

# Rural Power

## KEC's Summer Board Meeting covers lots of ground

Hundreds of electric cooperative trustees, managers and key staff heard from a variety of speakers on industry updates at KEC's Summer Board Meeting in Overland Park on Aug. 5.

Kirk Johnson, NRECA's Senior Vice President of Government Relations, highlighted congressional activities and encouraged the co-op board members and staff to visit with their delegation.

"Since Congress is officially in recess, take the time to visit with them when they are back home," Johnson encouraged. To help communicate with the legislators, he reviewed a talking points handout that focused on climate change, pension flexibility, coal ash and the farm bill.

Peter Baxter, NRECA's Senior Vice President of Insurance and Financial Services, reviewed the NRECA pension plan's funding levels and stressed how vital the plan is for employee retention.

"This is the generation who saw their parents' 401K plan become a 201K plan," Baxter explained. "The defined benefits plan is of great importance to them."

Wallace Barron, President of Barron & Associates, stressed the importance of having defensible policies and explained how boards can show their due diligence through well-developed policies and proper documentation of minutes.

Phil Irwin, Federated's President and CEO, reported that claim counts nationwide have steadily decreased over the last several years, and that since becoming a reciprocal exchange back in 1999, Federated has returned a total of \$2.4 million in cash to Kansas members. He then presented a check to KEC for loss control contributions in support of safety and training programs.

NRECA's Member and Community Engagement Representative, Megan McKoy-Noe, discussed how cooperatives can connect with their members through social media.

Charles Terrill, KEPCo's Executive Vice President and CEO, and Stuart Lowry, Sun-



Federated's Phil Irwin (center) presents a check for loss control contributions in support of safety programs to John Blackwell, KEC President, and Bruce Graham, KEC CEO.

flower's President and CEO, reported on the activities of the Kansas G&Ts and recapped issues that affect power supply.

Editor of *Kansas Country Living*, Larry Freeze, detailed the process of what it takes every month to publish the magazine.

Keith Ross provided the NRECA Director's report. During the NRECA Mem-

bership meeting, also held on Aug. 5, Mr. Ross was re-elected as the NRECA Director.

At lunch, Kevin Lockett, former NFL and Kansas State football player, shared stories from his athletic career and described his current leadership and charitable efforts, including his foundation called "Lockett-Up" which is aimed at promoting academics to at-risk youth.

The KEC Auxiliary program featured Caney Valley's Betsy Zadorozny who demonstrated "Experiments with the Electric Grandmother." Youth Tour alumni Chantz and Amber Martin shared lifetime lessons learned from the trip. The 89th Street Bluegrass Band also performed. On top of that, the KEC Auxiliary hosted a silent auction that raised \$2,477 for KEC's youth programs.

Prior to convening the Summer Board Meeting, Wallace Barron facilitated two courses: "Understanding the Electricity Business" and "Your Board's Culture: Its Impact on Effectiveness." Jody Severson facilitated "Cooperative Foundations: Co-op Legacy, Principles and Impact on Communities" KEC staff also hosted a "help desk" for board members new to using iPads or tablets.



During the Summer Board Meeting luncheon, Kevin Lockett talked about his foundation. Donations may be made to: National Christian Foundation, with the Lockett-Up Foundation on the memo line. Mail checks to: Lockett-Up Foundation, c/o Kevin Lockett, 5413 W. 148th Terrace, Leawood, KS 66224.

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## USDA announces \$5.2 million in funding for co-op development programs

Lillian Salerno, administrator of USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service, announced that the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program would provide \$5.2 million in funding for nine co-ops that serve six states.

Recipients include Midwest Energy in Hays "which will receive a \$167,020 grant to help construct and equip an addition for a fire station in Grainfield. The overall project cost is estimated at \$238,600."

ECT - 8/12/13

## Earnie Lehman appointed to Tower Foundation Board

Earnie Lehman, Midwest Energy's President and General Manager, was appointed on Aug. 6 to the Tower Mental Health Foundation Board of Directors.

The Tower Mental Health Foundation of Kansas was created as a result of an agreement between the Attorney General's Office and the Menninger Foundation in 2007. It offers support to organizations that provide mental health services to Kansas.

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL - 8/6/13

## Rolling Hills building consolidation approved

Rolling Hills members voted in a mail-in election - with 951 "yes" votes and 735 "no" votes - to support the strategic plan to consolidate the co-op's office locations. The co-op currently is headquartered in Mankato with district offices in Ellsworth and Belleville.

Under the consolidation plan, Rolling Hills would construct a new headquarters in Beloit.

ROLLING HILLS - 8/9/13

## AUGUST

- 16 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 22 **MDM Meeting**, 10 a.m., Coyote Canyon, 2351 S 9th, Salina
- 23 **KCRE Golf Tournament**, Salina

## SEPTEMBER

- 2 **Labor Day**, KEC Office Closed
- 10 **KEC Legislative Committee Meeting**, 9:30 a.m. - Noon, Marriott Courtyard, 3020 Riffel Drive, Salina
- 10 **KEC Strategic Planning Committee Meeting**, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Marriott Courtyard, 3020 Riffel Drive, Salina
- 10-12 **KEC Hotline School - Pratt Community College/Vo-Tech**, Pratt
- 13 **Kansas REC Manager's Fall Meeting**, Country Inn & Suites, 1805 North 110th Street, Kansas City, KS
- 17-19 **KEC Hotline School - Manhattan Vo-Tech**, Manhattan
- 18-19 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 19 **Tri-County Annual Meeting**, dinner at 5:30 p.m., meeting at 6 p.m., Texas County Activity Center, 5th & Sunset, Guymon, OK
- 20 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays

## Power to the People: story of cooperation to air on KTWU

A documentary showing an inspiring story of cooperation will be shown next month on public television in Kansas.

The hour-long program, titled *Power to the People*, tells the story of 32 electric cooperative employees who worked to bring electricity to remote villages in Guatemala.

*Power to the People* is scheduled to run in September on Topeka's KTWU, the public television station that serves most of the eastern half of Kansas. Efforts are underway to have the program available in other public television markets in Kansas.

The production is made possible by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Kansas. The broadcast schedule follows:

- Monday, Sept. 2 at 9 p.m.
- Saturday, Sept. 7 at 6 p.m.
- Sunday, Sept. 8 at 5 p.m.
- Sunday, Sept. 8 at 10 p.m.
- Monday, Sept. 9 at 9 p.m.
- Sunday, Sept. 22 at 12 a.m.

"The video is an amazing story

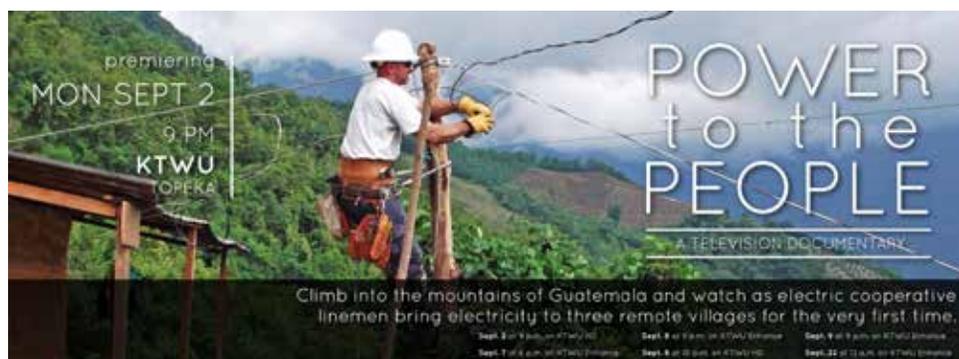
of spirit and determination that goes beyond just delivering electricity," said Bruce Graham, KEC's CEO.

"The documentary is a universal message about how electric service makes a health, welfare and quality of life difference," Graham added.

Graham has a unique connection to the project. He launched the initiative in 2011 while serving as CEO of the Indiana statewide.

"While I may have been involved at the start, the stars of the show are the linemen who volunteered for the project and the 38 Indiana electric cooperatives that donated time and resources," Graham said. "I am excited to have 'Power to the People' broadcast here because the same commitment and generosity so well demonstrated in this documentary is shared by electric co-ops in Kansas and across the nation."

A promotional tool kit will be emailed to each cooperative, complete with a news release, and social media images like the one below.



## Co-op linemen to deliver safety message at Kansas State Fair

Kansas electric cooperatives and Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Kansas are co-sponsoring a high-voltage line safety demonstration in combination with the Kansas State Fair, Sept. 9-13.

Cooperative linemen from CMS, Lane-Scott, Midwest Energy, Sedgwick County, and Wheatland have volunteered to help spread the message.

Teaching the public to stay safe around power lines is the focus of the electric cooperatives' message at this year's fair. The demonstration, which is part of "Kansas' Largest Classroom," will incorporate the electric safety demonstration on loan from Midwest Energy.

"It is important we use electricity safely and that everyone knows the proper precautions to take," said Brian Dreiling, Manager of Energy Services at Midwest Energy. "That is what we encourage during the demonstration at the State Fair."

Journeymen linemen from the electric cooperatives will demonstrate proper safety precautions and teach viewers what protective gear linemen use and why, what happens to a person

when they come into contact with an energized line and why birds can land safely on power lines.

The public demonstration will operate from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and is free of charge for all fair attendees. The demonstration will be located in the Beef Judging building, east of the Oz Gallery.

Touchstone Energy and Discovery Channel School "Get Charged" kits will be distributed to teachers who pre-register their fifth through ninth grade classes for the demonstration. "Kansas' Largest Classroom" is a one-of-a-kind educational event that features various items from crafts to agriculture and animals. This program provides teachers with materials like lesson plans and lists of activities to assist with their trip to the Kansas State Fair.

There are a limited number of State Fair admission passes available to cooperative board members and employees.

If you would like to receive free general admission passes to this year's State Fair, please call Shana Read, KEC, at 785-478-4554 or email [sread@kec.org](mailto:sread@kec.org). Tickets will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis.

## Cindy Hertel earns CCC

Cindy Hertel, Communications Manager at Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, has earned professional credentials through the Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) Program—a voluntary, national certification standard.



In order to achieve this certification, Hertel had to submit a portfolio of her work samples, which was judged by communicators in the electric co-op industry who have already earned the CCC designation. Once her portfolio was approved, she took a four-hour written examination that covered industry and communications issues, including ethics, electric co-op history, writing and marketing.

"The study material comprises a wealth of knowledge covering a myriad of topics that are specific to electric cooperatives, and having completed the program, I feel I am better prepared to meet the challenges in my job and serve our members," Hertel said.

Since 1985, when the program began, more than 200 co-op communicators – including nine current and retired employees in Kansas – have attained CCC status. The CCC Program board of directors governs the program. Currently employed Kansas communicators who have earned the CCC certification include – Bruce Graham, Carrie Kimberlin, Jerri Imgarten, Bob Jennings and Shana Read.

Cindy Hertel

## Kansas electric cooperatives suffer from summer storms

A summer storm system that rolled through western and central Kansas early morning on Aug. 6 brought high winds and damage, causing hundreds of outages.

The storms developed over western Kansas in the middle

of the night and worked their way east. Strong winds caused damage to trees and structures and downed power lines in the service areas of Ninescah and Southern Pioneer. These two systems collectively lost more than 300 utility poles, including 34.5 kv structures.

Gary McGuire, Ninescah's warehouse supervisor, responded to the call in the middle of the night and was caught up in the storm. "I heard that we had 100 mph straight-line winds, and I can attest to that. I was sure the pickup was going to be rolled over on me. The winds were so strong; it turned the windshield wipers



KEC's Larry Detwiler tracks mutual aid crews helping to restore power following storms.

on my truck upside down."

The co-ops began working immediately to restore service. In addition to the local line crews, co-op linemen from across the state assisted in the repair efforts through KEC's Mutual

Aid plan. Five electric cooperatives sent dozens of linemen and equipment to the areas that suffered damage. CMS, Pioneer Electric, Sedgwick County, Victory, and Wheatland all sent aid to help repair the damage.

Restoration efforts were hindered by weather. "The area with the most damage is between Pratt and Byers, and those roads were under water," said Brian Beecher, Southern Pioneer's operations and engineering manager.

The storm also caused minor damage for Butler and Lane-Scott, but they completed full restoration from their local crews.

## insympathy

### Norman L. Leistikow

Norman L. Leistikow, retired Twin Valley board member, died Aug. 9. He served on Twin Valley's board from 2001 to 2009, and also served on the KEC board from 2002 to 2009.

Funeral services were held Aug. 14, 2013 at the Carson-Wall Funeral Home. Burial was in the South Mound Cemetery with military honors given by the McConnell Air Force Base Honor Guard.

Memorials are suggested to the Parsons Educational Foundation and may be mailed to the funeral home, P.O. Box 942, Parsons, KS 67357.

## KEC's communications internship program serves as workforce development

In this age of highly-competitive job markets and working to find the right fit for electric cooperative positions, the KEC communications internship has proven to be a good source of workforce development.

Pioneer Electric Cooperative was in search of a communications specialist and recently hired KEC's summer communications intern, Sadee Rohleder.

Rohleder graduated from Kansas State University in May with majors in agricultural communications and journalism. She starts in Ulysses on Aug. 16.

"This is an amazing opportunity that I would have never received without my internship at KEC," Rohleder said. "I am very excited to get started at Pioneer, and I know the experience and connections I have made at KEC will benefit me as I start my job."

The KEC internship program is structured to assist KEC Communications



Sadee Rohleder (left) assists board members at the iPad Help Desk during KEC's Summer Board Meeting.

staff and the membership with a growing list of communication projects, as well as to help college students build their portfolios and gain real-life work experiences.

"We are very happy to have Sadee join our team," Anita Wendt, Pioneer Electric's Vice President of Energy Services said. "Her skills and talents are going to be put to good use as we move through the year with new projects, events and programs. We are eagerly anticipating the positive impact she is going to have here at Pioneer Electric."

While at KEC, Rohleder created news releases, took photos, wrote stories for the *Kansas Country Living* magazine, and helped design centerspreads.

She also helped with the logistics for the youth programs and the State Fair.

"It is the type of environment you don't want to leave," Rohleder said. "The employees push you to work hard while having fun, and there are always opportunities to try something new."

Rohleder is not the first intern to be placed at a co-op following an internship at KEC. Jerri Imgarten, Communications Specialist at Victory Electric, served as the KEC communications intern in the summer of 2007.

"The summer I spent at KEC was invaluable," Imgarten said. "It introduced me to a new industry and gave me the opportunity to use all the various communications skills I learned in college."

"It also gave me a 'leg up' when I started my job at Victory Electric because I was already familiar with much of the lingo and programs around the state and nation," Imgarten continued. "I was able to dive into my job right away versus spending valuable time doing research and getting familiar with the electric cooperative industry."



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