

# Rural Power

## INSIDE

- 2 | Calendar
- 2 | Kansas co-op annual meetings
- 3 | Consolidated co-op name, logo announced
- 3 | Marc Martin honored with Kansas Touchstone Energy Power+Hope Award
- 4 | Chris Koch shares inspirational story at KEC Annual Meeting, area schools

Please send any story ideas to [ruralpower@kec.org](mailto:ruralpower@kec.org).

## Sen. Moran, state legislators among KEC Annual Meeting speakers

More than 200 representatives of Kansas electric cooperatives gathered in Topeka Jan. 23-26 for KEC's Annual Meeting. The attendees discussed issues and challenges facing the co-ops, listened to a wide range of speakers and participated in special presentations and events.

The meeting opened Monday morning with Kansas **SENATOR JEFF LONGBINE** and **REPRESENTATIVE RUSSELL JENNINGS**. Both legislators complimented the credibility of the KEC Government Relations team. Rep. Jennings provided his viewpoint on several legislative activities at both the state and federal levels that will have an impact on co-ops.

"Nobody wants to pay more taxes than is necessary to sustain government, whether it's the state or federal government," Rep. Jennings said. "But a level of taxation is necessary to meet the essential functions that every one of us have grown to rely upon. Just as I flip the switch and expect the lights to come on, I expect our state to be safe. And I expect good roads and quality education. Because there's more to a state economy than just how much you pay in taxes."

Sen. Longbine gave a brief description of his path to the Statehouse and thanked Ninnescan board member Ruth Teichman for her previous legislative leadership. He then recapped several issues including a bill to abolish the Kansas Electric Transmission Authority.

Both lawmakers reviewed legislative action on EPA's Clean Power Plan and their belief that the state should proceed down a dual path that challenges the legality of the rule, but also prepares for compliance if the rule takes effect.

**SENATOR JERRY MORAN** discussed his passion for working in public service.

"The prime motivation I had for running for office was a belief in rural America," Moran explained. "Just like rural co-ops, we have the same mission: That our kids and grandkids will call what we call home."

He stated that Congress needs to reign in regula-



Senator Jerry Moran addresses the attendees at the KEC Annual Meeting.

tory overreach citing WOTUS, EPA's Clean Power Plan, and the Endangered Species Act as examples. He addressed access to health care and stressed the importance of supporting hometown hospitals and care for veterans. Lastly, Sen. Moran praised the Kansas Youth Tour program and the students' engagement and attitude.

"I have never seen a group of kids so well-behaved, concerned and interested," he complimented. "You should be very proud of your Youth Tour and how you selected them."

Also on the agenda was NISC's **VERN DOSCH**, author of an insightful book titled *Wired Differently* which outlines the NISC story as a service provider that has established a workplace culture enabling them to effectively recruit and retain talent.

Dosch said, "I've come to understand that culture really matters because so often the culture dictates how you will handle upcoming challenges."

He shared his belief that electric co-ops will grow and adapt to technology, stressed the importance of

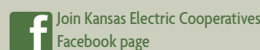
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The KEC Board of Trustees elected the 2016 KEC Board officers (back row from left): Terry Hobbs, Treasurer; Patrick Riley, Secretary; and Keith McNickle, Vice President. (Front): Kathleen O'Brien, President.



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## Kansas co-op employees featured in RE Magazine

The February issue of *RE Magazine* features several young professionals in the article "Next Generation Workforce: Kansas." The article highlights young, rural employees who have moved back to work at electric co-ops as the next generation workforce. Read the article at <http://remagazine.coop>.

NRECA's **MICHAEL KAHN** spent a week in Kansas, driving more than 1,000 miles, to write the profiles. He interviewed Victory Electric's **JERRI IMGARTEN** and **KENNEDY ST. GEORGE**, both former KEC Communications Interns. Kahn also met with Sunflower's **KODY POUNDS**, Pioneer's **LINDSAY SHEPARD**, and Southern Pioneer's **ELYSE MOLSTAD**. Sunflower's **STEVEN HAUSLER** accompanied Kahn, serving as the photographer for the story.

The article also quotes Victory's CEO **SHANE LAWS** who serves on NRECA's Workforce Advisory Group. This group is focused on the co-op next generation workforce challenges. Approximately 14,400 co-op employees are eligible to retire within five years. To prepare for these retirements, NRECA has collaborated with the Workforce Advisory Group to create the National Electric Cooperative Mentoring Program. The purpose of this program is to facilitate the exchange of ideas and the transfer of knowledge within and across the electric co-ops.

## congrats

### Beth Looney named CEO of Pacific Northwest G&T

**BETH LOONEY**, Wheatland Assistant General Manager, has accepted the CEO position at Pacific Northwest Generating Cooperative (PNGC), a generation and transmission co-op headquartered in Portland, OR. Looney's knowledge of power contracts in negotiations with Wheatland wholesale accounts has been an invaluable asset during her time at Wheatland.

"Beth has been an important member of the Wheatland team the past two-and-a-half years. We will miss her expertise and talents on the executive team. We wish her well in her new position at PNGC," said Wheatland General Manager Bruce Mueller.

## co-opcalendar

### FEBRUARY

- 14-17 **NRECA Annual Meeting**, New Orleans, LA
- 19 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays

## annualmeetings

### FEBRUARY

- 18 **Brown-Atchison**, Cooperative Headquarters, 1712 Central Ave., Horton, meal 11 a.m., meeting 12:45 p.m.

### MARCH

- 1 **Nemaha-Marshall**, American Legion, 207 5th Street, Axtell, meal 11:30 a.m., meeting 1 p.m.
- 3 **Flint Hills**, Herington Community Building, 810 S. Broadway, Herington, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 7 **Bluestem**, United Methodist Family Life Center, 5th and Clarke, Clay Center, meeting 7 p.m.
- 10 **Butler**, Circle Middle School, 14697 SW 20th, Benton, meal 6 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 19 **Pioneer**, Grant County Civic Center, 1000 W. Patterson, Ulysses, meal 12 p.m., meeting 1 p.m.
- 22 **Heartland**, Fort Scott Community College, 2108 S. Horton, Fort Scott, meeting 7 p.m.
- 28 **Lyon-Coffey**, Emporia Civic Center, W.L. White Arena, 111 E. 6th Ave., Emporia, Meal 6 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 29 **Ninnescah**, Municipal Building, 117 W. Third, Pratt, Meal 6 p.m., meeting after meal
- 31 **Doniphan**, Doniphan West Middle School, Hwy. 20 E., Denton, meal 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:30 p.m.

### APRIL

- 1 **Caney Valley**, Cedar Vale School Gym, 508 Dora, Cedar Vale, Meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 5 **Prairie Land**, Cooperative Headquarters, 14935 US Hwy. 36, Norton
- 5 **Sedgwick County**, The Cotillion Hall & Ballroom, 11120 W. Kellogg Dr., Wichita, meal 6:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 7 **Radiant**, Cooperative Headquarters, Hwy. 400 & Jewell Rd., Fredonia, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 7 **CMS**, High School, 409 School Addition, Meade, Meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 7 **Twin Valley**, LCHS Cafeteria, 601 S. High School St., Altamont, meal 6 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 8 **Alfalfa**, Cherokee High School, 412 E. 5th, Cherokee, OK, meal 5 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 12 **DS&O**, Webster Conference Center, 2601 N. Ohio Street, Salina, meal 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:30 p.m.
- 12 **Victory**, Western State Bank Expo Center, 11333 Hwy. 283, Dodge City, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 15 **Rolling Hills**, NCK Technical College, E. US Hwy. 24, Beloit, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 16 **Sumner-Cowley**, Wellington High School, 1700 E. 16th Street, Wellington, meal 11:30 a.m., meeting 1:15 p.m.
- 19 **LJEC**, McLouth High School, 217 Summit Street, McLouth, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 19 **Kaw Valley**, Cooperative Headquarters, 1100 Auburn Rd., Topeka, meal 5 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 19 **Ark Valley**, Fair Grounds, Sunflower Bldg., 2000 N. Poplar St., Hutchinson, meal 6:30 p.m., meeting after meal
- 20 **Wheatland**, Greeley County 4-H Building, 905 Ingalls Ave., Tribune, meal 11:30 a.m., MDT, meeting 12:30 p.m., MDT

### MAY

- 10 **KAMO**, Chateau on the Lake, 415 State Hwy. 265, Branson, MO, meal 6 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 11 **Western**, Cooperative Headquarters, 635 S. 13th Street, WaKeeney, meal 12 p.m., meeting 1 p.m.
- 20 **Sunflower**, Western Cooperative Electric, 635 S. 13th Street, WaKeeney, meal 12 p.m., meeting 8 a.m.

### JULY

- 19 **Lane-Scott**, Lane County Fairgrounds, Dighton, meal 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:30 p.m.

### SEPTEMBER

- 22 **Tri-County**, Texas County Activity Center, 5th & Sunset, Guyman, OK, meal 5 p.m., meeting 6 p.m.

### OCTOBER

- 17 **Midwest Energy**, FHSU Campus Robbins Ctr., One Tiger Place, Hays, meeting 10 a.m.

### NOVEMBER

- 16 **KEPCo**, Prairie Band Casino & Resort, 12305 150th Road., Mayetta, meal 6 p.m., meeting 4 p.m.

# Consolidated cooperative name and logo announced

LJEC and Kaw Valley have announced a new name and logo for the future consolidated cooperative.

At the annual meetings on April 19, 2016, the membership of both co-ops will vote on the proposed Articles of Consolidation and Consolidation Agreement. Pending approval, the co-ops will join on January 1, 2017, under the name of **FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Currently, both co-ops operate under an alliance that has seen a significant reduction in costs, and it is estimated that the new co-op will save \$20 million over the next decade.

"The backbone of this cooperative alliance and bringing these cooperatives together is savings for the membership over the next 10 years," said Chris Parr, assistant general manager of LJEC and part of the alliance's senior leadership team. "When we break that total down, we see avoided costs of doing business averaging about \$137 per year per member, overall."

Over the years, both cooperatives have worked to maintain consistent rates for their members. The last rate increase for LJEC was in 2010, and the last rate increase for Kaw Valley was in 2012. The consolidation will help the cooperatives continue to offer stable rates.

"We have seen efficiencies across the board, and we are seeing numbers exceeding those forecast in regards to savings," said Parr. "We have been able to share equipment and resources, and reduce duplication of products and services. Eight retirements in the last 15 months have allowed us to adjust the roles of current employees, as well as hire 10 new employees to keep both facilities operating at the same level our members expect and deserve."

One current transition is Kaw Valley's General Manager **JERRY MANNING**, who will move into a different role for the cooperatives. He announced that both Boards of Trustees had named LJEC General Manager **STEVE FOSS** as the CEO of FreeState Electric, Inc.

"It was an easy decision knowing that the employees and this new cooperative are in capable hands," said Manning. "Steve has a unique opportunity ahead of him, and I feel that the timing is right to begin the transition."

Manning added, "I went to the board and asked them to consider moving in this direction now, rather than later, because I feel it's

important to establish the leadership team and direction as we move forward. I will still be working for our members, and I will continue to be a part of the move toward FreeState Electric Cooperative."

Foss has been with LJEC for the past eight

years and has 32 years of electric co-op experience.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to lead the alliance and blend these two cooperatives into one," said

Foss. "We have a talented group of employees who work hard for our membership."

"We have already begun to transition in several areas on the business side and day-to-day operations," Foss added. "Both offices in Topeka and McLouth will remain open, and no employees will lose their job throughout this process. The joining of these two cooperatives will be beneficial to not only our members and employees but the communities we serve."

The McLouth office will take over the billing functions, which will also benefit the McLouth Post Office. The Topeka office will host the calling center.



## Electric cooperative employee recognized for commitment to his community

At KEC's Annual Meeting, **MARC MARTIN**, District 1 Operations Manager at Rolling Hills, received the Kansas Touchstone Energy Power+Hope award.

Martin has been with Rolling Hills for more than 25 years, and his career has developed from his initial role as an apprentice lineman.

"It has been a real blessing to begin working for a co-op at a young age, have the opportunity to grow in my career, and be involved with a great bunch of people," said Martin.

The Kansas Touchstone Energy Power+Hope award is designed to recognize those who have gone above and beyond in demonstrating the cooperative spirit and a



Bruce Mueller (right), Chair of the Kansas Touchstone Energy Executive Council, presents the Power+Hope Award to Marc Martin, Rolling Hills, for his community involvement.

commitment to community. Potential recipients are selected from a pool of co-op employee and trustee nominations. The award winners receive a plaque and a \$500 donation to a charity of their choice.

Martin was nominated for this award by fellow Rolling Hills employee Linnea Beebe for his participation and dedication to local events, activities, and organizations.

"Marc has been very active in the community. He has coached a baseball team, volunteered as a kids wrestling organizer, and assisted in his church as a youth leader and elder," said Beebe. "He is not afraid to take on another task when asked, even if it means working long days and weekends."

"I feel really honored to be nominated by a coworker for an award that recognizes people within the electric co-ops who give back to their community," added Martin.

Martin's donation went to Immanuel Lutheran Church's "God's Kids" program. He has been active in this program since moving to Ellsworth and has seen the positive impact it has made in the community.

"The 'God's Kids' Program serves meals on Wednesday evenings to the Ellsworth community youth. The program functions on donations alone and serves between 60-85 youth weekly," said Martin.



# Chris Koch brings inspirational message to KEC Annual Meeting, area schools

"I grew up just like any other kid," explained **CHRIS KOCH**, speaker at this year's KEC Annual Meeting. "I caused mischief in school and helped out on my grandpa's farm operating equipment whenever I could. Sure I had to do things a little different, but life was normal."

Despite being born without arms or legs, Koch was raised just like any other kid in his small farming community in Alberta, Canada. During the Jan. 25 luncheon, Koch spoke to more than 400 managers, trustees and guests about his life and how he never let his disability stop him from accomplishing his goals.

"Chris has such an incredible spirit and helps us find perspective in our lives," said **BRUCE GRAHAM**, KEC's Chief Executive Officer. "No matter how difficult work or personal challenges are at times, Chris should be an inspiration to be strong and persevere," he added.

With a little innovation and a lot of determination, Koch manages to do everything he sets his mind to. He currently travels the world spreading his message, "If I Can..."

"Most people assume that living a life without arms and legs would be difficult, but growing up for me was easy and my life has been great," Koch explained.

From a young age, he helped out on the family farm, including operating tractors and combines. Koch attributes the ease of his upbringing to his family's humor and ability to make best of the situation.

"My family could have treated my disability like a total tragedy but

instead chose to take it all in stride," Koch said.

KEC, in cooperation with LJEK and Brown-Atchison, sponsored Koch to travel to four schools around northeastern Kansas after his appearance at the Annual Meeting. More than 700 students attended the presentations.

"Chris was particularly effective in his school presentations and I am

certain his story will be meaningful in the lives of many," said Graham. "I came away from his visit wondering why society calls Chris disabled – when in so many important ways, he is so able."

With a shared love of farming, he was able to connect with many students who could relate to his agricultural upbringing.

Several school officials commented that they were impressed by the participation of students and Koch's ability to keep even the younger students clinging to his every word. At the end of his talk,

he answered questions from the students and asked them for ideas for practical jokes he could play on others. Students asked anything from "How do you get dressed?" to "Do you like K-State or KU?"

Koch began speaking in front of people at an early age.

"It just started organically," he explained. "I have been talking to groups most of my life. It really started picking up four to five years ago."

"If I Can..." began as a concept for a television show where Koch would travel the world spreading his message. He is currently in talks with several networks and hopes the show will materialize.



Chris Koch demonstrates to Jackson Heights High School students how he is able to open a bottle of water without hands.

## KEC Annual Meeting, cont.

succession planning and commended the attitude of "Servant Leadership."

Inspirational speaker **CHRIS KOCH** shared his story with more than 400 attendees at the luncheon. (See story above). Also during the luncheon, **BRUCE MUELLER**, Wheatland General Manager and Chair of the Kansas Touchstone Energy Executive Council, presented the Power+Hope Award to **MARC MARTIN**, Rolling Hills. (See story on p. 3).

Additional speakers featured on the agenda included Sunflower's **BILL BRANCH**, USDA's **PATTY CLARK** and **RANDY SNIDER**, and Apple certified instructor and K-State faculty member **CYNDI DANNER-KUHN**. CFC's **MIKE LEWIS**, Kansas Director to the NRECA Board **KEITH ROSS**, Federated's **PHIL IRWIN**, and Kansas Committee for Rural Elec-

trification Chairman **ED WILTSE** gave reports.

KEC also made presentations to two CoBank Sharing Success Grant recipients. **JIM GENANDT**, President of the Manhattan Area Technical College, accepted a grant to purchase equipment needed for lineman training. **DAWN GABEL**, Executive Director of the National Agricultural Hall of Fame, accepted a grant to seed the development of a Children's Energy Park near Bonner Springs.

During the KEC Annual Business Meeting, the membership approved the terms of a sale of KEC property located adjacent to its current headquarters. KEC's CEO **BRUCE GRAHAM** commended President **RALPH PHILLIPS** on his service to the KEC Board.

KEC's Loss Control, Safety and Compliance Department recognized cooperatives that earned "No Lost Time" awards and those that

received Safety Achievement Certificates. KEC's Government Relations staff discussed the "Get Pinned" challenge designed to encourage trustees and employees to join ACRE and KCRE.

Kansas legislators were the focus of the evening during KEC's Annual Legislative Reception. Approximately 100 members of the Kansas Legislature dropped by the reception to visit with co-op constituents. The KCRE silent auction raised \$3,382. The KEC Auxiliary raffle raised \$864 for KEC's youth programs.

Prior to the meeting, three trustee courses were offered. On January 25, the KEC Auxiliary had its program.

On Sunday evening, a retirement reception was held for three employees – **BOB JENNINGS**, **DANNY SEELE** and **DAVE HOLTHAUS** – representing nearly 75 years of service to KEC and its members.