



NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Engaging Our Members



Bruce W. Mueller

When you belong to an electric cooperative, you're not a customer, you're a member and a key part of the co-op's success. As new challenges confront electric

cooperatives, our ability to succeed depends on strong engagement with member-owners. Today, how we interact and how we engage with our members is changing. Engagement is built on mutual trust. With trust we can adapt to new challenges in partnership with our members.

Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same set of core principles and values. Community and member engagement is an important contributor to the cooperative principles and the cooperative business model. It is important that we do more to keep our members engaged, and to the greatest extent possible.

The Wheatland Board of Trustees asks members to participate in the annual **MEMBER ENGAGEMENT MEETING** on Oct. 17 in Scott City. Last year, the Wheatland Electric Board of Trustees decided to have one meeting instead of three as in previous years. Wheatland will continue to alternate meetings east to

west each year. The primary objectives of the meeting will be to:

- ▶ Help the Wheatland Board of Trustees and management better understand the feelings of the members relating to the community, the co-op, and its members.
- ▶ Serve as a sounding board for the evaluation of ongoing programs, policies and initiatives and for the development of new programs, policies and initiatives.
- ▶ Foster a higher degree of understanding with the membership for their cooperative and the cooperative business model.
- ▶ Enable the co-op to be totally member-oriented and responsive to the expectations and needs of the membership.

Meeting Topics

- ▶ **RELIABILITY OF SERVICE:** Wheatland Electric continues to focus on improving system reliability for its members. The recent improvements to our electric system will be discussed.
- ▶ **NEW TECHNOLOGY:** We will be discussing new technologies Wheatland has implemented to better serve the membership and potentially reduce costs.
- ▶ **SERVICE TERRITORY LAW:** We will briefly discuss the newly adopted

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR

Wheatland Sends Dvorak &

CADE DVORAK, South Haven; and **SEBASTIAN TORRES**, Greeley County-Tribune were awarded the opportunity to attend the 58th annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour with 1,800 peers from across the nation from June 7 through 14. Wheatland selected the delegates through an essay and an interview process.



Sebastian Torres (standing to the right of mascot) and his fellow delegates were able to cheer on the Washington Nationals with “Screech” at the baseball game.

Dvorak and Torres joined other teens from across Kansas and Hawaii to spend a week touring Washington, D.C. There, delegates learned how to become community leaders.

While in D.C., the students toured the White House, the U.S. Capitol, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Smithsonian museums, Mt. Vernon, Arlington National Cemetery, the National Cathedral and many memorials and historical sites. The students

also attended a professional baseball game, a theater performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and saw the

pandas at the National Zoo.

“The trip to Capitol Hill inspired me to become more involved in politics and to pay attention to everything that is happening,” Dvorak said.

As part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s National Youth Day on June 11, all of the state groups convened to learn from inspirational speakers. This year’s keynote speaker was Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic medalist and two-time world wheelchair basketball champion, who shared his inspiring message, “Just because you can’t stand up doesn’t mean you can’t stand out!”

“What I will always remember is the fun and great memories that my new friends and I made during the trip,” Torres said. “It’s an experience I’ll never forget, not just because of where we went, but who I went with, as well.”

Wheatland is proud to have sponsored students on this trip.

“Youth Tour is a great opportunity that can change these students’ lives,” said Alli Conine,



It’s an experience I’ll never forget, not just because of where we went, but who I went with, as well.

SEBASTIAN TORRES

Torres to Nation's Capital



Cade Dvorak stands in front of Mt. Vernon, just one of the many stops on Youth Tour.

Wheatland Youth Tour coordinator. "After touring our nation's capital, meeting our senators and congressional representatives and learning firsthand about how our government operates, they return home with a greater knowledge and memories that will last a lifetime."

To learn how you can participate in Wheatland's Youth Tour program, contact Alli Conine at aconine@weci.net or 620-874-4563. For more information about Youth Tour, visit www.youthtour.coop.



Before heading to Washington, D.C., students received a guided tour of the Kansas State Capitol from Youth Tour alumni including state representatives Kyle Hoffman and Steven Johnson, and Gov. Jeff Colyer's chief counsel Brant Laue.



Thirty-nine delegates from Kansas and Hawaii stand in front of the White House during their tour of Washington, D.C., June 7-14.

COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP

Camp Teaches Leadership, *the Pillars of a Cooperative*

Fitting in and being part of the group can be challenging for anyone, especially high school students. It is this sense of belonging, of being part of something bigger, that sets electric cooperatives apart from other utilities. The Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC) in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, aims to bring high school students together in a collaborative setting to learn the cooperative principles while cultivating the students' leadership and teamwork skills.



Brant Cotta, Argonia, and Sammie Strnad, Caldwell, enjoy the view of Elk River.

This year's CYLC hosted 37 Kansas high school students and other hand-picked scholars from Colorado, Oklahoma and Wyoming from July 13-19. Wheatland Electric is pleased to have sponsored **BRANT COTTA**, Argonia, and **SAMMIE STRNAD**, Caldwell, for this leadership opportunity.

At CYLC, the youth gained a greater understanding of how their electric cooperative operates by creating a candy cooperative. The students learned leadership and teamwork skills while participating in daily membership meetings, establishing committees, and electing a general manager and board of directors. They also learned about power generation by touring both Trapper Mine, a surface coal mine, and the neighboring Craig Station Power Plant.

To be selected for this trip, Cotta and Strnad were chosen by Wheatland through a written exam, essay and

The welcomeness I feel in this camp makes me realize that family can be made of complete strangers in a matter of days.

BRANT COTTA

Teamwork, Inclusiveness:



Brant Cotta experiences skydiving in Denver on the way to camp.



Nearly 100 campers from Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming attended the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, from July 13-19.

interview by committee.

“Students are selected based on their leadership potential,” said Alli Conine, manager of member services and corporate communications. “This includes their academic achievements and community and extra-curricular activities, along with their attitude when faced with adversity.”

While at camp, students participated in group

activities and educational sessions while learning the importance of inclusivity and collaboration. Even the scheduled leisure activities offered learning opportunities as the students worked together maneuvering their river rafts down the Colorado River, competed in a volleyball tournament and showcased their entertaining skills at the annual talent show. The students also toured downtown

Steamboat Springs, enjoyed an evening dance and swimming.

Established in the 1970s, the CYLC is sponsored by Wheatland Electric and coordinated by Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. KEC strives to represent the interests of the electric cooperatives of Kansas through its focus on state legislation, and by providing safety services and programs, and educational and leadership opportunities for the state’s youth.

The leadership seminar inspired me. It made me realize what I’m doing right and what I can improve to become a better leader.

SAMMIE STRNAD



Sammie Strnad (left) and friends shop in downtown Steamboat Springs.



Returns!

Help Wheatland Electric Cram the Van this Fall!

CRAM THE VAN

Events Near You!

- ▶ **SEPT. 11** – Gooch's Foods (Tribune)
- ▶ **SEPT. 20** – Wheatland Electric (Syracuse Office)
- ▶ **OCT. 1-5** – Cardinals Care Food Drive (Conway Springs)
- ▶ **OCT. 4** – Z98 Women's Fair (Garden City)
- ▶ **OCT. 5** – Cardinals Football Game (Conway Springs)
- ▶ **OCT. 8-12** – Great Bend Schools-Hiss-Sherman Challenge (Great Bend)
- ▶ **OCT. 12** – Wheatland Electric (Great Bend)
- ▶ **OCT. 20** – Harper Fall Fest/Bullseye BBQ (Harper)
- ▶ **OCT. 27** – Fall Finale (Spencer Flight Center)

It's September and it's officially time to Cram the Van! As always, we'll be serving up hamburgers and hot dogs, hot off the grill, in exchange for your donation to the local food bank at all our Cram the Van events.

We had great success last year with our two school competitions in Great Bend and Conway Springs and we are looking forward to doing it again this year!

The competition between all Great Bend schools was sponsored by Hiss-Sherman Wealth Management. Hiss-Sherman offered a \$1,000 prize to the top three schools that collected the most donations (first place – \$500, second place – \$300, third place – \$200). The top three schools were determined by calculating average pounds collected per student. Our winners were Central Kansas Christian Academy, Holy Family and Lincoln Elementary, respectively.

In Conway Springs, the local schools were a huge part of the program's success. During the week-long Cardinals Care food drive, held in conjunction with Wheatland's Cram the Van drive, schools rewarded students with extra time off and Wheatland donated pizza for the winning class at the high school, as well as a pizza party for the students at St. Joseph Catholic School.



Staking technicians Corbin Spellman and Heath Hill man the grill at the Western Kansas Broadcast Center event in Garden City last fall.

You don't have to wait for the red van to show up in your town to make a donation. We'll also have donation bins at every Wheatland Electric office, Hired Man Grocery and Grill in Conway Springs, Caldwell City Hall, Wheatland Broadband, Heartland Foods in Scott City, and Ron's Market in Holcomb. Drop off your donations anytime during business hours from Sept. 1-Oct. 31.

At the end of October, Wheatland will collect the donations and deliver them to the local food bank in the community in which they were donated. We've collected more than 21 tons of food over the last four years. Help us break last year's record of collecting nearly 10 tons!



Donated food items from Cram the Van fill the Great Bend office. Donations are delivered to the local food bank in the community in which they were donated.



Members load the red van with items for a local food pantry.

Join Us at the Polls Nov. 6

Our co-op's No. one priority is providing our consumer-members with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. But doing this job requires a lot more than stringing and maintaining power lines throughout our service territory. It requires political engagement. That may seem far removed from our core mission, but it's absolutely essential to serving you, our consumer-members.

That's why we're participating in a national program of America's electric cooperatives called Co-ops Vote.

Co-ops Vote encourages all co-op members to participate in national, state and local elections while educating political candidates and elected officials about the important role played by electric cooperatives in their communities.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service organization representing the nation's electric co-ops, launched Co-ops Vote in 2016. Co-ops Vote started as a national non-partisan get-out-the-vote initiative that helped drive rural voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election.

Through this program, electric co-ops realized they had a unique advantage: As co-ops, the civic virtue of voting is in our DNA. We show concern for community—one of the seven cooperative



principles—through participation in our democracy.

Co-ops have another advantage. Elected officials and decision-makers across the political spectrum trust us because of the work the electric cooperative family has put into political engagement. When we all get involved, we can make things happen politically and in our local communities.

Our participation in Co-ops Vote helps to ensure that rural issues remain part of the national discussion—and are supported by our elected officials. But Co-ops Vote isn't just for co-ops. It's for co-op members just like you.

You can participate by registering to vote and committing to cast your ballot on Nov. 6. If you're interested in getting more involved, just give us a call or visit www.vote.coop to learn more about the upcoming elections and access online tools that can help you participate. We look forward to seeing you at the polls on Election Day!

Engaging Members

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Sub, Senate Bill 323 and the benefits it has for the cooperative.

Keeping our members as our main focus and working as a team to serve their evolving needs is what makes a cooperative different. To better serve our members Wheatland will soon offer **PREPAY POWER** for residential accounts. You will simply put money onto your account and as you use electricity, the cost of the usage will be deducted daily. You decide how much electricity to purchase—enough for a day, a week, a month or more. Prepay Power couldn't be easier and we are excited to offer this service to you.

Look for more details in the October issue of *Kansas County Living* magazine.

Until next time, take care.

SAFETY Tip of the Month

School is back in session, and students aren't the only ones who need to remember the rules! Always stop for school busses that are loading or unloading children, watch out for school crossing guards and obey their signals, and be sure to slow down in school zones.

P  **PREPAY**
POWER

COMING SOON PREPAY COULDN'T BE EASIER
SIGN UP  **FILL UP**  **USE UP**  **FILL UP**



MICHAEL DOYLE
IT Support Specialist

A DAY *in the* LIFE

BY ALLI CONINE

When you are tasked with keeping every electronic device working for employees in Great Bend, Harper, Conway Springs

and Caldwell, your days tend to be busy. **MICHAEL DOYLE**, IT Support Specialist for Wheatland Electric in our Great Bend office since March 2016, keeps electronic devices operating in the east part of Wheatland's territory.

When electronic devices aren't working quite right there are people who can help me, and I know that Michael is one of those people. Computers and technology have always interested him and that's why he pursued a career in IT.

Each day for Michael starts by looking at help desk tickets from employees who are having IT issues. Filling out a ticket is the first step for Wheatland's employees and it allows IT staff to track problems and make sure issues are resolved in a timely manner. Some issues can be fixed remotely, but some require Michael to be there in person.

Michael travels to Wheatland's office in Harper at least twice a month to help resolve any electronic device issues, to touch base with employees and make sure things are running as they should be. Michael makes the same trip to Caldwell and Conway Springs each month.

Outside of your typical electronic device, Michael is also responsible for managing Wheatland's payment kiosk at Hired Man's Grocery Store in Conway Springs. He says that software updates

can create challenges that need to be resolved.

Michael also coordinates quarterly computer security trainings. "It's important to provide routine, ongoing training to all of Wheatland's employees," he said.

He believes every employee needs to be alert and aware of potential threats at all times. Michael manages monthly phishing emails that are department specific and get harder to detect each time.

We talked about how technology is constantly evolving and how he stays up-to-date. Michael recently attended a week-long training in Denver about one of the many software programs Wheatland uses. Wheatland employees also have access to training through Lynda.com, which Michael utilizes as he often as he can.

What's his favorite part about working for Wheatland? "It's the people," he said. "It feels like family here."

Speaking of family, Michael grew up in Kansas City, came to Great Bend on a tennis scholarship and didn't have any intentions of staying past that until he met, Ali, his wife of almost two years. Together they have two dogs. Michael enjoys smoking meat, so much that he has five smokers. The Doyles enjoy concerts, going to KU basketball games and even KU football games.

We ended the day talking about how well Wheatland treats their employees and how that's reflected in the number of people who work here for the duration of their career.

ALLI CONINE, Manager of Member Services and Corporate Communications