

# Rural Power

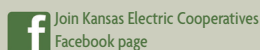
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Please send any story ideas to [ruralpower@kec.org](mailto:ruralpower@kec.org).



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## Co-op line crews battle a week of damaging storms

From May 24-26, a crop of tornadoes kept electric cooperatives in Kansas busy. At least seven electric cooperatives were directly affected by the storms. Crews replaced broken poles and rebuilt lines to restore power to their members.

### May 24, 2016

The first round of tornadoes hit western Kansas on May 24. At the height of the storm activity, Victory experienced more than 8,000 outages. Across its service territory, Victory suffered damage from up to 10 reported tornadoes. Line crews worked through the storms to restore power.

"We lost numerous structures including a three-quarter mile stretch of 34.5 kV line," said **JERRI IMGARTEN**, Victory's Manager of Marketing and Communications.

Immediately after a tornado touched down about 4 miles west of town that afternoon, Wheatland reported at least 400 services out. Power was restored to all affected members by early evening.

"We also had a roof from a barn get tossed up into 115 kV lines of our G&T, Sunflower," said **SHAWN POWELSON**, Wheatland's Manager of Member Services and Corporate Communications.

"Later in the evening, we suffered minor storm damage in the city of Great Bend due to straight line winds and tree debris," said Powelson. He added that nearly 500 meters were temporarily knocked out, but most were quickly restored.

Midwest Energy worked to replace 13 poles after line crews quickly restored service to about 1,200 members who lost power due to lightning strikes and high winds the previous evening.

In Dighton, Lane-Scott reported widespread



LJEC Journeyman Lineman Greg Kramer clears a downed tree from a line following severe weather on May 26.

outages across its system.

"Crews worked long hours to repair the damage to poles, insulators and lines," said **ED WILTSE**, General Manager. "I think we lost 20 to 30 poles."

### May 25, 2016

During the evening of May 25, approximately 20 homes were damaged or destroyed in a

rural area of northern Kansas served by DS&O. Reports cited a wedge tornado about a half mile wide that wreaked havoc in Dickinson County. The co-op lost approximately 100 poles and 6 miles of line. DS&O Lineman Kevin Stroud lost his home.

Three cooperatives, Ark Valley, Bluestem, and Rolling Hills, sent mutual aid to DS&O.

### May 26, 2016

On May 26, another storm cell produced hail and damaging winds in LJEC's service area. The co-op had significant tree damage that caused approximately 800 outages.

"Our crew cut a lot of trees and restrung quite a bit of wire," said **SARAH FARLEE**, Public Relations and Marketing Specialist for the LJEC and Kaw Valley Alliance. "Luckily we did not



DS&O Lineman Kevin Stroud lost his home in a May 25 tornado.

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## Great Plains Energy to acquire Westar Energy

Great Plains Energy, Inc., the parent company of Kansas City Power and Light Company, has entered into an agreement to acquire Westar Energy, Inc., in a cash and stock transaction. After the closure of the transaction, which is expected in Spring 2017, Westar will become a fully owned subsidiary of Great Plains Energy.

Great Plains Energy said the transaction enterprise value was estimated around \$12.2 billion, including about \$8.6 billion in total stock and cash consideration and the assumption of about \$3.6 billion in Westar's debt. Once the transaction is completed, Great Plains Energy estimates it would have more than 1.5 million customers in Kansas and Missouri, close to 13,000 MW of generation capacity, nearly 10,000 miles of transmission lines, and more than 51,000 miles of distribution lines.

Currently, Great Plains and Westar jointly own and operate the La Cygne and Jeffrey power plants, and, along with KEPCo, jointly own and operate Wolf Creek Nuclear Generating Station. The transaction is subject to approvals from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

## co-opcalendar

### JUNE

- 9-16 **Electric Cooperative Youth Tour**, Washington, D.C.
- 17 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays

### JULY

- 4 **Independence Day Holiday**, KEC Office Closed
- 15 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 20-21 **KEPCo Board of Directors Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 16-22 **Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp**, Steamboat Springs, CO
- 19 **Lane-Scott Annual Meeting**, Lane County Fairgrounds, Dighton; meal 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:30 p.m.
- 30-31 **KEC Summer Meeting**, Marriott Hotel, Overland Park

## 2nd annual KEC IT Summit focuses on security issues

KEC held its second annual IT Summit from May 24-25 at the Courtyard by Marriott in Old Town, Wichita. The training attracted 20 information technology employees from across Kansas and Nebraska.

"This training provides a chance to network with our peers from other co-ops and learn about new technologies that we see as beneficial to us in the near future," said Jevin Kasselman, Director of Broadband and IT at Wheatland Electric Cooperative. "I hope to see future IT Summits remain just as interesting and relevant."

Kasselman stated that while all presentations at the IT Summit were interesting, security was "a hot topic" for all.

Over the course of two days, attendees heard a variety of presentations involving cyber-security policies, SonicWall demonstrations, business transformation planning, and Microsoft licensing. A roundtable discussion was also included, allowing attendees to openly discuss current issues and technology.

Presenters at this year's IT Summit included Kris Parker, Alexander Open Systems; Jacob Julian, DUO; Bill Branch, Sunflower Electric; Eric Eberle, NISC; Kyle Kopczyk, Power System Engineering; and Trey Cross, ACES.

For more information, email Carrie Kimberlin, KEC's Manager of Creative Solutions, at [ckimberlin@kec.org](mailto:ckimberlin@kec.org).

### Wheatland

Wheatland's 68th annual meeting was held on April 20 in Tribune with approximately 165 members and guests in attendance.

**MALLORY HORTON**, 2015 youth leadership camp winner, shared her experiences, and the 2016 winners were announced. Wheatland awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to 12 local high school seniors.

During the meeting, Wheatland General Manager **BRUCE MUELLER** and staff recapped the past year and highlighted upcoming plans for the cooperative.

Sunflower's **STUART LOWRY** also presented at the meeting.

Re-elected to the board were **LAWRENCE HOUSTON**, **WES CAMPBELL**, **ROBERT HISS**, and **WILLIAM BARNES**.

### KAMO

KAMO's 75th annual meeting was held at the Chateau on the Lake in Branson, MO, on May 10. Approximately 294 guests were in attendance.

Elected to the board were **J.B. KILLGORE**, **ED KLOECKLER**, **LARRY CULWELL**, **MARTIN YOUNGBLOOD**, **DAVID TROGDON**, and **JOHN HIBDON**.

### Western

Western held its 71st annual meeting on May 11 in WaKeeney with approximately 200 members, guests, and employees in attendance.

The cooperative made their first webcast presentation that reached Ellsworth, Olmitz, and Plainville members.

**L.T. COBURN**, 2015 Youth Tour winner, shared his Washington D.C. experience, and the 2016 winners were

announced. Sunflower's **STUART LOWRY** spoke as a guest.

During the meeting, Western history was made as the first female board member, **SUSAN ROHLER**, was elected. Re-elected to the board were **FRANK JOY** and **CHARLES LUETTERS**.

### Sunflower

Sunflower held its annual meeting on May 20 at Western's headquarters in Wakeeney with approximately 40 people in attendance.

**TODD BARTLING**, Vice President of Renewables Development of National Renewables Cooperative Organization, was the guest speaker.

Re-elected to the board were **ED WILTSE**, **ALLAN MILLER**, **STEPHEN EPPERSON**, **SHANE LAWS**, **DARRIN LYNCH**, and **BRUCE MUELLER**.



# Wheatland's Powelson awarded Touchstone Energy Brand Champion

**SHAWN POWELSON**, Wheatland's Manager of Member Services and Corporate Communications, was awarded the 2016 Touchstone Energy Brand Champion Award on May 11 at the Connect Conference. Along with three other dedicated co-op employees, Powelson was recognized for his exceptional efforts in making the Touchstone Energy brand come alive for his members.

"This honor shines the spotlight on dedicated employees who have shown leadership, effectiveness, and consistency while building the brand," said KEC's Shana Read who also serves as the Kansas Touchstone Energy Regional Member Representative.

"It's always an honor to be recognized for any achievement, and I'm grateful for this award," Powelson said.

"However, as all of us know, very few things happen in the cooperative world as the result of one person's efforts. I work for a great co-op and have been able to put together a great team over the last couple of years. So really it's an award for all of us."

In 2014, Powelson initiated Wheatland's "Cram the Van" program. This food drive was held during a two-month



On May 11, Touchstone Energy Cooperatives COO Mary McLaury named Shawn Powelson, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, as one of the 2016 Brand Champions.

period and featured 11 stops in 10 counties served by the co-op. He also arranged for additional food drop-off locations. In total, the program collected 6,615 pounds of food for those in need in Western Kansas and raised \$850 in cash donations.

"The Touchstone Energy Brand Champion award is presented to those who have made exceptional contributions to building the brand. Shawn is a shining example of why the brand is as strong and successful as it is today," said KEC's CEO Bruce Graham. "This type of leadership on behalf of the Touchstone Energy brand has had an impact in their local, regional and state communities."

The Connect Conference is an annual event for electric cooperative communication, marketing and member service professionals. The 2016 conference was held in Portland, OR, and brought together more than 550 co-op professionals.

Previous winners of this award in Kansas include Butler's **TRAVIS GRIFFIN** (2010), Western's **DENNIS DEINES** (2011), Sunflower's **NIKKI PFANNENSTIEL** (2012), and KEC's **SHANA READ** (2013).

## Pioneer Electric helps give high school students a dose of truth at Reality U

We've all heard that money doesn't grow on trees, but that concept is often difficult to teach to teenagers. However, Pioneer Electric recognized the importance of teaching teens a sense of financial responsibility through the program Reality U.



Dee Longoria, Pioneer Electric Energy Services Specialist, helps a student calculate her remaining finances during Reality U.

Every year, freshmen at Ulysses High School spend a morning participating in the program. They complete a lifestyle survey that asks where they think they'll be at age 26. Then they're assigned a salary based on the median wage for Kansas and get a credit score based on their real GPA. That's when the goal of Reality U sets in.

"If they have a 1.4 GPA, their credit score is not going to be high and everything they go to buy is going to be more expensive," said Jen Hittle, Executive Director of Tigers in Action of Grant

County, which runs Reality U.

"Each student also purchases a house," said Hittle. "All of the available houses have actually been on the market locally." Students also purchase a vehicle based on local prices and family

requirements.

"They'll need utility services, and that's where Pioneer Electric helps out—talking about the cost of electricity, gas, water, and trash collection.

"Students come to the booth and together we work out what their monthly cost for utilities would be," said Drew Waechter, Communications Specialist. He said it's an eye-opener.

"We are often met with comments like, 'Oh, I didn't know that we had to pay for that.' It is interesting to get a glimpse into how each student prioritizes their finances," Waechter said.

"It's really an amazing opportunity to give the kids a dose of reality," Hittle said. "It gives them a little added respect for what their parents go through."

For Pioneer, it's all about commitment to community.

"By investing in our youth, we are able to ensure the further growth of the communities that we serve," said Waechter. "Our hope is that wherever life may take these students, they know that Pioneer Electric will be here to support them."

By Michael W. Kahn, NRECA  
Published in the May 9, 2016, issue of ECT

## Rolling Hills moves into its new headquarters

The staff of Rolling Hills is moving to their new office in Beloit this week. Office equipment is being relocated from Ellsworth, Belleville, and Mankato offices.

The move comes less than a year after the official ground-breaking ceremony which was held on July 22, 2015. The cooperative plans a grand opening and ribbon cutting on July 8.

# Touchstone Energy cooperatives sponsor ElectroRally races

Students from across the state learned how to strategize with electricity in this spring's Touchstone Energy ElectroRally races. High school students competed in Beloit on April 14 and in Olathe on May 7.

The Kansas ElectroRally, which was started in 1999, is made up of a series of races held for electric vehicles (EVs). Touchstone Energy cooperatives in Kansas sponsor two races annually.

"The races are usually hosted by schools that are sponsored by their electric cooperative," said Brian Dreiling, Manager of Energy Services at Midwest Energy. "We have been trying to have more races in the eastern part of the state, and with Touchstone Energy cooperatives sponsoring this event, we were able to do just that."

Kansas high school teams design, build, and race EVs and compete to complete the most laps in one hour. The EVs are powered by batteries and are single-driver, lightweight, aerodynamic, and highly efficient.

"It is all about the hands-on, front-line experience," said Shawn Powelson, Wheatland Electric Cooperative manager of Member Services and Corporate Communications. "Exposing students to this kind of experience in high school inspires ingenuity, requires dedication and instills a sense of pride."

Students learn many skills by participating in these events. They acquire problem solving, industrial arts, teamwork and even writing skills. They have to work together to meet requirements, build the vehicle themselves, and write a report over their work on the vehicle.

In the future, Powelson hopes to see more cooperatives

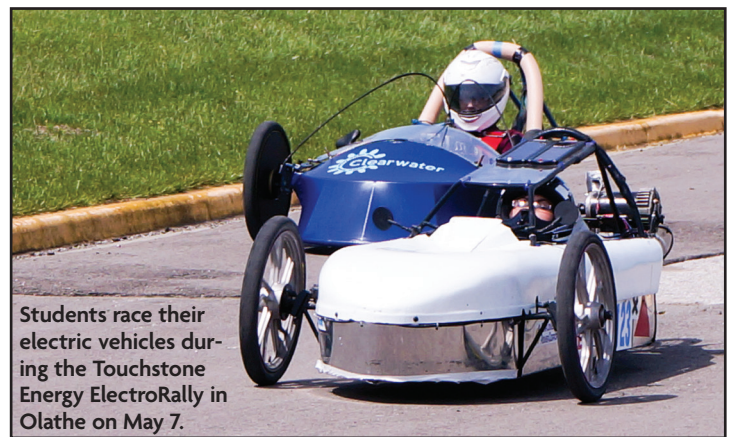
get involved in these races in order to reach more students across the state.

"This is an incredible learning opportunity for students involved in these programs," he said. "More students across the state should have that same opportunity, and who better to partner with than their local cooperative?"

Powelson said the more cooperatives are involved in ElectroRally, the more schools will be able to participate in this learning opportunity.

"Hopefully, the kids will grow up to be engineers, inventors, or who knows what else," Powelson said. "Maybe they will come back and live in our communities – maybe even to work at their local electric cooperative."

For photos or details on the individual races, visit [www.kansaselectrorally.org](http://www.kansaselectrorally.org).



Students race their electric vehicles during the Touchstone Energy ElectroRally in Olathe on May 7.

## Damaging storms, cont.

have to replace any poles."

Kaw Valley line crews were sent to restore damage northwest of Topeka in the Silver Lake area. The area was hit with hail and damaging winds.

"The crew replaced one pole, and they had a couple of buildings near Silver Lake that had significant damage and had to be disconnected," Farlee explained. "Lighting and wind caused outages near Auburn, Burlingame, and southwest of Lawrence."

Victory suffered more damage on May 26 near the town of Wright.

"We lost six 34.5 kV poles due to straight-line winds," said **RYAN MILLER**, Victory's Operations Supervisor.

There have been no fatalities reported from these storms. The co-op crews kept their eyes on the weather throughout the Memorial Day weekend, but thankfully the threat of tornadoes, large hail, strong winds, and flash flooding was minimal.

## SPP awards first FERC Order 1000 project to Mid-Kansas Electric

Mid-Kansas Electric Company was awarded the Southwest Power Pool's first FERC Order 1000 transmission project on April 26. SPP, a Regional Transmission Organization with members in 14 states, received 11 proposals for the Walkemeyer Phase II Project, a 22.6-mile, 115 kV line from Walkemeyer to North Liberal in southwest Kansas.

FERC Order 1000 requires RTOs to allow competitive bidding on all regionally funded projects that are larger than 100 kV and not needed within three years. The SPP planning process identifies transmission expansions on three criteria: reliability, economics, and public policy.

The SPP board and Members Committee supported an industry expert panel's recommendation to award the project to Mid-Kansas, with Oklahoma Gas & Electric as the alternate.

"Mid-Kansas is pleased to be selected by the SPP Board of Directors as recommended by the Industry Expert Panel," said Stuart Lowry, Mid-Kansas President and CEO. "I'm incredibly proud of the proposal submitted by our project

team, led by Dr. Al Tamimi, Vice President of Transmission Planning and Policy; COO Kyle Nelson; and CFO Davis Rooney."

Although Mid-Kansas won the bid, the company has requested a restudy of the project to see if the project remains necessary. In 2013, SPP's 10-year planning study showed a need. Since then, the oil and gas loads forecasted have decreased. The load forecast has also been impacted by the removal of Mid-Kansas' Cimarron River Station's auxiliary load.

"We are mindful that the desired end of the process is to plan and construct transmission projects needed to appropriately balance reliable service with customer cost," Lowry said. "For that reason, Mid-Kansas requested, and the SPP staff endorsed, a restudy of the project to confirm the project is needed for reliability purposes. We see this request as an important stewardship responsibility to the other SPP stakeholders."

It is anticipated that SPP staff will report the results of their re-evaluation of the project at the summer SPP board meeting.