





A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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**WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**



**WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC**
Delivering Energy for Life
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Cost-of-Service Study Preliminary Findings



Bruce W. Mueller

Earlier this year, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WEC) hired a consultant, C.H. Guernsey, to prepare a study which examines the

cooperative's cost of providing electric service. This cost-of-service study (COSS) determines the revenue needed to cover the cooperative's operating expenses and debt obligations, as well as examines the equitability of the rates among the various consumer classes.

operating expenses have skyrocketed despite ongoing efforts to control costs while providing reliable electric service to the membership. The financial integrity of the cooperative has been adequately maintained even though the Wheatland base rates have not increased since 2016.

In addition to all WEC rate classes being adjusted, WEC is considering adding a demand component to our electric rate schedule for residential members. WEC does not currently charge residential members for demand, though demand is measured and reflected on your monthly electric bill. Historically, it's been accounted

Cost-of-Service Study Preliminary Findings

The preliminary results of the COSS show that all WEC rate classes need to be adjusted to cover their contribution more accurately toward the cost of providing electric service. Wheatland's

“Wheatland’s operating expenses have skyrocketed despite ongoing efforts to control costs ...”

Continued on page 12G ▶

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. Test smoke alarms every month. If they're not working, change the batteries. Talk with all family members about a fire escape plan and practice the plan twice a year.



PUTTING THE

POWER

in Your Hands!

Why COMMUNITY SOLAR?

Why participate in WEC's Community Solar starting in 2024? One contract, no large initial investment, no maintenance costs, and all the benefits!

The flexibility of community solar is a great option for co-op members interested in solar generation, but not in the ownership hassles of their own system.

- ▶ Participating in Community Solar allows subscribers to avoid the upfront cost, hassle and maintenance of rooftop solar.
- ▶ Nothing is installed on your roof and no adjustments are made to your service.
- ▶ If a subscriber moves to a new house within Wheatland's service territory, their subscription may transfer to their new service.
- ▶ Subscribers can cancel at any time, however once the agreement has been terminated, a member may not participate again for one year.
- ▶ Work with your trusted energy partner throughout the whole process.
- ▶ No processing, administration or other fees.

Have you ever walked out of your house on a sunny day and thought, "Wouldn't it be nice if I could harness the sun's energy to power my home?" OK, maybe you haven't! But we're sure you've noticed solar panels on top of houses in your community, and maybe you've even seen a solar farm here or there while driving down a rural Kansas highway.

Whether or not you've considered solar as a part of your home's energy mix, we here at Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc., are excited to share that harnessing the power of the sun is now more accessible than you think!

Starting Jan. 1, 2024, we're making **COMMUNITY SOLAR** available to residential co-op members just like you!

This new cooperative program allows homeowners or renters to subscribe to solar shares at \$5 per share — equivalent to 125 kWh or two solar panels.

Community Solar subscribers will receive an adjustment for electricity generated by their share of the system — more on that later. The typical homeowner who chooses to invest 50% of their home's annual electricity usage is estimated to receive a yearly net savings of \$138! And that's after taking the cost of shares into account!

Community Solar programs like ours harness natural energy from the sun

and cost less than installing a solar array at your home. As a homeowner, participating in Community Solar eliminates the worry of zoning restrictions or petitioning your homeowners' association. And even if you don't own your home, not to worry because renters can participate, too. In fact, any residential member who pays an electric bill can participate, including our Prepay Power members!

Starting in January, sign up for Community Solar, which will be available on a first-come, first-served basis and requires a one-year contract. Members will subscribe to solar shares from the largest commercial solar farm in the state, Johnson Corner Solar Project, located in Stanton County.

Johnson Corner is operated by Sunflower Electric Power Corp., our wholesale power supplier. Sunflower generates the electricity that we, your distribution cooperative, deliver to you. We're proud to partner with Sunflower on this innovative and cutting-edge program. The energy from Sunflower's solar farm is distributed to the power grid, just like energy produced from other sources such as coal, wind, natural gas and more.

By participating in Community Solar, you, our electric co-op member, are literally harnessing the power of the

The Johnson Corner Solar Project, the largest commercial solar project in the state, is located in Stanton County. It will be the base for our Community Solar program, which will allow members to invest in renewable energy sources as an alternative to rooftop solar.

of Solar

sun. In return, your energy credits will reflect the performance of your subscribed number of solar shares, based on the amount of power generated by Johnson Corner and the market revenue from the power sold into the energy market each month.

Participating in Community Solar eliminates the large up-front investment and maintenance costs and concerns that can be a hassle for those who

own and maintain their own residential rooftop solar system. With Community Solar, we take care of installation, maintenance and insurance fees, making it easy for you to participate!

We will share more information about Community Solar and how you can participate beginning January 2024 in *Kansas Country Living*, on our website, with our local media partners, and across social media — so stay tuned to sign up!

SHARE IN THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF SOLAR POWER WITHOUT THE COST OF INSTALLING ROOFTOP PANELS

- ☀️ AN AFFORDABLE ALTERNATIVE TO OWNING AND MAINTAINING A SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM
- ☀️ NO ROOF DAMAGE
- ☀️ NO LARGE, UPFRONT INVESTMENT
- ☀️ SIMPLE SIGN-UP AND BILLING
- ☀️ AVAILABLE TO OWNERS AND RENTERS
- ☀️ EASY WAY TO SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY

We're removing barriers to solar energy

COMING SOON!

JANUARY 2024

Solar Made Easy!

Wheatland Electric Cooperative **SOLAR** COMMUNITY



*** Shares are limited to no more than the average of your previous 12-month electric use. If your 12-month average = 1,000 kWh, then a max of 8 shares is allowed.

3. On your electric bill, every month you will receive a solar adjustment for your solar shares, which is based on the revenues derived from the power sold into the energy market.

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE:



WECI.NET



CALL YOUR LOCAL OFFICE



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



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.

four years of weekly, yearlong classroom instruction and book work 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 comprises eight members, four from labor and four from management, who test each apprentice's knowledge, skill and judgement 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



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

still employs today. "To be recognized for this program is long overdue."

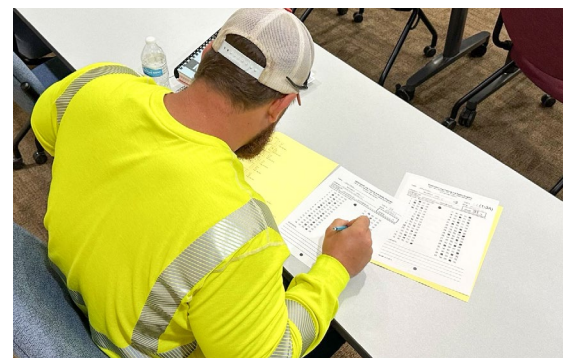
In addition to WEC's lineman apprenticeship program, our cooperative also provides two additional apprenticeship programs: substation and meter technician.

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.

APPLY FOR A TRIP OF A LIFETIME

FIND OUT
MORE



JUNE 14-20, 2024

AN ALL-EXPENSES-PAID TRIP
TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHAT IS YOUTH TOUR?

An all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by your local electric cooperative.

A week of visiting historic monuments, touring world-class museums and meeting elected officials.

An opportunity to develop lifelong friendships with delegates from across the country!

FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM: NRECA YOUTHTOURDC

EMPOWER



APPLY TODAY! CYLC

JULY 12-18, 2024

★ ★ ★ COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP ★ ★ ★



• COLORADO Camp

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP MEMORIES

FIND OUT
MORE



SPEAKERS
DANCE
RIVER RAFTING

TALENT SHOW
EXPLORE
STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

APPLY ONLINE AT WWW.WECI.NET/YOUTH-TOUR-PROGRAM
BY JAN. 19 AT 5 P.M. CT.

2 HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS WILL BE SELECTED FOR EACH TRIP!



Cost-of-Service Study Preliminary Findings *Continued from page 12A* ▶

for as part of a cooperative member's overall consumption (kWh) or usage. In implementing this change, WEC will look at the highest 15-minute average usage recorded during a normal monthly billing cycle to determine the demand (kW).

We believe implementing a residential demand charge will more accurately and fairly collect fixed costs from the overall cooperative membership. In addition, it will also give members more control over their electric bill by taking usage practices into account.

The board and management recognize that any change in rates is very important to members. Any proposed rate adjustment will be designed to provide only the revenue needed to provide electric

service safely and reliably to members for years to come while meeting our financial obligations.

Wheatland Board of Trustees and management are considering an increase to be implemented in early 2024. Members will receive notification in December of a public meeting where rate modifications will be considered.

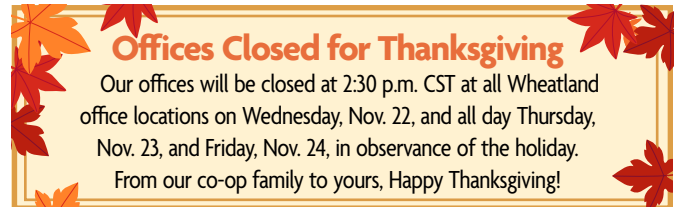
As the season of gratitude approaches, I want to take a moment to express my deepest thanks to each one of you. The spirit of cooperation that binds us, and the essence of Thanksgiving is rooted in the principles of community and sharing. On behalf of our cooperative family, I wish you and your families a joyous and bountiful Thanksgiving.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.



★ HONORING ALL WHO SERVED ★
VETERANS DAY

Our office will be closed on Friday, Nov. 10, for the holiday. From our co-op family to yours, Happy Veterans Day!



Offices Closed for Thanksgiving

Our offices will be closed at 2:30 p.m. CST at all Wheatland office locations on Wednesday, Nov. 22, and all day Thursday, Nov. 23, and Friday, Nov. 24, in observance of the holiday. From our co-op family to yours, Happy Thanksgiving!

COLD WEATHER ACCOMMODATION

BEGINS NOV. 15

As of March 1, 2016, Wheatland Electric has adopted the following cold weather accommodation policy for residential members. All delinquent accounts are subject to disconnection when temperatures exceed 35 F for a 48-hour period between Nov. 15 and March 15, unless a member requests a cold weather accommodation.

In order for a member to retain electric service when temperatures are above 35 F during the cold weather period, they must comply with the following provisions:

- Inform us of their inability to pay their account in full.
- Complete and sign a Cold Weather Accommodation agreement.
- Pay any outstanding billed deposit in full.
- Pay half of each current bill during the cold weather period.
- Past due balances (including the bill due Nov. 5) must be paid in full at the inception of the cold weather period.
- Apply for federal, state or local funds for which the member may be eligible.
- Agree to make an arrearage payment plan or sign up for our Prepay Power program at the conclusion of the cold weather period.

Members who do not adhere to their accommodation agreement are not eligible for payment arrangements at the conclusion of the cold weather period. The entire outstanding balance, applicable fees and additional deposit, if applicable, are due and payable prior to reconnection if service is disconnected.

POWER *the* PANTRY



Excited Helping Hands Preschool students gear up to participate in their first Great Bend Schools competition.

Wheatland Electric's commitment to supporting the community has shone brightly during this year's Power the Pantry campaign. The campaign saw a remarkable outpouring of support, with generous donations pouring in from local businesses eager to make a difference. Members of the cooperative also rallied behind the cause, contributing online donations that added substantial momentum to the campaign.

CORPORATION, TYSON FRESH MEATS, AND PIONEER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE with each contributing \$2,500 to this year's charity tournament.

Additionally, Wheatland coordinated a friendly but fierce competition between Great Bend schools sponsored by Gifting Forward, fueling a sense of community spirit and giving to the campaign. The multifaceted approach showcased Wheatland's unwavering dedication to supporting those in need while fostering a sense of togetherness within the community.



Members could directly donate to Power the Pantry online or at any Wheatland Electric office.

One of the campaign's highlights was the 5th Annual Co-ops Care Charity Golf Tournament, where participants teed off for a great cause, raising funds to bolster the pantry's resources. A special shoutout to this year's **GIGAWATT SPONSORS**, including **SUNFLOWER ELECTRIC POWER**

Stay tuned in the months ahead as we share donation totals and wrap up our 10th consecutive season of Cram the Van. Every dollar donated has helped us Power the Pantry in 2023!

