



Information from 2010 RERC Annual Conference

Here is a quick review of the event if you missed attending the RERC Annual Conference in St. Louis. This gathering was all about “*Strategies for Your Customer Efficiency Programs*”, with an information-packed [agenda](#).

With every speaker representing an electric company or cooperative, attendees gave the event high marks. The photos here tell a portion of the story. Also, the feedback from attendees (below) was gleaned from comments listed on the Conference evaluation form:



Entrance to Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet

- “*Best conference I have ever attended on topics*”.
- “*Great job to Richard and Dot on putting on an excellent conference*”.
- “*First time attending, conference very well planned, looking forward to coming again*”.



(L to R) Harry Ruth, Bill Andrew & Mike Fuller



(L to R) Keith Emerson talks with Steve Shoot, while Debbie Rementer visits with Bob Behlke



Viewing Central Electric Power’s Display Walls are (L to R) Bob Behlke, Mark Newbold, Bob Snyder & Steve Wallenwine

Again this year, RERC had the pleasure of honoring both programs and people who serve as an example to others for their efforts and leadership. A write-up on the recipients (listed below) of RERC’s *Distinguished Service Award* and *Silver Switch Award* is shown in the following paragraphs.

Aaron Ridenour of **Prairie Power** (IL) - *Distinguished Service Award (Elec. Cooperative Sector)*

Mark Kingland of **Alliant Energy** (IA) - *Distinguished Service Award (Investor-Owned Sector)*

TLC Safe Electricity Program (Molly Hall and the Energy Education Council) – *Silver Switch Award*

This national conference represented the 57th consecutive annual event sponsored by this organization. During the Business Meeting portion of the Awards Luncheon, Chairman Mickey Miller led the vote to usher-in new Board member **Max VanSkiver**. Outgoing Board member **Rolland Skinner** was recognized for over 20 years of service to RERC. For the Business Mtg. Minutes, [click here](#).

Award Recipients Honored at the Conference

I. Silver Switch Award:

Presented to:

Energy Education Council
Safe Electricity “TLC” Education
Program

The *Safe Electricity* program is a national education campaign that has used innovative methods and personal stories to expand public awareness of electrical hazards. Originally launched in 2001, this ongoing program employs a diverse array of multimedia outlets to keep electrical safety in the public eye. It uses radio and television public service announcements (PSAs), billboards and print PSAs, timely news releases and social media websites to multiply the Safe Electricity message.



Molly Hall, representing all those involved in the TLC Safety Education Program, receives the Silver Switch Award from RERC Chair Mickey Miller.

All of these methods are supported by www.SafeElectricity.org, the program’s website. There, viewers can access live power line demonstrations, streamed videos, and print-ready articles. An extensive library of safety resources and information is also available, with some targeted to specific audiences such as youth, homeowners, farmers, teachers, and even a Spanish safety section.

During 2007, the TLC (Teach, Learn, Care) campaign was born. Members of Safe Electricity learned of 12-year old Caitlyn Mackenzie’s tragic death near the family’s swimming pool. While still wet, Caitlyn touched a spotlight containing an electrical fault and she was electrocuted.

The group felt that sharing personal stories like this, told by loved ones and survivors, would touch the hearts of a wide audience. It would motivate many who viewed the material to teach others about electrical safety. Thus the theme for TLC: “Teach what you know. Learn what you need to. Care enough to share it with those you love. Give them TLC.”

Additional personal stories from survivors of overhead power line incidents have followed. Homeowner Shawn Miller’s story of surviving a power line accident but losing his left hand and forearm was aired 27,000 times by broadcast stations in Illinois alone. These and other real life incidents in the TLC campaign prove the power of awareness in saving lives.

The Safe Electricity program was created by the Energy Education Council, an association formed in 1952 of electric power suppliers, the University of Illinois and other allies. As others became aware of Safe Electricity’s success, municipalities and utilities beyond Illinois saw the value of becoming partners. The program now has about 400 partners in 20 states. The Rural Electricity Resource Council is proud to recognize this outstanding program with the 2010 Silver Switch Award.

II. Distinguished Service Award: (Investor-Owned Utility Sector)

Presented to:

Mr. Mark Kingland

Technical Sales Support Project Manager

Alliant Energy Company
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

In his duties for Alliant Energy Company, Mr. Mark Kingland specializes in helping commercial and agricultural businesses with energy management, auditing of energy use and electric rate comparisons. Kingland has been with Alliant Energy since 2004, first as an Agricultural Representative working with farmers and agribusinesses. In 2008 he was promoted to Project Manager where he supervises others and works with larger agribusiness and industrial customers on energy-efficiency projects.

Kingland is a 1980 graduate of Iowa State University with a degree in Agriculture. In addition to his full-time job, he participates in a third generation farming operation in partnership with his brother. Since coming to Alliant Energy, Mark has been instrumental in developing a nationally recognized agricultural energy-efficiency program for the utility. He manages a team of Agricultural Field Reps who work one-on-one with customers in analyzing and implementing efficient equipment and process improvements.

During his interactions with customers, Mark identified a lack of awareness in grain drying and management practices that directly relate to energy use. He felt it revealed a genuine need for customer education in drying and handling processes that could not only improve product quality, but also affect energy consumption and operating costs.

As a solution, Kingland designed and coordinated a series of half-day informational seminars to assist farmers and grain elevator personnel. The response by customers was overwhelming, with "sold out crowds" at the first two workshops in 2009. Mark led the discussion using a PowerPoint presentation to cover grain drying and storage; effective use of aeration fans; the advantages and disadvantages of different equipment; and utility rates.

Elevator managers brought their operations and financial staff to the workshops. Post-event evaluations showed that attendees were impressed with the information provided. Kingland was recognized for his ability to convey essential concepts in an easy-to-understand and down-to-earth style.

The RERC is proud to join his other supporters in recognizing Mark Kingland for outstanding efforts by awarding him the Distinguished Service Award.



Mark Kingland (L) with Alliant Energy in Iowa, receives the Distinguished Service Award from RERC Chair Mickey Miller.

II. Distinguished Service Award

(Rural Electric Cooperative Sector)

Presented to:

Mr. Aaron Ridenour

Manager-Marketing/Economic Development

Prairie Power, Inc.
Jacksonville, Illinois

This year's recipient within the Rural Electric Cooperative sector is known for his caring commitment and dedicated efforts to helping others. Mr. Aaron Ridenour has been involved in economic development within the central Illinois area throughout his career. With a friendly personality and willing attitude, he continues to apply his skills and knowledge to assist businesses in the region.

In his position as Manager of Marketing and Economic Development at the G&T level, Aaron works closely with member cooperatives to reach common goals. His ability to foster valuable relationships with state agencies, businesses firms and funding sources has been an asset to Prairie Power and to the region.

The accomplishments cited by those who nominated Ridenour include:

- ♦ Authored and received approval for eight USDA Rural Economic Development Loans, and two Rural Development Grants totaling over \$7,000,000.
- ♦ Obtained four Participation Loans through the G&T for businesses served by distribution cooperative members, totaling \$600,000.
- ♦ Assisted 36 cooperative member businesses with expansion/locations totaling over 1,300,000 square feet and creating/retaining over 1,650 jobs.
- ♦ Led the efforts in 2009 that resulted in \$4,382,611 in electric sales from economic development projects, with cumulative sales since 1998 totaling over \$13,696,498.
- ♦ From loans and grants he secured, over \$40,000,000 in private investment has been leveraged.

"In addition to Aaron's professional accomplishments, he always demonstrates a *can do* attitude and pleasant, cooperative and positive disposition in working with co-workers, economic development allies, and business investors" says Jim Coleman, CEO of Shelby Electric Cooperative. Aaron has served unselfishly on several Boards and in leadership positions with local, regional and national organizations and business associations.

As illustrated by the letters from his supporters, Ridenour continues to be a positive example to those around him. Our congratulations to Aaron Ridenour on being selected to receive the Distinguished Service Award. #



Aaron Ridenour (L) with Prairie Power G&T in Illinois, poses with his Distinguished Service Award and RERC Chair Mickey Miller.