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On the
Cover

A young rider enjoys
a Cosmic Cruisers
Sled Dog Tour.

Photo by Lydia Stern,
Mountain Magic Media.



"Stonewalls at Picketwire" by Liz Baker, a consumer-member of San Isabel Electric Association.

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Monthly Contests



Enter for your chance to win a \$30 digital gift card to Smartwool, a Colorado-based company. Read more about this great brand and their products in Discoveries on page 30. For official rules and how to enter, visit Monthly Contests at coloradocountrylife.coop.



PINTEREST SNEAK PEEK

COCountryLife pinned: Looking for a great soup to enjoy on a cold winter day? Try San Luis Valley REC Board Director Creede Hargraves' *Easy Bison Green Chili*. Get the recipe at coloradocountrylife.coop.



FACEBOOK CHATTER

COCountryLife posted: Brian Getz was inspired reading the Snowman Charcuterie Board recipe in the December issue. "We hosted family at our house for Christmas and I'm proud to say the kids' table finished every last bite of the snowman plate before opening presents. I believe the hat made of Oreos was the first thing to go."

LINEWORKER RECOGNITION

Providing an opportunity to say thanks for keeping the lights on

BY KENT SINGER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



KENT SINGER



As I write this column in early January, the first regular session of the 74th Colorado General Assembly is about to get underway. The speaker of the house, the president of the senate and the governor will all make speeches about their legislative priorities and goals for the session. The CREA government relations team will be there, closely following the activities of the legislature to protect the interests of Colorado's electric co-ops.

One of CREA's legislative priorities this session will be to ask the general assembly to recognize the essential work done by Colorado's electric lineworkers. This is not a request to adopt any new legislative policy or program, but rather a request for an official legislative resolution honoring lineworkers. We will make this request on behalf of lineworkers employed by all utilities as well as contract lineworkers, not just electric co-op employees. We will ask that the recognition be done in conjunction with National Lineworker Day in April.

The hundreds of lineworkers who keep the lights on in Colorado deserve recognition, not only by our legislature and governor, but also by every citizen of the state whose life is made better by access to

electric service. We take for granted that the lights will come on and our computers will hum every hour of every day without giving much thought to how electricity is generated and delivered. The fact is that the delivery of electricity depends on the efforts of lineworkers who work 24/7/365 to build, monitor and repair the poles and wires that bring electricity to our homes and businesses.

Lineworkers do hard, technical, physically demanding and potentially dangerous work. Especially during the winter months, lineworkers in Colorado do this work in the harshest of conditions. This winter, lineworkers in Colorado have faced near-arctic conditions as the temperatures have dropped to record lows in parts of the state. In some cases, lineworkers access facilities in snowmobiles given their remote location in deep snow. Despite these challenges, lineworkers keep the power grid up and running to make sure Colorado residents have all the comforts that electricity provides.

From time to time, we are reminded of the element of danger that is involved in linework by tragic incidents that happen around the country. Just this past December, two days before Christmas, a young co-op apprentice lineman in Ohio lost his life

while working to restore power for the co-op's consumer-members. While these incidents are rare, they are a sober reminder that the men and women working on the lines are exposed to dangers that make their job that much more difficult.

CREA employs a team of safety professionals who work with co-op line crews to supplement the safety programs at each co-op. Our safety team is composed of folks with many years of lineworker experience and our goal is to do everything we can to eliminate incidents and accidents that can occur in this work.

Our electric co-ops take this obligation to their line crews very seriously. Safety is literally job No.1 at every co-op.

By sponsoring a resolution honoring utility and contract lineworkers, CREA hopes to bring attention to the essential work done by these Colorado heroes. We hope that by doing so, our legislature and all Colorado citizens will take a moment or two to appreciate and thank all lineworkers for the critical service they provide to Colorado.

Kent Singer is the executive director of CREA and offers a statewide perspective on issues affecting electric cooperatives. CREA is the trade association for 21 Colorado electric distribution co-ops and one power supply co-op.

FROM THE EDITOR

Open the pages on a new adventure

BY MONA NEELEY EDITOR EMERITUS



MONA NEELEY

This month's Focus On (page 26) featuring Dolly Parton Imagination Library brings me back to my love of books and libraries.

It's been a long love affair. I can remember my mom's look of consternation when, as an elementary school student, I trudged home from the local library with a jumbled stack of checked-out books in a borrowed red wagon. I was ready to read my way through that summer. I knew even then that there's no better way to spend your time than lost in the magical, unexplored, faraway places books can take you.

Books have let me peek into the lives of people different from me; they have allowed me to explore other countries, civilizations and cultures; and they have taught me about things I will never experience firsthand.

Opening the pages of a book is like opening a door to a new adventure and there are so many of these adventures waiting at the library.

I must confess that, even though I love libraries, I probably haven't been in one since I last took my kids so they could fill their arms with books. It think it's time I pick up my granddaughter and get back to the library. I need to show her where to find her own window to adventure.

Editor Emeritus Mona Neeley oversees *Colorado Country Life*, which is published in coordination with your local electric cooperative. Its goal is to provide information from your local electric co-op to you, its consumer-members.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Oil, Gas and Fossil Fuels

I would like to address the term "fossil fuels." Oil and gas do not come from fossils.

A fossil is defined as the hard remains of a plant or an animal. To become fossilized, rapid burial must occur. Over millions of years, with heat and pressure, the remains become mineralized or fossilized.

On the other hand, when there is no rapid burial, the dead organism decays due to exposure. These settle to the bottom of lakes, rivers, lagoons and swamps where they become an organic, muddy, clay-like layer. Eventually, the layer turns into an oily shale. This shale layer is the source for oil and gas.

H.K. Barousse, Westcliffe
SDCEA consumer-member

Art Appreciation

Thank you for the great info in "Small Towns, Big Art." (October '22) We're now planning some short trips to see their art firsthand.

Jean Gabardi
SDCEA consumer-member

Leadership in Electric Vehicles

The most profound problem on our plates is how to deal with climate change. Gas-powered engines/heaters are major culprits. I am grateful for the wisdom shown by our utility providers (Mountain Parks Electric, take a bow) in describing the electric vehicle option.

Carol H. Ehrlich, Grand Lake
Mountain Parks Electric consumer-member

Holiday Wishes Bring Smile

Thanks to Executive Director Kent Singer for his lighthearted and thoroughly enjoyable essay on holiday wishes. Even though I've been known to execute a classic Colorado rolling stop a few times, I applaud his wish list. And I'm happy to learn that he thinks *Die Hard* is a Christmas movie. No argument there.

E. Lewis McCool, Cortez
Empire Electric consumer-member

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Send your letter to the editor to share your thoughts about CCL. To share, visit our Reader Engagement page at coloradocountrylife.coop/reader-engagement. Mail your letter to Editor, 5400 Washington St., Denver, CO 80216 or email editor@coloradocountrylife.org. Include name and address. Letters may be edited for length.

**CONGRATS
JANUARY CONTEST
WINNERS**

Three lucky readers won one of three coffee table books:

SILVER RAILS
Barbara Humbracht, Cortez
Empire Electric Association
consumer-member

**MY HEART BELONGS TO
NATURE**
Linda Ellis, Pueblo
San Isabel Electric Association
consumer-member

THE BOLD GARDEN
Kathleen Benjamin, Oak Creek
Yampa Valley Electric Association
consumer-member

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**COLORADO IN
COLOR**
2023 PHOTO CONTEST

CONTEST UPDATE

**Winners
will be
announced
in the April
2023 issue!**

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Bright Ways to Save

Update recessed lights, improve energy efficiency

BY JAMES DULLEY



Recessed “can” light fixtures play a role in lighting many people’s homes. Often, however, there are inexpensive, simple things that can be done to make those existing recessed light fixtures brighter and more energy efficient.

The first thing to do is replace any incandescent or CFL bulbs with LEDs. CFL bulbs are just slightly less efficient than LEDs, but they do not come to full brightness immediately as LEDs do. This may cause you to quickly switch on more lights than you actually need for the task at hand. They also do not direct as much light downward, which is important with recessed lighting.

Much of the light energy gets lost inside the canister because most lightbulbs, other than PAR and BR types, emit light in all directions. Simply painting the inside of the canister bright white can reflect more of the light into the room where you want it.

If your existing recessed fixtures are old, they probably leak a lot of room air into the

attic. Build a box in the attic with at least 6 inches of clearance around the can. This should reduce air leakage and allow enough surface area for the heat from the LED to dissipate safely.

If you are going with new recessed lighting, an interesting and efficient new design has a 4-inch speaker built into the center of an 8-inch flat LED integral fixture. It is Bluetooth enabled so you can pair it with your cellphone or computer. This light/speaker can link up with others throughout your house. It snaps into a standard 8-inch canister and is held in place with springs.

For new recessed fixtures where indoor air leakage is a possibility, select a newer, airtight design which has a sealed canister. The sealed, airtight recessed fixture canister, when installed properly, also forms a seal between the ceiling and the fixture. These types of recessed fixtures are also effective for ceilings between floors to minimize drafts and noise transmission.

When installing one in a ceiling under an insulated attic floor, chose an IC-rated (insulation contact) canister design. These fixtures are designed to be able to touch the attic insulation for efficiency without the hazard of overheating.

If you are doing the work yourself, start with a light plan. Think about placement in relation to floor joists, what you want to light, whether or not you want dimmable lights and how you will make the canisters airtight against your ceiling.

James Dulley is a mechanical engineer and an avid do-it-yourselfer with a nationally syndicated newspaper column. Send inquiries to James Dulley, *Colorado Country Life*, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit dulley.com.



LEARN MORE ONLINE

For more recessed lighting and efficiency tips, visit coloradocountrylife.coop and click on Energy Efficiency under the Energy tab.

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*The **So Lite™ Scooter** is easy to transport and almost impossible to tip over.*

Like millions of older Americans, I struggle with mobility. For years, I watched my quality of life slip away, as I was forced to stay home while friends and family took part in activities I'd once enjoyed. I thought I'd made some progress when I got a mobility scooter, but then I realized how hard it was to transport. Taking it apart and putting it back together was like doing a jigsaw puzzle. Once I had it disassembled, I had to try to put all of the pieces in the trunk of a car, go to wherever I was going, and repeat the process in reverse. Travel scooters were easier to transport, but they were uncomfortable and scary to drive, I always felt like I was ready to tip over. Then I found the **So Lite™ Scooter**. Now there's nothing that can hold me back.

Years of work by innovative engineers have resulted in a scooter that's designed with seniors in mind. They created Electronic Stability Control (ESC) that makes it virtually impossible to tip over. If you try to turn too quickly, the scooter automatically slows down to prevent it from tipping over. The battery provides powerful energy at a fraction of the weight of most batteries. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the **So Lite™ Scooter** is the most portable scooter ever—but it can hold up to 275 pounds—yet weighs



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only 40.8 pounds without the battery! What's more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat, trunk or even on an airplane. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. Best of all, it's designed with your safety in mind, from the newest technology and superior craftsmanship. Why spend another day letting your lack of mobility ruin your quality of life? Call now and find out how you can get a **So Lite™ Scooter** of your very own.



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Feast Upon a Fan Favorite

Local bison offers big flavor and nourishment

BY AMY HIGGINS

San Luis Valley REC Board Corporate Secretary Stephen Valdez and his family have a long history of farm and ranch life. The family ran a commercial cow-calf operation in La Jara for several years before purchasing their first bison in 2017, putting Big River Bison on the map. Today it is a 1,500-acre hay production and bison operation.

“We take great pride in our practices and love the memories we are creating while doing so,” Valdez says. “It is important to us to ensure customers know exactly where their meat is coming from and how the animals were handled/raised. Our main goal is to keep improving and growing each year so that we will be able to continue this operation for generations to come.”

Bison meat is low in fat, and high in iron, protein, and Omega 3 and 6. In addition, there are no low-level antibiotics, hormones, drug residues or preservatives, Valdez says. This month, he shares bison chili recipes including this one shared with him by fellow San Luis Valley REC board member Creede Hargraves that have been a fan favorite at the local Colorado Farm Brewery. For more information and to purchase, visit bigriverbison.com.



DID YOU KNOW?

Bison meat is low in fat, and high in iron, protein, and Omega 3 and 6.

Smoked Bison Red Chili

Recipe and photo by Creede Hargraves

- 6 dried ancho chilies, stemmed and seeded
- 6 guajillo peppers, stemmed and seeded
- 6 chipotle peppers, stemmed and seeded
- 2 pounds ground bison
- 2 large, sweet onions, diced
- 3 large jalapeños, seeded and diced fine
- 3 roasted poblanos, peeled, seeded and diced
- 3 (4 ounce) cans medium hot, diced green New Mexico chilies
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1/4 cup ground cumin
- 2 tablespoons Mexican oregano
- 1/2 cup ancho powder
- 1/2 cup red chili powder (Valdez prefers guajillo, if you can find it)
- 2 quarts beef or bison stock
- 2 (15 ounce) cans diced tomatoes
- 1 (15 ounce) can pinto beans, with liquid
- 1 (15 ounce) can black beans, with liquid
- 1 (15 ounce) can garbanzo beans, with liquid
- 1 (15 ounce) can red beans, with liquid
- 1 (3 pound) bison chuck roast, smoked, pulled apart, fat removed

Optional Toppings

- Queso Fresco, crumbled, to taste
- Cotija cheese, to taste
- Cilantro, chopped, to taste
- Green onions, to taste

Take the stemmed and seeded ancho chilies, guajillo peppers and chipotle peppers, rinse them off and then place in a saucepan with just enough water to cover them. Cook until they are rehydrated and fall-apart tender. Place the chiles and liquid they were boiled in into a blender and puree. Set aside the puree.

In a 12-quart stock pot, brown the ground bison, then add the chopped onions and cook until the onions are translucent. Add the jalapeños, poblanos and diced green chilies. Add all the spices. Add the 2 quarts of stock and bring to a boil. Add the diced tomatoes and all the beans. Return to a boil and let simmer for 30 minutes. Add the bison chuck and return to a boil. Add the chile puree. If you want more liquid, add more stock. If you want to increase the heat, add one 1/2 teaspoon cayenne at a time until the desired spice is achieved. Serve with corn muffins — Valdez opts for atole corn muffins.

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NEW YEAR, SAME DEDICATION

Cold and snow bring co-op challenges

When a cold snap hit Colorado at the end of 2022, heavy snows snapped tree limbs, causing them to fall onto power lines. This is a common cause of power outages, which many Coloradans experienced as we rang in the new year. While many spent the holidays in the comfort of their homes, electric co-op line crews hit the field and began restoration efforts.

Colorado's electric co-ops are committed to keeping the lights on, which means crews go out to fix damaged power lines even in the harshest conditions.

The safety of line crews is the number one priority for co-op operations and restoration is a close second. When operations managers determine that crews can safely head out to begin to troubleshoot and repair outages, linemen head out — at all hours of the day and night.

Sometimes outages require de-energizing power lines, which has the potential to delay restoration and may also cause

other temporary outages. La Plata Electric Association in Durango aptly described its restoration work in early January as playing “Whack-a-Mole,” because as one section of line was restored, other outages popped up. But crews persisted until all members were restored.

As Poudre Valley REA experienced in January, sometimes it's a transmission line that goes down and takes out power. Crews from the Fort Collins-based electric co-op were able to reroute and restore to members while Western Area Power Administration and Tri-State G&T worked on transmission line repairs.

It's a smart idea to plan and prepare for outages by keeping up with weather forecasts. Now is the time to prepare an emergency kit with outage essentials, such as flashlights, extra batteries, water bottles and a nonperishable food supply. If you rely on electric life support equipment, make a plan for power outages. If you have special medical equipment at home, such as a respirator, CPAP



La Plata Electric crews work to restore power to members in the Durango area during a recent snowstorm. Photo courtesy LPEA.

machine or an insulin pump, consider purchasing a backup generator and have contingency plans in place.

Power outages are unavoidable for any utility, especially this time of year. Despite the unpredictable challenges winter weather can cause, dedicated co-op crews and dispatch staff work until power is fully restored to their members. Visit your co-op's website for more preparedness tips and keep current with outages and restoration on your co-op's social media channels.

Sign up for CREA's Innovations Newsletter

Colorado's electric cooperatives utilize technology to adapt to their consumer-members' changing energy needs. Your electric co-op acts as a resource for you by promoting beneficial electrification projects, such as replacing a gas-powered water heater with an electric, air-source water heater.

As leaders in the electric industry, co-ops across the state have a proven record of

accomplishing innovative projects and initiatives not only for you, the consumer-member, but also your community. Some of these projects include installing state-of-the-art EV charging stations; pilot projects exploring the benefits of on- and off-peak time rate structures; developing ways to analyze outage data; and creating microgrids.

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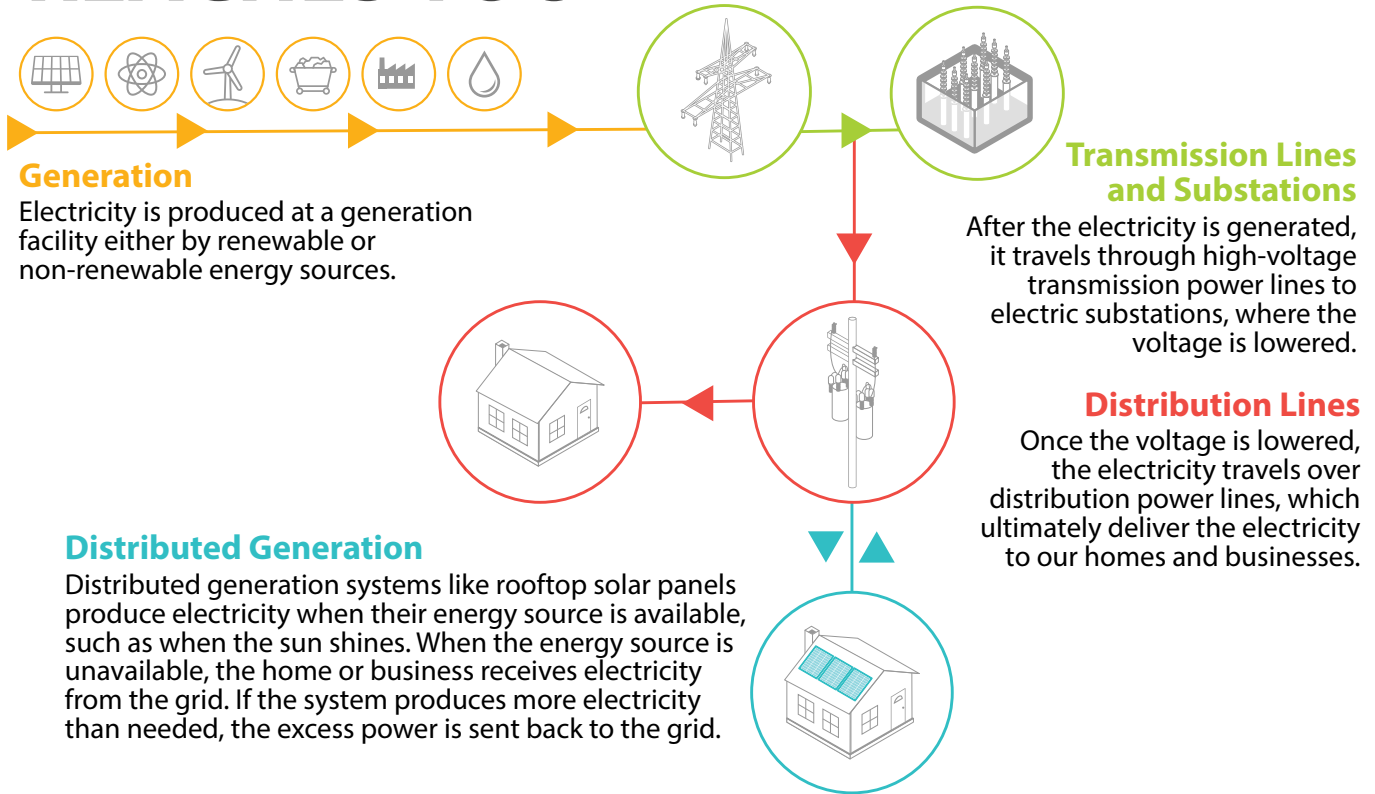
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MUSH!

Dogsledding through a magical Colorado wonderland

BY EUGENE BUCHANAN

Cueball and Merlin are clearly agitated. At the end of their rope. Luckily, that's literally and figuratively. You see, it's their job to be at the end of their rope and they are ready to go. Jumping up and down, whining and pulling, pulling, pulling against their tethers, they're the lead dogs for our dogsled tour in the Flat Tops Wilderness Area with Snow Buddy Sled Dog Adventures out of Steamboat Springs.

Our human guides have already showed us how to put on the dog harnesses and attach them to their sled ropes. The lead dogs are attached first, hence their giddiness while they wait for the eight others to get hitched up. And with just a little instruction beforehand, we actually get to drive them. With me in our sled is my daughter Brooke and her friend Natalie. I'm bundled up in the front, covered with blankets and pillows,

while they're standing and holding onto rails, one behind the other, both feet — and each of their 100-something pounds — standing on the brakes for all they're worth, trying to hold Cueball, Merlin and the rest of the team in check.

Soon we get the signal to go.

With that, the girls step off the brake, yell "Ready...Hike!" and, taking their signal from leads Cueball and Merlin, the dogs are off and running. Instantly the scene goes from pure chaos — dogs barking and jumping — to serenity. The only sound is that of our sled whisking over the snow. It's a frigid, bluebird Colorado morning, the day after a three-day snowstorm. The fluffy white banks of the Forest Service road go whizzing by, along with the trunks of snow-covered aspen trees. The dogs work as a team, pulling with all their might.

We're just three of about 1,200 people who are lucky enough to dogsled with owners Dan and Sarah every season. And all 1,200 come away from the experience mesmerized. "People just love dogs," Sarah says, who has been running dogs in Yampa Valley Electric's territory since 2011 and keeps about 60 year-round — which she juggles with kids Giovanni ("Vonn"), 2, and Lark, 4. "They've been companions of humans forever. It's hard not to be inspired by how hard they work and how much fun they have doing it. They'll run all day if you let them."

She admits her guests are surprised at how they feel afterward. "Everyone sort of gets a dopamine release after it," she says. "It just evokes this symphony of feelings people aren't used to, all coming together in the great outdoors."



▲ Trained sled dogs lead the way through the snow-covered terrain. Photo courtesy of Snow Buddy Sled Dog Adventures.

Indeed, if you want to experience Jack London's *Call of the Wild* in Colorado, there's no better way than by taking a dogsled tour, whisking through a winter wonderland with the patter of paws and yips and yelps of your canine motors echoing through the cold mountain air. You can either do it yourself — yelling, like we did, “Ready...Hike!” and “Gee!” and “Haw!” (right and left, respectively) — or, sit back snuggled in the warmth of a cozy blanket inside your wooden basket while an expert stands behind you and drives the team.

At last count, there were more than a dozen licensed dogsled outfitters in the state, from Winter Park, Gunnison and Tabernash to Durango, Snowmass and Steamboat Springs. All provide the necessary gear, instruction and, of course, well-trained dogs to pull your sled.

Another leader in the field — a top dog, if you will — is Gunnison's Cosmic Cruisers Sled Dog Tours, which outfits dogsled adventures for all ages and abilities. The company, which is served by local electric co-op GCEA, lets guests choose between all-day tours or shorter outings, either letting you drive your own team or relaxing in comfort with your guides at the helm.

“We specialize in introducing people to the basics of mushing and, when desired, teaching them to run a team of rambunctious, very experienced huskies on a pristine wilderness trail,” says company founder Lisa Mapes, who runs the business with her husband Dave and children, Merlin, 22, and Ayla, 28. “It's a great way to get out in Colorado's vast wilderness while focusing on and learning about these amazing animals that pull the sleds.”

Lisa, a former private therapist working with young trauma victims, says she got bit by the dogsledding bug, so to speak, when she first tried it in 1993. “We used to use horses a lot in our therapy sessions with the kids and then one day, on a whim, I decided to take a kid mushing with an outfitter,” she says. “I went nuts about it and fell in love with it right away. I was just mesmerized how the dogs all worked together and how natural it was for them to pull so hard for so long. It all had such a great flow to it. And the kid I was working with loved it.”

Smitten with the sport, she went home and tried it with her own dogs, to mixed results. “Actually, it was a total mess,” she admits. “I had big mutt dogs, and I threw horse collars on them and grabbed my skis, which didn't really work. Then I tried it with a sled. I learned quickly that it takes



a certain kind of dog.”

Enter four-time Iditarod Sled Dog race champion Susan Butcher, who just so happened to be selling off some of her “retired” dogs from the esteemed 1,000-mile race that runs from Anchorage to Nome, Alaska. “She was my mentor and we developed a long-lasting friendship,” says Lisa, who, after picking up five of Butcher’s dogs, was off and running in the sled dog world.

Lisa then got into dogsled racing in Minnesota, quickly entering the 200-mile John Beargrease race, whose 80-below wind-chill temperatures showed her how hard the sport can be. “I had only 2,000 miles of training going into a 200-mile race, but I thought it was enough,” she says. “I felt racing overall was one of the best ways to learn, as you have to deal with everything from food and cold to team positioning.”

Eventually, she began leading tours so others could experience the same joy that dogsledding brings her. And this, of course, has meant even more dogs, with their pack growing quite a bit from her early days. Lisa and Dave now have 60 dogs at their 260-acre mountainous ranch 15 minutes outside of Gunnison near Antelope Hills. Lest you think it’s tight quarters, there’s plenty of room for them to roam. The dogs each have their own house with a chain, as well as six pens and 2.5 acres for general romping, chasing and roughhousing. Throw in a discreet breeding area, family pens, alone-time pens, hourly rotations to run and more, and, while it might not be the Hilton, it’s the next best thing for a hound.

Which is what she has, actually — an Alaskan Husky Greyhound mix, which is a super-fast mixed breed — as well as other pure and mixed breeds, all bred with the single purpose of running. This fall, Lisa received six more Canadian Inuit dogs

◀ A group of fledgling dogsledders learn safety measures before a Cosmic Cruisers tour.
Photo by Lydia Stern, Mountain Magic Media.

from a village near the North Pole, dogs originally bred for hunting polar bears and now used for hauling sleds.

“The ranch is great for them,” she says. “There’s plenty of room for them to roam around and they usually howl every night after dinner. Out here, no one else can hear them.”

While you’d think telling them apart might be hard, she and Dave have it dialed in, even for the newcomers. The dogs carry such names as Sneaky Pete, Joe Dirt, Marge (from *Fargo*), Odin, Toby and more; all have their own personalities and mannerisms, just like people. And while they might age faster (remember, seven dog years to every one human year), they have a pretty good retirement plan. While some will still pull and even lead teams at age 12 or even 13, their AARP years (usually up to about age 17) involve swimming in the pond, lying in the sun, hiking with Dave, Lisa and the kids, and sleeping everywhere, “from on top of beds to chairs, rugs and even clothes.”

The hardest thing to do, she adds, is retire a dog from pulling “because they’re just filled with so much passion for it — they love to do it so much. And that’s what most of our guests take away from the experience.”

As far as positioning, sometimes she’ll put one lead dog up front and sometimes two, usually running anywhere from eight to 12 dogs per sled. And guests can drive their own teams, which isn’t too hard with some basic instruction. “Kids actually pick it up a lot quicker than adults,” she says. “They don’t overthink it.”

That played out when Brooke and Natalie, remembering the pointers they received at the beginning, came into a corner braking and then let up just a bit, feathering them, almost, to let the sled slide out and away from the turn, and not clip the inside wall of snow. It works, and soon we’re back on the straight-away, trotting away toward our turnaround point — a wall tent, deep in the forest,



▲ Sled dogs at Cosmic Cruisers are outfitted with harnesses to prepare for a run. Photo by Lydia Stern, Mountain Magic Media.



▲ A group of dogsledding passengers pose with their tour guides and their dogs. Photo courtesy of Snow Buddy Sled Dog Adventures.

complete with cayenne/cinnamon hot chocolate (you *have* to try it), battery-powered chandeliers and bling lights, and cookies warming on a grate over a crackling woodstove. And the dogs, bless their souls, also get a chance to rest and relax, with a lucky three even getting to come inside with us humans.

The dogs have just as much fun come summer, joining their horseback outfitter trips or just running loose on their ranch. “Our philosophy is happy dogs equal happy

humans and fun mushing,” Lisa says. “Dogs are our life and livelihood — it’s a partnership of respect, love, amazement and pure joy. Each animal is an individual with wants, needs and uniqueness that we try to honor.”

As with Sarah and Dan, Lisa and Dave consider their dogs family, which can make for a rather raucous dinner table. But neither they nor their kids would have it any other way. “Both of our kids grew up raising dogs and dogsledding,” says Lisa. “They love it and

are both pretty experienced mushers.”

And she’s thankful for the help. As with Snow Buddy, Cosmic Cruisers runs trips every day of the week from late November to April. All-day tours stop for lunch in Gunnison National Forest, and they offer half-day outings outside Crested Butte. When you go, Lisa says, just open up your mind, enjoy the experience and hang on for the ride.

“You’re being pulled by dogs with indomitable spirit and unbelievable teamwork,” she says. “They’re amazing athletes and pull even at 11,000 feet altitude with ease. They love running and dislike stopping.” She also says to never underestimate the power of a sled dog. She’s had dogs pull fence posts out of the ground and even a fender off a truck.

➤ A Cosmic Cruisers sled dog enjoys the calm after a long dogsledding tour. *Photo by Lydia Stern, Mountain Magic Media.*

✔ Sled dogs work as a team, pulling with all their might. *Photo courtesy of Snow Buddy Sled Dog Adventures.*

Their guests, who hail from as far away as Brazil, Australia, Africa and China, love the experience as much as the dogs love giving it to them. Lisa says they’re forced to turn people away every year and feel bad about it, but with 60 already, they can’t really add *more* dogs.

“People just don’t know what to expect, but then they love it,” she says. “At the start, a lot of people are kind of overwhelmed — they’re surprised with all the noise. They’ll often ask, ‘Why are they screaming and jumping?’ It’s because the dogs are so excited. Our guests are just amazed at their enthusiasm to go running.”

Clients are also amazed at the peacefulness that ensues once they take off through a wintry oasis, the dogs working as a team while the world, as well as their troubles, evaporate into a rooster tail of snow behind them.

“Once you pull that cord and are gliding along in this snowy wonderland, it’s pretty

magical,” Lisa says. “I’ve had some people break down and actually cry, saying they never thought it’d be so spiritual.” She says that holds especially true for people coming from a big city who are all wound up, as well as for kids with challenges and disabilities.

“You just get to see them shine,” she says. “It’s so great to see that transformation in people. Everything just slows down and all their worries melt away. It’s pretty addictive.”

At the time of press, Snow Buddy Sled Dog Adventures’ and Cosmic Cruisers Sled Dog Tours’ PACFA (Pet Animal Care Facilities Act) licenses were in good standing.

Eugene Buchanan, a former publisher and editor-in-chief of an outdoor magazine, is now a freelance writer from Steamboat Springs adding new outdoor adventures to his more than 25 years of experience.



““ You’re being pulled by dogs with indomitable spirit and unbelievable teamwork. They’re amazing athletes and pull even at 11,000 feet altitude with ease. They love running and dislike stopping.”
—Lisa Mapes, Cosmic Cruisers Sled Dog Tours





National Bird-Feeding Month

Creating Wildlife-Friendly Gardens

BY VICKI SPENCER MASTER GARDENER | GARDENING@COLORADOCOUNTRYLIFE.ORG

Wandering around your neighborhood, you may be dismayed by the bleakness of February's bare-branched trees and shrubs. But look closely. Your spirits will be lifted by birds fluttering all around. While fun to watch, birds remind us that February is the most difficult month for wildlife seeking food and shelter. That's why February has been designated National Bird-Feeding Month.

Bird feeding is an activity enjoyed by the entire family, and it's rewarding to know you are helping birds when they are most vulnerable. While studying relationships between types and locations of feeders, and which species prefer which seeds, consider creating a more wildlife-friendly garden.

Wildlife-friendly gardens replace manicured lawns with a habitat that birds, butterflies and other wildlife require. This includes cover, nesting sites and fruiting plants. Imitating the natural habit that existed before your area was developed helps reduce, or eliminate, the use of pesticides that leave traces in insects eaten by birds. Without pesticides, expect some imperfection. But in return, you will enjoy more birds and butterflies. And you'll save money by using less water needed by lawns.

Your local nature center, native plant society or Audubon chapter can help you learn about your property's natural history. Visit audubon.org/plantsforbirds to find information about bird-friendly plants and attracting birds and butterflies.

While envisioning a habitat garden, you might find your priorities begin to change. For instance, if dead trees (whose hollows provide good nesting sites) don't pose a danger, you might consider leaving them. If you don't have — or don't like — dead trees, you could add supplemental housing with pole-mounted nesting boxes and houses. They are better at deterring predators

than tree-mounted ones.

Consider adding well-placed feeders to supplement natural food sources that are low in the winter. Birds need a clear view of potential predators, nearby cover, easy access to water and natural sources of food. Look for feeders designed to deter squirrels or you could go broke refilling seeds daily.

Adding water features helps birds thrive in our dry climate. If a pond is not practical, a simple bird bath does wonders. Some come with heaters, but they're not required. Watch the weather and when temperatures dip, you can melt ice with warm water.

Butterflies are another benefit of habitat gardens. Adding colorful, nectar-rich plants attracts these avid pollinators. But if you want to encourage habitation, include plants suitable for larval stages in your garden design. You should also provide mineral sources. These can simply be small patches of wet soil. Or you can create butterfly puddling sites by adding shallow dishes with pebbles covered with water. As butterflies visit the dishes, they will take in trace minerals from the water. Consult with your native plant society and visit your local botanic gardens (which may feature a butterfly house) for more ideas.

Don't feel you must take drastic measures to redesign your entire yard. Minor modifications made consistently, year after year, will lead you toward a more habitat-friendly garden that will benefit birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

Master Gardener Vicki Spencer has an eclectic background in conservation, water, natural resources and more.



LEARN MORE ONLINE

Read previous gardening columns at coloradocountrylife.coop.
Click on Gardening under Living in Colorado.



Open a Page on Electric History

Engage and enlighten kids through books

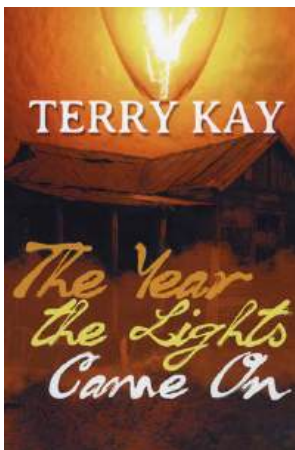
BY AMY HIGGINS

Electricity is responsible for our hot morning coffee and daily meals. It keeps us cool under the sizzling sunshine and warm in wintry weather. And in the 21st century, the advancements go several steps further: Electricity delivers news and messages to the palms of our hands, quickly charges our vehicles and tools and stores critical information. And the innovations keep coming. Who knows what the future holds with the power of electricity?

When we explain to our younger generations how life worked without the instant access we have to electricity today, it can sound like far-fetched fiction. Yet, for some of our older population, life without electricity was indeed the narrative in their youth, particularly for those living in rural communities.

As time goes on, there will be fewer recollections of life without electricity, so recorded accounts are valuable. *Colorado Country Life* is bringing to light three books

that will help young readers learn some of America’s history with electricity with the added perk of amusing anecdotes.



THE YEAR THE LIGHTS CAME ON

By Terry Kay

The boys in the Our Side Gang are befuddled by the big-time clash between them and the Highway 17 Gang, until Colin Wynn, the narrator of the story, gets the skinny from his older brother Wesley.

It’s electricity. “Bingo!” 12-year-old

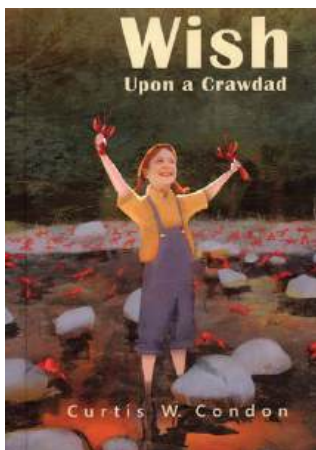
Colin thinks. By golly, electricity must be the source of the social upheaval that overshadows him and his friends — all the folks of the rural Georgia town, in fact.

With their lickety-split lighting-speed, cushy kitchen appliances and fancy farm equipment, electricity brought power (literally and figuratively) and privilege to their neighbors on the other side of Highway 17, while the Our Side Gang and their rural town of Emery was left in the dark. But the Rural Electrification Administration was coming to Emery, and that will change everything. Colin is sure of it.

The Year the Lights Came On by Terry Kay takes readers along for the adventures, skirmishes and difficulties that the Our Side Gang encounters in 1947 and highlights the strength of steadfast friendships through Colin’s narrative. The Highway 17 Gang harbors ill-conceived notions that the Our Side Gang is “less than” simply because they light their homes with candles and oil

lamps rather than incandescent lightbulbs and wash their clothes by hand instead of an electric washing machine.

The Year the Lights Came On is a coming-of-age tale with the REA's arrival to the rural town of Emery thinly veiled in the storyline. Kay's character development is compelling as he paints pictures throughout the book with great use of the five senses as well as humor. Originally published in 1976, Kay reworked the novel in 2007 to tighten it up and make it "appropriate for any age group." With the latter in mind, readers should take note that there are terms in the book that may have been typical in the 1940s but are considered offensive in 2023.



WISH UPON A CRAWDAD

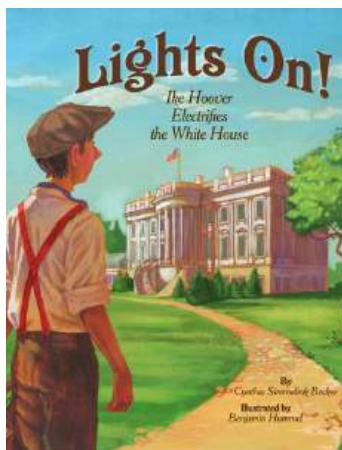
By Curtis W. Condon

Ruby Mae Ryan is a feisty 12-year-old girl living on a farm with her family in rural Oregon. The hard-working townspeople in their community created an alliance and have been busy hoisting poles, draping wires and boring holes into the structures of homes and buildings for electrical outlets. They call this group an REA, a rural electric association, and it is owned by the entire town with one goal in mind: to bring electricity to an area where municipal power

plants refuse to venture.

Ruby can't wait. Her best friend Virginia and her friend-turned-nemesis Mary Belle have had electricity in their nearby town for a while now, so Ruby knows what she was missing: a real-life stove, lights that illuminate a whole room, and washing machines that clean clothes immaculately. Ruby has worked earnestly to save money for when the lights come on — several oddball jobs, but none as lucrative as her crawdad-catching business — to buy something particularly special, but she doesn't want to jinx it by saying it out loud.

In *Wish Upon a Crawdad*, young readers will take a journey with strong-willed Ruby as she navigates friendships, friction, flubs and ferreting out crawdads — that is, if she can find them before her wish slips away from her grasp. Targeted toward middle schoolers, *Wish Upon a Crawdad* is a sweet tale of a red-headed spitfire who will stop at nothing to make her wish come true, with many stumbles along the way.



LIGHTS ON! IKE HOOVER ELECTRIFIES THE WHITE HOUSE

By Cynthia Simmelink Becker

Illustrated by Benjamin Hummel

In 2019, *CCL* reviewed and wrote about

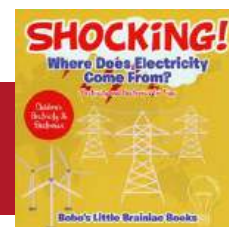
Lights On! Ike Hoover Electrifies the White House, but with its delightful illustrations, elaborate research and industry-appropriate information, it bears repeating.

Lights On! takes young readers through the steps it took for Ike Hoover (not to be confused with President Herbert Hoover) to ready the White House for electric lighting. Throughout the story, Hoover navigates the impressive building though the rafters and walls to install electrical wiring, and along the way builds relationships with the White House staff, including a rapport with President Benjamin Harrison.

The late Cynthia Simmelink Becker (author and Pueblo resident) pulled out all the stops researching and writing this book for young readers. It was important to Becker that she emphasize the fashion, technology and architecture of the era.

The most challenging aspect, she said, was locating real-life representations of the electrical equipment of the late 19th century. After extensive online research and numerous phone calls, she ultimately discovered that one of Edison's 1890s turbines was on display at the Western Museum of Mining and Industry in Colorado Springs, an invaluable revelation and resource for her book.

Illustrator and native Coloradan Benjamin Hummel revealed the ornate details of the White House and characters with vibrant depictions, and even cleverly concealed his signature bumblebee — an homage to his last name, which translates as "bumblebee" in German — throughout the story. While written for third- to fifth-graders, older bookworms will likewise get a charge out of *Lights On!*



ANOTHER ELECTRIFYING BOOK:

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Alone

BY DENNIS SMITH | OUTDOORS@COLORADOCOUNTRYLIFE.ORG

I've never really given it much thought, but I guess I've always known that fly-fishing is a game you usually play alone — even when you're doing it with a couple of like-minded friends. At least that's how I see it. You might travel to the river together, string up your rods and pull your waders on in the parking spot, but once you're on the water, you're on your own.

Trying to figure out what the bugs and the fish are doing at any given moment in a body of water, what fly to use, where to cast and how to retrieve it are generally things you like to puzzle out for yourself, although you're probably not immune to a little friendly advice if one of your buddies is catching fish and you're not. You want to catch fish, after all, but it's much more gratifying to solve those mysteries yourself rather than have somebody else do it for you.

It's also occurred to me that, over time, and perhaps without even realizing it, some of us become pretty selective about who we fish with. It just seems to work out that way. For example: The only people I've fly fished with regularly for the last two decades have been my two sons, my daughter-in-law and my grandkids. Oh, and Doc Sheets. For a couple of seasons before he passed away, Doc and I would meet every Thursday afternoon near a long, dark pool on the Big Thompson just upstream from the Narrows. We'd sit on the trunk of a fallen cottonwood tree at the edge of the bank to watch the river and shoot the breeze for a while before he'd take up his spot at the tail of the pool to fish dry flies and I wandered upstream to swing wet flies through the pocket water below the bridge.

And now that I think about it, I did drive up the Poudre Canyon with Loveland bamboo rod maker Fred San Martin about three years ago to try some of his new rods out on the river. And I remember fishing on the Big Thompson one warm spring day in 2011 with Dustin Krause when he caught a huge, gorgeously colored rainbow on one of his glitzy little midge patterns. I was about 50–60 yards upstream when I heard him yell.

Early last spring, the boys called to suggest we meet at a nearby lake to cast a few flies. We suited up in the parking lot, then split up and stationed ourselves at random places around the shore. We were together, but alone.

Dennis Smith is a freelance outdoors writer and photographer whose work appears nationally. He lives in Loveland.



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DOLLY: THE BOOK LADY

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Helps Young Readers Flourish

If you haven't heard of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, prepare to be impressed by the charitable endeavors of the country music icon. For nearly 30 years, her nonprofit has gifted two million free books to the tiniest readers, establishing another moniker for Dolly: "The Book Lady."

Each month, from birth until age 5, DPIL mails registered families a free children's book to their homes. The program starts with *The Little Engine That Could* welcome book and ends with *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* upon the child's graduation to "big kid."



Photos courtesy of Imagination Library.

Find a Partner

To get in on the action, families must live in the area of a local affiliate, such as a business or school district. One such affiliate in Colorado is Highline Electric Association, with offices in northeastern Colorado. HEA paid the startup funds and advertised to get the program running, starting in Phillips County, according to HEA Member Services Specialist Jessie Heath.

Today, DPILs in HEA's territory are mailing books to 747 kids each month. "Highline Electric is proud to help bring this wonderful program to some of our youngest members as well as other children throughout our territory," Heath said.

Leaving a Legacy

DPIL launched in 1995 in Dolly's hometown in Sevier County, Tennessee, and grew to the enterprise it is today. It expanded across the United States (including Native American communities) and then to Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Republic of Ireland. The program also started offering audio and braille books in 2011.

"Before he passed away, my Daddy told me the Imagination Library was probably the most important thing I had ever done," Parton wrote in a letter posted on the DPIL website. "I can't tell you how much that meant to me because I created the Imagination Library as a tribute to my Daddy. He was the smartest man I have ever known, but I know in my heart his inability to read probably kept him from fulfilling all of his dreams."



MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about DPIL by visiting imaginationlibrary.com. While you're at it, check out the documentary titled "The Library That Dolly Built" to get a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the program. See the trailer at bit.ly/3XRag3.



Scan the QR code to watch the trailer.

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Dirty hands and a sun burned nose
A secret hideout up in a big oak tree
A slingshot and an old hound dog
Runnin' through the creeks, catchin' frogs
Ol' Tom 'n Huck had nothing on me

Carry our lunch and walk to school
Christopher Columbus and the golden rule
We said the Pledge of Allegiance every day
We grew up fast but we grew up good
We raised a little hell but we understood
that good or bad, there was a price to pay

Worked two jobs for my wife and kids
God sure blessed everything we did
We had each other and the good Lord up above
Now the kids are out and on their own
We love it when they bring the grandkids home
and after 40 years we're still in love

A tired old man in baggy clothes
Wore out hands and a sun burned nose
An open book for everyone to see
Out on the porch is my easy chair
I sure enjoy just sittin' there
Life's been good to me

Dennis L. Fisher, Nathrop
SDCEA consumer-member

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Please call 866-HEAT-HELP
(866-432-8435) for more information
or visit cdhs.colorado.gov/leap.



READERS' PHOTOS



WINNER: Grand Valley Power consumer-member **Craig Goodknight** summits Mount Kilimanjaro with his copy of *CCL* in tow. He trekked the highest mountain in Africa on Christmas morning, following a six-day climb on the Western Breach route. What a way to end the year!



Consumer-members of Poudre Valley REA, **Lee** and **Terrie Roberts**, pose with their copy of *CCL* at the Mt. Pellier Domino Club in St. Croix. The club is known for its beer-drinking pigs!

Take Your Photo with Your Magazine and Win!

It's easy to win with *Colorado Country Life*. Simply take a photo of someone (or a selfie!) with the magazine and submit it on our Reader Engagement page at coloradocountrylife.coop. We'll draw one photo to win \$25 each month. The next deadline is Wednesday, February 15. Name, address and co-op must accompany photo. See all of the submitted photos on Facebook at facebook.com/COCountryLife.



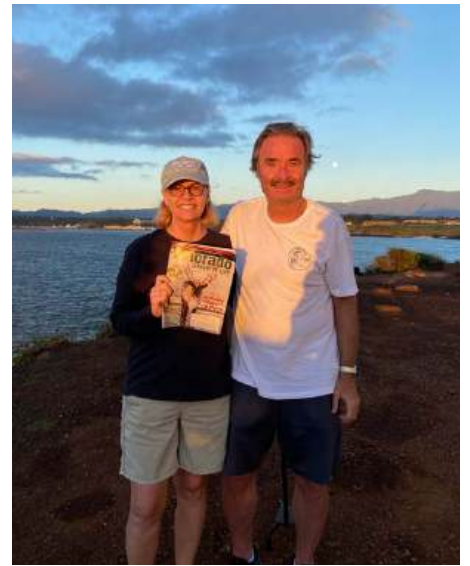
Susan Thomas and **Patrick Mueller** enjoy a holiday getaway to Philipsburg, St. Maarten, with their friends **Darlene** and **Gary Hammann**. The happy folks are all consumer-members of Mountain View Electric Association.



K.C. Electric Association consumer-member **Francesca Mousel** photographs her two kids, Zeb and Zeb, with the magazine before they head off to school.



Karen Ellison shows off her copy of *CCL* in her beautifully landscaped garden in Cape Cod. Karen is a consumer-member of Grand Valley Power.



Mountain View Electric Association consumer-members **Dan** and **Tracy Cuvala** bask in a beautiful sunrise on vacation with *CCL* in Lihue, Kauai.



Thaine Michie, a board member at Poudre Valley REA, and his wife **Marilynn** bring along their copy of *CCL* as they help decorate the City of Sierra Madre Rose Parade float to ring in the new year.



Larry and **Carol Enderson** bring their copy of *CCL* to the Temple of Kom Ombo in Egypt. The Endersons are consumer-members of High West Energy.

 FUNNY STORIES



Soon after moving to our home in the foothills, we were visited by a young lady named Kathy. She was starting college and could not afford to keep and take care of her horse. She asked us if we would take her. Frosty O Fox was the name of her beautiful white horse. Of course, we could not believe our luck and readily accepted.

Kathy proudly showed us all the great tricks Frosty could do. She was a very well-trained horse — she could even count! Kathy asked her, “Frosty, how old are you?” The horse replied by pawing her right hoof on the ground seven times. We were all duly impressed, until Kathy whispered to us, “Frosty is lying, she is actually 9 years old.”

Frosty lived with us for many years. We rode and enjoyed this beautiful animal until the end of her days. We're very grateful to Kathy.

Ingrid Garver, Fort Collins
Poudre Valley REA consumer-member

My 3-year-old granddaughter was sitting on the sofa, crying with a box in hand. Her head was in the box. I asked her what she was doing with her head in the box. She said, “It’s my crying box.” She put the box down and started playing again. Approximately three hours later, she was crying again, but without the box. I asked, “What happened to your crying box?” She stopped crying, looked at me and said, “I forgot it.”

Linda K. Roskop, Kersey
Morgan County REA consumer-member

We pay \$15 to each person who submits a funny story that’s printed in the magazine. At the end of the year, we will draw one name from the published funny stories, and that person will receive \$200. Go to our Reader Engagement page at coloradocountrylife.coop to submit your funny story.



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Stellar Snow Machine

Hit the hills on a vehicle that is out of this world. MoonBikes, with its North American headquarters in Boulder, hit the world by storm in 2021 with its all-electric, easy-to-operate, snow machine and the public's response has been astounding. A fusion of snowmobile and motorcycle, these bad boys can take you through groomed and ungroomed terrain for up to 3 hours on a full charge. See for yourself at moonbikes.com.



Avalanche Ally

Fresh snowfall lures Colorado's outdoor enthusiasts to the mountains this time of year. But snowy adventures come with unique safety hurdles, including avalanche dangers. ORTOVOX, with headquarters all over the globe, including Longmont, sells avalanche transceivers that guide you with step-by-step instructions during an avalanche rescue attempt. Offering a variety of outdoor safety gear and apparel, ORTOVOX helps bring peace of mind to experienced mountaineers and winter weekend warriors alike. Learn more and find your local retailer at ortovox.com.



Cozy Toes

When your feet are warm, the rest of your body follows suit. Smartwool's ski and snowboard socks offer targeted cushioning, breathability and enhanced strength with a pop of flair. It also manufactures apparel and accessories with the same protection from the cold that their socks are famous for. What's more, the Steamboat Springs-based company plans to have 100% climate-positive wool in its products by 2030. View the collections and purchase a pair at smartwool.com. **And enter CCL's monthly contest for a chance to win a \$30 gift card. See page 3 for details.**



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