

Rural Power

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Please send your story ideas to ruralpower@kec.org.

KEC completes series of Speak Up!/Listen Up! workshops

Effective communication is a cornerstone in building a strong, sustainable culture of safety excellence, but talking about safety does not come naturally on the job site. This is why KEC offered a series of Speak Up!/Listen Up! training dates last month.

Twelve workshops were held at six cooperatives between March 12-29. There were 379 managers, crew supervisors, administrative staff, and operation employees representing 25 cooperatives who attended the training sessions that showed how employees could work together to enhance their safety culture. The series of training events were hosted by Butler, DS&O, FreeState, Heartland, Victory, and Western cooperatives.

"We applaud the work by our Loss Control, Safety, and Compliance Department to implement this program. KEC staff brought this program to the Strategic Planning Committee as part of the call to strengthen safety performance of member systems through training, education, and behavior changes," said KEC's CEO **BRUCE GRAHAM**.

The Speak Up!/Listen Up! program uses proven communication concepts and real-life scenarios to train employees how to engage in discussions and provide feedback within work environments in a constructive way.



KEC's Larry Detwiler presents the Speak Up!/Listen Up! training at Victory Electric to teach employees how to effectively communicate and receive feedback about unsafe behaviors. This training was offered at six locations last month.

"We have an excellent safety culture," said **RANDY WAGER**, FreeState's Right-of-Way Superintendent. "This program took that one step further and gave me some insight on how I can continue to instill courage and confidence in employees to speak up and take feedback when it comes to working safely."

The national program was developed through a partnership between Caterpillar (CAT) Safety Services, NRECA's Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange.

"Throughout this training, I've been impressed by the employees' willingness to speak up about issues, even with supervisors in the room," said **LARRY DETWILER**, KEC's Director of Loss Control, Safety, and Compliance. "The workshop teaches how to communicate effectively so that an employee does not focus on the messenger, but rather the message."

Kansas Corporation Commission approves Sunflower / Mid-Kansas merger

The Kansas Corporation Commission has approved the merger of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation and Mid-Kansas Electric Company, Inc., which is slated for Jan. 1, 2020, and will incorporate Mid-Kansas into Sunflower.

The members of Sunflower formed Mid-Kansas in 2005 to bid on the sale of Aquila's Kansas electric network properties. Mid-Kansas began operation on April 1, 2007.

Since 2007, the intent of Sunflower's and Mid-Kansas' member-owners has been to merge the two generation

and transmission providers to fully capitalize on synergies of the two companies.

The merger will remove regulatory and operational duplication, create an entity with even greater financial stability and access to lower financial lending rates, better absorb fluctuating load, and decrease risk if there is a loss in load.

The merger will not be official until properly filed with the Kansas Secretary of State and the effective date has occurred.



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Lane-Scott names McLeon as General Manager

Lane-Scott has announced the appointment of **RICHARD MCLEON** as the new General Manager. He will assume responsibilities on June 1, succeeding **ED WILTSE** upon his retirement.

McLeon has been part of the electric cooperative community for more than 25 years, and has extensive experience in operations, financials, and general management of distribution, transmission, and generation cooperative utilities. He comes to Dighton from Henderson, TX, where he served as General Manager/CEO of Rusk County Electric Cooperative.

McLeon is a US Army veteran and served XVIII Airborne Corps, 24th Infantry (M) in Operation Desert Storm / Desert Shield. He is a Life Member of the San Antonio Livestock Exposition and has been married for 30 years to Patty McLeon. They have two sons attending Texas A&M University.

McLeon holds a Master of Business Administration from Sul Ross State University and a Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M University. He has served cooperative members in project management and economic development roles as well as being a Chief Financial Officer, Assistant General Manager, and General Manager/CEO.

jobmarket

KEC helps to promote co-op careers by listing openings on the careers section of the KEC website.

Visit <https://www.kec.coop/careers> to learn more about the following positions.

Send your open position listings to ruralpower@kec.org. Positions will be posted on the website for one month, unless otherwise directed by the co-op.

▶ FreeState has an opening for an Accounts Payable Specialist.

▶ Sunflower has openings for an Administrative Assistant, Transmission Engineer I-II, Line Tech Apprentice, Journey Line Tech, Mechanic I-Sr, Operator Tech Mechanic I-IV, Strategy Planning Engineer II, and Relay Supervisor (Substation Automation and Protection Supervisor).

co-opcalendar

APRIL

- 18 **Touchstone Energy West Electrorally**, Hoisington High School, Hoisington
- 19 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 23 **FreeState Annual Meeting**, Perry-Lecompton High School Theatre, 404 Lecompton Rd., Perry. Meeting starts at 7 p.m.
- 24 **HR Summit**, Marriott Hotel, 9100 Corporate Hills Drive, Wichita
- 24 **Wheatland Annual Meeting**, Great Bend Events Center, 3111 10th St., Great Bend. Meal starts at 11:30 a.m. Meeting starts at 12:30 p.m.
- 25 **Supervisor and Manager Development Program (SMDP) course**, 7171 Know the Rules: Legal Responsibilities and Liabilities for Supervisors, Wichita Marriott
- 25 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 25 **Sunflower Electrorally**, Scott City Airport, Scott City
- 28-30 **NRECA Legislative Conference**, Washington, D.C.

MAY

- 2-3 **IT Summit**, Courtyard by Marriott Old Town, Wichita
- 4 **Touchstone Energy East Electrorally**, Olathe Northwest High School, Olathe
- 8-9 **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting**, Marriott Hotel, Wichita
- 8 **Western Annual Meeting**, Co-op Headquarters, 635 S. 13th Street, WaKeeney. Meal starts at noon. Meeting starts at 1 p.m.
- 15-16 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, Hilton Garden Inn, Salina

KEC webinar focused on Touchstone Energy resources

KEC hosted an interactive webinar with national Touchstone Energy staff on April 11 to learn about Touchstone Energy resources.

ANNE HARVEY, **MARY ANN CRISTIANO**, and **ADRIENE WALLS** reviewed the online training resources, highlighted onboarding assets and employee discounts, and showcased new advertising campaigns. They also discussed how co-ops can get the most value

from their Touchstone Energy memberships.

A recording of this session can be found on KEC's Members Only section of the website.

This webinar was the third remote learning opportunity offered through KEC. The next opportunity—a webinar focusing on Cooperative.com—will take place in September.

For more information, contact Shana Read at sread@kec.org.

upcomingtraining

2019 IT Summit to focus on ethical hacking, cybersecurity

The KEC IT Summit will be 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on May 2, and 8 a.m.-noon on May 3 at the Courtyard by Marriott at Old Town in Wichita.

JAY FERRON, a multi-certified information security subject-matter-expert, will discuss ethical hacking. **JJ CUMMINGS**, a security professional with TALOS Group, will show co-ops how

to defend themselves against advanced threat actors. **MIKE MCELRAVY**, the senior solution architect at ConvergeOne, will review IT transformation and successful cloud migrations. Other topics include AMI data, cybersecurity, and a variety of sponsor presentations.

For more information, contact Shana Read at sread@kec.org.

Power System Engineering to offer Distribution Line Design course

Power System Engineering, Inc. (PSE) is offering a three-module course on Distribution Line Design, May 15-17 at the Wichita Marriott.

This course is designed for utility staff responsible for designing and constructing distribution overhead lines, underground lines, and new services.

There will be a mix of lectures, group exercises, and participant discussion that revolves around real life design situations.

The cost to attend the course is \$1,200 per person. To register or for more information, email Kahara Franze at franzek@powersystem.org.

HEARTLAND

Heartland held its annual meeting at Ft. Scott Community College on March 26.

More than 90 members attended the meeting and enjoyed an ice cream social. **TYLER KUESER**, 2018 Youth Tour winner, sang the National Anthem and gave a report of his D.C. experiences.

Re-elected to the board were **DON DAVIED**, **H.H. STOCKEBRAND**, and **RON TAYLOR**.

DONIPHAN

Nearly 60 members were present at Doniphan's Annual Meeting on March 28 at the Troy Community Building.

A meal was provided by a local 4-H group, and a local Boy Scouts troop helped with carrying and bussing plates.

Re-elected to the board were **RICHARD LEMKE** and **KEN SMITH**.

SUMNER-COWLEY

Sumner-Cowley held its annual meeting on March 30 in Wellington. Nearly 500 members and guests attended the meeting.

Special guests included **SUZANNE LANE**, KEPCo, Congressman **RON ESTES**, and State Representative **CHERYL HELMER**. The youth tour and camp winners were honored, and the co-op awarded \$13,500 in scholarships

RON JEFFRIES, **JEFF SWANSON**, and **JOHN WHITTINGTON** were re-elected to the board.

PRAIRIE LAND

Approximately 340 members and guests attended a meal and Prairie Land's 81st Annual Meeting on April 2 at the co-op headquarters in Norton.

On display throughout the meeting were 450 safety posters created by area third graders from across Prairie Land's 18-county service territory. The poster contest is held in October as part of the Co-op Month activities.

IVAN BOHL and **SANDY BENOIT** were re-elected to serve on the board.

SEDGWICK COUNTY

Sedgwick County hosted its 81st annual meeting on April 2 in Wichita.

Approximately 300 members attended the meeting, and a meal was served to 675 members and guests.

Davis-Moore Auto Group of Wichita displayed a 2019 Chevrolet Bolt EV Premier. Guest speakers included KEC's **BRUCE GRAHAM**, and the 2018 youth winners **BRAD DRAKE** and **REAGAN BERLIN**.

MARGIE CONYAC and **STAN THEIS** were re-elected to the board. **JOE BAALMANN** was newly elected to the board.

DS&O

DS&O's annual meeting was held in Salina on April 2. Approximately 300 members and guests attended.

Linemen presented a high voltage safety demonstration prior to the meeting. Special guests included **SUZANNE LANE**, KEPCo, and **TYLER MASON**, Military Liaison to Representative Dr. Roger Marshall.

JIM CHRISTOPHER and **BRIAN LANG** were re-elected to the board. **SHELIA HUMMEL** was newly elected.

FLINT HILLS

There were 325 members and guests who enjoyed a meal and attended Flint Hills' annual meeting in Herington on April 4.

Guest speakers included **SUZANNE LANE**, KEPCo, and the 2018 camp participants. The 2019 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp winners were announced.

Re-elected to the board was **SHAWN POTTS**. **CARY GRANZOW** was newly elected and will replace Duane Carlson who retired from the board

RADIANT

Radiant held its annual meeting on April 4 in Fredonia. Approximately 375 members and guests enjoyed the evening meal and attended the meeting.

Prior to the business meeting, linemen presented a high voltage safety demonstration. KEC's **DOUG SHEPHERD** and KEPCo's **SUSAN CUNNINGHAM** were guest speakers. Special guests included **PAM HENDERSON**, District Representative for Senator Moran.

This was Radiant's final Annual

Meeting before consolidation with Lyon-Coffey effective Jan. 1, 2020.

TOM AYERS and **SANDRA SMITH** were re-elected to the board.

CMS

CMS held its annual meeting on April 4 in Meade. Approximately 250 members and guests enjoyed the meal and attended the meeting.

Guest speakers were **BRUCE GRAHAM**, KEC, and **MARK BARBEE**, KEPCo. **LINDA TOMLINSON** was honored for her service as Board President (1998 – 2019). Her 21-year tenure ties former board member Howard Norman as the longest serving Board President. Tomlinson remains on the board, but has resigned her officer position.

MICHAEL JOHNSON, **JOE MURPHY**, and **RON OLIVER** were re-elected to the board.

ALFALFA

Nearly 1,400 members and guests were served dinner and attended Alfalfa's annual meeting. This year's meeting was held on April 5 in Cherokee, OK.

KARI ROBERTS, the spouse of AEC employee Kevin Roberts, entertained the crowd with her vocal talents. A special chair was placed on stage in remembrance of Trustee **DOUG MCMURTREY**, who died on March 19.

MARK ANGLE, **JULIE RUSSELL**, and **JOE WOODS** were re-elected to the board.

ROLLING HILLS

Rolling Hills had 234 members and guests present at its 17th Annual Meeting held in Beloit on April 5.

Employees made introductions with their number of years at the co-op, and the linemen presented a "Safety Around Electricity" demonstration. **SIENNA WINGERSON** spoke about youth tour and **KARA EILERT** recounted her camp experience. **SUZANNE LANE**, KEPCo, was the keynote speaker.

Re-elected to the board via mail ballot in December were **MICHELLE BROKES**, **MIKE BRZON**, and **JOHN GEORGE**.

Governor Laura Kelly signs utility bills into law

Last week, Gov. Laura Kelly signed two bills of interest to electric cooperatives.

A compromise version of **SUB. SB 69** provides for an independent, consultant-conducted study of 29 topics important to Kansas electric providers and energy stakeholders. The initial results will be presented to the Kansas legislature in January 2020. A second report follows in July 2020. The compromise is a product of intense negotiations with KEC's CEO **BRUCE GRAHAM** in helping shape the list of study topics.

HOUSE BILL 2178 continues the long-standing requirements placed on electric utilities under the Kansas Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act (KUUDPA). Without the legislation, new Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC)-ordered obligations, outside the statutory framework of KUUDPA, would have been placed on electricity providers effective April 30, 2019.

For more information, visit the Legislative tab on the Member's Only section on the KEC website.

Q Does KEC have any resources to help with new trustee orientation?

A KEC staff has updated the New Trustee Guide which is available as a pdf on the Members Only section of the KEC website under the... [READ MORE.](#)

Asked & Answered

Kansas students qualify for national wind turbine competition

A four-student home-schooled team from Lebo, self-titled as the Electric Four, has qualified for the National KidWind Challenge after placing in regional and statewide wind energy competitions.

The middle school students will travel to Texas to compete in the National KidWind Challenge, along with their coach **MIKE TWEEDY**, Director of Member Services at Lyon-Coffey Electric Cooperative.

Sponsored by the American Wind Energy Association and National Renewable Energy Laboratory, among other organizations, the 2019 National KidWind Challenge will take place during the AWEA's Windpower Conference in Houston, May 21-23.

The KidWind Challenge asks elementary through high school students to design and build functional wind turbines in order to demonstrate their understanding of wind energy technology. Kansas State University's Kansas Energy Program coordinates the program in Kansas.

"The KidWind Challenge provides many important academic and life lessons for these students, all while having fun in a supportive environment," said **RYAN HAMEL**, Event Organizer, Kansas Energy Program. "The students must learn to work as a team, overcome obstacles, and hone their



Lyon-Coffey's Mike Tweedy coaches his team "Electric Four" at the State KidWind Challenge on March 30. His team includes Caleb Durst, sixth grade; Jesse Durst, third grade; Garrison Knight, fourth grade; and Daniel Rausch, fifth grade.

presentation and interview skills. When you consider some of our youngest participants were only in the fourth grade, we were so impressed with them."

Those participants include members of the Electric Four whose members are in fourth through sixth grades. Their parents, who are co-op members, asked Tweedy to coach the group.

"It is awesome to foster the opportunity for students to build, test, and better understand the wind and solar technology and development for our future," said Tweedy.

The Electric Four qualified for the national challenge by placing first in the fourth through eighth grade division at the regional contest on March 1 at Wolf Creek's Dwight D. Eisenhower Learning Center in Burlington.

The team then placed third in the State KidWind Challenge held on

March 30 at the Kansas Museum of History in Topeka. Approximately 50 students from across the state tested their hand-crafted wind turbines in front of a panel of judges, which included Lieutenant Governor Lynn Rogers.

"The best part of being a coach is seeing the team evolve," explained Tweedy. "High school kids were coming up and asking them [members of the Electric Four] questions about their project. They all had the answers to the questions."

Tweedy said his team has built a presence for themselves at the events.

"They talked about what they learned, modified what failed, and they shared parts with other teams. Seeing how they interact with each other and with the other teams was remarkable," said Tweedy.

Tweedy hopes that more electric cooperatives will participate in the KidWind Challenge program.

"Reach out to schools and communities and find a group to sponsor," Tweedy suggests. "Being involved with events like KidWind Challenge is a superior opportunity for both co-ops and kids."

For more information about the KidWind Challenge program, email ksenergyprog@ksu.edu, or visit <https://kansasenergyprogram.org/kidwindchallenge>.