

# Rural Power

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## Sen. Roberts has virtual meeting with 2020 youth delegates

**SENATOR PAT ROBERTS** met with students selected to attend the 2020 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and staff of the sponsoring co-ops in an online session on July 2.



Sen. Pat Roberts shows his collection of face masks to the 2020 Youth Tour winners during a web conference on July 2.

Every year during the spring, co-op officials spend a few days on Capitol Hill discussing the issues that are important to the Kansas electric cooperatives. Those visits are then followed by summer visits, when co-ops send area students to Washington, D.C., to gain a close up perspective of our federal government in action. Sen. Roberts has been an avid supporter of co-ops during his tenure and has always prioritized meeting with co-op delegates at both events. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 Legislative Conference and the Youth Tour were cancelled, so this year's visit with Senator Roberts occurred virtually. More than 30 students and co-op staff, repre-

senting 18 member-cooperatives, attended.

Sen. Roberts commented that he's always been impressed with past youth tour delegates. "The attitude and leadership of this youth group is so special," Roberts told the group.

Addressing the students, the Senator encouraged them to consider that the U.S. Capitol belongs to them. "Think of this as your Capitol," he said. "No matter all of the problems that we may have here, we are depending on you. You are the future. Re-dedicate yourself to your country, and help us restore what you think is right with our nation."

Sen. Roberts then answered questions from the students. Topics included finding a vaccine for COVID-19, the Black Lives Matter movement, and privatized space exploration.

The web conference also gave KEC staff a chance to thank the Senator, who upon his announced retirement will not be returning as a U.S. Senator in January.

"You have truly inspired a generation of future leaders in Kansas and beyond," said KEC CEO **LEE TAFANELLI**. "We thank you for both your years of service in public office and your support of the electric cooperatives' youth programs."

## Rep. Steven Johnson meets with youth leadership council applicants

Prior to NRECA canceling the Youth Leadership Council (YLC) events for this year, KEC staff developed a creative approach to select the Kansas representative to the YLC. Traditionally, applicants would be interviewed on the first day of youth tour, the chaperones would select the finalists, and the students would elect their representative to the national council.

"Since we didn't have the opportunity to meet our applicants this year, we developed a new process to get to know the students better," said Shana Read, KEC's director of education and training.

The applicants were asked to participate in a series of activities that included writing an essay, having a personal online interview, and taking part in a virtual conference with **REP. STEVEN JOHNSON**.

During the conference, Johnson shared how his

involvement in the Youth Tour program in 1983 helped inspire him to get involved in politics. He also spoke about the electric cooperatives.

"When I was your age, I didn't know much about electric cooperatives. But as I got involved in the program, I learned the concept of one member, one vote and the ability to dream big," Johnson said. "If we could use the cooperative model and apply it to the legislative model, we could accomplish big things."

"Dream big dreams," he encouraged the students. "I look forward to the ideas that you will achieve."

Each of the students was invited to ask a question concerning something they were passionate about. Topics ranged from the oil industry, prison reform, college financial aid, the COVID-19 pandemic, affordable health care, and financial assistance for small businesses.



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## Kansas Co-ops Vote events kick off

This fall, Kansans will have the opportunity to vote for candidates who will represent them in D.C., Topeka, and at local levels of government. Kansas' electric cooperatives are using the election season as a chance to get to know candidates and educate those interested in holding elected office on issues of importance to electric cooperatives and the communities that they serve.

The visits are a part of the Co-ops Vote initiative, a non-partisan effort to encourage electric co-op members to be educated, engaged voters.

This year's visits are designed as informal come-and-go events to allow for ultimate flexibility and provide for adequate social distancing needs. As part of this effort KEC staff and candidates for elected office have spent time visiting electric cooperatives to talk with staff about COVID-19 response efforts at the cooperatives and in the communities, the importance of broadband infrastructure, and the vitality of rural Kansas.

KEC staff has held visits at 4 Rivers, Sedgwick County, Sumner-Cowley, and Flint Hills over the course of the last two weeks. Additional visits will be held throughout both the primary and general election cycles.

## jobmarket

KEC helps to promote co-op careers by listing openings on the careers section of the KEC website.

Visit [www.kec.coop/careers](http://www.kec.coop/careers) to learn more about the following positions.

- ▶ KEPCo seeks two SCADA/metering technicians.
- ▶ Prairie Land seeks an electrical/system engineer.
- ▶ Sunflower has multiple openings.

Send your open position listings to [ruralpower@kec.org](mailto:ruralpower@kec.org).

Positions will be posted on the website for one month, unless otherwise directed by the co-op.

## co-opcalendar

### JULY

- 28 **Twin Valley Annual Meeting.** Labette County High School, Altamont, meal at 6 p.m., meeting at 6:30 p.m.
- 30 **MDM Meeting.** Location TBD, 10 a.m.

### AUGUST

- 1-3 **KEC Summer Meeting.** Marriott Hotel, Overland Park - **CANCELLED**
- 13 **Victory Annual Meeting.** Western State Bank Expo, Dodge City, 6 p.m.
- 19 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting.** via teleconference, 1:30 p.m.
- 21 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting.** Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 24-28 **Supervisory and Management Development Program Courses.** Topeka - **POSTPONED**
- 26 **Wheatland Annual Meeting.** Caldwell Community Building, Caldwell, 6 p.m.
- 27 **MDM Meeting.** Location TBD, 10 a.m.
- 28 **KCRE Golf Tournament.** Sand Creek Station Golf Course, Newton

### SEPTEMBER

- 1-2 **REC Managers Meeting.** Hilton Garden Inn, Manhattan

## SMDP courses postponed until 2021

The Supervisor and Manager Development Program (SMDP) courses that were originally scheduled to be offered at KEPCo's headquarters in Topeka during the week of August

24-28, 2020, has been postponed until summer of 2021. More information about the courses and the dates will be sent to the co-ops once the training and speakers have been confirmed.

## upcomingtraining

### KEC to offer two online directors courses in July

This month, KEC will offer both a Credentialed Cooperative Director course and a Board Leadership course. Attendees of these online courses will receive credit toward their CCD and/or BLC certificates.

Each six-hour course is divided into two sections. On July 24-25, Bryan Singletary will facilitate the CCD Course **2630.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING**. This course teaches directors how to participate effectively in strategic thinking and planning processes. On July 28-29, Molly McPherson will facilitate the new BLC Course

**953.1 IMPROVING BOARD DECISION-MAKING QUALITY.** This course delves into the hurdles, traps and minefields that can negatively impact boardroom decision-making and provides strategies for to counterbalance them.

Seating for each course is limited to 30 participants and will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Cost for each course will be \$260 for KEC members, and \$360 for non-members.

For more information, contact Shana Read at [sread@kec.org](mailto:sread@kec.org).

### KMSDA to hold virtual fall meeting, Sept. 22-23

The Kansas Member Services Directors Association (KMSDA) 2020 Fall meeting will be offered online on Tues., Sept. 22 and Wed., Sept. 23.

Topics will include governance communications and reputation management by **STEPHEN BELL**, NRECA; assessing workplace safety and preventing violence by **TIM DAVIS**, Constangy Brooks, Smith & Prophete LLP;

a resource review by **ANNE HARVEY**, Touchstone Energy; Best practices for Operation Round Up by **SARAH FARLEE**, FreeState; and updates by KEC, KEPCo, and Sunflower staff.

In addition, **CARRIE KIMBERLIN**, KEC, will pre-record Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, and PhotoShop tips and tricks prior to the meeting, but will host a live Q&A session.

## Alfalfa Electric Co-op completes new headquarters

To more efficiently serve its more than 4,000 member-owners, Alfalfa has relocated to new headquarters in Cherokee, OK.

Construction of the 16,000 sq. ft. building began at the end of 2018, and despite delays due to weather and COVID-19, the project was completed in early June.

“Our new headquarters facility will better serve our members and employees with the latest technology, ease of access, and safety features for many generations to come,” said **GREG GOETZ**, Alfalfa’s general manager/CEO. “I am proud of our board of trustees and employees for the group effort to complete a project like this.”



Alfalfa's employees moved into the new headquarters in Cherokee, OK, on June 4.

The new facility has a modern dispatch center with a live wall map of its system that allows real-time outage management and vehicle tracking for

improved response time and increased safety for crews. A drive-through window helps to serve the members.

A 10,000 sq. ft. vehicle storage building houses the trucks and equipment used by its crews.

The new headquarters was built using insulated concrete form construction which makes it energy efficient. The building includes a hardened area to protect sensitive data and employees. In addition, there are two electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

## Butler employees show commitment to community

During this time of precaution, most co-op staff meetings include disinfectant and face masks. But for the employees at Butler Electric, the meeting on June 25 included white hair nets and bright yellow funnels.

Showing their commitment to community, nearly 40 employees worked together to assemble more than 6,000 meals to donate to the local Kids Need 2 Eat program. This summer program assists communities in overcoming barriers to all children having daily access to nutritious food.

“Our Operation Round Up committee looked for a hands-on project so the employees could feel for the difference they’re making instead of just writing a check,” explained Sarah Madden, Butler’s office manager.

Each meal consisted of shelf-stable packets of macaroni and cheese that were enhanced with nutrients. The supplies were provided by the Iowa-based Outreach Program



Butler employees assembled more than 6,000 shelf-stable meals for local children through the co-op's Operation Round Up and CoBank's Sharing Success programs.

and funded through a combination of the cooperative's Operation Round Up and Co-Bank's Sharing Success matching grant program.

There were dozens of tables set up in the co-op meeting room to accommodate the meal prep stations, and an 80's music playlist set the tone. Butler's line crews and office staff worked together in teams to combine the ingredients, and seal the bags. Another group boxed up the packets, and stacked the finished and taped-up boxes. The boxes were then distributed to local school-aged children throughout Butler county.

In addition to the donation of the supplies to the Outreach Program, Butler's Operation Round Up committee also donated \$1,000 to the Kids Need 2 Eat program.

## annual meetings

### Butler

Butler's annual meeting was cancelled due to the pandemic. In lieu of an in-person meeting, Butler's membership participated in a mail-in ballot that ended on May 22. Re-elected to the board were **SHERI CLAASSEN** and **RON OELKERS**.

### Ark Valley

Ark Valley held its annual meeting on July 7 at the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson.

A roast beef dinner was served to nearly 300 members and guests by Carriage Crossing Restaurant.

**NATALIE SCHWEIZER**, the 2020 Youth Tour student and \$1,000 scholarship recipient, read her winning essay.

Re-elected to the Board were **LARRY FROESE** and **DAN SCHNURR**. **JOE SEIWERT** was elected to replace Keith McNickle who had reached the end of his term limit.

The membership also approved an amendment to the bylaws which permits the board to determine the time or place of the annual meeting if not previously held pursuant to the bylaws.

### Lane-Scott

Lane-Scott's annual meeting was held on July 14 at the Lane County Fairgrounds in Dighton. A crowd of more than 250 guests enjoyed a meal by John Ross Catering Co.

Guest speakers included the 2019 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp delegates **KADEN BRADSTREET** and **LEXIS BEESLEY**, and KEC CEO **LEE TAFANELLI**.

Incumbent Trustees **PAUL SEIB JR.** and **RICHARD SOREM** were re-elected, and **RANDAL EVANS** was newly-elected to the Board of Trustees.

Because the county fair had been canceled, carnival rides were not offered at this year's annual meeting.

## insympathy

### Sandra Birkhead McLeon

Sandra Birkhead McLeon, mother of Lane-Scott Manager Richard McLeon, died on July 13. She was 79 years old.



# Bluestem Electric Cooperative's new meeting space receives acoustic upgrade

Despite months of COVID-19 related delays, Bluestem Electric Cooperative successfully installed artistic panels to improve the sound quality of the co-op's meeting space.

On April 23, 2019, Bluestem employees moved into their new facility in Wamego. **MARLA MARSHALL**, Bluestem's office manager, said that staff started to think about artwork for the new building shortly after the move.

"We wanted similar artwork that we had at the Clay Center office after the building remodel in 2013," Marshall stated. "When we were going through the same process for the Wamego office, we realized we had this huge wall in the meeting room. From the time that we spent in that space, it was obvious the acoustics were bad and there was a terrible echo. We hoped to incorporate something to help, as well as get some cool artwork up on the wall."



Bluestem Electric Cooperative collaborates with KEC's Creative Services to develop acoustic panels featuring the Seven Cooperative Principles for the co-op's new meeting space in Wamego.

Bluestem employees began brainstorming and Marshall started sketching out ideas for the artwork. Michael Morton, Bluestem's general manager, mentioned incorporating the cooperative principles.

In the fall of 2019, Marshall reached out to Carrie Kimberlin, KEC's manager of creative solutions. Kimberlin created the final layout of the wall design and managed the installation logistics. Fast-Signs in Topeka produced and installed

the panels.

The completed artwork was ready to be installed in the meeting room earlier this year. However, the pandemic put the project on hold until June 16. Bluestem staff have been pleased with the result.

"The panels have helped enormously with the acoustic problem," Marshall stated. "I'm very happy that we learned that KEC offered this service in time to take on this project."

## Smith named as Kansas representative to YLC

**ANALUZ SMITH**, sponsored by Alfalfa Electric, was chosen to represent Kansas on the NRECA Youth Leadership Council. Due to safety concerns regarding COVID-19, the YLC conference and the youths' participation in the 2021 NRECA Annual Meeting have been cancelled, but Smith will be able to retain the honor of having been selected.

The cancellation of the YLC events for this summer and next spring came after the 2020 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., was cancelled.

Selection of the YLC is typically done by the students while on the trip. Instead, this year, the YLC applicants were asked to complete a series of projects including writing an essay about how the pandemic has affected them, to have a virtual personal interview with staff, and to participate in a video conference with an elected official.

Smith, who will be a senior at Medicine Lodge High School this fall, plans to study



Alfalfa Electric Cooperative staff presents Analuz Smith, along with other student winners, a MacBook as a consolation prize following the cancellation of the youth programs.

nursing. She is actively involved in National Honors Society, FFA, Science Club, Forensics, pep band, and also plays basketball, volleyball, and is on the track team. When she's not busy with work, academics, or extracurricular activities, she volunteers at her church and in her community.

Even though all of the YLC activities were canceled, Smith was still thankful for having been chosen to present Kansas.

"When asked about the trip, I tell people that I may not get to experience what all the trip

had to offer, but I did get to experience the process that no other delegates from the years before got to," Smith said. "I'm thankful for getting to be involved in a new process created in spite of COVID-19."

Last month, Alfalfa staff invited Smith and the other youth program winners to their new headquarter facilities where they presented each of the students with USB pens and a MacBook.

## KCRE to host 24th annual Golf Open on Aug. 28

The Kansas Committee for Rural Electrification (KCRE) will host its 24th annual Golf Open on Aug. 28 at Sand Creek Station Golf Course, located at 920 Meadowbrook Dr. in Newton.

Registration for the four-person scramble begins at 7:30 a.m. at \$70 per participant. Included in the registration fee are green fees, the use of a cart and the driving range, mulligans, lunch, and a chance to win a prize.

The tournament begins at 8:30 a.m. A shotgun start will commence the fundraising event for KCRE, a political action committee that supports state legislators, elected officials, and candidates who support issues of concern to electric cooperatives and rural Kansans.

To donate prizes, sponsor a hole, or play in the tournament, contact **KIRK THOMPSON**, CMS Electric, at 620-873-2184.

More information will be sent to the cooperatives closer to the event.