

Rural Power

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

Congressman-elect Estes makes co-op visits

Kansas State Treasurer Ron Estes has been elected to replace Mike Pompeo in the state's 4th Congressional District. Pompeo was confirmed as director of the CIA on January 23, 2017.

Estes, a fifth generation Kansan, used the opportunity provided by three cooperative annual meetings to meet hundreds of potential voters prior to the special election on April 11. While it is common for Kansas cooperatives to have elected officials in attendance at their annual meetings, for this special election, all three candidates for the Congressional seat were notified of the events to be held in the 4th District. Libertarian candidate, Chris Rockhold, sent a representative to Sumner-Cowley's meeting while Estes attended the annual meetings at Butler, Sumner-Cowley, and Sedgwick County electric cooperatives. As a result, Estes has expressed a greater appreciation and understanding of electric cooperative operations, governance and our membership engagement.



Congressman-elect Ron Estes visits with Sumner-Cowley members at the co-op's annual meeting on April 8 at the Wellington High School.

Prior to his entry into politics, Estes served in consulting and management roles in a number of industries, including aerospace, oil and gas, automotive, and other manufacturing and service industries.

Estes will be sworn into office on April 25 at the same time as approximately 30 Kansas coopera-

tive representatives will be in Washington, D.C., for the NRECA Legislative Conference.

The Legislative Conference includes visits with Congressional offices where cooperative representatives will discuss the unique benefits of the locally-controlled, consumer-owned, cooperative business structure.

Co-ops will also call on lawmakers to support investments in rural infrastructure, reduce barriers to maintenance and expansion, renew tax credits for geothermal, nuclear and other technologies, and reduce regulatory burdens from agencies such as the EPA and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Co-ops invited to attend 2017 Broadband Communities Summit

Representative of electric cooperatives are invited to attend the 2017 Broadband Communities Summit in Dallas, TX, May 1 to 4. This event, titled "Fiber: Get in the Game of Gigs," offers a wide range of subjects including rural and economic development tracks that will focus on the challenges and potential benefits of providing broadband to underserved rural areas.

This event is being endorsed by Hilda Legg, Vice-Chairman of *Broadband Communities* magazine and former USDA Administrator for Rural Utilities Service.

"Since leaving USDA, I have focused my consulting work on helping rural communities with economic development and infrastructure development," Legg said. "I have assisted many communities in their efforts to build high-speed broadband in difficult terrain and economically challenging conditions. I remain committed to bring-

ing broadband to our rural communities and families, and my work with *Broadband Communities* is an important part of that effort."

"We realize that more and more, electric cooperatives are being considered as a high speed broadband provider in areas where little to no broadband exists," she continued. "This Summit provides an excellent opportunity for electric cooperatives to become better informed about the challenges of building out broadband in rural areas."

Legg offers a discount code to allow electric cooperatives a way to register for the four-day conference for \$410, (saving \$540 off the regular price). The registration code for the discount is electric 410.

For more information, visit the Summit website at www.bbcmag.com/2017s/ or email hildalegg@yahoo.com.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
PO Box 4267
Topeka, KS 66604-0267
www.kec.org

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inbrief

NRECA CEO named to FCC Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai appointed NRECA CEO Jim Matheson and 28 others to serve on a newly created Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee (BDAC).

"Access to high speed internet is a key ingredient for a healthy 21st century economy, particularly in rural America," Matheson said. "I'm honored and excited to sit on this committee, and I look forward to representing the interests of rural America as we work to close the digital divide."

The committee will meet for the first time on April 21, 2017. Its mission is to advise and make recommendations to the FCC on how to accelerate the deployment of broadband by reducing and removing regulatory barriers to infrastructure investment.

Text-to-Donate campaign to aid rural Kansas fire departments

AT&T is underwriting a text-to-give campaign to support contributions for the Kansas State Firefighters Association and help the rural fire departments that responded to the recent wildfires, which burned more than 650,000 acres in Kansas – the largest in state history.

"While so many Kansas communities are recovering from the recent wildfire outbreak, it is amazing to see the outpouring of generosity and support," said Eric Voss, vice president, Kansas State Firefighters Association.

Working with the Kansas State Firefighters Association, AT&T is helping support a text-to-give campaign for the Association. Donations will be used to assist rural Kansas fire departments with training and equipment purchases.

Wireless customers looking to provide support to Kansas fire departments can text-to-donate to the Kansas State Firefighters Association by texting WILDFIRES to 80077 to make a \$10 donation. When prompted, reply to confirm the donation.

co-opcalendar

APRIL

- 19 **Wheatland Annual Meeting.** Wichita County Community Bldg., 502 East M. Street, Leoti, meal 11:30 a.m., meeting 12:30 p.m.
- 19 **PCB/SPCC Seminar,** Holiday Inn, Salina
- 19-20 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting.** KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 20 **Twin Valley Annual Meeting.** LCHS Cafeteria, 401 S. High School St., Altamont, meal 6 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 21 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting.** Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 21 **Rolling Hills Annual Meeting.** Cooperative Headquarters, 3075B US Hwy. 24, Beloit, meal 5:30 p.m., meeting 6:30 p.m.
- 23-25 **NRECA Legislative Conference,** Washington, D.C.
- 27 **KEC HR Summit,** Wichita Marriott

MAY

- 4-5 **KEC IT Summit,** Courtyard Wichita at Old Town
- 10-11 **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting.** Wichita Marriott
- 17-18 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting.** Holiday Inn, Salina

KMSDA elects officers at spring meeting

The Kansas Member Services Directors Association's 2017 spring meeting was held March 29 to 31 at the Courtyard by Marriott Wichita at Old Town.

Elected as the 2017-2018 officers were: **STEVE HAUSLER**, Sunflower, president; **MIKE TWEEDY**, Lyon-Coffey, vice president; **KEVIN HEPTIG**, Bluestem, secretary; and **RON GRABER**, Heartland, treasurer.

The meeting kicked off with a presentation from **MARK HORST**, King Solar, and **MARK BARBEE**, KEPCo,

regarding KEPCo's Prairie Sky Solar Farm. Other speakers included **JUSTIN LABERGE**, NRECA, on leadership writing; **KRISTEN BRIGHTON**, New Boston Creative, on social media analytics; **DR. TIM DAVIS**, FHSU, with tips on diffusing volatile members; **ANDY NEIDERT**, ARCmedia, on increasing member engagement on social media; and **STEVE HANSON**, NRTC, on the benefits of the Nest Thermostat.

The 2017 fall KMSDA meeting will be Sept. 6 to 8 in Wichita.

upcomingtraining

HR Summit

KEC's 5th annual HR Summit is scheduled for April 27 at the Wichita Marriott. This training has been pre-approved for 1.50 Specified Re-certification Credit Hours: HR (General).

Speakers for this one-day training will include **KRISTINA DIETRICK**, CBS, who will discuss HR trends; **GARY GOELLER**, KCC, who will review the requirements of the DOT Driver Qualifications files; **DOUG FIERO**, NRECA, who will present a benefits update; and **KRISTIN BRIGHTON**, New Boston Creative Group, who will show how social media can expand the applicant pool. Also, Kansas' new NRECA Field Service Representative, **MALACHI STURLIN**, will be in attendance.

To register, contact Shana Read at sread@kec.org.

IT Summit

KEC has planned the next IT Summit for May 4 and 5 at Courtyard by Marriott Wichita at Old Town.

Speakers for this two-day training include **TIM FAWCETT**, Guernsey, who will review security information & event management; **SHANNON ROTHCHILD**, Nex-Tech, who will give a cybersecurity update; and **MARK BARBEE**, KEPCo, who will offer a tour of the Prairie Sky Solar Farm. On day two, **BILL WEST**, Federated, will discuss cybersecurity insurance; **MIKE MAHURIN**, AOS, will discuss endpoint protection; staff from KSU Polytech will give an update on drone technology; and **JASON MCGRADY**, Touchstone Energy, will highlight Lynda.com training opportunities.

To register, contact Carrie Kimberlin at ckimberlin@kec.org.

Pioneer

On March 18, Pioneer held its 73rd annual meeting at the Grant City Civic Center in Ulysses. There were more than 150 registered members present.

Prior to the meeting, Pioneer helped sponsor a free health fair with 24 booths from healthcare vendors. There were approximately 1,090 blood draws.

Re-elected to the board were **MELVIN WINGER, MIKE BREWER, and MARTIE FLOYD.**

Lyon-Coffey

Lyon-Coffey held its annual meeting on March 20 at Burlington High School. More than 500 members and guests enjoyed a fried chicken dinner.

Guest speakers included **STEVE SMITH** from Wolf Creek, KEPCo's **MARCUS HARRIS**, and Kansas Youth Leadership Council representative **CAITLIN SCHNEIDER**. Lyon-Coffey Manager Scott Whittington, honored retired trustee **DONNA WILLIAMS** for her 20 years of service to the Board.

Members re-elected **EUGENE HUSTON** and **WARREN SCHMIDT** to the Board and approved bylaw amendments regarding nomination procedures and mail-in ballots.

Ninnescah

Ninnescah held its 79th annual meeting on March 21 at the Pratt Municipal Building. Dinner was served to more than 300 members and guests.

Guest speakers included KEPCo's **MARCUS HARRIS** and KEC's **DOUG SHEPHERD**. Harris spoke about the Prairie Sky Solar Farm becoming a renewable energy source for KEPCo. Shepherd spoke about working together for a stronger voice, especially in politics. Youth Tour winners were announced.

Re-elected to the board were **LORI JOHNSON, EDWIN LENKNER, and KENNETH UNRUH.**

Caney Valley

Caney Valley held its 69th annual meeting on March 24 at the Cedar Vale school gymnasium.

Nearly 450 members and guests enjoyed a hamburger meal catered by

the Sedan Lions Club. Scholarship and youth camp winners were announced.

Re-elected to the board were **CORAL ANN MAGNUS, DAVID EVANS, and DAN HUBERT.** **STEVE CLARK** was introduced as a new Board member who was appointed to fill the position left vacant by the death of his father, **JIM CLARK.**

Heartland

Heartland held its annual meeting on March 28 at Fort Scott Community College. There were 68 registered members among the total attendance of 133 people.

Heartland recognized four departing board members for their years of service: **PATRICK JOHNSON, BOB STAINBROOK, DENNIS PECKMAN,** and Board President **SAM MARSH.**

Members elected **LARRY LINDBERG** and **LARRY STAINBROOK,** and re-elected **DEAN DAVID** to the board.

Doniphan

Following an open house of its renovated building, Doniphan held its annual meeting on March 30 at its headquarters in Troy. Hy-Vee catered a meal to more than 130 attendees.

BILL BIRNEL, Westar Energy, served as the guest speaker. The co-op recognized line superintendent **ART ATKINS** who retired after 50 years of service. A plaque was presented to the family of **ARLAN MITCHELL**, former General Manager, who died on Nov. 2, 2016.

Re-elected to the board were **MIKE COLLINS, NORMAN SIGRIST, and STEVE WHITTAKER.**

Prairie Land

Prairie Land held its annual meeting on April 4 at the co-op headquarters in Norton. Lunch was catered by P.H.A.T. Boys Catering to 350 members and guests.

SANDY BENOIT was introduced as a new Board member. She replaces **GILBERT BERLAND** who retired after 33 years of service to the Board.

The 2017 youth winners were introduced. More than 300 hand-drawn safety posters created by area third grade students were also on display.

Re-elected to the board via mail ballot were **JERRY GALLAGHER, RONALD GRIFFITH, MIKE ROGERS, and KEITH ROSS.**

DS&O

DS&O held its 79th annual meeting on April 4 at the Webster Conference Center in Salina. Approximately 370 attendees enjoyed a dinner catered by Ricky's Café.

Guest speaker **DAVID CARTER**, K-State Engineering Extension, encouraged members to be energy efficient and highlighted several online resources.

RON SEFERT, BRUCE SPARE, KEN HEDBERG, and DAVID MUELLER were re-elected to the Board.

Radiant

Radiant held its annual meeting on April 6 at the co-op headquarters in Fredonia. Approximately 500 barbecue meals, prepared by Radiant member Rory Hamilton, were served.

Guest speakers included KEC's **CAROL DORR** and KEPCo's **MARK BARBEE.** Several board members and employees were recognized for reaching milestone anniversaries, and scholarship recipients were announced.

LARRY FELTS was elected to the board to fill position left by **LOREN DICKENS'** retirement. **MICHAEL SPRINGER** and **NICK FRANKENBERY** were re-elected to the board.

Alfalfa

More than 700 members attended the Alfalfa annual meeting on April 7 at Cherokee High School. Dinner was served to approximately 1,650 attendees by Kleins Catering.

Members who had served in the military were given a special lapel pin. After the posting of the colors, the National Anthem, and Pledge of Allegiance, **JIM WARNER**, Lieutenant Colonel, Retired Vietnam Veteran recognized more than 120 current and former military personnel in attendance. This is a new tradition that the co-op plans to continue.

JOE WAGGONER and **JOE HISE** were re-elected to the board.

Midwest Energy meter reader shares award-winning talent

DAN BRANHAM, Meter Reader and General Helper at Great Bend, has a not-so-secret talent: an incredible self-taught ability to paint wildlife scenes on canvas that are so life-like and detailed, they resemble photographs.

"It seems to come natural," the lifelong Great Bend artist said.

"We grew up in the city, but when I was around five, we were spending a lot of time at a family farm, and I would be drawing the dogs, ducks, geese, and pheasants that were out there."

Branham continued developing his then-hobby through high school, earning an art scholarship at Barton County Community College. After school, he would do occasional commission work for family and friends. "I do a lot of dogs, mostly hunting dogs, but an occasional poodle," he said.

It wasn't until he began showing his work at shows in Great Bend, Topeka and Manhattan that he began enjoying commercial success.

In 2016, one of Branham's paintings won the People's Choice Award at the



Dan Branham

Kansas State Fair. One of the viewers at the fair was connected to the governor's office, which led to him being selected by Gov. Brownback as the 2018 Wildlife Artist of the Year for the Governor's One-Shot Turkey Hunt.

"That was a great honor," Branham said. "They select one artist each year for that, and to be considered along artists that have done the One-Shot before, I never thought I would get to that level. When I got the call, I was shocked and humbled."

Branham said it takes him about 150 to 170 hours to do a complete painting, at a rate of about 10 hours per week. He carries his personal cell phone with him when on his meter routes, and "sometimes I'll see a background that's so perfect, I'll say, 'that belongs in a painting' so I'll stop and get a picture."

Branham continues to sell his paintings at shows and exhibitions, and recently has branched into selling prints of his paintings. He's entering his work in as many regional shows as he can to build a name for himself and his work.

"I don't see myself as an artist. More than anything I'm a hunter, an outdoorsman, who just happens to be able to paint."

You can see more of Branham's work at <https://www.facebook.com/BranhamArtStudio>.



Branham's "Evening Refuge" painting won the People's Choice Award at the 2016 Kansas State Fair.

insympathv

Steven Hellwig

Steven Forrest Hellwig, son of retired DS&O Manager Don Hellwig, died March 24, 2017, at the family farm in rural Oswego, KS.

Funeral Mass was held March 31 at the Mother of God Catholic Church in Oswego.

Memorials may be made to the Hellwig Scholarship Fund in care of Derfelt Funeral Home, 203 Illinois St., Oswego, KS 67356.

Jim Foster

James B. "Jim" Foster, retired Twin Valley Board Member, died April 6 at Oswego Health and Rehab. He served on the board from 1972 through 1995.

Funeral Mass was held April 10 at the Mother of God Catholic Church in Oswego.

Memorials are suggested to The 506 Foundation, Inc. for a student scholarship to a member of the local FFA chapter. These may be mailed to Forbes-Hoffman Funeral Home, P.O. Box 374, Parsons, KS 67357.

jobmarket

Communications Specialist

Pioneer Electric is seeking a Communications Specialist. Responsibilities include preparing publications, news articles, video/commercials, newsletters and ads to promote programs and services. Applicants should have experience with desktop publishing and web design software. A bachelor's degree in communications or equivalent is required.

For a complete position description or to apply, contact Pioneer Electric, Attn: HR, PO Box 368, Ulysses, KS 67880, or mmorales@pioneerelectric.coop. Deadline is April 17, 2017.

Maintenance Technician

FreeState is seeking a Maintenance Technician for its Topeka office. This individual will schedule all vehicle maintenance, as well as assess and fix minor repairs on co-op vehicles and equipment. This position is responsible for the general maintenance of co-op facilities.

For a complete position description or to apply, contact Chelsea Renyer, HR Generalist, at chelsea.renyer@freestate.coop. Applications are available online at www.freestate.coop.