

# Rural Power

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## Two northeast Kansas electric cooperatives form alliance

Two Kansas electric co-ops have formed a new Cooperative Alliance to help them hold the line on future rate increases for their members. LJEC and Kaw Valley formed the alliance this month to gain cost savings and greater operating efficiencies neither could achieve on their own.

“The days of stable electric rates are quickly becoming a thing of the past,” said Steve Foss, LJEC General Manager. “Both of our cooperatives have systematically cut costs to keep rates down, but we needed a longer-term answer. Without this alliance, our financial forecasts showed the need for rate increases in one to three years.”

The alliance will help the co-ops achieve long-term cost savings and hold off future rate increases by combining purchasing, accounting, billing and member service functions; sharing equipment, software and engineering services; incorporating best practices from both co-ops; and providing members value-added services and discounts available through each co-op.

The cooperatives’ Board of Trustees approved the alliance during a special joint meeting on Oct. 3.

“This alliance is an excellent fit for our cooperatives,” said Jerry Manning, Kaw Valley’s General Manager. “We are almost identical in how we provide services. Our operating processes are similar and we use much of the same technology and equipment, which will allow us to efficiently and effectively blend functions to maximize cost savings without affecting our high quality, reliable electric services.”

The cooperatives also have a rich history of serving members and communities in northeast Kansas for 75 years. And, they provide services in three of the same Kansas counties: Shawnee, Douglas and Jackson.

The alliance will be co-managed by Foss and Manning. The co-ops will keep their business offices and will continue to provide services and monthly bills under their co-op names. No full-time jobs will be eliminated.

The alliance is the first step toward a possible consolidation of the cooperatives in 2016, a consolidation that is expected to deliver cost savings of more than \$13 million over 10 years. Members of both co-ops are expected to vote on the consolidation at their 2016 annual meetings.

## Co-ops celebrate grand openings of new headquarters facilities

To help celebrate Cooperative Month, two Kansas electric cooperatives hosted open houses and receptions at their new headquarters buildings.

DS&O held a ribbon-cutting on Oct. 8 at its new headquarters at 201 Dakota Dr. in Solomon. Staff then led tours, grilled hot dogs, and the linemen offered bucket truck rides to members and guests. DS&O had more than 500 attendees at its open house. In addition to the other activities at DS&O, Midwest Energy linemen brought the high-voltage safety demo to teach the attendees to stay

safe around power lines.

Twin Valley’s new headquarters facility, 1511 14,000 Road in Altamont, had a rainy reception for its open house on Oct. 9. Despite the weather, Twin Valley linemen grilled hamburgers and hot dogs for more than 300 members and guests. Attendees were also given a guided tour of the new building by office personnel. During the open house, a severe rainstorm caused several outages. A couple of crews left the celebration to restore power to the members.



DS&O held its grand opening on Oct. 8 in Solomon.



Twin Valley’s open house was held Oct. 9 in Altamont.

## Touchstone Energy Executive Council holds elections, selects Power+Hope winners

The Kansas Touchstone Energy executive council met for its annual meeting on Oct. 7 in Wichita.

Re-elected to the council were Ronald McNickle, Twin Valley; Scott Whittington, Lyon-Coffey; and Dennis Deines, Western. Ron Graber, Heartland, was elected to fill the vacant member services seat.

The officers remained the same: Bruce Mueller, Wheatland, chair; Leon Eck, Rolling Hills, vice chair; and Dennis Deines, Western, secretary/treasurer.

The guest speaker was NRECA's Mary McLaury who reviewed the national Touchstone Energy program.

McLaury mentioned that Touchstone Energy is celebrating its 16th birthday. She spoke about the Co-op Connections Card prescription benefit, stating that the 494 co-ops that participate in the prescription program (15 of which are in Kansas) have saved members over \$78 million in prescription costs.

She next reviewed the strategy development tools, the Balance Performance Scorecard, co-op web builder, the strategy execution map, and Lynda.com. She mentioned that the resources through TogetherWeSave will soon be translated into Spanish.

McLaury highlighted the structure and governance of the Touchstone Energy Brand. She detailed the strategic priorities of the brand, and then opened the floor for questions.

Shana Read, KEC, and Dennis Deines, Western, gave a report on the 2014 programs and activities, including the State Fair Energy Expo, the Brand Champion award, the ElectroRally and the youth tour programs.

Next, the council reviewed the nominees for the Power+Hope employee recognition program, and elected winners. The winners will be recognized at KEC's annual meeting in January.

Before adjournment, the council approved the 2015 budget and state-wide assessment.

## OCTOBER

- 17 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 22-23 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 23-24 **Accountants Club meeting**, Ambassador Hotel, 104 S Broadway, Wichita
- 24 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka

## NOVEMBER

- 3 **District 2 Meeting**, Kansas Association of School Boards, 1420 SW Arrowhead Road, Topeka
- 5 **District 1 Meeting**, Doubletree Hotel by Hilton, 2098 Airport Road, Wichita
- 6 **District 4 Meeting**, Victory Headquarters, 3230 N. 14th, Dodge City
- 7 **District 3 Meeting**, Fort Hays State University Robbins Center, One Tiger Place, Hays
- 13 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 18-19 **Transformer Workshop**, Kaw Valley Electric, Topeka
- 19 **KEPCo Annual Meeting**, meeting at 4 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m., Marriott Hotel, 9100 Corporate Hills Drive, Wichita
- 20 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, Marriott Hotel, 9100 Corporate Hills Drive, Wichita
- 21 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 20-21 **Metering Workshop**, Kaw Valley Electric, Topeka

## New directors and employees learn the power of co-ops

The biannual class for the KEC New Director & Employee Orientation met on Oct. 8 at the Wichita Marriott. Eleven employees and seven directors from across the state attended the class.

The workshop was designed for any board member or co-op employee who is new to the electric cooperatives. It offered the attendees the chance to meet experienced electric co-op staff in key leadership positions, learn the history of the electric co-ops and their grassroots beginnings, and understand the structure of electric utilities and co-ops.

Presentations included an update on KEC services, understanding generation and electric rates, and the importance of

political engagement. Speakers included Bruce Graham, Doug Shepherd, and Shana Read, KEC; Cindy Hertel, Sunflower; and Les Evans, KEPCo.

As part of the orientation, NRECA's Mary McLaury presented the new course "The Power of Cooperatives," which was designed to teach a deeper understanding of the co-op difference.

This training was created in 2012 following the KEC Organization Assessment process which identified the need for a statewide orientation program. The orientation program won a Spotlight on Excellence award in 2013 and was featured in the January 2014 issue of *RE Magazine*.

## jobmarket

### KEC seeks editor for Kansas Country Living magazine

Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., is currently seeking an Editor for the monthly magazine, *Kansas Country Living*.

This position is responsible for providing editorial, design and photography services. The Editor seeks to educate members, employees, and the general public on the objectives of the rural electrification program at the state and national levels through use of all communications media.

Required qualifications include a college degree in communications, journalism, or advertising (experience in a

related field may be substituted), at least five (5) years experience in written and oral communications, experience with electronic and print media; developing and implementing public relations and advertising; photography, and preparing materials for presentations.

For a full job description, please visit [www.kec.org](http://www.kec.org) and click on "Careers" under the "About KEC" section. To apply, please send a letter of interest, resume, and three (3) references to [careers@cec.org](mailto:careers@cec.org), or mail to Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., Attn: Shana Read, PO Box 4267, Topeka, KS 66604.

## Kansas Co-op Council issues 70 Years – 70 Pounds challenge

October is national Co-op Month and Governor Brownback has proclaimed it “Co-op Month” in Kansas, as well.

The Kansas Cooperative Council (KCC) and its member cooperatives host numerous events in October. This year, co-ops are demonstrating “concern for their community”, one of the seven co-op principles, by donating to local food banks.

The theme for the Kansas cooperative initiative to fight hunger, “70 Years – 70 Pounds,” ties community support with recognition of the KCC’s 70th anniversary. The KCC’s board of directors has challenged each member of the organization to donate at least 70 pounds of shelf-stable food items to a hunger relief charity in their community.

As part of last year’s Co-op Month “Pound Out Hunger” challenge, KCC members reported the collection of nearly 5,000 pounds of food.

“If each of our 265 members meets the 70 pound goal, over 18,000 pounds of food will be given in the name of co-ops to feed hungry people all across Kansas,” said KCC’s Leslie Kaufman.

## Oct. 13-19 is Careers in Energy Week

Earlier this month, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback proclaimed Oct. 13-19, 2014, as Careers in Energy Week.

The Governor issued a proclamation that urges all Kansans to become familiar with and support the services and benefits offered by the energy career and technical education programs.

“Energy provides careers to thousands of residents who serve in every community,” Brownback stated in the proclamation.

“Energy careers range from line-worker to engineer, construction specialist to accountant, chemist to environmentalist, maintenance laborer to executive - all valued and all essential,” he continued.

To help commemorate the Careers in Energy Week, the October issue of *Kansas Country Living* focuses on different types of electric co-op careers. KEC also developed graphics for member-cooperatives to post on co-ops’ social media outlets.

## Co-ops hold local food drives to celebrate Co-op Month

In honor of October being Cooperative Month, Wheatland and Lyon-Coffey electric cooperatives are both officiating food drives. All non-perishable items will be donated to local food banks in the communities in which they were collected.

Wheatland’s newly-developed “Cram the Van” is currently underway and has made appearances in several cities throughout the co-op’s service area, including Garden City, Syracuse, Conway Springs, Great Bend and Anthony. Through the end of October, a donation bin is placed in each of Wheatland’s offices, along with two other drop-off locations located at Caldwell City Hall and Hired Man Grocery in Conway Springs.

Along with having drop-off locations, Wheatland has attended individual events throughout its communities, including women fairs, grocery stores and football games. To get word out to the members, they have used social media, radio and print advertising, and also sent flyers in billing statements.

“As well as this year has gone, we plan on making the food drive an annual event. Food banks always need more donations during the holidays,

so we want to do whatever we can to help,” said Shawn Powelson, Manager of Member Services.

Lyon-Coffey is also responding to community needs with a “Fill Willie’s Wagon” food drive. They are accepting donations at both the Emporia and Burlington cooperative

offices through October

24. At that time, the month-long food drive will culminate with an Open House at both offices. One lucky member who contributed to the “Fill Willie’s Wagon” campaign will win a flat-screen television.

“It’s been a slow start, but we sent out a flyer with billings this month and also put an ad in *Kansas Country Living*. We’re hopeful that Willie’s Wagon gets filled by the end of the month so that local food banks can benefit before the holidays,” said Lindsey Audiss, Human Resource Manager.

The “Cram the Van” and “Fill Willie’s Wagon” logos were created by KEC’s Communications staff.



## KEC plans annual series of district meetings for November

KEC is planning the annual series of District Meetings. Each of the four meetings are scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. The schedule for this year’s meetings are as follows: **District 1**, Nov. 5 at Doubletree Hotel, Wichita; **District 2**, Nov. 3 at Kansas Assoc. of School Boards, Topeka; **District 3**, Nov. 7 at Fort Hays Robbins Center, Hays; and **District 4**, Nov. 6 at Victory Headquarters, Dodge City.

The agenda will include a budget presentation by KEC staff, as well as a legislative update, a discussion on the science of rate-making, and a presentation on co-op commu-

nications. There will be a brief demonstration of “Making Accidents Disappear” by magician Scott Davis. Davis will present his magic show to 10 Kansas elementary schools that week. (Read more about his presentation in the Sept. 26th issue of *Rural Power*.)

The feature presentation for Districts 1 and 2 will be an update on the SPP and the effects of the day-ahead market by KEPCo staff. The feature presentation for Districts 3 and 4 will focus on transmission planning and the role of the SPP by Al Tamimi, Sunflower’s Senior Manager Planning and Distribution.

## Youth race in High Plains ElectroRally

High school students from across Kansas competed in the 15th annual High Plains ElectroRally on Sept. 25. This event, sponsored by Midwest Energy, Sunflower Electric, and Sunflower's six member cooperatives, was held at West Frontier Park in Hays.

Seven Kansas teams representing schools in Ellinwood, Grainfield, Hays, Olathe, Scott City, and Stockton competed alongside teams from Colorado and Nebraska.

The first Kansas ElectroRally was held in 1997 at Kansas State University. Races are now held throughout Kansas in the fall and spring.

High school teams design and build single-driver, lightweight, aerodynamic, high efficiency, electric cars with three or four wheels at least 16 inches in diameter. The cars are powered by deep-cycle lead acid battery packs with a maximum weight of 64 pounds.

Based on time and distance, the race is won by the team that completes the most laps in one hour. Strategy is as important as speed—drive fast to do many laps or go slow to conserve battery. These cars reach speeds in excess of 30 mph and travel a distance of 25 miles in the one-hour period. For more information about the program, please visit [www.kansaselectrorally.org](http://www.kansaselectrorally.org).

## Co-op employee, trustee rescue accident victim

Electric cooperatives are distinct from other utilities because of their commitment to the communities they serve. This co-op principle was clearly demonstrated when a Caney Valley employee and trustee came to the rescue of one of their members.

On Aug. 19, Tom Everett, Meter Reader, was checking his route when he discovered an overturned tractor in a ditch.

Upon investigation, he found a man pinned in the tractor. The man had been trapped for more than an hour, and Everett realized that he couldn't free the injured man without assistance.

As there was no cell service in the area, he radioed for help and



Tom Everett



Jack Newcomb

then drove to the nearby home of Caney Valley trustee, Jack Newcomb.

Together, they rushed back to see if they could hoist the tractor high enough to free the man, who by now was severely dehydrated and suffering from painful injuries.

Using a chain and pickup, Everett and Newcomb raised the tractor high enough to pull the man to safety.

The victim was then flown to Wichita where he underwent surgery. He is expected to make a full recovery.

This harrowing experience reinforces not only the cooperative principles of serving the members, but also the value of workplace safety and how to respond when accidents occur.



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