

# Rural Power

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

## Alexander Orel joins KEC's Government Relations team

**ALEXANDER** "ALEX" OREL has accepted the position as Manager of Government Relations at KEC. His first day was Oct. 23.

Orel's responsibilities include state and federal legislative advocacy and grassroots initiatives. He holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Business Administration from Benedictine College.

Orel most recently served as Legislative Liaison for the Office of Governor Brownback with responsibility for communication and relationship building among members of the Kansas House and Senate.

"Alex has an excellent rapport with legislators on both sides of the aisle and with staff serving



Alexander Orel

in key positions in the administration," said Bruce Graham, KEC's CEO.

"Alex has also worked on several political campaigns in the state, and that communication experience will be of value in cultivating a strong and vital grassroots organization for Kansas cooperatives," Graham added.

Orel is actively involved with volunteer projects, including previous service on the Kansas Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention where he helped to provide leadership and guidance for an effective juvenile justice system.

He has also tutored through the Atchison Public Schools and currently volunteers as a youth football coach.

KEC also announced the promotion of **KIM CHRISTIANSEN** to Director of Government Relations and Legal Counsel. Christiansen joined KEC in July 2014 as Manager of Government Relations. These association staff changes are the result of the announcement by **DAVE HOLTHAUS**, KEC's Vice President of Government Relations, that he will be retiring before the start of the 2016 Kansas Legislature.

## KEC District Meetings featured legislators, capital credits, economics

There was a healthy turnout for KEC's District Meetings held Nov. 2, 3, 4, and 9. More than 200 managers, directors and key staff attended the series of meetings.

The agenda included a statewide year-in-review, and budget presentation by KEC staff, and an update on the Clean Power Plan presented by KEPCo's **MARCUS HARRIS** (Districts 1 & 2) and Sunflower's **WAYNE PENROD** (Districts 3) and **PAUL REYNOLDS** (District 4).

The agenda also featured an in-depth presentation on capital credits by Federated's **SUSAN OLANDER** (Districts 2, 3 & 4) and **BILL WEST** (District 1) with a supporting video tailored to Kansas co-ops by **TY THOMPSON**, NRECA's Vice President and Deputy General Counsel.

The economic presentation for Districts 1 and 2 was "**Economic Overview and Operat-**

**ing Benchmarks for Co-ops in a Rising Interest Rate Environment**" by CFC's **JOHN SUTTER**. The economic presentation for Districts 3 and 4 was "**Equity Management: It's About the Members' Money**" by CoBank's **SETH HART**.

In addition, several legislators and officials stopped by the meetings to address the attendees: Senator **CARYN TYSON** (District 1); Kansas Attorney General **DEREK SCHMIDT** (District 2); Rep. **TROY WAYMASTER** (District 3); and Rep. **SHANNON FRANCIS**, Rep. **RUSS JENNINGS**, and Senator **TERRY BRUCE** (District 4).

"This year's District Meeting tour focused on the challenges facing our industry from the legal, regulatory, and economic fronts. The agenda was probably a bit sobering, but it is important to provide an opportunity for discussion of such critical issues," said Bruce Graham, KEC CEO.



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## KEC Seeks Communications Specialist

Due to upcoming retirements and pending promotions, KEC is now seeking an individual for the position of Communications Specialist. Responsibilities include designing publications, writing news articles, and advertising. The position also assists with coordination of the youth programs and other co-op activities. A college degree in communications, design, marketing or journalism preferred. For a position description or to apply, email Shana Read at [sread@kec.org](mailto:sread@kec.org) by Nov. 13.

## Kaw Valley seeks Director of Information Technology

Kaw Valley seeks a full-time Director of Information Technology.

Candidates should have a bachelor's degree in a IT-related field and a minimum of five years of work-related experience in IT or system administration. Freewave radios, NISC, DNP3, Turtle (TS1) AMR, and TWACS AMI and IT-related certifications are a plus. Must have knowledge of circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming. Must also have knowledge of IT Network Administration and IT hardware and software system installation.

To apply, send a resume and completed employment application to Lisa Scott, Director of Human Resources at [lisa.scott@kve.coop](mailto:lisa.scott@kve.coop). View the job description and application at [kve.coop](http://kve.coop) under About Us, Employment Opportunities. EOE.

# insympathy

## Curtis Durall

Curtis Durall, who had served as a Trustee on Ninnescah's board since 2005, died on Oct. 21. Durall had also served on the KEPCo Board since 2013.

Funeral service was held on Oct. 24 at the Larrison Mortuary in Pratt.

Memorials may be made to the Pratt Recreation Department, and sent in care of Larrison Mortuary, 300 Country Club Road, Pratt, KS 67124.

## NOVEMBER

- 12** **MDM Meeting.** KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 18-19** **KEPCo Annual Meeting – dinner at 6 p.m.,** meeting at 4 p.m., Geary County Convention Ctr., 310 Hammons Dr., Junction City
- 20** **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting.** Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 23** **Attorney's CLE Meeting.** Courtyard Marriott at Old Town, 820 E. 2nd St. N., Wichita
- 26-27** **Thanksgiving Holiday.** KEC Office Closed

## DECEMBER

- 2-3** **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting.** Marriott Hotel, Wichita
- 16-17** **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting.** KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 18** **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting.** Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 24-25** **Christmas Holiday.** KEC Office Closed

## Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame nominations sought

Nominations are now being accepted for the Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame, sponsored by the Kansas Cooperative Council, is important for recognizing the contributions of co-op pioneers and honoring those who have gone "above and beyond the call" in advancing the cooperative philosophy.

The showcase display at the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson also plays a significant role in educating others about the

uniqueness of the cooperative business model by highlighting the achievements of our state's great co-op leaders and preserving our co-op history.

Since it was established in 1999, 38 individuals from all types of cooperatives have been inducted into the Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame. Each December, the Council asks for nominations for additional inductees.

To download the nomination form, visit [www.kansasco-op.coop](http://www.kansasco-op.coop). The deadline is Dec. 4.

# upcomingtraining

## KEC's CLE program

KEC's Continuing Legal Education (CLE) program will be held Monday, Nov. 23 from 8:30 a.m.-4:20 p.m. at Courtyard Wichita at Old Town.

Topics include information on how to prevent loss, followed by the Choctaw Electric Story with **JOE HARRIS**, a national legal update by NRECA staff,

a presentation on the KCC Complaint Process by **GLENDA CAFER** and **TERRI PEMBERTON**, a board issues presentation by **TIM LARSON**, and two hours of ethics credits presented by KEC's **KIM CHRISTIANSEN** and K-LAP.

Registration deadline for this training is Nov. 16.

## Director training offered at KEC Annual Meeting

At the KEC Annual Meeting, directors may take a new Board Leadership course, a CCD course, and a customized, half-day workshop.

On Sat., Jan. 23, **BRYAN SINGLETARY** will facilitate the new **BLC 963.1: Strategic Technologies and their Impact on the Cooperative**, and **TERRI SMILEY** will offer the CCD course **2620: Board Operations and Process**.

On Sun., Jan. 24 from 1-4 p.m., **ADAM SCHWARTZ** will facilitate **Doing the Right Thing-How to avoid complacency at your co-op**. This course highlights a few very high-

profile cases where cooperatives have engaged in behavior that was not in the members' interests. Sometimes the behavior has included criminal acts, and other times the activity was 'legal' but unethical.

In this seminar, directors will take a closer look at some case studies of co-ops that went bad, probing why and how it happened. They will also look at high-performing co-ops, asking the same questions why and how do good things happen. Because this seminar is a half-day independent offering, it does not qualify for NRECA education credits.



## Stuart Lowry urges continuation of rural development funds for electric co-ops

Electric cooperatives boost rural development nationwide with U.S. Department of Agriculture loans and grants and are urging Congress to keep the programs funded, a co-op executive told a U.S. Senate Subcommittee.

Through USDA's Rural Utilities Service and Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program (REDLG), co-ops help build fire stations and schools, buy ambulances and get small job-creating businesses off the ground, said **STUART LOWRY**, Sunflower's President and CEO.

"REDLG is one of the programs that co-ops have utilized to help enhance small-town America," said Lowry, who testified Oct. 21 before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

In 2015, REDLG loaned \$32.5 million to 29 electric co-ops for projects that created 288 jobs and retained another 436. It awarded \$7.1 million in grants to 18 co-ops.



Stuart Lowry, Sunflower's President and CEO, (left) with Sen. Jerry Moran, who chairs the subcommittee overseeing funding for rural development.

"Recently, the list of entities eligible for the program has expanded, which has placed more demand on the funds," Lowry said. "The administration requested a budget of \$60 million, and we would like to see the REDLG program funded as close to this recommendation as possible."

The RUS Electric Loan program provides loans and grants that enable

co-ops to finance future and improved electric distribution, transmission and generating systems. NRECA and member co-ops appreciate the subcommittee and the Senate Appropriations Committee's support for funding the program at \$6 billion for fiscal 2016, Lowry said.

Yet, Lowry noted that "we are concerned that, as the result of overregulation, we will be required to spend more of these dollars on compliance costs."

"As such, it is important that RUS is adequately funded so that utilities can spend less time crunching numbers related to compliance costs for providing electricity and more time engaging in other activities and programs, such as REDLG, that contribute to an improved economy and a better quality of life for our members," Lowry told the senators.

This article was written by NRECA's Cathy Cash and first published in the Oct. 28, 2015, issue of *Electric Co-op Today*.

## KEC hosts writing and resources workshop for cooperative centerspread editors

A Centerspread Editor Workshop was held at the KEPCo headquarters in Topeka on Oct. 27. Fourteen communications staff attended to gain knowledge and resources for their local newsletters.

"The workshop was designed to provide a forum to answer the centerspread editors' questions and to find out how we can better help them with content and design," said **CARRIE KIMBERLIN**, KEC Communications Specialist, who coordinated the event.

The event kicked off with a welcome by KEC's CEO **BRUCE GRAHAM** who stressed how beneficial communicators are to their cooperatives.

Attendees heard from representatives of several organizations including SafeElectricity, NRECA's Straight Talk, Touchstone Energy, and Federated Rural Electric Insurance who provided resources and tips for the attendees to use in their local newsletters. There were also presentations by KEC's Larry Detwiler, Vicki Estes, Carrie Kimberlin, and Shana Read.

"The workshop is a big help to us three-person-departments. We appreciate all the help we can get," said

Anne Harvey, Touchstone Energy, shares resources with the centerspread editors at the workshop held at KEPCo on Oct. 27.



**DENNIS DEINES**, Western's Manager of Member Services.

**VICKI ESTES**, who is the Editor of *Kansas Country Living*, explained that the event allowed her to make more connections with other co-op communicators. "I was also amazed at the number of resources that are available for us," said Estes, referencing the presentations by the representatives of the sister organizations.

Guests who attended the workshop were also enthusiastic about their newly discovered resources.

"The workshop provides tools to make my life easier," said **TRAVIS GRIFFIN**, Butler's Public Relations Manager. "For people like me who wear many hats at the cooperative, this helps me with my busy day."

He also said that the workshop helps him refresh the wants and needs of the members of his cooperative. "It reminds me of what a cooperative is, and how I can better relate to our members," Griffin said.

## CoBank funds students to national civics competition

CoBank, through Lyon-Coffey's Manager **SCOTT WHITTINGTON**, recently awarded the Southern Lyon County Education Foundation \$2,500 through CoBank's Corporate Giving program. The grant was used to help fund the Hartford High School's senior class to participate in a civics contest in Washington, D.C., this spring.

"CoBank and I are happy to help provide these young people with the opportunity to explore our nation's roots and learn about the role government and policies play in life and business," Whittington said.

The civics competition, titled *We the People*, has been coordinated by the Center for Civic Education since 1987. At the event, students participated in imitation congressional hearings where they testified as constitutional experts before a panel of judges. To qualify for the national competition, teams must either win their state championship or qualify as a wildcard.

Hartford placed second at the

Kansas championship and was the first team in the history of the competition to qualify as a wildcard from Kansas.

"We are very grateful for all of the support that enabled us to take this trip" said **LEWIS WHITSON**, Hartford High's social studies teacher, "The trip provided the students with a wonderful opportunity to visit our nation's capital and it taught them the power of community and what can happen when everyone comes together for a cause."

CoBank's corporate giving program provides funds to each elected director to distribute throughout the country. There are a total of 24 elected directors from six regions around the country and three or four appointed directors. Whittington has been the director of the Mid-Plains region since 2012. Along with the donation to Hartford High School, donations were also allocated to Leroy Masonic Lodge Honor Flight, Suicide Prevention Association, local food banks, Coffey Council for the Arts, and North Lyon County School library.

## Kansas Touchstone Energy Council holds Annual Meeting

The Touchstone Energy Annual Membership Meeting was held at the Wichita Marriott on Oct. 26.

**ANNE HARVEY**, Touchstone Energy, gave an update on the national program activities including the new safety campaign materials, Lynda.com training opportunities, updates to the Co-op Web Builder Program, Co-op CONNECTIONS card, and the new employee training program titled "The Road to Member Engagement."

KEC's **SHANA READ** and Western's **DENNIS DEINES** presented a review of the state activities in 2015, including

the Energy Expo at the Kansas State Fair, the recent Essential Energy Conversation training at the Fall KMSDA meeting, and the growth of the ElectroRally program.

The Touchstone Energy Executive Council approved the 2016 budget and set the 2016 dues assessment. Re-elected to the council were **BRUCE MUELLER**, Wheatland, and **TRAVIS GRIFFIN**, Butler. Newly elected was **JIM EHRlich**, Rolling Hills. Officer positions elected were **BRUCE MUELLER**, Chairman; **SCOTT WHITTINGTON**, Vice Chairman; and **DENNIS DEINES**, Secretary/Treasurer.

## RBK Manufacturing receives REDLG loan through Twin Valley Electric Cooperative

RBK Manufacturing, L.L.C., in Coffeyville recently received a \$200,000 loan from Twin Valley through the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program.

RBK's largest market right now is the construction industry, but they also make plastic products, such as dashboards, for the auto market. The REDLG loan will fund new tooling equipment for the expansion of their manufacturing department.

With the new gear, RBK plans to add a

new process to build virtually indestructible parts; and already have a potential client who may use the military grade plastic as mower decks on their lawnmowers. RBK plans to add at least three more people to their workforce.

"Twin Valley Electric Cooperative utilizes the REDLG program because it helps local businesses expand and provides them with interest-free working capital," said Twin Valley's Manager **RON HOLSTEEN**. "We are happy to partner with USDA and RBK Manufacturing to

## Midwest Energy holds annual meeting

Midwest Energy held its annual meeting Oct. 19 at the Robbins Center at Fort Hays State University. More than 120 people attended the meeting. Members were entered into a drawing for a solar panel within Midwest Energy's Community Array, as well as other items.

The five winners of the 2015 Youth Tour, **BREANN ANSCHUTZ**, **KINSEY ACKERMAN**, **ANDREA BUSS**, **QUINLEE NIBLOCK** and **KRISTEN ZERR** spoke about their trip to Washington, D.C., this past summer. General Manager **EARNIE LEHMAN** spoke about the EPA's Clean Power Plan and the impact it could have on Midwest Energy.

Re-elected to the board were **LOUISE BERNING**, **JUANITA STECKLEIN**, and **DALE UNRUH**.



Midwest Energy members Gail and Linda Palmberg, Hays, won a solar panel within the Community Array at the Midwest Energy Annual Meeting on Oct. 19 that was held at the Robbins Center at Fort Hays State University.

help bring new jobs to the community."

The REDLG program has provided over \$70 million in loans and grants across Kansas, and continues to fund rural projects through the local utility organizations.

USDA provides zero-interest loans to electric cooperatives, who then pass the loan to local businesses for developmental purposes. With developmental projects like these, co-ops hope to improve the economic climate of their community.