P.O. Box 1335, 3230 N. 14th Ave. Dodge City, KS 67801 620-227-2139 victoryelectric.net facebook.com/victorvelectric twitter.com/thevictoryelec Visit us on YouTube

Electric Cooperation ASSOC., Inc. A Touchstone Energy Cooperative Electronews

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Chanda Schulte

Vice President of Communications

FROM THE CEO

Advocating for Policies That Serve Members

As a member of the Victory Electric cooperative, you have a voice. Our board of trustees and leadership team consider your perspective as we set the co-op's priorities and direct its operations. We, in turn, are a voice for our members, communities and electric co-ops at the state and national level. We use our collective voice to help shape the policies set by our government leaders.

In April, more than 2,000 co-op leaders from all over the United States met with Congress and federal agencies to advocate for our members. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2023 Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., focused on maintaining reliable, affordable electricity for American families and businesses. I was one of 28 co-op leaders in the Kansas delegation, along with Victory

Electric trustees Terri Larson, Pat Morse and Daryl Tieben.

There are five key issues affecting reliability and affordability that co-op leaders discussed with



Shane Laws

legislators and others during the legislative conference:

ELECTRIC DEMAND: Electricity powers our economy, and the demand for electrifying different sectors of the economy will only continue to grow. To meet the increasing demand, we need time, technology development and new transmission infrastructure as well as policies that are inclusive of all energy sources.

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78th Annual Meeting

Highlights Growth and Opportunity



Victory Electric members took advantage of the time to catch up with friends and neighbors at the annual meeting.



Victory Electric's IT team took video and livestreamed the annual meeting.



A cooperative member talks with Board of Trustees President Pat Morse.

Victory Electric enjoys connecting with our members each year at the annual meeting. Victory hosted its 78th annual meeting on April 11 at Western State Bank Expo Center for 171 attendees. The 137 cooperative members in attendance approved changes to the co-op's Articles of Incorporation, heard updates about current and upcoming Victory Electric projects, and had the opportunity to share their thoughts with trustees and other members of the leadership team.

Jemma Rumbaugh sang the national anthem, and David Graves offered the invocation. Victory Electric Board of Trustees President Pat Morse called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. and declared a quorum. He introduced his wife, Shannon, and the other trustees and their spouses in attendance: Daryl Tieben and Carol; Cedric Drews; Terri Larson; Jim Imel and Cindy; John Leis and Jill; James Ochs and Deb; Randy Quint and Lynne; Ken Schulte and Gwen; Kenny Wehkamp and Ivy; and new board member Megan Evans and Scott. Morse also introduced Shane Laws, CEO, and Dave Snapp, Victory Electric attorney.

Special guests in attendance at the meeting were Jason Goetz, state representative for District 119, and Ford County Sheriff Bill Carr. Vicki Estes, editor for Kansas Country Living magazine and director of communications at Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., and Jerri Whitley and Josh Schmidt from Sunflower Electric also attended. Former board members Myron Jones and Richard Lightner were also present.

Snapp announced that incumbent trustees LEIS, IMEL, WEHKAMP and

QUINT were all reelected to the board by Victory Electric members. He addressed a proposed change to Victory Electric's Articles of Incorporation, which was printed in the 2022 Victory Electric Annual Report and Meeting Notice included in the April 2023 edition of Kansas Country Living. The members attending the annual meeting voted in favor of the addition to the Articles of Incorporation.

Laws presented a video highlighting how Victory Electric is building on a strong foundation to meet opportunities and challenges now and in the future. In the video, Victory Electric staff shared what projects the cooperative has been working on in the areas of IT and cybersecurity, key accounts and economic development, member services, engineering and accounting.

Laws also shared more about a federal grant Victory Electric has applied for with Kansas State University and Sunflower Electric regarding grid resiliency and system hardening. "When I say grid resiliency, I'm referring to the system's ability to withstand storm events, weather events and all the tough weather events we experience in



Trustee Ken Schulte (right) visited with a member at the meeting.

southwest Kansas," Laws said. System hardening refers to improving and strengthening wires, poles, circuits and other equipment so that the system can withstand those events.

Laws stressed the importance of Dodge City and Ford County as well as Victory Electric to our country's food system. If received, the grant would mean \$42 million for the cooperative to provide microgrids and other infrastructure improvements in Ford County.

"That's just one example of what your co-op is doing on your behalf to make sure we position Victory Electric in a place that ensures we're going to be reliable, low-cost, keep the lights on and have a positive effect on the nation's food supply," Laws said.

Victory Electric would like to thank Border States for providing water and Sunflower Electric for providing one of the door prizes, a Google Nest Thermostat. RANDY RIEKENBERG, TOM **ARMSTRONG, GERALD LIGHTNER** and GEORGE HERTEL each won \$200 bill credits, and MILAM JONES won the Google Nest. All of the members who registered and attended the annual meeting received a \$20 bill credit to be applied to their Victory Electric account.



Victory Electric's 78th annual meeting on April 11 included 171 attendees plus a four-legged friend.



Chanda Schulte, Victory vice president of communications, and John Leis, trustee, greeted members as they registered for the annual meeting.



Attendees young and young at heart enjoyed the goody bags at the 78th annual meeting.



Victory Electric Board President Pat Morse (left) opened the annual meeting on April 11 and introduced Shane Laws (center) and Dave Snapp (right).

Schulte Completes Certified Cooperative Communicator Program



Vice President of Communications Chanda Schulte completed the Certified Cooperative Communicator program presented by the National **Rural Electric Cooperative** Association.

Vice President of Communications **CHANDA SCHULTE** completed the Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) program on May 1. Schulte, along with 27 other communicators from across the United States, graduated from the reimagined pilot program of the CCC after completing over 110 hours of instruction during the past 10 months.

As the cooperative's voice during times of both calm and crisis, the communicator plays a strategic role at the co-op and needs a voice within its leadership. The CCC program supports this critical role by providing co-op communicators with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively communicate and increase their visibility within the co-op and community.

The program is a cohort-based blended learning program with a mixture of online and in-person instruction. In addition to the instruction received, CCC students build strong, long-lasting relationships that they can carry with them throughout their careers.

CCC participants attend courses specifically designed for the work they perform at their co-op. They benefit from idea sharing and networking with their classmates from across the country and learn strategic communication skills to advocate for the co-op form of business and the advancement of the co-op network.

"I am extremely appreciative to the board of trustees and Shane Laws for allowing me the opportunity to participate in the CCC program," Schulte said. "I have gained a substantial amount of knowledge and skills both from the instruction and my classmates and I look forwarding to putting those skills to work for our cooperative."

Dylan Ratts Joins Victory Electric as Key Accounts Coordinator

Dodge City native DYLAN RATTS joined Victory Electric in April as the key accounts coordinator. He looks forward to learning more about the entire electric industry in his new role serving the cooperative's commercial members.

"I'm excited to get connected with the key accounts and general members as well and learn the whole process," Ratts said. "I'm passionate about getting to know people and building relationships within the workplace and with customers."

Ratts received his associate of arts in general finance from Dodge City Community College (DC3) and a bachelor of business administration in finance with a banking concentration from Fort Hays State University (FHSU). He previously worked as a financial examiner for the State of Kansas in the Office of the State Bank Commissioner.

Ratts developed his salesmanship skills while working at Lewis Automotive in Hays while attending FHSU and then Lewis Chevrolet after returning to Dodge City.

"I love the size of Dodge City," Ratts said. He praised his hometown's smalltown vibe. "It has everything I need, and you don't have the big city traffic." Ratts said he also appreciates the people of southwest Kansas.

"The Key Accounts department plays a significant role in the cooperative,"

Kyndell Penick, vice president of safety and key accounts, said. "Keeping up with industry trends and keeping our members informed is essential to



Dylan Ratts

us and our members. Dylan has a background in customer service and business that will help Victory reach our members and keep them engaged in what we do as a cooperative. Serving business members by having someone they can contact with questions and concerns is a value we don't take lightly. Dylan will be a pivotal member to keep our program thriving and growing in the future."

A former member of the DC3 golf team, Ratts enjoys Dodge City's two golf courses. His parents, Rhonda and Bart Ratts, were also born and raised in Dodge City, and he has two older sisters, Mallory and Morgan.

Ratts is a big fan of the Kansas City Chiefs and loves NASCAR and attending country music concerts. He also enjoys hunting waterfowl and upland hunting, including pheasants and quail.

WELCOME TO THE VICTORY ELECTRIC **TEAM, DYLAN!**

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Looking for additional ways to save energy this summer? Your laundry room is a great place to start. Wash clothes with cold water, which can cut one load's energy use by more than half. Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the size of the clothes load, so fill it up when you can. When drying clothes, separate the heavier cottons. Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons like linens and towels from your lightweight clothing.



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GENERATION RETIREMENT: The North American Reliability Corporation (NERC) said the U.S. has been experiencing a "disorderly retirement" of older electric generating plants because replacement power is insufficient or not coming online quickly enough to meet demand.

PERMITTING DELAYS: Permitting red tape and lengthy environmental impact reviews affect electric cooperatives' ability to construct critical electric generation, transmission and broadband infrastructure. NRECA supports assessing the potential environmental impacts of energy projects, but the federal permitting process is cumbersome and costly. The outdated process needs to be modernized so that co-ops can meet the future needs of our members and communities. In some cases, projects must go through overlapping permitting reviews by different agencies, which is redundant and inefficient. Congress is considering legislation to overhaul and streamline the federal permitting process. To help electric co-ops provide for tomorrow's energy needs, there should be firm time limits on environmental reviews, greater involvement in the process by those proposing infrastructure projects, and a shorter review period for small projects whose environmental impacts are known and would be minimal.

SUPPLY CHAIN: Electric cooperatives face considerable supply chain challenges and delays for essential machinery and components such as distribution transformers and electrical conduit. These delays — along with labor shortages that prevent manufacturers from increasing output — threaten our ability to provide reliable electric service, restore power after natural disasters and meet growing demand for electricity. Co-op leaders have spoken in favor of government policies that will support sustainable supply chains for the electric sector. This includes addressing critical labor shortages and investing in domesThe farm bill's energy and rural development titles contain significant opportunities for electric cooperatives and rural communities, including expanding rural broadband access, enhancing electric infrastructure and promoting economic development.

tic manufacturing of steel raw material components and power transformers instead of relying primarily on international producers. Co-op leaders have also urged the Department of Energy to pull back on its proposed efficiency standards for distribution transformers that would likely increase supply chain problems if enacted.

NATURAL GAS: Electric cooperatives use a diverse fuel mix to power American homes and businesses, and natural gas is the largest energy source. Extreme weather events in recent years have challenged natural gas availability and led to rolling blackouts.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed strict regulations on carbon dioxide emissions at fossil fuel-fired power plants, further straining the grid.

Farm Bill

Co-op leaders at the legislative conference also discussed the farm bill, an essential tool for rural electric cooperatives. Legislators have been working on a new five-year farm bill and hearing from commodity groups and other stakeholders during committee hearings and listening sessions. Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. CEO Lee Tafanelli and Manager of Government Relations Reagan McCloud shared co-op concerns with Sens. Roger Marshall, R-KS, and John Boozman, R-AR, at a recent farm bill roundtable.

The farm bill's energy and rural development titles contain significant opportunities for electric cooperatives and rural communities, including expanding rural broadband access, enhancing

electric infrastructure and promoting economic development. The grants, loans and programs supported by the farm bill help electric cooperatives carry out their mission.

Electric cooperatives' supply chain concerns were a primary topic of discussion at a recent Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing about the Department of Energy's 2024 budget. Four senators acknowledged electric cooperatives' efforts to address supply chain shortfalls and asked Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm about the agency's plans to help. Kansas Sen. Jerry Moran said in a recent newsletter to constituents, "Having a secure and affordable electrical grid is critical to supporting Kansas families, businesses and infrastructure." He also noted he will prioritize electric co-ops in his work on the upcoming farm bill.

The message co-op leaders have been sharing with legislators is being heard. We will continue to advocate for policies that benefit our cooperatives and our members.

THANKS, SHANE



Victory Electric Introd

Beginning in July, Victory Electric will be using a new bill format to improve readability and help members better understand their charges and energy use. We want to provide valuable information to cooperative members in a format that is clear and easy to read. Note that we are not changing your electric rates or the due date for your monthly bill — we are simply updating the layout and design.

Victory Electric incorporated better graphics to draw attention to the most important elements, such as the large

bubble that prominently features the current bill amount and due date at the top of the bill.

Use the appropriate QR code to access the SmartHub app for your Android or Apple mobile device so you can easily pay your bill or report outages electronically.

The center section of the new bill is Your Energy Snapshot, which shows your energy use for the past 12 months in kilowatt-hours as well as the average outdoor temperatures each month during that time period. Your Energy

Breakdown lets you easily compare daily use and the average temperature for the current bill with the same information from one month ago and one year ago.

If you would prefer not to receive a printed bill, you may call our office or go to your SmartHub account and select paperless billing in the settings. a pdf copy of your bill with the new design will be available online under billing history. If you have any questions, please contact our office at 620-227-2139.

Front

GENERAL CONTACT INFORMATION — Victory Electric's address, office hours, local and toll-free phone number, and website. The QR codes will take you directly to the SmartHub app to login or download. Be sure to use the correct QR code for your phone operating system, Android or Apple.

CURRENT BILL AMOUNT — The large circle helps you easily identify the total of your most recent electric bill and the due date. If on automatic draft, it will identify the amount and date of the bank or credit card draft.

MESSAGE CENTER — This area has important cooperative information, changes and announcements.

YOUR ENERGY SNAPSHOT — The chart supplied will help you compare current usage with the previous month and year. The three circles compare this month's energy use and average temperature to last month and this month last year.

PAYMENT STUB — Includes cooperative contact information, bank draft notifications (for those that are signed up) plus the bill summary with due dates.

MEMBER CONTACT INFORMATION — This area lists the phone number and email address we have on file. Please keep this information up-to-date.



uces New Bill Format

Understanding Energy Charges

ENERGY CHARGE: The energy charge is the cost for the total amount of energy used in a billing period. The energy charge is determined by multiplying the total amount of electricity consumed during the billing period, measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh), by the energy charge rate.

ENERGY COST ADJUSTMENT: The ECA is a pass-through variable charge or credit to adjust for differences when wholesale power costs from our power provider either exceed or fall below the base rate.

This allows the cooperative to respond to market fluctuations without implementing a rate change. Victory Electric does not make a profit on the ECA.

SERVICE AVAILABILITY CHARGE: This is the minimum charge to be connected to the distribution lines. The service availability charge covers the cooperative's operating costs and reflects the investment in the poles, wires, transformers and other equipment it takes to provide you with electric service.

DEMAND CHARGE: Demand is a charge to appropriately allocate costs to build, maintain, or upgrade the infrastructure needed to deliver energy to members. Demand is the rate at which energy is being used, not the total energy used. The charge is determined by the maximum demand of energy at any point within the billing cycle multiplied by a member's rate.

TAXES AND FEES: Bills include applicable taxes and fees for the sale of electric service at a location. Victory Electric collects and remits these taxes and fees directly to the appropriate government agency.



Back

METER INFORMATION — This area lists your account number, meter number, usage period, present and previous meter readings, meter multiplier, kilowatt-hours used during the billing period, demand and your current rate schedule.

YOUR ACCOUNT SUMMARY — This area will list your service address and description. It will list the total payments or other credits received since your last billing period and any unpaid balance forward. Finally, it will list a breakdown of your current charges:

- ► Energy Charge
- Energy Cost Adjustment
- ► Total Demand
- Service Availability Charge
- Sales Tax (if applicable)
- Franchise Fee (if applicable)

SMARTHUB INFORMATION and other ways to pay your bill.

VANILLADIRECT PAY — Members can pay their Victory Electric bill at participating retail stores, such as Dollar General, Walmart, Family Dollar and Walgreens. Members must bring their bill stub or their account specific barcode (you can print it when logging on to your SmartHub account) to a participating retail store and the bar code will be scanned at the register or customer service desk. Members can then make a cash payment toward their bill. There is a \$1.50 convenience fee to use this service.

9 Cool Ways to Beat Summer Heat

Memorial Day weekend ushers in the unofficial start of summer. While you're prepping the grill for barbecues and planting vegetables in the garden, make sure your home is ready for summertime, too! Making your home more energy efficient can keep costs down and keep you cool as the heat begins to sizzle.

Leaky windows or ducts, old appliances and inefficient cooling systems waste energy and cost you more money over time. Dirty air filters raise operating costs and may reduce air flow through your home. Using appliances during peak energy times can also make your bill higher.

You don't have to invest a lot of time and money to address these common issues. Here are several simple ways to improve energy efficiency in your home as the temperatures begin to climb:

Add weather stripping and caulk around windows and doors to keep cold air inside. Also seal gaps around piping, dryer vents, fans and outlets to prevent air leaks.

Replace incandescent light bulbs with LED bulbs to cut your energy bill. According to the U.S. Department

of Energy, Energy Star-rated LED bulbs produce 70% to 90% less heat than standard bulbs and use up to 90% less energy.

Use an inexpensive insulating jacket or blanket on your water heater to save up to 16% in water heating costs and reduce standby heat losses by 25% to 45%. (Safety note: To avoid overheating, do not set the thermostat above 130 degrees on a water heater with an insulating jacket or blanket installed.)

Check, clean or change the filter of your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system to extend its life and save money. HVAC professionals recommend checking filters every month. It's also a good idea to have your system inspected every year.

🖊 Install a programmable thermostat, a great money-saving tool that can be set to automatically adjust the temperature based on your family's routines. Smart thermostats can be controlled remotely.

Use ceiling fans to circulate the air in the rooms you're occupying at home. They make you feel cooler, which means you can raise the thermostat a few degrees and still feel comfortable. Remember to turn them off when you leave the room, as fans cool people — not the room.

Consider operating your clothes dryer and oven during cooler parts of the day.

Monitor your energy use regularly to check for trends and help you make informed decisions. SmartHub lets you view your electrical energy usage monthly, daily or hourly. You can compare your electrical usage, charges and weather temperature variations to note seasonal or behavioral changes in how you use energy.

In the summer, close curtains, blinds and shades during the hottest part of the day. Not only is about one-third of a home's energy lost around windows, but about 76% of sunlight that falls on standard double-pane windows enters the home to become heat, according to www. energy.gov.

For more efficiency tips, visit Victory Electric's Energy Solutions page at www. victoryelectric.net/energy-saving-tips.

WORKING ON THE



Members of the West Hopewell Community FCE club visited Victory Electric on May 4. Kyndell Penick and Justin Straight gave an electrical safety demonstration and shared information about electrical safety at home, lineworker training and what to do when you see a downed line.



Students at the Ford County Farm Bureau Association Day on the Farm event tried on lineworkers' gloves and learned about safety equipment and



Victory Electric lineworkers attended the Ford County Farm Bureau Association Day on the Farm event for local fourth graders and presented electrical safety demonstrations to students, who experienced the sights, sounds and smells of what happens when contact is made with a power line.