

## 2019 Year in Review

### Our successes

The past year brought many exciting advancements to San Luis Valley REC and Ciello.

Some of the 2019 highlights include the following: a SCADA upgrade was completed at three substations; this will help keep electric operations, dispatch and fiber online during transmission outages. Following a design, bid and contract process for underground powerline trenching/conduit replacement, 1.2 miles of underground primary wire in the Baca Grande and .5 miles in Casita Park were replaced. This replacement will improve reliability in the area.

Staff determined the facilities needed and staked a three-mile line rebuild for a large load customer in Center; the crew built this in a narrow window showcasing our commitment to members. In addition, improvements were made to our mapping (GIS) to help readability and reduce outage time.

Ciello continued to expand throughout 2019, as the network is now well over 10,000 passings (potential connects), and we have roughly 4,400 accounts. Numerous software and hardware upgrades were completed in 2019. More than 700 Colorado Central Telecom accounts were converted to the Ciello network over the last two years. Our wireless network continued to grow, with over 80 wireless sectors deployed.

Other upgrades included an essential software program that helps troubleshoot Internet issues when customers call in for technical support. We upgraded our backup power in our Network Operations Center giving us much more reliability during outages and weather-related events.

Fiber to the home deployment was completed in the Pearl/Hermit Lakes areas as well as the area around Santa Maria. Additional fiber was installed in the general area around Freeman's Store in Creede as well, and fiber was placed to the top of Agua Ramon.

Nearly 1,150 installs were completed during 2019. Fiber placement was finished on the west half of Monte Vista, as well as in some areas on the north side of town. It was also placed in the area around the Monte Vista Airport, and additional fiber was installed in various parts of Alamosa.

A new rate structure was rolled out in April for SLV REC, causing concern and confusion among some members. The new rate structure introduced a demand rate to residential customers.

While demand has historically been a component of irrigation and large commercial customer energy and demand use

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Photo by Jennifer Alonzo

Annual Christmas Light Parade

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# Focus on our members



## Trees 4 Tomorrow

Two Monte Vista girls started with a dream that has turned into a growing reality— “Trees 4 Tomorrow” was established by 13-year-old Sydney and 10-year-old Jayda Woodke and encompasses students in grades k-12.

The girls’ ultimate goal is to plant trees for the community at Monte Vista parks and schools. Last May the project was set into motion when approximately 200 shrub and tree saplings were planted by students, and a nursery was created behind Monte Vista High School. Colorado State Forest Service officials, especially Forester Sam Scalvo, have been a huge support system and will continue to help the girls as the project moves

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Young REC members, Sydney and Jayda Woodke, presented for the SLV REC employees in January explaining their project and what they hope to accomplish. The presentation was one of many they’ve made throughout the community.

Photo by Jennifer Alonzo

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has transformed in recent years making a residential demand charge practical. With LED lights, smart thermostats, electric cars, solar, battery energy storage, demand-flexible water heaters and countless other new technologies, residential consumption patterns can vary greatly between homes. A demand rate structure more fairly distributes the costs to customers for their impact on the electric grid.

Following a complaint filing with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, new interim rates went into effect on Dec. 1. The biggest change in the interim rates was a reduction in the demand charge and an increase in the kwh charge. The interim rates will be effective through April 1, 2021. In the meantime, we’ll continue to provide opportunities for members to learn more about the new rate structure and provide feedback.

The year also saw personnel changes, as new faces joined our team and old faces moved on to new adventures. Customer service welcomed Nate Pacheco, Vanessa Tapia and Davine Atencio, and Kelby Maestas transitioned out of the office to telecommunications as a technician. Network Engineer Dave Mixa retired from the REC following 20+ years of service; Swapnil Modak came to us all the way from Mumbai, India, as network engineer to take Dave’s place. Ernesto Villalba, formerly a telecommunications technician, joined Swapnil in the office as a network specialist. La Jara area Serviceman

Ruben Heredia took on the role of the Monte Vista area serviceman, and in October, Kevin McCarroll returned to the REC as the La Jara area serviceman. Frank Henningsen joined the REC team as a utility locator. Jennifer Alonzo stepped in as the new marketing and sales coordinator, and Jeff Smith transferred from working as a contractor for Cielo to one of our in-house telecommunication technicians.

Wade Lockhart was welcomed to the board as the member-at-large director, taking over for Mike Rierson, who spent 20 years on the board.

Following our commitment to community, we hosted an engineering intern, who was a local youth headed to college to study engineering. Other community involvement continued throughout the year as well. Employees took part in several career fairs and safety days, introducing students to positions available in the co-op world and presenting electric demonstrations. Once again, we were able to take part in the Creede Balloon Festival with the Touchstone Energy Cooperative balloon; we also lit up Truck 1001 to roll through downtown Alamosa in the annual Christmas Light Parade. REC and Cielo helped sponsor many Valley events and continue to work toward building our communities.

With 2020 starting off strong, we want to take a moment to thank all of our members and customers for being a part of a successful 2019.



## Loren Howard

### Safety—everyone's business

Who doesn't talk about safety? Everyone has a role to play in making the world we live in a safe place. In the Valley, almost everyone thinks about fire safety – making our homes and communities as fire safe as possible within our capabilities. The electric utility industry is no exception and has an inordinately large task of keeping employees safe. Certainly, linemen have a particular responsibility to work safe.

REC spends significant time and money to provide a safe environment for all employees. First, I want to focus on the line crew. Linemen are always working on and around a potentially dangerous environment—live electricity, usually 7,200 volts. It takes special training, equipment and personal safety gear to make the workspace of a lineman safe. Understanding concepts like “minimum approach distance” and “step potential” are examples of specialized training and education required for our crews working on power lines and in substations. These employees have unique personal gear like rubber gloves, rubber sleeves and line coverup that they need and use when work requires being close to energized lines.

All REC employees participate in regular—and in some cases, extensive—first aid training and CPR. Employees in the field may also be required to complete avalanche training, field rescue techniques and traffic control procedures

in order to make their work adequately safe.

In addition to some of the more obvious safety training required at REC, employees regularly engage in evacuation training, hazardous material handling and spill response procedures. In recent years, given the world we live in, training on active shooter response and incident command procedures used during forest fires are now conducted regularly.

So, how can members assist in keeping all REC employees safe? When our crews are working out in public areas, it might be tempting to stop and see what they are doing, but that distracts a lineman and can pull their attention away from the work. At night, during storms and other challenging environmental conditions, please let crews and employees focus on their work. We are all appreciative when power is restored, but it is safer to write a note and mail it into the office, thanking the crew for their work.

Electricity makes our lives easier by doing lots of work for us. Making it safe to use is pretty easy for most users – just pay attention when using it. Keep outlets covered when small children are around; don't overload outlets and circuits by plugging in multiple devices; replace frayed extension cords, and if an appliance has a bad cord, get it replaced by a qualified electrician or destroy it.

Let's all keep electricity in its place and let it work for us.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Your email will be forwarded based on the direction you provide in your subject line.

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# Meet Your Co-op!

## Say hi to our amazing customer care team

Our customer service representatives are the backbone of our cooperative. They are the key connection to our members and customers, and we're proud to have an amazing team representing SLV REC and Cielo.

### Davine Atencio

A new face in the customer service department is Davine, who came to the REC in December. Davine spent numerous years working at Rio Grande County Social Services in Del Norte and was nervous, but excited to make a change. She has two grown children; her son lives in Utah and her daughter in Denver. Davine's youngest son is in eighth grade in Del Norte, and she spends much of her free time following his sports activities and just being a mom. While she's still learning the ropes at the REC, Davine is excited to be here where she's learning something new every day.



### Mary Davis

Mary will hit her five-year mark with the REC in March, previously working two years at Davis Engineering and 16 years at State Farm Insurance. Mary and her husband own a farm, so much of her free time is spent doing farm work. She loves animals, especially horses and enjoys reading when she has time. She also enjoys spending time with her 92-year-old mom, who lives on the farm with them, and her 10-month-old grandson who makes her smile all the time. Her two grown sons live here in the Valley as well. Mary's favorite part about working in customer service at the REC is talking with people; she loves the customer service interaction. She also loves her coworkers; "they are a great team to work with."



### Nate Pacheco

Nate celebrated his one-year anniversary at the REC in January. He previously worked as operations coordinator in the counseling department at Adams State University. Nate loves outdoor activities, staying fit and following his four sons in sports. The boys— 12, eight, four and three— keep him and his wife busy. Nate appreciates that the REC is always evolving and adapting. He enjoys learning new things and keeping up with the changes.



### James Romero

Coming to the REC from Rio Grande Savings & Loan, James will celebrate his five-year anniversary in March. His free time is spent working out, spending time with Jasmine and their two-year-old daughter and fishing. James also loves hot rods and old cars, owning three of his own classics. James appreciates the fast-paced environment in REC's customer service department; he enjoys keeping busy consistently.



### Vanessa Tapia

Vanessa came to the REC in April after working for Conejos County Social Services for three and one-half years. She enjoys doing crafts, camping and fishing, as well as spending time with her son, who is in fourth grade. Vanessa appreciates her coworkers and supervisor at the REC; her work is always busy and exciting. "There's never a dull moment."





## Recipe of the month

### INGREDIENTS

1/2 c. softened butter  
4 oz. softened cream cheese  
1 t. vanilla extract  
2/3 c. granulated sugar  
1-1/4 c. all purpose flour  
About 12 crushed Oreos  
Pink gel food coloring

### VALENTINE CREAM CHEESE OREO COOKIES

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Use a hand mixer to beat butter and cream cheese until light and fluffy (about 2-3 minutes).
3. Mix in vanilla extract and a few drops of pink food coloring.
4. Combine sugar and flour; mix into wet ingredients.
5. Crush Oreos in a large freezer bag and fold them into the cookie dough.
6. Use a tablespoon to scoop out dough, roll into small balls, and place onto baking sheet.
7. Bake for 10-12 minutes and let cool.

## Conservation Corner

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Are you using your fireplace efficiently? Remember to turn down the thermostat when burning a fire, and close the damper when a fire is not burning.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



### TREES

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forward.

This spring the trees will be evaluated to see if they're ready to be planted within the community, and the sisters will organize the planting of at least 400 more saplings. They also hope to dig and transplant rootballs of trees from Forest Service land, pending approval and grant monies.

As their mission continues and community involvement grows, the Woodke girls are hoping for even

## Rate Education

### Explaining demand

The distinction between how much electricity you need right now and how much you need in total over time is important. Imagine you want to fill a swimming pool with water. You could fill it in minutes with a fire hose. Or you could fill it in hours with a trickle from a garden hose. In both cases, you get the same amount of water. But *how much water you get how fast* is quite different, and that difference incurs costs to the system.

That cost to the system is where demand comes in— the cost to deliver *what* the customer wants *and when* they want it.

[rmi.org/residential-demand-charges-next-big-thing-electricity-rate-design](http://rmi.org/residential-demand-charges-next-big-thing-electricity-rate-design)

more support. They could use help with labor; supplies, such as gloves, shovels and soil and letters of support. Financial donations are appreciated too, as many of the grants they'd like to apply for require matching funds.

More information can be found on the Monte Vista School District's website, [monte.k12.co.us](http://monte.k12.co.us) (see link to "Trees 4 Tomorrow" on left side). The girls can be reached at [slvtrees4tomorrow@gmail.com](mailto:slvtrees4tomorrow@gmail.com) or through their dad, Aaron Woodke, at Monte Vista High School, 852-3586.





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POWERING A VITAL VALLEY

P.O. Box 3625  
Monte Vista, CO 81144

February 2020



## POWERING OUR COMMUNITY



Photo by Blain Decker

SLVREC's office is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and will be closed on Feb. 17, 2020 for Presidents' Day.

### ENERGY ASSISTANCE

866-HEAT HELP (866-432-8435)  
[www.energyoutreach.org](http://www.energyoutreach.org)

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### SCHEDULED MEETINGS

Board Meeting: Tuesday, Feb. 25, 9:30 a.m.

The REC Board of Directors meets the last Tuesday of each month unless otherwise stated. Members are welcome; advance notice is required.

This institution is an equal opportunity employer.

## CONGRATS ON YOUR MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES!

REC  
SAN LUIS VALLEY

ciello



Mike Glover  
5 Years



Justin Harrison  
5 Years



Monroe Johnson  
5 Years



Ben Osburn  
5 Years



Rudy Vialpando  
5 Years



Manny Garcia  
15 Years