

# EMPIRE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

*Echoes of the Empire*

OCTOBER 2019



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## PLUGGED INTO SAVINGS

BY BOBBE JONES MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER



BOBBE JONES

Rita Caffey has a history of firsts when it comes to saving energy. She was the first residential net-metered account on Empire Electric Association's system; one of the first in Montezuma County to purchase a hybrid Toyota Prius; and the first to take advantage of a new EEA rebate for electric vehicle chargers and installations.

A single, independent woman and a 20th-century pioneer, Rita had enough of the Los Angeles area in the '90s and ventured out seeking new territories. Making her way to Albuquerque and then Durango, she took one step further to see Mesa Verde. That was a turning point.

"This area just clicked for me," Rita said.

She returned to California, gave her employer five weeks' notice, packed up and moved to Cortez.

Rita feels so lucky to have found the perfect place to live in McElmo Canyon with its undeniable beauty and southern sun exposure. She installed a stand-alone solar array in the early 2000s when prices were still high and there were no incentives. She rationalized that she had a stable job as a surveyor

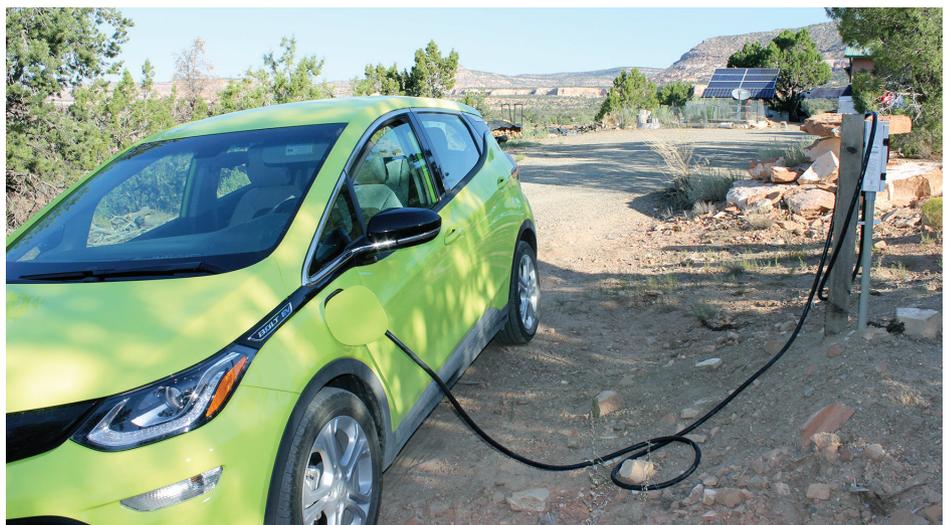
for Huddleston Land Surveying, and her house was small — plus she is extremely conservative with her energy usage.

"I really, really wanted to do this" Rita said, "and it is one of the best decisions of my life. It teaches you a lot about how people use power and how they waste power."

She approached EEA in 2003 with her desire to be grid-tied. At that time, she found it too costly. Three years later, EEA revised its net-metering policy and asked her to review it. It was more customer friendly and she became the first residential net-metered account on the system.

A conservative user of electricity, Rita typically receives money back annually from EEA for her net-metered solar system. Even though she is grid-tied, she still lives a stand-alone lifestyle, not using a vacuum cleaner, blow dryer or toaster. She believes in having a minimal impact on the environment and practices that philosophy.

Along with the solar array, Rita always wanted an all-electric vehicle. She sold her



Always looking to save energy, Rita fuels up her electric vehicle near her solar array (in the background).

hybrid in April and purchased an all-electric Chevrolet Bolt. The Bolt was ordered with a basic package and no extras except the plug-in option for a Level 3 supercharger. Although there are no Level 3 chargers currently available in our area, they will be coming and can provide an 80 percent charge in 30 minutes.

The Bolt was advertised at 240 miles per charge, but computed estimates based on Rita's driving history since April show that she should get around 320 miles per charge. She hasn't tested that prediction yet. Rita puts about 50 miles per week on the Bolt, traveling to and from work to her home in McElmo Canyon. Like other EVs, the Bolt has a regenerative braking gear that will create power when coasting down a hill. The battery is charged once a week and takes about 2.5 hours to fully charge.

Because Rita built her home with the stand-alone solar array in mind, it was designed with a 110-amp service. Before installing the EV charger, Rita used a 110-amp

home outlet to charge her Prius, which took an hour for every 4 miles worth of power.

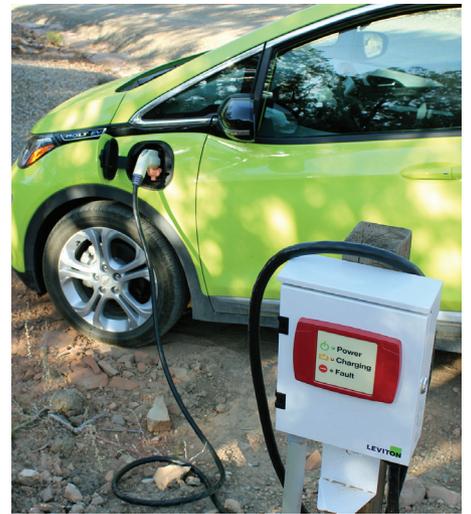
The new Level 2 EV charger requires a 220-amp access so it is installed near her power pole. It provides between 15 and 20 miles per hour of charging. "You can save about half the fuel cost as compared to a gasoline-powered vehicle," Rita said.

She thought the process for applying for the EV charger and charger installation was easy but qualified her comment with the fact that she hired an electrician to install the charging station, so everything was to industry regulations.

Rita is pleased with her lifestyle, proud of her solar array and excited about her new EV and charger.

"I'm not trying to preach to people," she said. "I just want them to understand that it's not hard."

EEA and Tri-State Generation and Transmission offer rebates up to \$3,000 for Level 2 electric vehicle chargers and installations, and up to \$9,000 for Level 3 EV chargers



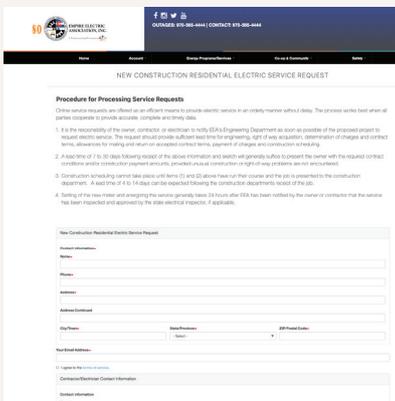
**▲** Rita powers her Chevy Bolt at her new electric vehicle charging station.

and installations with data collection capabilities. Without the data collection capabilities, the rebate for a Level 2 EV charger and installation decreases to \$1,500. For details, please visit the [www.eea.coop](http://www.eea.coop) Energy Efficiency Products page or call the energy management advisor at 970-565-4444.

## Less Paper, Less Hassle

### User-friendly fillable web forms are available now!

Sign up for a new service, transfer service, discontinue service, apply for rebates and much more. Go to [www.eea.coop](http://www.eea.coop) and visit the **Start or Change Service** page or the **Energy Efficiency Products** page.



## Photo Contest Winner for October



**▲** Ray of Sunshine by Scott Twilley

# Practice Makes Perfect!

EEA apprentice linemen practice in the EEA operations yard. A lineman apprentice is the first step on the career ladder to becoming a journeyman lineman. EEA lineman apprenticeships require 8,000 hours of full-time training and instruction to develop the skills to work with electricity, circuits, power lines and other electronic equipment.



Working Foreman Jake Thurman and Apprentice Lineman Preston Vialpando. Photo credit: Terrell Wells

EEA provides scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each to individuals pursuing a vocational or technical certificate as a lineman. The recipient must be a dependent of a member of EEA and must use the scholarship within the next school year. Applications are due by February 15 each year. **Applications are available at [www.eea.coop](http://www.eea.coop).**

EEA provides free safety presentations to 4th and 5th grade classrooms and other organizations. Learn how to be safe around electricity. Call EEA at 970-564-4458 to schedule an appointment.



## My Co-op Employees



Chase Suckla



Justin Purkat

**Congratulations to our two newest employees!** Both Chase Suckla and Justin Purkat were hired at the beginning of summer as temporary interns in a lineman capacity. Chase accepted a part-time warehouse specialist position and Justin accepted a consumer services representative position. Welcome to EEA!

## Co-op Calendar

### October 11 –

Empire's board meeting begins at 8:30 a.m. at its headquarters in Cortez. The agenda is posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [eea.coop](http://eea.coop). Members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

### October 31 –

Halloween and Member Appreciation Day.

### October is National Cooperative Month!

On October 31st between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. we are celebrating our members. Stop by our office for -

**FOOD,  
FRIENDS,  
and FUN!**



# Touchstone Energy Balloon

The Cortez Rendezvous Balloon Festival on August 2-4, 2019, brought in several ballooning enthusiasts. One well-known chief balloon pilot is Cheri White of the Touchstone Energy hot air balloon program. Cheri helped develop the program 20 years ago. Since its beginning, the group has accumulated 1,940 hours in the air with Touchstone balloons and returned over \$320,000 in charitable donations to co-op communities. For the past two years, Touchstone has donated \$1,200 to Hospice of Montezuma. Communications Specialist Denise Moore secures volunteers and works directly with the balloon crew to help set up and pack up the balloon each day, plus schedule a driver for the chase vehicle, as needed. This year, there were volunteers from EEA, Mesa Verde National Park and Hospice of Montezuma.



Left to right: Cheri White, Cindy O'Brian and Ann Sciba enjoy the day.



The Touchstone Energy hot air balloon ascends beautifully above the festival.

# Empire Electric Continuing Education Scholarships

Each spring, 15 \$1,000 scholarships are available for students who are continuing their education. To be eligible, students must not have a lapse between high school and college and must be a previous recipient of an EEA scholarship. **These students are recipients of the 2019 continuing education scholarships.**



Marcus Amrine



Thomas Anderson



Kayleen Bowie



Jasper Breitenbach



Cortney Cashner



Ashley Cole



Trystan Henderson



Brendan Jones



Nichole Kibel



LaShay Lewis



Brent Maloy



Colton Reynolds



Erin Rogers



Zane Wilson



Caleb Yoder