

WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS



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FROM THE MANAGER

We're Ready for Storm Season. Are You?



Bruce W. Mueller

Now that warmer days are upon us, like many of you, I welcome more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy the weather. This time of year brings many of

my favorite activities like cooking out with family and friends, afternoons on the water and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

But the warmer weather also makes conditions right for dangerous storms. Our region is known for harmful tornadoes and severe storms, often destroying everything in the storm's path. These potential weather events can also destroy our electrical system, but I want you to know that Wheatland Electric Cooperative crews are ready and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area.

When major storms knock out power, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines. I would encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during major storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit www.ready.gov for additional resources.

- ▶ Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- ▶ Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- ▶ Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and

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SAFETY Tip of the Month

Summertime is on the way, meaning pool and beach time for many children and adults. In recognition of National Water Safety Month, we remind parents and swimmers to practice safety when in or around the water.

WHEATLAND ELECTRIC MEMBER

SPOTLIGHT

SARAH JANE'S

SARAH JANE MAY didn't invent green tomato salsa. She just perfected it.

As a young girl growing up on a small farm south of Argonia, Sarah's family grew a lush vegetable garden every summer that included tomatoes, okra, corn, jalapeños and strawberries.

Before the first winter frost hit, her mother would pick the remaining green tomatoes left on the vine, not letting a single piece of produce go to waste.

The unripe harvest would then slowly be stewed into a large batch of tasty and tangy tomato salsa, which wasn't just a family favorite, but a neighborhood hit, too.

"My mom would use up all the jars in the house. And the neighbors, they would bring their jars, too — our large batch would be shared by everyone," Sarah said.

Today, a generation later, Sarah and her husband, Shane, run a family-owned and operated business out of their Main Street store in Argonia with help from

Sarah's mother, Nancy Forrest, who assists with the books, and the pair's two children, Regan, 14, and Zane, 10, who can often be found

wrapping and labeling jars, or counting change at the front counter for customers.

Sarah Jane's specialty is a multitude of farm fresh dips and delicacies, which include:

- ▶ jalapeño jelly, which can be served over a bar of cream cheese with salty crackers;
- ▶ fresh black bean and corn salsa, only available between Memorial Day and Labor Day;
- ▶ jalapeño mustard, a unique blend of hot and sweet with a cult-like fan base; and
- ▶ chow chow, a sweet relish and recent addition thanks to fierce customer demand.

These products and more are sold and shared not only to neighbors and friends in Argonia, but to loyal customers and wholesalers across Kansas, and even a few communities out of state where more and more Sarah Jane's fans have started to crop up.

Cooking and canning recipes created by her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother began as a way for Sarah, a former administrative professional, to provide for her family during the economic downturn in the late 2000s.

That's when, newly laid off from the aircraft industry in 2009, the mother of one — with another on the way — realized that working outside the home would only provide enough funds to cover childcare expenses. Instead of returning to the turbulent workforce, Sarah started planting a garden to provide provisions for her growing family.

"When you grow a garden, you always have too much, and just like my mom, I was giving jars away. Well, people wanted to start paying me for it," she said. "That's when I started doing itty, bitty craft

Sarah Jane May and her husband, Shane, opened their storefront in Argonia in 2018.



RIGHT: Sarah Jane May, owner, is pictured in the kitchen with her mother, Nancy Forrest, who helps run the books for the business, and her daughter, Regan.



Where to Buy Sarah Jane's

See a full list of locations or SHOP ONLINE at www.sarahjanesalsa.com

ARGONIA

Sarah Jane's, 116 S. Main
Quick Pick #8, 509 N. Main

CALDWELL

Kanokla Networks, 21 N. Main

CONWAY SPRINGS

Hired Man's Grocery, 424 N. Fifth St.

HARPER

Fence Post, 700 E. 14th St.

NORWICH

Eagle Grocery, 242 S. Main



Sarah Jane May got her start selling her homegrown products at craft fairs, festivals, and farmers markets across Kansas.



Sarah Jane's features a delectable line of dips and delicacies, including customer favorites like green tomato salsas, jalapeño mustard, jalapeño jelly and chow chow.

shows and booths. I didn't write a business plan or apply for a loan — it kind of all just happened.”

What happened is that demand quickly began to outpace supply.

When Sarah first began cooking her salsas and jellies in larger quantities, she would pick up tools at her local big-box retailers, stacking her shopping cart with as many canning materials as she could fit around a baby carrier.

The small business owner and entrepreneur first realized she had something special going on around 2010, during one of her very first fairs, Christmas in the Country, an annual holiday show in Oxford.

“I sold completely out of my jalapeño jelly on that first day, and I still had one more day to sell,” she said. “I came home, made jalapeño jelly all night long, and sold out again the next day. I was so excited. That's when I thought, there's something here!”

Sarah Jane's goods began selling like hot cakes — in the right place, at the right time.

While one national trend — an economic downturn — kicked her out of the workforce, another emerging trend — shopping local — quickly buoyed her homegrown business forward.

In the early 2010s, all around the nation, ideas like “source local,” and “farm fresh to table” were making big waves across the consumer food industry.

At that time, the small business' biggest sales were typically to folks at the local farmers markets in Wichita and the state fair in Hutchinson, places where Sarah Jane's began developing its growing fan base across Kansas and into parts of Oklahoma and Missouri.

In 2014, a very big customer — a Whole Foods chain store coming to Wichita — even approached Sarah directly about selling her jars on its store shelves, another big break in the family business.

Today, Sarah Jane's products are sold at multiple Wichita locations, nearly two dozen small communities across Kansas, in and around Kansas City, Missouri, and in communities in Michigan and Wisconsin, too.

To create their delectable dips and dishes, they also source in-season produce from growers located across central Kansas.

“I would rather work with mom and pops all day long, but you can't deny that products move quickly at the grocery stores,” Sarah added.

Of course, there were also big challenges as business began to bloom.

For one, you can't grow or buy green tomatoes all year long all on your own. And for two, manufacturing products on a large scale requires safety and efficiency. And a lot of standards and regulations to boot.

In the beginning, to prep, cook and can their goods, Sarah and her family rented out the local senior center in Clearwater, and shared a kitchen with a barbecue restaurant in Haysville.

“Going to local farmer's markets, I met growers with greenhouses who could supply me with

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Win a 4-jar Gift Set from Sarah Jane's!

We are giving away a chip and dip gift basket to one lucky member! It includes a four-jar Sarah Jane gift box that includes medium green tomato salsa (16 oz.), jalapeño jelly (8 oz.), jalapeño mustard (12 oz.), and a jar of chow chow (16 oz.).

To enter, email sdonecker@weci.net or write to Shajia Donecker, social media specialist, at Wheatland Electric, 2005 W. Fulton St., Garden City, KS 67846, **BY JUNE 18, 2021**. Include your name, address, telephone number and a request to enter the **"SARAH JANE'S GIVEAWAY."** One winner will be selected at random and announced the week of June 21 on our website and on social media.



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green tomatoes all year long," she said. "The other challenge was finding a certified kitchen that could be licensed and all the rules that come with wholesaling. But you sit down, and you figure it out."

Around 2018, a year after she convinced her husband, Shane, to quit his day job as an aircraft sheet metalist and join the family business, the Mays opened their own store on Main Street in Argonia.

"Originally we were looking for a warehouse and a kitchen. But as soon as I saw the brick underneath the plaster, I fell in love," Sarah said. "I asked myself 'Why not do this? We're going to be

here anyway!' We have been so surprised at the support we get here, in our tiny little town."

In its short time, the Argonia store has become a community staple, offering more than just Sarah Jane's products.

When the coronavirus pandemic began last spring and stay-at-home orders became the norm, the Mays began offering take-and-bake meals inside their store, including frozen casseroles and burritos.

Today, Sarah Jane's storefront also offers a small line of fresh produce from local farmers, local meat including beef and pork, and other seasonal hometown and Kansas-made goodies.

"Our closest grocery store is nearly 20 minutes away, and we knew (during the pandemic) that is what the town needed," she said. "We're here to do what we can for our community and support each other."

Sarah's dream for Sarah Jane's — and for her hometown — is big, but it's simple: to lift up the local economy, grow the community, and one day become a travel destination for visitors from all over.

"My dream would be to have the community back to where it was when I was younger, when we had a grocery store and café — those are two of the things I would love to see come back into our community," she added.

But for right now, running the store, continuing to cook and can for their customer base, and expanding their homegrown business is at the top of the to-do list.

"I love where we're at, I love having our own place, and being in control of our own destiny," she said. "I love having our storefront where people can come in and we can show them what we do. Honestly, I haven't set an alarm clock in years — I wake up every morning, and I'm ready to go."



ABOVE: Sarah Jane and Shane May with their two children Regan, 14, and Zane, 10.

RIGHT: In 2020, when stay-at-home orders became the norm, Sarah Jane's in Argonia began selling frozen meals, like enchiladas. The take-and-bake meals were such a huge hit and are still sold in their store today.



3rd Annual

CO-OPS CARE CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Hosted by:



**FRIDAY,
SEPT. 17, 2021**
THE GOLF CLUB AT
SOUTHWIND
GARDEN CITY, KS

8 A.M.
Registration
9 A.M.
Shotgun Start
4-Man Scramble
\$100/Player
\$400/Team

BENEFITING:



To Register:

CONTACT WHEATLAND ELECTRIC

620-874-4563

ACONINE@WECI.NET

We're Ready for Storm Season. Are You? Continued from page 16A ▶

other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.

- ▶ Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- ▶ Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from a potential power surge, and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information, and

check Wheatland Electric's website for power restoration updates.

After the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs, including on your property.

Planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings, and download our SmartHub app to stay abreast of power restoration efforts and other important co-op news and information.

I hope we don't experience severe storms this summer, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. At Wheatland Electric Cooperative, we recommend that you act today because there is power in planning.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.



What Does the Certification MIP Mean at Wheatland Electric?

In the electric industry we have an abundance of acronyms and abbreviations that our members might not understand. We're here to break down our alphabet soup!

MANAGEMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

LUKE WEST, director of corporate services and water at Wheatland Electric, has successfully completed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program (MIP), a national-level management credential.

West, who has been with Wheatland for 16 years, successfully completed the comprehensive, six-week program, which includes onsite classes in the Fluno Center for Executive Education at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Courses for the intensive management program began in Madison, Wisconsin, in December 2019 and were concluded online in 2020 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"Completing the MIP program was one of my goals as a higher-level cooperative manager," West said. "This program helped me better understand our guiding principles and why we do what we do as a cooperative."

West, a Kansas State University graduate, began his career at Wheatland Electric as a groundsman in 2005. He then stepped into his role as an apprentice lineman in 2006 and graduated to journeyman lineman in 2010.

In 2013, West was promoted to manager of safety and compliance. Since 2017, he has served in his current role as corporate services and water director. West directs all activities for Wheatland Water, including water contracts and farm leases, in addition to overseeing and reviewing all corporate policies/documents and facilities for Wheatland Electric.

We are grateful to have a director like Luke leading our corporate services!



Luke West, director of corporate services and water at Wheatland Electric, has successfully completed the NRECA Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program (MIP), a national-level management credential.

Severe Weather SAFETY

Here in Kansas we can certainly appreciate firsthand the tranquility of rural Mother Nature, from the quiet prairie sprouting in spring to the calm of a famous Kansas sunset on a warm summer night. But we're also no stranger to the sharp swing Mother Nature can make without a moment's notice, especially during severe weather season. Whether it's a blizzard in April, a spring thunderstorm with golf-ball sized hail, or a summer tornado tearing across the plains, we Kansans need to be prepared for anything that might come our way.

Wheatland Electric wants to remind you of a few ways you can stay safe and prepared during this storm season, should you experience a storm or power outage.

START NOW BY PREPARING YOURSELF, FAMILY AND HOME:

- ▶ Keep a disaster supply kit stocked and accessible, and make sure all family members know where it is stored. Take into account your family's needs, baby items, pets, food, water and flashlights with batteries, to name a few. For a comprehensive guide, visit ready.gov/kit.
- ▶ Consider keeping a standby generator at your home, especially if you rely on essential medical equipment.
- ▶ Visit our website at weci.net/preparing-outage for a more comprehensive list to protect your property and help family members prepare for a storm.

DURING A STORM:

- ▶ Continue checking the weather forecast and watch for signs of an approaching storm.
- ▶ Keep a weather radio in earshot, tuned to your regional weather service.
- ▶ Know the difference between a severe thunderstorm watch and warning. A watch means there is the possibility of storms in your area. A warning means a storm has been reported or is imminent and you should take cover.
- ▶ Stay indoors if you know a storm is headed your way.

IF LIGHTNING STRIKES:

- ▶ If you are outside, move to a low area away from water and trees and crouch as low as possible.
- ▶ Set down any metal items such as a baseball bat, golf club or fishing rod.
- ▶ If you are with a group and stuck outside, do not stand close together. During a lightning strike, there is NOT safety in numbers.
- ▶ Bring outdoor dogs inside. Metal chains and doghouses can attract lightning.
- ▶ Take shelter, when possible, in a building or enclosed vehicle with a hard-top roof — not an open-frame vehicle like a convertible or golf cart.
- ▶ Stay away from windows and doors while inside.
- ▶ Avoid water and electronics in your home during storms. Unplug electronics to protect them during a power surge and wait until the storm stops before taking a bath or shower.

IF POWER IS LOST AT YOUR HOME:

- ▶ Don't panic! Check to see if your neighbors have power. If they do, the problem could be inside your home. Check

your main fuses or circuit breakers to see if they have blown or tripped. Replacing a fuse or resetting a circuit breaker may restore your electricity.

- ▶ Keep freezers and refrigerators closed to preserve food.
- ▶ Turn off air conditioners during a power outage and do not turn them back on for several minutes after the power has been restored.
- ▶ Dress comfortably and use natural ventilation to keep your home cool.

AFTER THE STORM:

- ▶ Before entering storm-damaged buildings, make sure electricity and gas are turned off.
- ▶ Do not turn off power if you must stand in water to do so. Call your electric utility and have them turn off power at the meter.
- ▶ Never enter a flooded basement unless electricity has been disconnected.
- ▶ Do not use water-damaged electronics before properly restoring them. Electric motors in appliances should be cleaned and reconditioned before use. It may be necessary to replace some of your appliances and electronics. Have your water-damaged items inspected and approved by a professional before use.
- ▶ If you clean up outdoors after a storm, do not use electronic equipment in wet conditions.
- ▶ **NEVER GO NEAR DOWNED POWER LINES.** They could still be energized and potentially dangerous. Downed lines, stray wires and debris in contact with the downed lines all have the potential to deliver a fatal shock.
- ▶ Move properly away from downed lines, and anything contacting them, by shuffling with small steps, keeping your feet together and always touching the ground. This will minimize the potential for a strong electric shock.
- ▶ **DO NOT DRIVE OVER DOWNED POWER LINES!** If you are in a vehicle that is in contact with a downed line, stay in the vehicle. Honk your horn to signal for help from a utility lineworker and tell others to stay away from your vehicle.
- ▶ If your vehicle is on fire and you must exit, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together, avoiding simultaneous contact with the vehicle and the ground. This way, you avoid becoming the path of electricity between the vehicle and the ground.

In the event of a storm, Wheatland Electric closely monitors the situation. Utility crews make every effort to restore power as quickly as possible, both during and after a severe weather event.

Wheatland Electric will provide real-time updates on our Facebook page during any widespread power outage. If you are without power, you can also view our outage map at weci.net/view-or-report-outage, or look for the Outage Center on our homepage, identified by the icon to the right.

Severe damage to power lines and the electrical grid could cause power to be out for days or weeks. If you are ever without power for an extended period of time after a storm, please call your local Wheatland Electric office during regular business hours, or 1-800-ON-AGAIN (1-800-662-4246) at any time.

OUTAGE ALERT



WHEATLAND ELECTRIC
Delivering Energy You Like
A Transocean Energy Company

Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. Renews 'Sharing Success' Program

Wheatland Electric and CoBank recently renewed their Sharing Success program, bringing their combined total donations to the program to \$125,000. The Sharing Success program continues to be one of the most valuable tools for giving back to the communities we serve. Wheatland has been able to make a significant impact in our communities helping many organizations achieve their mission.

The Scott Community Foundation began formally accepting applications for grants from the Wheatland Electric Sharing Success Fund from non-profit organizations on Dec. 1, 2012. Wheatland Electric and CoBank have each increased their contribution amounts to the fund over time. In 2020, each organization began donating \$10,000 annually. Non-profit groups interested in receiving funding from the Wheatland Electric Sharing Success Fund can apply online at [weci.net/sharing-success-program](https://www.weci.net/sharing-success-program). Questions should be referred to Alli Conine, manager of member services and corporate communications, at 620-874-4563 or aconine@weci.net.



Alli Conine, manager of member services and corporate communications at Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc. presents to Nicole Turner, community development coordinator, Pam Caldwell, assistant executive director, and Ryan Roberts, executive director — all with the Scott Community Foundation — a check for \$10,000 for the Sharing Success Fund.

“The Sharing Success program allows us to give back to the communities we serve,” said Bruce W. Mueller, Wheatland’s CEO/general manager. “Since 2012, the Sharing Success program has awarded \$105,000 in grants to non-profit organizations across our service territory. Wheatland is excited to continue partnering with CoBank and the Scott Community Foundation.”

APPLY TODAY

<https://www.weci.net/sharing-success-program>

QUESTIONS?

Alli Conine, Manager of Member Services & Corporate Communications
620-874-4563 or aconine@weci.net