

WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS



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FROM THE MANAGER

Annual Meeting Recap, Storm Restoration



Bruce Mueller

This month I'd like to talk about two recent major events that have happened at Wheatland Electric Cooperative. First, I want to thank all our members and

special guests who attended Wheatland's 69th Annual meeting in Leoti, KS. We had approximately 125 people in attendance, 89 of which were registered members. During the meeting, we presented the 2016 financial report, and provided a summary on the activities and accomplishments of the cooperative over the past year.

11 high school senior scholarship winners were recognized, each of whom will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to continue their education. We also recognized our two Youth Tour and two Leadership Camp winners for 2017. In addition, Wheatland employees were recognized for service awards ranging from thirty-five to five years.

Stuart Lowry, President and CEO of Sunflower Electric (Wheatland's wholesale power supplier) presented an update on wind generation that affects the wholesale power market in Kansas.

Lastly, I want to share with you one of the topics I discussed during the annual meeting, capital credits.

Capital credits can also be referred to as Members Economic Participation, which is one of the seven cooperative principles. During my presentation, I explained why Wheatland hasn't been able to pay capital credits since 2006. I then announced that the Wheatland Board of Trustees has approved Wheatland retiring (paying out) \$750,000 in capital credits for 2017 (based on the 2016 financials). We'll be sharing more information with you about when and how those capital credits will be paid to you in the coming months. The 2018 Annual Meeting will be held in Scott City and I hope to see many of you there.

The second major event was Winter storm Ursa. I googled the meaning of Ursa and it's a Latin word meaning Bear. It was a Bear of a storm. It hit Wheatland's western side of our service territory on April 29. The damage was extensive. Over 1,000 poles were damaged or destroyed causing major outages. At the height of the storm, Wheatland had more than 12,000 meters without electricity. It took us nearly two weeks to re-energize our last occupied residential meter.

Our employees worked tirelessly. The linemen were amazing as each day they worked 16 hours to get those lights back on for the membership. All employees chipped in, as we had accounting personnel delivering

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2017 Wheatland Electric Annual

Wheatland held its 69th Annual Meeting at the Wichita County Community Building on April 19. The meeting is an opportunity for Wheatland's members to learn what the cooperative has accomplished during the previous year and the goals for the future. Wheatland also recognized this year's Youth Tour and Leadership Camp winners and announced the winners of the Wheatland Scholarship.

Youth Tour is billed as the trip of a lifetime. Whether it's a week-long camp in Steamboat Springs or a jam-packed tour of Washington D.C.—students rave about the life-changing experiences. **JUSTIN BROWN** from Caldwell and **ROSSIEL REYES** from Great Bend will attend Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp where they will learn about cooperatives, tour a generation facility, learn about government and build on communication and leadership skills. They will also go white-water rafting, participate in a talent show, tour Trapper Mine, visit Fish Creek Falls, and make friends that will last a lifetime.

PAYTON GARRISON from Norwich and **ARELY YANEZ** from Tribune will go to Washington D.C., where



Flag-festooned bucket trucks greeted those attending the 69th Annual Meeting in Leoti.

they will see history come alive as they explore museums, memorials and monuments such as the Smithsonian, the Vietnam Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial. They will also have the chance to meet and talk with congressional leaders from Kansas at the U.S. Capitol. Wheatland is proud to sponsor these four students, and hopes they truly have the “trip of a lifetime!”

Eleven high school seniors were each awarded a \$1,000 scholarship from Wheatland this year. Wheatland

established the scholarship in 2015 to help develop the leaders of tomorrow and to ensure Wheatland's future is just as bright as its past.

There were four trustee positions up for election this year. The following trustees were elected:

- ▶ **KATIE EISENHOUR**, District 1;
- ▶ **VIC CASE**, District 2;
- ▶ **STACEY ADDISON-HOWLAND**, District 4; and
- ▶ **JOHN KLEYTEUBER**, District 5.

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting in 2018!

2017 Scholarship Winners

Eleven high school seniors were awarded \$1,000 scholarships at this year's Annual Meeting.

- ▶ **COURTNEY LARSON**, Argonia High School
- ▶ **LYDIA STEWART**, Caldwell High School
- ▶ **SYDNE MATHES**, Chaparral High School
- ▶ **BRE AKIU**, Conway Springs High School
- ▶ **ASHTIN HEATH**, Great Bend High School
- ▶ **MORGAN CROCKETT**, Greeley County High School
- ▶ **MEGAN ROTH**, Holcomb High School
- ▶ **ERIN HALL**, Norwich High School
- ▶ **KYLEE TROUT**, Scott Community High School
- ▶ **REINA SEAL**, Syracuse High School
- ▶ **ABBEY FISCHER**, Wichita County Junior/Senior High School



Several of the Wheatland Scholarship winners were in attendance to receive their certificates.

Meeting Highlights



Shawn Powelson, manager of member services, addresses the membership.



General Manager Bruce Mueller (left) presents a scholarship to Morgan Crockett (of Greeley County), one of 11 scholarships given by Wheatland Electric.



Wheatland linemen Nathan Porter (left) and Bruce Loy (right) give a tabletop safety demonstration for members at Annual Meeting.

Employee Service Awards

The following employees were recognized at the 2017 Annual Meeting for their service to Wheatland Electric.

35 years

▶ **TERRY REBEL**

30 years

▶ **EILENE JACOBS**

25 years

▶ **MARK KIRCHER**

20 years

▶ **WES CAMPBELL**

15 years

▶ **BEN HAHN, TUAN HERRELL, GEAROLD LEVERETT, ANDY PIVONKA, TYSON RYFF and SUSAN SNYDER**

10 years

▶ **PAM BRUNGARDT, AMY JONES, JAKE JONES, LISA LOEPPKE, SHAWN RYAN, JOE THOMECEK, BRAD THYNE and QUENTIN WHEELER**

5 years

▶ **BRANDON BARRETT, LEWIS BROWN, CODY ELLIS, JORDAN HABIGER, BRUCE MUELLER, BETH NELSON, SHAWN POWELSON, HEATHER RUFENACHT and NATHAN SCHROCK**

Get to Know Your Co-op Staff

Chris Huber

District Manager
10 years in Garden City

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

I've been married to my wife, Mary, for almost 38 years. We have two sons and a daughter. Caleb lives with his wife, Amy, in Castle Rock, Colorado; and Tom and his soon-to-be wife, Chelsey, live in Norton. Erin and her husband, Morgan, live in Lenexa. We have six granddaughters. We also have one spoiled charcoal lab and three bluetick beagles.



Chris Huber

WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

Concordia

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Spend time with my wife, hunt, fish and try to train the beagle pack.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

Mary and I went bear hunting in Canada.

WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

My family.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE?

Monty Python and the Holy Grail. That movie always makes me laugh.

WHAT IS SOMETHING NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I used to raise mules.

SAFETY

Tip of the Month

Before planting trees near a power line, conduct research or speak with a professional to ensure there is enough space for the tree to grow. If you suspect that a tree is too close to power lines, report it to your local cooperative office.

Winter Storm Ursa Brings Record-Breaking Snow

Winter Storm Ursa brought a crippling, destructive blizzard that affected an area from the Texas panhandle to Nebraska the last weekend of April. Ursa stranded hundreds of motorists, resulted in numerous road closings, caused downed trees and power lines and left up to eight feet snow drifts in some places. In Scott City, snowfall totals were estimated at 17 inches. If snowfall estimates hold, Ursa will claim the title of the heaviest snowfall on record, anywhere in Kansas so late in the season.

The entire western portion of Wheatland's service territory was affected by the powerful storm that left more than 1,000 broken or damaged poles and miles and miles of downed and damaged lines. The first outage calls associated with the storm came early Saturday morning, May 29th as the storm let loose its first volley. After a brief spike in outages Saturday afternoon, nearly all storm associated outages had been restored by 9:30 that evening. Unfortunately, Ursa was only just beginning to show her fury. By Sunday morning, conditions had worsened considerably and by Sunday afternoon it was a full-blown blizzard. Visibility was zero and

in many areas, our linemen were no longer able to patrol lines or identify the causes of outages. At the height of the storm Sunday afternoon, May 30th, Wheatland had more than 13,000 meters out of power.

As the storm began to lift Sunday evening and Wheatland began to try to assess the extent of our damages we quickly discovered a new problem, we couldn't get to where we needed to go. Over a foot of snow in most places, even larger drifts in some and stranded vehicles made patrolling our lines next to impossible. In addition, damage to transmission lines were further complicating our efforts at restoration.

By Monday morning, we had made arrangements with local county personnel to clear roads to places we needed to get to and with local farmers and other equipment operators to literally pull our trucks from one spot to the next to make line repairs. It was slow and sloppy going but by the end of Monday, less than 30 hours from our peak of more than 12,000 outages, we were down to less than 3,000 meters out of power. By Tuesday evening we were down to approximately 2000 meters with

The entire western portion of Wheatland's service territory was affected by the powerful storm that left more than 1,000 broken or damaged poles and miles and miles of downed and damaged lines.

only 400 of those being residential. Crews continued to battle extremely muddy conditions and progress in restoring remaining meters began to slow considerably as crews were now having to repair/replace downed poles and lines to restore just a few meters at a time.

But help had been and was arriving in the form of additional crews from unaffected portions of our eastern service territory and mutual aid crews from Caney Valley Electric and Radiant Electric. Crews continued to work to repair and replace large sections of downed lines and poles to restore power to the more rural



Left: Linemen climb a pole and utilize a bucket truck to complete repairs on a section of line.

Below: Even if poles weren't broken as a result of the storm, many were left leaning.



Howfall to Wheatland Territory



Large equipment, like pictured above, was used to get Wheatland trucks from one spot to the next.



Power was restored to the last member's house 13 days after Ursa struck.

residential members.

By the following Tuesday, we were down to 349 meters still out of power with only 35 of those being residential and all of them located in Wichita County. We released our first two mutual aid crews and brought in five new ones, three from Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, one from Bluestem Electric Cooperative and another from our neighbors to the east, Lane-Scott Electric Cooperative. Our friends at Sunflower Electric also sent us a crew to assist with clearing damaged lines and poles from roadways to help speed up the restoration process.

We focused as many available crews as possible on restoring those final 35 occupied residences, with a total of 14 crews working in the Wichita County area over the next couple of days. By shortly after 6:00

p.m., on Thursday May 11th, we were able to restore power to our final remaining occupied residence.

We would like to say thank you to all our linemen, many of whom worked 15 straight days to restore the outages caused by Winter Storm Ursa. Thank you as well to our many employees, from many different departments, who lent a helping hand. Thank you also to all the Kansas Electric Cooperatives who sent mutual aid crews to assist in our restoration efforts.

As of print of this magazine, our crews were still working to restore power to 65 meters. We thank you, our members, for your understanding during the restoration process. Thank you to the many of you who stopped by to say thank you, dropped off thank you cards, bought our linemen meals or offered an encouraging word. We appreciate your support!

From the Manager

Continued from page 16-A

meals and human resources cooking food and washing clothes. Member services becoming travel agents to arrange housing, meals and food delivery. They also kept the membership informed by communications via social, television and radio mediums.

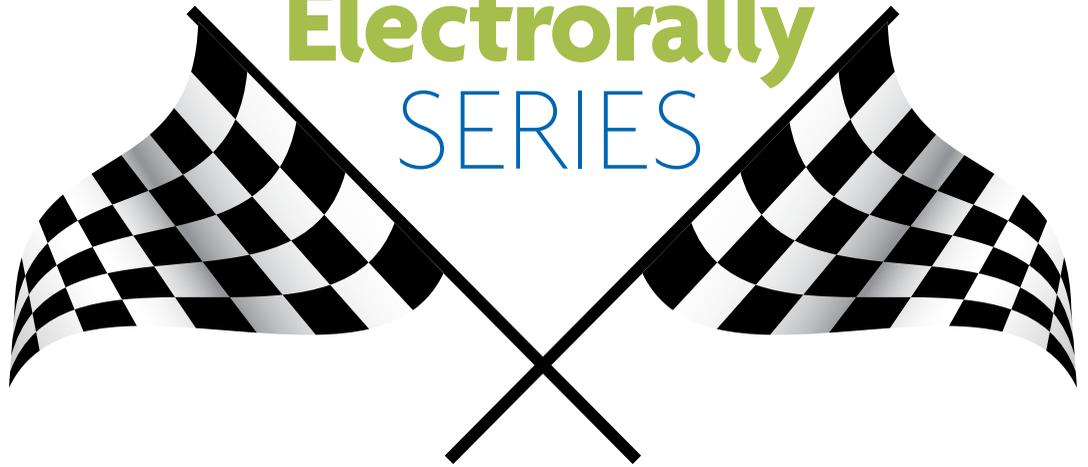
Our operations management team kept in constant contact at the district's control centers to coordinate and dispatch line crews in the restoration effort. And virtually none of those things would have been possible without our IT team keeping our communications network up and running. It was amazing to see and I am proud of the efforts of each and every employee who participated in the storm restoration efforts. What a TEAM! I thank each and every one of them. I'm proud to be able to lead them.

I also want to thank all the Kansas Electric Cooperatives Mutual Aid line crews who assisted with the restoration efforts. Without their help, we could not have restored the Wheatland electric system in a timely and safe manner. I want to extend thanks to the membership for your patience as we re-energized all the meters that were without power for such an extended period. I also want to thank the members who brought meals, treats, baked goods and sent in thank you notes to each of the area offices, they were very much appreciated.

(As of the print deadline for this magazine we still had 48 meters remaining out of power. The large majority of these remaining outages were for meters that provide power to rural isolated areas and for uses such as general agriculture, irrigation and gas wells. Rest assured, our team will continue to work to restore power to these remaining meters as quickly and safely as possible.)

Until next time, take care.

KANSAS Electrorally SERIES



The teams design, build and race their own cars, using several disciplines to construct the perfect racing machine.

The weather for an Electrorally race held in Scott City can be a bit of a gamble. In years past, there was talk of a “curse” because of the near certainty of less than ideal conditions (read: cold, rainy, miserable). Although it didn't rain, the cold and wind prevailed at this year's Sunflower Electrorally race, held April 26th at the Scott City Municipal Airport.

Fourteen teams from Kansas and Nebraska came to race in spite of the cold to compete in the Solar, Standard and Open classes. The teams design, build and race their own cars, using several disciplines to construct the perfect racing machine. With few guidelines, students are afforded much flexibility when it comes to the design of their vehicles—as long as they stay within their budget. Teams are only allowed to spend \$2,000 on their car, which means parts are often “harvested” from past vehicles, or they are fabricated from materials already on hand.



Lap counters and spectators huddle to get out of the wind during a heat race.



The Scott City car leads the Great Bend car during one of the heat races at the Sunflower Electrorally. Both teams are sponsored by Wheatland Electric.



Ellis Makes Final Pit Stop

This year marked the end of an era with the retirement of **CHUCK ELLIS**. Ellis was instrumental in starting the electric car program at Scott Community High School in the late 90s and has been a part of it ever since. His background in racing, coupled with his knowledge of design made him a natural fit for the program. His dedication to his students has made his teams consistently successful. Everyone involved in the Sunflower Electrally is sad to see Ellis go, but we wish him the best in his retirement.

Right: Ellis (seated in car) surrounded by his final team Karlee Logan, Chaseton Cupp, Emily Hall and Chandler Hornbostel.

Race days are always exciting. They are the culmination of all of the hard work. Generally, the routine is the same: students and sponsors check in, turn in waivers, drivers are weighed in (they have to weigh 180 pounds or make up the difference with ballast), each team is required to pass a written exam on safety and vehicles must pass inspection—all before a single car hits the track. From there, the cars draw for pole position, last minute checks are done, and the race begins. Each car has a designated “counter” to record the number of laps their car successfully completes in one hour. This lap count is what determines the winner.

Students tweak their designs and their strategy from race to race. Small adjustments can make the difference between a first place finish and not finishing at all. Students learn from trial and error what works and what doesn't. This process is a powerful teaching tool in real-world applications of math, art and physics. Students learn teamwork as well. Most develop ways to communicate with each other during a race, be it headsets or simple hand gestures.

Wheatland provides volunteers to help set up and tear down the track, register teams, grill and serve hot dogs and hamburgers, take photos, run errands or do whatever is needed to make the race a success. Wheatland is fortunate to be able to use the Spencer Flight Center to host the event, especially when the weather is not on our side.

The Kansas Electrally Series is a powerful teaching tool in real-world applications of math, art and physics.

For more information about the electric car program in Kansas, visit www.kansaselectrally.org. Schools interested in starting an electric car program should contact Shawn Powelson, manager of member services and corporate communications, at spowelson@weci.net.



The Great Bend team of Travis Straub (sponsor), Tristan Milligan, Jared Divis, Jace Schwager, and Caleb Straub, finished third in Solar class.



The Scott City Team of Chaseton Cupp, Chuck Ellis (sponsor), Karlee Logan, Emily Hall, and Chandler Hornbostel, took second place in Solar class.

A DAY *in the* LIFE

BY SHAWN POWELSON



Winter Storm Ursa

Job: Wreak as much havoc and destruction as possible

Location: Wheatland Territory

Years of Service: Two days, two days too long

Normally in this column, I feature an employee of Wheatland and try to give our members a snapshot of what he or she does at the co-op. Occasionally, I schedule a day to shadow someone and then do a write-up about our time together.

This month, however, other things snatched away the time I had set aside to spend time with an employee—actually, one particular ugly thing called Winter Storm Ursa.

Ursa hit the western portion of Wheatland's service territory on April 29 and departed not soon enough the evening of April 30. By the time it left us, we had a big fat mess on our hands.

With the storm gone, Wheatland was firmly focused on restoring the resulting outages as quickly and safely as possible. It was all hands on deck. For the next 13 days, Wheatland employees from all departments, all job levels and all districts, pitched in to assist in the restoration efforts, in what was sometimes a nearly round-the-clock task.

A typical day, post Ursa, for operations personnel and linemen consisted of an early morning operations brief with an update on current outages remaining and where crews would be working that day to restore power to as many people as quickly and safely as possible. Crews were working 16-hour days and, in some areas, staggered throughout the day so that there were crews working through the night. Dispatch personnel were constantly updating outage maps, helping to formulate damage estimates and coordinating 24-hour shifts of their own to help assist operations.

After the first couple of days and as our local operations personnel could get to more areas to assess system damages, it quickly became apparent that our system had sustained significant damage

in Wichita County. Nearly three-quarters of our downed or damaged poles were located in this area. Due to my proximity to the Leoti (Wichita County) office, much of my time was spent assisting in restoration efforts for this area.

Most days were a whirlwind of activity, from early morning briefings from Area Operations Manager Rick Klaus with details of which crews would be working in which areas to outage and system updates from Operations Director Phillip Shelley. I constantly gathered information, doing my best to share restoration progress with our members, employees and media.

The middle part of most days were spent coordinating and delivering meals to the crews working in the Wichita County area. After the first few days, due to the concentration of damage and the number of residential members remaining without power in the area, the number of crews assigned to Wichita County began to climb. At one point, 14 crews were working in the area. Area Wide Supervisor Kelley Burch kept a map on the wall in the Leoti office to keep track of damaged lines, downed poles and more importantly where each of the 14 crews were. After a brief daily conference call to find out which crews were where, drivers and routes were coordinated and more than 60 hungry linemen and support staff were fed.

On the 15th consecutive day of our linemen working outages, our operations staff agreed we needed to give everyone a day off and get them home to their families. On that afternoon as one of our Scott City linemen pulled into the warehouse, I strolled by and asked, "Calling it a day?" "Calling it 15," he said. I hope he enjoyed that well-deserved day off on day 16.

Here's to hoping this is the last Day in the Life of Ursa I ever have to write. No thank you, Ursa, for sharing your day(s) with me.

SHAWN POWELSON, Manager of Member Services and Corporate Communications