

Benton Rural Electric Association

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Scott Fisher
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Trustee, District 8

General Manager

Michael J. Bradshaw
mikeb@bentonrea.org

Power Outage?

If your electricity is out for more than a few minutes...Check your breaker box to see if a circuit breaker has tripped. Then, check to see if your neighbors are without power. Report Benton REA outages by calling 800-221-6987 or via the SmartHUB app.

Satisfaction Survey Results Are In

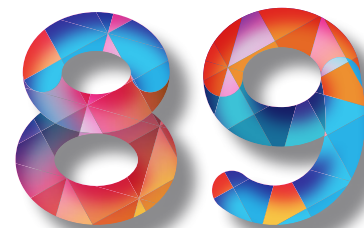
Members scored Benton REA 89 out of 100 possible points in a recent American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey. Among other Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, Benton REA exceeded the national average ACSI score of 78.

"We are thrilled with the survey results and our satisfaction score," said Troy Berglund, Benton REA's community development and member relations manager, "but the survey has also shown us areas in which we

can improve to better serve our members."

A random selection of members were mailed a postcard in early July asking for their participation in the survey. 250 members from 13 different zip codes completed the 13-question survey either online or by phone.

The survey concluded that drivers of cooperative members' satisfaction include (1) providing good value for the money, (2) being involved in the community,



(3) supporting renewable energy like solar and wind power, (4) offering energy efficient programs to help members save money and (5) communicating important cooperative information.

"Benton REA seeks to excel in all of these areas, because our members have told us they matter," said Berglund. ■

Rates Remain Stable

Several local utilities recently announcing electric rate increases that will become effective this fall. To avoid any confusion for Benton REA members, Benton REA will NOT raise its electric rates now or in the near future.

Other utilities have announced electric rate increases due to wholesale electric cost increases as the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) recently announced a 5.4 percent increase in wholesale electric rates, effective October of 2017.

"Benton REA is not immune to the BPA rate increase because Benton REA receives most of its wholesale power from BPA," said Benton REA general manager Mike Bradshaw. "In fact, BPA's electric rates will increase by five percent to Benton REA. However, the Benton REA

management and Board of Trustees have chosen to avoid passing this rate increase through to our members."

How is Benton REA able to avoid the rate increase?

There are a combination of reasons why Benton REA is able to absorb the wholesale power increase and maintain stable electric rates for its members. First is budgeting. The BPA rate increase was expected and Benton REA made budgetary adjustments to help mitigate the increase. The second is cost savings. For example, funds from the recent sale of service area within the Yakama Nation Indian Reservation were used to pay down debt, resulting in debt service cost savings.

The BPA rate increase is a concern for Benton REA and its members.

Even though Benton REA is able to absorb this BPA rate increase, this continues a very concerning trend of BPA rate increases. During the last 10 years, BPA's rates have increased nearly by 40 percent and that trend is expected to continue. This trend of BPA rate increases was the primary topic Benton REA took back to Washington, D.C. earlier this year as we met with our congressional delegation. Benton REA will continue to work with BPA, congress and others to help stop this trend. Our goal is to maintain stable rates for our members, and we will continue to work diligently toward that goal. ■

Five Scholarships up for Grabs



Applications for Benton REA's 2017-2018 scholarships are due Dec. 1, 2017.

Each year, Benton REA awards up to five separate \$8,000 continuing education scholarships to qualifying Benton REA members or their children whose main residence is in Benton, Yakima or Lewis counties and who are graduating high school seniors.

Academic scholarships can be used for a 4-year post-secondary education. Trade & Technical scholarships can be used for a 2-year certificate program.

Scholarships are judged based on academic performance as well as a written essay.

Benton REA's scholarship program is fully funded through unclaimed capital credits.

Scholarship applications can be found in your high school guidance counselor's office or downloaded at BentonREA.org/scholarships. For questions, call 509-786-8265 or email memberservices@bentonrea.org. ■



80 Years in Pictures

Leaders in Rural Electricity

Throughout its 80 years, Benton REA has been driven by the leadership of seven different men. From its first to its current, which of these Benton REA general managers do you know? ■



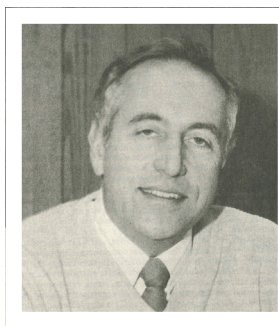
John B. Whitehead
1937-1949



Burton Hall 1949-1967



Joe Chiara 1967-1988



Dick Heitman 1988-1988



Charles Dawsey 1988-2012



Clint Gerkenmeyer
2012-2016



Michael J. Bradshaw
2016-Present

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COOPERATIVE INFO

BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Prosser Office
402 7th Street | P.O. Box 1150
Prosser, WA 99350
(509) 786-2913
Toll Free 1-800-221-6987
Office Hours: Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

West Richland Office
6095 W. Van Giesen,
West Richland, WA 99353
(509) 967-2921
Office Hours: Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Office Closed for Lunch Noon - 12:30 p.m.

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MEMBER SERVICES

This newsletter is a product of the Benton REA Member Services and Economic Development Office

Elecia Copenhaver, Marketing and Communications
Troy Berglund, Member Services Manager
May Hays, Community Relations Coordinator
Ron Mitchell, Electrical Advisor
Eric Miller, Energy Services

Nominate a Local Hero to Win #WhoPowersYou Contest and \$5,000

Because we know it's more than just electricity that powers communities, we believe it's important to recognize the people who power our co-op community.

Benton REA is teaming up with Touchstone Energy to bring you the #WhoPowersYou contest. The #WhoPowersYou contest honors the people who inspire, motivate and empower members of our co-op communities.

Beginning Oct. 2, 2017, Benton REA members, as well as members of other Touchstone Energy Cooperatives across the nation, will have the ability to nominate the person that inspires them and makes a difference in their co-op community. In addition to receiving national recognition, the winners of the contest may be awarded one of four cash prizes including the \$5,000 grand prize.

Winners will be selected by a panel of judges from Touchstone Energy on the basis of creativity and originality as well



as the nominee's positive impact on your community. Winners will be announced in December, 2017.

To nominate someone in your life, visit WhoPowersYou.com after Oct. 2 and before Nov. 4. There you can submit a photo of your nominee and a brief description of

how he or she makes a difference in their community.

To see contest rules, watch videos about last year's winners and nominate a local hero in your community, visit WhoPowersYou.com. ■

Districts 7,8 Open for Nominations

Benton REA is governed by eight trustees who each represent a district within our service area. These trustees are elected by you—our members—to serve a three-year term.

The two districts and their respective trustees up for election at the 2018 Annual Meeting are District 7—Connie Krull and District 8—Catherine Russell.

Any member interested and qualified to become a trustee candidate can be placed on the ballot. Members interested in running as a candidate for the Board of Trustees must contact Benton REA by Nov. 1, 2017. Members should contact Missy Jasso, executive assistant, by calling 509-786-8260. Candidate qualifications are listed on page eight of your October Ruralite magazine.

Members who reside in a district up for election will receive a ballot in January, 2018. Members may either mail in their ballot or bring their ballot to the Annual Meeting to be counted.

All ballots will be counted and the winners announced at the Annual

Meeting on Feb. 10, 2018. ■



Connie Krull - District 7 Trustee / Vice President



Catherine Russell - District 8 Trustee



Co-ops Commit To Members

Benton REA is joining 30,000 cooperatives nationwide in October to celebrate National Co-op Month, which recognizes the many ways cooperatives are committed to strengthening the local communities they serve. "Co-ops Commit" is the theme for this year's celebration, spotlighting the countless ways cooperatives meet the needs of their members and communities.

Benton REA delivers electricity to more than 10,000 members in our three-county service area. It is our mission to provide Benton REA's members with affordable and reliable energy and other member-driven compatible services. Benton REA strives to enhance the quality of life for all

members.

"There are many benefits to receiving electricity from Benton REA such as our reliability record, our energy conservation programs and our commitment to community," says general manager Mike Bradshaw. "But, the one thing that makes us a different kind of utility is the return on your investment." Benton REA is proud to be the only utility in the area committed to returning margins (net income) to its members. That return on members' investment is called "capital credits".

Rural America is served by a network of about 1,000 electric cooperatives, most of which were formed in the 1930s and

40s to bring electricity to farms and rural communities that large, investor-owned power companies had no interest in serving because of the higher costs involved in serving low-population and low-density areas.

Together, electric cooperatives are committed to our communities, to education, to safety and to impacting the world for good. We are committed to you, our members, and 2017 marks Benton REA's 80th anniversary of that commitment.

Follow #CoopMonth on Facebook and Twitter to see how co-ops across the country are committed to their members and celebrating National Co-op Month. ■

\$100 Smart Thermostat Rebate

Put \$100 back in your wallet when you purchase a qualifying smart thermostat.

Benton REA members who currently have an electric furnace or heat pump as their primary source of heat can receive a \$100 rebate with the purchase of one of the following smart thermostats:

- Nest 3rd Generation
- ecobee3 (not ecobee3 lite)
- ecobee4

"Smart thermostats can help members save energy because they have the capability of programming themselves based on the homeowner's lifestyle to regulate the home's temperature throughout the day,"

said Eric Miller, energy advisor with Benton REA. "These thermostats can also be controlled remotely with a smartphone."

Once purchased, members can choose to self-install their smart thermostat or hire a professional. Those who choose to have their thermostat installed professionally will receive an additional \$25 incentive from Benton REA. To receive a list of qualifying professionals, call 509-786-8265.

Members must apply for this rebate within 6 months after the purchase date. Limit two per household. Thermostats that control cooling-only systems are not eligible for an incentive.

To apply for the \$100 or \$125 rebate, download the application at BentonREA.org/smart-thermostat-rebates or call 509-786-8265. ■

