



NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Mid-Kansas, Sunflower Merger



Bruce W. Mueller

Since 2007, you have read about Mid-Kansas Electric Company, Inc., one of the electric utilities that provides wholesale generation and transmission services to Wheatland Electric Cooperative. You may recall that the Sunflower Power Corporation and its members, including Wheatland, chose to form Mid-Kansas to successfully bid on the sale of Aquila's Kansas electric network assets.

The acquisition essentially doubled the electric generation capability and the miles of transmission line in the system. Most importantly, the number of Kansans now served by the electric cooperative business model, which puts ownership and governance in the hands of the electric consumer versus private stockholders, also doubled. That means more people have a voice in their

Since the formation of Mid-Kansas, the goal of Sunflower's and Mid-Kansas' member-owners was to capitalize on the synergies of both Sunflower and Mid-Kansas, ultimately merging the two into one larger cooperatively owned and operated utility.

electric utility, and their well-being and quality of life are considered in each decision made at the board table.

The additional Mid-Kansas' electric load added generation resource diversity, and the enhanced utilization of Sunflower's existing resources have also benefitted the native Sunflower system. For the past decade, the two systems have been jointly planned and operated.

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Happy 4th of July

Wheatland Electric will be closed on Wednesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. Have a safe and happy holiday.





BEAT THE Peak

Summer Energy-Saving Tips

This extra power to supply the peak demand—the electric utility industry’s equivalent of rush-hour traffic—is when power costs skyrocket.

The heat of summer often sees the height of utility costs. This is partially due to the increase in energy load, but also when energy is being used.

“On-peak hours”—typically between 1 and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday during the summer months—refers to the time of day when there is the most demand for electricity, requiring more power from the electrical supplier. This extra power to supply the peak demand—the electric utility industry’s equivalent of rush-hour traffic—is when power costs skyrocket. When costs to the power supplier increase, costs to our consumer-members increase as well.

Avoiding peak energy costs is a good reason to put some chores on hold between 1 and 7 p.m.—the hottest part of the day. Delay activities that require hot water, such as washing clothes, taking showers or washing dishes. Also, postpone using heavy appliances, like clothes dryers and ovens.

Use the following energy-saving steps to beat the peak this summer.

COOLING

Costs associated with cooling your home can make

up a large portion of your summer electric bills.

- ▶ **Set the thermostat at 78 degrees or higher and use ceiling fans.** You can save up to 5 percent on your air conditioning costs for each degree you raise the thermostat in the summer.
- ▶ **Invest in a programmable thermostat.** Set it to automatically raise the thermostat setting when you are generally away from the house. It can then automatically adjust the temperature shortly before you typically arrive home.
- ▶ **Don’t cool an empty house.** If you are away from home for several hours or a few days, turn your thermostat up a few degrees so you aren’t paying to cool an empty house.
- ▶ **Buy an ENERGY STAR-certified air conditioner.** Replacing a 10-year-old window air conditioner with an ENERGY STAR-certified model can cut energy bills by an average of \$14 a year. Have an air conditioning technician or energy auditor determine which unit is the right size for your space, especially if you are replacing a central air conditioning unit.
- ▶ **Check out the rebates available to Wheatland members.** Wheatland offers rebates to resi-

dential members for the installation of energy-efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. To learn more, visit www.weci.net and click on "Get Rebates" or call 800-762-0436.

USE FANS

- ▶ **Use fans to cool yourself.** Having a fan on can make you feel up to two degrees cooler. Just keep in mind that fans cool people, not rooms, so be sure to turn off the fan when you leave a room.
- ▶ **Flip the switch.** Most ceiling fans have a switch near the blades to change the blade direction. In warm months, flip the switch so that the blades operate in a counterclockwise direction, effectively producing a "wind chill."

ADD WINDOW COVERINGS

About 30 percent of a home's cooling energy is lost through windows. According to Energy.gov, during warmer weather about 76 percent of sunlight that falls on standard double-pane windows enters to become heat.

- ▶ **Install white window shades, drapes or blinds to reflect heat away from the house.**
- ▶ **Close curtains on south- and west-facing windows during the day.**

INSULATE AND SEAL

- ▶ **Make sure you have proper insulation.** It will help your home stay cool longer. Adding insulation will also help your home stay warmer in the winter.
- ▶ **Be sure to seal any gaps in your home.** If you live in a pier and beam home or mobile home, make sure there is insulation under the flooring and proper skirting. The goal is to keep the cool air, which you paid for, in your home and the hot air outside where it belongs.

OUT WITH THE OLD

- ▶ **Consider consolidating food to the main refrigerator or freezer if you have a second, older refrigerator or freezer** located in a garage or any unconditioned space. Older appliances can use up to two times more electricity if located in an unconditioned space.

HOUSEWORK

- ▶ **Delay housework using major appliances until before or after "on-peak hours."**
- ▶ **Use counter top appliances,** like microwaves, convection ovens, slow-cookers, toaster ovens, etc., to reduce the extra heat produced by larger appliances and conserve energy.
- ▶ **Dry clothes outside in good weather.** Using the sun's energy to line dry will save you money and leave your clothes smelling fresh.
- ▶ **Clean the dryer lint filter after every load.** Clogged filters drive up energy costs.
- ▶ **Wash laundry in cold water.** Ninety percent of the energy used by washing machines is for hot water, so washing on the cold cycle will save you money.

PREVENTION

The best way to deal with high bills is to prevent them.

- ▶ **Use SmartHub to monitor your daily electric use.** This free app helps Wheatland Electric members see their usage day by day, so you can make changes to your energy use as you go instead of being surprised by a high bill.
- ▶ **Text ENERGY to 830-423-5032 to receive peak alert notifications.** Wheatland Electric offers free peak alert notifications to know when you should take extra precautions to conserve energy. For more energy-saving tips, LIKE Wheatland Electric on Facebook or call your local office.

DO YOUR PART

With your help, our goal is to reduce our power cost during "on-peak hours," Monday through Friday, 1 to 7 p.m., when demand is high and the price of energy is at a premium.

Text **ENERGY** to **830-423-5032** to receive peak alert notifications.

Text **ENERGY** to
830-423-5032



CO-OP CONNECTIONS SPOTLIGHT

Find Savings at DQ



America has come to love Dairy Queen's famous Orange Julius. If you've never tried this frothy drink, you're in for a sweet

treat! The beverage is a blend of frozen orange juice concentrate, milk, vanilla, sugar and ice. Stop in at Dairy Queen in Scott City today and use your Co-op Connections Card to buy one Orange Julius and get one Orange Julius FREE!

Use your Connections Card at these other local businesses for more great savings! For a complete list of deals visit www.connections.coop/weci.

- ▶ **Renewal by Anderson**, Great Bend
- ▶ **Suzy B's Flower's & More**, Scott City
- ▶ **D'Mario's Pizza**, Harper

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

Mid-Kansas, Sunflower Merger

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the synergies of both Sunflower and Mid-Kansas, ultimately merging the two into one larger cooperatively owned and operated utility. Within the next 60 days, Sunflower and Mid-Kansas will jointly submit regulatory filings to the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) for the merger of Mid-Kansas into Sunflower in early 2020.

For many reasons, the time is right to move forward with a merger of the two systems.

Although the two systems have been jointly planned and operated since 2007, a merger, which will not require staffing changes, allows for an even greater level of integration. Merging will remove regulatory and operational duplication, such as replicate forms and reports, and a combined, larger utility can access lower cost debt and better absorb a fluctuating load that occurs due to industry and economic pressures.

The wholesale electric rates for each utility are now comparable, so a merged

rate will not negatively affect either company. In fact, due to reasons unrelated to a merger, the average wholesale power rate will likely decrease for both companies in 2019 with another possible decrease in 2020. Since Wheatland Electric passes through the wholesale power costs to our members, any decreases could mean lower overall power costs to you the member.

The formation of Mid-Kansas was a bold decision that was made only after careful consideration and certainty that the endeavor would benefit Wheatland's members, along with the other members of Sunflower. Rest assured that the decision to merge Sunflower and Mid-Kansas entailed the same level of analysis and certainty of a merged company and is in the best interest of those we serve. Taking care of you is what we do.

As always, if you have questions regarding the merger or any other topic, don't hesitate to contact me.

Until next time, take care.

REBATES AVAILABLE! Upgrade Your HVAC

Did you know that Wheatland offers rebates to residential members for the installation of energy-efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems? Heating and cooling a house often accounts for the majority of a household's monthly energy costs. Many homeowners can save energy and money

by installing a more efficient HVAC system. Higher efficiency means lower monthly energy bills and improved comfort.



To learn more, visit www.weci.net and click on the "Energy Education" tab and then on "Rebates" or call our office 800-762-0436.

| Rebate Levels | | | |
|---------------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| BTU | Min SEER | Central A/C | Heat Pump |
| Up to 36,000* | 13 | \$200 | +\$150 |

*Add \$30 for each ½ ton above 3 ton (36,000 BTU). For example, you could receive a \$410 rebate for a four-ton (48,000 BTU) heat pump.

Sharing Success Program Awards Grant to Scott Recreation Commission

Wheatland Electric and CoBank recently renewed their Sharing Success program, bringing their combined total donations to the program to \$70,000. It's just one of the opportunities Wheatland Electric has to serve its communities.

The Sharing Success program was created in 2012 through a partnership with one of Wheatland's partner banks, CoBank, and the Scott Community Foundation.

That first year, Wheatland contributed \$5,000 to the Scott Community Foundation to create the Wheatland Electric Sharing Success Fund. CoBank matched the donation, giving the fund a balance of \$10,000 to distribute to local non-profits.

"The Sharing Success program continues to be one of our most valuable tools for giving back to the communities we serve," said Bruce Mueller, Wheatland General Manager. "We are thankful to CoBank and the Scott Community Foundation for their partnership on this great program. Over the last five years we've made a huge impact in our communities,



Alli Conine, Manager of Member Services and Key Accounts, and Nicole Turner, Community Development Manager, Scott Community Foundation present \$1,000 grant to one of the youth baseball teams and Rachel Richardson, Assistant Director at the Scott Recreation Commission.

together helping more than 55 separate organizations achieve their mission."

Each year since, Wheatland and CoBank have continued to donate \$5,000 each to the program. The Sharing Success funds are typically given in \$1,000 grants by Wheatland Electric, with an emphasis on spreading the wealth evenly to all corners of Wheatland's service territory.

One of our most recent recipients of the Sharing Success program was the

SCOTT RECREATION COMMISSION. Their request for a \$1,000 grant will be used for the Youth Baseball/Softball Equipment program. This grant helped replace old baseball and softball equipment, as well as purchase new helmets and catchers gear. The Scott Recreation

Commission can purchase more equipment at one time with this grant, rather than piece-by-piece, allowing them to maintain the equipment more efficiently. Not having to continually replace outdated and broken equipment provides a safer environment for their youth teams.

The Scott Recreation Commission serves Scott City and its surrounding communities and offers the opportunity for youth to participate in many diversified programs and productive leisure activities offered through the recreation commission at their quality facilities. They have approximately 300 youth that participate in tee-ball, baseball and softball in the summer.

The application process for the Sharing Success program requires a letter with a brief description of your non-profit organization, the project details and costs for which you are requesting the grant. Non-profits interested in receiving funding from the Wheatland Electric Sharing Success Fund can contact Alli Conine, Manager of Member Services and Key Accounts, at 620-874-4563.



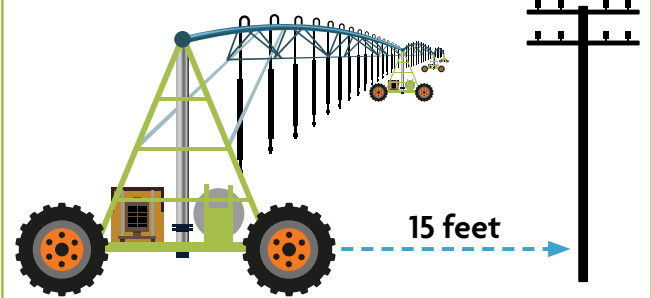
From left: Alli Conine, Manager of Member Services and Key Accounts, along with Heather Rufenacht, Member Services Coordinator, present Nicole Turner, Community Development Manager, and Ryan Roberts, Executive Director, with a \$10,000 check for the Sharing Success Fund.

Cultivating Safety in Agricultural Practices

For many crops in Kansas, irrigation systems are essential to deliver vital water. Wheatland Electric urges proper installation for new systems and regular maintenance for existing systems. Ensure everyone's safety by taking these measures:

- ▶ Do not store, handle or assemble irrigation pipes under or near overhead power lines.
- ▶ Make sure everyone in the area, including children, understands the danger of moving pipes near power lines. Efforts to free animals from pipes by lifting them upright have proven deadly.
- ▶ Avoid moving pipes in windy conditions. People have been killed when the relatively light aluminum pipe they held blew into power lines.
- ▶ Keep pipes at least 10 feet away from the lines—above, below and to the sides—at all times. If an irrigation pipe makes contact with a power line, stay far away and warn others to stay away. Call 911 and Wheatland Electric at 620-872-5885 to report the incident and the location.
- ▶ Have a qualified electrician install your system, and inspect the pump and wiring prior to each irrigation season.
- ▶ Make sure irrigation systems with electric motors are adequately grounded with copper piping. If there's a lightning strike or a short in the system, having the system grounded provides a safe path for a surge of electricity to ground, rather than energizing the equipment or passing through a person who may come in contact with the equipment. This

Keep **IRRIGATION EQUIPMENT** and *water streams* 15 feet away from overhead power lines.



Research collected from Nation Agriculture Safety Database.



- also prevents energizing the ground around the equipment.
- ▶ Make sure the system is at least 15 feet way from power lines when operating, and position the water jet streams so they will not spray power lines.
 - ▶ If water is spraying at the power lines, make sure no one approaches the system. In this situation, power lines can transmit electricity to the irrigation system. Ensure the system is off before adjusting jets to spray away from lines. For more information on irrigation and electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

Make sure that any lighting equipment in your pool is up to code and regularly examined by a professional. To change or repair a light, ensure the electricity to the pool is first turned off at the circuit breaker.

*If you are in the water and feel electric current, which can cause a tingling sensation, shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. **Do not use a metal ladder to exit the pool.***

*Remember, water and electricity are a dangerous mix, even outside the pool. **Never touch any electrical appliances or outlets when you are wet or standing in water.***

Learn more at

 Safe Electricity.org®



Saturday, Aug. 18 | The Golf Club at Southwind in Garden City | 9 a.m. Shotgun Start

GOOLF

WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

TOURNAMENT

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CALL 620-275-4080

OR EMAIL

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1st Place \$75 | 2nd Place \$60 | 3rd Place \$45

\$70 per person (includes cart & lunch)

4-man scramble

Breakfast provided



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



Natalia Barb
Broadband Support

A DAY *in the* LIFE

BY ALLI CONINE

Most days you'll see **NATALIA BARB**, Broadband Support, pacing the hall at the Wheatland Broadband office, wearing her headset,

talking to members and in her words "trying to explain things in a way that makes sense. You forget what it means to not know anything, to not understand the lingo or the technical terms."

Natalia is the person you'll most likely talk to when calling for technical support. Depending on the day, Natalia will average 15-20 support calls. Some calls are easy, some are more complex. Each call lasts an average of 8 minutes and 80 percent of the time the problem can be fixed by rebooting.

Wheatland Broadband was formed in 2002 to offer internet service to the true last mile in rural Western Kansas. Wheatland Broadband focuses on providing reliable internet service and top-notch customer support and that is exactly what you get with Natalia. She's patient and attentive, skills that put her at the top of the customer service skills list. Natalia is an empathetic listener, which is crucial for providing great service, and great service beats fast service every time.

While spending the day with Natalia, she had multiple support calls that were fixed via remote support. Modern-day technology enables Natalia to assist a member as though their encounter was face-to-face.

Looking at Natalia's work station was overwhelming. She has four computer screens and she moves between all of them so fast I wasn't sure which one she was even looking at. For someone with a background in English she has a natural talent for broadband support. I asked her how someone with her background winds up giving broadband

support? She shared how she moved to Scott City from Emporia where she worked at Country Mart in the meat department. She loved it, but she wanted something more so she started working at a communications company. She answered support calls much like she does now. When she saw that Wheatland Broadband was looking for broadband support she was intrigued. Here she is, 18 months later, living in Scott City and loving it!

Natalia jokes that she likes tech support because she likes coffee, and it wouldn't surprise me if that's true. She drinks coffee all day and she also had a Mountain Dew energy drink on her desk. Besides her love for caffeine, I also learned about her love for the bestselling book "Tubes, A Journey to the Center of the Internet." She likes the magic of the internet, but thinks it is more fun to discover what is behind the curtains.

I learned that Natalia and her husband, Matt, share a love for geeky stuff. They write music together; Matt is a guitarist and sings. They enjoy cooking and are planning to celebrate their 10th wedding anniversary by making homemade tamales.

One piece of advice Natalia would like to share with members is that they should not pay for tech support that you didn't request. If a company tells you that they will provide support for a certain fee—it's a scam. This is probably the most upsetting aspect of her job.

Her favorite part of working at Wheatland is the people. She loves that we are a cooperative and we have the opportunity to do more for people than a typical internet company. Natalia believes that every single person working for Wheatland Broadband wants to do the best they can for the members and that shows the quality of the company she works for.

ALLI CONINE, Manager of Member Services and Key Accounts