

WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEWS



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FROM THE MANAGER

Take Time to Reap Safe Harvest



Bruce Mueller

It can be an exciting and exhausting time, the culmination of a season of hard work. However, the rush to harvest can also yield tragic outcomes. Each year, dozens of farm workers are killed and hundreds are injured in accidents involving power lines and electrical equipment.

“Things people see every day can fade from view and in the busyness of harvest time, it’s easy for farm workers to forget about the power lines overhead,” says Richard McCracken of the Safe Electricity Advisory Board. “But failure to notice them can be a deadly oversight.”

It’s a good idea to periodically review, with all workers, the farm activities that take place around power lines. Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance. Keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines—above, below and to the side—a 360-degree rule.

“Always lower grain augers before moving them, even if it’s only a few feet,”

says Bob Aherin, PhD, CSP & University of Illinois Professor and Agricultural Safety & Health Program Leader. “Variables like wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can combine to create an unexpected result. Also use extreme caution when raising the bed of a grain truck.”

Farm workers should take these steps to ensure a safer harvest season:

- ▶ Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- ▶ Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines. Don’t let the spotter touch the machinery while it is being moved anywhere near power lines.
- ▶ As with any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment

Continued on page 16-F ▶



Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines—above, below and to the side—a 360-degree rule.

YOUTH TOUR

Visits Washington

PAYTON GARRISON and **ARELY YANEZ** were selected by Wheatland Electric to attend the 57th annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. From June 8 to 15, Garrison and Yanez joined more than 1,800 high school students nationwide to experience our nation's capital, government and history.

This year's delegation of 36 Kansas and four Hawaii youth began their trip with a banquet in Topeka, which featured Youth Tour alumni Rep. Kyle Hoffman, Rep. Steven Johnson and Chief

Counsel for Gov. Sam Brownback Brant Laue. Following the banquet, Hoffman, Johnson and Laue led the Hawaii-Kansas delegates on a night tour of our state's capitol.

After bucket truck rides, safety demonstrations and a co-op career panel questionnaire at FreeState Electric, Topeka, the group embarked on its way to Washington, D.C.

This year, with the assistance of Senator Jerry Moran's staff, the students had the privilege of touring the White House.

"The students were thrilled to be able to take the self-guided tour of this beautiful historical site," said Shana Read, director of communications at Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. "As the tour was also on Flag Day, each student was given a flag while on the tour, fostering a strong sense of patriotism."

The delegates also visited the many memorials; toured the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Smithsonian museums, Mount



Payton Garrison and Arely Yanez visit the Capitol to meet with their Kansas representatives.



Arely Yanez takes a selfie with fellow Kansas-Hawaii delegates in front of the Lincoln Memorial.



The Kansas-Hawaii delegates visit many museums and memorials in Washington, D.C., including a stop at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial.

Vernon, and Arlington National Cemetery; attended a major league baseball game at Nationals Park, and watched the production of *The Sound of Music* at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

“The Holocaust Memorial Museum has made the biggest impact on me during this trip. I couldn’t help but feel the emotion. Learning more about that era in history really made me think about all of the freedoms we have in our country,” said Garrison.

Perhaps most memorable for the group was the access the students had to government officials. Students met with Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins and Congressmen Ron Estes and Roger Marshall. Delegates also had the opportunity to speak with Senators Moran and Pat Roberts.

“During this trip, students learn

first-hand the importance of being informed about the issues that impact rural America and being engaged in the political process, and it often opens the eyes of many students to future possibilities in leadership roles in our government, local communities and in our cooperative,” said Shawn Powelson, Wheatland’s youth tour coordinator.

“Talking to the senators and representatives inspired me because they were from small towns like me,” said Yanez.

Each year, Wheatland sponsors two students to attend the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., as a strong commitment to our community and our mission to inspire future generations to become leaders. For more information, contact Shawn Powelson at 800-762-0436 or spowelson@weci.net.

“Talking to the senators and representatives inspired me because they were from small towns like me.”

ARELY YANEZ





Leadership Camp in the Rockies

Through this trip, we hope local students will learn how our electric co-ops work and how co-ops and their employees support the communities they serve.

BRUCE MUELLER,
GENERAL
MANAGER

JUSTIN BROWN and **ROSSIEL REYES** were selected to attend the 41st annual Cooperative Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, from July 14-20. Joining their peers from Colorado, Oklahoma and Wyoming, approximately 100 youth learned about the cooperative principles at the week-long educational and leadership retreat.

“Wheatland Electric Cooperative is proud to be a participating sponsor of the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp and send our local youth to develop essential leadership and teamwork skills,” said General Manager Bruce Mueller. “Through this trip, we hope local students will learn how our electric cooperatives work and how co-ops and their employees support the communities they serve.”

The Kansas and Oklahoma participants met as they boarded the bus along its route to Colorado. When the bus arrived in Denver, the group was treated to a snorkeling experience at the Denver Aquarium. Campers swam face-to-face with a grouper, a school of cownose rays, moray eels, red drums, nurse sharks and 400 other exotic underwater species.

When the group arrived at Glen Eden Resort, nestled in the Rocky Mountains, the

campers immediately began daily membership meetings where a general manager, board of directors and committees were selected. The experience also gave participants an authentic camp feel with river rafting, volleyball tournament, swimming, a dance and a talent show.

Several demonstrations and presentations enhanced students’ knowledge on the cooperative model and on operations at their electric cooperative. Campers competed to build a model transmission line out of craft supplies, toured Trapper Mine, Craig Power Plant and experienced a high-voltage safety demonstration. The campers also raised \$390 to donate to the NRECA International Foundation.

“On the trip, what had the most impact on me was learning about the linemen who put their lives on the line every day in order to make everyone else’s easier,” said Reyes. “The safety demonstration truly opened my eyes, and I now appreciate the electricity I have even more.”

By the camp’s end, students demonstrated the leadership skills they attained by running for an ambassador position at next year’s camp. Participants elected by their peers as ambassadors for the 2018 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp were: Paige Claassen, Pioneer; Max



1. Rossiel Reyes and Justin Brown enjoy the view of Elk River near camp.
2. While touring Trapper Mine, campers pose in front of the coal mine's Molly Brown dragline; its height is equivalent to a four-story building.
3. On their way to camp, students visit the Downtown Aquarium Denver. Rossiel Reyes (third from the left) is ready to snorkel!
4. Rossiel Reyes (right) and friend stop at Lookout Mountain for a scenic view of the Rockies.
5. During the Hawk Quest presentation, Justin Brown learns about how co-ops protect raptors using avian protection devices.

Holthaus, Nemaha-Marshall and RaeLyn Scott, Flint Hills. As ambassadors, the elected students will return to camp and facilitate camp leadership activities, while serving as role models for the incoming campers.

If you or someone you know is interested in attending the 2018 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., or the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, please contact your local high school guidance counselor. Each year, Wheatland accepts one nomination of a high school junior from each of the 13 high schools in its service territory.

Follow us on Facebook, visit our website www.weci.net and read *Kansas Country Living* for trip updates and information. For more information about Wheatland Electric's youth programs, contact Youth Tour Coordinator Shawn Powelson at 800-762-0436 or spowelson@weci.net.

The safety demonstration truly opened my eyes, and I now appreciate the electricity I have even more. ROSSIEL REYES

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#CoopCamp Highlight

Justin Brown
July 14, 2017 at Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado

My friends at camp have inspired me and helped me learn how to become a better leader.

Get to Know Your Co-op Staff

Heath Hill

Staking Technician

2 months in Garden City



Heath Hill

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

My wife and I have been married for 11 years. We have two children and a third on the way.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

Ulysses

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Anything that involves my kids, and I'm an avid hunter.

WHAT SPORT OR TEAM IS YOUR FAVORITE?

Arizona Cardinals

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK AND WHY?

The Green Mile, this is just one of those books I couldn't put down.

WHAT WOULD YOUR IDEAL JOB BE?

Working as a Staking Tech at Wheatland Electric.

SAFETY

Tip of the Month

Every year in the U.S., almost a half million people are injured or killed in traffic accidents attributed to texting while driving. Ensure that you never text and drive and encourage others to do the same.

Offices Closed on Sept. 4



In observance of Labor Day, Wheatland's offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 4.

We wish you a safe and happy Labor Day!

Take Time to Reap Safe Harvest *Continued from page 16-A*

such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.

- ▶ Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.
- ▶ Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside bins. Know where and how to shut off the power in an emergency.
- ▶ Use qualified electricians for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

Operators of farm equipment or vehicles must also know what to do if the vehicle comes in contact with a power line: Stay on the equipment, warn others to stay away and call 911. Do not get off the equipment until the utility crew says it is safe to do so.

"If the power line is energized and you step outside, touching the vehicle and ground, your body becomes the path and electrocution is the result," Aherin said. "Even if a

power line has landed on the ground, the potential for the area nearby to be energized still exists. Stay inside the vehicle unless there's fire or imminent risk of fire."

If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together, without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Some electrocutions have occurred after the operator dismounts and tries to get back on the equipment.

It is important that all farm workers and seasonal employees are informed of electrical hazards and trained in proper procedures to avoid injury.

For more information on electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

Until next time, take care.

CO-OP CONNECTIONS SPOTLIGHT

Co-op Connections Card Savings

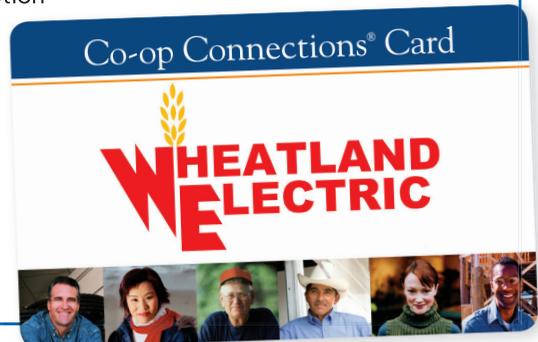
When you don't have time for the beach, keep your golden glow with regular visits to **E-Z TAN** in Great Bend.

E-Z Tan is known as the largest, cleanest salon in Central Kansas offering 18 beds with three levels of tanning, a leg tanner, hand-held air brush spray tan, VersaSpa spray tan booth, eyelash extensions, lotion inventory and more! No appointments necessary; walk-in with your Co-op Connections Card and get \$10 off a tanning package!

Use your Connections Card at these other local businesses for more great savings.

- ▶ Gifts, Etc., Scott City
- ▶ Office Products Incorporated, Great Bend
- ▶ D'Mario's Pizza, Harper

For a complete list of deals visit www.connections.coop/weci. Still need a Connections Card? Contact your local office for more information on how to start saving now!





Returns!

Help Wheatland Electric Cram the Van this Fall!

It's September and that can only mean one thing here at Wheatland Electric: It's time to Cram the Van!

Over the past three years you've helped us collect more than 11.5 tons of food to benefit local food banks and people in your community. We're looking forward to the next two months and you helping us Cram the Van with a goal of surpassing last year's donation of nearly 5 tons!

The big red van will make its

first stop at the Syracuse Bulldogs home football game against Beaver, Oklahoma on Friday, Sept. 8. We'll be serving up hamburgers and hotdogs, hot off the grill, in exchange for your donation to the local food bank. We won't stop there! The big red van will keep right on rolling until the Fall Finale on Saturday, Oct. 28.

Remember, you don't have to wait for an event to make a donation. In addition to the 11 events we'll

be conducting across our service territory, we'll also have donation bins located at every Wheatland Electric office, Hired Man Grocery and Grill in Conway Springs, Caldwell City Hall and Wheatland Broadband. Drop off your donations anytime during business hours from Sept. 1 to Oct. 31. When we're done "cramming the van" at the end of October, we'll take all the donations and deliver them to your local food bank in your community.



Cram the Van has collected more than 11.5 tons of food over the last three years. We are excited to Cram the Van again this year!



Last year our members helped us collect 2,380 pounds in Harper County to benefit the Mission Mart Food Bank.

Bring your family, and stop by for hamburgers and hot dogs in exchange for your donation.



Join us at an event near you!

- ▶ **SEPT. 8** – Syracuse Bulldogs Football Game, Syracuse
- ▶ **SEPT. 14** – Western Kansas Broadcast Center Parking Lot, Garden City
- ▶ **SEPT. 22** – Heartland Foods, Scott City
- ▶ **SEPT. 25** – Arts Park, Leoti
- ▶ **OCT. 6** – Hired Man Grocery, Conway Springs
- ▶ **OCT. 13** – Wheatland Electric, Great Bend
- ▶ **OCT. 14** – Harper Fall Fest/Bullseye BBQ, Harper
- ▶ **OCT. 17** – Gooch's Foods, Tribune
- ▶ **OCT. 20** – Holcomb Longhorns Football Game, Holcomb
- ▶ **OCT. 26** – Caldwell Bluejays Football Game, Caldwell
- ▶ **OCT. 28** – Fall Finale, Wheatland Broadband-Scott City

A DAY *in the* LIFE

BY SHAWN POWELSON



Jillane Koochel
Benefits Specialist
10 years in Great Bend

When I asked **JILLANE KOOCHEL** if she'd let me interview her for a "Day in the Life" article, her response was something to the effect of, "Not too much excitement going on here in the benefits department, but sure, if you insist." I insisted.

As the main point of contact for 144 full- and part-time employees, she is responsible for everything from health insurance to 401k's, to answering questions about coverages for life events like, "My wife just had a baby, now what?" to "what's long-term disability coverage?" So while Jillane's job may not seem "exciting," it's certainly important.

Jillane has been in her position as the benefits specialist for nearly two years; prior to that she was a consumer services representative. The combination of being new to the position, recent changes in Wheatland's Human Resources department and the ever-changing rules and regulations in human resources/benefits certainly keeps her on her toes.

"How do you keep it all straight?" I asked. Jillane was quick to credit our national trade organization, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), for providing her with a lot of guidance. "NRECA administers most of our benefit programs. They do a great job of sending us regular communications and helping us to stay on top of the things we need to know and communicate to our employees," she said.

In addition, Jillane assists with payroll. And then, of course, there's the inevitable calls and emails with questions from those 144 employees—any of which could trigger several follow up actions including calls to Blue Cross Blue Shield or to one of the helpful folks at NRECA, and of course, a form or two to fill out. "I try to make sure employees know it's okay for their spouse to call me with questions, too, especially the

linemen. A lot of times they are busy out in the field during the day and may not have the time."

She also helps with new employee orientations, which have been on the rise after a number of recent retirements and staffing changes at Wheatland. "We've completely revamped our new hire process in the last year or so," Jillane noted. She's helped to develop a presentation that includes an overview of the cooperative, highlights of the different departments and programs, an outline of benefit information and more. She also created a new employee packet that contains all the necessary forms, deduction information, etc.

"I like doing the orientations," she said. "It really helps make that connection with new employees. Someday down the road, if they have a question about a benefit, coverage or are experiencing some sort of life event, it makes it that much easier for them to pick up the phone and call me."

When she's not busy administering existing programs and benefits, Jillane thinks about developing new programs and initiatives that might interest employees. Whether it's creating early-morning walking groups or offering incentives for weight-loss or other healthy activities, Jillane is intent on finding ways to engage employees in their health—and not just physical health. She's also interested in exploring opportunities to add financial wellness programs and workshops to the mix. She believes financial health can be just as important as physical health and wants to provide employees both young and old with opportunities to make improvements to their financial fitness as well.

As we finished up our time together, I asked Jillane what she enjoys most about her job. "I really like being able to help the employees, helping them to solve a problem," she said. "I like seeing the end result, knowing that I've been able to help them." Exciting? Maybe not, but I'm sure glad we have someone like Jillane taking good care of us. Thanks for sharing your day with me, Jillane.

SHAWN POWELSON, Manager of Member Services and Corporate Communications