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WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Always Safe, Integrity Always.

May is National Electrical Safety Month

Safety is not just a priority at Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) — it's the foundation of everything we do. As we recognize **NATIONAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH** this month, it is an opportunity to reflect on the role safety plays not only in our daily operations, but in the lives of our employees, members and communities.

At WEC, our commitment to safety is intentional and ongoing. Brad Thyne, our manager of safety and compliance, leads these efforts by researching, planning and developing procedures designed to protect everyone who interacts with our system. He also provides continuous training and electrical safety education to our employees, reinforcing that safety is not simply a requirement — it is a core part of our culture. This commitment is reflected in our safety motto: **ALWAYS SAFE, INTEGRITY ALWAYS.**

That culture extends beyond our crews. In 2025 alone, WEC line crews conducted nearly 50 live safety demonstrations across southwest and central Kansas. Through trailer and tabletop demonstrations, we engage students and community members in real-world scenarios — such as what happens when equipment contacts energized lines or how to respond to an accident involving downed power

lines. We also emphasize the dangers of padmount transformers, and the risks associated with overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

While these demonstrations are impactful, safety also starts with simple, everyday habits. We encourage everyone to:

- ▶ Stay at least 40 feet away from downed power lines and assume they are always energized.
- ▶ Never touch or play near padmount transformers or electrical equipment.
- ▶ Avoid overloading outlets and use surge protectors when needed.
- ▶ Call 811 before digging to prevent accidental contact with underground utilities.

Whether our employees are working in the field or supporting operations in the office, each person plays a role in maintaining a culture where safety comes first and we look out for one another. At WEC, safety is a core value that drives our mission of **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE.**

As we recognize National Electrical Safety Month, we invite you to join us in practicing safe habits — not just today, but every day. Together, we can build a safer, stronger community.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.



Bruce W. Mueller

FROM CONCRETE TO *Community*

How a small Kansas town
— and the power of working together —
transformed the South Haven Senior Center

In South Haven, a town of just over 300 in Sumner County, progress rarely arrives with fanfare.

It comes quietly — in early mornings and late evenings, in the steady rhythm of residents showing up, volunteering and returning to do it again the next week. It happens in conversations over coffee and in shared meals where everyone knows one another.

And sometimes, those small efforts build into something bigger than anyone expected.

That's exactly what happened at the **SOUTH HAVEN SENIOR CENTER** — where a long-awaited renovation was made possible in part through a \$5,000 Sharing Success grant from Wheatland Electric, matched by a \$5,000 contribution from Kanokla Telephone Association, based in nearby Caldwell.

Together, those cooperative investments helped bring new life to a space that has long served as the heart of the community, hosting a government-supported Friendship Meal program, regular senior and community activities, and events that bring residents together year-round. The center is also available for rental, providing an important source of funding.

In a town with three churches and a close-knit network of neighbors, the senior center remains one of few shared spaces where anyone can gather. But for decades, the building itself told a different story — one shaped by time, wear and long-overdue change.

“Dungeon is a good word for it,” said Diane Hyde, the senior center’s treasurer, with a chuckle. “The whole building just kind of felt too dark and dingy.”

That feeling stemmed largely from what lay beneath people’s feet. The center had operated for decades on a bare concrete floor — worn down after years of use by multiple occupants.

Still, every week, the doors opened — because

Wheatland Electric awarded a \$5,000 grant from its Sharing Success fund toward the renovation project at the South Haven Senior Center, which was then matched by Kanokla, a telecommunications service provider in Caldwell. Pictured from left: Vernon Hromas, Janice Harshfield, Mary Hoisington, member services and key accounts manager at WEC, and Diane Hyde. Hromas, Harshfield and Hyde serve on the senior center board.



in South Haven, what happens inside a place matters more than how it looks.

A BUILDING WITH A PAST

The building itself has lived many lives.

Located on Main Street along U.S. Route 81, the modest metal structure began as a grocery store. Later, it became a boat repair facility, leaving behind scuffs, oil and grease embedded in the floor.

When that chapter ended, the building became a catering business — Bodacious Smoked Meats — known for its meals and monthly all-you-can-eat buffets.

By the time the senior center purchased the building in 2012, the original flooring had long since been removed, leaving only a concrete base that had endured decades of wear. It wasn't inviting or easy to maintain.

But it endured — just like the people who gathered there.

WHERE COMMUNITY HAPPENS

In a town like South Haven, places like this aren't just maintained — they're carried forward.

Despite its condition, the center has always been full of life, according to residents gathered one Monday morning in late March for a fundraiser breakfast — a weekly tradition.

On this particular Monday, volunteers moved between the kitchen and tables to serve guests breakfast pizza, biscuits and gravy, and coffee — in exchange for community donations that help keep the center running, including covering utility costs, Diane said.

These breakfasts, which usually feature biscuits and gravy, egg casserole, and a special for the week, are more than a fundraiser. They're a tradition that stretches back decades — even generations.

According to locals, the morning breakfasts were started by Dorothy Dvorak, a deeply involved community member known for helping others. Though she passed away in late 2020, her legacy still lives on in the rhythm of Monday mornings.

In fact, her grandson, Zachary Dvorak — a local farmer — was there that morning to enjoy the breakfast, voluntarily cooked by Vernon Hromas, the center's president and go-to handyman, and Janice Harshfield, both secretary and dedicated cook.

"I think she would have thought this was nice ... she would have loved it," Dvorak said, referring to the center's recent upgrades, including bright new flooring and repainted walls.

Diane smiled at the thought.

"Dorothy always wanted to get this floor redone," she said. "Hopefully she's up there looking down at us, saying, 'About darn time.'"

IMAGINING SOMETHING MORE

The push for change began with a simple idea, something "a little lighter, a little brighter," Diane said. She, along with

Russell Hyde strips the inner perimeter of the damaged wood before he and his wife, Diane, begin painting.



Harshfield and Sherry Carothers, also a board member, brainstormed their options, envisioning something beyond aesthetics.

That vision took shape through the efforts of board members, volunteers, and community supporters — including memorial contributions.

The goal wasn't just to improve the building — it was to make it feel like it belonged to everyone.

THE WORK BEHIND THE SCENES

But before anything new could be added, there was work to undo.

Diane and her husband, Russell, who is the vice president of the senior center, removed the building's old wainscoting, made from barnwood marked with local livestock brands. Years of termite damage made removal necessary, though thankfully, no active termites were found.

The couple patched walls, prepared surfaces, and repainted the interior — covering dark colors with lighter tones that reflect natural light. The couple said at least three coats of new paint were required.

"At least she taped everything up ... that's the worst part of painting," Russell said, with a grin.

Not everything was replaced. A section of the original barnwood was left on the east wall, preserving the brands of local farmers and ranchers — a quiet tribute to the building's history and the community's roots.

THE CHALLENGE BENEATH THEIR FEET

The most significant hurdle, however, remained the floor.

Estimates to replace it ranged from \$17,000 to \$18,000 — no small sum for a town of this size.

"To raise that kind of money is pretty difficult," Diane said.

THE SIXTH COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE AT WORK

Cooperatives are guided by a shared set of principles — and one of the most powerful is the Sixth Cooperative Principle: Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

THIS PRINCIPLE STATES:

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

IN SOUTH HAVEN, THAT PRINCIPLE CAME TO LIFE. READ MORE IN OUR STORY.

Continued on page 12D ▶

FROM CONCRETE TO *Community*

Continued from page 12C ▶

The center turned to fundraisers and community donations. Progress was steady — but slow.

For a time, completing the project in phases seemed like the only realistic option, Hyde said. Then came the turning point.

Wheatland Electric awarded its **\$5,000 SHARING SUCCESS** grant to the project, and soon after, Kanokla Telephone Association, based in nearby Caldwell, matched that contribution with another \$5,000.

Together, those cooperative investments, along with an additional contribution from the Sumner County Board on Aging, provided more than half of the funding needed — transforming what once seemed like a long-term effort into a project that could be completed all at once.

“We believe in the power of connection — both through technology and through places like our senior centers that bring people together face-to-face, and this project reflects the very best of the cooperative spirit,” said Jill Kueny, CEO of Kanokla. “Supporting the South Haven Senior Center is about more than a building improvement; it’s about investing in the social fabric of rural communities.”



The center hosts everything from weekly breakfasts and the Friendship Meal program to informal gatherings, special events and community rentals — serving as one of the town’s primary spaces for connection.

A NEW CHAPTER

Today, the difference is immediate. With new flooring and fresh paint, the space feels brighter, warmer and more welcoming.

Even so, challenges remain, including the need to upgrade the bathrooms to be Americans with Disabilities Act compliant and to replace a broken water softener. But even with those hurdles, the sense of renewal is clear.

Diane said the center plans to host an open house later this year, inviting both local residents and neighboring communities to experience the transformation.

In a larger town, this might simply be called a renovation.

But in South Haven, it feels like something more lasting, a reflection of people who care enough to keep showing up and a reminder that when communities — and cooperatives — work together, even the biggest challenges can be met.

What was once a concrete floor is now something more: a foundation for connection, for tradition, and for whatever comes next.

“I would love for it to be a center where people just love to gather and hang out and meet with friends,” Diane said. “Not just for seniors, but for the whole community.”

And in a town like South Haven, that’s exactly what makes a place matter.

TOP LEFT: Zachary Dvorak, a local farmer, receives breakfast from Vernon Hromas, the center’s president and resident handyman, and Janice Harshfield, secretary. Both board members have volunteered as cooks for the Monday morning breakfast fundraisers for years.

TOP RIGHT: The South Haven Senior Center provides members with access to local newspapers and information from the Sumner Board for Senior Services, helping keep the community informed and connected.

BOTTOM: Monday morning breakfasts — prepared by volunteers — serve as a key fundraiser supporting the center’s operations. The weekly gathering also continues a long-standing tradition of coffee, conversation and community at the South Haven Senior Center.



2026 Youth Program Winners Selected

Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) is excited to announce **LEXI AVERHOFF**, junior at Ingalls High School, and **ISABELLE SHIPLEY**, junior at Norwich High School, have been selected to serve as our delegates at the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour from June 13-19, 2026, in Washington, D.C.

In addition, **GWEN MICHELLE TEVINGTON**, junior at South Haven High School, and **HAYLA EDWARDS**, junior at Scott Community High School, have been selected to represent WEC at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp from July 10-16, 2026, near Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

To apply, eligible juniors complete an online application, including a written essay about a family, social or school situation in which their leadership made a difference.

Our four selected delegates were shortlisted from these applications and selected following extensive interviews by the WEC Board of Trustees.

“Leadership has always been something that I strive to accomplish in every situation I am in,” Shipley wrote in her written application. “Many qualities make a good leader, and I will continue to develop those skills to better my leadership.”

Edwards shared similar sentiments in her written application.

“The most important role of a (softball) catcher is to lift up your teammates. If my team is struggling, I have stopped the game many times to have a team huddle and communicate on how to keep our chins up and continue playing to the best of our ability,” she wrote.

Leadership has always been something that I strive to accomplish in every situation I am in.

ISABELLE SHIPLEY, NORWICH

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR WINNERS



Lexi Averhoff
Ingalls High School



Isabelle Shipley
Norwich High School

COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP WINNERS



Hayla Edwards
Scott Community High School



Gwen Michelle Tevington
South Haven High School

The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour brings students to Washington, D.C., providing Averhoff and Shipley with the opportunity to meet their elected officials on Capitol Hill, hear from nationally recognized speakers, tour historic landmarks and museums, attend a performance at the Kennedy Center, cruise on the Potomac River, and build meaningful connections with peers from across the country.

Edwards and Tevington will join 100 other high school youth representing cooperatives from Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma and Wyoming near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. At camp, students will learn about the cooperative business model, develop leadership skills, and listen to nationally recognized speakers. They also have the opportunity to raft the Colorado River, tour the Craig Generation Plant, attend a high-voltage safety demonstration, and participate in other activities, building memories that will last a lifetime.

Applications for these opportunities are accepted each fall and must be submitted by the January deadline. Juniors who reside in WEC's service territory that are a legal dependent of an active member receiving service from WEC are eligible to apply. For more information, visit www.weci.net/youth-tour-program.

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

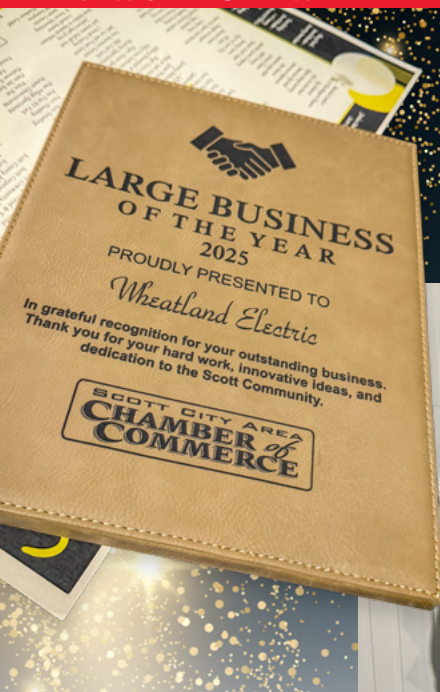
Always watch for brake lights on the vehicles ahead of you so you're ready to react. The weather is warming up which means there are more people on the road and construction zones are common. Stay informed about upcoming construction zones by checking traffic alerts and using navigation apps that provide real-time updates on roadwork activities. Speeding accounts for more than one-third of all fatal accidents in construction zones. Obeying the posted speed limit is crucial for everyone's safety.



MEMORIAL DAY
REMEMBER AND HONOR

We will be **CLOSED** on
Monday, May 25, 2026,
in observance of Memorial Day.

Wheatland Electric Named Large Business of the Year



Employees of WEC accept the 2025 Large Business of the Year from the Scott City Area Chamber of Commerce. Pictured from left: Samantha Garcia, member services and key accounts manager; Bryan Mulligan, serviceman; Jevin Kasselmann, director of information technology; Shajia Donecker, multimedia specialist; Nicole Semenko, manager of human resources; and Rochelle Irwin, human resources coordinator.

In a celebration of local excellence and community impact, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) was recently named the **2025 LARGE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR** by the Scott City Area Chamber of Commerce at its annual chamber banquet on March 27, 2026 — an honor that reflects far more than operational success.

For WEC, the recognition represents something deeper: a steadfast commitment to people, purpose and progress.

“Being named Large Business of the Year is something we are truly proud of,” said Alli Conine, director of member services and corporate communications. “We’re grateful to be part of a community that values connection, service and progress.”

While WEC is recognized for delivering reliable power across southwest and central Kansas, the cooperative’s impact reaches far beyond infrastructure.

At its core, WEC is driven by a mission — **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE** — a philosophy that extends into every corner of its service territory. This mission is brought to life not only through dependable energy, but through meaningful investments in the communities it serves. From addressing food insecurity in local neighborhoods to supporting economic development initiatives, WEC plays an active role in strengthening the fabric of rural Kansas. The cooperative also places a strong emphasis on cultivating future leaders,

ensuring that the next generation is equipped to carry communities forward.

“These efforts are not one-time projects,” Conine said. “They are part of an ongoing commitment rooted in who we are as a cooperative.”

Central to WEC’s work is the Seventh Cooperative Principle: **CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY**. This guiding value is not simply a statement — it is a daily practice.

Whether investing in sustainability efforts, supporting local programs, or collaborating with community partners, WEC’s actions consistently reflect a long-term vision for shared success, Conine said.

This dedication is made possible by the collective efforts of employees, trustees, members and partners — each playing a role in advancing the cooperative’s mission.

“This award belongs not only to our employees, but also to our trustees, members and communities like Scott City who make this work meaningful,” Conine added. “Your trust and collaboration are what allow us to make a lasting impact.”

As WEC looks ahead, its focus remains clear — continuing to empower members, support communities, and prepare for a sustainable future.

“We are honored to receive this recognition, and we remain committed to continuing this work — today, tomorrow and for generations to come,” Conine added.

IN HONOR OF THE
USA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY

Let's *Party* like it's **1776!**

at *Dry Lake Brewing* **JUNE 3** ★ 4-7 PM
1305 MAIN STREET IN GREAT BEND

SPECIALTY DRINKS • DOOR PRIZES • AMERICAN FARE



GREAT BEND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AFTER HOURS



POWER PLAY

JULY 15, 2026

GIVEAWAYS! PRIZES!

FREE HAMBURGERS &
HOT DOGS TO THE
FIRST 200 PEOPLE!



SERVING AT

6:30 P.M. CT

GAME START

7 P.M. CT

**AL BURNS
MEMORIAL FIELD**



HERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA!

Complete our member satisfaction survey at www.weci.net by **May 21** or scan the QR code below using your smartphone camera!



SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH US

YOU COULD WIN A \$250 PREPAID CARD!



YOUR FEEDBACK POWERS CHANGE.

POWER PLAY

JULY 7, 2026

FIRST 50 FANS GET IN FREE!
FREE HAMBURGERS & HOT DOGS TO THE FIRST 200 PEOPLE!

SERVING AT **6 P.M. CT** GAME START **6:30 P.M. CT**

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Delivering Energy for Life
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CLINT LIGHTNER FIELD