

WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS



Wheatland Electric Co-op, Inc.

Board of Trustees

William Barnes
President
Wes Campbell
Vice President
Dan Bonine
Treasurer
Stacey Addison-Howland
Secretary
Mark Arnold
Trustee
Vic Case
Trustee
Katie Eisenhour
Trustee
Bob Hiss
Trustee
John Kleysteuber
Trustee
Mike Thon
Trustee

District Offices

Garden City – 620-275-0261
2005 W Fulton, P.O. Box 973
Garden City, KS 67846
Great Bend – 620-793-4223
2300 Broadway, P.O. Box 1446
Great Bend, KS 67530
Harper – 620-896-7090
906 Central, P.O. Box 247
Harper, KS 67058
Leoti – 620-375-2632
N Hwy 25, P.O. Box 966
Leoti, KS 67861
Scott City-Main – 620-872-5885
101 Main St., P.O. Box 230
Scott City, KS 67871
Syracuse – 620-384-5171
206 1/2 N Main
P.O. Box 1010
Syracuse, KS 67878
Tribune – 620-376-4231
310 Broadway
P.O. Box 490
Tribune, KS 67879

FROM THE MANAGER

Legislative Update & Remember, it's Annual Meeting Time

Over the last few months, I have shared information and updated you on one of the biggest challenges we've faced over the last few years: protecting the electric service territories of the Kansas electric co-ops. I am pleased to report that Sub Senate Bill 323 was signed by Governor Colyer on March 5, 2018, and became effective (law) on March 9, 2018. The new statute assists the Kansas electric co-ops in the following ways:

- ▶ **NOTICE:** the municipality must give the electric co-op 30 days notice of plans to annex a co-op's assigned service territory. This will give the co-op a chance to put in evidence to retain its territory.
- ▶ **STANDARD OF REVIEW:** in the annexation proceedings, before a municipality can take a co-op's assigned service territory, the municipality has to supply substantial competent evidence that its electric service is in the best interest of the public, and is now required to take the co-op's evidence on this issue.
- ▶ **SCOPE OF REVIEW:** during an annexation proceeding appeal, the district court can allow additional evidence if it's not included in the record presented by the municipality.
- ▶ **COMPENSATION:** on any bare ground annexation, the municipality must reimburse the electric co-op for

future revenues lost by the annexation in the amount of 8.5 percent of the gross annual revenue for 10 years.

This new law was a compromise bill, which the Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC) and the Kansas Municipal Utilities (KMU) worked together on. The bill passed the Senate 38-0 and the House 117-0. This bill passage was due to the hard work by the KEC staff and leadership, the KEC Board and Legislative Committee and the electric co-ops of Kansas.

I want to make it clear that the electric co-ops of Kansas want cities to continue to grow and we want to grow with them. As cities grow we want a chance to serve our designated service territory or to be compensated fairly when we lose that territory. The passage of this legislation is a big step forward in that regard.

Three of the fastest growing electric co-ops neighbor three of the fastest growing cities in the country (Austin, Texas, San Antonio, Texas and Atlanta, Georgia). We can grow together and we look forward to that opportunity in the future with all of the cities in and around our service territory.



Bruce W. Mueller

Continued on page 16F ▶

Operating Statement

for year ended 12/31/2017 (Unaudited)

Revenues

Electric Operating Revenue \$95,900,930

Expenses

Cost of Power 56,463,727
 Operations & Maintenance 8,068,086
 Administrative & General 7,879,055
 Depreciation 8,804,831
 Interest 6,708,048
 Taxes 4,441,858
 Other 93,543

Total Expenses 92,459,148

Operating Margins \$3,441,782

Non-Operating Items

Interest Income 705,564
 Income from Equity Investments 849,934
 Loss from Subsidiaries (1) (1,635,681)
 Other Capital Credits 796,822

Margins without Sunflower Capital Credits \$4,158,421

Sunflower Capital Credits (2) 4,506,018

Total Margins \$8,664,439

(1) Water and Broadband operations.

(2) This amount is Wheatland's share of 2017 earnings of Sunflower Electric Power Corp. This allocation is not in cash and will be available to Wheatland's members at such time as it is paid out by Sunflower.

Balance Sheet

as of 12/31/2017 (Unaudited)

Assets

Electric Plant \$293,186,825
 Non-Electric Assets 73,741,116
 Less: Depreciation (101,254,219)
 Net Plant 265,673,722
 Investments 91,352,534
 Cash & Short-Term Investments 5,694,563
 Receivables 11,297,371
 Materials & Supplies 3,014,566
 Prepayments & Other 306,697
 Other Current Assets & Deferred 4,624,833

Total Assets \$381,964,286

Liabilities

Long-Term Debt \$215,881,731
 Payables 45,368,192
 Other Liabilities 7,567,312

Total Liabilities \$268,817,235

Equities

Patronage Capital \$112,134,021
 Other Capital 1,013,030

Total Equities \$113,147,051

Total Liabilities and Equity \$381,964,286

Official Notice of Annual Meeting for Wheatland Electric Members

The 70th annual meeting of the members of Wheatland Electric will be held Wednesday, April 25, at the William Carpenter 4-H Building, 608 Fairground Road, in Scott City, Kansas.

Lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m. CDT. The business meeting will convene at 12:30 p.m. The following matters will be addressed:

- ▶ Reports of officers, trustees, committees and employees
- ▶ Voting on proposed bylaw amendment
- ▶ Election of trustees of the cooperative
- ▶ Any other business which may come before the meeting
- ▶ Adjournment

The 2018 nominating committee consisted of the following members:

- ▶ District 1 – **ED CUPP**



Mark Arnold



Dan Bonine



Mike Thon

- ▶ District 2 – **MILAN REIMER**
- ▶ District 3 – **DALE WETZEL**
- ▶ District 4 – **MARVIN GRABER**
- ▶ District 5 – **ROBERT BUERKLE**
- ▶ District 6 – **MATT HOISINGTON**
- ▶ District 7 – **KIM MILLER**

The following trustees have been nominated by the nominating committee for the position of trustee:

- ▶ District 3 – **MIKE THON**
1607 Rd 14, Tribune, KS
- ▶ District 6 – **DAN BONINE**
3901 19th St., Great Bend, KS
- ▶ District 7 – **MARK ARNOLD**
203 S. Market St., Caldwell, KS

Additional nominations may be made from the floor during the meeting.

Operating Statistics (Electric)	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Operating Revenue (Electric) (x 1000)	\$95,901	\$98,166	\$92,043	\$101,347	\$119,443
Energy Sales (kWh) (x 1000)	791,074	811,444	817,838	839,735	1,125,896
Average Revenue (\$/kWh)	\$0.1212	\$0.1210	\$0.1125	\$0.1207	\$0.1061
Cost of Power (x 1000)	\$56,464	\$59,033	\$58,545	\$66,163	\$84,264
Total Purchases (kWh) (x 1000)	829,031	854,492	859,192	884,996	1,166,542
Average Cost of Power (\$/kWh)	\$0.0681	\$0.0691	\$0.0681	\$0.0748	\$0.0722
Other Operations & Maintenance (x 1000)	\$16,041	\$16,647	\$17,026	\$16,852	\$17,003
Total Operations & Maintenance (x 1000)	\$72,505	\$75,680	\$75,571	\$83,015	\$101,267
Gross Operating Margin (x 1000)	\$23,396	\$22,486	\$16,472	\$18,332	\$18,176
Gross Operating Margin (\$/kWh)	\$0.0296	\$0.0277	\$0.0201	\$0.0218	\$0.0161
Depreciation Expense (x 1000)	\$8,805	\$9,475	\$8,186	\$7,774	\$7,809
Property Taxes (x 1000)	\$3,470	\$2,956	\$2,499	\$3,452	\$3,685
Other Taxes (x 1000)	\$971	\$644	\$588	\$644	\$572
Interest Expense (x 1000)	\$6,708	\$6,040	\$5,029	\$4,764	\$3,937
Operating Margin (x 1000)	\$3,442	\$3,371	\$170	\$1,698	\$2,173

Proposed Bylaw Amendments Regarding Payment of Capital Credits to Estates

The Wheatland Board of Trustees has recommended the following changes to the Wheatland Electric bylaws:

► **ARTICLE 7, SECTION 2, PARAGRAPH 7** – Notwithstanding any other provisions of these bylaws, the board of trustees, at its discretion, shall have the power at any time upon the death of any member (who was a natural person), if the legal representative of his estate **or a legal successor if no estate**, shall request in writing that the capital credited to any such deceased member be retired prior to the time

such capital would otherwise be retired under the provisions of these bylaws, to retire capital credited to any such **deceased member or legal successor**, immediately upon such terms and conditions as the board of trustees, acting under policies of general application, and the legal representatives of such person's estate **or such legal successor**, shall agree upon; provided, however, that the financial condition of the Cooperative will not be impaired thereby. **The board of trustees acting under policies of general application shall determine the**

method upon which a legal successor must show his status as the legal successor of the decedent.*

► **ARTICLE 7, SECTION 2** – Other procedural changes: All instances of the word patron have been changed to **member**.

► **ARTICLE 7, SECTION 2, PARAGRAPH 2** – Correction of typographical error: The word “it” has been changed to **“if.”**

*Upon approval and publication into the official bylaws emphasis will be deleted.

Sharing Success Program Awards \$2,000 to Local Charities

Wheatland Electric's Sharing Success Fund, managed by the Scott Community Foundation, recently awarded two \$1,000 grants to non-profits in its service territory.

The first \$1,000 grant went to the **HOSPITAL DISTRICT #6 – HARPER CAMPUS**. They submitted their request to help with the cost of American Heart Association first-aid and CPR/AED certification cards, as well as mannequins with blood circulation, compression and CPR quality indicators.

The Community Outreach Department of the Harper Campus recognized the need for additional funds to purchase the AHA first-aid and CPR/AED certification cards. The employers of the participants require these cards as proof of certification for compliance purposes.

Hospital District #6 certifies approximately 150-plus Harper County individuals each year. Along with the certification cards, the Hospital District #6 AHA certi-

fied trainers are required to use a mannequin with blood circulation, compression and CPR quality indicators built in to test their participants. Adding an additional mannequin will help with the efficiency of the classes needed for certification purposes, as well as give them the most updated equipment for their training.

The second grant for \$1,000 was awarded to the **CALDWELL JAYNES' GROUP FOR THE CALDWELL SCHOOLS**. The Jaynes' group submitted their request to help with the purchase of new water fountains for the Caldwell



Wheatland presented a \$1,000 grant to Caldwell schools to help purchase water fountains.

schools that will allow students to fill water bottles. They will be placing the new water/bottle fountains in various locations throughout the school. In the elementary school, one on the main level and one on the upper floor. In the high school and middle school, fountains will be placed in the cafeteria, as well as one in the back half of the school. The traditional water fountains that are being purchased will replace the old water fountains in the elementary school.

The Scott Community Foundation began formally accepting applications for grants from the Wheatland Electric Sharing Success Fund from non-profit organizations on Dec. 1, 2012. Wheatland Electric and CoBank have contributed an additional \$5,000 each year to the fund. The program will continue to run until the funds are exhausted. Non-profit groups interested in receiving funding should contact Alli Conine at 620-874-4563 for further details.



Harper Hospital District #6 plans to use their \$1,000 Sharing Success grant to help offset the cost of CPR training cards and tools.

Working ON THE Line

Being a lineman may possibly be one of the most important jobs in our electric-dependent society. It's challenging work, but also important work. Linemen are our first responders. Linemen are the unsung heroes who labor without regard to their own comfort in order to ensure our members have electricity. Perhaps you have seen them raising their bucket trucks in the howling winds and torrential rains, or in freezing, icy conditions. They work around the clock near high-voltage power lines until electricity is restored to every member in our co-op community.

One of the most important aspects about their job is the need for safety. Being a lineman is very rewarding, but it can also be unforgiving. Safety is a top priority at the co-op for all employees. But for linemen, there can be no slip ups or careless actions. Mistakes can cost a limb or a life.

Linemen put their life in the hands of co-workers every day and when they do that they become more than colleagues. They're family. That sense of family extends to electric co-ops across the country. One of the cooperative principles is Cooperation among Cooperatives. Wheatland helps

LINEMAN SPOTLIGHT: JESUS VILLEGAS

APPRENTICE LINEMAN, 3 YEARS

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BECOME A LINEMAN? The ability to work outside.

WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING HAVE YOU RECEIVED? Pratt Community College – Electrical Power Technology. Apprenticeship program through the Merchants Job Training & Safety Program (MJTS) and Wheatland's Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC).

WHAT RESTRICTIONS DO YOU HAVE AS AN APPRENTICE LINEMAN? I cannot work on anything primary (anything above 600 volts) unless directly supervised by a journeyman. I also cannot be "on call," which is the lineman who is the first to respond to an after-hours outage report.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF BEING A LINEMAN? Operating the digger truck.

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED WHILE DOING LINEWORK?

I was changing out a meter in a backyard one day. I opened the gate and started to walk in the backyard and spotted a dog, the dog then spotted me and started chasing me. I ran through the gate, closing it quickly just in time.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE AND LEAST FAVORITE WEATHER TO WORK IN?

I enjoy the hot weather of summer and definitely dislike winter.

WHAT IS BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF YOUR JOB? Having everybody (members, general public, other linemen) watch you all the time it can be a little stressful sometimes.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST REWARD OF YOUR JOB? Keeping the members' lights on.

WHICH STORM WAS MOST MEMORABLE?

I've only worked one, so it'll have to be Winter Storm URSA 2017.

NAME ONE TOOL

YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT. Kleins lineman pliers. I couldn't survive without them.

HOW HAS TECHNOLOGY CHANGED YOUR JOB?

I've not been in the industry long enough to see significant change but the addition of the automatic metering infrastructure (AMI) meters has helped in that connects and disconnects can be done remotely.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU WISH PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT YOUR JOB? That we are not electricians.



Jesus Villegas

Wheatland is proud to join electric cooperatives around the country in recognizing Monday, April 9, 2018, as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

other cooperatives in their time of need and they extend that service to us, too. Last year, during Winter Storm URSA, mutual aid crews arrived to help Wheatland repair and replace large sections of downed power lines.

In order for linemen to be able to respond no matter the situation or weather conditions, they need to be highly trained. So, what does it take to be a lineman?

Wheatland's multi-step program starts with a four-year, 8,000 hour Department of Labor-approved apprenticeship program developed from the Merchant Job Training and Safety program (MJTS). It includes hundreds of hours of classroom learning along with supervised hands-on training, written tests and skills testing. At the end of each year, the apprentice must pass an oral test with the Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC). The JATC is made up of four managers from Wheatland and four persons from the Department of Labor. With each test passed they move up to the next level (groundman, first-year apprentice, second year apprentice, third-year apprentice and fourth-year apprentice). After the fourth year is complete, and they have passed their test they become a Journeyman Lineman.

As a Journeyman Lineman, they can do everything—climb poles, operate all mechanized equipment, work on energized lines, troubleshoot outages, provide first aid and CPR, and more!

Wheatland's dedicated linemen maintain more than 4,600 miles of line throughout our 16 county service territory. They light our homes and businesses every day. They endure harsh weather conditions and long hours, all to make our lives better.

Wheatland is proud to join electric cooperatives around the country in recognizing **MONDAY, APRIL 9, 2018**, as

National Lineman Appreciation Day to honor the hardworking men and women who work often in challenging conditions to keep the power on.

The next time you see a lineman, be sure to thank them for keeping the lights on. But more importantly, thank

them for the hard – and often times dangerous – work they do, day in and day out.

Use #ThankALineman in your social media posts on April 9 to show support for our Wheatland linemen who make our lives easier every day.

LINEMAN SPOTLIGHT: BRANDON RITCHIE JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN, 8 YEARS



Brandon Ritchie

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BECOME A LINEMAN? My wife. She wanted me to do something with my life. I applied for train conductor school and the Electric Power and Distribution (lineman) program at Manhattan Area Technical College (MATC). I was accepted to the lineman program.

WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING HAVE YOU RECEIVED? I completed the lineman program at MATC and have been through the apprentice training program at Wheatland.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN TO HELP AN APPRENTICE? As a journeyman lineman it's my responsibility to look out for the apprentice, make sure he's being safe. Kind of like a big brother.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING A LINEMAN? Being outside.

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED WHILE DOING LINework? When we were helping repair storm damage in Oklahoma from a big ice storm a few years ago, we saw poles that had been completely lifted out of the ground instead of being snapped off. I'd never seen anything like that before. Also, maybe not strange, but unexpected, when members bring us food while working a large storm outage.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE AND LEAST FAVORITE WEATHER TO WORK IN? My favorite is spring and fall, mild weather. My least is definitely the summer, it's too hot.

WHAT IS BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF YOUR JOB? Helping an apprentice learn the job, passing along information and training. Also, keeping everyone safe.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST REWARD OF YOUR JOB? Completing a challenging job and coming home safe to my family.

WHICH STORM WAS MOST MEMORABLE? Last April, Winter Storm Ursa. I've never worked in conditions like that, all the snow. Getting drug around in my bucket truck by a tractor from place to place was pretty memorable.

NAME ONE TOOL YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT. My apprentices (wink and a chuckle) and my Kleins lineman pliers.

HOW HAS TECHNOLOGY CHANGED YOUR JOB? We use a remote control to operate our digger trucks. When I started, we entered our time on a sheet of paper, now we enter it on a computer. Automated metering infrastructure (AMI) technology and using iPads in the field are some other big changes.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU WISH PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT YOUR JOB? It's a power pole, not a telephone pole. It's not as easy as just flipping a switch to get the power back on. Sometimes it takes time to find the problem and fix it. We do the best we can to get it back on as quick as we can.

Take a Ride on the Touchstone Energy Balloon April 21

The Touchstone Energy hot air balloon is returning to Wheatland territory in Western Kansas! Join us on Saturday, April 21, 2018, for *Wind and Wheels* at the Wichita County Fairgrounds in Leoti. Wheatland members can expect a day full of family fun and activities for all ages and an opportunity for a free tethered hot air balloon ride.*

Touchstone Energy's Hot Air Balloon Team last came to Wheatland's territory last summer at the Deerfield Summer Celebration. The balloon quickly stole the show, as Wheatland members and attendees lined up throughout the day for their chance at a free tethered ride. The weather was amazing that day and we used every drop of gas the balloon team brought with them!

Wheatland is excited to sponsor the Touchstone Energy hot air balloon again this year at *Wind and Wheels*. In addition to the balloon, attendees can expect a day packed full of fun. Activities of the day will include a car show, giant kites, kite flying, a bike scavenger hunt, a rocket launch and much more! For more details search for *Wind and Wheels* on Facebook. We hope to see you there!

**Inflation of the Touchstone balloon and tethered rides are weather dependent.*



SAFETY Tip of the Month

While you are spring cleaning, make sure to vacuum the coils behind the refrigerator, clean your stove's exhaust hood, and clean your dryer ducts. All of these could be fire hazards if they are neglected.

Legislative Update & Annual Meeting *Continued from page 16A*

Annual Meeting is April 25

I'd like to cordially invite you to Wheatland's 70th Annual Meeting on April 25, 2018, at the William Carpenter 4-H Building, in Scott City.

We look forward to visiting with you, and enjoying fellowship. We will discuss what Wheatland has accomplished in the past year, and our plans for the future.

Wheatland will announce and present 12, \$1,000 scholarships to the winners of our scholarship program. The scholarship recipients are children of Wheatland members.

We will also announce the two winners of the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., and two winners of the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steam Boat Springs, Colorado.

The Annual Meeting is the opportunity for you to exercise one of the greatest benefits of being a member of Wheatland, by voting for the upcoming board of trustees.

Wheatland is not owned by far away investors. It's run by a democratically elected board of trustees, a board who

is given the privilege to serve because of your vote. Our trustees are members of your community. They are concerned with the issues you face every day because they face them, too.

Attend Wheatland's Annual Meeting and exercise your right as a member of the co-op and vote.

Lunch will be provided for all in attendance along with a registration gift and the chance to win great door prizes. I'm looking forward to seeing you there.

Thank a Lineman on April 9

Before I close, **MONDAY, APRIL 9, IS NATIONAL LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY.** Wheatland linemen are incredibly talented and dedicated. They risk their lives every day so we can all enjoy the benefits and conveniences that electricity brings to our daily lives. I want to say thank you to each and every one of our linemen, thank you for your hard work and dedication to keeping the lights on—it's a pleasure to be able to lead you.

Until next time, take care.

Wheatland to Award \$12,000 in Scholarships

Wheatland Electric will announce the winners of its 2018 scholarship program at its 70th Annual Meeting on April 25 in Scott City. Wheatland will give away a total of \$12,000 in scholarships.

Recipients were judged on their academic performance, school activities, career goals and a 1,000-word essay. The Wheatland Board of Trustees again voted to make one \$1,000 scholarship available to each of the high schools in Wheatland's service territory for 2018.

Eligible high schools are: Argonia, Caldwell, Chaparral, Conway Springs, Deerfield, Great Bend, Greeley County, Holcomb, Norwich, Scott County, South Haven, Syracuse and Wichita County.

More than 50 students applied for the scholarships. The \$1,000 awards will go to students who plan to attend an accredited two- or four-year college, technical or vocational school.

Once the winners are announced, Wheatland will write checks directly to their schools of choice.

In addition to unveiling its scholarship recipients, Wheatland has several other activities planned for the April 25 meeting including: recognizing the winners of the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp trips and voting for 2018-2019 members of the Wheatland Board of Trustees.

Lunch will be provided for everyone who attends the meeting, and gifts will be handed out to every Wheatland member in attendance. Members can also enter a drawing for great door prizes.

Wheatland's annual meeting provides a great opportunity for members to learn more about their cooperative, ask questions and have a voice in their electric cooperative.



youth tour starts **HERE**

Meet Wheatland's Youth Tour Winners



CADE DVORAK
DC Winner

Where are you from and what school do you attend?

I am from the small town of South Haven and I attend South Haven High School.

What is your favorite subject in school?

My favorite subjects include math and history.

What are your future plans?

I hope to attend college and get a degree, then enter the Air Force.

How did you hear about the program and what made you decide to apply?

I heard about the program through the school, and I love to travel and meet new people so I decided to apply.

What are you most looking forward to on your trip?

The things I am looking forward to are new friendships and learning and seeing new things.



SEBASTIAN TORRES
DC Winner

Where are you from and what school do you attend?

I am from Tribune and attend Greeley County High school.

What is your favorite subject in school?

It would definitely be math.

What are your future plans?

To attend the University of Kansas where I hope to become an accountant or statistician.

How did you hear about the program and what made you decide to apply?

Through my friends, the school counselor and other staff members. I decided to apply because it's the opportunity of a lifetime and it sounds absolutely amazing because of all the monuments, museums, and other locations we'll visit. I feel like it won't just be fun, but it'll be a huge educational experience as well!

What are you most looking forward to on your trip?

Going to the Washington Monument and parts of the Smithsonian. I've always wanted to go to both of them and I never would've dreamt that I could have that opportunity at such a young age.



BRANT COTTA
Camp Winner

Where are you from and what school do you attend?

I am from Argonia and attend Argonia High School.

What is your favorite subject in school?

My favorite subject is English, mostly because I think books are awesome.

What are your future plans?

Whoa, do we have to have a plan? I thought most adults just improvised! In all seriousness, I'm probably going to go to school for either an acting or theatre directing/producing degree.

How did you hear about the program and what made you decide to apply?

Well, I got an email from my counselor with the title, "Win a Trip to D.C.! Don't miss this once in a lifetime opportunity!"; and I thought, "Huh, neat." So, here we are!

What are you most looking forward to on your trip?

I'm excited to meet new people and learn what it takes to be a leader! Also, hiking...I love hiking.



SAMMIE STRNAD
Camp Winner

Where are you from and what school do you attend?

I live between Wellington and Caldwell, but I go to school at Caldwell.

What is your favorite subject in school?

Art

What are your future plans?

Attend Kansas State University to study graphic design.

How did you hear about the program and what made you decide to apply?

One of my friends won it last year and he talked about it to my class.

What are you most looking forward to on your trip?

Meeting new people and learning how to become an even better leader.



Tyson's Crew has a combined 31 years of line experience and includes (from left) Brandon Ritchie, Jesus Villegas, Jordan Hartwell, and Tyson Ryff.

A DAY *in the* LIFE

BY SHAWN POWELSON

At Wheatland, line crews are commonly referred to by their foreman's first name. Especially in

districts where there are more

than one crew. In this case, the Great Bend crew I would be working with is usually referred to as Tyson's crew. I met line foreman **TYSON RYFF** and his crew at the Great Bend warehouse. In addition to Tyson, the crew consists of journeyman lineman **BRANDON RITCHIE**, journeyman lineman **JORDAN HARTWELL** and third-year apprentice **JESUS VILLEGAS**.

After ensuring we had all the necessary supplies and equipment for the job we'd be working on, we headed out. Tyson and I rode in his standard-issue Wheatland flatbed pickup with a trailer load of conduit, while Brandon and the others followed in the bucket and digger trucks. On our way to the job site, I asked Tyson what the plans were for the day.

He told me that they'd been working on replacing nine double-circuit poles for the last two weeks and were just about finished, aside from tying in a few places. The next phase would be to run underground lines to an oil well. The landowner, a local farmer, had requested underground service to replace the existing overhead lines. Tyson explained that if the landowner was willing to incur the cost of installing the underground service, including the price of the trenching and conduit, Wheatland would make the requested changes.

Once we arrived at the job site, Tyson checked in with the landowner who was finishing up the trenching while the rest of the crew scattered to prepare to lay the conduit (or pipe as they referred to it). I noticed right away, and throughout our time together, the crew was like a well-oiled machine. Everyone on the crew had a job to do and did it seemingly without having to be told. I'm certain that comes with working side-by-side, day after day, but to a first-time observer it's certainly impressive to watch.

The first spool of "pipe" was on a rack on the end of the trailer (being pulled behind Tyson's truck) and was ready to be laid in the trench. Brandon held on to one end as the truck eased forward unspooling the pipe. Jordan ensured the pipe came cleanly off the spool and after they'd gone a few feet, Jesus grabbed the pipe and began guiding it into the open trench. They continued slowly along the length of the entire trench until they reached the far end, nearly 1,000 feet. There was just enough pipe and the guys were pleased they would not have to splice it to complete the run.

Once the first run was complete, they repeated the process two more times, laying a total of three runs in the trench. When it was time to change out a spool of pipe, Jesus used the boom of the digger truck to position the new spool on to the rack. He operated the truck with a large wireless remote control that reminded me of a video game. Joysticks, buttons—this looked fun. I started to ask to take a turn but then thought better of it. No wonder his favorite part of being a lineman is operating the digger truck, it would be mine too!

As we finished our time together, I stood with Tyson as he observed Brandon up in the bucket tying in some line from the double-circuit pole project they were completing. Tyson explained that Brandon was doing hot work on the bottom circuit and the top circuit was grounded and dead. He further explained that anytime hot work is being performed, a qualified observer is required. As we headed back to the warehouse. I asked Tyson what his favorite part about the job was.

"I like taking a step back and looking at it," he said. "There's a sense of accomplishment when you're finished with a big project. You can look at it and see how much nicer it looks."

I could certainly tell from my day with them that they all took pride in their work and a job well done. Thanks for sharing your day with me guys, and as far as I'm concerned, job well done!

SHAWN POWELSON is Director of Member Services and Corporate Communications at Wheatland Electric.

