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WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Built by Members, Powered by Purpose

October is **NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH** — a time to celebrate what makes cooperatives different and recognize the members who make our work possible.

As a member-owned cooperative, our purpose goes far beyond delivering safe, reliable and competitively priced electricity. At Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC), we are here to **POWER OUR COMMUNITIES** in every sense of the word. We exist to power possibility, opportunity and connection across the communities we serve.

This month, we are shining a spotlight on what that mission looks like through the eyes of our members. In this issue, you will meet one member from each of WEC's seven districts — seven individuals with seven distinct stories. We asked them to share, in their own words, what cooperative membership means to them and how WEC has made a difference in their lives.

Their experiences are as unique as they are, reminding us that every member matters and every voice strengthens our cooperative family.

All cooperatives, including WEC, are guided by **SEVEN PRINCIPLES** that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These principles provide a framework that helps cooperatives navigate challenges, embrace opportunities and remain true to their purpose: Open and Voluntary Membership; Democratic Member Control; Members' Economic Participation; Autonomy and Independence; Education, Training and Information; Cooperation Among Cooperatives; and Concern for Community.

At WEC, these principles are more than words. They are reflected in the way our members elect local trustees, participate in cooperative decisions and share in the cooperative's financial success. They also guide our commitment to education, community investment, economic development and partnerships that improve the quality of life throughout our service territory.

This October, as we celebrate National Cooperative Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many qualities that set electric cooperatives apart — and take pride in being part of something bigger.

Together, we are not simply delivering electricity — we are **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE** and **POWERING COMMUNITY** beyond electricity, lighting the way toward a stronger, brighter future for us all.



Bruce W. Mueller

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

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.

Protecting the Power

Behind the Scenes



Jevin Kasselmann, director of information technology, visits with students in Great Bend High School's JAG-K program about protecting personally identifiable information in the digital age.

Cybersecurity plays an increasingly important role in delivering safe, reliable and competitively priced electricity.

When you think about what it takes to keep the lights on, power lines, poles, substations and lineworkers may immediately come to mind. But in an increasingly connected world, protecting the electric system also requires safeguarding something you may never see: the digital infrastructure working behind the scenes.

October is **CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH**, a nationwide observance highlighting the importance of protecting the technology, systems, and information we rely on every day.

To recognize the month — and take a closer look at what cybersecurity means for an electric

cooperative, Kasselmann said cybersecurity goes well beyond protecting computers and passwords. Ultimately, it is another important piece of providing members with reliable electric service.

“If you didn’t have power, just think of some of the chaos that might ensue,” Kasselmann said. “You can’t do simple tasks anymore without having electricity. It’s a very important part of our daily lives.”

WEC is also connected to a much larger electric grid, meaning the importance of cybersecurity extends far beyond any one cooperative. In fact, the federal government identifies energy as one of the nation’s 16 critical infrastructure sectors — and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) notes that virtually every other critical infrastructure system depends on electricity to operate.

PREPARING FOR AN EVOLVING THREAT

During Kasselmann’s more than 28 years at WEC, technology — and the threats surrounding it — have changed dramatically. Cyberthreats that once might have been motivated by curiosity have evolved into sophisticated attacks that can target critical systems, hold data for ransom, and even use artificial intelligence (AI) to impersonate trusted individuals.

Those threats are far from hypothetical. In 2025 alone, the FBI received more than 3,600 complaints involving **RANSOMWARE**, with reported losses



Cory Eli (right) and Taylor Heili, both wireless tower technicians, organize and connect wiring for a card security reader at WEC’s Leoti office.

cooperative — we recently sat down with **JEVIN KASSELMANN**, WEC’s **DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**, to discuss today’s evolving cyberthreats, how WEC works to protect member information and critical infrastructure, and what members can do to protect themselves.

exceeding \$32 million, according to the Internet Crime Complaint Center.

Among Kasselmann's biggest concerns is ransomware, which can encrypt an organization's files and systems, making them unusable until they are restored or a ransom is paid.

His approach to that risk is straightforward: "It's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when."

That means prevention is only part of WEC's strategy. Preparation and recovery are important, too.

"You need to be prepared for it and take any safeguards you can to try to stop it," Kasselmann said. "But also make sure you have good backups where you can restore your system and get going and back online."

To that end, WEC maintains two separate **DATA CENTERS** in geographically dispersed locations, with backups stored at each. Data is also backed up in the cloud, providing an offsite backup if a physical event, such as severe weather or fire, affects one of the cooperative's facilities.

WEC also uses multiple layers of cybersecurity protection. Rather than simply looking for known computer viruses, some of today's security tools monitor how devices behave and can detect abnormal activity.

When potentially malicious activity is detected, the affected machine can be isolated and WEC's IT team alerted. Other protections help prevent access to potentially dangerous websites and allow WEC to carefully evaluate emerging technologies, including AI tools, before they are used within its systems.

PROTECTING PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Security doesn't stop at the computer screen.

Many of WEC's substations are located in remote areas across southwest and central Kansas, making continuous monitoring another important consideration.

To help protect these critical assets, WEC has been deploying camera systems that provide around-the-clock monitoring and is working toward using **DATA ANALYTICS** to better distinguish people and vehicles from routine movement, alerting personnel when something may require attention.

Damage to a substation can potentially cause an outage for the members it serves. While WEC's system is designed so power can be rerouted through other areas in many situations, protecting these critical — and costly — assets remains an important part of maintaining reliable service.

CYBERSECURITY STARTS WITH ALL OF US

Members also have an important role to play in protecting their own information, and Kasselmann's top piece of advice is simple: Don't reuse passwords.

"Don't have one password that gives you access to everything," he said. "That is one of the worst things you can do."

Instead, Kasselmann recommends using

WANT TO HEAR MORE?

Listen to our podcast for a deeper dive into cybersecurity at Wheatland.

Hear directly from **JEVIN KASSELMAN**, director of information technology, as he sits down with host Shajia Donecker, multimedia specialist, to discuss today's cybersecurity threats, how WEC protects its systems and members, and what you can do to stay cyber safe.

Scan the QR code to listen, or find **"WHO'S ON THE LINE?"** on Apple or Spotify Podcasts!



password managers, enabling multi-factor authentication whenever possible, and choosing long, memorable passphrases rather than short passwords.

"The one thing I can stress the most is, the longer the password, the better," he added.

Much of the work involved in cybersecurity is invisible — and ideally, members never have a reason to notice it. But like every job performed throughout the cooperative, Kasselmann said the work of WEC's IT team ultimately supports the same mission.

"Everybody here at Wheatland plays an important role," he said. "For that one end goal: **TO DELIVER ENERGY FOR LIFE.**"

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Many incidents are prevented because someone spoke up. Whether it's a changing work condition, a questionable setup, or a simple concern, your voice may be the last barrier between a hazard and an injury. This month, challenge yourself to: Ask the extra question. Verify assumptions. Stop work when something doesn't feel right. Share concerns without hesitation. A strong safety culture is built on conversations, not silence. If you see something, say something. We are responsible for one another.



POWERED BY YOU, *Our Members*

DISTRICT 1

DENISE DREILING, SCOTT CITY

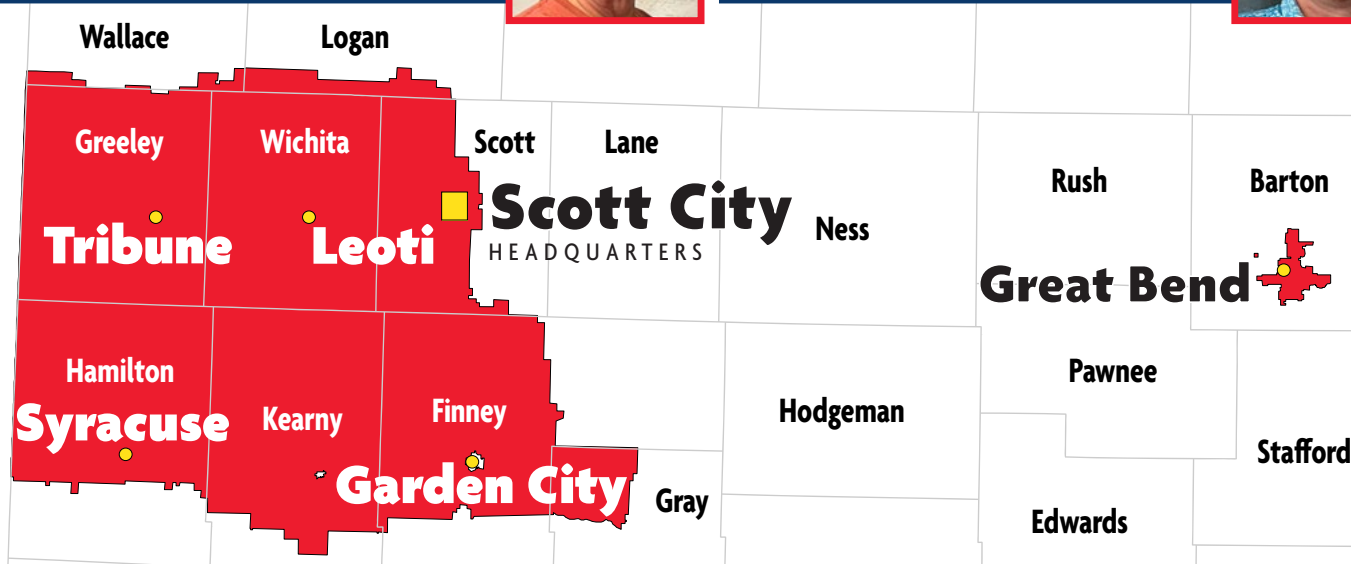
"To me, being a member of Wheatland means more than simply having electricity. It means being part of a cooperative that truly cares about and invests in the communities it serves. I've seen that commitment firsthand through the support Golden Rule Preschool has received from the Sharing Success Fund. These grants have helped us purchase resources our students use every day and given them more opportunities to learn through hands-on experiences and play. Having Wheatland see the value in our community and invest in our children means so much to us!"



DISTRICT 2

JERAD GOOCH, LEOTI

"Being a Wheatland member means belonging to a cooperative that understands and supports small-business owners and families in rural Kansas. As a grocery store owner, I value the reliability and local focus — Wheatland feels like a partner rather than a distant utility. When storms and outages happen, their crews work hard to restore power quickly so businesses like ours can reopen and families can get back to normal. I also value knowing Wheatland employees personally. We see each other in the store, coach each other's kids and raise our families here. Wheatland is part of the same community fabric we are."



DISTRICT 4

MICHELE BOY, SYRACUSE

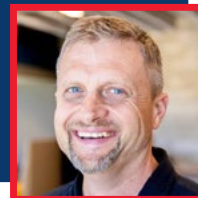
"Wheatland feels more like a family to me. They're engaged with their members and our community, and when there's an outage, they're quick to communicate, jump into action and respond. I see their crews working in and around our community, testing and replacing poles, and they're always professional and courteous. I also enjoy seeing Wheatland represented at community events, whether it's participating in the parade or serving hot cocoa and cookies at Christmas. They're not just our electric cooperative — they're part of our community."



DISTRICT 5

ANDY FAHRMEIER, FINNEY COUNTY

"Wheatland treats its members as more than just customers. The relationship isn't simply transactional — they go above and beyond to truly serve people and communities. I've seen that firsthand through programs like Power the Pantry, which addresses a real need in our community, and through Wheatland's scholarship program. Two of my daughters have received Wheatland's academic scholarships, and that support has made a meaningful impact to our family. To me, Wheatland is a cooperative that genuinely invests in the people and communities it serves."



Celebrating National Cooperative Month

DISTRICT 3

CHRISTY HOPKINS, TRIBUNE

"Wheatland keeps our community's needs at the forefront. The men and women who work at Wheatland are our friends and neighbors, and whether they're responding to an outage, venturing into a storm to restore power, helping hang our community's Christmas lights, or supporting our local food pantry, they're always eager to lend a hand. I value knowing our local cooperative is focused on serving this region and providing value for its member-owners. We're all working together for the good of western Kansas and the people and businesses who call this place home."



DISTRICT 6

KRISTA SMITH, GREAT BEND

"I appreciate being an owner in my electric company because I feel Wheatland has my best interests at heart. I especially value the annual meeting and the opportunity it gives members to stay informed. Wheatland also gives back to our community in so many ways. As a food bank volunteer, I've seen firsthand what a difference Power the Pantry makes, and I appreciate the scholarships and opportunities they provide to our youth. On top of that, the customer service in Great Bend is top-notch — everyone is always friendly and helpful!"



At Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., (WEC)

our members are more than just customers — you're the very reason we exist.

That distinction is at the heart of

THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE.

Continued on page 12F ►

DISTRICT 7

RICK DOLLEY, ARGONIA

"Being a Wheatland member makes me feel like we have a voice — that we're truly listened to and kept informed about what's happening and what's ahead. I value being part of a positive, growing cooperative that truly cares about the communities it serves. As mayor of Argonia, I've seen how Wheatland's employees work with our city staff, always with a positive attitude and a willingness to go the extra mile. Wheatland doesn't just look at today; they're continually improving and looking toward the future. The service you receive from Wheatland and its employees is truly world class."



Rice

Reno

Kingman

Sedgwick

Harper

Sumner

POWERED BY YOU, *Our Members*

Continued from page 12E ▶

to serve the people and communities we power. Our **MEMBERS** help shape our priorities, elect local trustees to represent their interests and share in the success of the cooperative. But being a cooperative means more than having a different business model. It means being connected to the communities we serve.

Across WEC's **SEVEN DISTRICTS**, our members are our neighbors, friends, local business owners, farmers, educators and community leaders. We live and work alongside you, and that local connection helps guide how we serve — from providing safe, reliable, and competitively priced electricity and returning capital credits to supporting local organizations, investing in youth and education, and finding new ways to meet the evolving needs of our communities.

While our service territory stretches across southwest and central Kansas communities with different needs, histories and priorities, one thing connects us all: WEC belongs to the members we serve, members like you.

That's why, in celebration of **NATIONAL CO-OP**

Unlike investor-owned utilities that answer to shareholders, electric cooperatives like ours are built



Members gather at our 2026 Annual Meeting in Great Bend on April 22.

MONTH this October, we wanted you to hear directly from some of them.

On Pages 12D and E, we're highlighting one member from each of our districts and asking them to share, what cooperative membership and their experiences with WEC mean to them.

Their stories are different — and that's exactly the point. There is no single experience that defines our cooperative. Instead, WEC is shaped by thousands of members — nearly 20,000 — across the communities we call home.

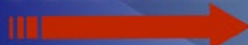
For us, National Cooperative Month is an opportunity to celebrate those connections and remember what has always made cooperatives special: when we work together, we make our communities stronger.

That's the **COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE** — and it's something worth celebrating!

WIN THE ULTIMATE

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power-the-pantry](http://www.weci.net/power-the-pantry)
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TO ENTER TO WIN!



FOR EVERY \$20 YOU
DONATE TO YOUR LOCAL
FOOD PANTRY, YOU'LL BE
ENTERED TO WIN!



A Good Catch Strengthens Wheatland's Safety Culture



Members of WEC's line crews, including district managers, foremen and journeyman linemen, joined their counterparts from electric cooperatives across the state at the Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC) Safety Summit in Wichita. The event focused on utility safety practices, regulatory compliance and loss control. Pictured are, among others, (front row, starting fifth from left) Lee Tafanelli, CEO of KEC; Bruce W. Mueller, CEO/general manager of WEC and vice president of the KEC board; Brad Thyne, WEC manager of safety and compliance; and Mikey Goddard, KEC director of loss control, safety and compliance.

Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. was recognized by Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC) at its **SAFETY SUMMIT**, Aug. 26-27, for an **OUTSTANDING GOOD CATCH** submission, highlighting the importance of communication and proactive safety practices.



One of only three cooperatives recognized from more than 60 submissions, WEC's award-winning **GOOD CATCH** stemmed from a crew responding to an outage, according to **BRAD THYNE, WEC'S DIRECTOR OF SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE**. While isolating, testing and grounding, employees discovered unexpected backfeed from a feedyard generator interlock before work began. "This recognition is a great example of the power of communication and the importance of recognizing the positive actions our employees take every day," Thyne said. "By sharing these Good Catches and the lessons we learn from them, we can continue strengthening our safety culture and help prevent incidents before they occur."

Good Catches, paired with after-action reports, give WEC employees an opportunity to share observations, lessons learned and opportunities for improvement — helping make safety an ongoing conversation across the cooperative.



CARDINALS CARE Challenge! OCT. 12-22

WHEATLAND WILL DOUBLE ALL CASH DONATIONS UP TO \$3,000!

100% of all donations benefit the Conway Springs Mission Mart!

Show your Cardinal Spirit to help those in need!
Bring cash or canned foods to any Conway Springs school to support the Cardinals Care food drive.

WE the POWER PANTRY



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. 26-30 and make your school a winner!

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

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

\$1 = 1 POUND

Use your smartphone camera to scan the QR code or visit our link at www.weci.net/schools-competition

WE the POWER PANTRY 50K in 2026

Sponsored By Gifting Forward