

## Member engagement

### Residential focus group wraps up

Fifteen of SLV REC's residential members recently took part in a stakeholder engagement process by attending three focus groups. The participants were representative of the entire SLVREC service area and included complainants from the 2019 PUC complaint. Facilitated by Charise Swanson of Hometown Connections, all meetings were conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first meeting, held in September, educated the participants on the electric industry, as well as rate making. Other discussions involved customer service, communication and rates.

Following the meeting, participants were invited to send questions to the facilitator for review and answering by REC staff.

Conversations during the second meeting, held four

weeks later, involved the previous questions, along with SLV REC's responses. Subsequently, participants were once again encouraged to send additional input or

clarifying questions for REC's review. Based on feedback from meeting two, an additional Zoom group was set up for interested participants to learn about REC's most recent cost-of-service study.

In the final meeting, held on Nov. 18, participants were given a draft interim report developed by Charise. The document includes all participant questions, rate input, along with SLV REC's responses and is available for viewing online at [slvrec.com/about-us](http://slvrec.com/about-us) (see "2020 SLV REC Stakeholder Engagement Interim Report" button).

In early 2021 similar focus group meetings will be held with 8-10 agriculture and commercial members.



## Meet your co-op

### McCarroll steps into storekeeper/buyer role

San Luis Valley's REC's Clay McCarroll recently stepped into the role of storekeeper/buyer, following three years as the warehouseman.

Prior to joining REC's team Clay worked as a salesman and warehouseman for American Electric. While there he gained experience in many of the duties he performs for the REC: material purchasing, inventory and warehouse stocking, among others. He also worked as an apprentice electrician for his father's company, Five Star Electric.

As REC's storekeeper/buyer Clay is responsible for maintaining adequate inventory levels and records, ordering and receiving materials for both the electrical and fiber departments, making sure all items are charged correctly and on time for all jobs, reconciling



Clay McCarroll

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# Member education

## Avoiding the energy rush: time of day matters

Did you know that when you use electricity often matters as much as how much electricity you consume?

It's no surprise that electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand, and electric co-ops must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy demands of their members during times of highest energy use, also known as "on-peak hours."

To reduce peak energy demand and save money, many electric co-ops have created a time-of-day (time-of-use) rate program to encourage electricity use during off-peak hours—when energy is less expensive to provide. Similar to saving money by attending a matinee, you can keep more money in your wallet simply by using electricity during an off-peak time period.

Using less on-peak power means lower costs for SLV REC— and ultimately, lower rates for members.

Electric rates based on time of use offer consumers the ability to lower their electricity costs without reducing

the amount of electricity used. By performing some of your daily chores, like running the dishwasher or doing laundry during off-peak hours, you can save on your utility bill. In a similar vein, plug electronic equipment, such as computers, printers, TVs and power tools into a power strip, then turn it off during peak hours.

You can also put technology to work for you. If you have a programmable thermostat, adjust the settings so your heating/cooling system syncs up with the off-peak rate periods. Use automatic timers to run hot tubs, pool pumps, water heaters and other appliances in the same way.

Saving energy can be simple. Remember, by shifting your energy use to off-peak times, you have the power to save on your monthly energy bill. To learn more about why time of day matters, watch a short video by visiting the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/TOUmatters>.

**REC Time-of-Day Hours**  
*Monday-Saturday*  
On-Peak: Noon-10 p.m.  
Off-Peak: 10 p.m.-noon  
*Sunday*  
Off-Peak: All Day

## Conservation Corner

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

**Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy.** Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load). Research the various types to find the best fit for your home.

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

Source: [www.nrel.gov](http://www.nrel.gov)



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"I just wanted to thank you and tell you how pleased I was with the experience I had with you guys setting up my fiber line. I initially talked to James, then Dustin, then Frank came out and installed it. And I can tell you it's first class all the way. Everyone did what they said they would do, and they were pleasant. The customer service couldn't be better—from the front door all the way to the installer!"

*—Steve Taylor, South Fork*

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## Loren Howard

### Getting and staying connected in this 'work remotely' world

In 2012, San Luis Valley Rural Electric began to investigate the possibility of starting a telecommunications subsidiary to bring the much needed connectivity to the SLV. A comprehensive feasibility study was completed in 2012 and follow-up evaluations were conducted in early 2013. Then later in 2013, a pilot installation of fiber to the premise at 20 homes in the Plaza area was completed to further study the practicality of building a fiber to the premise system to deliver the telecommunications services of Internet access and phone service.

This was the start of Cielo. Over the next two years, fiber was installed first in South Fork and the surrounding areas. Then, the challenge of stringing fiber up to Creede was taken on by the REC line crew. To get there, the fiber had to cross the Rio Grande river 13 times with the longest span almost 1,000 feet. With incredible ingenuity, REC linemen completed this rather daunting task and the buildout of fiber in the Creede community began.

Thus, started REC's venture into the world of telecommunications. Over the next few years, the communities of Del Norte, Monte Vista, Center, Moffat, La Jara and Saguache were built out with fiber to the premise, bringing truly world class telecommunication services to the Valley.

Today, Cielo has over 5,000 subscribers to its services and work continues to bring a quality experience to all subscribers. If you are connected via fiber, speeds up to 1,000 Mbps are available. Wireless subscribers can usually get at least 50 Mbps

and in some instances, 100 Mbps. Cielo deployed wireless to bring connectivity more quickly to meet the demand for better Internet access as the most frequent comment/complaint has been "Why can't I be connected now?" Wireless is easier on the front end to deploy but is far more problematic to keep functioning well. There are just too many factors that impact wireless connectivity such as interference from other radio sources and weather which moves antennas out of alignment or causes atmospheric interference. Ultimately, Cielo will be a fiber to the premise system except for a few extraordinary situations.

As the Cielo network has grown, there have been a few growing pains with the need to constantly upgrade network equipment capacity and connectivity to the outside world. Currently, Cielo has four connections including one geographically diverse route to a major hub in Denver. In 2021, a connection to Albuquerque should be in place as well. While continuing to improve the reliability of the Cielo network in the Valley is crucial, it is also vital to improve the reliability and robustness of the connections to the hubs (points of presence – POP) connecting Cielo to the world.

Cielo is here to stay and is committed to bring residents of the San Luis Valley reliable, high speed connectivity to the Internet and phone service in this time when staying at home, working remotely or attending class via video teleconference has become the norm.

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# Got the work-from-home blues?



## Tips offered to help keep you sane

If you joined the masses who began working from home after COVID-19 hit the U.S., or even if you worked from a home office prior to its arrival, you know working from home has its challenges.

As CNBC reported, “It used to be that working remotely was a perk. These days it’s about survival.”

Although statistics vary, an estimated 30 million people have lost jobs during the pandemic so far. For those of us who are fortunate enough to still have a job but now work from home, the days can seem to blend together one into the next.

To keep work and home a little more separate, here are a few good reminders. Even if you have already tried them, they are worth revisiting:

### Try to set a workday schedule and stick to it

A set schedule can help for two extremes: for people who are tempted to work too much (burnout, anyone?) or for those who are tempted by a shortened work day or the compulsion to do laundry or other in-home tasks during work hours.

### Schedule and take breaks

Although it’s tempting to sit at your home desk so long that you have to unstick your legs from the chair, try to schedule a few 5- to 15-minute breaks throughout the day. What is your company’s break policy? Implement it at home. Working nonstop is noble (unless you’re from Sweden) but it actually decreases productivity.

### Actually leave your house

This should go without saying, but as long as you are feeling well, go do something where you can maintain social distancing. Your body needs fresh air and we could all use a change of scenery at least once a day.

### Have a dedicated office space

It is ideal (but not possible for everyone) if you can have your own office digs in a separate and private area of the house. If that’s not possible, try to implement other boundaries, such as covering or moving your workspace

after hours, especially if it’s in a central hub of the home. Theoretically, this helps to keep work and personal life separate.

### Reach out for help if you need it

Talk to your supervisor or utilize your employee assistance program when it gets to be too much. As we all keep hearing, this is uncharted territory and the pandemic has brought new and different challenges.

### Try to create an exercise routine

There probably aren’t too many steps from your desk to your couch, and grocery delivery doesn’t require much movement either. To boost mood and to care for your body, make daily or weekly exercise goals.

Try to find something you enjoy (and are more likely stick with) for some much-needed endorphin release.

### Self-care – what’s that?

For overachievers, self-care can seem like a mirage out in the distance, or, frankly, something for other people. According to job guru Monster.com, 69 percent of employees are experiencing symptoms of burnout while working from home; and, despite that fact, 59 percent are taking less time off than they normally would.



## CLAY

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work orders to verify accuracy and much more.

“Any time you start something new it is all a learning experience. Being flexible and patient are two attributes that have been put to the test [in my new position],” Clay said. “But change and learning curves that come with new things are always challenging— have a good attitude and confidence in yourself then things start to get easier.”

Clay was born and raised in the Valley, graduating from Centauri High School. In his time outside of REC, he enjoys being outdoors— sports, hunting, fishing, farming and ranching. In addition, Clay and his wife have a new daughter.



## Recipe of the month

### INGREDIENTS

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 c. almond flour  
3 large eggs, beaten  
3 c. freshly grated Parmesan, plus more for serving  
2 t. garlic powder  
1 t. onion powder  
2 t. dried oregano  
Vegetable oil  
3/4 c. low-carb sugar-free tomato sauce  
1 1/2 c. shredded mozzarella  
Fresh basil leaves, for topping

### KETO CHICKEN PARMESAN

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Using a sharp knife, cut chicken breasts in half crosswise. Season chicken on both sides with salt and pepper.

2. Place eggs and almond flour in 2 separate shallow bowls. In a third shallow bowl, combine Parmesan, garlic powder, onion powder, and oregano. Season with salt and pepper.

3. Working with one at a time, dip chicken cutlets into almond flour, then eggs, and then Parmesan mixture, pressing to coat.

4. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat 2 tablespoons oil. Add chicken and cook until golden and cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Work in batches as necessary, adding more oil when needed.

5. Transfer fried cutlets to a 9"-x-13" baking dish, evenly spread tomato sauce on each cutlet and top with mozzarella.

6. Bake until cheese is melty, 10 to 12 minutes. If desired, broil until cheese is golden, 3 minutes.

7. Top with basil and more Parmesan before serving.

*Recipe by [www.Delish.com](http://www.Delish.com)*

## Historical happenings

### Late 1937: Easement soliciting began

To speed securing the right-of-way privileges and subscription of stock, the SLV REC board of directors hired "easement solicitors" to go into the field to get permission from landowners to put poles on properties just inside the fence line. Leo Widger of Bowen, E.E. Cochran Jr. of Del Norte, Web Allison of Monte Vista and V. Sherill Clark of La Jara took on this task. For this work, the men were paid \$5/day and five cents per mile

Courtesy Photo







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Monday through Thursday.

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**SCHEDULED MEETINGS**  
Board Meeting: Tuesday, Jan. 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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Application Deadline Approaching

**SCHOLARSHIPS** Feb. 4,  
2021

Details at  
[www.slvrec.com](http://www.slvrec.com)

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