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Electronews

The Victory Electric Cooperative Assn., Inc.

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|---|---------------------------------|
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- Angela Unruh**
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- Denzil McGill**
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- Amy Grasser**
Vice President of Corporate Services
- Rob Henry**
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- Ryan Miller**
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- Kyndell Penick**
Vice President of Safety & Key Accounts
- Chanda Schulte**
Vice President of Communications

FROM THE CEO

Get Involved! Join Us at the Annual Meeting

One of my favorite events is coming up on April 11, when Victory Electric will host our annual meeting for you, the members we proudly serve. I always look forward to this event because it's a great opportunity for me and our employees to talk with our members and hear what's on their minds.

We hope you'll join us for the annual meeting, which will take place at the Western State Bank Expo Center. For those who are unable to attend in person, we will also offer a virtual option. The meeting will be live streamed on the Victory Electric YouTube channel and all social media channels. Whether you attend in person or online, we thank you in

advance for getting involved because your participation means so much to us.

During the annual meeting, we'll share a few brief business updates on financial reports, recent projects, 2022 success and future growth of the cooperative.

Spending time with you and hearing your take on our community's energy future is so important to us. In fact, it's essential because everything we do is shaped by the members of our



Shane Laws

Continued on page 12H ▶

Nominating Committee Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the nominating committee of The Victory Electric Cooperative Association Inc., was held Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023, at the office of the cooperative on N. 14th Avenue in Dodge City, Kansas.

The following members of the nominating committee were present: **KENT BARTLETT, GREG HANIER, EARL PLATTNER, ROY BAKER, TIM GLEASON, RICHARD LIGHTNER, JIM LEMBRIGHT** and **BILL CRANE**.

Also present were Hailey Zimmerman, attorney for Victory Electric; Shane Laws, CEO; Pat Morse, board president; Chanda Schulte, vice president of communications; and Carolina Ross, executive assistant, who recorded the minutes.

Zimmerman covered qualifications and eligibility requirements for election as a trustee, as set forth in the bylaws of the cooperative, to determine if each potential nominee was eligible for election based upon the information available.

Greg Hainer was elected as chairman of the nominating committee and inspector of elections. Chairman Hainer called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and asked for nominations from Districts 2, 4, 6 and 10.

Thereupon, motions duly made, seconded and adopted, the following persons were nominated to stand election as candidates for trustee of the cooperative for a three-year term:

- ▶ District 2: **JOHN LEIS**
- ▶ District 4: **JIM IMEL**
- ▶ District 6: **KENNY WEHKAMP**
- ▶ District 10: **RANDY QUINT**

There being no further business to come before the meeting of the nominating committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

Annual Report and Voting Ballots Mailed to You

Look for Victory Electric's annual report in the April issue of the *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

Ballots for the board of trustees' election will be mailed separately and contain the candidate profiles, ballot, return envelope and your registration card for the meeting on April 11, 2023. Ballots must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, April 10, the day prior to the annual meeting. No voting will be held electronically or at the annual meeting. Results will be announced at the meeting.

Why vote? Purchasing electric power from Victory Electric gives you membership in the cooperative and, as a member, you have voting rights. Your participation is a fundamental power that flows from you to your electric cooperative. You have the power to discuss issues with friends

and neighbors and elect your board representation. That democratic right — which includes one vote by every cooperative member — is one of several important differences between electric cooperatives and investor-owned electric utilities. Informed and concerned members stay involved by electing those people who value their way of life and work to improve the quality of life in southwest Kansas.

Members of the board of trustees are responsible for directing the business and affairs of the cooperative. Like you, trustees are cooperative members, but they have a special perspective. Your board members live throughout the Victory Electric service area. The trustees' primary function is planning and policy oversight, establishing the long-term objectives of the cooperative.

JOIN US
APRIL 11, 2023

Annual Meeting

WESTERN STATE BANK EXPO CENTER
11333 U.S. HIGHWAY 283 IN DODGE CITY

5:30 pm
REGISTRATION BEGINS

6:00 pm
MEETING BEGINS



COBANK SHARING SUCCESS GRANT

LOCAL NONPROFITS MAY APPLY TO RECEIVE UP TO \$20,000!

📍 APPLICATIONS OPEN MARCH 16

📍 APPLY AT VICTORYELECTRIC.NET



CoBank Sharing Success Grant Applications Due May 16

One of Victory Electric's most notable and exciting community programs is CoBank Sharing Success, a matching grant opportunity open to local nonprofit organizations for up to \$20,000. Aimed at supporting local communities and people, the grant is made possible by Victory Electric's governing board of trustees in partnership with CoBank — a national nonprofit cooperative bank owned by the rural American cooperatives it serves. 2023 will be the 12th year for Victory Electric to award a Sharing Success grant.

"Thanks to the generosity of Victory Electric's board of trustees and CoBank, the Sharing Success grant enables us to give back to the communities we serve," said Shane Laws, CEO of Victory Electric. "We urge all eligible nonprofits to take advantage of Sharing Success, and together we can make a meaningful impact in rural Kansas. Over the last decade, Victory Electric has awarded \$125,000 in Sharing Success grants, and we are excited to offer the program again this year."

Applications will be available beginning March 16 at www.victoryelectric.net and are due May 16, 2023.

CoBank's Sharing Success fund matches charitable contributions made by its cooperative members to local nonprofits in their communities. The matching grant program is designed to celebrate the vital role that cooperatives play in communities across the country. CoBank states that collaborating with customers to support worthy causes

they care about is a great way to make a positive difference and fulfill its mission of service to rural America. Since its inception in 2012, the program has generated more than \$76 million in total charitable donations, primarily in rural areas across the country.

Previous Recipients Include:

- ▶ The Bucklin Library — 2012
- ▶ Mission of Mercy Dental Clinic — 2013
- ▶ Staath Memorial Museum — 2014
- ▶ Manna House — 2015
- ▶ Depot Theater — 2016
- ▶ Ford County Historical Society — 2017
- ▶ Ford County Sheriff's Office — 2018
- ▶ Ingalls Recreation — 2019
- ▶ Dodge City Salvation Army and New Chance, Inc. — 2020
- ▶ Crisis Center of Dodge City — 2021
- ▶ Ford County Fair Association and The Copeland American Legion — 2022

Any organization interested in applying for the 2023 CoBank Sharing Success grant must be a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The application is available on our website at www.victoryelectric.net/content/cobank-sharing-success-grant and due to Victory Electric's office **NO LATER THAN 5 P.M. ON MAY 16.**

Chainsaw Safety

- STATISTICS -

36,000 people each year are treated in hospital ERs for chainsaw-related injuries.

36% of chainsaw accidents result in injuries to the legs and knees.



The average chainsaw injury requires **110 stitches**.



The two most common places for injuries are the **front left thigh** and the **back of the left hand**.



One in five chainsaw injuries is from kickback.



Kickback is the single greatest cause of injury to **chainsaw users**.



Medical costs for chainsaw injuries amount to around **\$350 million** per year.

SOURCE: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

- INJURIES -



Head Injuries
3,418



Upper Body Area
2,141



Arm and Hand Area
17,994



Leg Area
16,348

SOURCE: U.S. PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

Schneweis Retires After 15 Years

LARRY SCHNEWEIS will have more time to share stories and make memories with his family, as he recently announced his retirement from Victory Electric. In January, he marked 15 years of service with the cooperative as a warehouse clerk. Victory Electric held a celebration in his honor in February.

Schneweis said, "There wasn't one day when I didn't want to come to work," noting that Victory Electric was a wonderful environment to work in.

"I miss the guys I worked with," Schneweis said. "It was a really good work environment."

His coworkers will remember him for being quiet yet unwavering, a hard worker and a great storyteller.

"His projects were always done well and timely," Plant Manager Mike Clark said. "And he always told stories — he had lots of experiences in everything."

Clark recalled that Schneweis particularly liked telling the story of how he traded his wife's car for their home. Vice President of Corporate Services Amy Grasser said he was known for sharing funny one-liners and dad jokes.

When asked how he was doing, he often replied, "Great and getting better."

Schneweis began his career at John Deere, then went to Western Beverage in Dodge City. He began his 26 years of employment there as a driver, then moved into supervisor, area manager and warehouse roles.

Family means a lot to Schneweis, and he often talks with great pride about his grandchildren. His retirement plans include spending time with his kids and grandkids, hosting family gatherings and traveling with his wife, Monica.

"We hope he will have a great time watching Lifetime or the Hallmark Channel," Clark quipped, adding that he expects Schneweis to stay busy tending to his yard or going on walks with his wife.

Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement, Larry.



Larry Schneweis

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity. **SOURCE: WWW.ENERGY.GOV**



HAPPY
St. Patrick's
DAY

Only Certified Workers Can Trim Trees Near Power Lines

Can anyone trim trees near power lines? The answer is no. Tree trimmers certified in utility clearance are the only individuals legally allowed to trim within 20 feet of power lines.

OSHA requires this training because electricity is a serious and widespread hazard to tree workers. According to the Tree Care Industry Association, electricity is the leading cause of death in the tree care industry, causing about 15% of all industry fatalities. Tree care industry workers do not have to directly contact a power line to be electrocuted; about half of all electrocution fatalities are the result of indirect contact.

Qualified line-clearance trimmers must be specially trained in how to safely work in proximity to energized lines. They must understand how an electrical grid functions, the effects of tree growth patterns and tree damage and how to implement directional pruning, as required by the American National Standard for Arboricultural Operations' safety standards.

According to OSHA, the duties of line-clearance certified tree trimmers typically include the following:

- ▶ Undergoing annual evaluations by licensed professionals to ensure continuous adherence to industry best practices.
- ▶ Requesting job briefings from employers and other crew members before starting a job or when environmental conditions change.

- ▶ Properly wearing approved personal protective equipment, including fall protection equipment when needed.
 - ▶ Complying with material handling and mechanical equipment requirements.
 - ▶ Working with a second line-clearance tree trimmer within voice range.
 - ▶ Determining the voltages of lines before work begins or assuming that the line is operating at the highest possible voltage if it is not possible to determine voltage.
 - ▶ Ensuring body parts and any ladders, platforms or aerial devices being used remain outside the minimum approach distance from any energized equipment.
 - ▶ Using only insulated tools and equipment to remove branches and limbs that are in contact with, or are within the minimum approach distance of, energized lines or equipment.
 - ▶ Determining if weather conditions are no longer safe to work in, such as the presence of high winds, ice, thunder or lightning that would make the work hazardous.
 - ▶ Beginning work on storm restoration efforts in the aftermath of a storm if they have been trained in the special hazards involved with this type of work.
- Please contact Victory Electric Cooperative if you have any questions about line-clearance tree trimmers or tree trimming near power lines.

KEEP KIDS SAFE AROUND **TREES** AND **POWER LINES**

When kids head outdoors to play, they may be climbing trees.

Be sure to scope out the area first to ensure the treetops do not have power lines running through or near them.

Children may reach up to grab a line or accidentally come too close to it when they are playing or sitting high up in a tree.

Teach kids to fly kites, drones and remote control planes or toys in open areas free from power lines.

Even if the power lines are not touching the tree, contact could happen once weight is added to the branch.

If a toy or other object lands in a substation, please call your electric utility to retrieve the item. Never approach the fence or try to enter the area.



Take time to teach children and teens how to respect and identify potential electrical hazards.

Get Text Notifications

Victory Electric listened to your concerns about the need for notifications to alert you of major weather events and anticipated or ongoing outage situations. Being able to reach as many members as possible is critical for satisfactory emergency communication. We want to keep you informed through text notifications for weather events, planned outages and important updates.

Victory Electric sent a test of our text messaging system to all members in February. If you did not receive the text message, please contact our office at 620-227-2139 or 800-279-7915 to verify or update your contact information.

NOTE: Victory Electric's text messaging system is not monitored, and we are unable to respond to texts. If you have questions about your account or a problem that needs to be resolved, please call our office.



Victory Welcomes Rumbaugh as Communications Coordinator



Shauna Rumbaugh

SHAUNA RUMBAUGH joined the Victory Electric staff in January as communications coordinator.

Rumbaugh grew up in rural Graham County and graduated from Hill City High School in northwest Kansas. A former member of 4-H and FFA, she studied agricultural education and journalism at Kansas State University. After earning her bachelor of science at K-State,

Rumbaugh received a Rotary fellowship for graduate study in Australia, where she earned a Master of Applied Science in agriculture and rural development.

“I enjoyed attending Western Sydney University’s Hawkesbury campus in Richmond, New South Wales, and meeting and working with people from all over world,” Rumbaugh said.

Following her studies abroad, she worked in Loveland, Colorado, as a copy editor for the former Duke Communications, which published magazines, newsletters, books and digital content for IT professionals. She later served as a marketing assistant and freelance writer/editor before returning to her agricultural roots in Kansas. Rumbaugh worked at High Plains Journal in Dodge City for 13 years, first as a copy editor

and then as a web editor, managing digital content for the publication’s website and email newsletters as well as writing about agriculture and rural issues for farmers and ranchers.

“Shauna’s writing experience is going to be a major asset to us,” said Vice President of Communications Chanda Schulte. “She has been writing and editing her entire career and she is very good at it. Her skills are going to enable us to produce so much more information and education for our members. I am excited to have Shauna as a part of our team and look forward to the growth of our department.”

“I believe my experience reporting on topics important to rural communities will guide me as I help share the cooperative message in southwest Kansas. I look forward to serving Victory Electric’s members as the communications team continues to educate members about energy efficiency and to support the community,” Rumbaugh said.

Rumbaugh lives in Spearville with her family. She loves reading and music and is learning to play the ukulele and banjolele. Her husband, Ben, is the Ford County surveyor; Noah lives in northern Colorado; Jax is a senior at Wichita State University; and Jemma is a senior at Spearville Middle/High School.

Welcome to Victory Electric, Shauna!



ENERGY BILL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE

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.



For more information, visit: www.dcf.ks.gov/services/ees/Pages/EnergyAssistance.aspx

Get Involved! Join Us at the Annual Meeting Continued from page 12A ▶

community. As I'm sure you know, the energy industry is in the midst of massive change. Consumer needs and changing technology impact nearly every aspect of how we manage and deliver energy to local homes, schools and businesses.

As we navigate major changes in the coming years, we need to hear from you and your neighbors to inform our planning as we strive to meet the long-term needs of all Victory Electric members.

You Have a Say

You may be wondering if your opinion really makes a difference, and yes, it does! Gaining guidance and perspective from our members and board helps set priorities for the co-op and guide future decisions. At our annual meeting, we raise issues for voting consideration by the general membership (that's everyone who pays for electric service from Victory Electric). The annual meeting is also a time for members to vote on the co-op's board of directors.

Our board of directors comprises 11 members who live and work right here in our local service area, so they are in the best position to know where community investments are most needed. And by the way, we hope you'll consider running for

the board in the future — we're always looking for folks who care about our community who would be willing to serve.

Your electric bill is an investment in our community.

This local input means those closest to the community know its needs and priorities and help direct where the co-op's dollars are spent. Every year, we invest funds to make updates to our local system, which help maintain reliability and grid resilience. Think of it this way: Every time you pay your electric bill, you're investing in your community because the money we take in stays here in the local community. By making these investments in our local system, we can ensure you have reliable power for everyday life.

Most consumers likely don't equate active involvement with their electric company with helping their community. But Victory Electric is not an ordinary utility company. We're a co-op, and our business model is meant to serve the members and the community in which it operates.

Our core purpose and mission are to provide safe, reliable and affordable power. But as a co-op, we're also motivated by service to our community, rather than profits. We hope you'll exercise the benefits of your co-op membership and join us for the annual meeting on April 11. We look forward to seeing you

THANKS, SHANE

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR YOUTH TRIP WINNERS!

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR BUILDS
 JUNE 15-22, 2023
 WASHINGTON, D.C.

SPONSORED BY YOUR LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

KARLA G. SEPULVEDA
 DODGE CITY HIGH

COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP BUILDS
 JULY 14-20, 2023
 STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO

IZAIAH PEARCE
 BUCKLIN HIGH

JACELYN HUELSKAMP
 SOUTH GRAY HIGH

THE VICTORY Electric Cooperative