Line Crews Keep the Lights On

A NOTE FROM
CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TREY TEAFF

ELECTRICITY TRAVELS ALONG AN INTRICATE NETWORK OF WIRES and poles to power our homes and businesses. Most of the time, it’s a seamless journey, but occasionally, the path of electricity is disrupted by obstacles like fallen tree branches, animals or car accidents. When that happens, Wood County Electric Cooperative’s lineworkers are ready to restore the connection no matter the weather or time of day.

We couldn’t carry out our mission without the daily dedication of our line crews. It’s a demanding job on the front line of our co-op that often requires working around the clock in challenging conditions to serve our members and communities. They are first responders who get us through some of our darkest hours. We count on them to power our lives, day in and day out.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association officially acknowledged the tireless efforts of this talented group with this 2014 resolution:

Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on;
Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure;
Whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents; and
Whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen;

Therefore be it resolved that NRECA recognize the second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day and make available to electric cooperatives materials and support to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America’s electric cooperatives.

We proudly join with NRECA and cooperatives across the country to honor lineworkers and show our appreciation and respect for the service they provide for our members.

Wood County EC’s lineworkers, as well as those from across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition. We invite our members to take a moment to thank a lineman for the work they do. Leave a message for them on our Facebook page and use the hashtag #ThankALineworker to show your support for the men and women who light our lives.
Help us keep our linemen safe.

Electric cooperative workers find all kinds of no-nos on utility poles, such as yard sale signs, basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes, lights and birdhouses. These obstructions are dangerous for lineworkers. Unwelcome clutter on utility poles can compromise safety equipment, leaving workers vulnerable to electrocution. Anyone posting items on utility poles also is at risk of exposure to thousands of volts of electricity pulsing overhead. Always stay at least 10 feet away from utility lines. Think before you post that sign!

Wood County Electric Cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.
Mineola Art Starts Here

THE MINEOLA LEAGUE OF THE ARTS HAS BEEN LENDING THE
town of Mineola colorful and cultural flair since its 1988
charter. The founders established the league as a way to
expand interest and education in the arts and as a forum for
communication and exchange of ideas between artists and
interested community participants. In its three decades of
existence, MLOTA has vibrantly contributed to Mineola’s
reputation as a charmingly arty town.

Nonprofit organizations like MLOTA don’t get very far
without the labor and financial backing of a community of vol-
unteers and a suitable place to call home. At first, MLOTA
members met in the back of a local store. Then in 1990, the
Meredith Foundation purchased the vacated Central Elemen-
tary School building and gifted it to MLOTA. With classrooms
and an auditorium area, it was a perfect fit. And more recently,
to accommodate growth, MLOTA has expanded its footprint
with an additional building.

MLOTA currently has a roster of 225 members who come
from Mineola, Wood County and many neighboring counties
and towns. With all of the valuable opportunities to learn,
practice, sell art and socialize, it’s not surprising that the
league also has members who live in more far-flung areas like
Chandler and Flint. Because of the league’s great reputation in
the art community, show participants come from even farther,
with some traveling from out of state.

Since day one, MLOTA has functioned through groups
called guilds, each dedicated to a specific art form. In the
beginning, guilds were formed for clogging, theater, writing
and even Toastmasters. The popularity of individual guilds has
ebbed and flowed over the decades. Currently, MLOTA has five
guilds: fiber arts, quilting, line dancing, painting and sculpture.
These guilds meet on a regular basis, and a representative from
each serves on the league’s board.

MLOTA President Jan Sokolosky, along with Vickie Steed,
programs vice president, recently sat down to talk about the
league and its current projects. They explained that while the
guilds may be narrowly named, each includes several forms of
similar art. For example, the fiber arts guild includes spinning,
knitting, weaving, crochet, embroidery, jewelry and crafting.

“We kind of figure everything in the world is some kind of
fiber,” Steed said. “So if it doesn’t fit into one of the other
groups, we lump it into fiber arts.”

Other guilds also welcome variety. For example, the
painters guild, which practices art making with watercolor,
acrylic, pastels, pencil and other media also embraces photography. The sculpting guild works with clay and ceramics but also welcomes an accomplished woodcarvers group.

According to Sokolosky and Steed, if there’s sufficient interest in a craft or activity that relates to the arts, then MLOTA will find a place for it within a guild or consider adding another guild.

“Just like quilting, there are old, traditional things that we don’t want to die out,” Steed said. “We want to ensure future generations learn about it. We’re not tied to just doing the things we do now. If somebody comes to us and says there’s an art form or a craft form [they] want to learn how to do, if we can find enough people interested in it, we’ll get it started.”

One of the major benefits of belonging to MLOTA is that members can join the activities of any guild that interests them. Different guilds, and groups within those guilds, meet regularly at different times of the week. And they each hold workshops, lessons and demonstrations related to their specific areas of interest.

Another valuable feature of league membership is that every member is allowed to use any guild’s room and specialized equipment and supplies to work on projects. For example, if a member is working on a quilt and wants to use the fabric cutters and table in the quilting guild room, they can do that anytime MLOTA is open and the guild is not having a class or meeting there. Similarly, members have access to the painters guild’s mat cutters, easels and other media supplies; the fiber arts guild’s looms, spinning wheels and drying racks; and the sculpting guild’s pottery, kilns and other equipment.

As Sokolosky pointed out, each guild is outfitted with specialized equipment. Members who have always wanted to try their hand at a particular art form can use a guild’s equipment before they make a large personal investment, even if they aren’t part of that guild. It’s an inexpensive way for members to explore and dabble in an art form before taking it to the next level.

What’s more, each guild is filled with experts who are always willing to encourage and help beginners and show them how to use materials and equipment.

Beyond its guild-related activities, MLOTA’s offerings include yoga classes and a stained glass artisan group. And while not an official part of MLOTA, the local Weight Watchers group also meets at the facility.

With expansive programs for all ages, the league also offers

1. Summer children’s programs culminate with a colorful show and tell.

2. League members hang their creations on the walls of the center.

3. Members of the painters guild meet regularly to work on their projects.
opportunities for nonmembers to view art and participate in making art, such as Sampler Days, held in August.

Guild instructors offer a variety of classes that cost $5–$10. All supplies are included, and participants keep their artwork. In the summer, MLOTA hosts a pair of popular art camps for kids ages 6–12 and 13–18. The camps are process- and project-oriented, and the campers are taught the basics, such as how to combine colors and the importance of composition. Each guild is represented, so one day the students may weave on a loom and the next day paint with watercolors. As with the Sampler Days classes, all of the supplies are included, and the participants take home what they make—after a show and tell with their families. It’s such a beloved program, Steed said, that campers have returned year after year. “And when they get too old for it, they even come back as helpers,” she said.

At the other end of the age spectrum, most of the more active league members are retirees; one very active painting guild member is 96 years old. While the league serves as a social outlet and meeting place for some of these members, it also offers an opportunity for emerging artists to explore latent talents and for accomplished artists to continue with their crafts.

Because of the freedom retirees have, most guild activities are scheduled during MLOTA’s daytime hours of operation. But the painters guild does have an evening painting event, on the first Thursday of each month. Occasionally there are also nighttime line dancing classes and weekend workshops. A comprehensive calendar is posted on the league’s website, mlota.org, and each guild also has a section listing its activities.

To promote the arts to the public and showcase the work of members and other area artists, MLOTA produces several public events throughout the year. Every April, the league hosts its Fine Art Show, which includes cash prizes and ribbon awards. In the fall, the two-day-long Quilt Celebration draws quilters from throughout the region. And this June, the woodcarvers will hold their first regional show. There is also the much-anticipated annual artisans Christmas bazaar, where members sell their works, with proceeds split between

2020 ANNUAL EVENTS

Art Show and Sale, April 10–11
Regional Wood Carvers Show, June 6
Children’s Art Camp (ages 6–12), July 6–10
Teen Art Camp (ages 13–18), July 20–24
Line Dance Kick-in, September 19
Quilt Show, October 9–10
Fiber Arts Expo, November 12–14
Christmas Bazaar, December 5–6
MLOTA and the artists.

As league members learn, make and perform, they don’t just keep their talents to themselves. They participate in community events on a regular basis. You can find them at local festivals, painting faces, high-stepping in parades and making items to donate to foster children. This year, they plan to host a dinner for the first responders of Wood County.

MLOTA’s focus on the arts is not one-dimensional, nor is its influence on the region. As Mineola Mayor Kevin White puts it, “Our town is altogether quaint, artistic, historical, friendly and avant-garde. I guess that makes Mineola eclectic and fun, which is one of the big attractions for our thriving tourism. The Mineola League of the Arts and the people behind it are major contributors to that vibe through the classes they offer, children’s art camps, and the quilt and art shows they hold. They are a major contributor to the heartbeat of Mineola.”

Interested in leading a more artful life? Just start here.