

# Electrical coops celebrate service

This month, Alaska's electric cooperatives are celebrating the community spirit that created them and is helping to keep Alaska's future bright. Their activities are part of a national celebration of Co-op Month designed to help the public understand how cooperatives work and the role they play in our daily lives.

In Alaska, as elsewhere, co-ops typically were formed by neighbors who joined together to meet a need that was not met by other businesses. There are many types of cooperatives. The key principle behind each of them is that they are owned by those they serve.

"The strength of the cooperative spirit in Alaska is reflected in the fact that a higher percentage of Alaskans get their electricity from a co-op than the people of any other state," said David Hutchens, executive director of the Alaska Rural Electric Cooperative Association (ARECA). A total of more than 350,000 people are served by one of the 16 co-ops that are members of ARECA.

The member-owners, usually one from each household or business receiving electricity, vote to elect the boards of directors of the cooperatives. The cooperatives operate as non-profit businesses, in that all earnings above expenses are credited to the members.

In celebration of National Co-op Month, many of Alaska's electric cooperatives are holding open houses, giving tours of their facilities or hosting other events.

