not even know who the landlord is.

Finally, for homeowners who live in their own homes but are planning to move, the same is true for you. Moving is a busy time, but please remember to call the Co-op and report your last meter reading. If you've sold your house and the buyer wants the electricity to stay on, that's perfectly acceptable to Washington Electric as long as it's clear who is taking responsibility for the electricity account and exactly when.

For those of you staying put? The weather is breaking, the robins are returning, and your Washington Electric Annual Membership Meeting is coming up in May! Life is good. 

## Right of Way Reclearing Projects

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

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 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.

### Reclearing Projects scheduled for Summer 2011:

**Barre** . . . . . 3 phase Mitchell Road and Route 14  
**Brookfield** . . . . . Bakers Pond vicinity, Route 12 & Northfield Road  
**Cabot** . . . . . West Hill and Jug Brook Road  
**Calais** . . . . . Nelson Pond and the east end of Bayne Comolli Road  
**Calais** . . . . . 3 phase line near Maple Corner  
**Chelsea** . . . . . Corinth Road  
**Corinth** . . . . . Chelsea Road  
**Corinth** . . . . . Hayward and White Road areas  
**Duxbury** . . . . . Route 100, Turner Hill, Ward Hill  
**Greensboro** . . . . . Route 16, Salls and Taylor Road  
**Groton** . . . . . cross lots line to Seyon Pond  
**Middlesex** . . . . . East Hill and Molly Supple Hill  
**Moretown** . . . . . Route 100B and Stevens Brook Road  
**Newbury** . . . . . Topsham, Swamp and Corey Hill roads  
**Plainfield** . . . . . 3 phase Lower Road  
**Stannard** . . . . . Stannard Mountain, Lazy Hill, Silver and Gonyaw roads  
**Topsham** . . . . . Emerson Road  
**Vershire** . . . . . Goose Green Road  
**Vershire** . . . . . McIver Road  
**Walden** . . . . . Bailey Hazen, Noyestar and Richards Crossing  
**Williamstown** . . . . . 3 phase Boyce Road  
**Woodbury** . . . . . Keene Farm, East Hill and Bliss Road  
**Worcester** . . . . . Minister Brook Road above West Hill

## Community Fund

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There's another quality that horses and riding uniquely bring to therapy, of benefit to people with spinal chord injuries, paralysis, or other physical conditions that limit movement.

"The horse moves your body much as if you were walking," Seidman explains. "That re-establishes neural connections and reminds your body what it feels like to walk. We're not saying that it will help people walk again, but it strengthens your core muscles, stabilizes and improves balance, and improves flexibility and breathing. It allows people with these conditions to maintain their physical abilities longer than they would otherwise.

"And besides, it's fun!" she says; "more fun than many kinds of therapy. It is a sport, after all."

Vermont Horse-Assisted Therapy was founded in 2008, but Seidman has run a stable at Pease Farm for 16 years. "I was coming across more and more kids who wanted to ride but had special needs," she says; "physical needs, developmental delays, emotional difficulties, and economic needs, too. I've worked with special-needs students ever since I was in college, so it's been really rewarding for me to be able to offer the farm as a resource in this way."

Seidman and Becca Reggio, a part-time instructor for VHAT, are certified through the North American

Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA). The other staff members, who are all part-time except Seidman, are riding instructor Chrissy Rohan and barn manager Susan Mitchell. Seidman is quick to point out that the therapy VHAT provides is not a medical model, which would require a physical-therapy license; it is an educational model.

"Our certification is for teaching the skills of riding to students with special needs."

VHAT attracts students from schools throughout central Vermont. It has also forged relationships with mental health agencies, public school IEP programs (individualized educational programs for students with specialized learning needs), the New School in Montpelier, and other agencies and institutions.

When VHAT applied for a donation from WEC's Community Fund, it was for a specific project called a "sensory trail."

"The trail will offer various stopping points and features such as long foam tubes that dangle from overhead and brush the student's body as he or she rides past, and objects that provide specific therapeutic activities," Seidman says. "Students with autism resist sensory, tactile sensations, but they want them and need them. These are all ways to give them a greater sensory awareness, as is handling a horse itself – brushing it, touching it, picking up its hoof to clean it."

The trail also will feature a "sound tube board" that students can tap with a

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## Community Fund

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foam paddle to produce musical notes. It's all about sensory and auditory stimulation; it's all about opening them up to the world around them.

## The Community Fund in 2010

General Manager Avram Patt provided his report on 2010's Community Fund activity to Washington Electric's Board of Directors on January 19. Patt administers the fund, receiving applications and passing his recommendations on to a Board committee that makes the final decisions.

At the start of 2010, Patt reported, the fund contained \$24,277.89, and WEC members contributed an additional \$1,115.74 during the year before the November capital credit

distributions were made (contributions from that point on go toward the following year's fund). Therefore, \$25,393.63 was available for donations during 2010. Over the year the fund made 44 donations, totaling \$21,498.52. This created a \$3,895.11 carry-forward for 2011, which was combined with \$19,151 in new voluntary donations by Co-op members from their capital credit refunds in November 2010. The Community Fund entered 2011 with \$23,046.11.


For comparison purposes, consider 2009. That year the Community Fund contributed to 37 organizations. It began the year with \$21,266, and spent just under \$19,690, carrying forward \$1,576 into 2010.

In his January report, Patt divided the fund's 2010 recipients into four general categories: 1) environmental organizations; 2) social services; 3) arts; and 4) community organizations

and "other." As in previous years, the category receiving the largest number of donations (15) and the largest dollar amount (\$9,299.66) was social services organizations (47.2 percent of the funds allocated).

Contributions made by the Community Fund range from \$250 to \$1,000, with a small number of exceptions.

With the national, state, and regional

economies continuing to struggle three years into what many are calling the Great Recession, Washington Electric's Community Fund is needed now more than ever. It reaches organizations that are doing vital work in our communities. If you're not signed up to have your annual capital credit refund diverted to the Community Fund, please consider doing so. You can call the Co-op for assistance. 

## VHAT Program for Children with Autism

There are still openings available for an **after-school** riding and therapeutic program at Vermont Horse Assisted Therapy's stable at the Pease Farm, 307 Culver Hill Road, in Middlesex. **The program will run from April 25 through June 13**, and will accept up to eight students on the autism spectrum. VHAT has received a grant from the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council for the program, in addition to donations from private foundations. These have reduced the cost to \$40 per student.

Interested parties can call VHAT at 802-223-4828, or contact VHAT Executive Director Sarah Seidman at info@VHAT.org.

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Your equipment is exposed to power surges until you connect your equipment to one of the Panamax heavy-duty Max2 family of products. Be safe, not sorry!

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# Changes In WEC's Operations Department

*Doing More With (Slightly) Less*

Washington Electric Co-op's Operations Department has gone through significant reorganization after losing workers in two important positions. The changes are designed to enhance operational efficiency while also allowing the Co-op to reduce its size and payroll by the equivalent of one employee.

"We strive to keep our costs under control as much as we can," said WEC General Manager Avram Patt. "At the same time, it's our duty to our members to provide power people can rely on and maintain our ability to respond quickly to outages, because they are inevitable for all utilities, and especially rural utilities like our Co-op. I believe in this case we've accomplished both these goals. Under the guidance of our operations director, Dan Weston, we have taken advantage of recent personnel changes to become more efficient, while ensuring that work that our linemen, engineers and other staff have on their plate is well taken care of."

In November 2010 two Co-op employees took an early retirement option. These were Administrative Services Director Denise Jacques and Safety & Environmental Coordinator Steve Anderson. Jacques' position was in management, not operations; for the present time her position has not been filled, other employees sharing Denise's former duties while the Board and management evaluate how best to address the situation permanently.

Anderson, however, did hold a post within Operations, with unique responsibilities and a breadth of duties that reveal how much goes on behind the scenes of an electric utility which people, generally, are unaware of. And at nearly the same time Anderson

left, Systems Maintenance Technician George Mears moved to Virginia (where he is now employed by another rural electric co-op).

Anderson was replaced by former Stock Keeper Scott Martino, a WEC employee since 1991. However, the job description was reviewed and changed – as was the job title.

"The new title is Safety & Environmental Compliance Coordinator," said Weston, "which reflects the magnitude of regulations and requirements we have to meet on an ongoing basis. It's a very big job."

And one with many, diverse aspects.

"Any number of things have to be monitored and checked regularly," Weston continued, "because this is a workplace and employees must

practice safety and must be protected.

And because our buildings are open to the public."

Operations workers must wear fire-resistant clothing; all operations personnel must become CPR- and First Aid-qualified;

every fire alarm and fire extinguisher in the office building and warehouse must be inspected frequently and maintained; above- and below-ground fuel tanks must be closely monitored; spill-containment plans and systems must be in place for every Co-op facility, including WEC's eight substations; extensive VOSHA regulations must be followed rigorously at all WEC buildings, including confined-space regulations at the Wrightsville hydroelectric station; linemen-apprentice and -training programs must be monitored and each lineman's progress in those programs must be certified; drivers of the large trucks must be CDL licensed; management personnel must receive controlled-substance abuse training

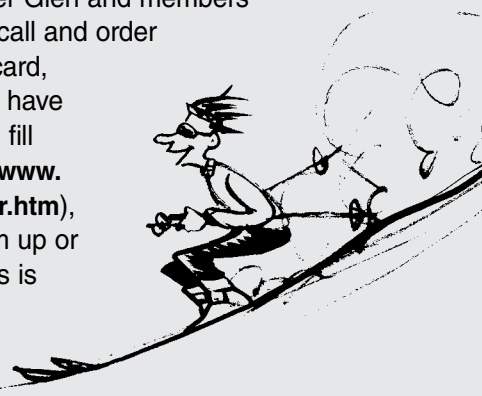
*You can't skimp on operations work; to do so would jeopardize member service and could endanger the employees. You can, however, restructure and reorganize with gains in efficiency.*

## Now, Call WEC for Mad River Glen Tickets

The geese have flown south, the temperatures have plunged, and ski season is here! This year the Co-op has an improved deal for WEC members who ski at Mad River Glen – which is also a cooperative. You can now purchase day passes at the Co-op office. The ticket price varies depending on the day; weekday adult tickets are \$35.

WEC is a ticket retailer for Mad River Glen and members are eligible for special prices. You can call and order tickets by phone, paying with a credit card, then either pick your tickets up here or have us put them in the mail. The Co-op will fill orders placed from the website (<http://www.washingtonco-op.com/pages/madriver.htm>), but members must still either pick them up or have them mailed to your address. This is not an electronic ticket offer.

See you on the mountain!



## WEC'S 72nd Annual Meeting Dinner Reservation

*Deadline for reservations is Friday, May 13.*

**Vegetarian Lasagna or Baked Ham & Roast Turkey**  
**Featuring Vermont Products**

Please list all attendees and each attendee's dinner choice.

Name _____	Child <input type="checkbox"/>	Dinner Choice	
		Ham/Turkey <input type="checkbox"/>	Lasagna <input type="checkbox"/>
Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Child care requested. Age(s) of child(ren) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Account # \_\_\_\_\_ or Map # \_\_\_\_\_

Number of persons attending \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*\$8 per adult/\$4 per child (under 12).*  
*Make checks payable to WEC and return to: PO Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651*

and learn to detect signs of impairment among employees; the safety and environmental aspects and implications of every field assignment must be understood and prepared for; regular trainings must be scheduled for the contracted right-of-way maintenance crews.

And this merely scratches the surface.

"It's a critical position for the Co-op, and no one person can do it all," said Weston. "It's a team effort. But Scott has taken on these responsibilities, and after his long experience at the Co-op he is well-prepared for the job."

Another change has been the creation of the position of Operations & Construction Services Manager, filled by Brent Lilley. Lilley has been with Washington Electric since 1987, and until recently was WEC's Senior Utility Technician in the Engineering Department. The engineering staff plan and design the development and renovations of the Co-op's 1,250 miles of power line, and other technical work (for example, at the substations). Therefore, Lilley comes to his new job with an intimate knowledge of the Co-op's extensive infrastructure.

"It's a planning job, largely," said Weston. "Brent is charged with planning and supervising every construction project from start to finish. That includes cataloguing all of the equipment that will be needed for each job and making sure the line crews will have what they need, and ironing out problems for every job ahead of time, like making sure the phone company has transferred its cable to correspond with our changes. If something goes wrong on a job and the crew has to suspend work, Brent always has another job ready to send them to."

"We're making the construction phase of our work as efficient and economical as possible," Weston reiterated. "But in every case, it's a team effort. Brent works with Scott and me, so we all know what's being done and we can support or substitute for each other."

As part of the Operations changes, the Co-op has hired two new

employees, Dan Couture and Mike Gray. Both are Systems Maintenance Technicians, and will cover many of the duties formerly performed by Scott Martino and George Mears, and there's more than enough work for two. Their primary functions are:

- 1) Overseeing the operation of WEC's 1-MW hydroelectric generating facility in Wrightsville;
- 2) Inventorying, ordering, and managing all the hardware needed by the line crews for construction and repair projects. They assemble the equipment that will be needed by each crew at the start of the day, put remaining hardware and equipment back when the crews return, and make sure the warehouse is fully supplied.
- 3) Performing connections and disconnections on an everyday basis. This function will progress into AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) maintenance as WEC moves toward a "smart metering" system.
- 4) Maintaining WEC's radio system.

"Mike and Dan both come to us with extensive backgrounds and experience," says Weston, pointing out, for example, that Gray previously worked for Bly Communications and brings expertise in the radio systems that keep WEC's personnel in touch, in the field and office. "I'm very happy to have them on board."

This staff reorganization, including the new hires, has been accomplished without adding to the total number of personnel. In fact, Weston notes, "We're one less than we were a year ago."

You can't skimp on operations work at an electric utility. To do so would not only jeopardize member service but could endanger the employees. You can, however, restructure and reorganize, with gains in efficiency – a creative way to respond to staff turnover. That has been Washington Electric's goal with the Operations Department. 