




A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
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WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Annual Meeting Insights



Bruce W. Mueller

I want to thank our members who attended **WHEATLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S 72ND ANNUAL MEETING** in Caldwell and at the seven remote loca-

tions. This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic we had to make changes to our normal annual meeting operating procedures. At the Caldwell location and at our other seven remote locations, we practiced:

- ▶ Proper social distancing
- ▶ Masks were required to enter the facility
- ▶ Masks were also required if proper social distancing could not occur
- ▶ Meals were pre-packaged and handed out to the membership

This was the second year of holding concurrent remote annual meetings

across the Wheatland service territory. We were able to offer the membership and employees the ability to attend and participate in the annual meeting remotely. We had approximately **335** people in attendance, **273** of which were registered members. Thirty-eight proxy votes were also cast. We had a contested trustee race in District 2.

This defines exactly what Cooperative Principle No. 2 is all about —democratic control. Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (trustees) are elected from among the membership and are accountable to the membership.

We want to thank the special guests who attended. During the meeting, we presented the 2019 financial report and the annual summary, telling the Wheatland story for 2019. As we did

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SAFETY

Tip of the Month

Electricity can jump from power lines to nearby tools and ladders. When working outside, look up and stay away! Keep yourself and equipment at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines. If you see a tree growing close to a power line, allow the professionals to trim it!

Annual Meeting Overview

Members of Wheatland Electric elected a new trustee and re-elected three incumbents to its 10-member board of directors at the 2020 annual meeting in Caldwell, Kansas, on Aug. 26, 2020.

A total of 335 members gathered in both Caldwell and across seven remote meeting locations. The members elected **JOSH YOUNG**, senior vice president with Security State Bank in Leoti, as their **DISTRICT 2** representative. District 2, one of Wheatland Electric's seven service districts, encompasses Wichita County and Wallace County. In addition to the members present to vote, 38 members were also present by proxy.

Young won a contested election against Brady Harbin, banking center president from Western State Bank in Leoti. Young is replacing outgoing District 2 trustee Vic Case, who served as a trustee from 2008 to 2020.

Members also voted during this 72nd annual meeting to re-elect the following trustees to their positions in their respective districts: **KATIE EISENHOUR**, district 1 (Scott County); **STACEY ADDISON-HOWLAND**, district 4 (Hamilton County, western Kearny County and Prowers County, Colorado); and **JOHN KLEYSUBER**, district 5 (eastern Kearny County, Finney County and Gray County).

A live recording of the meeting along with an annual



summary video and financial report are accessible on Wheatland Electric Cooperative's YouTube channel and at **WWW.WECI.NET**.

Wheatland Electric's annual meeting is typically held in April each year. However, due to challenges presented by COVID-19, trustees voted earlier this year to move the 2020 meeting to the August date.

1: Bruce W. Mueller, general manager/CEO, addresses members from the podium at this year's annual meeting.

2: Woody Barnes, board president, speaks with members in attendance during the annual meeting.

3: Hand sanitizers were given and utilized at all meeting locations.





- 4:** Rhei Thurman, executive assistant, assists members with registration during the 72nd annual meeting in Caldwell.
- 5:** U.S. Congressman Ron Estes (right) sits next to Debbie Luper, district director, at this year's annual meeting.
- 6:** Pat Thurman, Caldwell, won this year's grand prize, a 60-inch television from Chad's TV & Appliance in Harper.
- 7:** Wheatland members in Caldwell review the 2019 annual report.
- 8:** Wheatland members listen to presenters at the annual meeting, where face masks were required this year.
- 9:** A total of 335 individuals gathered in Caldwell on Aug. 26, 2020, and at the seven other remote locations, for the Wheatland Electric annual meeting.



Vic Case | Retiring District 2 Trustee

Many things have changed since **VIC CASE** first joined Wheatland Electric's Board of Trustees 12 years ago.

For one, when Case was first appointed in 2008 to fill a seat vacated by an outgoing trustee, there were 14 seats at the table.

Today, 10 trustees represent Wheatland's seven service districts across southwest and south-central Kansas, a consolidation effort that occurred as many trustees retired.

For another, there was no female representation on the board when Case first joined, he said. Today, two female trustees sit at the table, which Case said is a step in the right direction.

"It's a big addition — women see things a little differently and that is just great, to have a different perspective," the lifelong Wichita County farmer and rancher said. "I think it would be even better if we had two or three more."

Serving as a Wheatland trustee alongside other respected community leaders has been one of the most rewarding things about his service Case said, and one of the things he will miss most.

"Every one of them are great guys and gals, and they've got your back — you can tell that," he said. "They're all on the board to represent their districts and they're concerned about their districts, but they're also willing to do what needs to be done to help all the districts."

Case, who grew up in the district, is no stranger to civic service. In addition to his four three-year terms as a Wheatland trustee, Case has served and continues to serve as a Wichita County county commissioner, a board member in his church, on the county economic development board and on the juvenile detention board in Garden City.

His leadership involvement extends beyond the board room and onto the playing field, where he has coached basketball, softball, and baseball, from the little leagues to the minors.

In fact, getting involved in youth



Outgoing trustee Vic Case served as Wheatland Electric's District 2 trustee from 2008-2020. He is pictured at this year's 72nd annual meeting thanking members for the privilege to serve and represent them.

development has been one of the highlights of serving as a Wheatland trustee, according to Case.

Each year, board members help select area high school students to receive \$1,000 scholarships to the college of their choice. Students complete a competitive application process to win the awards.

The cooperative also pays to send two select high school students to the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., and two more to Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

"For Wheatland to be able to do that for the kids in our communities I think is just great," Case added.

This upcoming January, Case and his wife, Deborah, will be celebrating their golden jubilee — their 50th wedding anniversary. Together, they enjoy attending sporting events, spending time with their eight grandchildren, and traveling by vehicle to see the countryside.

"If I were younger, I would stay on longer if I could," Case said, referring to his tenure on the board. "That's another thing that's different: the (average) age of the board. We've got a lot of younger, active, and engaged board members, which is great."

2020 New Trustees

Josh Young | District 2 Trustee

When Josh Young first considered joining the board, he knew he wanted to get involved in something bigger than himself.

"I wanted to surround myself with people that are going to help me grow," said Young, a lifelong Kansan.

That goal became a reality when members elected the senior vice president with Security State Bank in Leoti as their District 2 representative.

As one of two nominees vying for an open position, Young knew he needed to make his case. He called friends, family and neighbors, put ads in local newspapers and messages on social media.

"It was outside my comfort zone to call people and say, 'Hey, pick me.' So, instead, I'd encourage everyone to have a voice. To me, this was the best approach," Young said.

Growing up on his family's farming operation and now working with farmers and ranchers in finance, Young has sat on both sides of the banker's desk. That fuels his passion for profitable growth. In fact, over the past eight years, he's helped Security State Bank grow from \$145 million to \$331 million in assets.

"I'm big on growth — I have a passion for both personal and business growth," Young said. "I want to see business grow, as long as it's happening profitably. Sometimes, it's not always feasible when you run the numbers."

Of course, it's not always about the numbers. The culture of an organization and the people who make it what it is are just as important. And it's one of the things that attracted him to Wheatland's leadership.

"My biggest fear would be that I don't bring to the table what people expect, but I also see that as a challenge and it drives me," he said. "I'm extremely excited for this opportunity, and I can't wait to get started."



Josh Young

Wheatland Electric is a not-for-profit cooperative, collectively owned by its membership. Democratic elections are held each year for open board of trustee seats. Trustees are limited to six, three-year terms and must be members. Ten trustees represent seven districts across the communities we serve. Read more below about our four district seats that were up for vote at this year's annual meeting, including one newcomer's reasons for running and three incumbents who share their reasons for returning.

Kathleen (Katie) Eisenhour | District 1

When Katie Eisenhour was first appointed to Wheatland Electric's Board of Trustees in 2013 to fill a vacant seat, she says it was an honor to be asked to serve.

Seven years later, as the Scott County economic developer begins her third three-year term representing the members of District 1, she continues to be humbled by the leadership and learning opportunities that are presented before her, she says.

"As the first female at the table in 20 years, I've seen our board and staff evolve in a beautiful way with gender diversity, and I'm proud to be a part of that movement," Eisenhour said. "Our board is respectful, diverse, inclusive, and that's good for our members and employees."

Eisenhour's background in co-ops began in the mid-1980s with 16 years at the Scott Co-op Association. She has traded commodities, substitute taught, and has served as a grain bookkeeper, credit manager, sales manager and chamber executive director.

Since 2009, Eisenhour has served as the economic development director for Scott County, a role that has gone hand-in-hand with her work as a Wheatland trustee over the last seven years, she added.

As trustee, she has earned Credentialed Cooperative Director distinction, attained her Board Leadership Certificate, and recently attained Director Gold Certificate, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's highest level of trustee education.

Looking forward, Eisenhour is excited to be a part of Wheatland's strategic planning efforts, collaborate on future ventures, and explore new revenue streams for the years to come.

"Management and board members make decisions together, and that's how it should be," she said. "It's an honor to represent members for District 1, and I take it very seriously."



Katie Eisenhour

Stacey Addison-Howland | District 4

Both sets of Stacey Addison-Howland's grandparents were farmers. She can distinctly remember them reminiscing about when electricity first arrived at their homesteads in the 1940s.

"I would go to the co-op meetings with them when I was a young girl, both the electric and grain co-ops," she said. "Of course, I didn't quite understand what they were all about back then!"

Addison-Howland, who has been re-elected to her second three-year term, represents District 4, an area encompassing much of Hamilton County, western Kearny County and Prowers County, Colorado.

The owner and agent of Farmers Union Midwest Agency in Syracuse was first appointed to the board in 2016 to fill an outgoing trustee's seat and elected to her first full term the following year.

Her decision to return to the board where she serves as secretary lies in her desire to see through several ongoing projects and play a meaningful role in the changing landscape of the co-op industry.

"Many people take for granted when they walk in, flip a switch and see the light on," she said. "There's so much involved with contracts, and lines, and people in getting it there."

As a National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Certified Cooperative Director, she brings a wealth of experience from sitting on numerous community boards and internal bank committees.

Despite her familiarity with civic service, the trustee said continuing to learn and grow makes serving as trustee both rewarding and fulfilling.

"I grew up as a farmer's kid, but I'm also a small business owner," she said. "I'm here to represent a good diverse group, from farmers to the individuals — from big to small."



Stacey Addison-Howland

John Kleysteuber | District 5

Before John Kleysteuber was first elected to the Wheatland's board of trustees in 2017, he was appointed to fill a new seat in District 5 the year prior.

"I was very honored to be asked to serve on the board," Kleysteuber said. "[Wheatland] provides a tremendous service, and I'm honored to be a part of this community."

In some areas across Kleysteuber's district, which encompasses Finney County, eastern Kearny County and northwest Gray County, Wheatland Broadband may be the sole service provider for members.

This includes residents and businesses who may need reliable, high-speed internet access in today's digital age.

Learning about the ins and outs of the electric and broadband industries has been one of the more rewarding aspects of serving as a trustee, according to Kleysteuber, who was re-elected to his second three-year term at this year's 72nd annual meeting in August.

"I've enjoyed being on the board and having something to say about the electric rates and what direction things are going for our community," he said. "When you turn on the light switch, you don't think a whole lot about it and all the planning that goes into making sure we have good service."

In his second elected term, Kleysteuber, a Garden City native who works on his family's irrigated farming and cattle operation, said he is looking forward to building on his current board experience.

"Every year you're on the board, you gain more experience and knowledge and you're able to make better decisions with that experience," he said.



John Kleysteuber

October is National Co-op Month

Each year in October, cooperatives across the country — credit unions, electric utilities, grain co-ops, and more — celebrate National Co-op Month.



This federally recognized celebration is an opportunity for co-ops like ours to raise awareness of a trusted and proven way to do business and build communities.

Co-op Month was first proclaimed in October 1964 by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, a former Minnesota governor, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In fact, electric co-ops emerged from a national effort to electrify rural areas during the 1930s through the 1960s. According to the NRECA, only 10% of rural America had electricity in the mid-1930s. Thanks to the powerful work of cooperatives, run by local members and their communities, that grew to over 90% by 1953. Today, more than 99% of America's farms have electric service, many of whom got their start thanks to the not-for-profit cooperative model.

This year's National Co-op Month theme, "Co-ops Commit: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion," highlights how co-ops are working to create diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces and boards and promote economic participation and advancement in their communities.

And that includes Wheatland Electric. We're not just a company — we're a cooperative, owned by the people we serve. To learn more, follow us on social media and visit our website throughout this month to learn more about what we're doing to better meet the needs of the communities we serve across southwest and south-central Kansas!

Annual Meeting Insights *Continued from page 16A*

last year, we produced a video for the financial report and annual summary. You may view the videos on Wheatland's website at WWW.WECI.NET.

Wheatland recognized 13 high school senior scholarship winners, who will each receive a \$1,000 scholarship to continue their education. We also recognized two Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and two Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp winners who, due to the pandemic, will receive \$1,000 scholarships instead of the trips. During the meeting, Wheatland employees were recognized for service awards ranging from five to 40 years.

In 2019, Wheatland Electric paid out **CAPITAL CREDITS** in the amount of **\$1 MILLION**. It was announced at the annual meeting that due to the pandemic causing financial hardship to some of the Wheatland membership, the Wheatland board of trustees approved an early capital credit payout in **AUGUST 2020 OF \$500,000**. This payout showed up as bill credits on the August 2020 electric bills. This amount was approved by the Wheatland board based on the 2019 financials. We also announced that the Wheatland Electric board has approved additional budgeted capital credits to be paid out (based on the 2019 financials). I want to emphasize budgeted, just in case there is some unforeseen financial crisis that would inhibit our ability to pay capital credits. Barring that circumstance, Wheatland is planning to payout additional capital credits in December 2020, so be sure to look for the 2020 Capital

Credits Harvest Days and locations where your checks will be distributed.

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH and electric cooperatives across the country (including Wheatland Electric) are highlighting the many ways we "**POWER ON**." Keeping this theme in mind, I recognize the essential role we play in serving the membership located within the Wheatland service territory.

Who would have fathomed in March that COVID-19 would amount to a test of our community and our nation. The changing circumstances due to the pandemic have created both challenges and opportunities. Over the past several months, we've all been challenged to operate differently and Wheatland has stepped up to help our membership.

As an essential service, and to ensure reliability of your power supply, we modified our operations to safeguard business continuity.

We've seen other local businesses rising to meet similar challenges during this time because that's what communities do. While the challenges caused by COVID-19 have been daunting, I'm heartened to see how everyone is pulling together.

In 1948, Wheatland Electric Cooperative was built by our members to serve our members and enable us to fulfill our mission, delivering energy for life, to the communities we serve, and that's what we'll continue to do — **POWER ON.**

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.



FORE a Good Cause

Co-ops Care Charity Golf Tournament raises more than \$16,000

This year's second annual Co-ops Care Charity Golf Tournament was a huge success!

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors, players, co-op employees and volunteers, Wheatland Electric and Victory Electric together were able to raise \$16,138.42 for our respective organizations: Cram the Van food drive and Dodge City's Avenue of Flags.

These proceeds will be divided equally between these two charitable endeavors. Concern for community is one of our seven cooperative principles. That means we work for the sustainable development of our communities through policies supported by our members.

More than 120 golfers took part in this year's four-man scramble held on Aug. 28, 2020, at Mariah Hills in Dodge City.

Wheatland's Cram the Van food drive program began in 2014 and has since facilitated the collection of over 47 tons (95,527 lbs.) of food for local food banks in the communities we serve. The big red van travels each fall to communities across southwest and south-central Kansas collecting donations and food items and distributing those items to the local food banks in which they were donated.



Proceeds from this year's second annual Co-ops Care Charity Golf Tournament will be split to benefit Dodge City's Avenue of Flags and Wheatland's Cram the Van food drive.



Thank you sponsors!

This year's event would not have been possible without the assistance of the following sponsors:

MEGAWATT (\$1,000)

- ▶ BHC RHODES
- ▶ CFC
- ▶ Emerald Transformer
- ▶ First Dental
- ▶ ITC Great Plains
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- ▶ Pioneer Electric Cooperative, Inc.
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DONATION

DRIVE-IN

CASH OR CAN DONATION

11:30 A.M. TO 1:30 P.M.

DONATE and grab your hamburger/hot dog, chips and a cookie **TO GO**

OCT. 13 SCOTT CITY | Between Wheatland Electric's Warehouse (125 S. Main St.) and Wheatland Electric Office (101 S. Main St.)

OCT. 16 GREAT BEND | Events Center Parking Lot (3111 10th St.)

OCT. 19 TRIBUNE | Behind Gooch's Foods (503 Broadway Ave.)

OCT. 22 SYRACUSE | Corner of Main Street and Ave B (green space by the Wheatland Electric Office, 206 N. Main St.)

OCT. 26 LEOTI | Parking lot across from Wheatland Electric Office (North Hwy. 25)

OCT. 28 HARPER | Parking lot at Wheatland Electric Office (906 Central)

DONATE **ONLINE** **AT WECL.NET**

Members have the option to make a monetary **DONATION** to their **LOCAL FOOD BANK**