



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

The Outlet

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Meriden

Staff

Steve Foss
Chief Executive Officer

Christopher Parr
Assistant General Manager

Randy Richards
Assistant General Manager

District Offices

McLouth Office
P.O. Box 70
McLouth, KS 66054-0070

Topeka Office
1100 SW Auburn Rd
Topeka, KS 66615

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Tip of the Month

Heading out of town for the holidays? Unplug electronics to avoid drawing a phantom energy load. Some gadgets, like TVs, use energy when plugged into an outlet—even when they're not in use.

FROM THE CEO

The Year in Review: FreeState's 2018 Highlights and Accomplishments

Each December I take a few moments to think back on the year and the progress we've made. We all work incredibly hard to make you our priority while staying ahead of the industry changes and challenges. I want to share with you six of the most significant accomplishments FreeState has achieved this past year.

Annual Meeting

The first FreeState annual meeting was a success. We did move our location and venue, and we saw members from all corners of our service territory come to Perry-Lecompton High School to be a part of history by attending the inaugural annual meeting. We saw a new board member elected and celebrated your membership and the cooperative difference.

Member Survey

We asked for your input, and we got it. The member survey provided us with honest and baseline information the co-op will use moving forward to serve you better. We also have started listening to discussions across the country about what other cooperatives are doing to stay ahead of a rapidly changing industry.

Consolidation Savings Adjustment

Our most significant accomplishment was giving back excess savings to our members in the form of a consolidation savings adjustment. We gave back \$400,000 in realized savings all due to the consolidation, and we continue to save our members money. I want to recognize the FreeState staff who work so hard to keep costs down and spend responsibly.

Retired Capital Credits

We were able to retire another round of capital credits because our margins were higher than we anticipated. We retired \$700,000 to both long-time members and



Steve Foss

“We all work incredibly hard to make you our priority while staying ahead of the industry changes and challenges.”

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Sharing Success with God's Storehouse

FreeState trustees and employees rally during their annual drive

FreeState Electric Cooperative's 80 employees and 11 trustees rallied to raise more than \$5,000 that was matched by the cooperative's primary lender, CoBank. The effort, part of the annual employee donation drive to assist local nonprofit organizations, raised a total of \$10,144 for God's Storehouse in Meriden--the first food pantry established in Jefferson County.

CoBank's "Sharing Success" program matches employee donations dollar-for-dollar and is then presented to the nonprofit organization of the cooperative's choosing.

"CoBank is committed to making rural America stronger," said Seth Hart, vice president, CoBank Electric Distribution Division Rural Infrastructure Banking Group. "One way to achieve that commitment is with the Sharing Success program that allows our members to gain access to funding that will help the communities in which they serve."

FreeState's trustees selected God's Storehouse after an application process. The board determined the food pantry to be the designated organization in June, and the trustees challenged



The emotion was palpable as FreeState leadership presented a check for more than \$10,000 to God's Storehouse in Meriden. Although the pantry knew it had been selected to receive Sharing Success funding, they had no idea how much was raised.

employees to donate throughout the summer.

"We're a member service organization and vested in the communities and customers we serve," said Jeanine Murphy, president of the FreeState board. "This is exactly what our cooperative mission is all about."

Area food pantries have seen requests rise over the past years, and with the holiday season approaching, there's often an increase in need. Monetary and food donations are how the pantry operates. Last year, the pantry

served 2,250 adults and 3,071 children. The assistance from FreeState will go toward purchasing items for those in need and help build an access road to the facility.

"The property was sold next to us, so we were no longer able to utilize that road," said Beverly Henry, the organization's treasurer. "This funding will help us build the road, in addition to purchasing food and provide for our Christmas family adoption."

FreeState has participated in the Sharing Success program for the past seven years and has made impactful donations to local organizations throughout FreeState's service territory.

For more information on how organizations can apply for the CoBank funding, call the office or visit the co-op website at www.freestate.coop. The deadline to apply is May 1, 2019.



A big thumbs up after FreeState presented a donation to God's Storehouse to be used to help those in need this holiday season.

Employee Safety Improves with Office Update



Left: Impact resistant glass windows were added to the McLouth lobby area for extra protection. The updated lobby also has a television that provides announcements and information on co-op matters, programs, and events. **Right:** The lobby area includes a place for members to sit and complete forms, or wait for assistance. The area now includes restricted building access to ensure safety of staff and visitors.

Every year 2 million Americans report having experienced some form of workplace violence. FreeState wants to ensure no employee is part of that alarming statistic.

Workplace safety has become a priority for FreeState and other cooperatives across the country. Many cooperatives are adding safety measures like impact resistant glass in lobby areas, controlled building access, safe rooms, and other safety measures to keep employees and visitors safe while at work.

In July, FreeState wrapped up construction on a new entrance to the McLouth office. The updates were made after safety vulnerabilities were recognized, something the board of trustees and executive management were eager to fix.

“We were way too open and accessible,” said Steve Foss, CEO. “The office was not as secure as we’d like to see it. And when it comes to the safety of our employees, we’re going to do what’s necessary to make sure each employee feels safe when at work.”

New features to the entrance of the building included installation of an additional glass wall, a locked door and two new pay windows made of impact resistant glass. Controlled access was provided by separating the lobby from the rest of the building.

“Restricted access is the biggest part of our update,” said John Malone, FreeState’s safety and resources manager. “We made

that decision based on safety recommendations from Federated Insurance. We made all our decisions based on making the building as safe as possible.”

Along with the upgrades, some employees were moved throughout the building. More space was provided for the member services department to complete the cooperative’s billing functions, all of which take place in the McLouth office.

“While we updated the front area, we took the opportunity to expand office space and work space that helps with the overall flow of operations,” said Foss. Controlled access means the building can be quickly locked down if a situation arises, and any members in the lobby would also remain safe.

“We hope we never have to use our crisis or emergency plans,” said Malone. “But we want to be prepared for any situation. We have our plans, but we continually look for ways we can improve with training or updates like these.”

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines workplace violence as any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the worksite. This specific form of violence is one of the major causes of fatalities in the business world, second only to transportation.

Connecting a Community

FreeState Electric Cooperative is pleased to provide financial support to community programs and organizations through Operation Round-Up®. Funding for this grant program is donated by FreeState members, who volunteer to round their monthly electric bill. That spare change is collected, and grants are awarded quarterly. For more information on the program visit www.freestate.coop/operationroundup.

In many small communities across northeast Kansas, the public library serves as a connection point for area residents.

Silver Lake is no different.

The small Shawnee County town just north of Topeka sees Highway 24 curve through, passing a few businesses and a line of storefronts on its way in or out of town. Tucked in that line of storefronts on the northwest side of town is the public library. Until recently it blended in, looking like the old grocery store it once was. If you didn't happen to see the books through the windows, you might not have even realized it was a library.

That all changed with the recent renovation project.

"The building seems so much more welcoming," said Cathy Newland, the library's director for the past eight years. "It looks like a library."

The library, like many businesses and organizations in small communities, started as an idea after a need was discovered.

Women at the United Methodist Church opened the library April 6, 1974, in a small rented space with donated books, shelving, furniture, and volunteer time from organizations and individuals. The library was open three hours per day and continued collecting books until there was no space for expansion.

In March 1981, the library moved to the leased building at 203 Railroad Street to accommodate its rapid growth. In 1995, the library expanded again into the building next door, and soon was occupying 201 and 203 Railroad St. In 2010, the building officially became the property of the Silver Lake Library Board and has continued to grow to keep up with the needs of the community.

Since taking over ownership of the building, a new roof, new paint, new carpet and expanded technology have all been added. In 2012, the library adopted a renovation plan



Tracey DeShazo, youth services librarian, helps a youngster look for a book in the newly stocked audio section thanks to a grant from Operation Round-Up®. The library has a full calendar of activities for children in Silver Lake.

to provide the community with a library that was updated, accessible, community-oriented, and offered an improvement to the downtown area along Highway 24.

Recent renovations have been made possible through a variety of fundraisers and special events all supported by the Silver Lake community and beyond. Examples include quilt raffles, holiday basket auctions, saving Best Choice labels from Wehner's Thriftway and a pancake feed sponsored by Bob Schwarz Financial. Add in grants and gifts, and the efforts raised \$125,000. Operation Round-Up® contributed \$6,120 for new shelving and new audio and digital inventory in the children's section.

The recent renovations are just a part of the three-phase project. Phase one was completed in 2013, and phase two, completed in September of this year, included new windows, a ramp, improvements to the main entrance and restoration of the north façade.

Phase three of the renovation will address the east façade and sidewalks that will improve safety, as well as the overall appearance of the building. Also included is an expansion to include a meeting room and ADA-compliant restrooms. However, continued financial support will be needed before the final step can begin.

"Fundraising is the biggest challenge, but the second challenge is even knowing what we can do with what we have, and how we put the best interest of our patrons first," Newland said.

"The vision of the library is to be a destination for the community," Newland said. "We want to build community, as well as provide valuable resources."

Those valuable resources are first-class materials and programs paired with a knowledgeable staff of eight.

Tracey DeShazo, youth services librarian, leads a portion of those programs.

"We have story time for small children, a creative hour for first- and second-graders, a Pinterest Club for third- and fourth-graders, and a program called Newberry Readers," DeShazo said. "We also have a great relationship with the Silver Lake Elementary library, and we share ideas, resources and materials."

"We utilize the interlibrary loan program to assist the elementary library in securing books to use for research projects or other projects integrated into lessons," DeShazo added.

"There are also times when intermediate readers may want a book that isn't available at the school library, and we can assist in getting those books to them."

The relationship is all about opportunity and making youth lifetime library users.

"I think the relationship with the public library is important because kids need to be exposed to as many reading opportunities as they can get," said Carrie Podlena, USD 372 media specialist. "The more Tracey [DeShazo] and I work together, the more children are going to be impacted."



Barb Crump, Silver Lake, looks through the latest magazine selection the library maintains. The library utilized funding from Operation Round-Up® to install a new shelving unit dedicated to periodicals.

Podlena and DeShazo's focus isn't just elementary students. The pair teamed up for the Junior High Book Swap program.

"Students read one book during the quarter that they can share with their peers," said Podlena, who added that students meet quarterly over lunch in the library to talk about the books they've read.

"At the halfway point, we met and had a fun night at the public library so we could check up on their progress and see how they were doing with their books," Podlena said. "We hold some of the events that go with it here at the high school library and some at the public library."

Podlena says the library is vital to a community like Silver Lake, especially to parents like her.

"My girls have grown up with library activities, and I really think that helped develop their love of reading," Podlena said.

The public library is accessible year-round for everyone in the Silver Lake community. It serves as a place to access information or entertainment that may not otherwise be available. It provides a safe place for the community to enjoy programs and other activities that enrich both children and adults.

2ND ANNUAL Energy Fair & Member Appreciation

FreeState Electric Cooperative hosted their 2nd Annual Health Fair and Member Appreciation Day Oct. 24. The event included a soap drive to assist area food pantries with gathering personal care items.

The fair featured local vendors that provided information on energy efficiency, energy options, and energy savings to attendees.

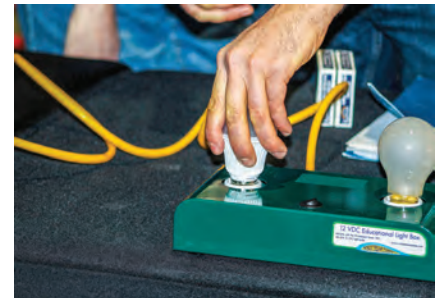
"This is just one way we hope to provide information to our members about options out there," said Steve Foss, CEO. "Events like these provide relevant information to our members."



Above: Members had the chance to check out the Chevrolet Volt at the Energy Fair. The car is part electric and part gasoline. Right: A Kansas Energy Program demo shows examples of energy powering different types of light bulbs. Ten vendors provided information.

Thank You Vendors!

- ▶ Ed Bozarth Chevrolet
- ▶ Good Energy Solutions
- ▶ Ground Source, Inc.
- ▶ Green Factor Insulation
- ▶ Kansas Energy Program
- ▶ Renewal by Andersen
- ▶ Kansas Foundation for Medical Care



New Feature Coming in January 2019!

Energy Use Coordinator **MATT LAMBERT** will answer questions about energy efficiency, renewables, co-op programs, and everything in between. Email Matt your question and it may be featured in *Kansas Country Living*. FreeState will not use your name if your question is answered in print or online unless you specifically request us to do so.

askmatt@freestate.coop



NOW AVAILABLE!

2019 Youth Program Applications

FreeState invests in our youth with opportunities designed to reflect the realities of our society and its preference for dynamic, personal interactions. In today's professional world, employers and thought leaders want to see presenters who make a connection with the audience while communicating a message. Youth Tour and Youth Leadership Camp helps build these communication skills, and the trips are all-expense-paid and will truly be experiences of a lifetime for area youth.

Any high school junior living in the FreeState territory with a parent or guardian who is a member of the cooperative is eligible. **DEADLINE FOR THE 2019 PROGRAM IS MONDAY, FEB. 11, 2019.**

For more information and to download an application packet visit **WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH** or call the office at 800-794-1989.

The Co-op Connection Corner

Each month we highlight a few local businesses where the Co-op Connections card provides a discount. This month we're featuring a national retail store and yogurt chain.

If you have questions about the card contact the office at 800-794-1989. If you'd like more information or instructions on downloading the mobile app visit our website at **WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/CONNECTIONS**.



- ▶ **BOGARD BODY AND WELDING**
17734 K16 Highway, McLouth, KS 66054
- ▶ **COMPLETE HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING, LLC**
18985 178th St., Tonganoxie, KS 66086
- ▶ **HOBBY LOBBY**
1900 S.W. Wanamaker Road, Topeka, KS 66604
1801 W. 23rd St., Lawrence, KS 66046
- ▶ **JEFFERSON HILL VINEYARDS AND GUEST HOUSE**
12381 Washington Road, McLouth, KS 66054
- ▶ **ORANGE LEAF FROZEN YOGURT**
1570 SW Wanamaker Road, Ste. 230, Topeka, KS 66604
- ▶ **PERRY CARPET SHACK**
107 Elm St., Perry, KS 66073
- ▶ **TONGANOXIE COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM**
201 W. Washington, Tonganoxie, KS 66086
- ▶ **TOWN AND COUNTRY REAL ESTATE AND AUCTION**
313 Jefferson, Oskaloosa, KS 66066
- ▶ **WINCHESTER HARDWARE**
12804 Wellman Road, Winchester, KS 66097
- ▶ **WORTHINGTON HARDWARE AND AUTO PARTS**
313 E. Front St., Perry, KS 66073

Cooperative Briefs

REMINDERS

Reporting A Power Outage

FreeState is typically reachable around the clock thanks to social media. Our Facebook page is a great place to find information and get updates on outages or other events.

Outages should not be solely reported on Facebook or any social media channel. To report an outage use the SmartHub mobile app or call the office at 800-794-1989.

Reporting on social media may not get your outage reported in a timely fashion. It is important that you provide FreeState with your outage so line crews can properly diagnose problems and restore outages quickly.

Outage updates are regularly provided on our Facebook page and members are encouraged to follow us on Facebook for these updates.

Cold Weather Rule Reminder

FreeState Electric Cooperative does not participate in the Cold Weather Rule established by the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC), a rule which restricts electric disconnects from Nov. 1 through March 31 when temperature forecasts are 35 degrees or below. FreeState Electric Cooperative is not mandated by this policy and has been responsible for establishing its own appropriate seasonal rules since 1996.

All accounts are subject to disconnection for non payment and are not governed by temperature.

If you have any questions about FreeState's seasonal rules or billing options, please call our office at 785-478-3444.

Office Closings

The FreeState offices will be closed on Monday, Dec. 24, and Tuesday, Dec. 25, for the Christmas holiday. We will also be closed New Year's Day, Jan. 1, 2019. Happy Holidays!

FROM THE CEO

Accomplishments

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newer members. Our hybrid system of retiring these capital credits is allowing us to benefit more members and that's what the cooperative difference is all about.

Operation Round-Up

When it comes to concern for the community, our members have provided more than \$64,000 to area programs and organizations that are making a difference in the communities we serve. We have a group of volunteer members who have given their time and talents to ensure that money collected from the Operation Round-Up program goes right back into the community. Every penny goes to bettering our communities.

CoBank Sharing Success

I can't forget to recognize our employees for their efforts in community giving. In June our trustees challenged our employees to raise money as part of the Sharing Success program offered by our lender, CoBank. That challenge was met, and then some. We rallied to collect funding that would be matched dollar for dollar by CoBank, and in October we were able to give a sizable donation to God's Storehouse in Meriden. It was an incredible moment seeing the genuine gratitude of the organization.

As we continue to move forward, we know that it takes much more than electricity to power our members. I also want to remind each of you to take a breather this holiday season and enjoy the blessings in your life.

As always if you have any questions about the content in *Kansas Country Living*, we encourage you to give us a call at 800-794-1989 or email customerservice@freestate.coop.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

FROM THE FREESTATE COOPERATIVE FAMILY TO YOURS

- ▶ Joe Ackley
- ▶ Britton Anderson
- ▶ Darren Anderson
- ▶ Bryce Best
- ▶ Josh Bogatz
- ▶ Tanner Bristol
- ▶ Derrick Brown
- ▶ Sarah Broxterman
- ▶ Jessica Bryan
- ▶ Cole Bryant
- ▶ Corey Calvert
- ▶ Jeremy Cameron
- ▶ Dustin Crotinger
- ▶ Rod Crowder
- ▶ Traci DePriest
- ▶ Brent Edgcomb
- ▶ Melanie Eichman
- ▶ Sarah Farlee
- ▶ Ron Forshee
- ▶ Steve Foss
- ▶ Kyle Fritz
- ▶ Mat Frye
- ▶ David Gechter
- ▶ Loren Goss
- ▶ Roderick Haffener
- ▶ Kyle Hallgren
- ▶ Scott Halverson
- ▶ John Hamm
- ▶ Kyle Hammer
- ▶ Brad Heideman
- ▶ Isiah Henry
- ▶ Adam Hernandez
- ▶ Paul Herring
- ▶ Amanda Holloway
- ▶ Wes Holthaus
- ▶ Jim Holwick
- ▶ Kim Howbert
- ▶ Chris Huffstutter
- ▶ Jerry Ireland
- ▶ Mike Jones
- ▶ Michael Kay
- ▶ Greg Kramer
- ▶ Desiree LaForge
- ▶ Matt Lambert
- ▶ Dean Lasher
- ▶ Nolan Lewis
- ▶ Matt Magill
- ▶ John Malone
- ▶ Danny Mehrhoff
- ▶ Michelle Meyer
- ▶ Tyler Meyer
- ▶ Jordann Moody
- ▶ Frank Ortega
- ▶ Ken Ottensmeier
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- ▶ Mark Raines
- ▶ Chelsea Renyer
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- ▶ Bobby Riedel
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- ▶ Kyle Sharp
- ▶ Justin Seele
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- ▶ Paula Spreer
- ▶ Zach Sterling
- ▶ Books Vaughn
- ▶ Randy Wager
- ▶ Grant Walker
- ▶ Jeff Werner
- ▶ Lindsey West
- ▶ Mitch West
- ▶ Kasey Whitaker
- ▶ Gary Willits
- ▶ Scott Wright
- ▶ Eric Wylie

