

Where Are They Now?

Delegates from Youth Tours past reflect on the trip that shaped their careers.

The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program is proven to change the lives of youth across the nation after a week in our nation's capital. Upon returning to their communities, they are enthused individuals motivated by the profound structure and history of Washington, D.C., with a new perspective.

Before consolidation in January 2017 the inspired youth of Leavenworth-Jefferson and Kaw Valley Electric Cooperative (now FreeState) returned home to their communities as a better and more dedicated leader with the fundamentals of leadership driving them.

Where are a few of our past delegate alumni and how did their youth tour experience set them up for success?

Kelli (Kirkwood) Maydew

Youth Tour alumni often get a taste of what lies beyond their comfort zone and are inspired to explore. Youth Tour alumna **KELLI (KIRKWOOD) MAYDEW**, from LeCompton, did just that.

After representing Kaw Valley in 2003, Maydew completed her last year at Shawnee Heights High School and graduated in May 2004 before moving to Liberal.

"I packed up and moved six hours from home to attend college at Seward County Community College, then again two years later

when I moved across the country to attend Winthrop University in South Carolina," Maydew said.

Like most alumni, Maydew became an active leader in her community in the years following as the team captain for her college volleyball team and as a competitive club volleyball coach after graduating from Winthrop in 2008.

Maydew graduated with a degree in psychology and moved back to Topeka. She then found herself once again became involved in her community, this time as the Kansas Recreation and Park Association Program Manager.

"I really enjoy member services and meeting lifelong members, as well as helping new people join our organization," Maydew said. "I also have a knack for event planning, so this opportunity fit my skillset well."

During Youth Tour, Maydew said her experience in D.C. helped her build her personal skill sets.

"Following the trip, I had to give a speech to a group of folks and talk about my experience," she said. "That helped give me the confidence I needed be able to speak in front of



Kelli Maydew at the U.S. Capitol in 2003 during Youth Tour.

others from that day forward."

Maydew says she thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to see beyond Kansas and encourages others to take the chance as well.

"Anytime you can travel outside your hometown bubble you should take advantage of the opportunity," Maydew said.

Cody Christensen

Topeka native **CODY CHRISTENSEN** represented Kaw Valley as a Youth Tour delegate in 2012. While that trip may have been his first to D.C. it certainly wouldn't be his last.

After returning from Youth Tour and finishing his final year at Washburn Rural High School, Christensen

Trustee Election Process Begins

Continued from page 16-A ▶

FreeState's operations and maintaining a productive relationship with our members. We look for our trustees to maintain open lines of communication with the districts they serve. Trustees work together to ensure equitable treatment to all members across the system, as well as strive to be knowledgeable about trends and circumstances that may affect the members and communities that FreeState serves.

Potential trustees must:

- ▶ Be FreeState member
- ▶ Have a bona fide residence in the district with an opening

Potential trustees cannot:

- ▶ Be employed by or have a financial interest in an enterprise selling electric energy or services
- ▶ Be employed by or have a financial interest in a business that sells services or supplies to FreeState
- ▶ Be a current FreeState employee or have been an employee within the past three years
- ▶ Be a close relative of a current FreeState trustee or employee
- ▶ Have entered a plea of guilty or no contest or have been adjudged as guilty of a felony crime

If you are interested in seeking a position on the board of trustees, please contact the office at 800-794-1989 and submit your name to be sent an application or visit our website at www.freestate.coop. Applications are due to either district office no later than 4 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 5.

Where Are They Now? Continued from page 16-E ▶

Spending that week in D.C. opened my eyes to the importance of public service and opportunities to work in government and other policy-related fields.

CODY CHRISTENSEN, 2012 YOUTH TOUR PARTICIPANT



attended the University of Kansas to pursue degrees in political science and economics.

The experience he had on Youth Tour played an important role in his choice of university and field of study after graduating high school. Remaining in Kansas for college allowed him to interact with state politicians and locally elected officials in the state that sparked his political interest in 2012.

"Spending that week in D.C. opened my eyes to the importance of public service and opportunities to work in government and other policy-related fields," Christensen said.

Those opportunities included internships with the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Brookings Institution, and at the White House in the Executive Office of the Presi-



Cody Christensen (left) poses in front of the U.S. Capitol in 2012.

dent. His experience working in the White House, where he received and responded to hundreds of daily emails from ordinary Americans on behalf of the President, along with his previous research experiences at Brookings and AEI led him to accept a full-time position at AEI as a research assistant, where he currently researches higher education policy.

"My work at AEI combines my interests in research, policy and passion for ensuring individuals have opportunities to access higher education," he said. "Access to higher education has become an important middle-class issue and is increasingly becoming a necessity for economic mobility."

According to Christensen, his Youth Tour experience was the opportunity that initiated his interest in politics and public service. He highly recommends students apply.

"Youth Tour is a unique opportunity to see the inner-workings of our nation's capital while visiting the many historic sites and landmarks that commemorate our history," he said. "Youth Tour provides you with a first-hand opportunity to see the importance of public service."

Christensen hopes to continue researching public policy in the future and is interested in returning to school for his PhD.

For more information about the 2018 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour application process, visit www.freestate.coop or call 800-794-1989.



FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
800-794-1989
www.freestate.coop

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Board of Trustees

Larry Butel
Overbrook

Larry Meadows
Tonganoxie

Dallas Caster
Auburn

Don Montgomery
Burlingame

Bill Conley
Delia

Jeanine Murphy
Leavenworth

Rob Sage
Maple Hill

Ralph Phillips
Mayetta

Mark Gratny
Leavenworth

Mark Wulfschuh
Berryton

Harlan Hunt
Meriden

Betsy Baker
Legal Counsel

Staff

Steve Foss
Chief Executive Officer

Christopher Parr
Assistant General Manager

Randy Richards
Assistant General Manager

District Offices

East District
P.O. Box 70
McLouth, KS
66054-0070

West District
1100 SW Auburn Rd
Topeka, KS 66615

East & West District Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Tip of the Month

Purchasing electronic gifts this holiday season? Remember to purchase Energy Star®-certified electronics and give the gift of energy efficiency. Visit www.energystar.gov/productfinder for a full list of efficient products.

FROM THE CEO

Trustee Election Process Begins

The FreeState board of trustee election process is beginning. Our trustees are an integral part of our cooperative whose main responsibilities are fiduciary and setting policy for the operation of FreeState. The current board of trustees have worked diligently putting together the new cooperative with the best interests of all of our members in mind. The FreeState board prioritized the importance of recognizing the fair and balanced election process between the East and West Districts. Their focus was to ensure adequate representation for all members.

FreeState members who may be interested in serving on the board of trustees can submit their names to be nominated for the election to the board.

The following trustees are up for re-election at the annual meeting on April 24, 2018.

- ▶ West District – **BILL CONLEY**
- ▶ West District – **ROBERT SAGE**
- ▶ East District – **MARK GRATNY**

We only have three trustee positions up for election this year due to an odd number of trustees. At the 2019 annual meeting, we'll have four (two from each district).

The nominating committee, made up of a member appointed by each of the board of trustees, will meet in February. This committee will review the names that have been submitted for consideration and the committee will then present a slate of nominees to be presented to the membership at the FreeState annual meeting for election. You'll see more information about this process as we move toward the annual meeting in April.

What makes a good FreeState trustee?

We seek those who have a sincere interest in preserving the strength of



Steve Foss

FreeState members who may be interested in serving on the board of trustees can submit their names to be nominated for the election to the board.

Continued on page 16-F ▶



I had to give a speech to a group of folks and talk about my experience. That helped give me the confidence I needed be able to speak in front of others from that day forward.

KELLI MAYDEW, 2003 YOUTH TOUR PARTICIPANT

Continued on page 16-F ▶

We Are FreeState Electric Cooperative: Operations Department Part I

As a memberowner of FreeState Electric Coop, your knowledge of and engagement with our coop is our priority. In addition to helping you understand the services we offer, we believe it's important to also introduce you to those who provide you with safe, reliable, and efficient power. To that end, FreeState will be publishing a yearlong monthly series that focuses on our departments and the employees who serve our members. Look for the articles in The Outlet, on our social media channels, and on our website www.freestate.coop, where we will feature exclusive web content. Our goal is to help you put faces and names behind those who work on the other end of the line because we are your neighbors who work for you every day.

Since their inception in the late 1930s, co-ops have been guided by the seven coop principles, dedicating themselves to providing safe and reliable power to their members. More than 70 years later, FreeState serves 14,000-plus members with 10 departments staffed with professionals whose daily goal is to provide exceptional service.

We begin our series with those employees who are most recognizable to members: FreeState's operations department, comprising 40 employees, which include our linemen.

Operations Manager

ZACH STERLING, operations manager, heads the department after working his way up the ladder from apprentice lineman, journeyman lineman and line superintendent.

"I started working for this

company in December 1996 before Kaw Valley and LJEC consolidated to form FreeState," Sterling said. "Now, about 21 years later, I am working for the same coop with the same goals—providing reliable service to our members."

Sterling's main responsibilities are planning, directing and organizing the entire operations staff, which includes both line and right-of-way departments.

Sterling said his years of on-the-job training as a lineman help him understand the coop's mission of providing reliable and safe power to our members.

"As a coop, being member owned, we work for our members as they are what built our company. It is our duty to serve them to the best of our ability, whether installing a new service or maintaining reliability. The fact that we get a chance to provide services to them makes what we

do rewarding."

While Sterling guides the department, he depends on collaboration with department staff, including the operations coordinator, line superintendents, line foremen, journeymen linemen, apprentice linemen, as well as maintain working relationships across nine departments to ensure everyone is working toward the same goals.

Operations Coordinator

Working alongside Sterling as the liaison between members and FreeState's line and tree crews is operations coordinator **KASEY WHITAKER**. Members calling FreeState with new service request or concern regarding power lines and trees will usually talk with her.

"I work closely with the right-of-way and line superintendents to resolve members' needs and provide them with the information needed to ensure the task is

completed in a smooth and efficient manner," Whitaker said.

Talking with members on the phone and creating service orders for the line and tree crews involved requires time and communication between Whitaker and every employee in the department.

"I help bridge the gap between our members and the guys going out and completing tasks for our members. I am one of the first points of contact, and I dedicate myself to providing a great first impression of our department and coop as a whole," she said.

This includes knowing who is on call each night and consistently communicating with the crews to stay informed and up-to-date. Her nine years of experience make her a valuable resource for the members as well as the coop.

To better serve our members in a timely and efficient manner, **AMANDA HOLLOWAY** joined FreeState on Dec. 11, 2017, to coordinate projects for the East District, while Whitaker handles West District projects.

Line Superintendents

FreeState takes pride in providing a four-year apprenticeship requiring linemen to complete workbooks, tests, and on-the-job training before being permitted to work on power lines unsupervised and unrestricted.

Linemen risk their safety daily while on the job and, although the highest safety standards are in place, theirs is a dangerous career.

Line superintendents are responsible for ensuring the safety of all linemen and work with each crew to ensure service orders are completed safely and correctly. They work internally to organize paperwork, assign crews to service orders and connect departments depending on the work needed.

We want to ensure safe and reliable power to our members and we want the best people out on the line.

NOLAN LEWIS, EAST DISTRICT LINE SUPERINTENDENT

FreeState's outside line department reports to three superintendents. **CURTIS HAVENSTEIN, NOLAN LEWIS, AND RON FORSHEE**. All began their careers the same way—as apprentice linemen working their way to their current positions.

"Starting from the low-man on the totem pole ensures we understand what it takes for a service order to be completed in a timely and safe manner," Lewis said. "It also helps us decide how to rotate crews according to who works best together."

Crew rotations and assignments are evaluated yearly to determine crew assignments and the appropriate number of apprentice linemen and journeymen linemen to each crew.

"It is vital for us to evaluate the crews at each office to ensure we have the correct personnel for jobs in the upcoming year," Lewis said. "We want to ensure safe and reliable power to our members and we want the best people out on the line."

Crew assignments and rotations are a vital part of the line superintendent's job. Forshee, who reports every day to Fort Leavenworth sees a new crew every year.

"We rotate so every one of our guys sees that system, and is exposed to it in case they ever have to work on it," said Forshee, who works with FreeState management and the United States government contract office on post. The Fort Leavenworth crew handles maintenance, repairs, and building infrastructure for the government.

Safety is another large portion of the line superintendent's job. In fact, it's a priority.

Lewis, Forshee, and Havenstein visit crews at least four times per month, and provide opportunity for extensive hands-on training.

"We work together to make everyone better," said Havenstein.

The jobs are important, but members are always kept in mind

when making decisions.

"At the end of the day, most of our members are our family members, friends, neighbors or people we grew up with," Lewis said. "We always want to provide the best service to them, and it starts with the guys we have on the line."

Line Crews

There are different levels of linemen on each FreeState line crew. Apprentice linemen who are just beginning their career, complete four years of extensive hands-on training before becoming a journeyman lineman.

Journeymen can work their way up to a foreman. The foreman leads their crew and is responsible for ensuring the apprentice linemen and journeymen linemen complete service orders safely and efficiently. Every FreeState line crew consists of at least one foreman, one journeyman and one apprentice. These are the men that brave the elements to keep the lights on.

"Being a coop means providing good, reliable service and safety for my crew and our members," said **MITCH WEST**, West District line foreman. "Every time we go out, we watch out for anything that may become a catastrophic hazard."

While West and the other line foremen oversee their crews, it is the responsibility of the journeymen to further the education of an apprentice. The success of the operations department relies on each individual member of the line crew.

"It's really like a ladder. Everyone has a step and without one step you can't get to the next," said **WES HOLTHAUS**, apprentice lineman. "All the way from our service-

Being a co-op means providing good, reliable service and safety for my crew and our members.

MITCH WEST, WEST DISTRICT LINE FOREMAN.

man up to the superintendents and managers, without one it wouldn't work."

FreeState also has service-men and repairmen who the crews describe as the "go-to" for running equipment during long outages, changing or setting up security lights, line maintenance, and visits to members.

Although no day is alike, they typically start the same way.

"With a cup of coffee," Holthaus smiles. "We also start each day loading up materials and checking over trucks, and head out to the work order we may have that day."

"Other days, though, may end up being longer if you are on call and you have to work in rain or snow or in the middle of the night to help restore an outage for a member. You never really know what each day will bring," said Holthaus, who added that's what keeps the job interesting.

With all the hours spent working on dangerous and team-oriented jobs, the line crews become close and quickly bond with each member of their crew.

"It's like a tight knit family working out here," said **BRYCE BEST**, journeyman lineman. "This is the best job I've had, and I enjoy the fact that every day brings something different and a new challenge."

The individuals in the operations department work as one to ensure your power stays on and that our communities receive the best service available.

FreeState, is not just member owned—we are member driven.

Margin Stabilization Adjustment Refund

FreeState East District members will notice a line item on their January bill for December usage representing a refund, or their fair share of a rebate FreeState received from our East District power supplier, Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (KEPCo). This margin stabilization adjustment refund is distributed to members who purchased power in 2017.

As a cooperative, FreeState returns profits to our member-owners when the board of trustees determines we have met our financial requirements and obligations, and issuing credits will not be a financial burden to the cooperative.

Our East district power supplier, KEPCo, is also a cooperative; owned by 19 electric cooperatives across Kansas. As a member of this cooperative, FreeState was entitled to a rebate because KEPCo's operating margins allowed a refund. As a member of FreeState East District, that money belongs to you.

FreeState's returned portion of the rebate was \$300,000. The amount of your rebate is based on the metered kilowatt hours you purchased from FreeState between Jan. 1, 2016 and Dec. 31, 2016.

This adjustment will be reflected on your bill as the line item "KEPCo Margin Stabilization Adjustment." For members with security lights there will also be a line item that reads "S/L KEPCo Margin Stabilization Adjustment." For members with outstanding balances on your account, your portion of the rebate will be applied to that amount first.

FREESTATE OPERATIONS TEAM

ZACH STERLING
Operations Manager

KASEY WHITAKER
West District
Operations Coordinator

AMANDA HOLLOWAY
East District
Operations Coordinator

CURTIS HAVENSTEIN
West District Line
Superintendent

NOLAN LEWIS
East District Line
Superintendent

RON FORSHEE
Fort Leavenworth
Line Superintendent

ZANE PEAK
Journeyman Lineman
Line Foreman

TIM SMOOTS
Journeyman Lineman
Line Foreman

MITCH WEST
Journeyman Lineman
Line Foreman

JACOB PINEAU
Journeyman Lineman
Line Foreman

ROD CROWDER
Journeyman Lineman
Crew Foreman

JOE ACKLEY
Journeyman Lineman

BRYCE BEST
Journeyman Lineman

JEREMY CAMERON
Journeyman Lineman

DAVID GECHTER
Journeyman Lineman

ADAM HERNANDEZ
Journeyman Lineman

JERRY IRELAND
Journeyman Lineman

MIKE JONES
Journeyman Lineman

GREG KRAMER
Journeyman Lineman

BOBBY REIDEL
Journeyman Lineman

JUSTIN SEELE
Journeyman Lineman

BROOKS VAUGHN
Journeyman Lineman

DARREN ANDERSON
Serviceman

KEN OTTENSMEIER
Serviceman

BRITTON ANDERSON
Apprentice Lineman

KYLE HALLGREN
Apprentice Lineman

BRAD HEIDMAN
Apprentice Lineman

WES HOLTHAUS
Apprentice Lineman

JORDANN MOODY
Apprentice Lineman

BRYCE SHAVER
Apprentice Lineman

GRANT WALKER
Apprentice Lineman