

# ANNUAL MEETING 2015



By Will Holford

**B**luebonnet Electric Cooperative members celebrated the past and present, and got a glimpse into the future during the co-op's Annual Meeting, May 12, at the Sons of Hermann Hall in Giddings.

Bluebonnet's Board Chairman Ben Flencher reported that, since last year's Annual Meeting, the co-op has settled nearly all of the lawsuits stemming from the Bastrop County fires in 2011. Though limited to what could be disclosed by settlement agreements, Flencher told members that Bluebonnet was successful in defending its members and the co-op.

"We had a successful legal strategy that was fought hard and well executed," Flencher told 450 co-op members and guests during the meeting. "I'm proud to tell you that Bluebonnet came out of the lawsuits in great shape. In fact, we came out ahead, largely because of the support from our members and the communities we serve."

Flencher also congratulated Bluebonnet's three incumbent directors, Richard Schmidt, Suanna Tumlinson and James Kershaw, who were unopposed in this year's board election and, according to Bluebonnet's bylaws, were thus re-elected by general consent. Schmidt represents District 1, which includes Caldwell, Gonzales, Guadalupe and Hays counties. Tumlinson represents District 2, which includes parts of Travis County. Kershaw represents District



2



6



7

3, which includes Bastrop County.

"This was the second year in a row that our incumbent directors were unopposed," Flencher said. "That's a great testament to their leadership and our members' confidence in them."

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.

Matt Bentke, Bluebonnet's deputy general manager, updated attendees on the co-

op's operational and financial strengths, and highlighted many of the features and services available to Bluebonnet's members. Bentke said Bluebonnet's member service representatives answer 95 percent of the calls they receive, and on average, members can expect to be on hold only 32 seconds before speaking to a representative. Bentke also said Bluebonnet's rates are highly competitive with other utilities and the co-op returned \$3 million in capital credits — money the co-op collects above what is required to run the

# Bluebonnet members hear reports about the co-op, welcome re-elected incumbent directors



Sarah Beal photos



Bluebonnet members socialized, learned about co-op business and won door prizes during the 2015 Annual Meeting in Giddings. 1) Members gather as the meeting begins; 2) Tanya Clopton, member service supervisor, helps members update their information; 3) General Manager Mark Rose visits with members before the meeting; 4) Bert Rivera and the Ramblers entertain the crowd before the meeting begins; 5) Bluebonnet Board Chairman Ben Fleucher addresses the gathering; 6) Cecil Martinez Jr., with daughter Christina Martinez (Bluebonnet's corporate services executive assistant), sits on the lawn tractor he won during the door prize drawing; and 7) Linda P. Glass sits in the 2002 Ford F-250 truck she won in a drawing after the Annual Meeting. The truck was recently retired from Bluebonnet's fleet.

business — to current and former members this year.

Bentke touted the success of Bluebonnet's redesigned website that features the Energy Tracking Tool, a powerful online tool that shows members their energy use and costs down to the hour. He spoke of the ways members can do business with Bluebonnet on the site, such as online bill pay. He also described growth Bluebonnet has experienced in 2014 and 2015, and the enormous growth projected for Central

Texas during the next few decades. According to the state's demographer, Bluebonnet's service area has three of the top 10 fastest-growing counties in Texas, with Hays County No. 1.

Bluebonnet's General Manager Mark Rose previewed two products in the conceptual stage that would give members many more options in buying power from Bluebonnet. Bluebonnet will engage members this fall through community meetings to gather ideas to develop simplified but diversified rate

plans that fit members' lifestyles and energy choices, Rose said.

Bluebonnet is working to provide members an online generation portfolio that will enable them to choose between fossil fuels, such as natural gas and coal, and renewable energy, like wind and solar, Rose added.

"Our goal is to let our members choose how their energy is generated," Rose said. "If they want 20 percent of their energy to come from wind or solar, then they should be able to select that. Or if they want 100 percent natural gas, we should be able to buy that, compute the price and make sure that our members are getting the energy they want at the best possible price.

"These products are transformative. No utility in the country is doing this, but we are moving toward these products because it's all part of this community we belong to. Sometimes we can do things collectively more efficiently than we can do individually. We think we can provide some really exciting products for those members who want them."

Rose said Bluebonnet's goal is to have these products available to members within the next two years.

Bluebonnet gave away 29 door prizes during the Annual Meeting, including a Club Cadet riding lawn mower and lawn cart won by Cecil Martinez Jr. of Rockne.

Bluebonnet member Linda P. Glass is the winner of a 2002 Ford F-250 recently retired from the co-op's fleet. Glass's name was pulled at random from a pool of all co-op members who submitted a proxy voting form for the 2015 board elections or registered when they attended the Annual Meeting. "This is the first thing we've ever won," Glass said. ■