Transcript of Power Chat in the Electric Lounge
Season 2 – Episode 11 "Investing in SECO Energy's Workforce"
November 12, 2026

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Narrator: Power Chat In the Electric Lounge is powered by SECO Energy, an electric distribution cooperative serving over 260,000 members across parts of seven Central Florida counties. For more information about us, visit www.SECOEnergy.com.

00:22:24 - 01:24:18
Curtis Wynn, SECO Energy Chief Executive Officer: Welcome to Power Chat in the Electric Lounge, SECO Energy's podcast, where we talk about the people, programs and progress powering our communities. I am Curtis Wynn, CEO of SECO Energy. As we move through 2026 and look ahead to a new year. SECO is focused on preparing for the future. We are investing in new facilities, technology, infrastructure, and processes to support our growing membership and the communities we proudly serve. But one of our most important investments is in our people. Our employees are the foundation of everything we do. They provide safe, reliable service, respond during challenging conditions, support our members, and help us adapt to a changing energy industry. Today, I am pleased to welcome April Brown, SECO's Vice President of Human Resources and Corporate Services, April. Thank you for joining me here in the Electric Lounge.

01:24:19 - 01:31:15
April Brown, SECO Energy Vice President of Human Resources and Corporate Services: Thank you for having me. I'm very excited to talk about the future of SECO, And we can't talk about the future of SECO without talking about our workforce.

01:31:21 - 01:54:23
Curtis Wynn: You're exactly right. I'm just as excited to talk about it. It's really an important subject, so we'll just. We'll start at the top and start with the big picture. So I'll first ask you, if you will, just to tell me why is workforce development such an important priority for SECO energy and all the things that we do? Why is this such a such a major priority?

01:54:24 - 02:42:12
April Brown: Sure. Yeah. Three things come to mind when I think about workforce development in SECO. And that is growth. Of course, we are growing rapidly. Our communities that we serve is growing rapidly. We got to develop our employees and

prepare them for that growth. Next is change. You know, the technology is changing. The AI, advanced meters, all the data that we are getting, inundated with on a daily basis. And thirdly, I, you know, what comes to mind is succession. We have employees here that have reached 30, 40, even a 50-year employee year of service. And we must prepare and plan for those employees to eventually retire.

02:42:19 - 03:30:23
Curtis Wynn: Yeah. So, we got to keep the pipeline going. It never ends. SECO is 85 plus years old, and we plan to be here another 100 years. And we've got to have people all throughout the time that we're here. So that succession is definitely important. I want to, you know, when I was growing up and I used to hear about the electric company. The only thing that really came to my mind mostly was what I saw. And what I mostly saw was the line technicians, the line workers who were out fixing the power lines. But, you know, you and I both know and maybe you can share with the audience. SECO Energy is much more than that. We appreciate our line technicians, but we're much more than that. Tell us about some of the other careers that are available here at SECO.

03:30:25 - 03:58:00
April Brown: Yeah. Many people, just like you think about our line technicians or our field technicians, people in the field when they think of SECO energy. But we have many, many career opportunities here to offer employees within communications, Member experience, technology, human resources, vegetation, and many, many more.

03:58:02 - 04:35:10
Curtis Wynn: There's a lot. I mean, we have, what, 500 hundred plus employees and only a percentage of those are line workers. So those other workers make up a lot of our workforce. Yes, sir. Accounting people and payroll folks, all of that is important. One of the things we love doing here, and I love for you to tell us about how, you know, we're introducing students and young people. Not just to SECO but to the energy industry. Tell us, what are some of the things you're doing in that in that space?

04:35:11 - 05:20:15
April Brown: Yeah, we partnered with, Career Source in the in the high schools this summer. We brought many of them to our campus here at SECO to learn and understand how we distribute energy. We teach them safety in our field. We also hosted two sessions this summer in June and July. We offered some internships for high school students to come for week sessions, just to take what they've learned in the classroom and apply it to real work. They learn how to how to show up on time, how to you know,

come in and be present and, teach them real life skills that hopefully that they will benefit from in the future.

05:20:17 - 05:41:03
Curtis Wynn: They can benefit anywhere they go with that. I love the two step process. You mentioned one. Just introducing the students. Get them to come for a day, and then you take it a step further with the internship opportunities. What do you think is the value of those internship possibilities? What do they get out of that?

05:41:04 - 06:13:23
April Brown: Yeah, I think it's just, you know, how they can apply what they've learned in the classroom to real life and work experience. Here at SECO, understand who we are and what we do, that we're more than just what they may think or see or like you had referred to, you know, the line technicians who, you know, again, are extremely important to what we do and the superheroes of the, of the industry, but we also need many, many other, other types of employees.

06:13:24 - 06:32:00
Curtis Wynn: Right. So step one come to the class. Come take a day from school, come to the campus, spend the day with us. Step two. Spend a couple of weeks with us. And apply what you experience in school. But there's a third step. There's a third step that we call apprenticeship.

06:32:01 - 06:32:18
April Brown: Yes, sir.

06:32:19 - 06:44:10
Curtis Wynn: And that's more geared towards those existing employees who are already hired here, not only now. So they are here, but. So what is that? What is that apprenticeship program do for an existing employee?

06:44:16 - 07:20:01
April Brown: Yeah. So we take, students, even high school students, even we could take them from the high school level. Bring them on board. We're so excited about this project. It's one of our strategic initiatives. We're working with the state to develop or redesign our program. Apprenticeship program. But we can help provide these students with a paycheck while learning the skills that they need to do the position that they're wanting to do.

07:20:06 - 07:45:22
Curtis Wynn: As we look ahead to 2027, next year coming up, there's a new, program that you're developing and your on your team. It's called the internal Apprenticeship program. What can you tell us about this initiative in terms of how we use that as a part of the overall picture of getting and keeping qualified train people here at school?

07:45:23 - 08:48:23
April Brown: Yes. I think one of the roadblocks that students sometimes face or new, students or new graduates into the field face is stability to earn a wage while they're learning. And so this program that we're so excited about is going to provide that opportunity for people that, you know, and, you know, even if I say a new high school graduate, but maybe doesn't have to be a high school graduate, someone that's changing a career paths, you know, it's difficult to, learn and go to school and be educated with these, these degrees that are needed while not earning a paycheck. So this apprenticeship program, in partnership with Lake Sumter State College. Career source and some others that we are going to take candidates from. You know, they can earn a paycheck while they're earning learning the skills and abilities needed to do the job.

08:48:24 - 09:27:19
Curtis Wynn: Yeah. And to take that a bit further, April, some of our skill sets that we need are here. I'll just use it. I mean, we're yeah, at this level, but you may have a highly qualified person who comes in who's not at that highest level. So with their apprentice program, I love the way that set up so that you've got a clear pathway to help them move from where they may come into the organization to that optimum level, or the ultimate highest level of that particular skill set. How is that coming along? And where are you with that with that program?

09:27:21 - 09:56:12
April Brown: Yeah. So our we have apprenticeship program committee that is meeting monthly. And they are the last report that I received their at about the second year phase. So they're developing what that looks like, what an apprentice looks like coming in, what skills they have to have coming in the door, and then what they're going to learn first year and second year. So we're at the end of year two. And then we'll continue that out to the next three and four.

09:56:15 - 10:34:01

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. So you established a role, another role in your department, not long ago where you brought in a recruiter. Yes. So recruitment is also a part of this, this, this piece that we're putting together, make sure we have the best workforce we can find, because some of the positions that you are responsible for hiring are not easy positions to fill. So you have that recruitment program which is allowing people to come in and build a career. So can you tell us a little bit about how your recruitment efforts are going and what's involved with that?

10:34:01 - 11:05:01
April Brown: So yes, that was that was the program that we started a couple of years ago. We hired our own internal recruiter to go after those sometimes passive candidates that may not at first see our opportunities that we have. So we were spending a lot of money outside with outside recruiters. And we decided to take that in-house, bring that position in-house, with our recruiter Ty, who we love and adore. She's been great asset to SECO and bringing in those candidates for us.

11:05:03 - 11:17:06
Curtis Wynn: Yeah. I think another stat that I've seen that you've, you've shared with, with us, is that the time it takes to fill some of these positions has dwindle. Yes, sir. How is how is that?

11:17:09 - 11:46:05
April Brown: Yes, sir. We were going. We were taking 4 to 5 months from time to post to fill. That's from, you know, posting the job to someone in the seat that includes all things background checks and, and things that we have to do first, and of course, them given notice and have narrowed that to almost two months. So a few months of, of, time that we've gotten back for those vacated positions.

11:46:06 - 12:27:07
Curtis Wynn: And that that saves money. Yes, sir. There's when you have an open position, you're you've got a gap and it's costing and not only money to just take and spend all that time to bring someone else in, but this time that's not being used by our employees wisely to have someone else help to fill that gap. When employees come to seek out energy, how do you help them feel like this is not just a job, but a career? What are some things that distinguish us in terms of how we want that to happen, a career to happen versus just a job?

12:27:09 - 13:02:16

April Brown: Yeah. One thing we pride ourselves on is our one SECO culture. You know, I think people want to be at a place where they know they can, grow their career and they're in and develop. We are constantly taking pulse surveys and participating in culture surveys so that we can really understand, you know, people want to be at a place where they can be heard and, and to grow and learn and, feel like they're a place.

13:02:18 - 13:24:27
Curtis Wynn: So, so now let's go ahead and call it like it is. April. How is the culture here at SECO Energy? Based on that feedback that you've got and what would you how would you describe the culture here at sea, if anyone who may be wondering what is it like to be a part of that organization? What are the employees telling us about the culture?

13:25:03 - 15:04:19
April Brown: The Denison Culture Survey results were recently released, and we were so excited to find that, our scores have improved rapidly. You know, we started we first started on this mission and in 2022 when we took the first survey and we were shocked, with the results, you know, being that I really wasn't a place that people felt like they were heard and, wanted to be a part of. And so the results showed that and we took it seriously and we had focus groups. We have, consultants come in. We really sit down with many different groups of employees that provided us with information on what it was like to be an employee at SECO. We took that feedback seriously, and, and we, made initiatives with it and put those directly on our strategic map. And we reached out to the employees and said, we know that you want to be, empowered. And we know that we need a counter and better communication. We heard you. And, that result has paid off. Our most recent survey was improved by 200, 300%. I want to say we went from a 29, like index score to all the way to a 75, meaning that we are better than 75% of the organizations that are participating in that survey culture.

15:04:22 - 15:12:29
Curtis Wynn: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Kudos to you. And does that all fall on the shoulders of human resources or who's responsible for that. We all are.

15:13:06 - 15:40:00
April Brown: Yeah. We all are responsible for our culture. It starts from the top, right? It starts with, you. And when you first came in and you said, you know, I want to take a pulse of the culture here at SECO and how can we, introduce initiatives and this

strategic map, knowing that the culture needs to be improved first. So, it starts with, with the top and cascades down to all of us.

15:40:07 - 16:08:04
Curtis Wynn: I give kudos to the entire team, and I give kudos to every level of management because it is a team effort and something we take pride in because it all matters. It all goes back to you being able to recruit the talent that wants to come, to be a part of something that where they feel like they're heard, they feel like they're a part of it, they're empowered to do the work, and they see the mission and see the vision of where we're trying to go as an organization. So kudos to the entire team for getting that. Are we through yet? Are we done yet?

16:08:05 - 16:36:00
April Brown: We are not done. We you know, culture is never done. We, took another as you as we talked about, we did have the survey results. We do have things that people still are. We ask them, you know, what are two things you would like to change about SECO? And they give us their candid feedback, and we will take those and conduct more focus groups who want to continue until, we're 100% and then not stop there. Right? We want to be better than that.

16:36:00 - 16:49:09
Curtis Wynn: So as we move towards the end of the year. What would you say to someone who they're hearing about our culture, they're hearing about the way we provide opportunities. What would you say to someone who's considering a career here at second?

16:49:11 - 17:16:02
April Brown: I would say learn as much as you can about SECO. Go on our website. There's a lot of great information out there. Our career pages out there. We are going to continue to partner with Career Source. Reach out to them if you have a local branch there. We will offer still internships. We're going to partner with the local colleges. And, I would say reach out. It would be the best decision I think, you ever made

17:16:04 - 17:25:06
Curtis Wynn: So we're not going to stop there. We're going to keep going and make sure we live up to our vision of how we want to be. And that vision is the second part of it is.

17:25:10 - 17:27:22
April Brown: Be the preferred employer of the region.

17:27:23 - 18:03:12
Curtis Wynn: Absolutely. Absolutely. April. Thank you. Thank you for sharing your perspective and for the work you do and your team are doing to strengthen SECO Energy's workforce. As we prepare for 2027, our commitment is clear. We will continue investing in our employees, creating opportunities for students, developing future leaders, and preparing our current workforce for the changing energy industry. The future of SECO Energy will be shaped by our facilities, technology and infrastructure, but most importantly, it will be shaped by our people.

00:18:03:15 - 00:18:18:28
Curtis Wynn: To our members, thank you for allowing us to share and to serve you and to our employees. Thank you for the dedication, professionalism and care you bring to your work every day. April, once again, thank you for joining us here in the Electric Lounge.

00:18:18:28 - 00:18:21:01
April Brown: Thank you sir. It's my pleasure being here.

00:18:21:04 - 00:18:35:17
Curtis Wynn: And thank you for listening to Power Chat in the Electric Lounge from all of us at SECO Energy. We wish you and your family a safe and meaningful Thanksgiving season. We look forward to continuing to serve you in 2027.