

2023 ANNUAL
REPORT



ILLUMINATING CONNECTIONS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2024

GREAT BEND EVENTS CENTER | 3111 10TH ST., GREAT BEND

10 A.M. MDT / 11 A.M. CDT REGISTRATION

10:30 A.M. MDT / 11:30 A.M. CDT LUNCHEON

11 A.M. MDT / NOON CDT BUSINESS MEETING

AT ALL LOCATIONS

**THANK YOU FOR
JOINING US IN
GREAT BEND OR
REMOTE LOCATION**



**CALDWELL | GARDEN CITY
GREAT BEND | HARPER
LEOTI | SYRACUSE | TRIBUNE**



MEETING AGENDA

11:30 A.M.

INVOCATION + LUNCH

NOON

POSTING THE COLORS

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

NATIONAL ANTHEM

CALL TO ORDER

MARK ARNOLD PRESIDENT

RECOGNITION OF TRUSTEES

MARK ARNOLD PRESIDENT

RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

BRUCE W. MUELLER CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

DECLARATION OF QUORUM

MARK ARNOLD PRESIDENT

OFFICIAL NOTICE +

AFFIDAVIT OF MAILING

JIM MCVAY GENERAL COUNSEL/
ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

FINANCIAL REPORT

TREASURER'S REPORT — VIDEO PRESENTATION

TRACI GODDARD DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

ANNUAL SUMMARY

VIDEO PRESENTATION

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

ALLI CONINE DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES & CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

SERVICE AWARDS

MARK ARNOLD PRESIDENT

OLD BUSINESS

MARK ARNOLD PRESIDENT

NEW BUSINESS

MARK ARNOLD PRESIDENT

JIM MCVAY GENERAL COUNSEL/
ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

GRAND PRIZE DRAWING

MARK ARNOLD PRESIDENT

ADJOURNMENT

RETIRING THE COLORS

OFFICIAL NOTICE

Annual Meeting for Wheatland Members

The 2024 Annual Meeting of the Members of Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be held Wednesday, April 24, 2024, at the Great Bend Events Center, 3111 10th St. in Great Bend, Kansas, or at any of our remote meeting locations: Scott City, Leoti, Tribune, Syracuse, Garden City, Harper and Caldwell.

Registration opens at 11 a.m. CDT and lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m. CDT. The business meeting will convene at noon. The following matters will be addressed:

- ▶ Reports of officers, trustees, committees and employees.
- ▶ Election results announced.
- ▶ Any other business which may come before the meeting.
- ▶ Adjournment.

The following trustees have been nominated by the nominating committee for the position of trustee:

DISTRICT 3

- ▶ **JOHN NIEHUES**
612 Haskell St.
Tribune, KS 67879
- ▶ **KEVIN WHITE**
1682 Road Q
Tribune, KS 67879

DISTRICT 6

- ▶ **JOHN L. SULLIVAN**
5906 16th Street Terrace
Great Bend, KS 67530

DISTRICT 7

- ▶ **MARK ARNOLD**
203 S. Market St.
Caldwell, KS 67022

STACEY ADDISON-HOWLAND, SECRETARY

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

FROM THE MANAGER

ILLUMINATING CONNECTIONS

Across the Communities We Serve

As CEO and general manager of Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., I am confident the future of our organization is incredibly bright.

This belief is borne not only from the hard work and dedication I see our cooperative employees champion every day, but also the **CONNECTIONS** we work to create daily — not just through the energy we deliver, but through the partnerships we build, the projects we help fund, and the programs we implement to enhance the lives of co-op members just like you.

These connections are not always apparent and certainly not something you think about when you flip on a light switch at home. However, in the same way electricity can brighten a dark room, we are excited this year to **ILLUMINATE CONNECTIONS** between our cooperative and the communities we serve, shedding a light on how we serve as a source of service, compassion and innovation.

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

Because we're a co-op, we operate differently than other utility companies. Decisions are made locally by trustees elected by you, the members who live right here in our communities. And everyone who pays to receive electricity is a member with voting power.

In fact, when you pay your electric bill every month, your money stays here — to pay for the electricity used, to make system improvements that strengthen service and reliability, and to support our local economy — instead of lining pockets of shareholders who live thousands of miles away.

Our **COMMUNITY-CENTRIC** focus has been at the core of everything we've done at our cooperative since day one: Oct. 25, 1948. That's when we were officially chartered by the Rural Electrification Administration, a New Deal era

program signed into law by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1935, during the height of America's Great Depression.

At the time, nine visionary western Kansans took matters into their own hands to bring reliable and affordable electricity to our rural region, at a time when nearly 90% of rural America lacked electrical power.

Today, nearly 76 years later, the visionary leadership and hard work of a few locals has continued to **POWER OUR LANDSCAPE** and transform us into the economically thriving region we call home today.

POWERED BY PRINCIPLE

As a cooperative, we are guided by **SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES**, which put the needs of our members first and reflect the core values of honesty, transparency, equality, service and inclusivity.

The last — but not least — of these is **CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY** — “Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.”

And it's true. Guided by democratically elected locals who represent the interests of our co-op membership, we invest funds to strengthen not only our local infrastructure, but also our local communities.

Initiatives like **CRAM THE VAN** stocking our area food banks, the **SHARING SUCCESS FUND** funding local projects and **YOUTH PROGRAMS** providing scholarships and leadership experiences for high school students are just some of the ways we **EMPOWER OUR COMMUNITIES**.



Bruce W. Mueller

GUIDED BY DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED LOCALS WHO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF OUR CO-OP MEMBERSHIP, WE INVEST FUNDS TO STRENGTHEN NOT ONLY OUR LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE, BUT ALSO OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 ▶

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

ARGONIA HIGH SCHOOL
MAYA JONES

CALDWELL HIGH SCHOOL
JACKSON RISLEY

CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL
INNSLEE ALBRIGHT

CONWAY SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL
HAYLEE OSNER

DEERFIELD HIGH SCHOOL
ALYSSA SMITH

GARDEN CITY HIGH SCHOOL
GEORGIA FAHRMEIER

GREAT BEND HIGH SCHOOL
ADDY NICHOLSON

GREELEY COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
IAN TARMAN

HOLCOMB HIGH SCHOOL
EMILY DRYDEN

NORWICH HIGH SCHOOL
BROOKLYN SHEETZ

SCOTT COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL
ALEXIS POWELSON

SOUTH HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL
ALIVIA BACON

SYRACUSE HIGH SCHOOL
NEVAEH HAHN

WICHITA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
WYATT GARDNER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3 >

FROM THE MANAGER ILLUMINATING CONNECTIONS

I encourage you to read more on **PAGE 10** about how these co-op programs and more **ILLUMINATE CONNECTIONS** across the communities we serve, bridged by our seventh cooperative principle.

POWERING CHANGE

I'm also excited to shed some light on one of our newest programs available to co-op members — **COMMUNITY SOLAR**.

This unique and innovative program allows residential members (homeowners and renters) to subscribe to solar shares for \$5 per month (equivalent to 125 kilowatt-hours or two solar shares) and receive an adjustment on their electric bill.

This monthly adjustment is based on the performance of their subscribed number of solar shares and reflects the power generated and revenue sold into the energy market from Johnson Corner Solar, a 20-megawatt community solar farm near Johnson City, Kansas.

We introduced this program in 2024. We are **PROUD TO PARTNER** with Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, our wholesale power supplier, on this pioneering project.

This exciting and **CUTTING-EDGE** program puts all the benefits of **SOLAR POWER** in your hands and eliminates the headaches and high costs of individual rooftop solar installation.

Solar farms, like Johnson Corner, have the advantage of economies of scale, meaning costs decrease as the size of the system increases. That means more savings for our solar subscribers and to have **100% OF THEIR ELECTRIC USAGE GENERATED BY RENEWABLE ENERGY!**

Based on the last three years of performance (2021-2023), a subscriber investing in seven community solar shares would have saved a total of \$449 on their electric bill — after taking the \$35 monthly subscription cost into account!

I encourage you to learn more about our initiative to harness the **POWER OF THE SUN** — for everyone — on **PAGE 6** and to contact your local WEC office with questions or to sign up.

A PROMISING FUTURE

From our humble roots, we've grown into a cooperative powering 21,600 homes and businesses with 4,625 miles of distribution power lines, across 14 Kansas and three Colorado counties. I'm proud of that fact and that we're serving your needs, measured at the highest levels of success in our industry.

In 2023, we achieved an American Consumer Satisfaction Index® (ACSI) score of 92 out of 100 — our highest member satisfaction score to date — and one of the best scores in the nation among electric co-ops since 1994!

IN 2023, WE ACHIEVED AN AMERICAN CONSUMER SATISFACTION INDEX® SCORE OF 92 OUT OF 100 — OUR HIGHEST MEMBER SATISFACTION SCORE TO DATE!

DESPITE THESE CHALLENGES, I'M PROUD THAT OUR COOPERATIVE CONTINUES TO SHINE AND EXEMPLIFY THE SPIRIT OF THE SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES THAT WE VALUE AND PUT TO PRACTICE DAILY.

How? Our organization has worked diligently to improve both member engagement and satisfaction through our service, community outreach and innovate programming, all which we do to **BRIDGE THE CONNECTIONS** between the cooperative and our members.

We couldn't have achieved this milestone without our employees, who help us deliver safe, reliable and competitively priced electricity, and trustees who guide us. **THANK YOU** for your positive feedback, collaboration and support along the way.

There's a saying electric cooperatives "go the extra mile." Literally, this adage reflects the fewer number of consumers that co-ops across the country serve per mile of distribution power line. The national electric co-op average is eight members per mile, compared to private and investor-owned utilities which serve

32 consumers per mile of power line.

At WEC, our number is seven members per mile of line, reflecting just how rural our region truly is and enumerating both the physical and fiscal challenges we face in **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE.**

Despite these challenges, I'm proud that our cooperative continues to shine and exemplify the spirit of the Seven Cooperative Principles that we value and put to practice daily.

Thank you for attending this year's annual meeting, for engaging with your cooperative, and for bridging the connection between our organization and those at the heart of it — members like you.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.



2023 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour delegate Brinlie Stevens from Scott Community High School was selected to represent Kansas on the NRECA Youth Leadership Council. She also attended the 2024 NRECA PowerXChange conference in San Antonio, Texas, in March 2024 to represent our cooperative. WEC helps develop the next generation of community leaders through our youth leadership and scholarship programs.

2024 SERVICE AWARDS

5 YEARS

ALEX FRANCO | GARDEN CITY
JESSE HARBRIGE | LEOTI
JAMES SWANSON | GREAT BEND

10 YEARS

MARIO DIAZ | GARDEN CITY
BECKY LOPEZ | GARDEN CITY

15 YEARS

CLINTON GULICK | HARPER
BOB HISS* | GREAT BEND
NATHAN PORTER | LEOTI
KYLE STRICKERT | GARDEN CITY
DEBBIE STONESTREET | SYRACUSE
TRENT SUCHY | GREAT BEND

20 YEARS

NICK BUEHLER | SCOTT CITY

25 YEARS

MATT RILEY | SYRACUSE

30 YEARS

BRUCE LOY | LEOTI
CURTIS PETERSON | GARDEN CITY

*INDICATES BOARD MEMBERS

TOP 10 REASONS TO SIGN UP FOR SOLAR

NO NEED FOR SOLAR PANELS. Community Solar allows you to access solar energy without the expense and maintenance associated with installing and managing your own solar panels!

FLEXIBLE PARTICIPATION. WEC offers flexibility when participating in community solar! You can participate up to 100% of your eligible shares and you can increase or decrease your number of shares once a year.

HARNESS THE POWER OF THE SUN. In return, your energy credits will reflect the performance of your subscribed number of shares, based on the amount of power generated by Johnson Corner and the market revenue from the power sold into the energy market.

IT'S EASY. There is no change to your electric service, and you'll use electricity just as you do now! The only difference is that the energy generated on your behalf at Johnson Corner will be 100% renewable energy!

NO UPFRONT COSTS OR MAINTENANCE FEES associated with participation.

ECONOMIES OF SCALE. Johnson Corner is a 20-megawatt (MW) facility and about 2,000 times larger than a typical residential rooftop solar installation. The utility-scale size of Johnson Corner provides a significantly lower price for solar energy compared to solar energy from rooftop installations because systems like ours have the advantage of economies of scale, meaning that costs decrease as the size of the system increases.

MAXIMIZE SUN EXPOSURE. The Johnson Corner solar project also has tracking motors that adjust the angle of the solar panels throughout the day to maintain maximum exposure to the sun. This provides maximum utilization of solar irradiance with no impact due to shading from trees or adjacent buildings.

TRANSFER SERVICE. If a subscriber moves to a new house within our service territory, their subscription may transfer to their new service. The subscription may need to be adjusted based upon the past year's electricity usage of their new home.

MINIMAL RISK. If the program does not provide the benefits desired by the member, they may leave the program at any time.

100% RENEWABLE. Solar power is a clean energy solution, promoting the health of the planet.

Wheatland Electric members can subscribe on a first-come, first-served basis to community solar! Subscription sign-ups will always see a two-month bill delay due to processing times.

Contact your local WEC office to calculate your allowed number of solar shares based on your 12-month average electric consumption.

Members interested in participating, can sign up by completing the Wheatland Community Solar Share Agreement. Shares are limited, so we encourage you to act soon! Learn more at www.weci.net/community-solar or scan our QR code now!



LEARN MORE

2023 FINANCIAL

Statements

OPERATING STATEMENT AS OF DEC. 31, 2023 (AUDITED)

INCOME:

Electric Revenues	86,637,745
Water Revenues	3,477,802
Interest Income	321,608
Capital Credits from Other Cooperatives*	3,185,211
Non-Operating Income (Other)	(163,924)
TOTAL INCOME	93,458,442

EXPENSES:

Purchased Power/Cost of Sales	47,697,428
Operations & Maintenance	7,735,206
Administrative & General	8,592,756
Depreciation	12,368,996
Total Interest	9,197,426
Taxes	4,334,836
Other	102,916
TOTAL EXPENSES	90,029,564

TOTAL MARGINS 3,428,878

* Of this amount \$2,655,002 is a non-cash allocation of margins from Sunflower Electric Power Corporation for the year of 2023. This amount will be available to be paid out to members at such time when Sunflower makes cash distributions to Wheatland for that year.

Wheatland Electric will pay \$3,252,556 in property taxes for 2023. These amounts were assessed against assets such as electric lines, poles, buildings, trucks and water-related equipment owned by WEC. As a not-for-profit cooperative, WEC is exempt from income tax. At right is a list of property taxes assessed by county.

BALANCE SHEET AS OF DEC. 31, 2023 (AUDITED)

ASSETS:

Cash & Short-Term Investments	748,907
Memberships and Other Investments	93,630,945
Notes Receivable	2,086,576
Accounts Receivable	8,167,527
Materials and Supplies	6,145,701
Other Current and Accrued Assets	622,944
Deferred Charges	440,601
Plant Assets (All Operations)	406,455,718
Accumulated Depreciation	(122,603,503)
TOTAL ASSETS	395,695,416

LIABILITIES:

Principal Owed on Long-Term Debt	191,324,343
Interest Payable on Long-Term Debt (in 2024)	637,355
Notes Payable	37,372,802
Accounts Payable	5,847,749
Property Taxes Payable (due in 2024)	1,582,802
Consumer Deposits	1,427,302
Other Liabilities/Deferred Credits	8,486,055
TOTAL LIABILITIES	246,678,408

EQUITIES:

2023 Operating Margin	85,983
2023 Non-Operating Margin	3,342,896
Prior Years Margins	145,297,247
Other Equities	290,882
TOTAL EQUITY	149,017,008
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	395,695,416

PROPERTY TAXES PAID

Finney	1,068,111	Hamilton	222,959	Reno	3,695
Barton	400,390	Scott	219,320	Wallace	2,331
Harper	327,142	Wichita	180,007	Logan	1,711
Sumner	229,287	Kingman	91,981	Sedgwick	1,462
Kearny	225,771	Gray	48,739	Cheyenne	982
Greeley	224,368	Kiowa	4,235	Prowers	65
TOTAL 3,252,556					

POWERFUL NUMBERS

FROM

There was so much to celebrate in 2023! Check out these numbers that powered us through the last year. From the record setting \$90,785 Cram the Van donations to the small, but significant, Kansas Business Award accolade, these numbers prove we have a lot to be proud of as a member-owned cooperative here to serve you!



1 KANSAS BUSINESS AWARD

WEC was selected for the Apprenticeship Champions and Partners Award by the Kansas Department of Commerce for our nearly 50-year-old apprenticeship training program.



\$1,000 GRANTS

Were given to 19 community-based organizations in the WEC service territory to support projects and improve the quality of life for the communities we serve. Our Facebook followers pitched in during our Sharing Success Charity Challenge choosing the recipients of \$4,500 of these grants.

1 NRECA SPOTLIGHT ON EXCELLENCE SILVER AWARD

Our member services team won a national NRECA Spotlight on Excellence silver award for Best Annual Report, for our 2022 report published in April 2023.



WEC EMPLOYEES AND TRUSTEES SPONSORED

89 CHILDREN

and donated \$1,000 for Saint Francis Ministries' Christmas for Kids. A \$1,000 Sharing Success grant was awarded to fill wish lists for other children in need.

WEC RECEIVED AN ACSI® SCORE OF 92 OUT OF 100

for member satisfaction — the highest score we have received to date and the highest ACSI® score in the nation last year!



American Customer Satisfaction Index

WEC CELEBRATED 75 YEARS

On Oct. 25, 1948, WEC was chartered bringing electricity to rural southwest Kansas.

\$750,000

IN CAPITAL CREDITS
WERE RETURNED

Eligible members from 1990 and 2022 received checks (of \$25 or more) in December 2023.



THANKS TO YOU, WE RAISED \$90,785

when combined with our \$50,000 donation, in both cash and food donations to Power the Pantry!



90%

CASH DONATIONS

This year for Cram the Van, we shifted our focus to collect monetary donations (vs. food items) to Power the Pantry.

LINE CREWS HOSTED 38 SAFETY DEMOS

to educate the public, including school-age children and critical first responders, like EMTs and firefighters, on safety around power lines.



IN 2023, WE HAD AT LEAST

235

INDIVIDUAL CHARGING SESSIONS

77

UNIQUE DRIVERS

WEC put southwest and central Kansas on the national EV map in 2022 by installing public charging stations at our Garden City and Great Bend offices. In 2023, we added a third station in Harper.



\$14,000

IN SCHOLARSHIPS

were distributed to 14 outstanding high school seniors across WEC's service territory at the 2023 WEC Annual Meeting.



814 ATTENDEES SET A RECORD

at our 2023 WEC Annual Meeting across eight meeting locations.



ILLUMINATING CONNECTIONS

Bright Ideas That Bring Us Together



ABOVE: Many actions behind the scenes like sponsoring youth sports teams, donating bottled water at community events, helping stranded motorists and fulfilling holiday wish lists for children in need have the biggest impact.

BELOW: In 2023, our long-standing annual food drive — Cram the Van — took a new direction collecting \$90,785 in cash and food donations for a dozen local food banks across our service territory.



The work we do to brighten the lives of our members at Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., is a matter of a principle — Seven Cooperative Principles to be specific!

In fact, cooperatives around the world operate according to the same set of core principles, as adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance. These principles, which reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equality, inclusiveness and service, are a key reason

electric cooperatives like ours operate differently than other electric utilities and why we put members needs first.

We strive to serve our members and help our communities thrive, a value rooted in our earliest days. Electric cooperatives were created out of necessity — to meet a need that would have otherwise been unmet, at a time when stringing power lines across America's rural landscape was not economically attractive to large power companies. In the wake of America's New Deal and the creation of the Rural Electrification Administration in 1935,

nine visionary Kansans banded together to create WEC in 1948 to benefit the community. For a modest \$5 membership fee, locals could join the co-op and bring electricity to their homes and farms.

Over three-quarters of a century later, it's clear to see how these electric lines powered not only our homesteads, but

accelerated economic opportunities across our southwest and central Kansas service territory, benefiting all who live and work here today.

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Among the Seven Cooperative Principles, the last (but not least) is Concern for Community, a principle we consider essential to who we are. Concern for Community encourages us to “work for the sustainable development of our communities through policies supported by our membership.”

At WEC, we serve our communities not only by delivering an essential service, but by **POWERING OUR LOCAL ECONOMY**. Funding community causes, investing in our youth, promoting higher education and workforce training, aiding economic development efforts, and carrying out community service projects to benefit our members.

Why? Because your home is our home. Our employees send their kids (and grandkids) to the same schools as you; and our elected trustees who help set long-term priorities live locally on our lines and represent the best interests of the communities they belong to.

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and competitively-priced electricity, we also aim to be a catalyst for good. We're excited to shed some light on how our co-op serves as a source of service, compassion and innovation — **ILLUMINATING CONNECTIONS** across the communities we serve!

POWER THE PANTRY

In 2023, we took our long-standing annual food drive — **CRAM THE VAN** — and steered it in a new direction. With your help last fall, we collected \$90,785 in cash and food donations, **90% OF WHICH WERE MONETARY**, for a dozen local food banks across our service territory!



The Sharing Success Fund gives WEC the opportunity to distribute \$1,000 grants for up to 20 non-profits and other community-based projects each year.

We called this revitalized approach **POWER THE PANTRY**, with the same goal of ensuring our pantries were well-stocked before the holiday season. We refocused Cram the Van funds and donations — which have grown each year through our in-person events, school competitions and annual charity golf tournament — to have the greatest impact.

In lieu of traveling in our big, red extended passenger van and hosting in-person community events throughout the season, we **COMMITTED \$50,000** to our food banks to kick-off the campaign!

We then worked to **DOUBLE THE IMPACT** of our cash donation, with a goal of raising \$100,000 and, while we didn't quite reach our goal in 2023, we came close! We are incredibly proud and grateful for the generosity shown by the communities we serve.

The brightest spot? Facilitating the response from our cooperative members, who want to help other members in need!

SHARING SUCCESS

Our **SHARING SUCCESS FUND** is another way we work to brighten our communities. Sharing Success is made possible through contributions from WEC and CoBank, a financial lending partner.

Thanks to an annual matching contribution of \$10,000, this fund gives us the opportunity to distribute **\$1,000 GRANTS** for up to 20 non-profits and other community-based projects each year.

Since 2012, we've awarded over **\$145,000** to various organizations across southwest and central Kansas. These groups not only light up individual lives, but also beautify our towns and cities including: fire departments, senior centers, schools, healthcare centers and hospitals, museums, youth programs and libraries.

Sharing Success is just another way we **COLLABORATE** with our communities, convey **COMPASSION** through initiatives that serve others, and **EMBODY** our seventh cooperative principle!

INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH

Each year, WEC funds all-expenses-paid **LEADERSHIP LEARNING** experiences for up to four high school juniors to Washington, D.C., and Steamboat Springs, Colorado, through the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp.

Both once-in-a-lifetime getaways teach the **LEADERS OF TOMORROW** about cooperatives and **EMPOWER** them to give back to their communities and build connections with peers from diverse backgrounds.

Students across our service territory are selected based on a competitive written and interview process.

High school seniors can apply for **\$1,000 ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS**, which we award each spring. Supporting students higher education goals **POSITIVELY IMPACTS** students, their families and communities — nurturing an environment of education, achievement and opportunity.

LIGHTING THE WAY

When power outages occur, our lineworkers get to work immediately, restoring electricity as quickly and safely as possible.

Beyond our daily mission — **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE** — many actions behind the scenes have the biggest impact on our members: sponsoring youth sports teams, donating bottled water at community events, helping stranded motorists, fulfilling holiday wish lists for children in need and many more.

WEC powers our communities — we also work to **EMPOWER** our communities, **BUILDING TRUST** and **BRIDGING CONNECTIONS** that bring us together, one gesture of goodwill at a time.

Thank you for allowing us to serve you, our members, and helping us **ILLUMINATE CONNECTIONS** across the communities we serve!

7 CO-OP PRINCIPLES

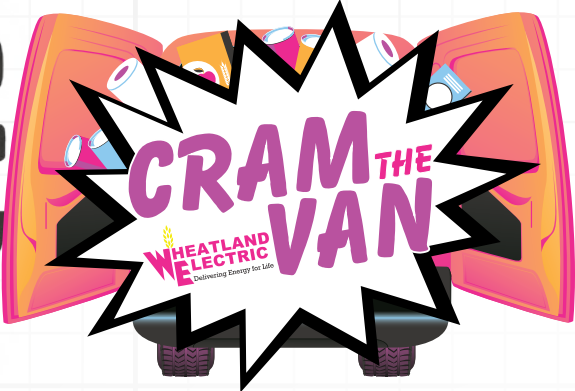
- ▶ Voluntary and Open Membership
- ▶ Democratic Member Control
- ▶ Members' Economic Participation
- ▶ Autonomy and Independence
- ▶ Education, Training and Information
- ▶ Cooperation Among Cooperatives

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Supporting students' higher education goals positively impacts the students, their families and communities — nurturing an environment of education, achievement and opportunity.



WE **POWER** *the* **PANTRY** *in 2023*



Steering Our Annual Food Drive in a New Direction



We are incredibly proud and grateful for the generosity shown by the communities we serve, and the brightest spot was facilitating the response and engagement from our co-op members to help their neighbors in need.

Over a decade ago WEC set out to find a new way to expand our involvement in the Seventh Cooperative Principle — Concern for Community. That community service project, created in 2014, was coined **CRAM THE VAN**.

Our objective? To collect non-perishable food items from co-op members and deliver them to our local food banks across our southwest and central Kansas service territory.

In the inaugural year, we identified the largest vehicle in our fleet — a big, red extended Chevy passenger van — removed the back seats, plastered on some flashy graphics, and set out to do just what we dubbed our crusade — to Cram the Van!

In exchange for freewill and food donations, we grilled hamburgers and hot dogs as our “thank you” at dozens of stops in the communities we serve, including at Friday night football games, local community events and outside neighborhood grocery stores. Our whirlwind first year resulted in 6,615 pounds of food for local food banks.

Over the next nine years, we continued our Cram the Van journey with new events and avenues to raise funds including a charity golf tournament, school competitions to add some fun and friendly rivalry to the mix, and making it easier to donate online.

After nine successful years and nearly 113 tons of food collected, we decided

THE EVOLUTION OF CRAM THE VAN

2014-2019

Our original **CRAM THE VAN** logo.



2020

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the **WAY** we conducted our in-person events changed: Members drove through to make their donation and pick up their meal and employees and volunteer donned personal protective gear including face shields, masks and gloves, to protect everyone involved. Despite these changes, the reasons **WHY** we crammed the van did not: to support our local food banks and neighbors in need!



2021

In 2021, we kicked things off with a new rallying cry for our campaign: **“YES, WE CAN!”** reflecting our desire to attain another record-breaking year. Not only did we achieve our goal, our marketing campaign was recognized with an NRECA Spotlight on Excellence Gold Award for Best Total Communications Program the following year.



RAISED

32,206 POUNDS OF FOOD (OR 16 TONS)

RAISED

44,576 POUNDS OF FOOD (OR 22 TONS)



In exchange for freewill and food donations, we grilled hamburgers and hot dogs as our “thank you” at dozens of stops in the communities we serve, including at Friday night football games, local community events and outside neighborhood grocery stores.

It was time to steer our long-standing food drive into a fresh and new direction.

In 2023, our annual campaign became bigger and better than ever. We chose to focus on where funds could have the greatest impact. In lieu of traveling in our big, red van and hosting events in person, we **COMMITTED \$50,000** to kick things off with our 2023 campaign!

We then worked to **DOUBLE THE IMPACT** of our monetary donation, with a goal of raising \$100,000. We called this revitalized approach **POWER THE PANTRY**, with the same goal of ensuring that our food banks were well-stocked before the holidays.

Based on feedback from our food banks, **CASH DONATIONS** are preferable to food items for several reasons: eliminating waste, reducing storage needs, offering flexibility, and allowing for the purchase of perishable items such as meat and cheese at local grocers and through voucher systems for food bank patrons.

While we didn't quite reach our goal in 2023, we came very close. And with the help of co-op members like you, we collected \$90,785 in cash and

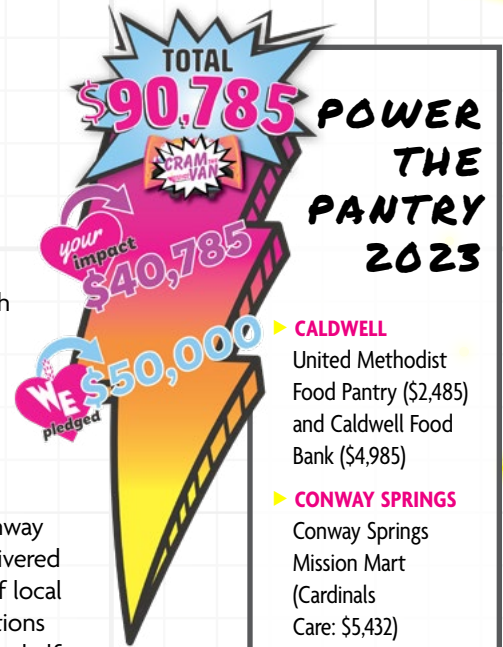
food donations — 90% of which were monetary!

In addition to the monetary total (\$82,032), additional food items from our Great Bend School Competition (7,501 lbs.) and Cardinals Care Challenge in Conway Springs (1,252 lbs.) were also delivered to our food banks. A handful of local businesses made cash contributions directly to area food banks on behalf of our campaign, as well.

This brings our combined 10-year food drive total to 317,693 **POUNDS, OR JUST OVER 159 TONS OF FOOD!**

We are incredibly proud and grateful for the generosity shown by the communities we serve, and the brightest spot was facilitating the response and engagement from our co-op members to help their neighbors in need.

We are excited for what 2024 holds, and we hope you will partner with us to **POWER THE PANTRY** this fall!



- ▶ **CALDWELL**
United Methodist Food Pantry (\$2,485) and Caldwell Food Bank (\$4,985)
- ▶ **CONWAY SPRINGS**
Conway Springs Mission Mart (Cardinals Care: \$5,432)
- ▶ **FINNEY COUNTY**
Emmaus House (\$4,665) and Genesis Family Health (\$4,370)
- ▶ **GREAT BEND**
Community Food Bank of Barton County (\$13,080)
- ▶ **HARPER**
Harper Mission Mart (\$8,190)
- ▶ **HOLCOMB**
Horns for Hope c/o USD 363 (\$2,885)
- ▶ **LEOTI**
Wichita County Food Bank, Leoti (\$8,030)
- ▶ **SCOTT CITY**
Hope's Closet/ Ministerial Alliance (\$12,415)
- ▶ **SYRACUSE**
Hamilton County Food Pantry (\$6,245)
- ▶ **TRIBUNE**
Greeley County Food Bank (\$6,150)

2022

At the start of fall 2022, we sought out to “**THINK BIG**” and make our 2022 Cram the Van campaign our biggest, brightest and best year yet. We smashed our goal by raising a record-setting amount of both food and monetary donations!



2023

We steered our campaign in a new direction this year with a focus on collecting monetary donations. We not only committed \$50,000 to **POWER THE PANTRY**, we also worked to double that impact by raising funds through our charity golf tournament, partnering with local businesses and creating an online campaign.



RAISED

\$4,599 POUNDS OF FOOD (OR 27 TONS)

RAISED

\$90,785 (OR 45 TONS)

FROM THE GROUND UP

Long-standing Apprenticeship Training Program Wins 2023 Kansas Business Award

When Rick Klaus served as a foreman in 1990, he was asked to become an instructor in Wheatland Electric’s apprenticeship program.

It was an honor, Klaus said, because instructors in those days were higher up the career ladder.

Today, Klaus, who serves as WEC’s director of operations, said he can count at least 42 students who have obtained their journeyman lineman status under his instruction.

“I learned so much more by teaching it,” he said, recalling his time at the front of the classroom. “Today my former students are servicemen, area-wide supervisors, and district managers ... it’s a good feeling!”

Since at least the mid-1970s, WEC has successfully administered a formal apprenticeship program to train our lineworkers from the ground up — providing classroom instruction on power line safety, construction and maintenance from qualified veteran lineworkers and coupling that knowledge with real-world experience in the field.

Most employees who work at an electric cooperative like WEC are lineworkers, employees who construct and maintain electric distribution power lines and substations, oftentimes braving the wrath of Mother Nature to make

emergency repairs and restore power.

Lineworkers begin this professional journey as either a groundman (with no previous experience) or a first-year apprentice lineman, those who typically have a year’s worth of schooling from a vocational or technical college or a year’s worth of industry experience under their belt.

From there, apprentice linemen must complete four years of weekly, yearlong classroom instruction and bookwork and nearly 7,000 hours of on-the-job training — not to mention annual written and oral examinations — to earn their journeyman status.

Many electric cooperatives provide apprenticeship training to build and retain their employees, but what makes WEC’s program unique is our **JOINT APPRENTICE TRAINING COMMITTEE**, according to Klaus.

Known as the JATC, the internal committee



Manager of Substations and Metering Kyle Strickert observes apprentices Braden Harmon and Colby Gugelmeyer as they practice building transformer banks and connecting meters. Apprentices learn to configure systems based on amperage needs and voltage requirements.





Wheatland Electric representatives accept the Apprenticeship Champions and Partners Award at the Kansas Business Awards in Wichita on Oct. 12, 2023. Pictured from left: Shajia Donecker, social media specialist; Alli Conine, director of member services and corporate communications; Nicole Semenko, manager of human resources; Lt. Governor David Toland; Bruce W. Mueller, general manager; Rick Klaus, director of operations; and Kyle Strickert, manager of substations and metering.

comprised of eight members, four from labor and four from management, test each apprentice's knowledge, skill and judgment prior to his or her promotion from year to year.

"They're hit with a variety of questions they might get in real life ... from their manager or from a [co-op] member," Klaus added.

Because of the physical and financial investment WEC makes in its apprentices, our electric cooperative has built a statewide reputation of training and maintaining highly qualified apprentices.

That reputation was recently honored at the **2023 KANSAS BUSINESS AWARDS**, hosted by the Kansas Department of Commerce, which recognizes entities throughout the state for "the valuable contributions they make to the Kansas economy and for the positive impact they make in their communities."

In 2022, the program introduced a new category — Apprenticeship Champions and Partners — recognizing companies and other entities that excel at providing registered apprenticeship programs throughout the state.

Several WEC representatives attended the awards banquet held in Wichita on Oct. 12 to be recognized as a nominee in this category and celebrate our program's impact on the local southwest and central Kansas economy.

"Our apprenticeship training program is a team effort," Klaus said, adding that there have been many excellent

WEC instructors over the years who have built much of the linework team WEC still employs today. "To be recognized for this program is long overdue."

In addition to WEC's lineman apprenticeship program, our cooperative also provides two additional apprenticeship programs: substation and meter technician.

Lineworkers with an interest in substation maintenance — managing large power transformers or programming controls — or metering can also become a journeyman in these areas after earning their journeyman lineman status.

While this coursework is shorter, taking approximately three additional years to complete, earning these credentials give lineworkers additional industry-wide exposure.

"It's also our downfall," Klaus said. WEC's reputation for highly skilled and well-trained apprentices means increased competition from larger utilities when WEC apprentices complete the program.

That's part of the reason WEC welcomes the recognition from state officials. "To be recognized for something you're passionate about is very rewarding," Klaus said. "We know we have a great program — what's wrong with letting the rest of the state know?"



TOP: Maria Carrasco (left), apprentice meter technician, receives instruction from Kyle Strickert, instructor and manager of substations and metering. The meter technician program is one of WEC's three apprenticeship programs.

BOTTOM: Written exams are only a small part of WEC's four-year lineman apprenticeship program. Apprentices also receive weekly classroom instruction and on-the-job training from experienced journeymen linemen.



OUR MISSION

DELIVERING
ENERGY FOR LIFE

OUR VISION

WHEATLAND ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE WILL PROVIDE
ESSENTIAL SERVICES THAT
ARE SAFE, RELIABLE AND
COMPETITIVELY PRICED
TO ENHANCE THE LIVES OF
OUR MEMBERS.

