

Rural Power

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Charles Ayers inducted into the KCC Hall of Fame

CHARLES AYERS, a retired board member from Wheatland Electric Cooperative, was inducted into the Kansas Cooperative Council's Hall of Fame on March 11. The 2020 inductees, also included **STEVE RIEGEL**, who served as Board Chairman of Ford Kingsdown Co-op and who currently serves on the Board of Directors of CHS. Both were honored for going "above and beyond the call" in advancing the cooperative philosophy.

EARL WATKINS, retired Sunflower President and CEO and 2017 KCC Hall of Fame inductee, nominated Ayers for the Hall of Fame award. He shared why Ayers deserved this honor.

"Charles' willingness to speak out and desire to understand complex issues seemed to serve the goals of the Board of Directors, and national level organizations. Throughout his decades of service to the cooperative industry, he has sought to integrate co-op board responsibilities with its ultimate mission of serving community and rural Kansas," said Watkins. "His vision, in simple terms, can be described as change, and especially change that advances the cooperative model and that inspires the next generation to take up this mission."

Ayers has given decades of service to electric cooperatives. He served on the Wheatland Board from 1986 to 2017. During that time, he also served on the boards for Sunflower, Western Fuels Association, ACES Power Marketing, and the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC).

He was nominated for his advocacy, innovation, and vision that has had lasting effects on the electric cooperatives in Kansas.

"Charles lobbied hard for the Sunflower



Hall of Fame honorees Charles Ayers (pictured left) and Steve Riegel pose with their plaques during the induction ceremony.

Holcomb 2 Plant, played a major role in the restructuring of the Sunflower RUS debt, and helped champion the change to the Retail Service Act that provided for the equitable protection for electric cooperatives when municipalities seek to annex electric cooperative certified service territory," said **WES CAMPBELL**, Sunflower Board Chair.

"Charles was instrumental in the purchase by Sunflower and its members of the Aquila electric system in 2006," Campbell continued. "All of

these accomplishments have helped to ensure the long-term viability of Sunflower and its members."

"I certainly felt honored to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. At the induction, I truly became aware and felt strongly about how marvelous the leadership is statewide in this industry," said Ayers. "I am proud to have gotten the opportunity to work with these leaders and appreciate their increasing dedication and commitment to their members."

The two inductees' biographical information will be placed alongside other honorees in the Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame showcase display at the Kansas State Fairgrounds. Located in the Pride of Kansas Building, this permanent display highlights the achievements of Kansas' great co-op leaders and preserves co-op history. It also plays a significant role in educating others about the uniqueness of the cooperative business model.

Since it was established in 1999, 47 individuals from all types of cooperatives have been inducted into the Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame. Nominations for potential inductees are accepted each December.



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Electric cooperatives respond to COVID-19

Faced with a global public health emergency and heightened concerns among members about the spread of the coronavirus, Kansas electric cooperatives are taking steps to deal with pandemic contingencies.

Amid growing concern over the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), KEC has postponed all training through April 3. KEC's Loss Control, Safety, and Compliance staff will work to reschedule those important safety and training sessions while also evaluating technology options to hold future training needs remotely through web conferences in the event this pandemic continues well into the future. KEC Communications staff have developed a menu of communications resources including news releases and social media graphics. KEC will continue to add resources as needed.

Many co-ops have closed offices and are allowing its employees to work from home. Annual meetings, community events, and employee education sessions have been cancelled or postponed. Co-ops are taking measures to limit staff exposure and have developed new policies regarding the sharing and parking of company vehicles.

On March 17, Governor Laura Kelly issued an Executive Order temporarily suspending disconnects of service to Kansas citizens for non-payment. The order applies to all electrical, natural gas, water, and telecommunications utilities as well as internet service providers. It will remain in force until rescinded, until May 1, 2020 or until the state-wide emergency expires, whichever is earlier.

jobmarket

KEC helps to promote co-op careers by listing openings on the careers section of the KEC website. Visit www.kec.coop/careers to learn more about the following positions.

- ▶ Bluestem has an opening for a Manager of AMI and IT.
- ▶ FreeState has multiple openings.
- ▶ Sunflower has multiple openings.
- ▶ Wheatland has an opening for a warehouseman.

co-opcalendar

MARCH

- 20 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, presented remotely via Skype
- 24-25 **Speak Up!/Listen Up!**, Pioneer Headquarters, Ulysses - **POSTPONED**
- 26 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka - **CANCELLED**

APRIL

- 14-15 **Oil Spill Workshop**, Victory Headquarters, Dodge City - **POSTPONED TO 2021**
- 15-16 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 17 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 16-17 **Oil Spill Workshop**, Western Headquarters, WaKeeney - **POSTPONED TO 2021**
- 21-22 **KEC HR Summit**, Marriott Hotel, Wichita - **TBD**
- 21-22 **Oil Spill Workshop**, Butler Headquarters, El Dorado - **POSTPONED TO 2021**
- 23-24 **Oil Spill Workshop**, DS&O Headquarters, Solomon - **POSTPONED TO 2021**
- 24 **Line Supervisor's Roundtable**, Bluestem Headquarters, Wamego - **CANCELLED**
- 26-28 **Legislative Conference**, Washington, D.C. - **CANCELLED**
- 29-1 **KEC IT Summit**, Courtyard by Marriott Old Town, Wichita - **TBD**

Kansas co-ops support KidWind Challenge

Kansas is seeing a boom in the KidWind Challenge program. Across the state, the number of competing teams has grown from 14 in 2019 to nearly 60 teams in 2020.

Last year, only one electric cooperative-sponsored team competed at the local, state, and national level. The four-home-schooled students call themselves the Electric Four and are coached by 4 Rivers' Member Services Director **MIKE TWEEDY**.

These middle schoolers earned the Rookie of the Year award at Nationals last year. Continuing their success, the Electric Four won first place at the KidWind Challenge's Southeast Regionals on March 6 in Burlington. 4 Rivers sponsored the regional event.

"We are excited to see the success of this group of innovators from our community," Tweedy said.

Other co-ops are getting involved in the program. Some provide wind tunnel testing, promote the program at local schools, or host regional events. The Kansas Touchstone Energy Cooperatives



Lane-Scott sponsored three KidWind Challenge teams at the Oakley regional event including the BTU Crew (pictured above).

is also a sponsor of the Kansas program.

Lane-Scott helped sponsor three Dighton teams who competed at the regional event in Oakley by donating funds for the students to build a wind tunnel to test their turbines.

"These bright young minds are being introduced at an early age to a growing

industry that's bringing job opportunities to Western Kansas," said **ANN JENNINGS**, Lane-Scott's Member Service Coordinator.

The KidWind Challenge is a national competition allowing students to explore the power of wind by building and testing their own wind turbines. Kansas hosted five regional competitions to qualify the top two teams in each division (4th-8th grades) and (9th-12th grades) to the state competition in Topeka on April 4. State winners will be invited to compete at nationals in Denver the first week of June.

For more information, visit <https://kansasenergyprogram.org/kidwindchallenge>.

Sunflower to purchase power from largest solar farm in Kansas

In Stanton County near the town of Johnson City, the construction progress of the Johnson Corner Solar Plant Project is nearly complete. The 20 megawatt (MW) solar farm, owned and operated by Lightsource BP will soon transform the sunny days into electricity.

The site was energized in mid-March, followed by commissioning testing that included performance and availability testing. Commercial operation is expected in early April.

Sunflower Electric Power Corp. will purchase the power from the Johnson Corner Solar Project, currently the largest solar farm in Kansas. Lightsource BP is one of the largest owners and operators of solar power facilities in the world, and the project at Johnson Corner is one of their first projects in North America.

The project location in southwest Kansas was chosen because this area has the highest level of solar irradiance in the state. Solar irradiance is a measure of the rate at which solar energy falls onto a surface, like a solar panel that absorbs the sun's rays and converts them into electricity.



The Johnson Corner Solar Plant Project in Stanton County contains 893 tracker rows with 75,012 solar panels. This project is the largest solar farm in Kansas.

The location of the solar project will also provide a solution to a transmission issue in the area according to **COREY LINVILLE**, Sunflower Vice President of Power Supply and Delivery.

“The Syracuse-Bear Creek 115 kV transmission line just north of Johnson Corner is nearing its facility rating limit and would have been in need of a \$8-12 million upgrade,” Linville said. “The injection of energy from JCSP at Johnson Corner will ease loading on this line and defer or eliminate the need for the upgrade.”

annual meetings

Nemaha-Marshall

Nemaha-Marshall kicked off the annual meeting season at the Axtell American Legion on Feb. 25. This year, 120 meals were served to members and guests.

Guest speakers included KEC's **TARA MAYS** and the 2019 youth program participants. Line Superintendent **CARL KOCH** was recognized for 47 years of service and his upcoming retirement, and Warehouseman/Custodian **BOB PERRY** was recognized for his 34 years of service and his retirement in July 2019. Several employees were recognized for milestone service anniversaries.

Re-elected to the board were **ROBERT VOET**, **ROBERT ROTTINGHAUS**, and **DAVID RONNEBAUM**.

Brown-Atchison

On Feb. 27, Brown-Atchison held its annual meeting at the co-op headquarters in Horton. Approximately 275 members and guests attended.

Before the meeting, Jackson Heights High School's choir provided entertainment. The

guest speakers were **SUZANNE LANE**, KEPCo, and 2019 Youth Tour participant **NOAH HEFTY**. **GARY SCHLAGEL** was honored for serving 26 years as a trustee on the Board of Directors.

DEAN MILLER and **KEVIN COMPTON** were re-elected to the board, and **BRENT NELSON** was newly elected.

Heartland

Heartland held its annual meeting at Ft. Scott Community College on March 10. More than 170 members and guests attended the meeting.

KEC's **BRUCE GRAHAM** was the guest speaker. At the event, members had the opportunity to test drive two Tesla electric vehicles, and to enjoy an ice cream social.

LARRY STAINBROOK, **LARRY LINDBERG**, and **DEAN DAVID** were re-elected to the board.

Caney Valley

Caney Valley held its annual meeting on March 12 at the Cedar Vale School Gymnasium. About 480 members and guests attended the annual meeting.

General Manager **ALLEN ZADOROZNY** gave the annual report, introduced the camp and scholarship winners, and presented an employee service award. The guest speakers were **SUSAN CUNNINGHAM**, KEPCo, and **LARRY DETWILER**, KEC.

DON LAND and **DAN HUBERT** were re-elected to the board, and **ALEX FULSOM** was newly elected. **DAVID EVANS** stepped down after serving nine years on the board.

Co-ops postpone annual meetings

The following Kansas electric cooperatives have either postponed or cancelled their annual meetings. These events were originally scheduled to take place in March and April, but have been cancelled due to concerns regarding the COVID-19 situation.

- ▶ 4 Rivers
- ▶ Alfalfa
- ▶ Ark Valley
- ▶ Bluestem
- ▶ Butler
- ▶ CMS
- ▶ Doniphan
- ▶ DS&O
- ▶ Flint Hills
- ▶ FreeState
- ▶ Ninnescah
- ▶ Pioneer
- ▶ Sedgwick County
- ▶ Sumner-Cowley
- ▶ Twin Valley
- ▶ Victory
- ▶ Wheatland

NRECA's YLC program promotes co-op engagement

For the past 59 years, Kansas electric co-ops have selected student leaders to take part in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. While on tour, each state selects one student to represent them on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Youth Leadership Council (YLC).



Brayden Schmidt poses with the Kansas State Flag during the NRECA Annual Meeting.

BRAYDEN

SCHMIDT, a high school senior from Sharon, is the Kansas representative to the YLC. He travelled February 29- March 4 to New Orleans, LA, for the NRECA Annual Meeting to celebrate the strength of the co-op network, deepen his knowledge of industry issues, and help conduct official business.

Schmidt joined the other 43 YLC members in carrying the state flags during the traditional Parade of States to open the first general session. He also gained hands-on experience with other facets of the meeting such as greeting delegates at the international luncheon, serving as a page during the business session, and providing assistance during the educational forums.

"Coming to this Annual Meeting made me feel like I was more involved with the cooperatives," he explained. "I got to introduce myself in front of a huge crowd and listen to amazing speakers, and it was phenomenal."

Schmidt also helped board members communicate with their legislators at the Co-ops Vote booth.

"Working the Co-ops Vote booth was fantastic because it showed me how important everyone's votes are, including my own," he stated.

He also attended a breakout session titled *After the Tour: Leveraging Youth Tour Attendees*, which was dedicated to sharing ideas how cooperatives can continue to engage with their youth alumni.

Lastly, the YLC students participated in a workshop alongside members of the NRECA Next Generation Leaders Experience, which is a unique program designed to help emerging cooperative leaders build their knowledge of the co-op network. The workshop allowed the two leadership groups to share insights and

exchange ideas.

Schmidt has had significant exposure to the electric cooperative industry throughout his high school career. He attended the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, CO, July 2018, sponsored by Southern Pioneer. He was selected for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., June 2019, sponsored by Alfalfa Electric Cooperative. He also served as a panelist for a workshop at the KEC Summer Meeting in August 2019. After learning about the cooperatives through both youth programs, Schmidt has a strong interest in the co-op community.

"The main turning point was when we toured FreeState during Youth Tour," he explained. "I got the opportunity to talk with engineers there and learn more about the job. I realized being an engineer was more of a community-based career, and I wouldn't have to be in a big city to do what I enjoy."

From his co-op experiences, Schmidt decided he was interested in becoming an electrical engineer. Schmidt will attend Wichita State this fall to study electrical engineering.

"These trips the co-ops sponsored makes me want to give back to them for investing in me in any capacity that I can," reflected Schmidt. "The co-ops have invested in me, and I want to give back on that investment."

Free online training resources available at LinkedIn Learning

As the situation with COVID-19 progresses, many electric cooperative employees are now working remotely.

Digital learning has become more important than ever, and LinkedIn Learning is offering free resources to assist employees in an easy transition to telework.

These resources can be accessed by visiting <https://bit.ly/2wnSpW9>.

The courses include working remotely, adjusting to a new work environment, and managing remote teams.

All cooperative employees have the opportunity to view these courses for free. For those employees at Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, you can access the full library of resources available. For more information about LinkedIn Learning, visit Cooperative.com or email TSELynda@nreca.coop.

KMSDA cancels meeting, plans to reschedule in fall

The Kansas Member Services Directors Association (KMSDA) 2020 Spring meeting, originally scheduled for March 25-27 in Wichita, has been cancelled. The cancellation is due to growing concerns over the COVID-19 virus.

The KMSDA planning committee intends to rebook the speakers at its regularly scheduled fall meeting. Details will be sent at a later date.

insympathv

Billie Joyce Short

Billie Joyce Short, mother of Butler's General Manager Dale Short, died March 8, 2020 at the Patterson Health Center in Harper County, Kansas at the age of 85 years.

Funeral services were held March 12 at Prairie Rose Funeral Home. Memorial contributions may be made to Harper Art Association or St. Jude Children's Hospital and can be sent in care of the funeral home at 613 W. 14th St., Harper, Kansas 67058.