

ANNUAL MEETING 2016

Co-op members re-elect incumbents, hear business update, listen to music and take home door prizes during successful Annual Meeting



1) More than 500 members and guests crowd the Sons of Hermann Hall in Giddings during Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting in May.

2) Linemen Kenneth Roush, left, Doug Schlemmer and David Davis spoke to members about the 60-plus pounds of safety gear

they wear in the field and how they do their jobs safely.

3) General Manager Mark Rose greets Shea Wright Bennett of Red Rock and her niece, Baylee Shed, 4, left, and 15-month-old daughter Ashlynn Bennett. 'It's always special

to see and talk to so many of our members,' Rose said.

4) Roberta Dannar of Burton won a truck retired from Bluebonnet's fleet.

5) Annie Jenke of Giddings was the grand prize winner, taking home a Cub Cadet zero-

turn riding lawn mower.

6) Deputy General Manager Matt Bentke tells members that Bluebonnet's finances are sound and the co-op is prepared for predicted residential and commercial growth.

Sarah Beal photos

By Will Holford

About 500 Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative members and guests attended the co-op's lively Annual Meeting May 10 at the Sons of Hermann Hall in Giddings. Country music from steel guitarist Bert Rivera and the Ramblers opened the meeting and it ended with a drawing for 26 door prizes, including a Cub Cadet riding mower.

"It's always special to see and talk with so many of our members," said Bluebonnet General Manager Mark Rose. "Turnout for this year's Annual Meeting exceeded our expectations. That and the wonderful, knowledgeable questions and comments folks had while I visited with them before the meeting shows how engaged our mem-

bers are in their co-op."

A key part of the Annual Meeting was election of four members to Bluebonnet's Board of Directors. In the only contested race, incumbent Director Kathleen Handy, District 3 in Bastrop County, defeated two challengers — Dustin Haisler of Elgin, and Frank Skube of Bastrop. On May 31, Handy unexpectedly died at her home in Bastrop. (See obituary Page 20C). The seat will remain open until the Board decides how to address the vacancy.

Three incumbents were unopposed for re-election: Chairman Ben Flencher, who represents District 5 in Bureson County; Vice Chairman Kenneth Mutscher, who represents District 7 in Washington County; and, Director Milton Shaw, who represents District 1 in Caldwell, Gonzales, Guadalupe and Hays counties. In accordance with Bluebonnet's bylaws, all three were elected by general consent.

"It's an honor to serve our members and a testament to our Board's performance that all four directors who were up for election this year were re-elected, three of whom were unopposed," said Flencher. "But Kat's

death leaves a hole on the Board and in our hearts. We will carefully consider the best way to honor her memory and fill the seat her death has left."

Bluebonnet's Board consists of 11 member-elected directors who serve staggered, three-year terms. One-third of the Board is up for election each year.

Flencher told co-op members that despite the oil and gas industry slowdown, Bluebonnet's 14-county service area is experiencing substantial commercial and residential growth that is expected to continue.

"We will see significant growth in our communities," Flencher said. "We know what's coming and are ready to accommodate the needs and challenges associated with growth. There is no better utility than Bluebonnet at working with commercial and residential developers and new members."

During the business portion of the Annual Meeting, the co-op's Deputy General Manager Matt Bentke explained how much and where the commercial and residential growth is occurring. He also compared

Bluebonnet's electric rates with other Central Texas cooperatives and reported the success of the recent \$3 million Bluebonnet Community Grants program. In addition, Bentke said the recently completed annual Bluebonnet member survey showed 95 percent of co-op members have a positive opinion of Bluebonnet and 94 percent rated its service excellent or good.

For the fourth consecutive year, Bluebonnet gave away one of its service trucks recently retired from the co-op's fleet. Roberta Dannar of Burton won the 2007 Chevrolet C1500, extended cab, two-wheel drive truck. Dannar's name was drawn at random from among 6,298 Bluebonnet members who participated in this year's Board election, either by submitting a proxy or voting in person at the Annual Meeting.

Dannar will put her "new" truck to good use moving and hauling things at Eleven Oaks RV Park, her family's business on Texas 237.

"I am super excited," Dannar said. "I don't usually win things and I really needed a truck, so it works out perfectly." ■