

# You're Invited!

## San Isabel Electric Annual Meeting



## September 21

Walsenburg  
Junior/Senior High School

10 a.m. – Doors Open

10 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. – Registration

10:30 a.m. – BINGO

11:30 a.m. – Lunch Buffet

1 p.m. – Business Meeting



- One lucky member will win a free year of electricity up to \$1,500\*
- 20 members will win \$50 in cash door prizes.\*
- Get a free gift that includes a locally hand-crafted bowl. Only one per member.\*\*
- Free lunch, coffee, cotton candy, popcorn, snow cones, donuts, and more refreshments
- Check out electric vehicles
- Sign up for a free energy audit
- Learn how you can finance the replacement of your water heater, heating and cooling equipment, insulation, generators, and more right on your electric bill for 0% interest and no money down!

*\*must be registered and in attendance during drawing.  
\*\*must attend the meeting to receive your free gift.*

## RUN FOR THE BOARD

There are three seats on the San Isabel Electric Association Board of Directors up for election in 2024.

### 3-YEAR TERM

- District 3 Gardner, Trinidad East, and Vicinity
- District 5 City of Walsenburg, Southwest, and Northeast Vicinity
- District 7 Aguilar, Trinidad West, and Vicinity

A candidate can be nominated for a director position in two ways:

1. The candidate can be selected by the nominating committee. Members of the nominating committee are appointed by the SIEA Board of Directors. The nominating committee met June 26, at 9:30 a.m. at the SIEA headquarters in Pueblo West. Please visit [SIEA.com/BoardElections](http://SIEA.com/BoardElections) to see who was nominated.

2. A candidate can also complete a petition with at least 15-member signatures and file it online, no later than 5 p.m. on July 23. Every consumer who buys electricity from SIEA is a member and owner of the cooperative. At the annual meeting, members just like you are elected to serve on the board of directors to make decisions about rates, renewables and other ways the cooperative operates. More information about running for the SIEA Board is available at [SIEA.com/BoardElections](http://SIEA.com/BoardElections).

# CHANGING FACES AT SIEA

BY RYAN ELARTON GENERAL MANAGER

This month, two more SIEA employees will be walking through the door to retirement: Royce Anderson and Eddie Smith. Anderson is our Safety and Compliance Manager, and Smith is our Assistant Line Superintendent.

Their jobs, accomplishments, and personalities are quite different. However, they are very similar in many ways. They both have a strong belief system that guides them with ethics and morals; they try to do the right thing for the right reason. They both have decades of experience, strong community ties, detailed knowledge of our area's geography and history, and dedication to doing a good job through completion. They'll be able to impart some of their knowledge to the new crop of supervisors before their last workday, but they take with them an incredible amount of institutional and professional knowledge that will take time to replace.

We look forward to a smooth transition, thanks to our internal culture and succession planning. We're committed to

fostering a work environment that prioritizes a culture of safety, where everyone goes home every day. We also understand the importance of family and encourage work-life balance. This commitment to safety and family helps us attract and retain top talent, so that we can continue to better serve our members.

Lineworker Lonny Rhodes will be SIEA's new Safety and Compliance Manager. And Lineworkers Logan Reese and Casey Blood will step into the Assistant Line Superintendent's role. With their experience in line construction, maintenance, and their commitment to safety, Rhodes, Reese, and Blood will ensure we continue delivering reliable, affordable energy, while prioritizing safety. Our employees across the company take this service mindset to heart as we strive to meet and exceed the expectations of you, San Isabel Electric's member-owners. I'm incredibly proud of our team and look forward to continue serving you.

## Adapting to Retirement: A New Chapter for a Champion of Safety

San Isabel Electric's Safety and Compliance Manager Royce Anderson is retiring this month after nine and a half years of dedicated service to the co-op. His career has significantly and positively impacted the company's members by reducing outages, maintaining low rates, and improving community services.

From a young age, Royce was determined to join law enforcement and ride motorcycles. He achieved his dream with the Colorado State Patrol, serving as a State Trooper for 25 years and a motorcycle trooper for part of his career. After retiring, he further honed his safety expertise with the Colorado Rural Electric Association, becoming an OSHA instructor and earning several safety certifications.

"His past career as a state trooper came with trust and credibility that usually takes a lot of time to earn. His respect for process and procedure has improved our relationships with outside agencies," said Darryl Stewart, SIEA Chief Operating Officer. Royce's ability to foster strong relationships was crucial in system upgrade projects that cut outage frequency and duration, benefiting member-owners across our territory.

Royce also facilitated the expansion of broadband and telecommunications by streamlining contracts for attaching equipment to San Isabel Electric's power poles. His diligent compliance work earned the company discounts on workers' compensation insurance, saving thousands of dollars annually.

"Anytime we have significant savings like that, it impacts the overall affordability of the electricity and other services we provide," San Isabel Electric General Manager Ryan Elarton noted.



▲ Royce Anderson retires after a successful career at SIEA.



Replacing Royce will be challenging due to his unique qualifications and extensive knowledge of Colorado. His expertise is not easily replicated, especially his familiarity with local roads and landmarks.

Royce is ready to use that knowledge and explore Colorado and the rest of the U.S. in his brand-new RV with his wife. "We're like kids in a candy store," he said, eager to embark on this new journey.

In retirement, Royce plans to carry his attention to detail into his hobby of engineering and to continue being active in his church.

"Royce found joy, fulfillment, and purpose in his career; I'm confident he will find it in this new chapter of his life as well. We wish him all the best," Elarton added.

◀ Royce Anderson (second from left) attends Mesa Hotline School with Apprentice Linemen Harvey Wall, Dillon Crowley, and Tim Paulson.

## Eddie Smith Retires After 28 Years With SIEA

“If there’s anything we can do as a company, please let us know, we’re here to help.” If you’ve ever worked with San Isabel Electric Assistant Line Superintendent Eddie Smith, you have heard him say that phrase countless times. And he means it, too. The phrase embodies him.

This month, Eddie retires after 28 years of service with the electric co-op. Smith is a second-generation San Isabel Electric lineworker. “My dad was like Superman to me, and I wanted to be like that. People looked up to him because he was a lineman. It’s becoming less like that these days.”

These days, most people groan when they wake up and have to reset a blinking microwave clock. They don’t think about the lineworkers who got out of bed, drove through back roads in the wind, rain, snow, or heat to find the cause of the outage, in the dark, and fixed it. All while the rest of us were soundly sleeping, safely in our beds.

Lineworkers love working outages. “We’re sick. I know it,” Smith jests. “It challenges the mind. First, it’s the challenge of figuring out the problem and how to solve it. Then, it’s actually getting it done. The satisfaction comes when you restore something everyone is depending on and needs,” he explained.

As much as Smith loves working outages, he loves what he’s able to do in his role as assistant line superintendent more.

“I’ve loved the whole journey. As assistant superintendent, I like helping the linecrews and tree trimmers. If someone calls, I like being able to go right over and solve their problem.”

Seeing things through to completion is another favorite part of his job. But now transitioning into retirement, it’s something that gives him some anxiety as well.

“I want to do it all. I want to finish what I’ve started. But it’s not possible. There’s always a new project beginning. Now is a good stopping point,” Smith said.

The list of Smith’s accomplishments is long. He oversaw a total rebuild of the electric grid in the city of Walsenburg. Everything from the ground up was replaced. The project took six years and was completed in 2020.

He also oversaw an upgrade project in the Cuchara-Panadero area and the upgrade of the co-op’s main line that runs from Pueblo West to Burro Canyon in Las Animas County.

Together, the upgrade projects reduced the amount of time the average member is without power by more than half.

He’s an integral part in planning and making day-to-day decisions, along with Line Superintendent Kevin Schleich and System Engineer Clinton Smith, who is Eddie’s son.

“They might want to arm wrestle to settle who did the most work,” joked SIEA Chief Operating Officer Darryl Stewart.

When you ask Eddie if he’s counting down the days, he’ll jab, “No! Why? Are you?” And if you ask him what his plans are in retirement, his answer is, “I don’t have any, but my wife sure does.”

If you can get him to stop trying to make you laugh, he’ll tell you about how he’s looking forward to traveling and spending more time with his wife and family in retirement.

If you live in Huerfano County, it’s highly possible you’ve met Eddie. You may have bumped into him at a church function or community planning meeting. He and his family are very active in their church in Cuchara, and Smith works very closely with emergency managers, elected officials, and non-government



▲ Eddie Smith retires after 28 years with San Isabel Electric.

leaders to keep Huerfano County safe and growing.

Since he became assistant line superintendent in 2017, he’s been the face of San Isabel Electric in Huerfano County.

During the Spring Fire in 2018, Smith was the point of contact for the federal incident management team, along with Schleich. “After that fire, I had trouble sleeping. I couldn’t forget the images of the faces of my friends and neighbors after they found out they’d lost everything.”

That’s the downside of being a lineworker. As he drove around the burn area, Eddie could see the devastation it was causing each member. They lost so much.

“As a lineworker, our main priority is to get the power back on to each and every member when the lights go out. It deeply saddens me when someone calls up and says ‘Ed can you turn my lights back on,’ and I have to say ‘no.’”

During the fire, Eddie had to say no because the fire’s command staff ordered the lines to be de-energized to keep firefighters safe and prevent the fire from spreading. But sometimes, during storms, it could be several hours or, rarely, days, before crews make repairs for the meters at the end of the line.

“Members have called and explained their loved one just had surgery, is having trouble staying warm, and they really need the power back on. And it’s heartbreaking when the only thing I can tell them is we are doing everything we can, and won’t quit until their power is back on,” he said.

Eddie’s day-to-day job is to oversee the line and tree trimming crews. Most days he works 12 hours, not counting the time spent answering the phone before he gets out of bed, and the time picking up calls after he walks through his front door at the end of the day.

“Eddie Smith embodies everything a company could ask for in an employee. His work ethic is unmatched. He cares about his fellow employees, our members, and the communities we serve. He leaves a legacy of service at San Isabel Electric,” General Manager Ryan Elarton said.

Quoting George Strait, “Oh, the last goodbye’s the hardest one to say. This is where the cowboy rides away,” Elarton said. “He’s riding away, but this will not be goodbye.”

# Truck Driving School Announces Walsenburg Location After SIEA Gifts Land

Springs Truck Driving School is set to open a new location in Walsenburg, facilitated by a land donation from San Isabel Electric Association.

“This opportunity for economic growth wouldn’t be possible without the generous land gift from SIEA,” said Carlton Croft, director of Huerfano County Economic Development.

The school will be located adjacent to the Love’s Truck Stop, along I-25 Business Loop and CR 301.

“Huerfano County consistently has high unemployment rates. Offering a pathway to become truck drivers and make a six-figure income fairly quickly is a great opportunity for people in the community,” Croft said.

“We gifted the land for public good. By gifting the land to the county, they will ensure the land will be developed and managed in a way that maximizes public benefit rather than purely private gain,” SIEA Board President Ray Garcia said.

The collaboration began several years

ago when Steve Speaks, owner of Springs Truck Driving School, reached out to HCED about expanding to Walsenburg. Speaks, who also operates a school north of Pueblo, sought a location with easy access to I-25 and high visibility.

Initial efforts to secure land faced challenges, but a conversation between Huerfano County Commissioner John Galusha, SIEA Board President Ray Garcia, and SIEA General Manager Ryan Elarton led to the suggestion of using land near SIEA’s Walsenburg warehouse. After that discussion and consideration, SIEA’s board approved the land gift to HCED.

The truck driving school will be the main tenant on the property. There are plans to break ground this year and for the school to open in 2025.

The Walsenburg location will offer CDL certification and renewals, providing both the written test and the required on-the-job training. “Everyone starts driving and shifting on their first day,” Speaks said.

Springs Truck Driving School will employ one full-time instructor, one part-time instructor, and an administrative office position, with a focus on hiring locally. There have already been several candidate interviews.

HCED is considering other tenants for the remaining space, including a food distribution center, which could further boost local employment.

“Local restaurants currently rely on deliveries or trips to Pueblo for supplies,” Croft explained. “Having a food distribution center nearby, along with a supply of truck drivers next door, would be a great asset for the community.”

“The county has the resources and know-how to develop the land in a way that maximizes its potential. The board is excited to see the land put to its highest and best use, which could include creating jobs, attracting investment, or improving infrastructure,” San Isabel Electric Board of Directors Vice President Jacque Sikes said.

## DONATION IMPACT REPORT

San Isabel Electric operates under seven cooperative principles which includes practicing a Concern for Community. Each board member lives in the community they serve, and we all work together to help our communities thrive.

Each month, the board of directors donates to community projects to help keep our communities strong and growing. All philanthropic funding comes from unclaimed capital credits not from member rates and electric bills. Our process for using unclaimed capital credits follows state law for unclaimed property. Unclaimed capital credits cannot be used for system improvements, maintenance, payroll or other overhead costs.

For more information about capital credits and unclaimed capital credits, visit [siea.com/capitalcredits](http://siea.com/capitalcredits).

All donations were matched by Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

The following donations were approved at the May board meeting:

**\$500**

- Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center — Pars for Patriots
- Pueblo West Metro District — Safety Fair
- PAWS for Life Animal Welfare and Protection Society — Pints for PAWS
- The First National Bank in Trinidad — School Supply Drive
- Walsenburg Jr./Sr. High School — Classroom Supplies
- Pueblo Eagles Aeries #4471 — Charity Golf Tournament
- Spanish Peaks Library District — SPLD Events and Programs 2024
- Walsenburg Jr./Sr. High School — Jr. High Enrichment Supplies
- Pueblo West Swim Club — PW Stingrays & CC Piranhas Invitational
- Pueblo West High School Band Boosters — Drum Major Podium

