

**WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

NEWS



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Harper, KS 67058
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Leoti, KS 67861
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Scott City, KS 67871
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206 1/2 N Main
P.O. Box 1010
Syracuse, KS 67878
- Tribune – 620-376-4231**
310 Broadway
P.O. Box 490
Tribune, KS 67879

FROM THE MANAGER

Looking Out for Our Members



Bruce W. Mueller

There are many areas of safety that must be recognized and acknowledged at Wheatland Electric Cooperative. Member safety, employee safety, electrical safety, community wide safety education, and the list goes on and on. Safety is at the forefront of the co-op's daily operations. Delivering reliable and competitively priced electric power to more than 32,700 meters across a 15-county service area is no small task, but providing that service safely requires employees to approach their daily responsibilities with an intense focus on safety. Our members get to see the results of our employees' efforts every day through the safe, reliable service we provide.

Because we care about the safety of you, our members, Wheatland is active

in educating and promoting electrical safety. We provide educational and safety programs utilizing our safety demonstration trailer and our table-top display for first responders, in schools, and for community events. Additionally, as part of our commitment to safety, employees, both inside the organization and in the field, undergo safety training on a regular basis. Our line crews participate in regular training sessions to ensure that our employees are constantly reminded of the safety aspect of the job and the importance of using equipment in the safest manner possible.

May is **National Electrical Safety Month**. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation, each year thousands of people in the United States are critically injured and electrocuted because of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes. Many of these accidents are

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**May is National
Electrical Safety Month**

plug into safety



ENERGY EFFICIENCY MAKEOVER

Investing in
Your Home;
Investing
in Your
Community

Here we are once again, looking ahead to spring, the warmer weather and our next Energy Efficiency Home Makeover. This will be Wheatland's third year to help one of our members make energy efficient improvements to their home at no cost to them. Over the past two years, we have helped **VARNA JOHNSON** from Great Bend and **CINDY HORNBACK** from Scott City. This year, we reached out to contacts in our Harper District and surrounding service territories. Our search led us to Conway Springs and to our friends at Hired Man's Grocery who helped us find **SHARON MORRIS**.

Sharon is a long-time resident of Conway Springs. She was born and raised there until she married and moved to New York with her husband. They lived in New York for a short time before deciding Conway Springs was home, so they moved back to Kansas to the house where Sharon currently lives. After returning to Conway Springs, Sharon's husband passed away. She raised six children in this house and is now creating new memories with her 22 grandchildren and one great-grandson. Sharon has worked as a custodian for Saint Joseph's Catholic School for more than 30 years. When we contacted Sharon to inform her



Left: Removing the old cooling unit and adding the new, more efficient system will help Sharon keep her home at a comfortable temperature.

Center: Insulation for the attic was run through an upstairs window. The recommended level for most attics is to insulate to R-38 or about 10 to 14 inches, depending on insulation type.

Right: Sharon Morris, longtime Conway Springs resident, shows off her new back door.

that she had been nominated for our Energy Efficiency Home Makeover, it completely took her by surprise.

"I can't believe that someone would think of me for something like this," she said. "If you can help this old house, I'd be very thankful." So, we accepted the challenge and got started.

We reached out to our friends at Hired Man's Grocery to find local contacts willing to help us complete an energy evaluation on Sharon's home to find out how to make her home more energy efficient. This led us to **WES OSNER** of Osner Construction who agreed to do the evaluation and head up the project.

A few days later, after Wes did a thorough walk-through of Sharon's house, we received an evaluation with recommendations that would enhance the energy efficiency of Sharon's home. Recommended improvements included:

- ▶ Install a new central AC unit;
- ▶ Remove the old window AC unit and repair the siding and interior wall in the living room;
- ▶ Add ducting for the master bedroom, front room and additional bedroom;
- ▶ Add additional blow-in insulation to various parts of the house; and
- ▶ Replace the front and back doors and add all new weather stripping.

Although the list was not very long, the items on it required quite a bit of work and expense. Now that we had our list of items to be completed, it was time to get to work.

Osner Construction took this project and ran with it. He scheduled all of our partners and coordinated the work to be done, ordered the new doors and did all the general construction work.

Northstar Comfort Services, located in Kechi, was contracted to add insulation to the various parts of the house that needed it the most, and then some.

When we first visited Sharon, you could tell just by walking through her home that parts of it were much colder than others.

"I have never lived in a house where the temperature was the same in every room," Sharon explained. We knew upgrading the heating and cooling system would make a huge difference for her. So, next in line was addressing proper ducting, as well as a heating and cooling system for Sharon's home. Fenix Heating and Cooling, located out of Wichita, removed the old window AC unit and replaced it with a new central AC unit. Fenix Heating and Cooling also added new vents to help with circulation. Osner Construction then repaired the siding on the outside of

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Thank You to Our Project Partners

▶ OSNER CONSTRUCTION

Wes Osner
315 S Church
Conway Springs, KS 67031

▶ NORTHSTAR COMFORT SERVICES

800 E. Kechi Rd
Kechi, KS 67067
www.northstarcomfort.com
316-685-2368

▶ FENIX HEATING AND COOLING

802 West 2nd St N
Wichita, KS 67203
www.heatingandcoolingwichitaks.com
316-945-4842

▶ FISHER LUMBER COMPANY

30010 W. Harry
Garden Plains, KS 67050
www.fisherlumber.net
316-531-2295

Additional Assistance Provided by:

▶ SERVICE CONCEPTS

7172 Lakeview Parkway W. Dr.
Indianapolis, IN 46268
www.serviceconcepts.coop
877-738-6824

Energy Efficiency Makeover Continued from page 16C

the house and patched the wall in her living room.

One of the final pieces to our project was to replace the front and back doors and add new weather stripping. Because of the poor existing weather stripping, sunlight could be seen around the door frame, which proved a poor fit leading to energy loss. Wes ordered Sharon's new doors at Fisher Lumber Company in Garden Plain. Replacing her old doors and the drafty weather-stripping will help keep the cold and/or hot air out and will make her home much more comfortable. Sharon had not been able to use her front door for a long time and used a door sweep to keep out unwanted air. She was overjoyed when she heard she would be able to use her front door to let visitors in.

We also wanted to update the lighting in Sharon's house. We were delighted to find that Sharon had taken advice from Wheatland's tips and had already started upgrading to more efficient LED bulbs. We called on our trusty friends at Service Concepts and worked with **RACHEL BARKER**, director of sales and marketing, and **STEPHANIE GENTILLON**, division coordinator, and they did not disappoint. Sharon's house

I'm just so thankful. I can't believe that there are people out there looking out for you, and you don't even know it.

now has all new lighting thanks to these ladies and donation of all new LED bulbs from Service Concepts.

This year's Energy Efficiency Home Makeover has gone along without a hitch and that is due in large part to our great partners, but in particular Wes with Osner Construction. We can't say thank you enough to Wes and all he did to help this project succeed. We are always grateful that our members are willing to step up and help other members with greater needs. We would also like to thank our friends at Hired Man's Grocery—without their help we wouldn't have found Sharon.

"I'm just so thankful," Sharon said. "I can't believe that there are people out there looking out for you, and you don't even know it. I can already tell the difference it has made. I can leave the interior doors open and move from one room to another



Left: Northstar Comfort Services installed additional insulation to make Sharon's home more energy efficient.

Center: Northstar added 10.5 inches of insulation to Sharon's attic. Properly insulating a home is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to reduce energy use.

Right: Additional duct work added throughout parts of the home will make the existing heating unit much more effective.



Fenix Heating and Cooling updated the HVAC system in Sharon's home by replacing her air conditioning unit and adding ductwork to ensure the entire house was heated and cooled evenly.

and it's the same temperature. And I love the new front and back doors; they are so nice. So much has happened in the last few weeks. I don't think I could ever thank you enough."

We hope to inspire members, like you, to evaluate your own home for energy saving projects. Replacing old weather stripping around doors, updating the lighting in your home to LED bulbs and even caulking around windows are cost-effective ways to make your home more efficient with little time and expense. A little bit of effort can go a long way in energy savings.

If you want to learn more about making your home more efficient, visit www.weci.net and click on the Education tab or contact one of our great partners from this year's project to see how they can help you with your very own Energy Efficiency Home Makeover.



Left: Sharon will no longer need to run her floor heating unit after new ductwork was installed to efficiently heat her home.



Right: The front and back doors of Sharon's home were replaced with insulated doors and new weather stripping that will reduce drafts and energy loss.

5 SMALL CHANGES Equal Big Savings

1 **INSTALL AND SET A PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT** and save an estimated 10 percent a year on heating and cooling costs.

2 **SEAL LEAKY DUCTWORK.** Air loss through ducts account for nearly 30 percent of a cooling system's energy consumption.

3 **REPLACE ANY LIGHT BULB,** especially ones that are on more than one hour per day, with a light-emitting diode (LED) bulb.

4 **CAULK, SEAL AND WEATHER STRIP** cracks and openings in your home.

5 **USE A POWER STRIP.** Save up to \$100 a year by plugging electronics into a powerstrip and turning it off when not in use.

Source: *Energy.gov*

SAFETY

Tip of the Month

No matter what kind of yard work you're doing—from something that takes an hour to something that takes all day—plan regular breaks and try to stay in the shade. Be mindful of your body and don't push yourself too far. Remember, it's good to get back outside, but not if your yard work is cut short by an injury.

Don't forget! May is National Electrical Safety Month. Pause and take the extra time to plug into safety.

Don't Tamper with Your Electric Meter

Meter tampering can result in electric shock, is illegal and increases electricity rates for other co-op members.



- ⊘ Never break a meter seal.
- ⊘ Never open a meter base.
- ⊘ Never remove a meter or alter an entrance cable in any manner.

If you know or suspect that someone has tampered with their meter, please contact us immediately.

Proper Pruning around Power Lines

Trees provide curb appeal, shade and a space for kids to play in the yard. However, when trees grow and interfere with power lines, they become safety hazards and are among the most common causes for utility outages.

With millions of miles of electric lines that give power to homes and businesses throughout the U.S., there are numerous trees growing near or into lines that require trimming and management. Usually, it's because a tall-growing tree was planted directly under or too close to the line. It might have grown taller than the person who planted it expected. Whatever the reason, it is crucial trees stay a safe distance from the lines and are properly pruned to preserve tree health.

First and foremost, remember that only trained professionals should trim trees near power lines. Trees growing in utility right of ways are maintained by the electric utility, while trees growing into power lines on private property are usually the responsibility of the owner. If you need to hire someone to prune trees on your property, be aware that most tree care workers are not qualified to work around energized power lines. According to the Utility Arborist Association (UAA), utility line clearance professionals who meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) qualifications are the only ones legally permitted to work within 10 feet of lines or work on a tree that has branches that are within 10 feet of a power line.

Trees are cut at the growth points for tree health, and in many cases, it's impossible to maintain the tree's



Have trees near power lines trimmed professionally. This helps prevent power outages from falling on power lines.

original shape. Some trees require directional pruning to keep them from growing back into lines. Trees directly underneath power lines may be pruned in a "V" or "U" shape with lines passing through the opening in the middle, or trees growing alongside a power line may be pruned in an "L" shape or one side may need to be completely removed. While the shape of a tree may change, trees can be pruned to maintain the health and safety of the tree while also increasing the safety and reliability related to the power lines.

Often pruning a tree solves the safety and reliability concern, but in some cases the tree must be removed. Those include tall or fast growing species that are directly under power lines, large previously topped trees under the power lines, saplings with potential to grow in or around the lines, and hazardous trees that may be leaning, in decline, cracked or split.

Property owners may choose to replace a problem tree with a new one. There are many varieties of shorter-growing trees that provide beauty, shade and screening, and will never grow to interfere with power lines. Your local tree nursery can help with selection of trees and shrubs appropriate for landscaping around power lines and electrical equipment.

Looking Out for Our Members Continued from page 16A ▶

preventable. There is much you can do to keep yourself and your community safe around electricity.

Don't attempt electrical do-it-yourself projects or overload your outlets. Be aware of overhead and underground power lines and report broken poles or downed power lines.

We take safety very seriously. We believe that safety is a key component of **Cooperative Principle Five: Education, Training and Information**. We know it is our duty to educate our employees, members and the communities we serve on the importance of electrical safety.

If you would like to learn more or set up a safety demonstration, please contact Quinten Wheeler, Manager of Safety and Compliance, at qwheeler@weci.net or Alli Conine, Manager of Member Services and Key Accounts, at aconine@weci.net, or call 800-762-0436.

Will My Cooperative Be Affected by the Tax Law?

As many of you know on Dec. 22, 2017, the federal **Tax Cuts and Jobs Act** was signed into law. There was an almost immediate focus across the country on lower income tax rates for utilities. **Kansas** has been no different with political and regulatory leaders immediately calling for the savings to be passed on to ratepayers.

And while action was swift to make headlines, affected utilities already had a precedent from the 1986 Tax Reform Act to return those savings. The impact of the reduction in federal tax rates from 35 to 21 percent is projected to cut Westar's (investor owned utility) tax bill by at least \$65 million. KCP&L (investor owned utility) has indicated approximately \$35 million in savings could be allocated to Kansas customers. So, while a refund isn't in question, some in the Legislature have expressed frustration that the return may be bundled with other rate adjustments and/or won't occur

This regulatory framework fits two of the seven important cooperative principles—democratic member control and member economic participation—and helps Wheatland Electric to meet its mission of Delivering Energy for Life.

until later this year.

The impact on **Wheatland Electric** is much different. Like most of the 30 electric cooperative entities headquartered in Kansas, we are IRS tax exempt entities and therefore have no federal income tax liability. **Cooperative members won't receive a tax-related refund because there is no federal income tax expense included in your electric rate.**

Wheatland operates as a not-for-profit entity and rates are designed to recover the cost of operation. We do not have stockholders demanding a return on investment. We have member-owners who elect directors to determine the cooperative's course, including appropriate electric rates. Changes to our cost of operation from generation and transmission, vendors, regulatory agencies, as well as property and income taxes are reflected in rates set by the members rather than the Legislature or the Kansas Corporation Commission.

This regulatory framework fits two of the seven important cooperative principles—**democratic member control and member economic participation**—and helps Wheatland Electric to meet its mission of **Delivering Energy for Life**.

Until next time, take care.

CO-OP CONNECTIONS SPOTLIGHT

Find Savings at Becker Tire and Treading

In 1954, Harold Becker founded **BECKER TIRE AND TREADING, INC.** Starting with one location in Great Bend, it has grown to be one of the largest tire distributors and retreaders in the Midwest.

Becker Tire and Treading has more than 150 employees who work the company's retail stores, commercial truck center, wholesale division, warehouse, used tire center, retread plant and Hunter Equipment Division.

Visit Becker Tire and Treading at www.beckertire.com.

Use your Co-op Connections Card at Becker Tire and Treading to receive \$25 off a new set of tires.

For more great savings, use your Co-op Connections Card at these other local businesses:

- ▶ **Dairy Queen**, Scott City
- ▶ **Renewal by Anderson**, Great Bend
- ▶ **Suzy B's Flowers & More**, Scott City

Still need a Co-op Connections Card? Contact your local Wheatland Electric office for more information on how to start saving now.





Julie Stoss and **Amanda Martinez**
Consumer Services Supervisors

A DAY in the LIFE

BY ALLI CONINE

Two Wheatland Electric consumer services supervisors, seven district offices, and 14 consumer services representatives (CSRs). **AMANDA**

DA MARTINEZ and **JULIE STOSS** are

responsible for managing the faces you see when you walk in the door at any of our offices.

Does it sound like a big job? It should, because it is. Martinez lives in Scott City and is responsible for the Leoti, Tribune, Syracuse and Garden City CSRs. Stoss works out of our Great Bend office and covers the Scott City, Great Bend and Harper offices. Each are responsible for managing seven CSRs. Their goal is to be in each of the offices they cover every week.

This is a new role for both of them. Their positions were created after **LYNN FREESE**, director of consumer services and water division, announced his retirement last spring, the department was restructured and the consumer services supervisor positions were created.

The three of us met in Martinez's office in Scott City, and I quickly learned that their days are full of phone calls. The CSRs are really the backbone of Wheatland. They handle everything from billing and budgets to work orders.

"We are *always* learning, and in turn, I train my CSRs everyday on what I've learned," Martinez said. "Our goal is to have everyone operating consistently--everyone doing the same thing in each of our seven district offices."

Since Wheatland acquired Aquila in 2006, the consumer services department has worked to eliminate the east verses west way of doing things. The supervisory positions have helped eliminate that. Stoss told me that they teach the "Wheatland way" not the "CSR way."

There is still some division between how each district office handles situations that arise, but it is because every office and every person is different.

We talked a lot about being in a supervisory role and how they each have honed in on their supervisory skills. It was evident in my conversations with Martinez and Stoss that they make a point to figure out how each person ticks. They strive to learn about the CSRs they manage. They understand how important it is to determine what motivates each person. Martinez and Stoss have focused on helping the CSRs take ownership of their work. They want them to understand why they're doing what they're doing. The consumer services department is a well-oiled machine thanks to their efforts.

Martinez said the hardest part of her job is the always-changing knowledge base and making sure all 14 CSRs are trained to implement and follow the changes. Having a positive attitude about change is essential in their positions.

Stoss thrives on the changing environment and communicating with other departments and members. While Martinez enjoys the fast paced day-to-day work and interacting with the members.

As always, we finished with what they enjoy most about working for Wheatland and as always it's the people they work with and the fact that Wheatland takes care of its employees.

Wheatland's CSRs are in good hands! It was clear to me after spending the day with Martinez and Stoss that they have a passion for what they do. Their ultimate goal is to help make the members happy, and it's clear that they take care of their team.

ALLI CONINE, Manager of Member Services and Key Accounts