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# Electronews

## THE VICTORY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSN., INC.

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## FROM THE CEO

# Managing Costs is a Shared Responsibility

Whether you're browsing the meat counter, filling up at the pump, or shopping for your family's daily needs, it's likely you're seeing the effects of higher prices on your wallet. At Victory Electric, we understand you may feel powerless when facing the rising costs of goods and services.

Electric cooperatives like ours feel the pressure of rising costs, too. The price of poles, wire, transformers and other essential equipment has risen significantly in the past several years — sometimes more than doubling in price. Rising fuel costs affect Victory Electric, too, as we send crews across our service area to maintain more than 3,200 miles of power lines.

We know you count on us to reliably and affordably provide the energy you need every day. Although we may not be able to control all costs, we do

have the power to manage expenses and reduce the costs that are under our control.

As a not-for-profit cooperative, it's Victory Electric's responsibility to keep electric rates as low as possible for our members, and that's a goal we take seriously. We are committed to the long-term success of Victory Electric and the well-being of our members.

At the distribution level, we work to save money by improving efficiency throughout the organization and adopting cost-saving technology where appropriate. We strive to keep expenses in check while continuing to deliver reliable electric service.

We have been able to pass through an Energy Cost Adjustment as a credit



Shane Laws

*Continued on page 12H ▶*



# VICTORY ELECTRIC HOSTS



Victory Electric hosted our 81st annual meeting on April 14 at the Boot Hill Casino Resort and Conference Center in Dodge City. Board President Daryl Tieben welcomed 253 attendees to the meeting, which gave members an opportunity to connect with one another and celebrate another year of cooperative progress.

Braden Vratil, a Victory Electric lineman, performed a rock-inspired rendition of the National Anthem on his electric guitar. Pastor Kirk Larson provided an invocation before Tieben called the meeting to order, declaring a quorum with 203 members in attendance.

He introduced the trustees and their spouses: President Daryl Tieben and Carol; Vice President

Cedric Drewes and Diane; Secretary/Treasurer Jim Ochs and Debbie; Megan Evans and Scott; Jim Imel and Cindy; Randy Quint and Lynne; Ken Schulte and Gwen; Kenny Wehkamp and Ivy; John Leis and Jill; Pat Morse and Shannon; and Hayes Kelman and Shelby. He also introduced Victory CEO Shane Laws and Ali, as well as Victory Board Attorney Dave Snapp and Debbie.



Board President Daryl Tieben welcomes members and guests to the annual meeting.



Victory Electric employees prepare for the 81st annual meeting to begin.

Tieben welcomed several special guests: Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC) Director of Finance and Human Resources Mindi Pfannenstiel, Sunflower Electric Power Corporation CEO Steve Epperson and other Sunflower staff. He also recognized past Victory Electric trustees, active-duty military, veterans and first responders in attendance.

Members approved the 2025 minutes and waived the reading of several annual documents. Tieben thanked the Nominating Committee: Chairman Greg Hainer, Kent Bartlett, Jack Ellis, Linda Martin, Kashly Van Petten, Tim Gleason, Jim Lembright and Tom Stanley.

Snapp reviewed proposed bylaw changes to update membership requirements,



Victory Electric lineman Braden Vratil performs the National Anthem on his electric guitar as Victory Electric Board of Trustees President Daryl Tieben looks on.



Victory Electric employees register members for the 81st annual meeting held at Boot Hill Casino and Resort Conference Center. Approximately 250 individuals attended the meeting to hear updates from their co-op, gather with neighbors and hear the results of the 2026 board of trustees elections.

meetings of members and other business matters, and ballots were collected and tabulated during the meeting. The changes passed.

A video highlighted Victory Electric's key initiatives and updates from 2025. Laws thanked members for their continued support while noting the cooperative's successes in economic development, keeping bills affordable and providing additional savings to members. He also addressed the increased interest from artificial intelligence (AI) and bitcoin companies in locating data centers in the area and explained how these large loads can benefit an electric cooperative.

Snapp announced the results of the trustee election. Re-elected to the board were incumbents **JIM IMEL**, District 4; **KENNY WEHKAMP**, District 6; and **RANDY QUINT**, District 10. Newly elected to the board was **CHARLES NICHOLSON**, District 2. **JOHN LEIS**, outgoing District 2 trustee, thanked the board and members for their support during his time serving as a trustee.

We appreciate all the members and guests who took part in our annual meeting! Your participation in cooperative business and trustee elections makes Victory Electric stronger.



Members arrive at the Boot Hill Casino and Resort Conference Center to attend the annual meeting April 14.



Pastor Kirk Larson gives the invocation.

→ **VICTORY ELECTRIC** ←  
**ANNUAL MEETING**

..... **RECAP** .....

**253**  
**ATTENDEES**

**203**  
**MEMBERS**

**30**  
**DOOR PRIZES**

**39**  
**VOLUNTEERS**

↗

# New Trustees Join Victory Board

In April, Victory Electric welcomed **HAYES KELMAN** and **CHARLES NICHOLSON** to serve on the Victory Electric Board of Trustees. Kelman is one of the three representatives for Dodge City in District 10, and Nicholson represents Minneola-area members in District 2. Both are native Kansans who have backgrounds in agriculture and business, and that experience gives them valuable perspective as they help provide direction to the cooperative.

## HAYES KELMAN — DISTRICT 10

Following the retirement of former District 10 Trustee Terri Larson in April, the board appointed Kelman to hold the vacated seat, in accordance with Victory Electric bylaws. He will serve the remainder of Larson's three-year term, which began in 2024, and be eligible for re-election in 2027.

Kelman is a fifth-generation farmer from Sublette, Kansas. A graduate of Kansas State University with a bachelor's degree in agribusiness/agricultural business operations, he and his father, Roger, founded Boot Hill Distillery in 2016. They transformed Dodge City's historic former City Hall into a distillery. Their spirits are made exclusively from grain grown at Kelman Farms in Haskell County, making it a "soil to sip" operation.

"My background in agriculture and business has shaped how I approach decisions — focused on long-term sustainability, disciplined cost management, and practical outcomes," Kelman said. "I'm used to thinking in terms of risk, return and durability over time. As energy demand continues to grow and evolve over the next several years, that mindset will be important in evaluating opportunities, managing costs, and making sure decisions are grounded in what's best for the membership as a whole."

He said he is thankful for the opportunity to step in and serve the community in a meaningful way as a trustee. "In my day-to-day work as a farmer and business owner, I rely heavily on dependable, cost-effective power, so I have a strong appreciation for what Victory provides," he said. "At the same time, the energy landscape is changing quickly, with increasing demand and new types of large users coming into play. I felt it was important to be involved in helping guide those changes in a way that benefits our members and strengthens the cooperative long-term."



Charles Nicholson (left) and Hayes Kelman join the Victory Board of Trustees.

In 2020, Boot Hill Distillery partnered with Victory Electric to bottle and distribute hand cleanser produced at the distillery to community members throughout Ford County and the surrounding area.

Hayes and his wife, Shelby, have two children.

## CHARLES NICHOLSON — DISTRICT 2

Charles "Chuck" Nicholson is a lifelong southwest Kansan and a third-generation farmer and rancher whose family has been part of the community for over a century. He is no stranger to Victory Electric, as he served on the board of trustees in 2005. He has served on other cooperative boards, as well. "I believe Victory is a well-managed cooperative, and our area offers strong advantages for attracting new commerce and opportunities. I want to give back and help provide positive, steady leadership for our members," Nicholson said. He earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics from Fort Hays State University but said his most valuable education happened on the farm during the 1980s agricultural crisis, which taught him to be conservative with finances and cautious about taking on debt.

"I will draw on these real-world experiences to guide prudent, practical decision-making on the Victory board," he said.

After recycling Dodge City wastewater on their family farm, he and his son, Jeremiah, expanded their environmentally responsible model to form an environmental engineering business, Beneterra, which operates in Australia.

Chuck and his wife, Shawn, have two children and three grandsons.

**WELCOME TO VICTORY, HAYES AND CHUCK!**

# 2026 Policy Priorities for Electric Cooperatives

At Victory Electric, our job goes beyond keeping the lights on day to day. We are also responsible for advocating on behalf of our members in Washington, D.C., to make sure decisions being made at the federal level protect reliable, affordable power in our local communities.

Victory Electric trustees **MEGAN EVANS** (District 5) and **PAT MORSE** (District 10) as well as **CEO SHANE LAWS** attended the annual National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., in April. Along with other co-op leaders, they helped to bring key energy issues and priorities to the political forefront while representing our local communities in the nation's capital.

In 2026, America's electric cooperatives are focused on a few key issues that directly impact our members:

- ▶ **FASTER DISASTER RECOVERY:** We support the bipartisan FEMA Act of 2025. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is a critical partner in helping electric co-ops restore power and rebuild their systems in the wake of natural disasters, but it could be more effective and responsive to the needs of rural America. If the FEMA Act passes, it will help utilities restore power more quickly after storms and disasters — while keeping costs lower for rural families and businesses.
- ▶ **CUTTING THROUGH RED TAPE:** Outdated and overly complex permitting rules slow down essential upgrades to power lines and substations. Streamlining these processes helps us keep up with growing demand and improve reliability. We're urging Congress to pass comprehensive permitting reforms, including the SPEED Act and PERMIT Act, both of which cleared the House in December 2025.
- ▶ **KEEPING RELIABLE POWER PLANTS ONLINE:** We're

advocating for realistic energy regulations that don't force dependable power plants to shut down before reliable replacements are ready.

- ▶ **PROTECTING CRITICAL HYDROPOWER:** Hydroelectric dams in the Pacific Northwest play a key role in keeping electricity reliable and affordable across multiple states. Removing them would raise costs and threaten reliability.
- ▶ **SMARTER LAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES:** We're advocating for smarter land-management policies like the Fix Our Forests Act that would allow electric cooperatives to better maintain power lines on public lands and mitigate wildfire risk.
- ▶ **MAINTAINING FUNDING FOR GRID INNOVATION AND INVESTMENTS:** Federal loan and grant programs help co-ops strengthen the grid, prepare for extreme weather, improve cybersecurity and explore new energy technologies — without shifting costs to members.

These policy priorities all come back to the same goal: making sure our members have safe, reliable and affordable power — now and in the future. To learn more about policy issues important to electric cooperatives and find voting and election resources, visit [www.vote.coop](http://www.vote.coop).

**2026 policy priorities**

- Faster disaster recovery through improved FEMA partnerships.
- Streamlining outdated and overly complex permitting rules.
- Maintaining funding for grid innovation and investments.
- Keeping reliable power plants online.
- Protecting critical hydropower.
- Smarter land management policies.

visit [vote.coop](http://vote.coop) for more info

## Victory Welcomes New System Engineer and Warehouse Clerk

In April, two new employees joined Victory Electric: **MEDEL OROZCO**, system engineer, and **TRAVIS BARNETT**, warehouse clerk.

### MEDEL OROZCO

Orozco is a Dodge City native and earned a degree in architectural engineering from Kansas State University. Before joining Victory Electric's engineering team, he worked as the electronics/electrical supervisor at Cargill.

He said Manager of Plant Accounting and Material Control Brendan Wenzl encouraged him to apply when a system engineer position opened at Victory Electric. "I got the opportunity, and here I am," Orozco said.

He will be focusing on engineering work for new development projects in the area.

"As the area grows, the infrastructure

has to grow as well, and that's where I come in," he said.

He enjoys working on his three cars and watching car-related shows. He likes cooking and grilling and listens to all kinds of music. Orozco regularly watches baseball, college football and soccer. His favorite teams are K-State, the Kansas City Royals, and Barcelona and the Mexican national soccer teams, noting that he is excited about the upcoming World Cup.

Orozco said his parents inspire him.

"I've seen them work really hard, and I want to work hard for them and show them their hard work paid off," he said.

### TRAVIS BARNETT

Barnett graduated from Spearville Middle/High School and now lives in Minneola with his fiancée and their two children. Before joining Victory Electric, he was a logistics manager for five



Medel Orozco



Travis Barnett

years at Kitchens, Inc. in Dodge City. He previously worked at Cargill and in the parts warehouse at Foley Equipment.

His father, Kelly, has been Victory Electric's mechanic for five years.

"My dad says it's a good company to work for," Barnett said.

In his free time, Barnett enjoys spending time with his kids, who inspire him. He likes working on cars and "anything with a motor," he said. He cheers for the Kansas City Chiefs and likes country music and going to the lake, too. The family also has two dogs.

**WELCOME TO VICTORY, MEDEL AND TRAVIS!**

Mark your calendar!

**JULY**

Spearville C.O.W. Fest 10  
Dodge City Days Parade 25

**MEMBER APPRECIATION**

**FREE ADMISSION**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> COME 1<sup>ST</sup> SERVE:**  
MEAL VOUCHERS & GIVEAWAYS!

**GATES OPEN 6:30 P.M.**  
**@CAVALIER FIELD**

**JUNE 15** Spark at the **PARK**

# Victory Congratulates 2026 CoBank Sharing Success Winners

Victory Electric congratulates the three winners of 2026 CoBank Sharing Success Grants: **SPECIAL OLYMPICS KANSAS**, **SOUTHWEST KANSAS AREA AGENCY ON AGING (SWKAAA)** and **QUIVIRA COUNCIL, BSA**. Each nonprofit organization will receive \$10,000 through the annual program, which celebrates the vital role cooperatives play in their communities and the valuable work of nonprofit organizations.

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS KANSAS

Special Olympics Kansas gives individuals with intellectual disabilities opportunities to participate and excel in a variety of sports. The \$10,000 Sharing Success grant is being used to provide meals, medals and equipment for Special Olympics events in southwest Kansas.

A West Regional Track and Field competition was held April 25 at Memorial Stadium in Dodge City. The event brought athletes from across western Kansas together for running, jumping and throwing events.

Events like these showcase Special Olympics athletes' determination, teamwork and love of sport, improving their quality of life. Special Olympics Kansas provides year-round training, health education, and sports competitions for over 5,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities across the state. Participants practice regularly in up to 20 sports, with events held at various locations.

For more information about the organization, visit <https://soks.org>.

## SOUTHWEST KANSAS AREA AGENCY ON AGING (SWKAAA)

The Southwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging (SWKAAA) is a nonprofit organization providing services to older adults and people with disabilities in a 28-county rural region. The \$10,000 Sharing Success grant will support volunteer transportation for medical treatments, such as dialysis. Funds will go toward the expansion of transportation assistance to serve additional counties in southwest Kansas.

Many seniors who want to remain in rural southwest Kansas face unreliable or nonexistent transportation, which restricts their access to healthcare and other essential services. While living far from emergency and specialty care, they are often dependent on caregivers or volunteers who have the availability and financial means to pay for mileage and gas expenses.

SWKAAA's transportation assistance program primarily covers volunteer mileage for essential medical appointments up to once per month, with case-by-case support for dialysis and cancer treatments.

SWKAAA stated in its application: "We have seen that communities with transportation services benefit from



Special Olympics Kansas won a 2026 CoBank Sharing Success Grant with Victory Electric donating \$5,000, which was matched by CoBank for a total of \$10,000. Front row, from left: Director of Communications Chanda Schulte and Special Olympics Kansas Director of Development-LETR Jacob LaMunyon. Back row, from left: Vice President of Corporate Services Amy Grasser, Vice President of Operations Ryan Miller, District 10 Trustee Pat Morse, Chief Information Officer Denzil McGill and Chief Financial Officer Angela Unruh.



Southwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging (SWKAAA) receives a 2026 CoBank Sharing Success Grant. Front row, from left: Vice President of Corporate Services Amy Grasser, Director of Communications Chanda Schulte, SWKAAA Executive Director Kari Unruh, SWKAAA Development Director Jessica Humki and Key Accounts Coordinator Dylan Ratts. Back row, from left: Vice President of Engineering Rob Henry, District 10 Trustee Randy Quint, District 10 Trustee Pat Morse, Manager of Plant Accounting and Material Control Brendan Wenzl and Chief Information Officer Denzil McGill.

residents aging in place, supporting local businesses and contributing to the local tax base."

For more information, visit [www.swkaaa-aging.org](http://www.swkaaa-aging.org).

## QUIVIRA COUNCIL, BSA

Quivira Council, BSA will use its \$10,000 grant to support essential facility improvements at Camp Mandan facilities, which are located northeast of Dodge City by Ford County Lake. Through year-round programming and facility use, Camp Mandan serves youth groups, families, community organizations and volunteers who rely on a safe and well-maintained environment.

The improvements will enhance the safety, comfort and functionality of the camp. Replacement mattress covers will help maintain cleanliness for youth and adult dorm guests, a

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## Managing Costs is a Shared Responsibility *Continued from page 12A ▶*

on members' bills since October 2022, which reduces our annual residential power bills.

We leverage federal funding sources such as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursements when possible. Getting back disaster recovery costs for the cooperative benefits members, too. Victory Electric also has fuel contracts in place to protect against market price fluctuations, and we bid out materials and services in our purchasing department to keep costs as low as possible.

### POWER PARTNERS

Victory Electric's strong partnerships help in striking a balance between minimizing costs and managing risk as well.

Our generation and transmission utility, Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, maintains a well-balanced, diversified portfolio of owned and purchased generation resources, using multiple technologies and fuel sources. Sunflower's capacity mix of coal, natural gas, solar, wind and hydro helps them manage market fluctuations and keep member rates competitive.

Sunflower Electric is part of the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), a regional transmission organization (RTO). SPP acts like an air traffic controller by directing the flow of electricity in its network. It optimizes electric generation and transmission resources and plans infrastructure to meet future energy needs. SPP recently expanded its service territory into the Western Interconnection of the nation's power grid — the first RTO to span two interconnections — and now serves all or part of 17 states with 86,000 miles of transmission lines.

As Victory Electric, Sunflower Electric and SPP work together to navigate complex industry challenges, we are always looking ahead and exploring more ways to manage rising costs. We also provide efficiency tips and other information to help you save energy and money.

We prioritize you, our members, while working hard to provide reliable, affordable and dependable electric service. We appreciate your trust in the cooperative as we continue powering the communities we serve.

**THANKS, SHANE**



**ABOVE:** Dave Geist accepts a 2026 CoBank Sharing Success Grant on behalf of Quivira Council, BSA. Front row, from left: Director of Communications Chanda Schulte, Dave Geist, and Vice President of Corporate Services Amy Grasser. Back row, from left: Vice President of Engineering Rob Henry, Vice President of Operations Ryan Miller, District 10 Trustee Randy Quint, Chief Information Officer Denzil McGill, and Manager of Accounting Tami Henry.

**BELOW:** Submitted photo of Dodge City-area Scout troops provided by Janie Presley.



JANIE PRESLEY

## Victory Congratulates 2026 CoBank Sharing Success Winners *Continued from page 12G ▶*

new stove will ensure safe cooking, and washer and dryer units will improve linen and kitchen upkeep. Updated vacuum cleaners will help maintain carpeted areas, while ventilation fans in the shower house will enhance air quality and reduce moisture issues for all users.

Hundreds of youth and community members benefit annually from programs, retreats and events hosted at the camp. Grant funding supports continued growth, learning and community engagement.

To learn more, visit [www.quivira.org](http://www.quivira.org).

### SHARING SUCCESS

The annual grant opportunity is facilitated by Victory Electric in collaboration with CoBank. Through CoBank's \$6 million Sharing Success fund, customer contributions to charitable organizations throughout rural America are matched. In 2025, CoBank increased its maximum grant award to \$15,000 annually, which is matched by Victory Electric, resulting in a combined total of \$30,000 available for distribution to one or more selected recipients. For the first time, the Victory Electric Board of Trustees selected three winners this year.

Since 2012, Victory Electric has awarded \$245,000 in charitable grants in partnership with CoBank. The 2027 application period will open early next year. To learn more about the CoBank Sharing Success grant, visit [www.victoryelectric.net/cobank-sharing-success-grant](http://www.victoryelectric.net/cobank-sharing-success-grant) or email [askcommunications@victoryelectric.net](mailto:askcommunications@victoryelectric.net).