



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

The Outlet

FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Board of Trustees

Larry Butel
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Mark Wulfkuhle
Berryton

Harlan Hunt
Meriden

Jacob Pugh
Attorney

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.

Operations Notice

FreeState has hired contractors (IES Commercial, Inc.) to assist with our construction work plan projects. These contractors started work Oct. 1 and will continue throughout 2019. If you have questions, please contact the office.

FROM THE CEO

Thankful for Our Employees

November is time to consider what we're thankful for, and this year I'm thankful for the co-op employees that work for each of you here at FreeState.

We have top talent here, but what makes them an incredible workforce is their dedication and commitment, not only to our members but our cooperative's guiding principles. Each employee understands what makes a cooperative unique, and they work hard to showcase the real cooperative difference.

It's people, commitment and dedication. It's taking action. We're highlighting the seventh cooperative principle, concern for community, in this issue.

On the next page, you'll read an example of that principle. But first I want to mention that without our trustees' and employees' generous contributions, we wouldn't be able to do what we did last month. The folks behind the scenes here at FreeState are the reason we can do incredible things and make a difference.

It started in May when the board of trustees elected to again participate in the CoBank Sharing Success program. This grant program matches employee donations dollar-for-dollar and is presented to the nonprofit organization of the cooperative's choosing. CoBank's program applies the seventh cooperative principle, "Concern for Community," by doing for others

and helping our communities succeed by providing support to local organizations. CoBank is our primary lender, and we're proud to leverage our partnership to make an impact in our territory.



Steve Foss

FreeState's nine trustees challenged employees to raise money for the annual Sharing Success program. Our goal was \$7,500, and the trustees and employees achieved it. All donations come directly from our trustees' and employees' pockets. This summer, they rallied and rose to the challenge. We wrapped up our program as board president Jeanine Murphy and I witnessed the sheer joy and gratitude of an organization that needed our support. It was a humbling moment, and I was proud of FreeState's willingness to rise to the occasion.

This accomplishment speaks volumes of the commitment and dedication your cooperative has to our communities, the people who call it home, and our neighbors and friends. I greatly appreciate all our employees do for this cooperative, and I thought our members would, too.

**AS ALWAYS, IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS
CONTACT US AT 800-794-1989 OR
CUSTOMERSERVICE@FREESTATE.COOP.**

THE POWER OF GIVING BACK



FreeState trustees and employees raised \$7,500 over the summer, which were matched dollar for dollar by FreeState's lender, CoBank. CoBank provides matching funds as part of the Sharing Success program to its customers to help rural America thrive. This is the eighth year FreeState has participated in the program. Pictured above is FreeState representatives Jeanine Murphy and Steve Foss presenting the check for \$15,000 to F.W. Huston administration and staff.

Rural healthcare is a growing concern in Kansas. FreeState recognized that concern and helped a small hospital that provides much more than healthcare to the area it serves.

FreeState Electric Cooperative's 80 employees and nine trustees rallied to raise \$7,500, which was matched by the cooperative's primary lender, CoBank. The effort is part of our annual internal donation drive to assist local nonprofit organizations. This year we raised \$15,000 for F.W. Huston Medical Center in Winchester.

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

"The CoBank match has helped us reach out and assist local nonprofits like F.W. Huston for the past eight years," said FreeState CEO Steve Foss. "As a cooperative, we are member focused and invested in our communities and those we serve. This is exactly what our cooperative mission is all about."

FreeState's trustees selected F.W. Huston after an application process by potential organizations. The board in June determined the medical center to be the designated recipient and the trustees challenged employees to donate throughout the summer. On Aug. 29, Jeanine Murphy, president of the board, and Foss met employees at the Winchester facility to present the donated funds.

"Thank you for what you do," said Murphy to the gathered crowd. "You provide a vital service to this community and the surrounding area and for that you should be commended. Today we're here to present this donation that will help you continue with your mission."

Murphy added, "It is my pleasure to present you this check for \$15,000."

The donation amount, which was unknown by F.W. Huston, was a shock –

a good one, that provoked a few tears in the crowd.

“This gift is more than we ever anticipated. The generosity shown to us by FreeState employees, trustees and CoBank has blown us away,” said Melody Keirns, director of human resources and community relations. “As a not-for-profit our profits are reinvested into our facility and employing 160 people, so there are not always funds left over to purchase new equipment.”

“This gift will go a long way in helping us purchase updated medical equipment that will help our organization give continued and quality care for our patients,” Keirns added. “Our gratitude is endless.”

The gift from FreeState will be used campuswide with specific funds earmarked for equipment upgrades for vital signs, exams and therapies, computers, kitchen items, thermometers, bladder scanner, wheelchairs and bedside tables. F.W. Huston has provided services to Jefferson County for the past 60 years and does not receive tax support, surviving on private donations and grants like this to continually provide quality care.

“Today we have been deeply touched by the generosity of FreeState Electric Cooperative, its



F.W. Huston staff is more than a little surprised during the presentation when they learn they would receive \$15,000 to help provide vital care services to the area.

employees and lending partner, CoBank,” said LaMont Cook, F.W. Huston CEO. “With immense gratitude, the F.W. Huston Medical Center Board of Directors and employees thank you for your kind and needed financial gift.”

“We are blessed to live and work in a great place, with thoughtful helping people and many hardworking community partners,” Cook added. “We treat this gift as sacred and will use it to the betterment of those we serve as we work to help people live life well.”

FreeState has participated in the Sharing Success program for the past eight years and has made impactful donations to local organizations throughout the FreeState service territory. For more information visit <https://freestate.coop/SharingSuccess>.

Since 2012, CoBank has partnered with cooperatives across the country to provide more than \$36 million in funding for rural America. Your cooperative employees proudly participate in this program that reiterates the cooperative principle of concern for community.



Jeanine Murphy, FreeState board president, and Steve Foss, CEO, present the \$15,000 check to F.W. Huston staff and administration in Winchester in September.

FREESTATE'S RIGHT-OF-WAY PROGRAM IS



Clearing THE WAY

Topeka Right-of-Way Foreman, Mat Frye, works on sight to clear the area around a line build. Frye supervises a crew in Topeka, while John Hamm supervises a crew in McLouth. Both crews are directed by Right-of-Way Superintendent, Randy Wager.

Tree-related outages have decreased to just over 15% of all outages. This is due to the work of these crews.

The work FreeState's Right-of-Way (or tree) crew does to keep lines clear of vegetation is vital to providing safe, reliable power to our members. FreeState employs in-house tree crews dedicated to right-of-way clearing. These crews work to reduce outages caused by trees and reduce line loss. Every tree that grows too close to lines is a source of line loss, and that means wasted energy.

The in-house crew originated in the McLouth office in 2000. And since then, has worked not only on vegetation management but also outages when tree damage becomes a safety concern for line crews. By maintaining a comprehensive, regular tree-trimming program, FreeState reduces safety concerns and service interruptions.

The crews that clear vegetation from our lines are trained professionals.

- ▶ **NEVER** attempt to clear the lines yourself.
- ▶ **NEVER** climb a tree with branches near lines
- ▶ **NEVER** touch power lines

CONTACT WITH POWER LINES COULD RESULT IN SEVERE INJURY OR DEATH.

Members are asked to call the cooperative if they observe a problem along the lines.

Tree Crew Priorities Include

- ▶ **OUTAGES** — Assist linemen to clear areas where trees or tree damage are hindering infrastructure repair. Due to safety concerns, jobs like these require efficiency and quick response.
- ▶ **REBUILDS** — Clear areas for linemen to make updates to the infrastructure without obstacles.
- ▶ **TROUBLE SPOTS** — Areas that experience frequent outages. The tree crew works closely with the operations crew to identify these areas and address them as quickly as possible.
- ▶ **MEMBER REQUESTS** — Prioritize according to the level of danger posed to members, member property, or the FreeState infrastructure. Some member requests take more time to get to or complete.

Pruning Practices

Our tree crews prune trees according to accepted industry standards to achieve aesthetic value, as well as prolonged clearance. Crews look specifically for trees or vegetation that could interfere with our lines, conductors, substations, and other infrastructure. Vegetation removed will be ground

on site or chipped. Wood is usually left behind where the tree stood. When pruning or doing clearing work we:

- ▶ Mark trees with a red ribbon to indicate removal.
- ▶ Remove trees rather than just trim them to the point they appear “butchered.”
- ▶ Work with members who have trees they want to keep because our priority is to clear lines, while being considerate of members’ property.
- ▶ Prune to keep tree health in mind.
- ▶ Are always willing to help a member choose an appropriate tree to plant in the right location.
- ▶ Trim trees up to the meter. Any lines or infrastructure beyond the meter is the responsibility of the member.
- ▶ Leave your property as clean as possible.
- ▶ Deliver wood chips to members directly. If a member is interested in chips, contact the office to be put on the list.

Chemical Application

The tree crew does have access and training to apply chemicals on specific clearing jobs and only utilize non-restricted use chemicals.

All chemicals used by FreeState are available to the general public and are little to no risk to pets or nearby plants when applied according to label instructions.

Chemical application is made under the direct supervision of an employee who is a Certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator.

Cut stumps are treated with low pressure, hand-held sprayers to prevent regrowth. Untreated stumps grow back very quickly, and the growth can often be thicker and more troublesome than the original vegetation. At times, high pressure is used when needed. Proper chemical application is essential to our ability to maintain a clear right-of-way.

During spring and early summer months (April through June), the tree crews may apply chemicals to areas that have the potential to limit access to infrastructure. These areas often include substations and the base of power poles or areas previously cleared to prevent regrowth.

FreeState wants to remain diligent in our transparency with our members. If at any time a member has a question regarding the right-of-way clearing practices or chemicals used, we encourage members to contact the office.

The Value of a Tree BY RANDY WAGER

Most people have at least one memory associated with a tree. Maybe a tire swing hanging from an old tree at your grandparent’s house, or a favorite shaded resting spot on hot summer days. Maybe you carved your initials in the trunk of a tree as a child, then sought that tree out as an adult for those memories. The emotions trees prompt are just one reason we value trees.

Trees provide the frame for a pleasant view or provide a screen from an unpleasant one.

They provide food and shelter to creatures big and small, and they have a proven positive impact on our emotional and physical health.

If you are a fan of trees, like I am, there are many organizations you can join with the purpose of planting and preserving them. If you own an orchard, you might belong to the International Fruit Tree Association or The Home Orchard Association. If you make your living from harvesting timber, you might belong to a Timber Industry Association. And if you believe the planting of trees is essential to our well-being, you might be a member of the Arbor Day Foundation.

FreeState tree crew members have a respect for trees. We have involvement in the Arbor Day Foundation, Kansas Arborists Association, International Society of Arborists, and the Utility Arborists Association. This involvement ensures members we are well trained and devoted to giving your trees care that meets the highest standards in the industry.

For all the good that trees do us, eventually any tree in an urban setting will become a liability. Large mature trees are the biggest problem we see, especially if they are near a house, playground or power line. The consequences of older, diseased, or damaged brittle branches failing is what we want to help avoid. We must remove or trim back these high-risk areas, so they no longer threaten infrastructure or pose a safety risk.

If you are considering planting trees, FreeState can help you determine where to plant to add value to your property without interfering with our ability to provide you with reliable electric service.

We get several calls with requests for trimming or removing trees that are causing a problem. I wanted to let our members know that we prioritize these requests. We take care of the most dangerous trees first and then trim where blinks and outages have been causing problems. We ask members to be patient and know that each request will be addressed as soon as possible by our qualified line clearance arborists on staff.



Randy Wager
ROW Superintendent

Our Crew Serving You

*CERTIFIED ARBORIST AND LICENSED CHEMICAL APPLICATOR

**LICENSED CHEMICAL APPLICATOR

***ISA CERTIFIED ARBORIST UTILITY SPECIALIST

- ▶ **RANDY WAGER** – ROW Superintendent***
- ▶ **JOHN HAMM** – McLouth ROW Foreman*
- ▶ **MAT FRYE** – Topeka ROW Foreman*
- ▶ **DUSTIN CROTINGER** – Topeka Tree Trimmer*
- ▶ **DANNY MEHEROFF** – McLouth Tree Trimmer*
- ▶ **JEFF WERNER** – McLouth Tree Trimmer*
- ▶ **SCOTT WRIGHT** – McLouth Tree Trimmer**
- ▶ **TANNER BRISTOL** – McLouth Tree Trimmer
- ▶ **DERRICK BROWN** – Topeka ROW Apprentice
- ▶ **COLE BRYANT** – McLouth ROW Apprentice
- ▶ **KYLE FRITZ** – Topeka ROW Apprentice
- ▶ **TYLER MEYER** – Topeka Tree Trimmer
- ▶ **SCOTT SHEPHERD** – Topeka ROW Apprentice

New Look. New Experience. Same SmartHub.

Paying your monthly FreeState bill should be simple and easy. Now, with SmartHub mobile app enhancements, it will be easier than ever.

Managing your account and service with FreeState just got a little easier with the new updates from SmartHub. The latest updates will be available this fall. SmartHub is FreeState's innovative resource for member account management, and it can do more than you think. It can help you take control and manage your FreeState member account like never before, giving you more time to focus on other responsibilities.

If you are a current user, you'll notice the mobile app will have a fresh, new look. When you open the app, you'll be able to see your usage analysis upfront or can contact us with the click of a button right from the home screen.

Outage and billing alerts are also displayed on the home screen, making it easy for us to communicate important information with you. Billing, payment and other features are available with one click of a button in a new condensed menu.

All of the features you love about SmartHub now will still be available, just with a refreshed look and an enhanced user experience.

If you haven't been using SmartHub, check it out today. Whether through the web, your smartphone or tablet (Android or iOS), you'll be able to pay your bill, view your usage, contact member service representatives and get the latest news.

Making payments through SmartHub is fast and easy. The first time you make a payment either through the web or through your mobile device, you will be able to securely store your payment information for future transactions. The next time you need to pay your bill, it will only take a couple of clicks.

FreeState will also have important notifications posted, and you'll be able to choose how you want to be notified about your bill, including email and text messaging. You'll also be able to set usage thresholds so you'll know when your usage is higher than you'd like and help you keep your electricity bill as low as possible.

Reporting an outage is also quick and easy with the SmartHub mobile app. No need to call, just let us know about a service issue with a few taps. You can contact FreeState's member service representatives for requests or questions. SmartHub's contact feature makes connecting with us quick and easy.

Access SmartHub by visiting www.freestate.coop or by downloading the app on your mobile device through the Apple App Store (iOS devices) or Google Play Marketplace (Android devices).

Share Your Stories



Once electricity was available, rural folks brought electric appliances to their homes. We've come a long way in 75 years.

Do you remember when the lights came on?

We want to hear your story and share it with the new generation of cooperative members.

As we talk about a new energy and the future of cooperatives, we also want to connect with our past to feature stories describing the time when the co-op brought power to the farm, ranch or rural residence.

We are asking for help from our members. Submit your stories or photos from the past that highlight when Kaw Valley Electric Cooperative or Leavenworth-Jefferson Electric Cooperative brought power to your lives.

Did you live on a farm? Did you get new electric appliances? Do you remember when you were able to flip a light on for the first time in the home or barn? We want to hear about it!

How to submit your stories: drop by one of the FreeState offices, email marketing@freestate.coop or call 800-794-1989. You can mail photos, written accounts or other memorabilia to:

FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
ATTN: MARKETING
PO BOX 70
MCLOUTH, KS 66054

Any tangible memorabilia will be returned to the member. We will begin sharing these stories in January 2020. We appreciate your willingness to share the past with the new generation of cooperative members.

11TH ANNUAL Health Fair & Member Appreciation

FreeState Electric Cooperative hosted their 11th Annual Health Fair and Member Appreciation Day Oct. 1. 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 physical, mental and financial health to attendees.

Desiree LaForge, FEC human resources manager, greeted member Irene Malone with a gift bag as she arrived. Attendees were treated to a meal and demonstrations by local vendors.



Marie Meador, McLouth Fire, visits with Beverly Muzzy, one of over 200 attendees of the 2019 health fair and member appreciation event in McLouth on Tuesday, Oct. 1.

Thank You Vendors!

- ▶ Amanda Holloway
- ▶ Assured Title
- ▶ Edward Jones – Neil Mullikan
- ▶ F.W. Huston Medical Center
- ▶ First State Bank and Trust
- ▶ FreeState Engineering Dept.
- ▶ Heartland Health Center
- ▶ Holland Eye Clinic
- ▶ Integrated Behavioral Technologies
- ▶ Jefferson County Friends of Hospice
- ▶ Jefferson County Health Department
- ▶ Jim Phillips Insurance
- ▶ Just Relax Massage
- ▶ Lawrence Memorial Hospital
- ▶ Lions Club
- ▶ Mary Kay – Rashel Will
- ▶ McLouth Fire Department and EMS
- ▶ McLouth Medical Clinic
- ▶ Midland Care
- ▶ Primerica
- ▶ Sam's Club Kansas City
- ▶ STACARE
- ▶ Taylor Insurance
- ▶ United Health Care
- ▶ Willow Center for Domestic Violence

Cooperative Briefs

NOW AVAILABLE!

2020 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 their message. Youth Tour and Youth Leadership Camp experiences 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 2020 PROGRAM IS MONDAY, FEB. 10, 2020.** For more information and to download an application packet visit WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH or call the office at 800-794-1989.

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 nonpayment 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.

Reminder: Office Closed

The FreeState offices will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 28, and Friday, Nov. 29, for the Thanksgiving holiday. We wish all our members a Happy Thanksgiving!

ASK Matt

Energy Use Coordinator **MATT LAMBERT** will answer questions about energy efficiency, renewables, co-op programs, and everything in between. Email Matt your question at askmatt@freestate.coop.



DEAR MATT,

A SALESPERSON IMPLIED TO ME THAT THE SOLAR PANELS HE WANTS TO SELL ME WOULD WORK IN THE EVENT OF A POWER OUTAGE. IS THIS TRUE?

The short answer is probably not. Unless your system includes a battery option or a certain type of inverter with an off-grid plug. The long answer explains how grid-tied generation typically works. Solar panels create DC power and homes use AC power. An inverter on your solar array uses the grid to convert DC to AC power for home use and exchanges with the grid. This is also an important safety feature. An inverter makes sure that home generation does not push power onto the grid and endanger line workers. I have been to more than a few homes with new solar panels where the member was under the impression they would have power in an outage — and that just isn't the case.

DEAR MATT,

A SALESMAN GAVE ME A NUMBER THAT SHOWED MY PAYBACK FROM SOLAR AND HOW I COULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LOWER USAGE MONTHS IN THE SPRING AND FALL TO HELP OFFSET MY WINTER AND SUMMER UTILITY BILLS. IS THIS TRUE?

This is not true and is an indication the salesperson does not understand how net metering works. FreeState has a monthly net metering policy that allows members' excess solar generation (kWh) to be pushed onto the grid on a sunny day when their usage is low. In the evening or cloudy days, that member then pulls electricity

off the grid. This results in two sets of numbers. One for kWh pushed, the other for kWh pulled. At the end of the month, we reset the two numbers or provide the "net." The member can offset the generation of their bill down to zero kWh for a month but would still owe the meter fee and potentially other fees. Excess generation does not roll over from month to month. Any excess consumption of kWh for that month not offset by generation is still owed to the co-op. This arrangement is called monthly net metering. Some salespeople target our members with misleading information that FreeState's metering arrangement is yearly net metering and falsely imply that excess generation will pass on month to month. Understanding a metering arrangement is key to understanding and making the decision to install solar, and whether it's a sound financial decision.

DEAR MATT,

THE SALES REP THAT SOLD ME THE SOLAR ARRAY SAID THEY WOULD TAKE CARE OF ALL THE PAPERWORK WITH FREESTATE, IS THAT TRUE?

Typically, yes. However, an underhanded tactic of salespeople is telling members they will handle all the paperwork and then they do not. I have personally dealt with cases where companies indicate in a contract they will handle the paperwork, and it just doesn't happen. So please, if you invest in a solar project, protect that investment and give FreeState a call to make certain everything is being handled correctly before they build anything on your property.