

Transcript of Power Chat in The Electric Lounge
Season 1 – Episode 1 “Who We Are & Why We Serve”
October 9, 2025

[Podcast begins jazzy, upbeat music plays]

00:08:30 – 00:24:58

Narrator: Power Chat in The Electric Lounge is powered by SECO Energy, an electric distribution cooperative serving over two hundred sixty thousand members across parts of seven Central Florida counties. For more information about us, visit www.SECOEnergy.com.

00:25:03 – 00:53:10

Curtis Wynn, SECO Energy Chief Executive Officer: Hello and welcome to the very first episode of Power Chat here in The Electric Lounge. I'm CEO Curtis Wynn. I'm going to be your host today, and I am so excited about bringing you this first episode of our podcast series. Here with me today our Vice President of C.C.M.E. welcome, Kathy. Now, first thing you got to do is tell me what C.C.M.E. stands for.

00:53:15 – 01:34:01

Kathy Judkins, SECO Energy Vice President of Communications, Community and Member Experience: Thank you. Curtis, as you mentioned, I'm Vice President of Communications, Community and Member Experience. But around SECO everyone is accustomed to saying C.C.M.E. We want to thank you for this opportunity to be a part of the podcast. And it is such an honor to kick this podcast off with you. We want to open the doors wider for our members to give them an opportunity to learn about energy tips, get a back behind-the-scenes peek of who we are as a cooperative.

What we stand for, our values and our mission, and to give them this opportunity to learn so much more about us.

01:34:06 – 01:41:47

Curtis Wynn: So, we want to get this communication out to our members. But why are we doing it with a podcast?

01:41:52 – 02:19:56

Kathy Judkins: Because members want to receive their information in different ways, new and different. With that, we have a newsletter that we produce every single month, but some of our members just don't have time to read it. They are managing their lives. We also have a website that they can come on and view information, but some of them just want as they are driving to work, to listen in to a podcast.

We are constantly seeking new ways to give them more information about our organization and what we do here in Central Florida.

02:19:58 – 02:50:56

Curtis Wynn: Yes, you do in your department. You have a lot of ways that you communicate with our members and as you said, I have members that I run into all the time, and we could have promoted something five or six times, six or seven different ways. And what they'll tell me is that you're all doing that. I didn't hear about it.

So, it is a challenge. Communications is tough and we have to constantly work on it. So, I'm excited about this new way of communicating by way of us of a podcast. Excellent idea. I'm glad we're doing it.

02:51:01 – 03:24:32

Kathy Judkins: Our plan is for our members to also be engaged in the Power Chat in The Electric Lounge, to give them an opportunity to share their insights, to request us to talk about various topics so that they can continue to gleam and learn more about who we are. I'm so excited about the opportunity of them being a part of this conversation, and I'm hoping that at some point we can bring some of those members and host a podcast with them.

03:24:37 – 03:50:56

Curtis Wynn: That would be great. This is the first one. So, we talked about this, and I think it is appropriate that as we think about what's the first topic we want to talk about, it's very appropriate that we give a sort of a foundational understanding of who we are.

What is an electric cooperative? How are we different from other electric utilities? Other utilities in general? What makes us unique? Give us some insight on that.

03:51:01 – 05:01:48

Kathy Judkins: That's right. Curtis, as a matter of fact, as a co-op, our members have an opportunity to help us in our decision-making process. Most of our members are not even aware why we call them members versus customers. But as a co-op, they are our members because we are a not-for-profit organization where we give back to our members by way of capital credits each year.

Once we've taken care of our revenue margins, those expenses, once we've taken care of our expenses, we give those dollars back to our members. But an investor-owned utility has stakeholders. And those stakeholders are their decision makers. So those decisions are made here at SECO Energy. And our members have an opportunity to have a voice in that.

Each year, our Board of Trustees are selected by our members at what we call District Meetings. Additionally, we have an Annual Meeting each year where our members have an opportunity to vote and have a voice in that process as well.

05:01:53 – 06:03:38

Curtis Wynn: Awesome. So, nineteen hundred thirty-eight, when we were born. So that means we as SECO Energy, we are approaching ninety years in business. And I've been or I've had the opportunity prior to coming to SECO to really see a lot of cooperatives across the nation. And there are three words that are found in most mission statements across the country with co-ops – Safe, Reliable, and Affordable.

There is no difference here at SECO. Safe. Reliable. And affordable electricity is what we're all about. But we're really about more than that, aren't we? We're really about a member-first mindset and getting out in the community. I'd like for us to talk a little bit about that second part of it. The first part is pretty obvious.

That's what we're here for. But let's talk about the efforts that we make to be member first, have a member first mindset and how do we get out into the community and make a difference?

06:03:43 – 07:06:28

Kathy Judkins: Well, the biggest thing that I thought that we should perhaps highlight in this podcast is the fact that our Board of Trustees and our employees live right here in the community. Communities where we serve. Our members may see our employees and Board of Trustees at a Little League baseball game, where many of them participate as coaches at a PTA meeting, where many of them are volunteers, or just in the grocery store sharing in their community neighbor experience.

That's the most engaging part for us, that our members get an opportunity to see our employees in the communities where we serve our call center employees, as a matter of fact, are right here in the community. They live here, work here. And that's one of the most powerful opportunities I believe separates us from all of the others, is the fact that we are here engaging in the communities where we serve.

07:06:33 – 07:15:34

Curtis Wynn: Yeah, you mentioned employees. I want to expand on that just a little bit. I don't know the percentage, but a pretty high percentage of our employees are also members.

07:15:37 – 07:16:19

Kathy Judkins: Yes.

07:16:24 – 07:54:28

Curtis Wynn: And actually this podcast idea was inspired one by one of our nearly five hundred employees who encouraged us to, hey, why don't we do a podcast? And we

listened to that. And the real advantage of that is because of those almost five hundred employees, many of whom are neighbors or cooperative members. Not only are they doing their jobs, but now they can share with their neighbors the firsthand experiences of what's happening at their electric cooperative.

Again, re-emphasizing that closeness, that local, that local feel, that member mindset that we all are talking about here.

07:54:33 – 08:42:42

Kathy Judkins: Yes. And let's just chat a little bit about service. Just think about storm season. We prepare year-round for the storm season that is ahead, and to provide that power to our members and to continue to look at ways that we can harden our utilities, our lines, to make sure that we are taking care of our members, that service.

But that's not all we do. We also provide scholarships for our high school students. We have energy efficiency, opportunities to give our members on tips. And we also give back to nonprofit organizations in our community.

08:42:47 – 10:01:50

Curtis Wynn: And we know we know that electric service, now it's a convenience, but it's also it's more than that. It's essential for our daily lives. But we go beyond that. We go, we go, as we talked about into the communities, I want to take us back to the origin of electric cooperatives and really some of the thought process of those, those founding fathers and mothers who got this thing started, they saw the cooperatives – as yeah, we're going to provide electric service to the farms and to those local communities that have been, that were denied this essential service of electricity.

But we were also considered economic development engines in those communities that we were going to serve in enable businesses to start for homes, to have the essentials of lights that they could pull up. They back then they pulled a string. And the lights came on. But those are those are really key elements that were important in the nineteen thirties.

But these carry forward today, and I don't think we'll ever move away from that core essential value that we bring to those communities and that we help to enhance those communities that we serve, those with whom within which we serve to help everyday lives of citizens.

10:01:55 – 12:19:50

Kathy Judkins: We've been around for nearly ninety years, as you mentioned, but just looking at the year twenty twenty-four, for our revenue was five hundred eighteen million dollars. We gave nine million dollars back for property taxes to the community and six point six million dollars in sales taxes. That speaks volumes of who we are as an organization and how we are a part of the fabric here in Central Florida, where we are giving back to the communities in which we serve.

I know that I mentioned scholarships, but I just want to restate, some of those opportunities that we give back to our communities with. One of those is our scholarship program. For decades, we've been awarding twelve students, high school students that are headed to college, to give back to them so that they could be successful in hopes that they come back and work in the communities where they live, where their families reside, and also hopefully come and work here at SECO Energy.

That is one of our goals and initiatives of helping our students. Just this year, alone, we took students to Tallahassee in our Youth Tour program, where those students had an opportunity to see the legislative process, learn more about cooperatives. And they were so thrilled to see that process and go to the Florida State Supreme Court and review how the court system works in our country and in our state.

Two of those students were selected to go on to participate, with thousands of cooperative students across the country to participate in the Youth Tour in Washington, DC. Looking at the fact that we are a part of this community, many, many of our members are giving back in a round up program that supports SECO Energy Foundation. And with that Foundation, we've been able to give, give back to community organizations to support the great initiatives that are needed to continue to work with our community.

12:19:54 – 12:21:10

Curtis Wynn: Economic engine.

12:21:10 – 12:24:40

Kathy Judkins: Yes, at its best, community involvement.

12:24:44 – 12:57:33

Curtis Wynn: Yes. All of that. Thank you. Thank you, Kathy, for those awesome stats as we wrap up this first episode of Power Chat in The Electric Lounge, we hope that our members walk away knowing one thing that we're about more than just electricity. We are about that, plus being a better part of our community. That's exciting. So, tell us about what we members should expect moving forward now that we've gotten this first one done?

What are your – what are some of the plans for future episodes?

12:57:38 – 14:21:29

Kathy Judkins: In our future episodes, we plan to speak more on energy tips. Our career path opportunities, or behind the scenes with some of our some of our staff and being a part of the process that how we govern our organization. So, they maybe have an opportunity to visit with one of our Board of Trustees. But our hope is also to bring some of our members in to talk about things that matters most to them.

So for our next episode that's coming up, we are going to feature you, sir, because you have been in this industry, energy industry over forty years and we want to give our audience, our members, an opportunity to hear your story and how meaningful it's been for you to be a part of this great industry.

We also plan to have our H.R. staff to discuss with us and our members about career opportunities here at SECO Energy. We're looking forward to a great podcast next. The next episode, we are planning to host our December podcast along the lines of the seasons of giving opportunities, sharing of our employees giving back to the community, as well as our SECO Foundation.

14:21:34 – 14:45:53

Curtis Wynn: So, members, if you have enjoyed and I hope you have enjoyed today's episode, the beginning episode very first of Power Chat in The Electric Lounge. We hope that you will subscribe through Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or whatever means that you use to listen to podcasts. We want ours to be at the top of the list of podcasts that you tune into, so join us.

14:45:58 – 14:57:16

Kathy Judkins: Thank you for joining us today. We are excited about the opportunities to come and the podcast that will be presented to you. We want to keep this conversation going.

14:57:21 – 15:09:09

Curtis Wynn: Until next time. Stay safe. Stay connected. We look forward to being a part and we appreciate you being a part of the electric cooperative family here at SECO. Thank you.

15:09:10 – 15:21:00

[Podcast ends jazzy, upbeat music plays]