

# Rural Power

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## Three veteran co-op member service directors to retire

With more than a century of experience among them, three member service employees will retire soon from their respective co-ops.

The three retirees are Ray Hutson of Lyon-Coffey, Ron Dickey of Bluestem, and Joe Heinen of LJEC.

### Ray Hutson

Hutson will retire from Lyon-Coffey in January. He has been with the co-op for 44 years.

Hutson started with Coffey County Rural Electric on November 3, 1969. The Coffey County and Lyon County cooperatives merged in January 1989.

After coming home from serving in the Vietnam War, Hutson applied for a job with Coffey County and started as a groundsman. He had some college experience before going to Vietnam and after three years of groundsman work, Hutson moved to an accountant position, then to the billing department, and finally to member services. He now holds the position of Assistant Manager. "It's been a good trip," said Hutson.

In 2011, Hutson was inducted in the Kansas Cooperative Council Hall of Fame. When asked if the honor had affected his career, Hutson replied, "No, my role has not changed at all. We still strive to do the best that we can for our members. We did before, we still do, and we will continue to do what is best for them."

### Ron Dickey

Dickey will join Hutson in retirement in the spring. He will leave Bluestem in March after his co-op's annual meeting. Dickey has been with the co-op since June 1, 1974. When Dickey was asked if it seems like it has been almost 40 years since starting at the co-op, he said, "It was yesterday."

After some business college experience and

a short stint in Vietnam, Dickey wrote for a newspaper in Louisville, KY, before he stumbled across the job at Bluestem.

"I went to Vietnam twice. Don't feel sorry for me though. I was only there for about 20 minutes each time. I just picked up prisoners and brought them back to Kansas," said Dickey.

He had a friend who mentioned working at Bluestem, and Dickey was hired. "I've been here since," he said.

As the Director of Member Services, he has had a variety of responsibilities at the co-op.

"Each director of member services from the co-ops do different things. I just happen to wear 50 hats," Dickey said.

For Dickey, much of his time is spent in the office doing various tasks for members and the employees at Bluestem. With so many responsibilities it seems like it would be hard to hire another but, "the person we hired to take my place will be able to handle the job in time because I know he isn't going to learn it all overnight," said Dickey.

### Joe Heinen

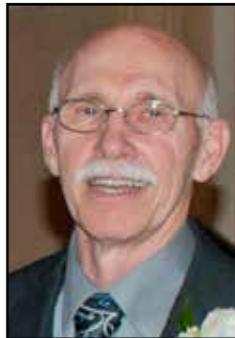
Heinen will retire from LJEC. He has been with the co-op since 1992.

"I still get up in the morning and I still want to go to work. I enjoy it because there is something different every day," Heinen said. He will retire as the assistant manager and director of member services.

His start at the cooperative is a unique story. He first started as a member on the Board of Trustees. Heinen served more than 19 years on the board.



Ron Dickey



Ray Hutson



Joe Heinen



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## USDA announces funding to improve rural housing

USDA Rural Development provided two \$25,000 Housing Preservation Grants to make housing repairs and improve housing conditions for limited income rural residents.

The Coffey County Housing Authority and the City of Mankato were awarded grants to assist low and very-low income residents make essential repairs to their homes.

Grants may be used to make general repairs, such as installing or improving plumbing, or providing or enhancing access to people with disabilities. Funds may also be used to make homes more energy efficient.

USDA – 11/15/13

## Sunflower's Don Gulley named as Southern Illinois Power Cooperative's CEO

The Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC) Board of Directors has named Sunflower's Don Gulley as its next CEO. He begins his new duties at year end.

Gulley replaces current CEO Tim Reeves. The organization holds the distinction of having had only four CEOs in its 50 year history.

Gulley has served as Sunflower's Vice President of Regulatory & Market Affairs since 2010. He has more than 25 years of utility management and business operations experience.

## Save the Date: HR Summit

The 2014 HR Summit will be held at the Wichita Marriott on Monday, April 28.

Speakers will include Kristina Dietrick of Creative Business Solutions in Topeka, and NRECA's Steve Newton. This training is designed specifically for employees who have human resources responsibilities at their co-ops.

Registration information will be emailed a few weeks before the date of the training.

## DECEMBER

- 18-19 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 20 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 25 **Christmas Day – KEC Office Closed**

## Kansas Touchstone Energy Executive Council holds annual meeting

The Kansas Touchstone Energy executive council met for its annual meeting on Nov. 19 in Wichita.



Re-elected to the council

were Perry Rubart, Pioneer, and Jerry King, Victory. Dave Childers, Sedgwick County, was elected to fill the seat vacated by Don Hellwig who stepped down. Special thanks were given to Hellwig for his leadership in Touchstone Energy through the years. Bruce Mueller, Wheatland, was elected chair. Re-elected were Leon Eck as vice chair; and Dennis Deines as secretary/treasurer.

The Council approved a new employee recognition program called Power + Hope. Two of the nominees were selected to be honored

## Retirees, continued

He was running a 60-cow milking operation. "I told people that I was wore out, the farm was wore out, and the kids could have cared less," said Heinen. "So I started looking for a job."

In April 1992, Heinen went to a regular board meeting when he heard that a co-op employee was retiring and no one internally wanted the job. "The manager at LJEC called for an interview and luckily he took a chance on me," said Heinen.

Transitioning from a board member to an employee was different, but Heinen enjoyed it. As a member of the board he directed and set policies. As an employee, he got to deal with the day-to-day challenges and help answer questions.

## Decades of Change

Over the four decades, these retirees have seen a lot of changes. They agreed that one of the biggest changes was

at the 2014 KEC Annual Meeting.

NRECA's Amy Rosier reviewed the national Touchstone Energy program. She reported that

the program now has 752 members and played a video about the Power of Co-op Membership. She highlighted several programs including the Co-op Web Builder 2.0, the Balance Performance Scorecard, current ACSI scores, and the Co-op Connections Card program.

Shana Read and Dennis Deines gave a report on the 2013 programs and activities, including the State Fair, the ElectroRally, a linemen documentary, and the youth tour programs. The council also approved the 2014 budget and statewide assessment.

technology.

Hutson said, "When I came here we didn't have bucket trucks. If you didn't know how to climb, you didn't have a job. When I moved into the office there wasn't such a thing as a copy machine."

Dickey agreed, "Technology has changed a lot and now it seems like it changes weekly. It was 1994 when I had my first cell phone. It weighed down a whole side of you. No one taught you technology, it had to be learned on your own."

Heinen remembers other enhancements, including meter reading technology. "The technology has really helped a lot. We have things now that I only thought we'd see in comics."

While technology has been a big change, all three agree that machines are safer, equipment is better, and the co-ops are more productive.

Congratulations to Hutson, Dickey and Heinen on their retirements.

## Bluestem remodels its Clay Center office

After five months in temporary offices, the employees of Bluestem's Clay Center office have returned to an updated space.

The project started in June and the employees moved back into the office on Nov. 12.

General Manager Ken Maginley said, "The office is more modernized and efficiently uses the space that is available."

The technology was up-to-date in the office prior to June, but now, "it's a more comfortable space," said Maginley.

Maginley praised Marla Marshall, Office Manager/Accountant, for being a big part of the remodeling process.

"The office footprint is the same, but it's more efficient and that's great. Energy is saved due to insulation added and the workflow is more productive



Bluestem's Clay Center office is once again open.

to the new layout and space that was made in the office," Marshall said.

Bluestem's Clay Center office had not been updated since 1957.

"We had

great support from the board and the members have all had positive comments," said Marshall.

The project took more than a year before it was started. The projected process was first approved by the board. Contractors and architects were then contacted, and plans were drawn.

"The board was supportive through the whole process," Maginley said.

The members of the co-op have also been very encouraging of the project. Maginley praised Marshall for the push to have the project completed and keeping everyone on task. "It wouldn't have been done without her."

## Quick action prevents farm fire

Because of some quick-thinking, a Midwest Energy employee helped prevent a fire.

Energy Analyst and Account Manager, Greg Swob, was returning from a How\$mart audit on Sept. 4 when he saw a tractor/baler quickly exit a field with smoke trailing from the baler. The young farmer left the tractor and was frantically throwing dirt on the baler.

"I pulled over and exited my truck with my fire extinguisher, and asked if I could help," Swob said.

"The farmer says, 'I don't know who you are or what you're sellin', but whatever it is I'll take two.'"

Swob quickly extinguished the smoldering nylon twine, heated by a faulty bearing. The \$40,000 baler was largely undamaged.

## KEPCo Board elects officers

The Kansas Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. (KEPCo) Board of Trustees elected Scott Whittington as President during its Nov. 20 meeting in Mayetta. Whittington, the Manager of Lyon-Coffey, has served on the KEPCo Board of Trustees since 2005.

The KEPCo Board of Trustees consists of a Trustee Representative and Alternate from each of the 19 KEPCo member electric cooperatives. The Board annually names seven trustee representatives to serve as its Executive Committee. The other officers elected were: Vice President, Kevin Compton, Trustee, Brown-Atchison; Treasurer, Dale Short, Manager, Butler; and Secretary, Dean Allison, Trustee, DS&O. Elected to the Executive Committee were Ken Maginley, Manager of Bluestem; Kirk Thompson, Manager of CMS; and Larry Stevens, Trustee of LJEC.

## Wheatland supports local school with Sharing Success grant

Last month, Wheatland awarded a \$1,000 grant to the Scott Community High School. This grant is from its Sharing Success Fund, managed by the Scott Community Foundation.

The high school will apply the grant toward the purchase of a game film program that will be available to all sports programs. The program, called Hudl, allows coaches and athletes to access and review game film utilizing a Cloud-based storage program. The football team had previously used the program, and the decision was made to expand the program to include all sports.

The program also allows for the creation of personalized DVD's of game film. When used to its fullest capabilities, the program will help provide information to college recruiters. The total cost to purchase the program was \$1,600.

"The Scott Community Foundation



From left: Shawn Powelson, Wheatland; Alli Conine, Scott Community Foundation; and Aaron Dirks and Randy Huck, Scott Community High School.

was funded in 2012 by a matching grant from CoBank," explained Wheatland's Member Services Shawn Powelson.

Wheatland and CoBank each contributed \$5,000 in 2012, and each gave an additional \$5,000 in 2013.

The Wheatland Electric Sharing Success Fund began formally accepting applications for grants from the from non-profit organizations on Dec. 1, 2012. To date, 11 grants have been awarded for a total of \$9,250. The program will continue to run until the funds are exhausted.

insympathy

## C. Howard Short

C. Howard Short, Butler Manager Dale Short's father, died on Nov. 6, 2013.

Funeral services were held on Nov. 9 at the Prairie Rose Funeral Home in Harper, KS.

Memorials may be sent to the Harper Health Foundation or to Harden Hospice in care of the funeral home at 613 W. 14th Street, Harper, KS 67058.



# Merry Christmas

From the staff at Kansas  
Electric Cooperatives, Inc.



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