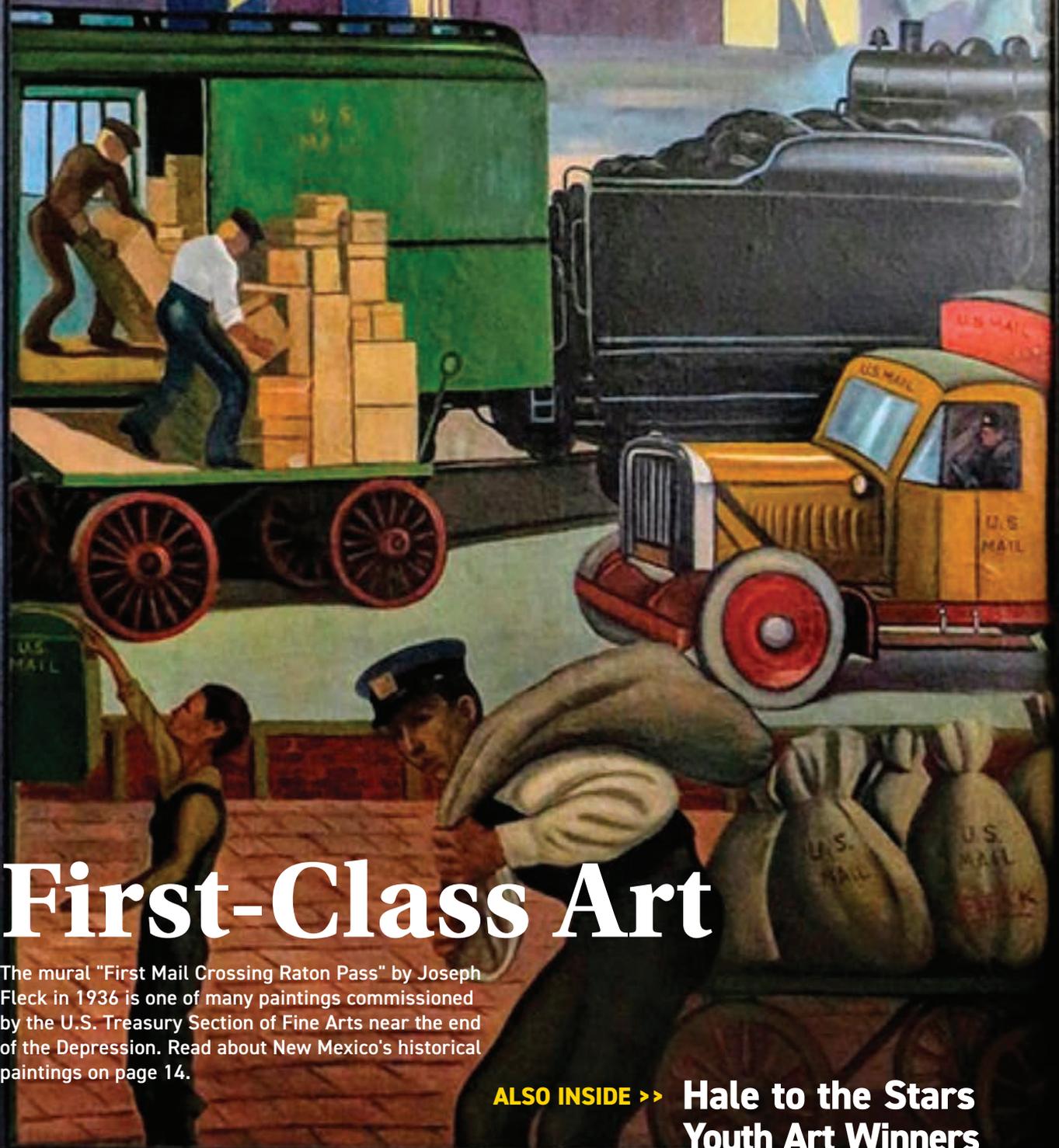


enchantment

The Voice of New Mexico's
Rural Electric Cooperatives

**OTERO COUNTY
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

FEBRUARY 2021



First-Class Art

The mural "First Mail Crossing Raton Pass" by Joseph Fleck in 1936 is one of many paintings commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Section of Fine Arts near the end of the Depression. Read about New Mexico's historical paintings on page 14.

**ALSO INSIDE >> Hale to the Stars
Youth Art Winners**



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Chief Executive Officer

Mario Romero

Cloudcroft Office

404 Burro Avenue • P.O. Box 227
Cloudcroft, NM 88317
575-682-2521

Carrizozo Office

507 Twelfth St. • P. O. Box 669
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Alto Office

1135 Hwy. 48 • P.O. Box 1135
Alto, NM 88312
575-336-4550

Emergency and Outages

800-548-4660

Fax • 575-682-3109

Website • www.ocec-inc.com

Office Hours

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (M-F)

Board of Trustees

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Vice President

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Board Meeting

The Board of Trustees meets the third Friday of the month at 9 a.m. at the Cooperative.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Your Electric Cooperative Updates

Private Property Access

The system that provides electric service to you and your neighbors is a network of poles, wires and underground cables that crisscrosses over public and private property.

Access to Otero County Electric Cooperative equipment on private property is a critical part of delivering reliable electricity to all members. Occasionally, linemen and servicemen may be on members' property—without notice—to inspect equipment, verify meter readings, maintain rights-of-way, troubleshoot and restore outages, or evaluate infrastructure safety for ongoing maintenance needs.

If entry to your property is through a locked gate, we respectfully ask that you allow us to install an OCEC lock or share your gate combination with us so crews can get onto your property in a timely manner when required to do so. Keys for OCEC locks are distributed only to those crew members who may have cause to be on your land, and combinations are kept confidential and never shared with outside sources. We only access your property when necessary and respect your privacy. Our personnel are professional and courteous, and will be in a vehicle clearly marked with the OCEC logo.

Contact your local OCEC office with questions, to request a lock for your location or to give us a combination for your entrance. We appreciate your understanding when we must enter your property.

Scholarship Applications Available

OCEC's Education Foundation started awarding scholarships to area students in 1989. Since its inception, more than \$1.1 million has been awarded to deserving students attending a New Mexico university, college or technical school.

The scholarship is \$1,000 per semester and can be renewed for up to seven additional semesters with verification that the required GPA is maintained and the student has enrolled for the upcoming semester. To be eligible, the student must be an active member receiving electric service from Otero County Electric Cooperative. Applications are available at any OCEC office, on our website at www.ocec-inc.com, or from your school guidance counselor.

Don't wait. The deadline to apply is March 15.

Holiday Closure

OCEC offices are closed Monday, February 15, 2021, in observance of Presidents Day. If you need to report an outage or emergency situation during this time, please call 800-548-4660. A representative in our after-hours dispatch center will assist you.



Commitment to Our Community

2020 was a year many people would like to forget. Many have lost loved ones, dealt with illness, experienced financial hardship, lost a job or their business. We have all been affected by the pandemic in one way or another. Although last year was difficult, silver linings can be found if we look for them.

Very early in the pandemic, utilities in New Mexico were required to stop disconnecting residential customers for nonpayment. Recognizing cutting off power to a struggling business might be the proverbial final nail in the coffin, the OCEC Board of Trustees extended this help to small businesses in the general service rate class. Fortunately, we have seen very few businesses in our area close permanently. Many have adapted to stay open, and some are even thriving.

As a member-owner of OCEC, you can take comfort knowing that even though OCEC experienced some challenges, your cooperative has adapted to many of the unknowns and has come out of 2020 in relatively good shape. This can be attributed in large part to two things: the cooperative business model and the quality of employees working to serve the OCEC membership.

This has never been more apparent to me than in 2020. With little impact to our membership, we have had to make several operational changes to comply with public health orders and keep

employees and members safe. Many employees are working from home. Employee meetings, safety trainings and board meetings have all been held virtually. Line crews have been required to limit contact with each other and work in small groups. Despite all the changes, our employees have demonstrated professionalism, flexibility, and competency, continuing to seamlessly provide reliable electric service to OCEC members.

In addition to excelling at their jobs, OCEC employees are great people. Whether donating sick leave, holding a fundraiser or donating money to a co-worker in need, like any good family, there are numerous examples of our employees and trustees taking care of each other.

This extends to our communities as well. Employees and trustees recently raised \$2,700 in personal contributions to provide Christmas gifts to children in our area. Member contributions to OCEC's Operation Round-Up were used as matching funds, bringing the total to \$5,400.

As a locally governed, member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative, you would have a hard time finding an organization more in touch with the people and communities of Otero, Lincoln and Chavez counties. As I often say, our members' interests are at the heart of every decision we make. This happens almost naturally, because our employees and trustees are the friends, family and neighbors of the people we



Otero County Electric Co-op CEO Mario Romero

serve. Whether it be our line crew restoring power during an outage or an office employee helping a member on the phone, our employees know and understand they are positively affecting the lives of the people in our communities.

As general manager of OCEC, I get to see the impact they make every day. I must say, it is tremendous, and they do a GREAT job.

So this year, when so many of our first responders and essential workers have rightfully received recognition for the service they provide, let us not forget to include our utility workers, especially all the employees at OCEC. We have all been blessed and our lives are better because of the work they do.

Outage Map

When an outage occurs and lights stay out for an extended period of time, you may find yourself wondering what is going on and when power will be restored.

Fear not, we have you covered! An outage map is available on our website for members. This is a great tool to identify if others in your area may also be experiencing a disruption in service and when you may expect to have service restored.

To access the OCEC outage map, click the red **Outage Map** button in the upper right-hand corner of our home page at www.ocec-inc.com.

