

COMMUNITY-OWNED GROCERY STORE SUCCESS STORY CONTINUES

The approximately 667 citizens of Walsh are about to celebrate the first anniversary of the opening of their community-owned grocery store, a store which has turned out to be a huge success.

After losing the only grocery store in September 2006, this small, tight-knit community banded together and, by investing and donating over \$200,000 from over 300 community members, formed the Walsh Community Store, Inc. This was enough money to purchase the established store building and equipment and begin renovation of the property. But the store still needed operating capital. It was able to secure a loan through the local bank while other resources were being sought.

Southeast Colorado Power Association became a part of that success story when after surviving several delays along the way, it was finally able to secure a \$160,000, 0 percent interest, rural economic development loan for the store, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Economic Development program. "When we were contacted about



Michael Bennett of the Colorado Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture signs the \$160,000 illustrative check as representatives of entities involved look on. Holding the check are store secretary-treasurer, Judy Bezona; president, Rick Mills; and vice president, James Hume. Second row (left to right) James Wittler and Joe Kost of the Colorado USDA office; Clarence Jones, store director; Doris Morgan, aide for Senator Wayne Allard's office; Erroll Cook, store director; and Jack Wolfe, chief operating officer of SECPA. Back row (left to right) Pete Dawson, Baca County commissioner; Lawrence Brase, president of SECPA; and Spike Ausmus, Baca County commissioner.

the project we knew we needed to help where we could," said Richard Wilson, CEO of Southeast Colorado Power. "We were glad we could help with the project." Members of the Walsh Community Store gathered on June 3, 2008, to accept the \$160,000 check from Southeast Colorado Power representatives and Michael Bennett, state director for the USDA.

The store is full of pride; you can see it everywhere you look. It's as if employees used a ruler to make sure every product on the shelves was perfectly straight. The 14 full- and part-time employees love their jobs and are friendly and courteous.

"I would never in my wildest dreams have expected something so simple as to see the first item placed on the shelf to be so emotional," stated Judy Bezona, board secretary treasurer. One longtime resident of the community was in tears the first time she came into the store. She was just so happy there was a store again. The period from September 2006 to June 2007 was the first time this community



This aisle of picture-perfect stock is the pride of the grocery store stockholders.

has been without a grocery store since the town was incorporated in 1927.

Volunteers help stock shelves and perform other small repair jobs that are needed. The store is continuing to thrive. Sales continue to increase, surpassing expectations. Of course, there will be challenges along the way, but with community spirit such as this, there is no doubt this grocery store is here to stay.

OUR ENERGY, OUR FUTURE

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reduction could climb into the billions, if not trillions of dollars. The affordability, availability and reliability of electric power in the United States are being put at great risk. This legislation is all based on man-made global warming science that could be called questionable at best.

If you are concerned about the direction Congress is headed, please call, write or email your legislators in Washington to let them know you are concerned about your energy future. To learn more about these issues and take advantage of an easy way to contact your elected officials, go to www.ourenegy.coop. Also, there was a postage paid card inserted in last month's *Colorado Country Life* magazine that you can fill out and send back to us and we will notify legislators in your name. We have an immediate need to form a grassroots effort to make consumer voices heard.

YOU COULD BE A WINNER

If you find your name in this issue as follows (Win* your name, account number), please contact Paige Horn at Southeast Colorado Power, 719-384-2551 or 800-332-8634, to receive a credit on your next power bill. Last month's winner was Ted Terrones, acct. #2000740000.