It’s much more than a wire

My morning and evening commutes provide a serene chance to let my mind wander in whatever direction it pleases. It’s my own little sanctuary of time to clear my thoughts before the day begins or after it ends so that I can devote my full attention to what lies ahead of me either at work or at home. While this sounds like a great concept, I’ll be the first to admit that it doesn’t always work out in practice.

You can ask anyone who works in this industry, especially within the operations sector, and they will tell you that no matter where they go, they are constantly looking up. Not necessarily at the beauty of the surroundings—no, they are looking at the power lines. It never fails. I can be on the way to the beach or in the mountains during vacation time with my family, and I can’t help but look at the power lines as we’re driving down the road. I’m constantly comparing the structures and designs to that of Southern Pine Electric.

On a recent morning trip into the office, I caught myself eyeing a Southern Pine three-phase line that runs along Highway 18 in Ranken County, and I reflected on what those lines actually do. Sure, everyone runs along Highway 18 in Rankin County, and I can’t help but look at the power lines as we’re driving down the road. I’m constantly comparing the structures and designs to that of Southern Pine Electric.

Distribution power lines originate at a substation, and from there follow routes along major highways, through wooded swamps or down bumpy dirt roads until they eventually reach a delivery point. That point could be a multimillion-dollar industry or the simplest of homes, but regardless of the destination, the product is the same—or is it? For a member of Southern Pine Electric, that product is significantly more.

At Southern Pine, those lines have brought existence to our members. They established the roots for generations of families throughout our service territory who might have left if the REA (Rural Electrification Administration) had not brought electricity to their farms all those years ago. Those lines provided the foundation for economic development in our communities, which changed the societal landscape forever.

Most important, those lines provide security in knowing that in the future our children and grandchildren will not have to do without what has now become a basic necessity for prosperity in our community. You see, I would argue that those are not power lines—they are in fact lifelines that provide power to the rural areas of the state that were forgotten by profit-minded utilities. They represent a vision that in 1938 led to the creation of Southern Pine Electric. The decision was made to make a difference, and through the hard work and dedication of directors, employees and members alike, those lifelines were established.

This year, Southern Pine celebrates our 80th anniversary. It’s hard not to wonder in awe of how this association was built and what it has become. Over the years, faces and processes have changed, but one constant remains the same. We will forever be committed to bringing the power to the lives of our members.

Southern Pine Electric now accepting applications for 2019 Mississippi Youth Leadership Program

Southern Pine Electric will sponsor two deserving high school juniors from within our service territory to participate in the 2019 Mississippi Youth Leadership Program. This program is sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi. It is an excellent opportunity for area students to learn about electric power cooperatives and how they operate within our region.

Applications for the program have been sent out to area high schools. Interested students should contact their school counselor. Due to limited space, only two nominations are accepted from each school. Home school students are encouraged to apply by contacting Gwen Creel at gcreel@southernpine.coop or 601-452-8127.

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