



President's Update

It promises to be a busy year for our chapter. We're well on our way to a great annual conference. No easy task as every year the host chapter sets the bar higher. We're up to that task, though, and a strong agenda nearly is complete. (See adjacent item.)

Our remaining quarterly meetings are in May, September and November. Faye Pointer is confirming suggested speakers, so you can get the dates on your calendars.

Jennifer McLravy completed our 2004 donations to our chapter charities, presenting \$250 each to Kate Johnson with the Center for New Directions and Amy Bodiker with The Women's Fund of Central Ohio.

International is reviving its mentoring program. Guidelines are being written, and more information will be shared as soon as it's available.

Watch your e-mail for important updates.

-- Vikki



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Co-ops offer challenges, opportunities

VP shares cooperative's, her story with Ohio Chapter



Cathy Bitler, vice president Offices Services for South Central Power Co., listens to a question from the audience.

In 1935, President Teddy Roosevelt signed an executive order creating America's electricity cooperatives. At Christmas 1936, Ohio's largest and the nation's 11th largest electric cooperative began serving its first 200 customers.

This is how Cathy Bitler, vice president of Office Services for South Central Power Co., introduced her company when she addressed the Ohio chapter's first quarter dinner meeting March 17.

In an energized presentation peppered with bits of humor, Bitler explained the differences, as well as some of the challenging similarities, between her cooperative and publicly owned utilities such as AEP. She also shared her background and her personal career goals for the future.

"There are 25 cooperatives in Ohio," Bitler said.

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2005 conference speakers confirmed, agenda nearly final

Your conference committees have been working diligently to complete the agenda for the 2005 International Conference Oct. 3-5 at the Columbus Hyatt Regency.

Confirmed speakers include Kathryn Sullivan, an AEP board member, COSI director and former astronaut; Holly Koepfel, executive vice president AEP Utilities East; Venita McCellon-Allen, senior vice president AEP Shared Services; Karl Pfirrmann, vice president PJM; Jolene Thompson, executive director Ohio Municipal Electric Association and vice president government and member relations AMP-Ohio; Jody Parish-Polen, Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives board member;

Judy Jones, commissioner with Public Utilities Commission of Ohio; Bob Skaggs, president of NiSource; Allison Brown, leadership consultant; Evan Blumer, executive director of the Wilds; and Columbus First Lady Frankie Coleman.

Plans for the welcome reception, afternoon field trip sessions, the awards banquet still are being finalized.

Registration materials, including a pre-agenda, are being prepared for mailing. Expected mailing date will be early August.

Further details will be provided in the second quarter newsletter.

Did you know accidents go up during week daylight savings time change occurs?

In his book, "Power Sleep," Dr. James Maas says that in the week following the change to daylight savings time (when we lose an hour of sleep) accidental deaths increase 7 percent compared to the week before and the week after. Give this some extra thought as you go about your business next week and stay safe. Visit www.sleepfoundation.org for more information.

Ground hog didn't shadow gathering at Easton Brio Tuscan grill

It was a day of weather prognosticators in the form of that hairy beast the ground hog. It was cloudy and even was trying to snow. It was Ground Hog Day and the day the Ohio chapter gathered for its belated holiday get together.

Despite Ohio's very own Buckeye Chuck forecasting six more weeks of winter, 11 Ohio chapter members gathered at Brio Tuscan Grille at Easton for good food, good wine and a good time.

Kudos to Latrice Holmes for her site location. Be sure to thank Latrice the next time you see her. If you were unable to attend, you will want to make sure you attend the next Holiday Social, tentatively planned for between Dec. 1 and Dec. 8. Hold those dates on your calendars.



Latrice graciously has accepted the invitation to organize the December event.

South Central Power VP shares her experiences and her career goals for the future

(Continued from page 1)

"South Central Power is the largest with 109,000 customers in 23 counties, and we are the 11th largest cooperative in the country. We are member-owned, and our members elect our board. Our members earn margins that are paid out every 20 years."

Bitler's response to a question about what happens to the margin if the member leaves the company resulted in laughter from attendees. "We'll track you down and pay you," she said.

She explained that South Central Power is strictly a distribution company, buying its generation from Buckeye Power. She noted that in an historical first in the early 1960s, AEP and Buckeye Power joined forces to build the AEP-operated Cardinal Plant in Brilliant, Ohio.

Like all utilities, Bitler said cooperatives also are very concerned about the president's energy policy, environmental legislation, the governor's proposed kilowatt-hour tax, bankruptcy among major accounts, members' identity theft, and finding, training and keeping good employees.

"Our organization is much flatter than yours (AEP's). We've only had three CEOs in the history of the company," she said. "Women's roles are very traditional. We have only two women vice presidents and eight directors. The vice presidents are me – and I handle credit and billing – and the other is Human Resources."

She also noted there are very rural barriers to women serving on co-op boards.

"Women have to be members to serve on the board. To be a member, women must have their electric service in their name. This just isn't common in the rural areas we serve," she said.

Bitler said that while her title is vice president of office services, she wears many other hats. Another of her key roles is serving as corporate lobbyist for which she interacts with legislators at the Statehouse and vies for "face time with our senators and congressmen" in Washington. She also is the company liaison with data processing and works with the board of trustees to organize the annual meeting.

And she is active in her community. She serves as chair of the Coordinating Council of Ohio University-Lancaster. She has held leadership positions with the Lancaster Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce and the Lancaster Area Community Improvement Corporation. She is a Chamber Athena Award winner, a two-time Lancaster Junior Women's Club Woman of the Year and the recipient of the Ohio University Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Award. She has bachelor's and master's degrees in communication from Ohio University.

Bitler said she also belongs to a local networking organization that is made up of women who own their own companies, are CEOs or want to be CEO.

"I didn't train for this job. I went to college to be a broadcaster, graduated and went to work at the local radio station," she said. "The station was sold and I decided to change jobs ... and went to work at South Central Power. Four years ago, I received my master's degree in communications."

All this being said, what does Bitler have in her sights down the road? The future at South Central, she said, holds promise.

"In six years, our CEO is retiring. I know that because I've discussed it with him quite frankly," she said. "At that time, only two officers currently with the company will be left in senior management – me and another person. I want to be CEO."