

Rural Power

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

Co-ops participate in KEC's "Day at the Capitol"

Approximately 45 co-op managers, board members, and staff gathered at the Kansas State Capitol on Feb. 7 to advocate for electric cooperatives.

Co-op officials from 17 Kansas electric co-ops and NRECA, met for a breakfast briefing by KEC staff. **BRUCE GRAHAM**, CEO, **LESLIE KAUFMAN**, Director of Government Relations and Legal Counsel, and **ALEX OREL**, Manager of Government Relations, reviewed the agenda and gave updates on state legislative issues. The group spent the remainder of the morning meeting with elected officials and attending committee meetings and legislative sessions.

"This was our inaugural *Day at the Capitol* event and was an excellent opportunity to personally visit with our elected officials providing them a cooperative perspective on issues important to our industry," Kaufman said. "We were pleased to have so many co-op members attending this year's event. Our presence shows that our

members are engaged."

During the event, co-op representatives met with legislators to help them better understand electric cooperatives and the issues that impact rural Kansas. They reminded legislators that co-ops are not-for-profit, consumer-owned, and self-governed businesses who are actively engaged in the political process. The group focused on topics including service territory protection and retail wheeling.

"Decisions made in Topeka can have serious consequences for our member-cooperatives and the communities they serve," Orel said. "As co-ops, we have a responsibility to our member-owners to see that their voices are heard."

Represented at the event were Ark Valley, Bluestem, CMS, DS&O, Flint Hills, FreeState, KEC, Lane-Scott, Prairie Land, Rolling Hills, Sedgwick County, Sumner-Cowley, Sunflower, Twin Valley, Victory, Western, and Wheatland electric cooperatives.



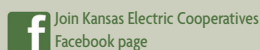
Clockwise from top: KEC's CEO Bruce Graham briefs the co-op attendees at the Kansas State Capitol. Ron Jeffries, Sumner-Cowley, and Terry Hobbs, Western, display the *Day at the Capitol* sign. FreeState's Randy Richards, Chris Parr, Steve



Foss, and KEC's Bruce Graham visit with Rep. Jim Karleskint. NRECA's Amanda Wolfe and KEC's Leslie Kaufman discuss issues with Sen. Steve Fitzgerald. Rep. Susan Humphries visits with KEC's Alex Orel and Sedgwick County's Eugene Scheer and Scott Ayers.



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Electric Co-op CEO named as RUS Administrator

President Donald Trump has appointed **KEN JOHNSON** as the USDA Rural Utilities Service Administrator. Johnson currently serves as General Manager and CEO of Co-Mo Electric Cooperative in Tipton, MO.

"We are excited and thrilled that Ken has been selected to lead the RUS program. Electric cooperatives have a storied history of working with RUS to power the rural American economy," said NRECA CEO Jim Matheson. "The ongoing collaboration between RUS and electric co-ops remains essential to the success of rural communities across the nation as co-ops invest in infrastructure upgrades to modernize the grid and meet consumer expectations. Ken is exceptionally qualified to serve in this role and we look forward to working with him in his new capacity."

"As President Trump pursues his comprehensive agenda of infrastructure improvements like increased broadband access for rural communities, adding Ken Johnson to the USDA team is exciting," said Sonny Perdue, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, in a statement. "Ken's experience with rural utilities, including real success in expanding access to high-speed internet, will serve us well as we strive to increase prosperity across rural America."

Under Johnson's leadership, Co-Mo deployed a fiber to the home (FTTH) network to all its members without using federal or state funding. The FTTH network provides internet with speeds of up to 1 Gigabit and access to the latest technology to approximately 16,000 subscribers.

KMSDA plans April meeting

The Kansas Member Services Directors Association Spring meeting will be held April 4-6 at the Courtyard Marriott in Wichita.

Presenters include **GARY PFANN**, NRECA; **PATTY CLARK**, Kansas Leadership Center; **MIKE WILSON**, Eastern Illini Electric Co-op; **MIKE MORLEY**, Midwest Energy; **CAROL J. SPONAGLE**, Energy Education Council; and **CARRIE KIM-BERLIN**, KEC. A detailed program will be emailed to all co-ops in the next few weeks.

co-opcalendar

FEBRUARY

- 15 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 16 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 22 **Brown-Atchison Annual Meeting**, lunch at 11 a.m., meeting at 12:30 p.m., Horton
- 25-28 **NRECA Annual Meeting**, Nashville, TN
- 27 **Nemaha-Marshall Annual Meeting**, lunch at 11:30 a.m., meeting at 12:45 p.m., Axtell

MARCH

- 5 **Bluestem Annual Meeting**, product fair at 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m., Clay Center
- 7-8 **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting**, Hilton Garden Inn, Salina
- 10 **Sumner-Cowley Annual Meeting**, lunch at 11:30 a.m., meeting at 1:15 p.m., Wellington
- 16 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 17 **Pioneer Annual Meeting**, health fair at 7 a.m., lunch at 11 a.m., meeting at 1 p.m., Ulysses

Co-ops to nominate veterans for CoBank/No Barriers program

The CoBank/No Barriers program for rural veterans is more than just a mountain vacation, it provides an opportunity for veterans with disabilities to challenge their own limitations. Through successfully completing demanding activities like rafting, rock climbing and hiking, participants become better-equipped to overcome the obstacles they face in their daily lives.

Co-ops are asked to identify deserving veterans in their communities who are interested in this inspiring outdoor program. In order to complete the process, the veteran is required to submit an application at <http://bit.ly/2018nobarriers>. The nomination/application period closes April 15.

Co-ops should email the name of their nominations to NoBarriers@cobank.com. Fifty veterans will be selected to attend one of four five-day expeditions in Colorado, or participants may also elect to attend the No Barriers Summit instead of one of the expeditions. CoBank's sponsorship covers all associated costs for each veteran participant.

upcomingtraining

Leadership Skills for the Front-Line Employee

KEC is coordinating a new workshop titled *Leadership Skills for the Front-Line Employee* on March 27.

The training will be facilitated by **BRYAN SINGLETARY** and will be held at Butler's headquarters, located in El Dorado, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Designed for line crews, supervisors, and any other employee who is a vital player in the operation of a safe and reliable electric system, this interactive, one-day course is designed to help the new leaders as well as the veteran supervisor/foreman to better understand the roles and responsibilities of front line leadership. Cost for this training is \$275 per attendee.

Following adjournment of the course, there will be an optional work order discussion from 3 to 4 p.m.

Make a hotel reservation at the Holiday Inn Express by calling 316-322-7275. Ask for the KEC rate of \$84.99.

2018 HR Summit

The 2018 HR Summit will be April 25 at the Wichita Marriott. This training is designed for co-op human resources professionals, benefits administrators and supervisors.

Speakers for this one-day training will include **SUSAN M. LANG**, U.S. Department of Labor, who will discuss minimum wage and overtime issues; **DR. LEANN BROWN**, FHSU's Management Development Center, will address performance management issues; **PATTI KLEIN**, USDA Rural Utility Service, will share RUS retention requirements; **BRIAN ALLEN**, Institutional Sales Consultant, will give an update on NRECA's Homestead Funds; and **MALACHI STURLIN**, Field Representative, will give the NRECA benefit plan update.

The HR Summit is \$195 per participant and includes lunch and materials.

Book your hotel reservation at 800-610-0673 by April 10 to get the KEC rate of \$124/night.

Bluestem names new management team

Bluestem Electric's Board of Directors announced the appointment of **MICHAEL M. MORTON** as its next General Manager. Morton who served as Bluestem's Assistant Manager, succeeded Kenneth Maginley, who retired on Jan. 5, 2018.

Morton brings extensive knowledge of Bluestem and of the electric cooperative world with him.

"We are fortunate to have such a great candidate within our own ranks to take over as our next CEO and look forward to his leadership as the cooperative continues to grow in the years to come," said Board President Ervin Gnadt.

Morton has more than 33 years of experience in the electric cooperative industry. Starting in 1984, Morton served as the PR&W Office Manager and became the Assistant Manager of Bluestem Electric in 1999 when PR&W Electric consolidated with C&W Electric to form Bluestem Electric Cooperative.

"I would like to thank the Bluestem Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees for providing this opportunity to serve as their General Manager. I am truly



Mike Morton



Jason Moore

honored and look forward to working in this new capacity with a very professional group of employees to continue to meet the needs of our members," Morton said.

With Morton's new role, Bluestem next welcomed **JASON MOORE** as the Assistant Manager on Dec. 4.

Prior to joining Bluestem, Moore was the director of human resources at Purple Wave, Inc. in Manhattan. He's a graduate of Texas A&M University and has been in the human resources profession since 1996.

Moore and his wife, Roshelle, live in Wamego and have three boys. He is a board member of the Wamego Area Chamber of Commerce and volunteers as a member of the Wamego Pyro Crew, a community group that sets up and discharges firework displays.

"I am excited to be part of the Bluestem Electric team, and I greatly appreciate this opportunity," said Moore. "Everyone has been very welcoming and I look forward to assisting Mike, the trustees, and the Bluestem employees in providing exceptional service to our members for years to come."

Flint Hills Board selects Charles Goeckel as Manager

The Flint Hills RECA Board of Trustees announced **CHARLES "CHUCK" GOECKEL** as the new General Manager. Goeckel replaces Robert Reece, who retired in January.



Chuck Goeckel

Goeckel attended Marymount College of Salina and Wichita State University earning degrees in computer science and business administration. He began his rural electric co-op career as an accountant for Sedgwick County Electric Cooperative in Cheney, then joined Flint Hills RECA as Office Manager in 1990, and was promoted to Assistant Manager in 1995. Goeckel completed NRECA's Manage-

ment Internship Program in 2014.

In addition to serving the co-op, Goeckel shows his commitment to community through involvement with the Council Grove Rotary Club, St. Rose of Lima Church Parish Council, and the Morris County Hospital Foundation. He is also a member and past president of the Kansas REC Accountant's Club.

"I truly appreciate the opportunity to serve the members, Board of Trustees and employees of Flint Hills RECA," said Goeckel. "The co-op is blessed with dedicated employees who all actively participate in carrying out the co-op's mission to provide safe, reliable, and affordable power to the members we serve. The co-op's future is bright. We look forward to the many opportunities we will have to bring value to our membership."

Lyon-Coffey selects Doebele as Assistant Manager

Lyon-Coffey Electric Cooperative has named **MARK DOEBELE** as its new Assistant General Manager.



Mark Doebele

Doebele began his career as an apprentice lineman for Norton-Decatur Electric Cooperative in 1989. He joined the Lyon-Coffey team in 1999 as a journeyman lineman and has held positions of Area Foreman and Director of Line Operations.

Lyon-Coffey General Manager Scott Whittington stated, "We value all our employees and are especially pleased to watch someone grow into greater responsibilities. Mark's leadership skills and thoughtful decision making will be of great benefit as he assumes his new role."

Doebele will continue to serve as the co-op's Director of Operations.

Lehman retires from Midwest Energy

EARNIE LEHMAN, President of Midwest Energy, retired Feb. 1 after 15 years of service. Lehman guided the co-op to complete the acquisitions of several small electric and natural gas systems and grew Midwest Energy's percentage of energy derived from Kansas wind to more than 100 megawatts.

With Lehman's retirement, the Board named **PAT PARKE** as the next President & General Manager. Parke had previously served as Midwest Energy's Vice President of Customer Service, and **BOB MUIRHEAD** has been promoted to that position.

For his part, Lehman was reflective on his four-decades long career in the energy industry, which included executive positions with utilities in Kansas and Texas, as well as a time serving as a federal regulator.

"Leading Midwest Energy has been the greatest honor of my career," Lehman said. "Over and over I witnessed the dedication and perseverance of our employees, who deserve full credit for the fine service provided and great reputation enjoyed by Midwest Energy."

Kansas Speaker of the House, industry leaders among annual meeting speakers

More than 200 representatives of Kansas electric cooperatives gathered in Topeka from Jan. 20 to 23 for KEC's Annual Meeting. The attendees discussed issues facing the co-ops, listened to a wide range of speakers and participated in special presentations and events.



Speaker of the House Ron Ryckman addresses the membership at the KEC Annual Meeting on Jan. 22.

During Monday's meeting, Kansas **REP. RON RYCKMAN**, Speaker of the House, discussed several current challenges including school financing and budgets. He stressed the need to fund other initiatives such as early childhood development, mental health, and the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERs).

"We wonder why we're in red ink every year, but all we do is kick the problem down to the next year so we can go home," Ryckman said. "We are looking for long-term, comprehensive solutions so that next year I won't have to stand up here and say that we have a math problem."

CHUCK CONNER, President and CEO of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC), highlighted his personal ties to the rural electric cooperatives and provided a review of the state of politics in Washington, D.C., and the effect on rural America.

"In a time of disruption and polarizations, if progress on a range of issues is going to be made, we need to reinforce relations with key allies and spur grassroots engagement," Conner explained.

Also on the agenda was **PATTY CLARK**, Acting President/CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center, who shared the mission of the Center and highlighted four leadership competencies: diagnose the situation, manage self, intervene skillfully, and energize others. Using a series of visuals, she discussed the difference between technical work and adaptive work, and she stressed the

importance of being unified to tackle issues.

"Leadership is an activity, it's not a position," Clark explained. "Anyone can lead, anytime, anywhere. Leadership is about mobilizing others to do hard work."

DOUG SHEPHERD, KEC's Vice President of Management Consulting Services, moderated a panel discussion on broadband. **TIM BRYAN**, NRTC's CEO, shared broadband resources including feasibility studies; **JIMMY TODD**, CEO and General Manager of

Nex-Tech, discussed partnership opportunities and the Kansas Fiber Network; and **DALE SHORT**, Butler's General Manager, highlighted the process his board used to evaluate broadband for their cooperative. The panel defined terms, discussed current infrastructure, and gave tips to consider to bring broadband to rural Kansas.

BRUCE REW, Southwest Power Pool's Vice President of Operations, described the function and makeup of the SPP and encouraged the members to visit spp.org for real-time data. He detailed the key market processes, including the number of participants and generating resources, and the generation mix per fuel type. Lastly, he listed several items to continue sustainability, including being flexible with the existing generation fleet, integrating real-time voltage stability tools, and developing stored energy resources.

BRUCE GRAHAM, KEC's CEO, referred to a handout showcasing the 2017 highlights during his State of the Statewide presentation. He recapped the government and regulatory activities such as the Co-ops Vote events which has since garnered national attention from NRECA. He highlighted the strategic planning process, the headquarters efficiency and remodel project, and the sale of the Apparatus Testing Division.

The **PETERSON FARM BROTHERS** served as this year's keynote speakers. Greg, Nathan, and Kendal Peterson sang along with several of their parody videos and shared how their viral YouTube videos help advocate for

agriculture.

TAYLOR GUNN, CoBank's Lead Economist, reviewed the evolution of rooftop solar installations and discussed current net metering policies and other rate trends.

Additional speakers featured on the agenda included **MIKE LEWIS**, CFC Regional Vice President, who gave the CFC update and presented KEC with grants totaling \$22,400 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 \$102,000 to support loss control and safety initiatives. Kansas Committee for Rural Electrification (KCRE) Chairman **ED WILTSE** gave a report before the KCRE membership considered bylaw changes and held an officer election.

KEC's Loss Control, Safety and Compliance Department recognized cooperatives that earned "No Lost Time" awards and Safety Achievement Certificates. KEC's Government Relations staff gave a legislative update.

Kansas legislators were the focus during KEC's annual Legislative Reception. There were more than 100 legislators who attended the reception to visit with co-op constituents.

The KCRE silent auction raised more than \$2,400. The KEC Auxiliary raffle and live quilt auction raised more than \$800 for KEC's youth programs. The quilt was donated by **CAROLYN MCNICKLE**, Twin Valley. McNickle, who passed away in December 2017, was an avid supporter of KEC's youth programs. To celebrate her final quilt, the KEC Auxiliary hosted a live auction that was won by Randy and Shana Read.

Prior to the meeting, three directors' courses were offered. **BETH KNUDSON** facilitated the 944.1: *Giving and Receiving Effective Feedback*, **WALLACE BARRON** facilitated the 2610.1 *Understanding the Electric Business*, and **SCOTT LUECAL** facilitated the 974.1 *Rate Making Strategies & Policy Decisions for Electric Cooperative Boards*.

On Sunday evening, members enjoyed a welcome reception.