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Phone Numbers: 406-467-2526 or 1-800-452-7516

Website: www.sunriverelectric.coop

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Ripples

APRIL 2025

SREC lineman helps bring power to a remote village

EACH day many of us flip on a light switch without a thought, but in a remote village in Guatemala, SREC Lineman David Kelleher spent several minutes explaining how to do just that to a man who's never had power in his home.

In February, Kelleher traveled with a group of linemen representing the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association to Guatemala to bring power to the village of Cocolitos, and to show the locals how to use it.

When David returned to work everyone had questions. Here is our co-worker interview with him.

Through David's eyes:

Q: Why did you want to go on this trip?

A: To experience a new culture, change lives of others, and I felt like it would give me the gift of sharing my outlook on life. Encountering communities that don't have electricity undoubtedly changed my perspective on life here at home.



Sun River Electric Cooperative Lineman David Kelleher spent several weeks in Guatemala helping a Montana crew to bring power to a remote village. | **SREC PHOTO**

Working in Guatemala:

Q: You worked with a crew from there – were they linemen or just residents?

A: I worked with linemen, groundmen and local residents. All of whom worked just as hard as us, if not harder!

Q: Did they have tools or equipment?

A: They had one flatbed truck, slings and ropes to climb, machetes, and a single hand-powered drill bit.

Tell us about the project:

Q: How many miles of line did you build?

A: Approximately two miles of line. Some ravines had spans over 1,500 ft. We used a drone in some parts of the ravines due to the depth and rivers.

Q: What was the biggest difference setting a pole or connecting wires compared to here?

A: We climbed all of them! There were no pre-drilled holes and we hand

See GUATEMALA, next page

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KELLEHER

Continued from page 5

dug anchors. Local co-op workers hand dug the pole holes. There were no buckets and we had to sag each span off of every pole.

The village you powered:

Q: What was the population of the village?

A: There is no actual count of people, but my personal estimate would be around 75 people. There were about 10 kids in the school. They start school at 6:30 a.m. and end their day between 1 and 2 p.m. The school is K-8, for high school education they must go to the nearest city.

Q: What was considered an average home?

A: A good home had rough wood floors or concrete. Beds were considered good if they had a mosquito net. Most homes had dirt floors, gaps in joints and Adobe falling off.

Q: What was the reference to the light switch – is it common for them to not have power in their homes?

A: Most people knew how lights worked. But there were some who lived in the village or higher on the mountain who never had electricity, and they had no idea how it worked. Their homes were dark and they did not speak English, so we showed them how they would flip on the light switch with a game of charades and a headlamp.

Q: Do homes have plumbing and water?

A: Mostly no, some homes had spring water that was piped into their home with half-inch pipe.

Q: How do they communicate with other villages without phones and computers?

A: Another thing we take for granted, we can communicate so easily. They don't really have a mail system and if you want to talk to someone in another village, you physically go there and talk to them. 364349

Q: What do the residents do to earn



ABOVE: SREC Lineman David Kelleher and the other Montana linemen pose for a picture.

BELOW: One student from Cocalitos, Guatemala, was so thankful for the Montana linemen who provided electricity for her home and school, that she asked to hug each one, including SREC Lineman David Kelleher.



money and make a living?

A: Most locals farmed and ranched. They raised corn for tortillas, and cattle for milk and beef. Some raised sugar cane to sell at local markets.

Q: Do they grow their own vegetables and raise animals for meat/milk/eggs?

A: Small gardens were rare to see. There were lots of chickens, ducks, turkeys and a few Guinea hens. They mostly raised goats for milk.

Q: Do they have markets or stores?

A: There were several small “markets” like convenience stores. There were markets on the sides of the road selling tortillas, fruit, melons and avocados.

Q: What is the main mode of transportation there?

A: Motorcycles, small pickups and SUVs.

Q: What is the biggest challenge they face, living in such a remote area?

A: The big challenge for the people who lived in Cocolitos is the isolation from a city. They were separated by one terrible road. The schoolteacher would walk to work if the road was too wet. Kids would walk about 1.5 hours if they lived outside the village.

The weather, food and hotel:

Q: While you were gone it was very cold here – what was the weather like there?

A: When we left home it was approximately -20 degrees. The high in Gualán was about 90 degrees with 90-100 percent humidity.

Q: What did you eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner?

A: Breakfast: eggs, pancake, omelet; Lunch: chicken, bread, tortillas, nuts; Dinner: plantains, steak, chicken, tortillas, bread.

Q: What was your favorite food in Guatemala?



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HAVE you recently purchased new appliances?

Sun River Electric Cooperative offers rebates for household appliances to our members. If you purchase an Energy-Star-compliant clothes washer or dryer, dishwasher, refrigerator or freezer, you are eligible to receive a \$25 rebate. Just download the rebate form from the website: www.sunriverelectric.coop, fill it out, attach a copy of the receipt and send it to SREC or fill out the information on the rebate page and attach a copy of the receipt and submit it electronically. The application will be reviewed, and the \$25 credit



will be applied to your billing account. For a listing of Energy-Star-rated appliances, check out its website: www.energystar.gov.

If you purchase an electric water heater, you may qualify for a \$100 rebate. The water heater must be at least 90-percent efficient, and at least 40-gallon capacity. The rebate form is also on the SREC website. Simply download it, fill it out and attach a copy of the receipt.

Rebate forms must be submitted within 90 days of purchase. If you have any questions, call Christy at Sun River Electric, 467-2526 or 1-800-452-7516.

RM

Continued from previous page

Q: What was your favorite food in Guatemala?

A: Shrimp – seafood from a restaurant in Rio Dulce.

Q: Did your hotel have modern amenities?

A: Our hotel was modern; it was about an hour from the village in the City of Gualan. They had showers, a/c, laundry, restaurants and clean beds. We only had one sheet for a blanket, but we didn't need more.

One person who made an impression on you, why:

David: The local interpreter named Mynor (Minor). A hard-working professor who helps on these trips to see his native country, and help those less fortunate. He takes a pay cut to translate for us while leaving his family with three young kids to help make these projects possible.

RM

APRIL 18, 2025

HAPPY LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY

TO ALL OUR SUN RIVER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LINEMEN!

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