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FROM THE CEO

Cost-of-Service Study Underway

Last month, we discussed the critical work that the Victory Electric Board of Trustees does throughout the year to ensure that the cooperative remains in a strong financial position while providing safe, reliable and affordable electric service to members. As a member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative, Victory Electric aims to keep rates as low as possible and keep the power on in a rapidly changing energy landscape.

Setting reasonable, equitable rates for members in all rate classes and establishing fair electric service policies for the cooperative are important responsibilities for the board. An independent cost-of-service study (COSS) is being performed to examine the fixed and variable costs of providing service and determine how to fairly allocate these costs across all of Victory Electric's rate classes — residential, industrial, small

commercial, large commercial and irrigation.

A COSS examines the cost of providing service to each rate class based on the load and service characteristics of that class. The COSS determines the revenue needed to cover the cooperative's operating expenses and debt obligations and examines the equitability of the rates among the different rate classes.

The COSS also provides a useful guideline to the board in assigning the responsibility for costs in a way that is fair to all members, whether they are a residential member using an appliance



Shane Laws

Continued on page 12E ►

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Tip of the Month

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. They can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet comfy on cold winter days. Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table.

SOURCE: NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION



Victory Electric Celebrates Monica Lampe's *35 Years of Service*



Above: Victory Electric employee Monica Lampe retires after 35 years at the co-op.

Below: Monica Lampe was featured as a new employee in the 1988 *Kansas Country Living* magazine when she was hired as a clerk-typist.

In 1988, Microsoft Office and the World Wide Web were still in the early stages of development, and desktop computers were replacing electric typewriters. Just as office technology has improved considerably since then, so has the technology used in the electric industry, with advanced metering infrastructure and smart electronic devices becoming widely used. Even lightbulbs, which Victory Electric once gave away to members every month, have evolved since the late 1980s.

MONICA LAMPE, accounting clerk, has seen many changes in technology and the cooperative since joining Victory Electric in 1988 as part of the member services team. Lampe recently retired after 35 years of dedicated service to the cooperative. She served with five different managers in that time and had four positions in member services and human resources as well as accounting and payroll.

"When I started there wasn't even a computer here," Lampe said. "We did everything by paper."

In the early years of her time at Victory Electric, employees would input information into a single computer. At the end of each day, they used a dial-up modem to transfer the data to an outside provider, which updated members' accounts and overnighted a printed report to Victory. Instead of looking up member accounts digitally as they do now, member services representatives (MSRs) looked up current balances and customer information on printed ledger sheets and card files.

"Yes, technology has come a very long way!" Lampe said. Instead of the digital outage maps commonly used today, Victory Electric employees formerly applied sticky notes to large, printed wall maps of the service area to keep track of outages as members called in to report them.

"I remember one time at midnight it was so bad they had to call us in," she said. "I didn't want to drive into a blizzard at midnight, but the phones were ringing and if people are out of power, we're going to be at work."

The ice storm of 2007 was an especially challenging weather emergency for the cooperative to manage, she recalled. A severe ice storm Dec. 10-11 that year caused extensive damage to power poles, lines and transformers. According to the National Weather Service, it was the worst ice storm

New Employee Profile— Monica Lampe

Monica has been employed as Victory Electric's new clerk-typist and is a life-long resident of Dodge City except for the last year when she resided in Augusta, Georgia.

Monica's husband, Shawn, is employed by Miller School in Dodge City as a physical education instructor. They have two children, Chrystal, seven, and Tyler, three.

We are very pleased to welcome Monica to the Victory Electric family.



Monica Lampe



Monica Lampe takes a “safety selfie” while participating in a safety scavenger hunt in 2019.

in Kansas history. Lampe said multiple crews arrived from the Federal Emergency Management Association to help, and they needed food and lodging to be arranged for everyone as they dealt with the ice storm and the costly damage it caused. Many members were without power, and it took some time to fix the damage. The ice storm even toppled part of Sunflower Electric’s transmission system, which was quite unusual, she said.

In spite of challenges like these over the years, Lampe said, “I wouldn’t stay that long if I didn’t enjoy it.”

She also had many special memories and highlights during her time at Victory Electric, such as serving as a chaperone for local youth while they attended the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

EMPLOYEE MEMORIES

“I’ve really enjoyed the people that I work with,” she said, noting that it was especially easy to get to know everyone when the company had only 10 employees in the office and 10-12 linemen. “It was very family-friendly, where we knew everybody’s spouses, we knew their kids — we knew everything about each other.” After the legacy Victory Electric system merged with the Aquila system acquired by the Mid-Kansas Electric Company in 2007, Victory Electric’s service area grew and so did the cooperative, which now employs an average of 70 people.

Lampe said when the company was small, employees also did more cross-training than they do now.

“During that time, you also changed your hat a lot,” she said. If the MSRs needed help up front, other office staff would step in and assist members. When there were outages to resolve, it was all-hands-on-deck.

“I think about the only thing I didn’t do was work on the line,” Lampe said. “I was never a lineman.”

Sandy Long, billing coordinator, began working at Victory Electric as a data entry operator about two years after Lampe started working at the cooperative. She said the two have grown close over the years and watched their children grow up together.



From left: Monica Lampe, Sandy Long and Martha Ruiz-Konrade pose with toys and other items for the 2014 Angel Tree program.

“I wish her well and it’s been wonderful working with her,” Long said. “We’ve been around a long time!”

“It seems like a long time, but also feels like it went really fast when you look back at it — and that’s also what they say about life,” Lampe said.

Lampe has seen many employees come and go during her tenure at Victory Electric.

She has also enjoyed seeing other employees grow in their careers over the long term at Victory. “I feel like I’ve watched everybody grow up — like Ryan [Miller] and Eric [Speer], who came in as really young pups — and I got to see them mature, get married and have children.”

She added, “Victory offers a great benefit package, and when you can start building that future for yourself, you really don’t want to walk away from it.”

FUTURE PLANS

Lampe said the thought of retiring is a little scary, but she looks forward to having the freedom to travel and spend more time with her nine grandkids. Her husband, Shawn, works for Dodge City Public Schools, and they have four children — Crystal, Ty, Morgan and Ciera.

Victory Electric employees value the expertise and enthusiasm Lampe gave to the cooperative for so many years. Chief Financial Officer Angela Unruh said, “Monica has been a dedicated Victory employee for more than 35 years. She has a wealth of knowledge that will be difficult to replace. We want to congratulate her on a well-deserved retirement and wish her the best in the new chapter ahead!”

Manager of Plant Accounting Steve Stecklein said, “I have enjoyed working with Monica. She has been an important part of our team for many years.”

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU FOR A JOB WELL DONE, MONICA!

ANNUAL MEETING

----- April 9, 2024 -----

JOIN US!

This year we will be holding our annual meeting in the **Boot Hill Casino & Resort Conference Center.**



**4100 W. Comanche St.
Dodge City, KS**

----- 2023 -----

Also new this year: The April issue of *Kansas Country Living* magazine will include ballots for the 2024 Board of Trustees election and your annual meeting registration card. Everything you need to cast your vote will be included on the cover of the magazine.

Districts voting this year:

District 1, District 3, District 8 and District 10



SAFE **RELIABLE** AFFORDABLE

Cost-of-Service Study Underway *Continued from page 12A* ▶

in their home or an industrial member operating a factory.

There are different kinds of costs that are evaluated, including:

- ▶ Costs to generate and consume energy;
- ▶ Costs to transmit electricity from power plants to substations; and
- ▶ Costs to distribute power to members (e.g., poles, wire, trucks, office and warehouse facilities, substations, maintenance and repair of lines, repayment of loans, employee costs).

Independent consultants from Power System Engineering (PSE) are in the process of conducting the COSS, and Victory's trustees will thoroughly review the information in the finalized report. They will then discuss rate options and any potential rate design changes that may be needed based on PSE's findings. The restructuring of electric rates is a challenging and important task for trustees to consider, and they take it very seriously. They are Victory Electric members themselves and pay the same rates as other residential members.

Although the cost of poles, line, meters, transformers and other critical resources necessary for providing reliable energy continues to rise, Victory

Electric does not make routine price adjustments for members. The last rate change occurred in 2017. Previous rate changes were made in 2010 for our Mid-Kansas Electric Cooperative (MKEC) system, which affected the former Aquila territories, and in 2011 for our rural legacy system.

The energy charge on your electric bill varies from month to month based on how much energy you consume. The energy charge adjustment is a direct pass-through from Sunflower Electric, our power supplier, and can increase or decrease each month based on the wholesale cost of fuel for electricity generation. Your monthly energy bill also includes a fixed service availability charge for expenses related to wires, meters, transformers, accounting, member programs and collections.

The COSS examines all of these charges and other information in detail, and the board will take time to review the findings before making any decisions. As a member and owner of the cooperative, you have a voice in decisions made by your elected trustees. We will keep you informed about any changes that are proposed.

THANKS, SHANE

STRESS LESS WITH BUDGET BILLING

Your electric usage and bill amount may vary from month to month based on the temperature and what time of year it is. For eligible members who prefer to pay the same amount every month, Victory Electric offers a budget billing option (also called even-pay).

Payments are set at the amount of a member's 12-month average electric use, making it easy to budget. An accurate history of electric use at your current residence is helpful in determining the monthly average. Although budget billing allows members to pay the same amount each month for convenience, Victory Electric still keeps track of their actual electric use. We do not want members paying too much or not enough each month, so budget billing payment amounts are recalculated biannually using the member's 12-month average bill amount.

To be eligible for budget billing, a member must reside at the address and have no late payments for a full year. Budget billing is only available to residential members, and you will still receive a monthly bill indicating the monthly payment amount.

If you are interested, please call or visit Victory Electric's office to see if you qualify and sign up. Members who use the PowerMyWay program are not eligible for budget billing, since those accounts are charged daily rather than monthly.



Going through tough times? Help is available.

Application period
is open from
12/18/23–3/29/24.

Scan here
to apply.



The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a federally funded program that helps eligible households pay a portion of their home energy costs by providing a one time per year benefit.

Victory Employees Value Continuing Education

Key Accounts Coordinator **DYLAN RATTS** recently attained Certified Key Account Executive Program (CKAE) certification. He began the certification process last fall while attending Cooperative University in Charleston, South Carolina, where he completed a three-day course.

“Along with gaining this knowledge, I was also able to connect with other key accounts coordinators from co-ops across the country,” Ratts said. “Collaborating with others in the industry was very beneficial.”

He also completed an exam covering the course material. The final part of the certification process involved developing a strategic business plan and member engagement plan to further strengthen Victory Electric’s Key Accounts program.

Victory Electric Vice President of Safety and Key Accounts Kyndell Penick said, “The CKAE training certification is a great tool and value for our Key Accounts program. This training will set Dylan up for success in the program and ensure our members get the value they need and deserve from Victory Electric. With the certification comes the completion of yearly credit hours to ensure our program stays updated with the newest trends and training.”

Providing continuing education for employees helps Victory Electric provide better service to our members and meet the challenges of the quickly changing energy industry.

“This was a valuable experience and will allow me to better serve you, our members,” Ratts said.



Key Accounts Coordinator Dylan Ratts recently attained Certified Key Account Executive Program (CKAE) certification.

OUTAGE MAP NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE



Victory Electric works hard to keep the lights on, but sometimes power outages occur. The co-op now offers an automated outage map to provide members with general outage information. The new digital tool displays the number of current outages and the approximate location.

Visit the Outage Center at www.victoryelectric.net/outage-center-0 to view the outage map. To report an outage, call our office at 620-227-2139 or send a report using the SmartHub app.

Gleason Joins Line Crew

Victory Electric recently welcomed **JACOB GLEASON** to the team as its newest lineman. The Spearville native worked for Southwest Towing in Dodge City before joining the cooperative. He worked for United Telephone in Dodge City and also did wind farm construction in the area.

After buying a semi-truck, Gleason operated his own trucking business, J.D. Express.

“I hauled cattle, oversized equipment and hazmat [hazardous materials] for almost six years,” he said.

Operating the business meant he had to spend a lot of time on the road, away from his family. Jacob and his wife, Emily, were high school sweethearts at Spearville High School and now live in Dodge City with their two children.

“I was ready to come home because I have a wife and two kids at home now, and I was tired of being gone,” Gleason said. Blaylee is 4 ½ years old, and Everett is 1 ½ years old.

Friends who work at Victory Electric

encouraged Gleason to apply for an open lineman position, and he is glad to be joining the team. He said he looks forward to learning more about “how the crews get from a big storm that knocks all the power out to getting everyone back on” and helping to troubleshoot and solve problems as part of the line crew.

Gleason attended line school for a year after graduating from high school and said he is glad to be returning to where he believes he is supposed to be.

Victory Electric Vice President of Operations Ryan Miller said, “Jacob was an intern for us years ago, and we are excited to have him back. We’re looking forward to watching him grow as a lineman.”

Welcome to Victory, Jacob!



Jacob Gleason

Dodge City Native Joins Accounting Team



Brendan Wenzl

Victory Electric recently welcomed **BRENDAN WENZL** as plant accountant. He formerly served as the executive director of the SouthWest

Kansas Area Agency on Aging, which he joined in 2019. He also had previous roles at Bank of the West and Waters True Value Hardware in Dodge City.

Wenzl received a bachelor's degree in business administration and finance from Fort Hays State University in Hays.

"I was born and raised in Dodge City and decided to come back again," Wenzl said.

He said he has always liked numbers and accounting, which he will put to good use in his new role at Victory Electric.

"I always knew it was a good place to work and thought it would be a good fit for me," he added.

He looks forward to learning more

about Victory's systems, growing his knowledge of accounting and being able to help the organization while growing in his career.

Victory Electric Chief Financial Officer Angela Unruh said, "We're excited to welcome Brendan to our dynamic team! With his past experiences and a thirst for knowledge, Brendan is a great addition to our accounting department. I'm excited to watch him develop as he navigates his new role."

"We are glad to have Brendan join the accounting team," said Manager of Accounting Steve Stecklein. "It's always nice to have local kids grow up and want to continue their careers close to home."

Wenzl said the sense of community is one of the reasons he decided to return home following his education. "I enjoy the community. I've always enjoyed the area and everyone's really nice."

In his free time, Wenzl enjoys watching the Kansas City Chiefs and the University of Kansas Jayhawks play.

Welcome to Victory, Brendan!

2 Linemen Reach Journeyman Status

Congratulations to Victory Electric linemen **CARLOS GARCIA ROJAS** and **CORY EDMUNDS** for reaching journeyman lineman status, the highest classification level for lineworkers to attain. The lineman certification process requires many hours of hands-on training, textbook study and examinations.

Garcia Rojas joined Victory's line crew in 2022 after completing the lineman program at Dodge City Community College (DC3) in Dodge City and working for North Houston Pole Line in Houston, Texas. Edmunds completed DC3's lineman course and was an apprentice at Great Plains Power in Grand Island, Nebraska, before joining Victory Electric in 2020.



Carlos Garcia Rojas



Cory Edmunds

BEST BETS FOR

Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid and lower your energy bills by conserving during peak energy times.

UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE

Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.



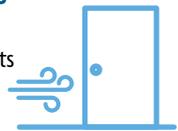
LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).



ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS

Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.



USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER

Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before going to bed.



MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT

Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.



SAFETY TIP

Did you know mylar balloons can damage the power grid and cause power outages? When balloons are released outside, they eventually fall back to earth and their remnants can cause harm to wildlife. To stay safe, consider alternatives to balloon releases and enjoy balloons indoors. SOURCE: WWW.SAFEELECTRICITY.COM



APPLY TODAY
•
APPLY TODAY

LIGHTNER COMMUNITY SPIRIT SCHOLARSHIP



Applications are open from
January 15—February 29

10 \$1,000 scholarships available!

▶ High school seniors or current students at a university, college or technical school who are dependents of a Victory Electric member, have a 3.0 GPA and have demonstrated a commitment to their community are encouraged to apply.

To apply, scan or visit—www.victoryelectric.net/lightner-community-spirit-scholarship.

- LOCAL **NONPROFITS** MAY APPLY TO RECEIVE UP TO **\$20,000!**
- APPLICATIONS OPEN **MARCH 15-MAY 17**
- APPLY AT **VICTORYELECTRIC.NET** ▶▶▶▶▶



SCAN TO APPLY

COBANK SHARING SUCCESS GRANT