

# OTEC Annual Meeting

By *B. Marie Jarreau-Danner*

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) is now one of the largest cooperatives in Oregon and is showing continued growth, according to OTEC Board President Peggi Timm.

During their annual meeting in May, members of OTEC and its Board of Directors gathered to share good news from the past year's activities and discuss the future.

Peggi included a brief history of OTEC in her presentation. She also shared information from the annual audit, covered the continued progress being made in providing economical, dependable, professional service to its members, and spoke of OTEC's continued effort to participate in the support of its local communities by offering a variety of contributions.

Ballots were tallied from the co-op's election, and those attending the 21st annual meeting shared music, laughter and a luncheon.

Peggi said there are now 29,350 electric meters in the OTEC system. Just 20 years ago, the fledgling corporation held its first meeting and had to scrounge for two more members to make the quorum.

Today, OTEC is "a sound organization with a strong financial base and outstanding management and employees," Peggi said.

Though OTEC is a not-for-profit corporation, some \$4 million in margins were accrued last year. All funds collected above the cost of running the business are called margins (or profits). Margins are assigned directly back to OTEC's members/consumers each year.

Peggi said OTEC's bankers require some profits be realized. About \$2 million was returned to members last year and it is anticipated a similar amount will be re-

*Good news,  
good food and  
good entertainment*



turned this year.

Addressing the members, OTEC General Manager Cliff Stewart said total investments now stand at roughly \$120 million.

"That's your investment," Cliff told the members. "It's your investment in your cooperative that can't be taken away from you."

Corporate expenditures also were discussed—expenditures not required, but which OTEC's governing body feels are necessary for the health of the co-op: supporting the community.

Some of that support comes in the form of hundreds of hours of valuable time donated to community events by OTEC employees.

The co-op also provides monetary support.

To provide assistance with electric bills last year, \$28,000 went to low-income families. This year, assistance to low-income families will increase to \$130,000, Peggi said.

More than \$50,000 in cash and work-in-kind donations were provided to communities. While 18

\$1,000 scholarships were approved for OTEC family members last year, this year 20 \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded.

"We'll also send four selected youths to Washington, D.C., for a week to see high-level democracy in action and learn how cooperatives relate to that," she said.

To support students and the environment, OTEC will install photovoltaic systems at three area schools to help students understand solar power and related environmental concerns.

Peggi also addressed the subject of green power, which has become the new buzzword in many circles.

Linked with contentious concerns about global warming, she said green power is a serious subject for everyone.

As a cooperative, OTEC purchases nearly 100 percent of its wholesale power from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) as a preferred customer.

"We purchase this hydropower at a very low cost not matched by anyone else," she said.

OTEC is participating in power supply planning to prepare for the next contract period. New power sales contracts will take effect in 2011.

"Please rest assured this board of directors spends a great deal of time studying and learning about different sources of alternative power," Peggi said. "The board is well aware of our governor's goal of 25 percent green power by 2025, but we will not jump at every new proposal or idea that comes around."

"Oregon Trail Electric Co-op will do our very best to make sure you continue to enjoy dependable, friendly and professional service at the lowest possible cost."

She said the time between 2008 and 2015 will be critical for power consumers nationwide.



*Above, OTEC board member Bob Cargill pulls a raffle ticket during the annual meeting. Opposite page, Board President Peggi Timm addresses the members.*

Peggi noted maintaining local control over the decisions made about the power provider and its management is a valuable asset that provides operational strength and consistency to OTEC.

With the last of the votes counted during the meeting, Stanley Weishaar and David Baum of Union County and Peggi Timm of Baker County all won their bids for re-election to their respective three-year-terms to the board of directors.

During the meeting, OTEC Employee of the Year honors were presented to Judy Crisafi of the Burns office and Susie Snyder of the John Day office.

Those in attendance did not hesitate to show their appreciation for the hip country and cool oldies music performed by Sweet Medicine.

OTEC employee Frank Carlson joined the band on occasion, pleasing the audience with several Elvis and Roy Orbison tunes.

Guest entertainer Kathy Moss spoke of perseverance and the spirit of life in the sagebrush land through her original prose and poetry.

She also treated the audience to a personal story of Harney County character Merlin Rupp, which illustrated strength of character and determination even when others offer little encouragement.

It's a tale about a horse and a hard

landing and taking charge of the future from there.

More than 200 people attended the event in the Grant County Pavilion in John Day. With the official business portion of the meeting completed, attendees were treated to a luncheon of Mexican food in observance of Cinco de Mayo. OTEC employees served the meals and presented many raffle and door prizes.

Of the 60 prizes awarded, Gerry Montgomery of La Grande won the meeting's first door prize: a DVD/VCR player. The grand prize, a 23-inch LCD flat-screen color television, went to Matt Snook of La Grande. ■