

WHEATLAND
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Thankful for Our Co-op Family



Bruce W. Mueller

At my family's Thanksgiving dinner each year, we all take turns saying something we're grateful for.

My list is usually about the same — good

health, wonderful family and friends, and a job serving the membership of Wheatland Electric Cooperative.

I'm so thankful to be a part of Wheatland Electric Cooperative. Our employees are the hardest workers I know. Our mission is to **DELIVER ENERGY FOR LIFE** and our vision is to improve the quality of life of our members and the communities we serve by providing services that are safe, reliable and competitively priced. It's a mission and vision we all take seriously.

I'm thankful for Wheatland Electric Cooperative because it allows employees to live alongside those we serve. The beauty of a cooperative is

it's locally owned and operated; there are no distant shareholders pulling the strings behind the scenes. Members elect members to serve on the board of trustees and govern the co-op. We are your neighbors, your friends, your family.

I'm thankful for my co-op because it serves as a vibrant force in the local economy — partly because **WE ARE LOCAL**. That means Wheatland Electric Cooperative is **INVESTED IN THE FUTURE OF ITS COMMUNITIES**.

Finally, I'm thankful for you, our members, because without you, there'd be no Wheatland Electric Cooperative.

Happy Thanksgiving from all of us here at your electric co-op.

I'd like to close this month's article by saying that on **NOV. 11** we are celebrating **VETERANS DAY**, and I would like to thank all the members, employees and trustees who have served in our armed forces. **WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.**

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.

Offices Closed for Thanksgiving

Our offices will be closed Thursday, Nov. 26, and Friday, Nov. 27, in observance of the holiday. From our co-op family to yours, Happy Thanksgiving!



Member SPOTLIGHT

Great Bend Chamber of Commerce

The **GREAT BEND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** exists to build connections throughout the local business community.

However, at a time when COVID-19 has forced us to physically and socially distance, finding new ways to maintain those connections has been challenging for us all.

Nevertheless, thanks to some creative thinking, determination, and local leadership, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce has risen to the challenge during this uneasy and uncertain year. And it serves as an example of how other organizations can continue to prosper in the wake of crisis, too.

“Our mission is to promote our businesses, promote our business climate and culture, and provide resources so people can make connections,” said Megan Barfield, chamber president and CEO. “If we’re being told we have to stay at home, that becomes really difficult to do.”

Staying Connected

Barfield has been with the chamber for nearly five years and served at its helm since the start of this year. At the beginning of the pandemic, one of the very first challenges was to find a new format for the chamber’s weekly coffees, which could no longer be held in-person due to the statewide stay-at-home order.

Normally, more than 50 local business professionals attend every Thursday. Barfield and her small staff introduced virtual coffees, an initiative they’re still doing today. They make sure the gatherings encourage engagement and connection, to continue carrying out their mission.

“We just saw huge engagement, and it was really exciting to see people who had never participated in a chamber coffee attend,” Barfield said. “Suddenly, they could be a part of our chamber coffees because they could do it from work or home. It was awesome, and it really formed a new sense of community.”

Informing the Community

Established in 1921, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce serves more than 500 members in a town of about 15,000 and is dedicated to promoting business prosperity. The chamber’s mission is to promote and improve the business climate in Great Bend through its services and partnerships that encourage growth and assist existing and new businesses in reaching their business goals.

Of course, how to execute this mission began to look very different when local businesses were faced with unprecedented challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

As a leading advocate for the local business community, Barfield said she and her staff knew they needed to share accurate and timely infor-



Chamber members celebrate the opening of the Landscape Structures Playground at Veterans Memorial Park in 2019. The playground is for children ages 2 to 5.

Below: The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce has used social media and live video to communicate and connect during the COVID-19 crisis, including moving its Chamber Coffees to an online format and starting community conversations, like the Chamber Chats.



Above: The Great Bend Chamber Ambassadors serve as a valuable extension of the chamber team. Here they are pictured during the 2020 Chamber Annual Meeting and Banquet.



mation with their member-base and the community at large. To that end, they developed a page on their website — “Keeping You Informed” — to feature news and resources relevant to the Great Bend community.

“Within the first few weeks, our social media and website traffic were up ... one week it was up 1,000%, which told us the information we were sharing was relevant and people were looking for it,” Barfield said. “We wanted to use our voice as a platform to share current and reliable information with the business owners and community, so we took to Facebook Live, and that’s ultimately how our Chamber Chats were born.”

Working Together

Chamber Chats — a local, livestreamed video — occurs at 2 p.m. every Monday and is a new initiative born out of the need to continue conversations in the era of social distancing. Each week, the Chamber hosts different guests to share relevant topics of information with its members and the Great Bend community. On the last Monday of each month, the chamber joins representatives of the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau and Great Bend Economic Development, Inc.

“We wanted people to know that these three organizations are working together, and that we’re working together to promote Great Bend and

the surrounding area. And we’ve had so much fun doing that,” Barfield said. “We’re sharing positive things, whether it’s a neighbor doing something kind for someone or a local business that helped a stranded visitor.”

Barton Strong

To further strengthen and support local business, the chamber with the help of the Golden Belt Community Foundation and the United Way of Central Kansas launched a new campaign: Barton Strong.

Through the campaign, the chamber sold gift cards and certificates on behalf of temporarily closed or otherwise affected local businesses. Those funds — a total of \$20,000 — were then matched by the Dorothy M. Morrison Foundation to assist Barton County nonprofits to help families affected by the pandemic.

“Any business that wanted could participate, whether they were a member or not, at no cost to them,” Barfield said. “Within two or three weeks we hit that \$20,000 goal and had almost 50 businesses participate.”

Membership Value

In addition, the Great Bend Chamber is also serving as the coordinator for local for-profits who apply for Barton County Strengthening People

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Thank You for Helping

In our seventh year — the most challenging yet — we weren't sure how things would go with our annual Cram the Van campaign.

Now, as we wrap up stops in all seven of our districts, we find ourselves humbled and in awe of the generosity of the communities we serve!

As an electric cooperative, "Concern for Community" is one of our governing principles. That is, we work for the sustainable development of our communities through policies supported by our members.

Over the last six years, Cram the Van has collected more than 47 tons (95,527 lbs.) of food donations, which have all been delivered to the local food banks in the communities in which they were donated.

Amid a public health pandemic and with so much uncertainty and so many challenges, we knew we needed to act, even if things looked different this year.

To that end, we once again drove our big ol' red van — the largest in our fleet — across our



Barbara Kirk, director of human resources, hands packaged to-go lunches to a donating member during the Oct. 13 Cram the Van drive-thru event in Scott City.

southwest and south-central Kansas communities to serve up hot-off-the-grill hamburgers and hot dogs and collect as many canned and other non-perishable food items as possible.

To keep everyone safe and ensure social distancing, we set up a drive-thru style collection and distribution system, amassing donations in

Since 2014, Cram the Van has collected more than 47 tons (95,527 lbs.) of food donations, which have all been delivered to the local food banks in the communities in which they were donated.



Us Cram the Van!

large drop-off bins and distributing hamburgers and hot dogs in pre-packaged containers.

At the time of publication, we haven't yet added up our food or fund totals; however, we are proud of what we've been able to accomplish together! Follow us on social media for our final figures and in a future issue of *Kansas Country Living* magazine, and in the meantime, there is still time to make a donation online to your local food bank at www.weci.net/cram-van-food-drive.

Thank you to our members across our service territory who have helped us Cram the Van! Members helping members, in the spirit of this giving season!



There is still time to make a donation
online to your local food bank at
[weci.net/
cram-van-food-drive](http://weci.net/cram-van-food-drive)



This year's Cram the Van events were held drive-thru style with a donation drop off and food pick up so members did not have to exit their vehicle. In exchange for their non-perishable or cash donation, members were treated to a to-go lunch of hamburgers or hot dogs, chips, a cookie and water.

Cold Weather Accommodation Begins Nov. 15

As of March 1, 2016, Wheatland Electric has adopted the following Cold Weather Accommodation policy for residential members. All delinquent accounts are subject to disconnection when temperatures exceed 35 degrees for a 48-hour period between Nov. 15 and March 15, unless a member requests a cold weather accommodation.

In order for a member to retain electric service when temperatures are above 35 degrees during the cold weather period, they

must comply with the following cold weather accommodation provisions:

- ▶ Inform Wheatland of their inability to pay their account in full;
- ▶ Pay half of each current bill during the cold weather period;
- ▶ Past due balances including the bill due Nov. 5, must be paid in full at the inception of the cold weather period ;
- ▶ Apply for federal, state or local funds for which the member may be eligible;
- ▶ Agree to a payment plan at the conclusion

of the cold weather period; and

- ▶ Complete and sign a Cold Weather Accommodation agreement at any Wheatland district office.

Members who do not adhere to the Cold Weather Accommodation rules are not eligible for payment arrangements at the conclusion of the cold weather period. The entire outstanding balance, reconnection fees and increased deposit, if applicable, are due and payable prior to reconnection if service is disconnected.

Great Bend Chamber of Commerce

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From left: Chamber staff members Angie Hicks, business manager; Megan Barfield, president/CEO; and Lee Ann June, marketing and communications; with senior volunteer Arlen Schroeder (back row).

and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Funds, which are made possible by the federal CARES Act and the State of Kansas. Local businesses can apply for reimbursement micro-grants for costs related to business interruption caused by required closures and expenses, all in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The chamber has been a force for positive change in the region and fulfills its mission as the leading advocate for the business community. At a time when many chambers are losing members due to business challenges posed by the pandemic, Barfield said her organization is gaining them.

"We're blessed that 99.95% of our members see the value that we bring. I attribute that to our visibility during COVID," she said. "Had we taken a back seat approach and decided that we can't do anything ... well, when people can't see you, they assume you're not there — out of sight, out of mind. Instead, we asked ourselves, where can we make the most impact and communicate in a way that is reaching people. And we've had a lot of success."

Vote for Your Favorite Charity to Win \$1,000 by Nov. 12

If you're like us, you missed March Madness this year. But never fear because we have a new bracket challenge for you!

It's our Giving Goodness Facebook challenge, which began Oct. 26 and will run through Nov. 12, 2020. In this tournament of charities, members like

you can vote for your favorite non-profit or charitable organization to win a \$1,000 Sharing Success grant from Wheatland Electric!

Now, more than ever during this season of giving, we recognize the importance of helping one another, giving thanks, and paying it forward.

That's because cooperatives like us are governed by core principles, including one of our most important: concern for community. This ideal encourages us to work toward the sustainable development of our communities through policies supported by our members.

What's more, democratic member control is another of our guiding principles. In this Facebook challenge, we're transferring the decision-making power to members like you!

Starting Nov. 1, you can cast your vote by visiting our official Facebook page and "liking" one of our "final four" charities that have been selected by fellow members in this bracket-style tournament. We also encourage you to share our post with your favorite charity team to rally other fans, too!

The two charities with the most "likes" between Nov. 1-8 will advance to our championship round for the title fight, starting Nov. 9. Our winning charity team will be announced on Friday, Nov. 13.

For more information or to play, visit www.facebook.com/WheatlandElectric and help us share the goodness during this giving season!

Giving Goodness
A CHARITY CHALLENGE ON FACEBOOK!

How to Play
Starting Oct. 26, nominate a local non-profit for the chance to win a \$1,000 Sharing Success grant!

How to Win
One of our "Final Four" non-profits will win this tournament of charities by rallying their fans on Facebook!

SAFETY Tip of the Month

When your vision is the most compromised at dusk and dawn, deer are the most active. To add to their terrible timing, a deer's movement increases dramatically during mating season (October-January) when you are more likely to travel in the dark due to shorter days. Stay vigilant!



ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR



WASHINGTON, D.C.

JUNE 14-21, 2021



YOUTH PROGRAMS BUILD

LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY, MEMORIES

COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP



COLORADO

JULY 16-22, 2021



CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS!

Apply ONLINE for the Trip of a Lifetime!

Youth Tour is more than just another trip. It's an opportunity to send four outstanding high school juniors to build leadership skills, make lifelong friends and explore with students from across the country. Each trip is designed to challenge and inspire the next generation of leaders. Best of all, it's free!

Wheatland Electric will award four area juniors with an all-expenses-paid trip to either Washington, D.C., or Steamboat Springs, Colorado. All costs and travel arrangements are covered by the electric cooperative. Apply online at www.weci.net/youth-tour-program **BY JAN. 8, 2021, AT 5 P.M. CST.**

Applicants will be interviewed at Wheatland Electric Cooperative Inc., in Scott City. Two winners will be selected for

the Washington, D.C., trip and two more will be selected for the Steamboat Springs, Colorado, trip. Selection is based on the completed application and interview. High school juniors must meet the following criteria to apply:

- ▶ Their parent and/or guardian must receive electrical service from Wheatland Electric.
- ▶ They must attend Argonia, Caldwell, Chaparral, Conway Springs, Deerfield, Great Bend, Greeley County, Holcomb, Norwich, Scott Community, South Haven, Syracuse or Wichita County high schools.

For more information contact Alli Conine, manager of member services and corporate communications, at aconine@weci.net or 620-874-4563.

TOUR THE NATION'S CAPITAL



During the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., students meet with our elected officials. This year's tour will be June 14-21, 2021.

Imagine — a chance to visit our nation's capital for one week, meet with 35 other student leaders from across the state and visit with Kansas' senators and congressional representatives. The **ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR** in Washington, D.C., is jam-packed with visiting many of the major memorials, including the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial and the brand-new Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial. To see what's in store, visit <http://bit.ly/dcytvideo2015>.

ADVENTURE IN THE ROCKIES



Each year, campers go rafting during Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, which is scheduled for July 16-22, 2021.

How big is a bald eagle? How thrilling is white-water rafting? Can I help run a successful cooperative? Find the answer to those questions and more at the **COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP**. Enjoy nature like never before in the beautiful Colorado Rockies. Meet nearly 100 students your age from cooperative communities in Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Wyoming while creating memories to last a lifetime. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/cylcvideo>.

The safety of our students and chaperones is our top priority. If the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour or Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp organizers feel that travel is unsafe due to concerns with the coronavirus (or any other acts of terrorism, disaster, civil disorder, or curtailment of transportation facilities), then the trip will be canceled.

Begins After Thanksgiving

HOLIDAY LIGHTS CONTEST

Hanging Your
Holiday Lights?

Show us your winter wonderland for
a chance to win a bill credit!

3 WINNERS

RECEIVE BILL CREDITS

1st \$200

2nd \$150

3rd \$100

BEGINS: Nov. 27 at 8 a.m.

ENDS: Dec. 18 at 11:59 p.m.

WINNERS ANNOUNCED DEC. 23
on our Wheatland Electric Facebook page!

Submit Your Entry

Send **PHOTO OR VIDEO** submissions to sdonecker@weci.net or submit via Facebook message to Wheatland Electric's Facebook page. The photo/video of the decorated property submitted to the contest must be owned or rented by the member submitting the property for consideration.

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 