

CVEA's Member Tour Program Creates Co-op Ambassadors



Above, CVEA representatives and tour participants pose for a photo at the Allison Creek diversion structure
Opposite, tour participants as they toured the Valdez Diesel Plant and Solomon Gulch and Allison Creek Hydroelectric Projects
Photo by Sharon Scheidt

On Tuesday, August 13, CVEA hosted 22 members for the fall Member Tour in Valdez. The Member Tour Program was developed to be a tool in the members' communication toolkit and an opportunity for CVEA members to gather information, learn how the system works, and ask any questions they have in a small, informal setting.

Tours have historically been available to VIPs and special groups upon request, but this program makes the opportunity available to all members. According to John Duhamel, CVEA CEO, "This program is important to us as we believe everyone who is interested in the facilities, as member-owners, should be able to see them and learn about them."

Participants from Valdez and the Copper Basin spent the better part of the day with the CEO, COO, Production Manager, and Director of Communications visiting the Valdez Diesel Plant, the Cogeneration Plant, and the Solomon Gulch and Allison Creek Hydroelectric Projects. Members were treated to a quick lunch and enjoyed a video showcasing construction of the Allison Creek project.

According to a post-event survey, the tours were extremely well organized, informative and fun. One participant said, "the

entire tour was great. Every member should take an opportunity to attend one. I have a greater appreciation of where our money went for construction and it gave a good feeling for what we are leaving for our future generations." Another said, "the tour was extremely interesting, and a great opportunity for members to learn more about CVEA. The information presented was at a good level, and participants could ask more detailed questions as needed. We enjoyed talking to the knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff about their work."

All agreed that they received a lot of great information and believe the ability to participate in the tours is a huge benefit to the Membership.

Now in its third year, the Member Tour Program is considered a very successful member engagement program for CVEA. Members leave with an incredible amount of knowledge and are in a position to serve as ambassadors for the Cooperative.

Registration is required and begins 30 days prior to each tour date. Space is limited to 20 members. If you have questions regarding this program, contact Sharon Scheidt, CVEA Director of Communications, at 907-822-5506, 907-835-7005, or email scheidt@cvea.org. ■





Employee Spotlight-Jason Shiehl



Jason is a Power Plant Operator in the Valdez District, a position he's held for two years, after joining CVEA as part of the Operator Trainee Program.

Wayne McKinzey, CVEA's Production Manager had this to say, "Jason is remarkable. He's multi-talented, a quick study and has an outstanding work ethic. I'm still amazed at how quickly he became a key contributor to our team."

In order to highlight Jason, we recently asked him a few questions:

Q. What do you do as a Plant Operator?

A. I operate the Valdez power plants: line dispatching, line clearing, swithing orders, and maintenance and repairs on CVEA equipment and facilities.

Q. What are some of the big projects or changes you've been involved in since you began working at CVEA?

A. I was a part of the Valdez Diesel Unit 5 overhaul, the Solomon Gulch dam stop log project, and played a part in the switching orders and clearances for the many key system upgrades completed in the last two years.

Q. What things do you do that might surprise members?

A. As operators we rotate shifts through Hydro night shift,

Hydro day shift, diesel plant shift, and relief shift. As a result of our rotating schedule we get tasked with many different jobs. We could be on the phone all day handling outage situations one shift, working on a diesel generator the next shift and then fabricating or painting something the next shift.

Q. What do you like about your job at CVEA?

A. I love the diversity of what we get to do as operators, no shift or day is the same.

Q. What do you do in your spare time?

A. I like to spend time outdoors camping, fishing, hunting, and exploring with my family.

Q. What things do you enjoy doing in the community?

A. I like taking my family to the fun community events, participating in the Valdez Archery Club, and just enjoying our small town atmosphere.

Q. What about your job are you most proud of?

A. Being a contributing member of the community; it feels good to know we're helping keep the lights on for our family, friends and community. ■

APA Award Winners

By Michael Rovito

The people who power Alaska gathered in the capital city of Juneau in August for the Alaska Power Association's 68th annual meeting. Electric utilities large and small from across the vast 49th state came together to tackle the pressing issues of the industry and to honor Alaskans who have played a significant role in advancing the mission of electric utilities.

APA, the statewide trade association for electric utilities in Alaska, bestows a range of awards during each year's annual meeting. This year, two Alaskans honored for their impact on electrification in Alaska and the communities they serve.

Receiving APA's Hatcher-Williams-Turkington Employee Award this year was Lloyd Pikok, assistant natural gas superintendent at Barrow Utilities and Electric Cooperative Inc.

Lloyd has worked for BUECI for 31 years. He was recognized for his dedication to the co-op, his fellow employees and the community he serves. Lloyd steps in to fill critical roles at the co-op when other employees are on leave. He also has encyclopedic knowledge of the operations and history of his utility, and his focus on safety benefits everyone.

Lloyd willingly, and without complaint, spends extra hours helping community members who have suffered a loss. He does this by using utility equipment to dig graves in the frozen tundra, and by counseling families on the process of setting up a gravesite and getting proper permissions from the city.

"It takes a certain ability and skill set to switch between handling natural gas emergencies to being sensitive to grieving family's needs," says Ben Frantz, BUECI general manager, APA board president and Lloyd's boss.

The highest honor Alaska Power Association gives its own in the industry is the Mason LaZelle Achievement Award. This award recognizes extraordinary contributions to the electrification effort in Alaska.

This year's award winner is John Duhamel, CEO of Copper Valley Electric Association, chairman of the APA Hydropower Working Group and a member of APA's Managers' Forum.

John has repeatedly climbed into the trenches with APA on numerous issues, bringing a granular knowledge of state and federal regulations and their impacts on what our members do. He takes that knowledge directly to the agencies that prefer those rules to show them what their regulations are doing to real people who must pay for ever-expanding regulations on electric utilities

His passion for this—and leadership on many of these issues—has helped strengthen APA in the face of government obstacles, leading to positive outcomes for the association's entire membership. For instance, a federal agency rewrote its



Above, Lloyd Pikok, left, receives the Hatcher-Williams-Turkington Employee Award from Barrow Utilities and Electric Cooperative Inc. General Manager Ben Frantz. Top, John Duhamel, CEO of Copper Valley Electric Association, center, receives the highest honor Alaska Power Association gives its own in the industry, the Mason LaZelle Achievement Award, from APA Executive Director Crystal Enkvist and Ben Frantz.

Photos by Mike Teegarden

definition governing significant sections of Alaska, leading to cost savings for electric utilities in those areas. This came about due to John's leadership.

John has also put a prime focus on safety, and his utility has won top safety awards the past two years. Under John's leadership, CVEA has invested in its community, helped local youth achieve their goals, and provided funding for the improvement of the communities served.

The yearly APA awards demonstrate there are numerous dedicated Alaskans who spend their careers working to keep power safe, reliable and affordable. Electric energy is an essential service, and Alaskans can rest easy knowing such high-caliber individuals are at the helm. ■

Local Art Cooperatives, A Culture of Creativity



Left, members of the Valdez Art Co-op pose in front of their remodeled building for a photo opportunity. Opposite top, a display of local artwork on sale at Casa De La Arte. Opposite, bottom left, a group of participants at one of Casa De La Arte's Spring 2019 painting classes. Opposite, bottom right, Valdez Art Co-op sign outside their building in Valdez.

Photos courtesy Valdez Art Co-op and Casa De La Arte Gallery and Studio

By Sharon Scheidt and Kevin Reeves

Co-op Month has been celebrated annually in October across the United States for more than half a century. It is a time for cooperative businesses to reflect on their shared principles and educate others about the value of belonging to a cooperative. CVEA members are used to celebrating with their local electric and telephone cooperatives, but did you know there are many, many kinds of cooperatives throughout the country? In fact, Co-ops provide nearly every good and service imaginable. They are businesses owned and/or operated for the benefit of those using its goods and services. Profits and earnings generated are shared among the members.

Recent cooperative data from the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, with support from USDA Rural Development, states that there are more than 40,000 cooperative businesses in the United States with 350 million members. Each are by the community, and for the community, and a great choice for buying local.

There are many cooperatives right here in CVEA's service territory. This Co-op Month, we're highlighting the newest Co-op in Valdez, the Valdez Art Co-op, as well as Casa De La Art Gallery and Studio near Tazlina.

The Valdez Art Co-op (VAC), located at 122 Kobuk Drive in Valdez, was the brainchild of Valdez local card-maker/artist

Kris Reeves. In March of 2019, frustrated by the lack of venues in which she and her husband, town-and-seascape painter Kevin Reeves, could display and sell their work in person, she began a social media callout to any other Valdez locals interested in forming a cohesive art community. The idea was to gather at least a handful of artists who would commit to renting a facility where they would promote, house, and sell their art.

Kris happily found herself deluged with responses from those involved in a full spectrum of artistic endeavors. Acrylic painters, furniture restorers, wood turners and wood burners, potters, photographers, window decal designers, and a variety of creative clothing entrepreneurs all greeted the idea with a fervent "Count me in!"

Meetings at a popular Valdez coffee house helped the group get acquainted with each other, discuss goals, and hammer out a workable business model. Discussion over whether to become a non-profit versus a co-op found them in communication with another art co-op, Ptarmigan Arts, in Homer, Alaska, who enthusiastically shared their business model, ideas, woes and works with the Valdez group!

The initial team of twelve—plus any of their spouses and friends who could be roped into helping—renovated an erstwhile hair salon near the Valdez waterfront and opened its

doors a scant two months from the time of Kris' original social media callout.

The all original art of "Made-in-Alaska" decals, paintings, cards, painted rocks, etched wood, photographs, hand-turned wood bowls and cups, pottery, quilts, yarn art, clothing and accessories each has its place in the gallery, and the buyer can commission one-of-a-kind works of art from the member artists.

As a for-profit corporation, the Valdez Art Co-op vets prospective members to make sure that both the art and the person are a good fit for the selling format. A prospective member fills out an application and presents him or herself to the Co-op board, which consists of all the founding members. Once approved, the new member signs an agreement and pays the required fees. Each member has voting privileges, and each fills a spot behind the cash register on an allotted day of the week, as the Artist(s) of the Day.

While the Co-op continues to welcome new members, due to the building size and the wall space allocated to each member artist, there will be a cap at some point. Artists who haven't yet joined can have their names placed on a waiting list, to allow for filling vacancies in the Co-op roster as they occur.

The Valdez Art Co-op has enjoyed a remarkably warm reception from the townspeople and tourists. One idea on the horizon for ways for the Co-op to engage the community in art appreciation, culture and creativity, is an outreach into the schools. The Co-op will be open year-round and plans are formulating to host a variety of art and writing classes and other artsy venues during the fall and winter season.

Valdez Art Co-op artists include: Jolyn Haneckow Benes & Emily Benes, Heather Haase, Celeste Addison Hurst, Mandy Marquardt, Julie Rose Mason, Dorothy Moore, Kris & Kevin Reeves, Alea & Forest Reimann, Larry Roberts, Adrian Sigmon, Rhonda Wegner Taylor, and Jan Whalen.

You can follow VAC on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Valdez-Art-Co-op-2367688933464499/> or Instagram at [instagram.com/valdezartists/](https://www.instagram.com/valdezartists/).

Casa De La Arte Gallery and Studio in the Copper Basin, opened with 12 local artists in 2016. What began as owner Naomi Young's life-long dream is now a reality that has grown from the original 12 to 51 participating artists.

Naomi believes that communities are strengthened through the arts, "Casa de la Arte wants to encourage artists and give them an outlet to create, share and display that energy. It is our mission to promote, encourage, support and educate emerging artists by providing an opportunity to display and sell their work."

Art displayed in the shop constantly changes as new artists are added and existing artists bring in new items. There is everything from paintings to greeting cards, clothing and scarves, baby items, woodworking and carvings, kitchen accoutrements, jewelry, rugs and home décor. One thing is certain, all items are original and local, which to the art co-op means

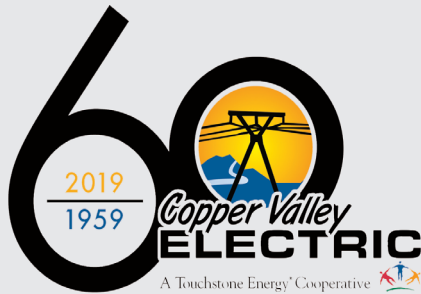


a focus on the Copper Basin, but also includes works from Valdez, McCarthy, Slana, Homer and Wasilla. The Gallery hopes to be known as the place to go for local, hand-made Alaskan art and crafts.

Education is an important part of the mission. Currently classes are offered at the gallery multiple times a week through the fall and winter (mid Sept-mid Nov and January through April). Classes utilizing oil, acrylic, and alcohol inks as well as felting, beading, carding and silver jewelry are offered. Naomi has also sponsored birthday parties, a woman's conference, and traveled to nearby villages. Casa De La Arte works with the Copper River School District Upstream Learning Homeschool program and has offered an after-school program in Kenny Lake and Slana when time permits. According to Naomi, "It never ceases to amaze me the talent we have in our area."

Casa De La Arte has been a member of *Made in Alaska* since 2014, and it was recently announced they received the 2019 "Rural Business of the Year" award from the Alaska Small Business Administration.

New artists can join by showing Naomi their creations. If it is a good fit, and space allows, they can follow the process and become a member. For details, stop by the gallery located at Mile 111 Richardson Hwy, next to the Tazlina Trading Post, just five miles south of Glennallen. For current information, visit them on Facebook. ■



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P.O. Box 45
 Glennallen, AK 99588
 www.cvea.org

Copper Basin District

(907) 822-3211
 Mile 187 Glenn Hwy.

Valdez District

(907) 835-4301
 367 Fairbanks Dr.

After hours outage line

(866) 835-2832

Important Dates

October

National Co-op Month Activities

Ruralite Cover Photo Contest:

Submit photos October 1 - October 30, 2019

Co-op Month Food and Cold Weather

Goods Drive: Bring nonperishable food and cold weather items (blankets, coats, hats, and gloves) to the CVEA or CVT offices

October 1 through October 30 and be entered to win a \$100 CVEA or CVT credit

Halloween Trick or Treat Spooktacular:

Stop by the CVEA office in your district for Halloween fun from 3-5 p.m., Thursday, October 31

CVEA Board Meeting: The October meeting of the Board of Directors is 1 p.m. Thursday, October 17, 2019, in Glennallen

November

CVEA Board Meeting: The November meeting of the Board of Directors is 1 p.m. Thursday, November 21, in Valdez

CVEA Offices Closed: The CVEA offices will be closed Thursday, November 28 for the Thanksgiving Holiday

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**Local,
Trusted,
Serving You!**

**Help CVEA celebrate Co-op Month this October!!!
 Join us for scheduled activities
 & events throughout the month!**

October 1-30 Ruralite Cover Photo Contest

- Winners will receive \$100 per winning photo, be announced to the local media, and be featured on the cover of Ruralite for one month in 2020. Submit your photos by 6 p.m., Wednesday, October 30
- Visit cvea.org/ruralitecoverphotocontest for details, rules, and application instructions

October 1-30 Food & Cold Weather Clothing and Blanket Drive

- Bring nonperishable food and cold weather (blankets, coats, hats, & gloves) items to CVEA or CVTelecom during normal business hours and be entered to win a \$100 CVEA Energy Credit or a \$100 CVTelecom Service Credit
- Food and cold weather clothing and blankets will help local organizations support members of our communities this winter
- The drawing will be held Thursday, October 31
- One ticket per item. Want more tickets? Bring more items!!
- Sorry, we cannot accept expired food or tattered/damaged cold weather items

Thursday, October 31, 3-5 p.m.

CVEA Halloween Spooktacular

Don't forget to bring your kiddos to the CVEA office as part of the annual downtown Halloween Spooktacular.

- Enjoy a trick or treat parade with five treat stops at CVEA
- Get your take home photo at a fun, themed photo booth
- Receive a special FREE gift (kids only-while supplies last)

