

# Rural Power

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

## KEC hires Estes as new editor of *Kansas Country Living*

With the announcement of Larry Freeze's upcoming retirement, KEC has hired Vicki Estes as the new editor of *Kansas Country Living*.

Estes brings more than 25 years of writing experience.

She began her career with the Kansas Press Association where she edited a monthly publication and a weekly newsletter, both of which offered trade news and trends and legislative updates for Kansas newspaper publishers and editors.

She has served in several leadership roles including managing internal and external communications for Washburn University School of Law, Westar Energy and St. Francis Health Center.



Vicki Estes

Estes realized her life-long desire to become a newspaper columnist when the Topeka Capital-Journal selected her to write a twice-weekly column nearly eleven years ago. She continues to add a lighter side to the newspaper's editorial page with her "slice of life" column that rotates with syndicated columnists and other local writers.

Most recently, Estes handled internal and external communications for Newcomer Funeral Service Group, where she wrote a weekly employee communique designed to streamline organizational communications, as well as a monthly newsletter highlighting employee and company success stories.

"Vicki is a well-respected communications professional, and I am excited to welcome her as the new editor of *Kansas Country Living*. She will bring best practices from her previous professional experiences to this position which can also benefit KEC and our catalog of member services," said Bruce Graham, KEC's CEO.

Estes started at KEC on April 1. Freeze's last day in the office will be May 22.

## Electric cooperatives work together for \$1.816 million loan

Midwest Energy and Western Cooperative Electric recently announced the award of a \$1.816 million loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic Loan and Grant (REDLG) Program, which will be used by BJKLM Development Company, LLC, to fund the site development and building construction of a large implement dealership in Hoxie. The dealership will be operated by BTI and is expected to add 20-25 jobs to the Hoxie economy.

The loan, announced by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on April 1, was one of 38 loans and grants totaling \$31 million to support job creation efforts, business development and strengthen economic growth in rural communities in nine states.

Midwest Energy and Western each requested \$908,000 from USDA, essentially guaranteeing their half of the loan. It marked the first time in Kansas two cooperatives have collaborated on a REDLG application,

reflecting a new era of confidence in development of projects requiring larger sums for investment.

"We're pleased to partner with Western, and we're pleased for the growth that this project will bring for the residents of Sheridan County," stated Earnie Lehman, President and General Manager at Midwest Energy, noting that Midwest Energy provides electricity to the city of Hoxie, while Western serves the southern portion of Sheridan County.

"Though this is the first collaboration between Western and Midwest on a REDLG application, this isn't the first, and won't be the last time Western and Midwest work together on issues impacting their member-owners," said Darrin Lynch, General Manager at Western. "Concern for community is one of the seven cooperative principles by which we live. As such, Western is honored to support this project. It represents a step of forward progress and development for rural Kansas."



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## Kansans voice EPA regulation concerns

A strong turnout of 20 electric cooperative representatives underscored concerns to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) at a recent conference on reliability impacts of EPA's proposed new regulations.

Corey Linville, Sunflower's Vice President of Power Supply and Delivery, urged FERC to get EPA to address significant flaws in its proposal that could harm reliability and electricity markets.

Sunflower's President and CEO, Stuart Lowry, was part of a team of G&T leaders who met with EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and EPA Staff about the impact of the proposed Clean Power Plan 111(d) rule. The goal of the April 13 meeting was to keep cooperative industry concerns forefront during this critical period as EPA works to develop a final rule.

## Turner named as CEPC's CEO

The Central Electric Power Cooperative (CEPC) Board of Directors has named Christopher M. "Chris" Turner as its next CEO. He begins his new duties in July upon the retirement of Donald Shaw, who has served CEPC for 42 years.

Turner currently serves as the CEO/Administrator of the Southwestern Power Administration (SWPA) in Tulsa, OK. SWPA markets power to 102 preference customers in Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. SWPA customers are composed of 21 cooperatives, three federal facilities, and 79 municipalities. SWPA has approximately 200 full-time employees and 50 contractors in four locations.

In his role as CEO of Central Electric Power Cooperative, Turner will also serve as a voting member on the Associated Electric (AECI) Board of Directors representing CEPC's eight member distribution systems. AECI in Springfield, MO, provides wholesale power to Central and its eight distribution cooperative members.

## APRIL

- 20 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays – 10 a.m.
- 23 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 30 **KEC's IT Summit**, Drury Inn, 400 W. Douglas Avenue, Wichita

## MAY

- 3-5 **NRECA Legislative Conference**, Washington, D.C.
- 13-14 **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting**, Marriott Hotel, Wichita
- 15 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Prairie Land Headquarters, Norton
- 19-21 **Underground Workshop**, Pratt Vo-Tech, Pratt
- 20-21 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, Prairie Band Casino and Resort, Mayetta
- 25 **Memorial Day Holiday – KEC Office Closed**
- 28 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka

# annualmeetings

## APRIL

- 17 **Rolling Hills – dinner at 5:30 p.m.**, meeting at 6:30 p.m., NCK Technical College, E. U.S. Highway 24, Beloit
- 28 **LJEC – meeting at 7 p.m.**, McLouth Elementary School, 217 Summit Street, McLouth

## MAY

- 5 **Caney Valley – dinner at 5:30 p.m.**, meeting at 7 p.m., Cedar Vale School Gym, 500 Dora, Cedar Vale
- 13 **Western – lunch at noon**, meeting at 1 p.m., Cooperative Headquarters, 635 S. 13th Street, WaKeeney
- 15 **Sunflower – lunch at noon**, meeting at 8 a.m., Prairie Land Headquarters, 14935 U.S. Hwy. 36, Norton

# upcomingtraining

## KEC creates IT Summit

KEC has created an IT Summit for co-op employees who manage information technology needs. This new training will be held at the Drury Inn, Wichita, on Thursday, April 30.

Topics include a discussion on security assessments by NISC's Sean Wiese, virtualization and storage technology by the Davenport Group, and a roundtable discussion for the attendees.

## Director Training at KEC's Summer Board Meeting

KEC has confirmed all of the training presentations to be held on Aug. 1-2, prior to the KEC Summer Board Meeting.

On Aug. 1, a new Board Leadership Course and a CCD course will be offered between 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Bryan Singletary will facilitate the new Board Leadership Course on power supply called **964.1 Communicating the New Energy Landscape**. Wallace Barron will facilitate the CCD course **2630 Strategic Planning**.

On Aug. 2, there will be a half-

day workshop from 1-4 p.m. Lynn Moore, Moore Innovative Solutions, will facilitate **Why Satisfaction Matters - The Impact of Building Influence**. This workshop is designed to explore the impact of positive and negative member satisfaction and discuss ways to repair and build relationships with their employees, members and community.

The Sunday course is in response to requests for training options outside traditional NRECA training and does not come with BLC or CCD credit. Moore is a dynamic presenter and her content will be useful to directors and cooperative employees alike.

## Supervisory Fast Track

KEC is offering the NRECA Supervisory Training courses on August 24-28 at the Courtyard Marriott in Wichita.

This "fast track" offers all nine interactive, half-day courses in one week. Participants can register for some or all of the modules they need to fulfill their Supervisory Training certificate.

Bryan Singletary will facilitate the Supervisory courses.

## Pioneer

On March 21, Pioneer held its 71st Annual Meeting and 28th annual health fair. Doors opened for the health fair at 7 a.m. and phlebotomists were kept busy as 1,279 people patiently waited to receive blood draws.

Guest speaker Ed Fitzgerald, owner of Fitz Meats – the Grant County Chamber of Commerce Business Builder of the Year, highlighted the importance of community involvement for local businesses.

CEO Steve Epperson introduced a video outlining the recently commissioned customer satisfaction survey and details about the Rubart Station.

Perry Rubart, Alfred Alexander and John Jury were re-elected to the Board.

## Sumner-Cowley

More than 230 registered members attended Sumner-Cowley's annual meeting on March 21 at Wellington High School.

Guest speakers include KEC's Kim Christiansen and U.S. Senator Jerry Moran. Sen. Moran informed the membership of regulations and mandates that will affect Kansas residents, and what he and members of the Senate are doing in Washington.

Re-elected to the board were Keith Leddy, Max Lowrey, and John Schon.

## Ninnescah

Approximately 270 members and guests attended Ninnescah's annual meeting on March 24. The meeting was held at the Municipal Building in Pratt.

Re-elected to the board were Michael Christie, Bryan Francis, and Ronald Schultz.

## Doniphan

Doniphan held its 78th annual meeting on March 26 at Doniphan West-South Campus. More than 125 members and guests enjoyed a dinner served by Doniphan West PTO, and

then heard reports from Manager Arlan Mitchell, Board President Craig Kostman, and a Building Committee report by Bill Becker.

Re-elected to the board were Craig Kostman and Bill Becker. Brett Neibling was selected to replace Tyler Keebler, who served on the board for three years.

## Kaw Valley

Kaw Valley's annual meeting was held on April 1 in Topeka. The meeting was attended by approximately 1,200 individuals who enjoyed a meal catered by Aboud's.

Manager Jerry Manning presented an overview of the expected savings from the alliance with LJEC and the proposed consolidation vote next year. Other speakers included youth winners Caleb Lovejoy and Zach Wilson.

Kaw Valley also recognized two retiring trustees at the meeting, Joe Conley (50 years) and Shirley Henderson (15 years).

Bill Conley and Don Montgomery were elected to the board, and Mark Wulfkuhle was re-elected.

## Ark Valley

Ark Valley held its 76th annual meeting on April 7 at the Kansas State Fairgrounds. 279 members and guests enjoyed a meal from Ray's Countryside Catering, Inc.

The agenda included reports from President Steve Schweizer and General Manager Jackie Holmberg, and the 2015 Youth Tour winner Brooke McNickle read her essay. Judy Kinsler and Steve Schweizer were re-elected to the Board.

## Sedgwick County

Sedgwick County held its 77th annual meeting on April 7 at the Wichita Cotillion. Nearly 800 members and guests enjoyed a catered meal.

Dave Childers, General Manager, summarized the recovery efforts from the recent spring storm. President Gene Scheer thanked employees for their storm recovery efforts, at which time

the membership applauded. KEPCo's Marcus Harris spoke on supply issues. Other guest speakers included Monroe Chrisco and Katie Helten who shared their youth tour experiences.

Gene Scheer, Clint DeVore, and Don Metzger were re-elected to the Board of Trustees.

## Prairie Land

Prairie Land's 77th annual meeting was held April 7 at the co-op headquarters in Norton. More than 400 members and guests enjoyed a beef brisket meal prepared by P.H.A.T. Boy Catering.

Allan Miller, Prairie Land's CEO, reported on the impact of EPA coal emissions regulations and discussed retail rates and the upcoming rate meeting. Stuart Lowry, Sunflower's President and CEO, presented more details and answered questions regarding the future of coal-fired generation.

Re-elected to the board by mail ballot prior to the meeting were Donald Solko, Kenneth Carter, Bob Paxson, Otto Levin, and William Peterson.

## Radiant

Radiant held its annual meeting at the co-op headquarters on April 9. More than 500 enjoyed a meal prior to the meeting catered by Roy Hamilton.

Guest speakers included Senator Forrest Knox, KEC's Kim Christiansen and KEPCo's Marcus Harris.

Elected to the Board was Carol Wehmeyer, and David Engelman was re-elected.

## CMS

CMS held its 69th annual meeting on April 9 at South Central Middle School in Protection. Approximately 150 members and guests enjoyed a catered meal prepared by Kim's Ribs of Guymon, OK.

CMS Lineman presented an impressive demonstration with their newly-constructed voltage safety demo trailer.

Jeff Headrick, retiring Board Member, was honored for 12 years of service. Newly elected to the Board of Trustees was Rock Ormiston, II. Re-elected to the Board were Clifford Friesen and Don Nighswonger.



Senator Jerry Moran spoke at the Sumner-Cowley annual meeting on March 21 in Wellington.

## RUS Acting Administrator to join NISC staff

Jasper Schneider, most recently acting Administrator of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Utility Service, will join NISC as the organization's Vice President of Member Engagement.

Schneider, who brings to the position professional experience in technology, law, and rural issues, is a North Dakota native. He holds undergraduate degrees from the University of Jamestown and a law degree from the Hamline University School of Law. Before attending law school, he worked as a business analyst for Cisco Systems. He has served in the North Dakota Legislature and was in private law practice before becoming USDA's North Dakota Rural Development State Director in 2009. Schneider was appointed acting Administrator of the USDA Rural Utility Service in the fall of 2014.

"NISC is especially pleased that Jasper will be joining the organization. It's rare to find an individual who has a deep understanding of technology and experience providing support to the nation's electric co-ops. He is an ideal fit to help advance NISC's culture of service," said Vern Dosch, NISC President and CEO.

Schneider will start April 20, working out of NISC's Mandan, ND, office.

## insympathy

### Gretchen Peterson

Gretchen Christine Peterson, wife of retired DS&O Trustee and former KEC President John Peterson, died April 9.

Funeral services were held April 14 at the Evangelical Covenant Church in Lindsborg. Memorials may be designated for the church in care of Christians Funeral Home, PO Box 386, Lindsborg, KS 67456.

### Kaysein Alivia Harris

Kaysein Harris, the three-week old daughter of former KEC employee Andy Harris, died as a result of injuries suffered in an auto accident on April 6.

Memorial contributions are suggested to Kaysein Harris Memorial, c/o the Bank of Burlingame, PO Box 5, Burlingame, KS 66413.

## Kansas electric co-ops recover from spring storms

Straight-line winds of 100 miles per hour during the night of April 3 caused system-wide power outages for several co-ops around the state including Ark Valley, Butler, and Sedgwick County. These co-ops requested Mutual Aid assistance to repair damage and restore power to their members. Most restoration was complete by April 5.

Line crews for all three co-ops worked continuously from the moment the storm hit. Crews from other co-ops were called to help speed up the restoration of power to the affected areas. DS&O, Flint Hills, Rolling Hills, Southern Pioneer, and Victory sent line crews to assist.

Ark Valley estimated 186 damaged poles which caused outages to more than 700 members. The co-op also had two substations without service



Midwest Energy had more than 530 damaged poles within its service territory following the April 3 storm.

due to downed transmission lines owned by Westar Energy.

Butler reported 36 distribution poles and four transmission poles down affecting approximately 3,500 members.

Westar Energy had damage issues which also affected restoration of power to some of Butler's members.

Sedgwick County suffered 80 broken poles, most of which were three-phase, including 1/2 mile of transmission and a mile of double-circuit line, affecting 4,500 meters. They utilized two contract crews in addition to mutual aid, effectively tripling their normal line personnel.

In addition to the three cooperatives that requested Mutual Aid assistance, Midwest Energy also reported close to 10,000 members without power. The cooperative had 530 damaged poles.

## Co-op employees attend various training opportunities

In April, KEC offered the 3rd annual HR Summit, a CLE program, and coordinated an NRECA Retirement Planning Seminar.

### HR Summit

More than 20 co-op employees attended the KEC HR Summit on April 7 in Wichita. This training was designed for electric cooperative human resources professionals, benefits administrators and supervisors.

The group heard an NRECA update from Michelle Gordy, learned how to create a positive workplace from Kristina Dietrick of Creative Business Solutions, discussed affirmative action plans with Terry Williamson of Hudson-Mann, and planned for the next generation workforce with NRECA's Michelle Rostom.

To serve on the planning committee for the 2016 HR Summit, please contact Shana Read at [sread@kec.org](mailto:sread@kec.org).

### Retirement Planning Seminar

KEC sponsored a two-day NRECA Retirement Planning Seminar on April 7-8 in Salina.

A group of 47 co-op employees and

spouses learned about investment basics and NRECA retirement benefits, calculated retirement needs, discussed legal affairs and estate planning, learned how to protect assets, and reviewed financial products and services.

Attendees were offered one-on-one retirement projection reviews with a professional investment adviser immediately following the retirement seminar.

### CLE program

KEC held a Continuing Legal Education on April 13 at KEPCo's office in Topeka. Twenty-one co-op attorneys and management representatives attend the training.

The group reviewed ethics tips from Deborah Hughes, heard legal and EPA updates from NRECA's Jessica Healy and Ted Cromwell, and a legislative briefing by Sen. Terry Bruce. KEC's Kim Christiansen reviewed board duties in "Rolling the Dice: Fiduciary Duties and the Board" and gave an ethics presentation titled "Who is your Client: Kansas Ethics and the Cooperative Attorney."