



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
 101 Main, P.O. Box 230, Scott City, KS 67871
 620-872-5885
 www.weci.net

**WHEATLAND
 ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

NEWS

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Great Bend, KS 67530
- Harper — 620-896-7090**
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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

Concern for Community Remains Central to Our Co-op

Over the years, you've probably heard or read about concern for community, our seventh cooperative principle. This is one of the core principles that sets cooperatives apart from other types of utilities and businesses. At Wheatland Electric, we've always taken this responsibility to heart because it's who we are: a member-owned organization committed to the communities we serve.

Over the past seven years, we've risen to the challenge to strengthen the safety net for our communities. We've done this through Cram the Van, our annual food drive. To date, our efforts have raised 127,733 pounds of

food for nearly a dozen local food banks — that's nearly 64 tons of food for hungry families across our southwest and south-central Kansas



Bruce W. Mueller

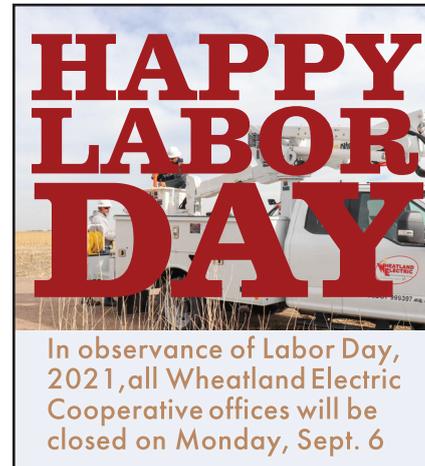
communities. And none of it would be possible without the generosity and commitment of members like you.

Every year, we Cram the Van because we care. And every year, our members show us why the sweat and toil are worth all the effort. It's

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SAFETY Tip of the Month

School days bring congestion: School buses are picking up their passengers, kids on bikes are hurrying to get to school before the bell rings, hurried parents are trying to drop their kids off before work. It's never more important for drivers to slow down and pay attention than when kids are present. Especially before and after school.

YES WE CAN



CRAM THE VAN

Even in the world's greatest food-producing nation, there are children and adults who face poverty and hunger in every community across America.

That includes our southwest and south-central Kansas communities, where crops are grown to feed the world, but hunger pains still abound. Nearly a dozen food banks, along with other critical social service agencies, create a wide safety net across our service territory to assist those who are most vulnerable. And we're here to support the amazing work they do!

To make sure these pantries stay stocked through the holiday season ahead, our employees at Wheatland Electric roll up our sleeves every fall for our annual food drive: **CRAM THE VAN.**

Starting in 2014, our cooperative set out to find a new way to expand our involvement in the seventh cooperative principle, "concern for community," which is the belief that, by working together, we can bolster local economies and deal more effectively with social and community needs.

That first year, we found the largest vehicle in our fleet (a big, red extended Chevy passenger van), removed all the seats from the back, plastered on some flashy graphics, and set out to help the people in our communities.

What started off as local community barbecues — a free hot dog or hamburger in exchange for a cash or can donation — has now grown

Left: Dan Haselhorst, board member of the Community Food Bank of Barton County, readies produce items for the drive-through-style delivery system in Great Bend.

Over the last seven years — thanks to the generosity of our cooperative membership — we've been able to collect 127,733 pounds of food, or over 63 tons! All items have been distributed to the local food banks in the community the donations were made ...

into so much more. Not only do we host events in every one of our seven districts, but we also coordinate an annual charity golf tournament, food drive competitions at many of our local schools, promote online fundraising, host a fall finale, and more!

Over the last seven years — thanks to the generosity of our cooperative membership — we've been able to collect 127,733 pounds of food, or over 63 tons! All items have been distributed to the local food banks in the community the donations were made, which is something we're very proud of.

We're headed into our 2021 Cram the Van season with a renewed commitment! From our smallest communities to those that serve our

larger towns, our food banks have expressed the continued need to stock shelves and replenish supplies that so many families depend on to put food on the table.

That's because people who live in rural regions like ours often face hunger at higher rates than people who live in urban areas. They face unique challenges, like a lack of transportation to grocery stores and food pantries, job opportunities concentrated in more low-wage industries, and higher rates of unemployment or underemployment to name a few.

To combat some of these continual challenges, volunteers at the Community Food Bank of Barton County have recently increased the frequency with which families can seek

assistance from the food pantry — once per month, up from five times per year prior to the coronavirus pandemic.

Each individual seeking assistance — old or young — receives a box of 20 items of food that can last about two weeks and is valued around \$20. That box of food will feed a family member for about two weeks, according to Ruth Behrens, president of Great Bend's food bank.

"Different people have emergencies at different times. Anyone who has a need can come in and get help because we have no income requirement," Behrens said. "A lot of people believe we are government-funded, but we are not. We rely on private donations and

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Donate to Your Local Food Bank NOW!

We've made it easier and quicker than ever to donate to YOUR local food bank! Visit www.weci.net/cram-van-food-drive to donate to a local food bank of your choice, drop off your can or cash donation at one of our local Wheatland offices, or come see us when we stop by your town! (To see when, visit page 16E).



Representatives of Genesis Family Health in Finney County help unload Cram the Van food donations during the 2020 Cram the Van season.



Every year, our Wheatland Electric van travels across our service territory to collect cash and can donations for local food banks. In addition to community get-togethers, we also host school food drive competitions, an annual charity golf tournament, promote online fundraising, host our Fall Finale in Scott City and more!



Ruth Behrens, board president at the Community Food Bank of Barton County (left), assists fellow board member Dan Haselhorst, (center) and Kathy Levingston, volunteer (right), with food boxes.



Marlene Regehr of Trinity United Methodist Church in Great Bend packs boxes of food inside the Community Food Bank of Barton County.



Alli Conine, manager of member services and corporate communications, presents a check from the 2020 Cram the Van season to representatives of the Greeley County Food Bank.

Yes We Can, Cram the Van

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the generosity of locals — a lot of people don't know that it's their neighbors who are supplying their food."

Many of the food bank representatives we spoke with echoed a similar sentiment: the need in their communities is seemingly less severe than last year during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, which is good news. However, that doesn't mean we put our foot on the brake.

"We're excited that people are doing a little better, and food wise, we're in good shape right now," said Velta Glenn, director of the Caldwell Food Bank. "However, money wise, to pay our utilities and other costs, that's a different story."

Glenn said the food pantry in Caldwell also relies on private donations for its operational costs and purchases of household products like toilet paper and cleaning products that many families can't purchase with food stamps.

"We can always use food, but cash is better," Glenn said, adding that because there is a need for household and other hygiene items, cash is almost always the most valuable donation an individual can make.

In Tribune, the local need is also met through private donations and the generosity of community residents, according to Kathleen Dowling, a representative of the food pantry.

The Greeley County Food Pantry is open once a week, on Wednesday mornings, and serves about 25 families per month, a number that has remained steady through the pandemic, she added.

Most of the food supplied in Tribune comes from the Kansas Food Bank in Wichita, along with discounted items from the local grocery store. Dowling said she is looking forward to the future of the food pantry, as she builds up both its board leadership and with the opening of a new building to replace their dilapidated facility prior to the start of next year.

At Wheatland, we're also hopeful for what's ahead on the road! We're excited to make Cram the Van 2021 our best year yet and assist our local food pantries with some of the supplies they need to power through the holiday season and steer themselves into the new year.

Every year, we Cram the Van because we care. And every year, our communities show us why the sweat and toil are worth all the effort. Thank you to all those involved who help us Cram the Van and fight local hunger! Yes WE Can, Cram the Van!

YES

WE

CAN

2021



In exchange for your
CASH OR CAN DONATION
grab a meal + be entered to win a TV!

**OR MAKE A CASH
DONATION TO YOUR
LOCAL FOOD BANK AT
WWW.WECI.NET**

**COMING SOON TO A
LOCATION NEAR YOU!**

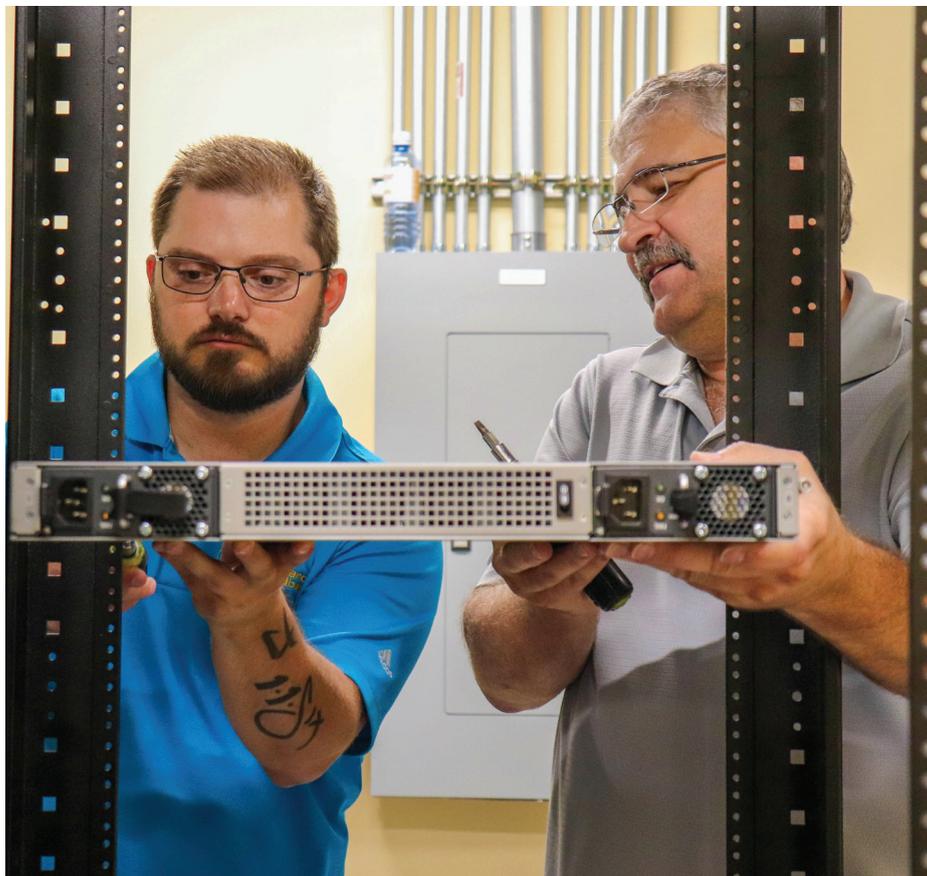
- SEPT. 9 LEOTI 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**
Parking lot across from the Wheatland Electric Office, 101 W. F St.
- SEPT. 10 TRIBUNE 5:30 PM**
Greeley County High School football game, 400 W Lawrence
- SEPT. 14 HOLCOMB 5:00 PM - 8:30 PM**
Longhorn Festival, Holcomb High School, 600 N. Jones
- SEPT. 28 GREAT BEND 3:30 PM - 7:00 PM**
Great Bend Events Center, during the Women's Expo, 3111 10th Street
- OCT. 1 CALDWELL 5:30 PM**
Caldwell High School football game, 31 N Osage St.
- OCT. 8 SYRACUSE 5:30 PM**
Syracuse High School football game, 502 Main
- OCT. 14 SCOTT CITY 4:30 PM**
Scott City Middle School football game, 809 W 9th
- OCT. 16 HARPER 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**
Fall Fest, Harper Fair Barn, 821 Central St.
- OCT. 22 CONWAY SPRINGS 5:30 PM**
Conway Springs High School football game, 607 St Louis St.
- OCT. 25 GREAT BEND 4:30 PM - 7:00 PM**
New Wheatland Electric Office, 200 10th St.
- OCT. 28 SCOTT CITY 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM**
Boo Bash, Scott City Elementary School, 410 E. 8th St.
- OCT. 30 SCOTT CITY 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM**
FALL FINALE!
Spencer Flight + Education Center, 300 S Mesquite Rd



This photo from Aug. 9, 2021, shows our new green space is still a work in progress outside our new building at 200 10th St. in Great Bend.

Now Open!

New Location in Great Bend



Michael Doyle, IT support technician, (left), installs a router inside a server room with the assistance of Jim Zorn, manager of IT/SCADA (right).

We're excited to share that our new building, warehouse and green space in Great Bend is now open!

Wheatland Electric broke ground on the new 30,000 square-foot building last September to centralize our operations in our south-central district.

Previously, our administrative and warehouse operations (located at 2300 Broadway Ave., and 1820 Second St., respectively) were housed separately within city limits.

Now, our facility at 200 10th St., allows us to consolidate these operations and better serve our membership.

The brick building features both a walk-in customer-service lobby and drive-up window to assist our Great Bend members with payment and other needs.

The new facility also boasts an outdoor green space with working fossil-free energy sources — a wind-generator, a solar generator, and battery storage — and will be irrigated with a water recovery system.

The member green space also features a pergola, picnic tables and chairs for members to enjoy, and will soon house an electric vehicle charging station.

Once complete, our representatives from the cooperative will be available to discuss all facets of the green space with local students or other interested groups upon request.

In addition, our new Great Bend location will house a mobile substation, designed for emergency and severe weather outages caused by tornadoes, ice events and other natural disasters within Wheatland's eastern operations. This includes District 6 (Great Bend) and District 7 (Harper, Caldwell, Norwich, Argonia, Conway Springs, South Haven and other communities within Kingman, Harper and Sumner counties).

This much-anticipated construction project has been completed by Wichita-based GLMV Architecture during the design and development phase and Eby Construction, also from Wichita, during the construction phase. Local subcontractors included Hammeke Electric, Stone Sand Co., Comfort Pro, Inc., Golden Belt Roofing & Exteriors, Inc., Jimlo Glass Center, Inc., all from Great Bend, and Joiner Construction Inc., from Ellinwood.

Top Right (from left): James Swanson, lineman apprentice; Tyson Ryff, line foreman; and Trent Suchy, substation maintenance journeyman; move old shelving units into the new warehouse.

Bottom Right: Jesus Villegas, journeyman lineman, (center) moves equipment into the new warehouse in Great Bend.



Learn More About Our New Great Bend Facility

Head over to our YouTube channel (search "Wheatland Electric" at www.YouTube.com) to listen to our latest podcast, "Who's on the Line?," where we discuss all facets of our facility, the member green space, electric vehicles and our new charging station! Happy listening!

Concern for Community Remains Central to Our Co-op

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why in addition to our community barbecues, we've added school competitions, fall festivals, online fundraising, a golf tournament, and more, to raise additional funds and food for our local food banks.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a continuous challenge, many economic and social challenges were brought to the forefront of our businesses, our schools and our lives. Like many of you, we were required to adjust our operations to maintain business continuity while staying focused on the bigger mission of helping our members during this turbulent time. This included last year's Cram the Van events, during which we adjusted our normal procedures without comprising the health and safety of our employees or our members. I'm proud to share that despite these challenges, we raised a record-setting amount of cash and can donations last year — and we aim to do the same in 2021!

With the holidays fast approaching, the events of the past year and a half have made me pause and think about the greater role of our cooperative. While our purpose is to provide safe, reliable, and competitively-priced electricity to you, the members we serve, we have a greater mission — to be a catalyst for good. So many needy families look to our

local pantries to help put food on the table. We feel it's our responsibility to support these food banks and the hard-working and generous individuals who give their time for the benefit of others.

That's why I'm excited for another Cram the Van season this fall. Seeing the kindness and generosity of our members helping other members when we stop in your community is what Cram the Van is all about. (See Page 16E for a list of local events). Cram the Van reminds us how generous, strong, and committed our communities are to helping those in need.

We know that our primary job is to keep the lights on; however, our passion is our communities. Because we live and work where you do, we want to make it a better place for all. If there's anything we can do to help you — whether providing energy-saving advice to help lower your monthly bill or discuss payment plan options during these difficult times — please reach out to us directly. Concern for community is the heart and soul of who we are. And no matter what the future brings, you can count on Wheatland Electric to be there to fulfill our mission: **DELIVERING ENERGY FOR LIFE.**

UNTIL NEXT TIME, TAKE CARE.

YES WE CAN!

Kicking off this year's **Cram the Van** season with our **3rd Annual** **CO-OPS CARE CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT**

Hosted by:

WHEATLAND ELECTRIC
Delivering Energy for Life
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

FRIDAY SEPT. 17, 2021
THE GOLF CLUB AT SOUTHWIND
GARDEN CITY, KS