

Rural Power

INSIDE

- 2 | Calendar
- 3 | Kansas electric co-op annual meetings
- 4 | Lyon-Coffey linemen honor Arbor Day with the help of Osage City preschoolers

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

Two Kansas cooperatives approve consolidation

Kaw Valley Electric Cooperative and Leavenworth-Jefferson Electric Cooperative (LJEC) will begin 2017 as a single co-op called FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

At their annual meetings on April 19, Kaw Valley and LJEC announced the members' approval of the alliance. The membership passed the consolidation with approval percentages of 86 percent at Kaw Valley and 87 percent at LJEC.

"Consolidation is a positive step in the right direction for all of our members," said **STEVE FOSS**, CEO. "We are extremely excited about the potential moving forward and what opportunities lie ahead for our members, staff, and boards."

Offices in both locations, located about 46 miles apart, will remain open. The co-op's billing functions will move to the McLouth office, and FreeState Electric financial accounts will move to the Bank of McLouth. The Topeka office will house the call center functions and dispatching duties.

Twelve trustees, six from each district, will serve the newly formed FreeState Electric Board. These trustees were named in the articles of consolidation and consolidation agreement. Until January 1, 2017, both co-ops will continue oper-

ating under nine trustees.

Once the merger is complete, FreeState Electric will serve about 17,500 accounts in nine northeastern Kansas counties, making it the largest cooperative in Eastern Kansas.

"We see trends in the industry that point to this type of evolution, and this consolidation vote shows how forward-thinking and progressive our members are," Foss said. "This puts us in a great position as we look to technology, growth, and development of the area we service."

Kaw Valley and LJEC have been part of a strategic alliance since 2014. On October 3, 2014, the Boards voted to enter into an alliance in an effort to bring members rate stability and savings, and improve operating efficiencies by combining purchasing, billing and member service functions; sharing equipment, software and engineering services; and incorporating best practices and processes.

Over the next 10 years, the alliance is estimated to bring the cooperative \$20 million in savings. In March 2016, Kaw Valley and LJEC announced the new name and logo of the consolidation and named Foss, current LJEC General Manager, the CEO of the co-op alliance.



Kansas co-op advocates travel to Washington for annual Legislative Conference

From May 1-3, 20 employees and directors from electric cooperatives in Kansas met with staff for the state's Congressional Delegation while in Washington, D.C., for NRECA's Legislative Conference.

The two-day summit gave 1,500 co-op officials information on issues critical to maintaining affordable and reliable electric service to 42 million co-op members nationwide. This year's program featured speakers who provided a unique perspective to what is happening in Washington as well as the upcoming presidential election. There were sessions on key issues including energy tax incentives, pole attachments, and FEMA.

"Our visits were an important opportunity to strengthen awareness of the cooperatives and build relationships with staff of our Kansas Congressional delegation. We communicate regularly and so our issues and our

co-op principles are familiar to the delegation. So familiar, in fact, that Will Ruder, Senator Moran's Deputy Legislative Director, was purposeful in using the term 'members' rather than customers," said Bruce Graham, KEC's CEO. "Thank you to those from the electric cooperative family who invested the time and energy to participate in this critical association initiative."

The Kansas delegation consisted of: Bruce Graham, Kim Christiansen, and Alex Orel, KEC; Dale Coomes, Heartland; Marcus Harris, Bill Riggins, and Phil Wages, KEPCo; Steve Foss, LJEC; Earnie Lehman, Midwest Energy; Steve Epperson and Perry Rubart, Pioneer; Dave Childers, Sedgwick County; Stuart Lowry and Clare Gustin, Sunflower; Ron Holsteen, Twin Valley; Shane Laws, Victory; James Christopher, DS&O; Mike Morton, Bluestem; Doug Jackson, Rolling Hills; and Bruce Mueller, Wheatland.



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Kansas co-op KARL members travel to DC



Wheatland's Shawn Powelson (left) and Midwest Energy's Tim Flax pose in front of the White House during their D.C. visit.

Midwest Energy's Vice President of Information Technology **TIM FLAX** and Wheatland's Manager of Member Services **SHAWN POWELSON** traveled to Washington D.C., in mid-March as members of Class XIII of the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership (KARL) program.

The members of the program visited with Kansas Senators Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts.

"It was good to hear all of the things that Senators Moran and Roberts are doing for Kansans," said Flax. "It was also important to see all the trials that they have to go through to get things done."

KARL members met with agriculture lobbyists to better understand their function in industries such as corn and ethanol that play a big role in Kansas' economy. The group also toured popular attractions including the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery and museums.

"One of the sites that stuck out the most was the Holocaust Museum," explained Flax. "The fact that such horrible things were done to millions of people, and not too long ago, is something that stays with you when you see exhibits of it in person."

The KARL program is a two-year course that offers study, training and travel for future agriculture and rural leaders in Kansas. Over the course of the program, class members attend nine in-state seminars as well as a few out of state.

The Washington, D.C., trip marks the end of Class XIII's first year, and the group plans to visit Chile in July 2017.

co-opcalendar

MAY

- 10 KAMO Annual Meeting.** Chateau on the Lake, 415 State Hwy. 265, Branson, MO; meal 6 p.m., meeting 7 p.m.
- 11 Western Annual Meeting.** co-op headquarters, 635 S. 13th St., WaKeeney; meal 12 p.m., meeting 1 p.m.
- 11-12 KEC Board of Trustees Meeting.** Marriott Hotel, Wichita
- 17-18 RESAP Observer Training.** Hilton DoubleTree, Wichita Airport
- 18-19 KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting.** Drury Plaza Broadview, Wichita
- 20 Sunflower Electric Power Corporation Annual Meeting.** Western Cooperative, WaKeeney; Meeting 8 a.m., meal 12 p.m.
- 24-25 KEC IT Summit.** Courtyard Marriott Old Town, Wichita

JUNE

- 2-3 REC Manager's Spring Meeting.** Marriott Hotel, Wichita

jobmarket

Kaw Valley seeks Assistant General Manager

Kaw Valley Electric, Topeka, seeks an Assistant General Manager. This position is responsible for managing and supervising the overall operations and organization of the Cooperative Alliance of Kaw Valley (west division) and Leavenworth-Jefferson (east division) toward the future consolidation to FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

The disciplines which the Assistant General Manager will have primary accountability for include engineering, operations, compliance and resource management.

A bachelor's degree and a minimum of five years of work-related experience in electric utilities is preferred. Must possess a thorough knowledge of electric cooperative operations; have knowledge of local, state and federal

policies; possess knowledge of accounting and budget development; employee and public relations; be able to supervise employees and assume responsibility in the CEO's absence; and must have a high degree of interpersonal skills with the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently.

Position comes with health insurance, dental, vision, and 401K retirement plan.

To apply, please send a resume and completed employment application by June 3 to Lisa Scott, Director of Human Resources at lisa.scott@kve.coop.

Find the complete job description and application at kve.coop under About Us, Employment Opportunities. Call 800-794-2011 with questions. EOE.

annualmeetings

Twin Valley

Twin Valley's annual meeting was held on April 7, 2016, at the Labette County High School in Altamont. 94 members registered for the meeting.

Dinner from Chicken Annie's was served to more than 150 members and guests. **KEN COLE**, Special Projects Superintendent, received a certificate for his 40 years of service. **DAVID HUBBELL** was recognized for 15 years of service on the Board.

Re-elected to the board were **DAN PETERSON**, **BRYAN HUCKE**, and **LARRY "DAVID" HUBBELL**. Also **DIANE MCCARTNEY** was elected for a two-year period to fill in the remaining term of Ronald McNickle.

Radiant

More than 200 members attended Radiant's 68th annual meeting, held at the co-op's headquarters in Fredonia on April 7.

Special guests included KEC's Bob Hall and KEPCo's Marc Doljac, and Pam Henderson from Sen. Jerry Moran's office. Hall spoke about services provided by KEC and current issues affecting electric co-ops, and Doljac spoke about power supply elements.

LUKE PLUMMER, **AUSTIN NELSEN**, and **HALEY THOMPSON** were presented scholarship awards by the Merit Scholarship Committee.

TOM AYERS and **SANDRA SMITH** were re-elected to the board.

CMS

A total of 225 members and guests attended the CMS annual meeting at Meade High School on April 7.

Special guests at the meeting were KEC's Alex Orel, KEPCo's Les Evans, CFC's Mike Lewis, and John Beard from Congressman Tim Huelskamp's office.

Scholarship winners **MADISON ANGELL**, **BRITANNY WALKER**, **ANNA-MARIE LAUPPE**, **KAITLYNN JONES**, **BAYLER KELLY**, and **KAYLA OLSON** were announced and presented a certificate and pen set.

RON OLIVER, **MICHAEL R. JOHNSON**, and **JOE MURPHY** were all re-elected to the board.

Alfalfa

Alfalfa held its 80th annual meeting April 8 at Cherokee High School. Approximately 1,400 people, including 603 members, attended.

The Prairie Rose Rangers performed. Board President Dennis Ferrel joined trustees Dr. Carl Newton and Debbie Ferguson, in expressing appreciation for the opportunity to serve the co-op. Ferrel and Ferguson stepped down due to term limits, and Newton opted not to seek re-election.

Newly-elected were **MARK ANGLE**, **JULIE RUSSELL**, and **JOE WOODS**.

DS&O

DS&O's annual meeting was held on April 12, at the Webster Conference Center in Salina. More than 180 members registered for the meeting.

Dinner from Ricky's Cafe was served to 398 members and guests. Attendees heard presentations on the recently completed cost-of-service study and a time-of-use rate structure change.

MIKE ALEXANDER, who retired after 29 years of service, was presented a meter lamp. Prior to the meeting, linemen gave a safety demonstration using their high-voltage safety trailer.

Re-elected to the board via mail ballot were **JIM CHRISTOPHER**, **BRIAN LANG**, and **DOUG LINDAHL**. Also, a bylaw amendment passed that dispenses with the elections and potentially the mailing of ballots to members if it is an uncontested elections for all candidates.

Victory

More than 470 members attended Victory's 71st annual meeting at the Western State Bank Expo in Dodge City on April 12. Approximately 754 meals were served to members and guests.

2015 Youth Tour Winners, **JALEN GIFFORD** and **ZALMA MOLINA**, joined camp winners, **JO'BETH OCHS** and **AUNDRIA OGLES**, in sharing their experiences with the attendees. The 2016 winners of both trips, as well as the Lightner Community Spirit Scholarships, were announced.

Re-elected to the board were **GARY GILLESPIE**, **JIM OCHS**, **RICHARD LIGHTNER**, and **PAT MORSE**.

Rolling Hills

Rolling Hills' 14th annual meeting was held April 15 at the Wellness Center Gymnasium in Beloit. Approximately 125 members and 150 guests were served dinner.

The 2015 Youth Tour participants, **HARLEY SCHUSTER**, and Youth Leadership Camp, **LEXI JEFFERY**, reported on their trip experiences. KEPCo's **MARCUS HARRIS** discussed diversified sources of power, EPA actions, and the upcoming elections.

JIM EHRLICH was re-elected to the board, and **JOHN GEORGE** and **MIKE BRZON** were newly elected via mail-in ballots conducted in December.

Sumner-Cowley

Sumner-Cowley held its annual meeting at Wellington High School on April 16. More than 220 members and guests attended.

Special guests included KEPCo's Shawn Geil; District Director for Congressman Mike Pompeo, Scott Bishop; and KEC's Kim Christiansen who spoke about the Co-ops Vote initiative.

Re-elected to the board were **JOHN WHITTINGTON**, **JEFF SWANSON**, and **RONALD JEFFRIES**.

LJEC

A total of 315 people, including 124 members, attended LJEC's annual meeting located at McLouth High school on April 19.

The proposal to consolidate LJEC

and Kaw Valley was approved by 87 percent of LJEC member votes.

Special guests included KEPCo's Marcus Harris, Representative Connie O'Brien, and Michelle Payne representing Senator Jerry Moran's office. Youth tour participant and the current Kansas representative to the Youth Leadership Council, **EMMA DEMARANVILLE**, shared her experiences with the attendees.

AMBROSE DEMPSEY, former LJEC Board President, was recognized for being posthumously inducted into the 2016 Kansas Cooperative Council Hall of Fame.

JEANINE MURPHY, **HARLAN HUNT**, and **RALPH PHILLIPS** were re-elected to the board.

Kaw Valley

More than 900 people attended Kaw Valley's annual meeting located at its headquarters in Topeka on April 19.

The proposal to consolidate LJEC and Kaw Valley was approved by 86 percent of Kaw Valley member votes.

Special guests at the meeting included KEC's Doug Shepherd, Alex Orel, and Vicki Estes; as well as Joe Badger from Sen. Jerry Moran's office.

JERRY MANNING, who started at Kaw Valley in 1982 and has served as General Manager since 2011, announced his retirement and was presented a plaque thanking him for his years of service.

Re-elected to the board were **ROBERT SAGE**, **BOB LYNCH** and **LARRY BUTEL**.

Ark Valley

Ark Valley's 77th annual meeting was held at the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson on April 19. Approximately 575 people, including 270 members, attended.

Retired Pastor Alden Dick from Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, gave the invocation. Rodney Hurst, Plevna, gave the report of the Nominating Committee. **COLT SUTTON**, winner of the KEC Youth Tour and scholarship competition, presented his winning essay to the members.

BUDD FOUNTAIN and **JOE SEIWERT** were re-elected to the board.

Osage City Preschoolers help Lyon-Coffey celebrate Arbor Day

Lyon-Coffey Electric Cooperative joined forces with the City of Osage City, the City Tree Board, and a local preschool to celebrate Arbor Day.

Co-op linemen planted two trees in Osage City's Lincoln Park on April 27. The co-op donated two red oak trees, the equipment, and staff time for the celebration.

The celebration began with **KATHY WEBSTER**, City Tree Board Member, who spoke to the preschoolers about the importance of Arbor Day. **MIKE TWEEDY**, Lyon-Coffey Member Services, explained the origins of the holiday.



Lyon-Coffey lineman, Bryce Morgan, is assisted by local preschoolers to plant trees in honor of Arbor Day.

"Arbor Day is a reminder that we have responsibilities that extend beyond our own backyards," Tweedy said. "It challenges us to take seriously our job as caretakers of our natural environment. We are fortunate to band together with our neighbors to

leave the environment in a better state than we may have found it."

Members of the City Tree Board, Osage City staff, and co-op linemen were helped by preschool volunteers for the planting of each tree. This event was the second year Lyon-Coffey has donated trees in honor of Arbor Day.

Lyon-Coffey announces new headquarters location

After several years of studying and planning a centralized location, Lyon-Coffey recently announced that its Board has approved building a headquarters facility at Beto Junction (intersection of I-35 and Hwy 75).

The Emporia office will remain open to accept payments.

The Board retained the services of Stava Construction to design and build a structure. Stava has experience in constructing commercial buildings throughout Kansas and the Midwest, and has been the primary builder for several CVS Pharmacies and Dollar General Stores.

Construction of the new cooperative building should begin sometime during the summer of 2016.

Youth Tour alumna wins grant to improve local nursing home

ASHLYN TAYLOR, Heartland's 2015 Youth Tour delegate, was selected as the Kansas recipient of a \$500 grant through the service organization GenerationOn.

Taylor and her fellow Erie chapter Future Farmers of

America (FFA) members used the grant to make improvements to the outdoor space at Guest Home Estates.

"While attending a leadership conference, I was pondering various service projects I would like to conduct over the coming year. The local Erie FFA chapter was also looking for an opportunity to conduct a service project," she explained.

"So, through collaboration, we determined that we wanted an agriculture and fabrication-related project to conduct for the coming year. By constructing swings for the local nursing home, we were able to make those



Ashlyn Taylor poses in front of the Washington Monument on the 2015 Youth Tour.

requirements and help local community members at the same time," she added.

In addition to the new swings, Taylor used the money to plant a new flower bed for residents.

"Often times, nursing home residents are overlooked when it comes to major community service projects," she stated. "It was a phenomenal feeling to lead the service project. It always feels nice to help others in the community."

The nursing home residents are grateful for the Erie FFA chapter and the new improvements they made to their residence. Previously, they were unable to spend a lot of time outside due to lack of seating, but this year they have enjoyed gathering outdoors to soak up the spring weather in the new swings.

NRECA partnered with GenerationOn, a global youth service movement, to provide service project grants to Youth Tour participants. Students have used the \$500

grants to jump-start service projects that range from providing food for those in need, art supplies for younger generations and joy and laughter for seniors.

"Concern for community is the seventh cooperative principle and this next generation of leaders has embraced it so readily. For 56 years, Kansas electric cooperatives have sent students to our nation's capital to meet with elected officials, witness government in action and gain valuable leadership skills," said KEC's CEO Bruce Graham. "We're pleased that this program has offered additional opportunities for these students to engage with their local communities."



Ashlyn Taylor, Heartland's 2015 Youth Tour delegate and GenerationOn grant winner, partnered with other members of her FFA chapter to build these swings for local nursing home residents.