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WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# NEWS

## WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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## FROM THE MANAGER

# Lighting the Way

How your co-op powers community and connection



**Bruce W. Mueller**

October marks **NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH**, a time to celebrate the values that make cooperatives like Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) unique. As a member-owned cooperative, our mission goes far beyond delivering reliable electricity — we're here to **POWER OUR COMMUNITIES** in every sense of the word. We exist to power possibility, opportunity and connection in the communities we serve — because our mission is **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE**.

October marks **NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH**, a time to celebrate the values that make cooperatives like Wheatland Electric Cooperative,

Every day, WEC demonstrates that commitment in ways that make a lasting difference. Our **POWER THE PANTRY** campaign has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and collected countless canned goods to support local food banks, ensuring that our neighbors don't go hungry. Through the **SHARING SUCCESS FUND**, we've reinvested member dollars directly back into community projects, strengthening schools, nonprofits and local organizations that improve quality of life across our service territory.

We're equally proud to invest in our future leaders. Each year, WEC provides **ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS**, and sends two students to the **ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR** in Washington, D.C., and two students

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We will be **CLOSED**  
ON **OCT. 13** FOR  
*Columbus Day*

# POWERING OUR

# Communities

How Wheatland Electric is building a better world

Each October, cooperatives across the nation celebrate **NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH** — a time to recognize the values that make co-ops unique and to reflect on how we're helping communities thrive.

This year's theme, "**COOPERATIVES BUILD A BETTER WORLD,**" perfectly captures Wheatland Electric Cooperative's mission to serve not just as a power provider, but as a community partner, leader and innovator.

At WEC, we're proud to say our work goes far beyond keeping the lights on. We're addressing hunger in our neighborhoods. We're investing in the next generation of leaders. We're supporting local economic development efforts. And we're preparing for a cleaner, shared future. That's because all throughout the year, we're committed to empowering our members and energizing our communities across central and western Kansas!

## FEEDING FAMILIES, FUELING HOPE

One of our proudest initiatives is **POWER THE PANTRY**, WEC's signature community service campaign that begins in early fall. What began 11 years ago as "Cram the Van" has grown into a cooperative-wide effort that supports a dozen local food banks across our service territory.

Our Power the Pantry campaign supports a dozen local food banks each fall, including the Greeley County Food Pantry in Tribune, which received \$6,374 in 2024.

COOPERATIVES BUILD A BETTER WORLD

CO-OPS



WEC employees package and sort food donations at the Barton County Community Food Bank following the Great Bend Schools Competition in 2024.



In 2024, we set an ambitious goal of doubling our **\$50,000** impact — and thanks to the overwhelming generosity of cooperative members like you, we not only reached it but surpassed it. Together, we raised more than **\$110,000**, the equivalent of 110,000 pounds of food, to fight hunger across our service territory. Beyond the dollars, the greatest reward has been seeing the compassion and generosity of our members rallying together to provide hope and stability to neighbors in need.

Power the Pantry reflects our deep commitment to the **SEVENTH COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE: CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY**. By making sure shelves are stocked before the holidays, we're not only providing food but also building trust, security and connection in the places we call home.

**SCAN TO MAKE A QUICK AND EASY DONATION TO YOUR LOCAL FOOD BANK!**



### INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S LEADERS

WEC believes in investing in the next generation of leaders.

Each spring, we award **AT LEAST 14 \$1,000 ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS** to graduating seniors with plans to attend a college, university or trade school to further their career or educational goals. These scholarships open doors to new opportunities, encourage achievement, and strengthen our communities by helping young people pursue higher education.

But we know learning goes far beyond the classroom. That's why each summer, we sponsor students for transformative, all-expenses-paid leadership experiences including:

- ▶ **ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR TO WASHINGTON, D.C.**, where high school juniors learn about democracy in action while connecting with peers from across the country.
- ▶ **COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP NEAR STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO**, where students immerse themselves in team building,

**BELOW:** Great Bend High School's Braylee Carper (left) and Quinton Heath attended the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp this year.



**LEFT:** Sophia Wedel (left), Wichita County High School, and Kamryn Meyer, Scott Community High School, toured Washington, D.C., during the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour this summer.



leadership training and learning more about the cooperative difference.

These experiences leave a lasting impact, inspiring students to actively contribute to their communities while building friendships and skills that last a lifetime.

**SCAN TO HEAR MORE ABOUT THE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR FROM OUR 2025 DELEGATES IN OUR LATEST PODCAST!**



### ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

As member expectations evolve, WEC is adapting our services and culture to meet changing needs — especially those of young adult members. We recognize that engaging the next generation is essential for our shared future.

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A Wiley Elementary School student tries on linemen's gloves during Big Truck Day, May 2, 2025, in Holcomb.



A power-packed evening with the Great Bend Bat Cats featured WEC linemen grilling for fans and the 8U Bombers on the mound for the first pitch on June 10, 2025.

That's why we host annual events like **CHAMBER AFTER HOURS** and community baseball nights with the **GREAT BEND BAT CATS** and **GARDEN CITY WIND** each summer. These gatherings create relaxed, family-friendly environments where members can connect, share ideas, and build lasting relationships.

By meeting members where they are — in the ballpark, online and at community events — and by leveraging social media and modern communication channels, WEC ensures that cooperative values stay relevant and strong. Young adult members aren't just tomorrow's leaders; they're helping shape the cooperative today.



**LEFT TOP:** Locals brought the heat during a "Cherry Hot" evening at Dry Lake Brewing in Great Bend on June 4, 2025.

**LEFT BOTTOM:** Young fans got in the game-day spirit with temporary co-op tattoos and plenty of smiles at the Great Bend Bat Cats game.

# POWERING OUR *Communities*

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## ENERGIZING LOCAL ECONOMIES

Electricity powers businesses, but at WEC we go further by helping spark **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** in the communities we serve. Through strategic partnerships and creative financing, we're always working to attract new opportunities, support existing businesses, and create vibrant local economies.

For example, did you know that we regularly partner with our generation and transmission provider, **SUNFLOWER ELECTRIC POWER CORPORATION**, to secure new loads that could strengthen our region's energy grid and promote growth?

We also utilize the **RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LOAN AND GRANT PROGRAM**, a U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative that allows cooperatives like ours to provide zero-interest loans to local projects that create jobs and stimulate economic development. In recent years, we've supported projects like the Scott Recreation Commission Fitness Center in Scott City, Kansas, and the Grow & Learn Childcare Center, Inc. in Leoti, Kansas, with these funds.

Our economic development efforts help bring new businesses, services and infrastructure to rural Kansas, and our **SHARING SUCCESS FUND** helps fund existing local projects, ensuring our communities not only survive but thrive in an increasingly competitive world.

SCAN TO APPLY FOR A SHARING SUCCESS GRANT VIA OUR ONLINE APPLICATION!



## DRIVING INNOVATION THROUGH RENEWABLE ENERGY

WEC is committed to preparing our members for the future of energy. That includes supporting electric vehicle adoption, expanding beneficial electrification programs, and offering renewable energy options such as **COMMUNITY SOLAR**.

- ▶ We've installed **PUBLIC CHARGEPOINT® EV STATIONS** in Garden City, Great Bend, and Harper, strengthening the region's EV infrastructure.
- ▶ Our **RIDE+DRIVE EVENTS** give members hands-on opportunities to test out electric vehicles and learn about the benefits firsthand.
- ▶ With purchase and financing options for **LEVEL 2 HOME CHARGERS** and the addition of all-electric fleet vehicles, WEC is demonstrating how EVs can be affordable, practical and sustainable in Kansas.

Through our subscriber-based **COMMUNITY SOLAR**, members can choose renewable energy without needing to install panels on their own property. And with **BENEFICIAL ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAMS** — like rebates for energy-efficient upgrades in your home — we're helping members save money, reduce emissions, and improve quality of life.

Together, these efforts ensure that cooperatives like WEC remain on the cutting edge of innovation while staying true to cooperative values.



**ABOVE:** Students at the Little Panthers Touch-A-Truck event in Great Bend had a blast exploring the trunk of WEC's all-electric Ford F-150 Lightning on May 5, 2025.

**LEFT:** One future driver even hopped behind the wheel to test out the Ford Lightning for size.

## BUILDING A BETTER WORLD, TOGETHER

At WEC, we know that providing reliable power is only part of our story. What truly defines us is the way we live out our mission — **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE** — by empowering members, energizing communities, and preparing for the future.

Through Power the Pantry, scholarships, youth engagement, economic development, and forward-looking energy solutions, we are proving that **COOPERATIVES REALLY DO BUILD A BETTER WORLD** — right here in Kansas.

As we celebrate National Cooperative Month this October, we thank our members for being part of that mission. Together, we're not only powering homes and businesses, but also strengthening communities, inspiring the next generation, and lighting the path toward a brighter tomorrow.

▶ **SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR RESIDENTIAL REBATE PROGRAM!**



WEC Serviceman Tuan Herrell (right) shares a smile with his grandson, Eastyn Wilkerson, at Holcomb's Big Truck Day on May 2, 2025.



# the **POWER** of **PRINCIPLES!**



Since the mid-19th century, cooperatives worldwide have operated under **SEVEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES** — values that set electric co-ops apart by keeping members' voices, needs and communities at the center of co-op operations.

At Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., these principles aren't just words; they're actions. From equitable access and democratic governance to community investment and mutual aid, we live them out daily through innovative programs, partnerships and member engagement.

As you explore this infographic, you'll see how WEC doesn't just honor cooperative values — we bring them to life!

## DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (directors/trustees) are elected among the membership and are accountable to them. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote); cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

*Members elect WEC's trustees through a mail-in ballot voting process each spring, with one member equaling one vote — no matter the size of their bill. Trustees are local neighbors who live and work in the communities we serve, too. At WEC's annual meeting each April, members hear updates, vote on bylaw changes, ask questions, and connect with cooperative leaders across eight meeting locations.*



## AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.

*Even though we partner with other organizations — such as Sunflower Electric Power Corporation for our power supply or financial lending partners like CoBank — we do so on our own terms. These agreements strengthen our ability to carry out our mission, but they never compromise our independence.*



## COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES


By working together through local, regional, national and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs.

*When disaster strikes, cooperatives rally together. In October 2024, 12 WEC linemen traveled to Aiken, South Carolina, to help restore power after Hurricane Helene. When neighbors need help, we answer the call — and they do the same for us. That's the power of mutual aid.*





## 1 OPEN AND VOLUNTARY MEMBERSHIP




Membership in a cooperative is open to all people who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender or economic circumstances.

*Membership in our cooperative is open to anyone who lives or owns a business in WEC's service territory. Whether you're a homeowner, renter, farmer, or business owner, joining is simple and accessible, with no barriers based on income, race, religion or background.*



## 2 MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION




Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative; setting up reserves; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

*As a cooperative member, you're also an owner. Since 2017, WEC has returned a total of \$9.25 million in capital credits to eligible members — putting surplus revenues back in our members' pockets. At WEC, it pays to be a cooperative member!*



## 3 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION




Education and training for members, elected representatives (directors/trustees), CEOs and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Communications about the nature and benefits of cooperatives, particularly with the general public and opinion leaders, help boost cooperative understanding.

*Through the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., and Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, WEC equips students with leadership skills and the cooperative story. WEC also keeps members like you informed through local events, safety demonstrations, and features in this very publication, all throughout the year. Lastly, trustees earn National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) credentials to sharpen their governance expertise, keeping WEC prepared for the future.*



## 4 CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY



Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.

*Each year, WEC helps stock a dozen food banks across central and western Kansas through Power the Pantry. In 2024, members raised \$110,297 in donations for local families — a powerful example of putting community first.*

*In addition, WEC makes \$30,000 in grants available each year through our Sharing Success Fund. The fund is made possible through a 50% matching contribution from CoBank — nearly \$200,000 has been made available to community groups since 2012!*

**SAFETY  
TIP OF THE MONTH**

Everyone loves a good scare on Halloween, but not when it comes to the safety of those little trick-or-treaters. Fortunately, there are lots of easy things parents and kids can do to stay safe on the spookiest of holidays. Carry glow sticks or flashlights, use reflective tape or stickers on costumes and bags, and wear light colors to help kids see and be seen by drivers. Remind kids to cross the street at corners or crosswalks. Slow down and be alert! Kids are excited on Halloween and may dart into the street. Turn on headlights early in the day to spot kids from further away.

# Lighting the Way

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to the **COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP** in Colorado. These opportunities expand horizons, build leadership skills, and inspire the next generation of cooperative members.

Our community engagement doesn't stop there. From sponsoring **LOCAL BASEBALL GAMES** and **CHAMBER EVENTS**, to hosting **EVS & ESPRESSOS** gatherings across our service territory, we're finding new and innovative ways to connect with members of all ages. These events give members the opportunity to enjoy a cup of coffee, ask questions, and learn firsthand about electric vehicle technology and the future of transportation.

These efforts reflect the truth at the heart of the cooperative difference:

“As a member-owned cooperative, our mission goes far beyond delivering reliable electricity — we're here to power our communities in every sense of the word.”

WEC isn't just an electric utility. We are a **MEMBER-OWNED, COMMUNITY-DRIVEN COOPERATIVE**, guided by principles that put members first.

As we celebrate National Cooperative Month, I invite you to take pride in belonging to something bigger than poles and wires. Together, we're not just delivering electricity. We're **POWERING COMMUNITY BEYOND ELECTRICITY** — lighting the way toward a stronger, brighter future for us all.

**UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.**

**GREAT BEND**  
*Schools Competition*  
**FOOD DRIVE**

*Benefiting the Community, Food Bank of Barton County*

Bring your non-perishable food items (or make a cash donation using the QR code below) Oct. 27-31 and make your school a winner!

**CASH AWARDS ARE BASED ON THE HIGHEST POUNDS DONATED PER STUDENT.**

Use your smartphone camera to scan the QR code or visit our link at [www.weci.net/schools-competition](http://www.weci.net/schools-competition)

**1ST PLACE - \$600**  
**2ND PLACE - \$400**  
**3RD PLACE - \$250**  
**4TH PLACE - \$250**

**\$1 = 1 POUND**

Sponsored By **Gifting Forward**

**POWER the PANTRY**