

Rural Power

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Please send your story ideas to ruralpower@kec.org.

Survivor contestant, state legislator among annual meeting speakers

More than 200 representatives of Kansas electric cooperatives gathered in Topeka Jan. 21-24 for KEC's Annual Meeting. The attendees discussed issues and challenges facing the co-ops, listened to a wide range of speakers and participated in special presentations and events.

During Monday's meeting, Kansas House Majority Leader **DON HINEMAN** recognized the co-op managers within his legislative district, thanked them for their work, and commended the cooperatives for their storm restoration efforts. He discussed the changes within the Kansas Legislature following the 2016 elections and how key issues might affect rural Kansas.

"A lot of the excess in state government has been rung out in the last eight years, and we are looking to new ways to bridge that gap. Here's one thing we cannot continue to do: We've adopted budgets using one-time sources of revenue. That's been a perennial activity for the last several years. Each time we look at a one-time form of money to close that gap, we get a little desperate," Hineman explained. "It's like winning the lottery and you can take it all once, and we took it all at once and are now without a secure revenue stream. We either need new revenue or additional budget cuts. We have to get real about the structural imbalance in our budget."

JIM MATHESON, CEO of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, commented on value of the cooperative business model and how impressed he is with the electric cooperative culture. He mentioned that cooperatives are facing changing times and NRECA continues to develop a menu of products and services to reflect the changing environment.

"One of my goals this year is focusing on how NRECA engages with our members. One



NRECA's Jim Matheson makes his debut appearance in Kansas at the KEC Annual Meeting on Jan. 23 in Topeka.

of my other big goals is enhancing our leadership and visibility," Matheson said.

He then added that the electric cooperative industry faces a lot of volatility and uncertainty.

"I think that is a great opportunity for us. We've been building bridges with the new congress and the new administration even before the election; for example, Co-ops Vote."

He commended KEC and its members for their

participation in Co-ops Vote, which he said should serve as a model for other states. He also promoted the "Serve our Country, Serve our Co-ops" program to encourage co-ops to hire veterans.

Also on the agenda was ARCmedia's Principal and Co-founder **ANDY NEIDERT** who discussed the value of cooperatives having a social media presence, citing examples of how it can be used for grassroots advocacy and storm restoration communication.

"If you're not at the meeting table, someone is talking about you. If you are there, at least you know what is being said," Neidert stated. "We had thousands of people last weekend during the ice storm saying they love their linemen; they know you are listening. The first thing about a good relationship is listening—you're listening when you are engaged on social media."

Also on the agenda was **BRIAN BRIGGEMAN**, Ph.D., Professor and Director of the Arthur Capper Cooperative Center at Kansas State University, who offered an outlook for agriculture and the economy. He listed the key forces driving agriculture, including demand, supply, margin compression, and technology. Lastly, he spoke about the need for a strong Secretary of Agriculture.

DAVE KENDALL, the producer of the *Tallgrass*

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Kansas Cooperative Council hosts congressional event



KEC participated in a Congressional Update with Kansas Congressman **ROGER MARSHALL**. The event was organized by several agriculture and co-op groups on Jan. 27 in Topeka. From left: Bruce Graham, KEC; Congressman Roger Marshall, and Haley DaVee, Heartland Credit Union Association.

Commissioner Pat Apple elected chairman of the KCC

On Jan. 12, Commissioner **PAT APPLE** was elected to serve as Chairman of the Kansas Corporation Commission. Commissioner Apple was appointed to the KCC by Gov. Brownback on March 24, 2014, and confirmed by the Kansas Senate on April 6, 2014.

Commissioner Apple served in the Kansas Senate from 2005 to 2014, where he provided leadership in many capacities including Chairman of the Utilities Committee.

insympathy

Jim Clark

JAMES E. (JIM) CLARK JR., Caney Valley Board Vice President, died on Jan. 20.

Services were held on Jan. 28 at the Lone Cherry Baptist Church north of Havana.

Memorials may be made to the Sedan Educational Foundation or the Lone Cherry Baptist Church. Memorials may be sent in care of the Dickens Family Funeral Home, 209 N. Douglas, Sedan, KS 67361.

Pete Walter

BERNARD "PETE" J. WALTER SR., retired Doniphan Board Member, died on Jan. 8. He served on the Board from 1975 to 1992.

Funeral services were held on Jan. 12 at the First Baptist Church of Wathena.

Memorials may be made to the First Baptist Church, Wathena, or the Doniphan County Meals on Wheels.

co-opcalendar

FEBRUARY

- 16 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 16-17 **487.2 Managing Your Electric Cooperative's Key Accounts Course**, Courtyard Wichita at Old Town, Wichita
- 17 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 26-3/1 **NRECA Annual Meeting**, San Diego, California

MARCH

- 8-9 **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting**, Marriott Courtyard, Salina
- 13 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Holcomb Station, Holcomb

annualmeetings

FEBRUARY

- 23 **Brown-Atchison**, Cooperative Headquarters, 1712 Central Ave., Horton, meal 11 a.m., meeting 12:45 p.m.
- 28 **Nemaha-Marshall**, American Legion, 207 5th Street, Axtell, meal 11:30 a.m., meeting 12:45 p.m.

MARCH

- 6 **Bluestem**, Saint Bernard Catholic Church, 17665 Old Post Road, Wamego, meeting 7 p.m.
- 7 **Flint Hills**, Herington Community Building, 810 S. Broadway, Herington, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 16 **Butler**, Circle Middle School, 14697 SW 20th St., Benton, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 18 **Pioneer**, Grant County Civic Center, 1000 W. Patterson, Ulysses, meal 12 p.m., meeting 10 a.m.
- 20 **Lyon-Coffey**, Burlington High School, 830 Cross Street, Burlington, meal 6 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 21 **Ninnescah**, Pratt Municipal Building, 117 W. Third, Pratt, meal 6 p.m., meeting after meal
- 24 **Caney Valley**, Cedar Vale School Gym, 508 Dora, Cedar Vale, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 28 **Heartland**, Fort Scott Community College, 2108 S. Horton, Fort Scott, meeting 7 p.m.
- 30 **Doniphan**, Doniphan Headquarters, 503 S. Jones Street, Troy, meal TBD, meeting TBD

APRIL

- 4 **Prairie Land**, Cooperative Headquarters, 14935 US Hwy. 36, Norton, meal 12 p.m., meeting 12:45 p.m.
- 4 **Sedgwick County**, The Cotillion Hall & Ballroom, 11120 W. Kellogg Dr., Wichita, meal 6:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 4 **DS&O**, Webster Conference Center, 2601 N. Ohio Street, Salina, meal 6 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 6 **Radiant**, Cooperative Headquarters, 9346 Jewell Rd., Fredonia, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 6 **CMS**, Meade High School, 409 School Addition, Meade, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 7 **Alfalfa**, Cherokee High School, 412 E. 5th, Cherokee, OK, meal 5 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 8 **Sumner-Cowley**, Wellington High School, 1700 E. 16th Street, Wellington, meal 11:30 a.m., meeting 1:15 p.m.
- 11 **Victory**, Western State Bank Expo Center, 11333 Hwy. 283, Dodge City, meal 5 p.m., meeting 6 p.m.
- 11 **Ark Valley**, Fair Grounds, Sunflower Bldg., 2000 N. Poplar St., Hutchinson, meal 6:30 p.m., meeting after meal
- 19 **Wheatland**, Wichita County Community Bldg., 502 East M. Street, Leoti, meal 11:30 a.m., meeting 12:30 p.m.
- 20 **Twin Valley**, LCHS Cafeteria, 401 S. High School St., Altamont, meal 6 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 21 **Rolling Hills**, Cooperative Headquarters, 3075B US Hwy. 24, Beloit, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.

MAY

- 10 **Western**, Cooperative Headquarters, 635 S. 13th Street, WaKeeney, meal 12 p.m., meeting 1 p.m.
- 11 **KAMO**, Chateau on the Lake, 415 N. State Hwy. 265, Branson, MO, reception 5:15 p.m., meal 6 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 19 **Sunflower**, Lane-Scott Electric Cooperative, 410 S. High, Dighton, meal 12 p.m., meeting 8 a.m.

JULY

- 18 **Lane-Scott**, Lane County Fairgrounds, 745 N. 7th, Dighton, meal 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:30 p.m.

OCTOBER

- 23 **Midwest Energy**, FHSU Campus Robbins Ctr., One Tiger Place, Hays, meeting 10 a.m.

NOVEMBER

- 15 **KEPCo**, DoubleTree Hilton Wichita Airport, 2098 Airport Road, Wichita, reception 5 p.m., meal 6 p.m., meeting 4 p.m.

Victory lineman shifts from taking pictures to preventing a train wreck

HEITH KONECNY was perched on an overpass outside Mullinville taking photos of electric system damage wrought by a January ice storm when he saw a power pole toppled over railroad tracks.

Konecny was about to line up the shot, but then, on the horizon, he spotted lights closing in on the pole.

"The lights got closer, and then I realized it was a train heading down the tracks, straight toward the pole," said Konecny, Victory's Supervisor of Metering Technology.

Konecny ran back to his truck, called dispatchers to alert the railroad and headed to the nearest intersection.

"I drove to the next crossing and turned on my flashers" to warn the engineer of the BNSF Railway train.

It can take a train a full mile to come to a complete stop, even after the engineer applies the brakes. The locomotive stopped about a quarter-mile from the downed pole.

"That train could have barreled through the pole. Had Heith not been in the right place, at the right time, it could have been a dire situation," said **JERRI IMGARTEN**, Victory's Manager of Marketing and Communications.

"It ended up stopping, but I don't know whether it was because of me or operations," said Konecny. "It was a locomotive and it didn't have cars attached to it. So maybe it was out scoping damage on the tracks. A signal would have sensed something on the track and it would have triggered a



Victory Electric's Heith Konecny helped stop a BNSF train from slamming into a power pole, documented ice storm damage and won a free lunch for his crew.

red light," alerting the train to stop.

Konecny's adventures didn't end there. He submitted the photo to a co-op contest and wound up taking first prize—two free large pizzas for him and his crew.

Imgarten and her team began the contest as a way to generate photos for social media.

"Visual elements work really well to show the extent of damage and to communicate how hard crews work to get members' power restored," she said. "But we knew it

would be hard for us to go out in the field take photos of the damage."

Because the co-op had advance warning of the storm, Imgarten and her team had time to come up with a plan. With a free pizza lunch at stake, linemen texted or emailed photos of storm damage. Co-op communicators across the country judged the entries.

Konecny's dramatic, fog-shrouded photo, with train lights visible through a crossarm brace won by a single vote.

"We thought the photo contest would be a great way to involve the linemen and engineering personnel in the co-op's communications efforts, but we never dreamed it would help prevent a potential train derailment," said Imgarten.

This article, written by Victoria A. Rocha, originally ran in the Jan. 31, 2017, edition of *Electric Co-op News*.

Bruce Graham appointed to NRECA/CFC Governance Task Force

Twenty co-op and statewide leaders, including KEC CEO **BRUCE GRAHAM**, have agreed to serve on a new NRECA/CFC Governance Task Force to consider electric cooperative governance issues.

These individuals were selected to represent a mix of NRECA voting members, each bringing unique knowledge and experience on governance matters. The panel includes 11 electric cooperative directors, many of whom have served on statewide or G&T boards; three distribution cooperative CEOs; four statewide managers; and one general counsel.

"I've been involved with electric cooperatives for 30 years now and much has changed in that time related

to operations, technology, politics, management, etc. In every case, it is useful to consult the standard bearers in our industry and how other businesses operate," Graham said.

Cooperative governance is evolving too and the task force was created in response to recommendation by the NRECA and CFC Board to study a variety of cooperative organizational issues and best practices. The group plans to present its findings later this year.

"We anticipate that these individuals will bring thoughtful consideration to the governance topics presented, and we look forward to working with them throughout the year," said **JESSICA HEALY**, NRECA Assistant General Counsel.

KEC launches new AT website



Visit at.kec.coop to view AT's product inventory and services.

KEC has launched the new Apparatus Testing (AT) website. Visit at.kec.coop to view AT's product inventory and services offered by the AT Department. Staff will continue to update the site with current inventory. The AT Department will begin promoting the site and products in the near future.

KEC Annual Meeting, cont.

Prairie Preserve: A Flint Hills Love Story, shared stories about his career and creation of the documentary. He stated that he found a connection to the electric cooperatives after reading Bruce Graham's column in *Kansas Country Living*.

He played clips of the documentary and thanked KEC for its sponsorship. Copies of the documentary were given as registration gifts to Annual Meeting attendees.

Keynote speaker **HOLLY HOFFMAN** shared her experiences as a contestant on the reality television show *Survivor*, how it impacted her life, and provided inspiration for more than 400 attendees at the luncheon.

"You learn a lot about yourself when everything is taken away," Hoffman shared. "A positive attitude won't take away your problems but it will make it easier to deal with them."

Additional speakers featured on the agenda included **KIRK THOMPSON**, CFC District 7 Director, gave the CFC update and presented KEC with grants totaling \$22,800 on behalf of CFC and NCSC. CoBank's **SETH HART** gave a highlight of CoBank's activities and presented KEC with a check for \$25,000 in support of association programming and services. Federated CEO **PHIL IRWIN** gave an update and presented KEC with a check for \$110,668 to support loss control and safety initiatives. Kansas Committee for Rural Electrification KCRE Chairman **ED WILTSE** gave reports before the KCRE membership held an officer election.

During the Annual Meeting Business Session, attendees received a printed report on KEC's accomplishments for the past year and **BRUCE GRAHAM** reviewed the highlights. Membership representatives considered and approved Bylaw revisions as recommended by the KEC Policies and Bylaws Committee.

KEC's Loss Control, Safety and Compliance Department recognized cooperatives that earned "No Lost Time" awards and Safety Achievement Certificates, and KEC LCS&C Instructor **BRUCE MCANTEE** was presented with a certificate for earning the Certified Loss Control Professional designation. KEC's Government Relations staff encouraged the attendees to join ACRE and KCRE.



The KEC Board of Trustees elected the 2017 KEC Board officers (from left): Keith McNickle, Vice President; Craig Kostman, Treasurer; Kathleen O'Brien, President; and Terry Hobbs, Secretary.

Kansas legislators were the focus during KEC's Annual

Legislative Reception. There were 117 legislators who attended the reception to visit with co-op constituents. The KCRE silent auction raised more than \$3,000. The KEC Auxiliary raffle and other donations raised \$565 for KEC's youth programs.

Prior to the meeting, three directors' courses were offered. **BRYAN SINGLETARY** facilitated courses 924 *When Disaster Strikes: Continuity Management and Emergency Response Planning for Directors* and 961 *The Evolution of Electric Co-op Power Supply*. **WALLACE BARRON** facilitated course 2630 *Strategic Planning*.

On Sunday evening, a welcome reception was held celebrating KEC's 75th Anniversary. **BRYTON STOLL**, 2012 youth tour delegate from Nemaha-Marshall, provided musical entertainment.

The KEC Auxiliary had its program on Jan. 23. **GARY LAGRANGE**, Retired U.S. Army Colonel, gave a presentation on how farming helps veterans transition to civilian life, **DEBBIE LYONS-BLYTHE** discussed organ donation, and **MIKE MCCARTNEY** recapped Civil War strategies and tactics.



The KEC Board of Trustees voted to recommend Bruce Meyer, Bluestem, to serve as the Region 7 Director-Director to the Federated Board.

Electric co-op staff connect with members at annual farm show

Four electric co-ops joined forces to sponsor a booth at the Topeka Farm Show, Jan. 10-12.

Bluestem, Brown-Atchison, FreeState, and Lyon-Coffey used the opportunity to interact with members and the public.

"The Farm Show is a great avenue for us to meet with our members," **MIKE TWEEDY**, Member Services for Lyon-Coffey said. "We are able to meet with people face-to-face and answer any questions they might have."

Kaw Valley and LJEC, which consolidated as FreeState in January, along with Bluestem, Brown-Atchison, and Lyon-Coffey cooperatives began attending the show in the early 1990s and have had a presence every year since.

"We are fortunate to be here every year and interact with the hundreds of people that come to the show," Tweedy explained.

More than 300 exhibitors participated in the event which drew nearly 30,000 attendees at the Kansas Expocentre in Topeka.

The Farm Show first started in 1989 and has grown to use six buildings. With free parking and free admission, a primary focus of the Topeka Farm Show has been to bring attendees who have a full-time stake in agriculture to meet and visit with exhibiting companies. Exhibitors display the latest in farm and ranch equipment and technology for today's farmers and agriculturalists.



Mike Tweedy, Member Services for Lyon-Coffey, visits with a member at the co-op booth at the 2017 Topeka Farm Show.