

## Concern for Community

### Getting to know Kayla Henderson

SLVREC member, 2004 scholarship winner and fifth generation Valley native, Kayla (Cochran) Henderson is making an impact on the San Luis Valley. As a 2004 Sargent High School graduate and co-owner of Alpine Veterinary Hospital, she has known since she was a little girl that she always wanted to be a vet. "I never really thought of anything else. I just focused on gaining veterinary experience," she stated.

Kayla worked hard throughout high school and received a full-ride Boettcher Foundation Scholarship, in addition to a \$500 REC/Tri-State Scholarship. She completed both her BS in Equine Science & Business Management and vet school at Colorado State University. Kayla stated, "what the REC scholarship allowed me to do (on top of my full ride) was transfer some of my funding so that I could study abroad in Ireland for a semester and finish my Honor's Thesis on thoroughbred racehorse nutrition."

Following graduation

from vet school in 2013, she "dragged" her husband kicking and screaming back to the Valley. Here she was able to apply for a federal grant to practice medicine at a rural mixed animal practice in a shortage area. "Thanks to the undergrad scholarships I received, I had no undergrad debt. But vet school is one of the most expensive professional programs; and that grant helped me pay off all of my loans within five years of graduating," Kayla commented.

When in 2019, Dr. Tyler Ratzlaff decided the time was right to pass the ownership of Alpine Veterinary Hospital onto the next generation, fortuitously, two of his associates, Kayla and Dr. Carla Enderle (a fourth generation New Mexico ranching native, Adam State Grad, and 2006 CSU Vet school grad) jumped at the opportunity to fulfill their own lifelong dreams. "We are not only the first partnership to own the practice, but also the first women owners," she commented.

Currently, Alpine has

seven doctors, two locations and 21 full- and part-time staff members.

"We have been practicing continually for 80 years, serving every single walk of animal life from Buena Vista to Santa Fe, Pagosa Springs to Trinidad. We are the only practice that's available 24/7, 365 in the SLV. We participate in 4H and the SLV Fair, Stampede and the Ag Fair every year. Our veterinarians and technicians spend countless hours at career fairs, school classrooms and college STEM workshops. We volunteer as committee members, Science Fair judges, lobbyists at the State Capitol, and serve as officers of both state and national organized veterinary medicine organizations," Kayla explained. "One of our biggest contributions is serving as one of the largest mixed animal practices in the state for dozens of veterinary, pre-veterinary and veterinary nursing students to experience externships and preceptorships from CSU, Adams State, and hundreds of other American and foreign universities." See



Kayla Henderson

*more Alpine Vet history in the online article at SLVREC.com.*

Kayla commented, "I've always loved the Valley and was never really one of those people that wanted to leave as soon as I possibly could! I always knew that if I married the right kind of man, and

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Concern for Community

Meet Your Co-op/Conservation/Ciello

Eric Eriksen

Member Information

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# Meet Your Co-op



## Colorado native joins REC crews

Journeyman Lineman Alex Franklin has joined the REC team from a contracting company in Texas. Graduating from Northwest Lineman College in 2014, he did linework for about eight years before journeying out in February of this year.

As a native of Estes Park, Colo., Alex had looked to come back to Colorado almost since day one of working in Texas. Finding the position at REC was a perfect fit; “after interviewing here and doing the ride-along, I knew this was the place I wanted to be. I enjoy being close to the mountains and close to my family and friends,” he said.

While positioned as the lead lineman in Texas, Alex was doing more construction and less technical work. “It’s been nice to focus more on what I’m doing and make sure I’m doing everything right, rather than leading others,” he commented.

Alex has spent the first few months getting acclimated to REC’s processes and learning how he fits into the workflow here. “I’m learning different ways to do things, which I’m kind of used to, because we worked with a lot

of different coops in Texas,” he said.

“I love the work and people here; they’re awesome. And the workload is much better; my hours are consistent for the most part. I don’t have to be out of town all week. It’s been great.”

Alex and his wife have purchased a home in Monte Vista and are looking forward to their future here. He enjoys playing video games and has recently taken up golf.

Welcome to the REC team, Alex! We’re happy to have you!



Alex Franklin

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know fall is the perfect time to schedule a tune-up for your heating system? Home heating accounts for a large portion of winter energy bills, and no matter what kind of system you have, you can save energy and money by regularly maintaining your equipment.

Combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings can save about 30% on your energy bills.

Source: Dept. of Energy



# ciello

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*-Barb Heersink, Monte Vista  
(Facebook)*

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**Eric Eriksen**

## AgriPower Solar awarded bid

The sun is shining on the San Luis Valley! In March 2023, San Luis Valley REC sent out a request for pricing on two proposed solar installations of 1,000 kilowatt (kW) each, to be co-located at each of the Creede and Moffat substations. AgriPower Solar (APS) of Salt Lake City, Utah was awarded the bid based on the capacity of their systems to generate more energy per square foot than other bids at a competitive price, which yielded the lowest cost per kWh installed of any of the systems proposed. This low cost per kWh installed means better short- and long-term savings for REC’s members.

Coincidentally with the RFP, REC was selected by Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) to participate in a significant grant opportunity through the Department of Energy’s “Energy Improvement in Rural or Remote Areas” program. The teams at REC and APS have worked together for many hours crafting a response to this grant opportunity that will strengthen REC’s capacity to support its customers for years into the future. REC and APS are working together on two additional grant programs through the Department of Agriculture that, if awarded, will further increase REC’s capability to deliver clean, reliable, renewable energy independence for decades to come.

Each project will consist of 26 dual-axis solar arrays that have the capacity to track the sun all day as it moves across the sky enabling each system to produce a maximum of 1,000 kW (1MW) of instantaneous power or



**Make Hay while the Sun shines.**

**In Summer heat, when brightly shines the sun,  
To make your hay, the proper time is come :  
Spread round the new mown grass, and do it right,  
Work while the sky is clear, and sun is bright.**

**Source:** *The Hand Book of illustrated Proverbs* (New York, 1857), by John W. Barber

approximately 2.8 million kWh of clean energy at each installation – enough to power 270 homes for an entire year. Certain conditions of the DOE and USDA grants require acknowledgment of award before construction activities can begin. REC is committed to both projects, and construction will begin in earnest as soon as allowed by the grant conditions. Construction on both projects will conclude within nine months from commencement.

As the second oldest electric cooperative in Colorado, REC has a long tradition of serving its more than 7,500-member community and improving quality of life in the San Luis Valley. Implementing clean, renewable energy projects is another way that REC is demonstrating its commitment to its members and the wellbeing of the San Luis Valley.

Expect passion, integrity, and excellence from me as I lead with the great people of SLVREC to best serve you... improving your future. Today SLVREC is among the best cooperatives in Colorado, and we will constantly work at being better tomorrow.

Feel free to stop-in to say “Hi,” write [EEriksen@slvrec.com](mailto:EEriksen@slvrec.com), or call anytime to 719-852-6630. I look forward to your feedback, concerns and bright ideas.

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## Member information

### Considering installing solar?

“Free energy from the sun *and* possibly lower my electric bill... Where do I sign up?”

The benefits of installing solar panels may seem like a no-brainer, but the reality is, not every home (and homeowner’s situation) is always right for solar.

There are several factors to consider before pulling the trigger on a solar system, like determining if your home will receive enough sun, finding the right contractor, negotiating contracts and other important details. Investing in solar for your home is a major decision and should be given careful consideration.

**What are my goals?** If your primary goal is to save money on electric bills, you may be able to achieve this through an energy audit program, which can identify areas of the home for maximum energy savings. REC will be kicking off an On-Bill Repayment program in the future, which can help members who may elect to install eligible energy upgrades to their property at no upfront cost. Stay tuned for details on this.

If your main goal is to use renewable energy and help the environment, consider signing up for our “Go Green Program.” You can help power renewable energy, without having to invest and maintain a home system. More details are online at: [www.slvrec.com](http://www.slvrec.com) (Programs tab)

If you’re hoping to reduce your monthly electric bill drastically, it’s important to understand that savings are dependent on many factors, and proper research should be done to verify cost savings.

**Is my property suitable for solar?** Your roof should be in good condition before installing solar panels. If your roof is old and in poor shape, it may need to be replaced before panels can be mounted. Additionally, your roof should receive a lot of sun to make the most of a rooftop system. Consider how much sun (and shade) the roof receives and if any trees will need to be removed. Solar panels perform best when facing south, so keep this in mind as you think about where the panels will be located.

Ground mounted solar will need plenty of yard space and typically performs better due to superior airflow.

**How long will I own the home?** If you’re considering solar, you’re likely planning to stay in **See SOLAR continued on Page 5**

### New tower installed at REC headquarters



San Luis Valley REC recently installed a 180-foot tower onsite at the Monte Vista headquarters. Moving REC’s radio equipment from a local provider to our own space will save the coop and members approximately \$30,000/year in rental fees and offer better coverage. Another important factor is cybersecurity; securing our own tower helps eliminate the potential for hackers. The tower will also be used to set up wireless Internet service for surrounding areas that lack access to fiber.

## KAYLA

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my career worked out going down the mixed animal path, that I would want to practice in the SLV. The opportunities were perfect: the grant opened and my husband's company had an Alamosa office, so the move made a lot of sense. Now, being able to raise my kids (Gage, Audra and Corbin) on the same ranch, have them attend the same school (and occasionally have the same teachers!) that I did, and practice at the hospital my family's ranch had used for generations, is a dream come true."

Kayla's husband Wade is from Pagosa Springs; he is the main reason she went down the mixed animal track, instead of the equine/Kentucky track (he said he'd never live away from the Rocky Mountains!). He has his own civil engineering company, Sky Hi Engineering, but loves farming and growing hay. He, Dr. Enderle, her husband DJ, and Kayla own the real estate that Alpine Vet sits on.

Wade and Kayla also own a ranch with her brother Chad Cochran and his wife Amy (who is one of Alpine's senior vet techs), and their parents Ronna and Jerry Cochran.

As a family, they love to ride horses and work cattle. "We love staying at our US Forest Service 'Cow Camp' cabin, and

we occasionally get a vacation to Maine or Mexico," she said. "Personally, I love reading and being in book clubs, gardening, and working on the ranch with our chickens, sheep, horses, Border Collies, cats and cattle."

Kayla was recently awarded a \$125,000 grant for the practice to really improve their food animal medicine. They also plan on using the money to help establish educational stipends for producers and students.

"Carla and I are hoping to one day establish a scholarship fund much like REC's to help students who have interest in veterinary medicine or animal science. Scholarship programs like REC's are absolutely essential in getting hard-working, rural kids from communities like ours the best start possible. I can only hope we can one day be as successful as you all have been!" Kayla concluded.

**June 2004 Newsboy**



**Kayla Cochran**  
**\$500 SLVREC/Tri-State Scholarship**

Kayla Cochran, Sargent High School, plans on attending Colorado State University this fall. She will major in Equine Science in the school's pre-veterinary program. Kayla also hopes to obtain a minor in Spanish.

*Historical Happenings & Recipe will return next month*

## SOLAR

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the home for several years. But if you plan to sell the home at some point down the road, consider that not all potential buyers will want to maintain a solar system. If you enter a contract to lease the system, carefully review the terms and what those mean if you decide to sell the property.

**Lease or purchase?** Purchasing a solar system outright is expensive, which is why many homeowners opt to lease their solar panels. However, tax credits can typically help cover some of the costs for a new system. Regardless of how you decide to finance the solar system, make sure you get several quotes from qualified contractors.

Speaking of contractors, there are several factors you'll want to discuss with them upfront.

**Can the contractor provide up-to-date documentation?** It may seem obvious but be sure to request proof and documentation of the contractor's licensing, permitting and other credentials. Comb through company reviews, check the contractor's status with the Better Business Bureau, etc.--do your homework on the front end before signing a contract.

**Does the contract seem reasonable and fair?** If you decide to hire a contractor to install solar, carefully read the fine print of the contract. Do the system performance calculations seem realistic? Does the project timeframe sound reasonable? Negotiate the contract terms to fit

your goals and needs.

**Who will maintain the solar panels?** Determining who is responsible for maintaining the solar panels will depend on who owns the system. If you lease the system from a solar installer, it may be their responsibility. Periodically, solar panels need to be cleaned as dirt and debris can impact panel productivity. Parts may also need to be replaced, so it's important to know who will take on these responsibilities.

**How will I work with REC?** Finally, but equally important, you should contact REC if you decide to install solar. The system must be connected to the electric grid, so you'll need to sign an interconnection agreement. We can walk you through the steps, including how our Net Metering Program works. Visit [www.slvrec.com](http://www.slvrec.com) (Services tab) for a general overview and to complete the solar interest form.

For many homeowners, solar panels are a great way to help the environment and save on electric bills--but there are many factors to consider before diving in and installing a system.

As with any major home project, do plenty of research upfront, and contact REC if you have questions or decide to move forward with installation.

We're your local energy partner and can serve as a helpful resource.



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**SCHEDULED MEETINGS**  
Board Meeting: Tuesday, September 26, 9:30 a.m.  
The REC Board of Directors meets the last Tuesday of each month unless otherwise stated. Members are welcome; advance notice required.

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