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WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

National Electric Safety Month: A Time for Vigilance and Education

At Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., (WEC) we recognize National Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. From our co-op crews to you, the members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

This annual observance is not only a reminder of the importance of electrical safety but also serves as an opportunity for us to educate and empower our communities about the critical measures needed to prevent electrical accidents.

Electricity is an essential part of our daily lives, powering our homes, businesses and communities. However, it also poses inherent risks if not handled with care and respect. During **NATIONAL ELECTRIC SAFETY MONTH** we renew our commitment to promoting awareness and implementing best practices to ensure the safety of our members and employees.



Bruce W. Mueller

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SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Distracted driving has become a deadly epidemic on our roads, claiming 3,308 lives in 2022 according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Cellphone use — specifically, texting, talking and social media use — has become the most common distraction. Other risky actions include adjusting the radio or GPS, applying makeup, and eating or drinking. By driving distracted, you're robbing yourself of seconds you may need to avoid a close call or deadly crash.



Stevens Attends NRECA PowerXchange

“Getting our generation interested in co-ops ensures the future for electric cooperatives is bright. This week also has shown me that I am braver and more outgoing than I thought!”

BRINLIE STEVENS, a high school senior from Scott Community High School, recently returned from the 2024 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) PowerXchange in San Antonio, Texas.

The leadership learning experience from March 3-6 was a whirlwind according to Stevens, who served as a volunteer with fellow Youth Leadership Council (YLC) delegates from 44 states.

“[The conference] made me more aware of how necessary and vital electric cooperatives are in rural communities,” Stevens said. “I now have a better understanding of why it’s so important that NRECA makes these youth events. Getting our generation interested in co-ops ensures the future for electric cooperatives is bright. This week also has shown me that I am braver and more outgoing than I thought!”

YLC delegates opened the conference during the general session, in front of thousands of representatives from electric cooperatives from across the country. YLCs introduced speakers, passed out microphones, counted attendance and other various conference tasks.

Stevens represented Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) during the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., in June 2023. During Youth Tour, she was selected as the Kansas YLC delegate by her peers.

“My favorite part of this week was watching my fellow YLC delegates perform their talents at the talent show and seeing Josh Turner,” Stevens added, referring to the country and gospel singer and songwriter who provided entertainment during the close of the conference.



Brinlie Stevens (right) at PowerXchange in San Antonio, Texas, introduces a speaker as part of her duties as a youth tour delegate.

Stevens says both Youth Tour and PowerXchange were inspirational experiences she will carry with her through her years of higher education and her career.

“I had the best week and I now have a friend in almost every state,” she said. “The kids on this trip are incredible and I couldn’t help but want to be friends with every single one of them. I know we will all go on to do amazing things!”

Congratulations, Brinlie Stevens! Thank you for representing our great state and WEC!

In addition to Stevens’ attendance, the PowerXchange conference in San Antonio was also attended by several members of WEC’s staff. WEC sends a rotation of employees each year to pursue professional development opportunities and conduct association business.



Stevens makes a quick introduction during a general session at PowerXchange on March 5 in San Antonio, Texas.



Stevens (third from right) joined a diverse group of peer leaders from across the country at the PowerXchange conference March 3-6, 2024.

Professional Achievements and Promotions Strengthen WEC

In the wake of retirements by long-standing employees, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) has promoted several employees. Our succession planning identifies and develops future leaders within the co-op to ensure continuity of leadership and smooth transition of key roles. These employees also learned from their successors.

NICOLE SEMENKO, former payroll specialist, steps into her new role as manager of human resources, following the retirement of **BARBARA KIRK**, who served WEC for nearly two decades.

Kirk, who retired March 8, started her career with WEC in October 2005, as a payroll specialist and was later promoted to manager of human resources in December 2015. Kirk became the human resources director in December 2017.

“I’m very thankful for the opportunities I have been given and the learning and growing I have done,” Kirk said. “I’ve worked on projects with many people over the years and have made friendships. I feel by doing the many HR functions, I’ve helped my fellow employees serve our communities.”

Semenko trained alongside Kirk for nearly a year following Kirk’s announcement of her impending retirement.

KLAUS TO RETIRE; BARRETT, PETERSON PROMOTED

RICK KLAUS, director of operations, has announced he will retire Sept. 6, 2024. Klaus’ career began at WEC in April 1982, as a groundman in District 5 (comprising Finney, eastern Kearny, and northwestern Gray counties). In November 1985, he was promoted to journeyman lineman, and then to District 5 foreman in 1990. In June 1998, he was promoted to foreman of the District 5 substation crew. Klaus became the District 5 manager in May 2014, and ultimately in charge of operations across Districts 1-5 in December 2015. In December 2018, he was

promoted to director of operations for all of WEC.

“Rick has done a tremendous job during his service to WEC,” said Bruce W. Mueller, CEO/general manager. “He has earned the admiration and respect from the members and employees who have worked with him over his 42-year-long career.”

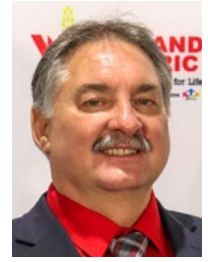
BRANDON BARRETT, WEC’s manager of engineering since December 2020, has over a decade of experience at WEC. He is currently training alongside Klaus to step into the director of operations position upon Klaus’ retirement. Barrett started his WEC career as a part-time engineering summer intern in 2009, before completing an additional three internships with WEC during college. In December 2011, he was hired as a full-time electrical engineer. In December 2017, he was promoted to electrical engineer II and ultimately manager of engineering, his current role, in December 2020.

To fill the role previously held by Barrett, **CURTIS PETERSON**, formerly District 5 manager, has been promoted to manager of operations. In this new role, Peterson is responsible for assuring that the WEC electrical facilities are constructed, maintained and operated in a safe, efficient and consistent manner across all WEC districts and meet National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) code requirements. He is also responsible for assuring that adequate planning occurs for the orderly development of distribution and substation facilities and will be working with WEC’s Manager of Safety Quinten Wheeler to promote safe and efficient work practices for all operations personnel.

Peterson has served WEC since June 1993, when he was first hired part time as a member of a District 5 line crew. He was promoted to journeyman lineman in December 1996, and District 5 manager in December 2018.



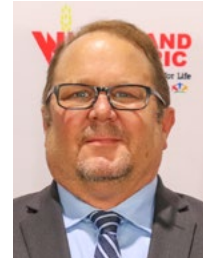
Brandon Barrett



Rick Klaus



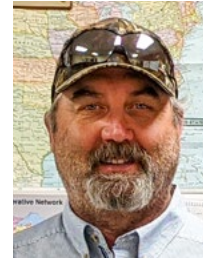
Jake Jones



Jevin Kasselmann



Barbara Kirk



Curtis Peterson

KASSELMAN AND JONES EARN CISSP

WEC strives to ensure our employees are both educated and trained at the highest standards of our industry. Two members of our information technology department recently completed the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) an independent information security certification granted by the International Information System Security Certification Consortium.

JEVIN KASSELMAN, director of IT, and **JAKE JONES**, systems administrator, have both earned this certification, demonstrating a high level of proficiency, experience and commitment to excellence in the field of information security and protecting organizations like WEC from cyberthreats.



Nicole Semenko



MEMBER SERVICES WIN NATIONAL *Spotlight on Excellence* *Awards* for Third Consecutive Year



Members gather at the WEC's 2023 Annual Meeting on April 26, 2023, in Scott City.



A historical display at the WEC's 2023 Annual Meeting in Scott City celebrated 75 years of co-op history.



A member attending WEC's 2023 Annual Meeting in Scott City views the historical display.

For the third year in a row, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. has received national recognition in the **2024 SPOTLIGHT ON EXCELLENCE AWARDS** program, sponsored by the Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

WEC's member services team received a **SILVER AWARD IN BEST EXTERNAL EVENT** for our 75th anniversary celebration at our 2023 annual meeting and a second **SILVER AWARD IN BEST WILD CARD** for our 75th historical display.

The 2023 event, held April 26 in Scott City and in seven additional remote locations across WEC's service territory, was attended in record numbers by co-op members across southwest and central Kansas.

The meeting's theme, "Feel the Power," reflected 75 years of shared cooperative history with the membership. WEC received its official charter from the Rural Electrification Administration in 1948.

Member services, with the help of additional cooperative employees, put together a special publication and life-size historical exhibit in Scott City as part of last year's annual meeting celebration, reflecting the co-op's many decades of service and rich history. Both the publication and exhibit featured historical documents and artifacts. A copy of the special publication (our 2022 annual report) is available online at www.weci.net/ annual-meeting.

"I'm extremely proud of our member

services team and the work they've done to catalogue and document our rich cooperative history," said Bruce W. Mueller, WEC's CEO/general manager. "Because of their strong communication efforts, we will be able to share our story and carry out our mission for decades to come."

The member services team is led by **ALLI CONINE**, director of member services and corporate communications, and includes the following team members: **SAMANTHA GARCIA** and **MARY HOISINGTON**, both member services and key accounts managers; and **SHAJIA DONECKER**, social media specialist.

The member services team will be recognized at the 2024 CONNECT Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, a national conference for communications and marketing professionals in the cooperative electric industry later this May. Donecker will accept the awards and participate in this annual professional development opportunity.

The Spotlight on Excellence program recognizes the best communication and marketing efforts by electric cooperatives and related organizations nationwide. More than 800 entries were submitted across 20 categories from just under 180 co-ops representing 40 states. Categories include writing, graphic design, digital communications, campaign development and more. The judging panel includes members from the University of Missouri as well as noted professionals in the fields of marketing, digital communications and print media.

TELL

US

HOW

WE'RE

DOING

As a member-owned electric cooperative, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. is committed to delivering exceptional service and meeting the evolving needs of its members. The ACSI survey provides an opportunity for members to share their experiences and provide valuable insights that will help shape the cooperative's future initiatives.



Scan the QR code or visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/WheatlandElectric to let us know how we're doing!



Complete our survey by May 31 &



be entered to WIN 4 KC Royals tickets!

A promotional graphic with a dark blue background and white text. It features a speech bubble containing the text "Complete our survey by May 31 & be entered to WIN 4 KC Royals tickets!". To the right of the text is a white icon of a baseball cap. Below the text is a white icon of a baseball bat and a baseball.

Revving Up the Scene!

Our cooperative's all-electric vehicles have been turning heads across events throughout the spring!

We've hosted multiple Ride+Drive events to show off our **2021 HYUNDAI KONA ELECTRIC** and **2023 FORD F-150 LIGHTNING**! We've also used our vehicles in on-site safety demonstrations, primarily for first responders to learn the ins and outs of electric vehicles.

Wherever we go, we're **CHARGED WITH EXCITEMENT** — working to help others discover the power of driving electric! In fact, our Kona Electric even made an appearance at this year's 2024 Sunflower ElectroRally, a high school and college e-car racing competition held in Scott City every year, where our employees served as pace car drivers during both rounds of racing at the April 4 competition! Electric vehicles offer instant torque, providing powerful acceleration, operate almost silently, require much lower maintenance, and offer a ton of environmental and operational benefits.

Want to learn more about driving electric? Visit www.weci.net/ electric-vehicle **TO ACCESS OUR FREE CHOOSEEV DIGITAL TOOLKIT!**

Access
Our **FREE**
ChooseEv
Digital
Toolkit!



Adam Kadavy of Scott City test drives the Ford F-150 Lightning.



From left: Ivan Gutierrez, Julian Enriquez and Karelly Davila with the Ford F-150 Lightning during the Better Home and Living Show on March 16 in Finney County.



The Hyundai Kona Electric serves as a pace car at the Sunflower ElectroRally on April 4.



Julie and Mark Dinkel get behind the wheel of the Ford F-150 Lightning at the Better Home and Living Show.



Samantha Garcia, member services and key accounts manager, provides EV information during the Better Home and Living Show on March 16.



Great Bend Fire Department members explore WEC's electric vehicles as part of their first-responder training.



POWER PLAY

Thursday, June 27

GARDEN CITY WIND

FIRST 200 PEOPLE:

FREE HAMBURGERS & HOTDOGS!

CLINT LIGHTNER FIELD | GAME STARTS AT 6:30 PM CT

First 50 people get in free!



Treat Bend! Join us for a POWER PLAY

Thursday, July 11

FREE HAMBURGERS + HOTDOGS

FIRST 200 PEOPLE

GIVEAWAYS! PRIZES!



serving at 6 p.m.

AL BURNS MEMORIAL FIELD
GATES OPEN AT 6:30 P.M. CT

National Electric Safety Month: A Time for Vigilance and Education Continued from page 12A ►

One of the fundamental aspects of electrical safety is education. We believe that knowledge is power, and by equipping our members with the necessary information and resources, we empower them to make informed decisions that protect themselves and their loved ones. From understanding the basics of electrical systems to recognizing potential hazards, education is the first line of defense against accidents.

In fact, in 2023 alone, we reached over **1,500 PARTICIPANTS** with our live safety demonstrations — from the very young to older generations, too. We caution students on the dangers of playing around pad-mounted transformers and warn the public about overloading circuits with too many electrical devices.

At WEC, safety is ingrained in everything we do. From our dedicated workforce to our robust training programs, we prioritize safety as our top priority. Moreover, as technology evolves and our reliance on electricity grows, we must stay vigilant and adapt to new challenges.

However, safety is not solely the responsibility of electric utilities. It is a shared commitment that requires the

collaboration and active participation of everyone in our communities. By practicing safe habits at home, work and public spaces, we can collectively reduce the risk of electrical accidents and create a safer environment for all.

As we commemorate National Electric Safety Month, I urge you to join us in prioritizing safety and promoting awareness in your daily lives. Whether it's conducting a home electrical inspection, teaching your children about electrical hazards, or simply being mindful of your surroundings, every effort counts toward preventing accidents and saving lives.

At WEC, safety is a core value that guides our operations and decisions. It guides us in our mission of **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE**. Help us reaffirm our dedication to electrical safety not just this month, but throughout the year. Together, we can build a safer, more resilient community where everyone can thrive. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to safety.

UNTIL NEXT TIME. TAKE CARE.

WHEATLAND ELECTRIC
Delivering Energy for Life
A Sustainable Energy Cooperative

You won't want to miss this...

June 19 4-7 PM
Dry Lake Brewing

Tropic like it's HOT

HAPPY HOUR IS ON US!

SPECIALTY DRINKS DOOR PRIZES
PORK CARNITAS PINEAPPLE SAISA
TROPICAL GRAZING TABLE

GREAT BEND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AFTER HOURS

DRY LAKE
Brewing
1305 Main St. • Great Bend