

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



# YOUTH TOUR 2017

FROM PIONEER ELECTRIC

**CARSON MILBURN** and **VANESSA REZA** were selected by Pioneer Electric to attend the 57th annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. From June 8 to 15, Milburn and Reza joined more than 1,800 high school students nationwide to experience our nation's capital, government and history.

Their journey began with a quick orientation and a night tour of the Kansas State Capitol. A late night made way to an early morning as any trace of tiredness was removed after bucket truck rides and a hearty breakfast with the staff of FreeState Electric Cooperative in Topeka. From there, they followed the yellow brick road out toward Washington, D.C.

Arriving in D.C., the pace of the trip only increased

as each day brought new sights, sounds and stories to share. Delegates viewed various monuments, stood in silence at the Holocaust Memorial Museum, met the waxy doppelgangers of Madame Tussauds, danced with the "grandson" of George Washington at Mount Vernon and paid respects at Arlington National Cemetery. New to this year's trip was a guided tour of the White House.

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

Scattered between each adventure were brief moments





for delegates to sit back and explore at their own pace. Milburn, Reza and their new friends paddled boats in the Baltimore Harbor, cheered at a professional baseball game, tried out sushi and purchased souvenirs.

“I made so many great friends on this trip and met a lot of people who were just like me,” said Milburn. “It was cool to experience that. It just goes to show that no matter where you are, you can be yourself.”

Along with their own delegation, students had the opportunity to meet with others from across the U.S. in various workshops and activities. Together, the record-breaking 1,800 students spent a day listening to speakers who encouraged them not to be afraid to stand up for change.

“You can’t really describe an experience like this,” said Reza. “We met so many wonderful people on Youth Tour. Although we may have different personalities, we all have the same mind-set and want to make our communities better places.”

Milburn and Reza learned about the cooperatives and the importance of communities coming together to accomplish great things. National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson spoke about the history of co-ops and their role in bringing electricity to rural America.

Delegates also had the opportunity to speak to Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, Congressmen Ron Estes and Roger Marshall and Senators Jerry Moran and Pat

Roberts. Our Kansas representatives gave students a look at the inner workings of our legislation. The legislators echoed the importance of community involvement and encouraged delegates to be active in representing topics important to rural Americans.

“What I love about this trip is that it challenges these students to look past themselves and see what they can bring to their communities and schools,” said Pioneer Electric Communications Specialist Drew Waechter.

“This is what a cooperative is all about. It’s looking past our differences and realizing there is so much we can do when we work together. It has been an honor to have these students represent Pioneer Electric, and I’m excited to see what they will accomplish in the future.”

Preparations for the 2018 Youth Tour are already underway, so keep an eye out during the fall 2017 semester for more information about the upcoming trip. Applications will be available to sophomores and juniors who attend Elkhart, Hugoton, Lakin, Moscow, Rolla, Stanton County, Syracuse and Ulysses high schools.

“Youth Tour is a great opportunity for our students,” said Waechter. “With the ongoing support of our members, we hope to continue this opportunity in the years to come!”

For additional photos and videos from the delegates’ journey, be sure to check out Pioneer Electric’s Facebook page or visit [pioneerelectric.coop](http://pioneerelectric.coop).

**1. 2017 delegates stop for a quick rest and picture at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial.**

**2. Say cheese! Pioneer delegate Vanessa Reza (right) snaps a quick picture while exploring the city.**

**3. Crowds gather in remembrance at the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.**

**4. Pioneer delegates Carson Milburn and Vanessa Reza tour the Capitol building.**

**5. Delegates wave flags during Flag Day outside the White House.**

**6. Left to right: Vanessa Reza, Carson Milburn and Ben Black, Butler Electric Cooperative, enjoy the view of the reflecting pool and Washington Monument.**



## Greatness Defined by How We Serve Each Other BY STEVE EPPERSON

FROM JULY 2017 ISSUE OF KANSAS COUNTRY LIVING MAGAZINE

**How do you define greatness?** Muhammad Ali once proclaimed, “I am the greatest of all time.” Maybe he was, as a boxer. You often hear people debate the greatest NFL quarterback; is it Tom Brady with the most championships? Peyton Manning because of his consistently high quarterback rating? What is greatness? Michael Jordan? Babe Ruth? Jack Nicklaus? Wayne Gretzky was called “The Great One.” What is really great? Aged steak cooked to perfection? The finest car money can buy? Or the house of your dreams on a private lake? Too many answers to the same basic question. I guess it depends a great deal on the context.

Interestingly, the greatest being whoever lived said, “The greatest among you is the servant of all.” It’s hard to ignore that one. Especially in light of our context as a cooperative. I like to think of an electric cooperative as primarily a service organization. It’s a service organization that distributes electricity, but it is a service organization. This is its essence, its DNA, and must be how it defines greatness. Our cooperatives and employees achieve greatness through service; service to our rural communities, especially to those in need.

Electric cooperatives across the state are heavily invested in community service because of who they are. They’re not power companies. They are cooperatives. They are service organizations. Cooperative employees participate and sit on boards of many community clubs and organizations. Employees offer their time, energy and resources to coaching, mentoring and volunteering for area youth programs. Many cooperatives fund benevolent activities through a variety of means. One of the most popular is Operation Round-Up. This program rounds up your electric bill to the next dollar; that difference is collected from all participating members and the proceeds fund those in need.

At Pioneer Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Ulysses and serving 10 counties in southwest Kansas, we established a program call H.U.G.S. (Helping Us Give to Society). Pioneer’s Board of Directors allows employees to collect all scrap metals in an effort to fund projects for our local communities. Over the past five years, tens of thousands of dollars have gone to local schools, fire departments, police departments, emergency services, parks and recreation, youth programs, crisis centers and institutions that assist developmentally challenged individuals. This is our effort to become great.

Servants serve. I hope you will take time to recognize your local servants at your local service organization. I hope you will take pride in the fact that you are a member-owner of an organization that has chosen service as its primary focus. In conclusion, I hope you can agree, that we have a lot to be thankful for, and I hope that we can all accomplish greatness by being servants together. **KCL**



Steve Epperson



Pioneer Electric’s Vice President of Energy Services Anita Wendt (right) surprises Alan and Patty Bultman with a \$3,200 check for their latest project, Peace House Ministries. The Pioneer Electric H.U.G.S. grant will be put toward the installation of electrical wiring.

**STEVE EPPERSON** is Chief Executive Officer for Pioneer Electric Cooperative, Inc. in Ulysses. Pioneer Electric serves approximately 15,900 retail electric meters in 10 counties in southwestern Kansas.



# Returns!

## Help Wheatland Electric Cram the Van this Fall!

FROM WHEATLAND ELECTRIC

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.



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



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.

## Western Awards Olmitz Fire Department Sharing Success Grant FROM WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

Western Cooperative Electric is pleased to announce the Olmitz Fire Department as one of three recipients of this year's Western and CoBank "Sharing Success" Grant.

Since becoming Olmitz Fire Chief, Jim New and his department of 16 volunteers have received several sets of used turn-out gear for his new fire fighters and several air packs from the Kansas Forest Service. These donations encouraged the current roster to organize a fundraiser to fund a brush truck, which they rigged up. The Forest Service gave the crew another pump truck. The Olmitz Fire Department now has three trucks in its fleet to meet the demands of the small, but growing community.

As with any small community, funds were limited to equip this third pumper. Even though local fundraisers were held, the amount raised was still less than needed. The Olmitz Fire Department contacted Western and, soon after, Western's Board of Trustees approved a donation of \$1,400 with a match from CoBank for a total donation of \$2,800.

"This donation allowed the Olmitz Fire Department to not only equip the third truck,



**Olmitz Fire Department received a \$2,800 Sharing Success Grant, to help equip their new brush truck.**

and be prepared, but also have equipment available for assistance to departments needing mutual aid," said Fire Chief New.

"Thanks to our Board of Trustees and CoBank, the 'Sharing Success' Grant has enabled Western to give back to the communities we serve," said Darrin Lynch, Western Cooperative Electric general manager.

CoBank is a national nonprofit cooperative bank owned by the rural American cooperatives it services, including Western. Western's donation was in conjunction with Golden Belt Community Foundation of Great Bend.

This year, CoBank established a \$3 million fund to match charitable contributions made by its cooperative members across the nation. The matching grant program, named "Sharing Success," is designed to celebrate the vital role that cooperatives play in individual communities across the country. Contributions made during a calendar year will be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis, from a minimum of \$1,000 up to a maximum of \$5,000. CoBank states that partnering with their customers to support worthy causes they care about is a great way for them to make a positive difference and fulfill its mission of service to rural America.



**This fully-equipped brush truck was added to fleet at Olmitz Fire Department to serve the community.**

# Operation RoundUp 2016 Highlights FROM BUTLER ELECTRIC

Operation RoundUp helps Butler Electric Cooperative enhance the lives of the less fortunate in our community and service territory. Through this program, Butler Electric automatically rounds up a participating member's electric bill to the next highest dollar; the additional change is then deposited in the Operation RoundUp fund.

Started in 2003, Operation RoundUp has contributed more than \$304,122 to help with member medical bills, house fires and other special circumstances and charitable organizations within our service territory.

In 2016, 3,493 accounts participated in Operation RoundUp. Through their generosity, donations of \$20,305.68 were added to the fund, an average of \$5.81 per account.

This past year, the Operation RoundUp program awarded more than \$19,431.86 to help individual members

and organizations within Butler REC's service territory.

Butler Electric member's helped support the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign, Relay for Life, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, 12 Baskets, Community Helping Our Kids Education, OK Kids Day, Kids Need to Eat, Family Life Center, Youth Horizons, Hickory Hollow Animals, Operation Pedal Express, Hope Ranch for Women, Flinthills Services, National Fire Safety, NRECA International Lineman's Fund, Local 4-H Clubs, Wheatland Fishing Has No Boundaries, Butler County Toy Run, local fire departments, NRECA Youth Tour and Lights of Kindness.

The program was able to directly help member families with medical bills, house fires and other special circumstances. We also provided scholarships to students attending lineman's school.



Butler Electric Cooperative awards Big Brothers/Big Sisters with an Operation RoundUp donation.

By members rounding their bills up a few pennies each month, Operation RoundUp has been able to change the lives of countless individuals. Thank you for your support of the program and if you currently do not participate and would like to, please call the office at 800-464-0060.

# CMS Awards \$5,000 to Local Graduates FROM CMS ELECTRIC

CMS Electric Cooperative, Inc. awards scholarships annually to current high school seniors whose parents/guardians are members of the cooperative. Scholarship merit is based on scholastic achievement, school extra-curricular activities, and community activities. The CMS Electric Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the following recipients of the 2017 CMS \$1,000 Scholarship.

## District 1

**KEITH EVANS** is from Liberal and graduated from Liberal High School. He is the son of Brad and Lana Evans. Keith plans to attend Oklahoma State University to study architectural engineering/business administration.

## District 2

**BAILEY LEWIS** is from Fowler and graduated from Meade High School. She is the daughter of Todd and Brenda Lewis. Bailey

plans to attend Fort Hays State University to study medical technology or radiology.

**KODY STOCKTON** is from Meade and graduated from Meade High School. He is the son of Kris and Sharon Stockton. Kody plans to attend Dodge City Community College for electrical power technician studies.

**PAYTON WELSH** is from Meade and graduated from Meade High School. She is the daughter of Matthew and Beth Welsh. Payton plans to attend Garden City Community College followed by Fort Hays State University to study farm and ranch management or to be an animal pharmaceutical representative.

## District 3

**MIKAYLA JELLISON** is from Protection and graduated from South Central High School. She is the daughter of Chris and Jeanette Jellison. Mikayla plans to attend Wichita State University to study dental hygiene.



Keith Evans



Mikayla Jellison



Bailey Lewis



Sidney Monroe



Kody Stockton



Payton Welsh

**SIDNEY MONROE** is from Protection and graduated from South Central High School. He is the son of David and Jennifer Monroe. Sidney plans to attend Fort Hays State University to study agronomy.





## Leadership Camp in the Rockies

FROM WHEATLAND ELECTRIC

“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



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.
3. On their way to camp, students visit the Downtown Aquarium in 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.

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 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](http://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](mailto:spowelson@weci.net).

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