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OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Thursday
7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

REMINDER

On Tuesday, May 20, our offices will open at 10 a.m. and we will be closed for Memorial Day on May 26.

It's Back! A Super Fun Way to Help Others

In a world where energy is a superpower, our members are heroes in a league of extraordinary individuals, harnessing the power of unity and community. Cooperatives like FreeState do more than provide power — they ignite a spark of progress, driven by principles not profit. In the cooperative universe, it's not just about the energy you use, it's about the energy you bring to the world.

One of those guiding principles, Concern for Community, is important to not only FreeState members — but to cooperative trustees and staff, too.

We have encouraged members to save pop tabs for the past three summers with our **SIPPIN' ALL SUMMER CHALLENGE** and our members came through! The challenge gives members an easy way to be involved and contribute to a great cause.

We are doing it again this summer and continuing our superhero theme. We're asking you to be a SipperHero for others and collect those tabs! It's



Sippin' All Summer Challenge

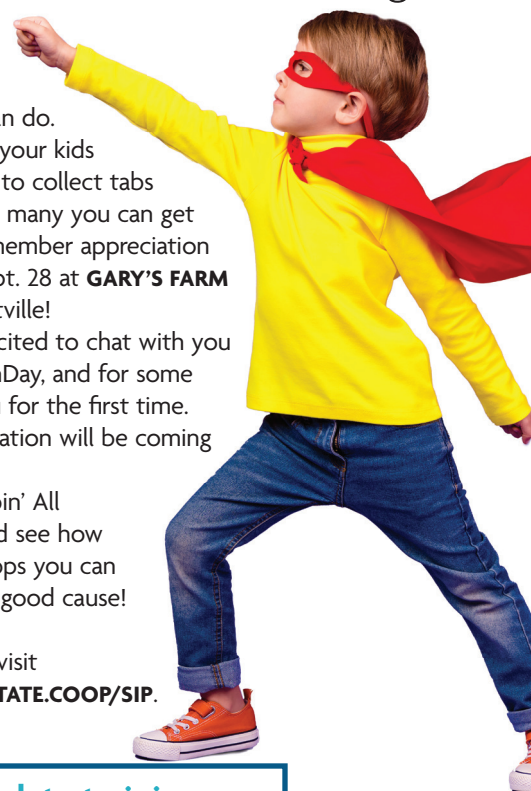
something everyone in the family can do.

Challenge your kids or grandkids to collect tabs and see how many you can get before the member appreciation event on Sept. 28 at **GARY'S FARM FEST** in Grantville!

We are excited to chat with you at Family FunDay, and for some — meet you for the first time. More information will be coming this summer.

Start "Sippin' All Summer" and see how many pop tops you can collect for a good cause!

For more information visit WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/SIP.



Save the date to join us
for Family FunDay on
Sunday, Sept. 28, at
Gary's Farm Fest!



2025 Youth Programs



TILLY JOHNSON

PERRY LECOMPTON HIGH SCHOOL

PARENTS: CINDY HART & TODD JOHNSON

MEET TILLY

2025 Youth Tour Delegate

My name is Tilly Johnson, and I am a junior at Perry Lecompton High School. I have a passion for music, staying active and learning new things.

Because my elementary and middle school did not have a sports program, I was drawn to music as an outlet. This later branched off into dance lessons, learning to play the clarinet, and being involved in multiple choirs. It wasn't until my freshman year that I first participated in school sports (track, cheer, dance and tennis).

I enjoy school and most things that come with it. Over school breaks, I always find myself wanting to go back. I thrive off of social interaction, learning new information and the challenges that come with it. This is why I hope to never stop learning and to find a future career path that hopefully will help me inspire others.

EXCERPT FROM TILLY'S ESSAY ABOUT HER MENTOR

I was the new kid. As a freshman, I was new to the school but also new to the entire concept of band. I met Mr. Rathert for the first time before the school year started.

He quickly prompted conversation by asking me questions about myself. I told him I was going to be new this year, and he replied saying he was as well and that we would be learning together. This conversation alone gave me so much courage going into my first day of school, knowing that even if the rest of the day was nerve-wracking, I at least could find comfort in the fact I was not alone in this new place.

Three years later, that warmth and welcome have remained. Mr. Rathert has built our band program by

not only inspiring younger students to give it a try, but also by cultivating an environment where kids feel welcome. No matter your skill level or social background, you can have a place in the band. I have seen an entire community's perspective shift for the better.

One of the most important things Mr. Rathert has taught me does not have to do with music at all. He has taught me the importance of honesty and integrity and how to carry yourself with grace even in times of personal strife. He creates a space where even if all my other classes are stressful or chaotic, fifth-hour band stays consistently grounded and constructive. He always preaches that we should strive to be better people, not just better musicians.

This conversation alone gave me so much courage going into my first day of school.

FreeState invests in our youth through opportunities designed to provide experiences that guide students to develop leadership and communication skills. These two high school juniors went through a competitive application process where they prepared an application, an essay and interview where they earned the opportunity to represent FreeState at two great leadership experiences this summer.



CHARLESEY COFFIN

MCLOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

PARENTS: ABBY COFFIN & MICHAEL COFFIN

MEET CHARLESEY

2025 Leadership Camp Delegate

My name is Charlesey Coffin and I am a junior at McLouth High School. I want to pursue a bachelor's degree in music education at one of my top schools: the University of Kansas, Texas Christian University or the University of Arkansas and become a high school band director.

I am very active in my school, such as being our FFA chapter reporter for the past two years and being a class officer for five years. I am also a member of the student council, play varsity softball, and I am on the McLouth Bands leadership team.

Outside of school, I raise sheep and goats and participate in 4-H to show at the state and county level, as well as being very involved in many music groups such as the Youth Symphony of Kansas City and Band of Angels.

EXCERPT FROM CHARLESEY'S ESSAY ABOUT HER MENTOR

When I think of a person who defines the meaning of a mentor in my life and my community, I immediately think of my ag teacher and my FFA Advisor, Mrs. H.

Starting the position in 2013, she worked tirelessly to build an FFA program from the ground up as our school didn't previously have one.

She organized funding for the upcoming program and worked incredibly hard to get the school boards' permission for the founding of the program.

Mrs. H has also made it her priority to incorporate community support into her FFA chapter in numerous ways. She manages so much outreach within our community such as inviting stakeholders to FFA banquets, advocating for ag education in our elementary

school by having a student teach a lesson about agriculture once a month, supporting the McLouth Threshing Bee and McLouth Tractor Pull by setting up volunteer opportunities for her students, organizing many appreciation breakfasts for local businesses, asking local businesses to send employees to talk to students about their career force and job opportunities within the communities that students can take advantage of once they graduate, and lastly, setting up a food program with a student to help feed the community by sending out food string bags for those in need. In all of these scenarios, Mrs. H has made so many connections in the community and made McLouth FFA students a friend to all of those people.

“She made it her priority to incorporate community support into her FFA chapter.”

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? Blake Phillips

Kansas Electric Cooperatives' (KEC) Director of Education and Training Shana Read was working on the schedule and appointments for the 2025 Youth Tour when she saw a familiar name. It was **BLAKE PHILLIPS**, scheduler for Kansas Congressman Tracey Mann, and former delegate representing FreeState at the 2018 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC).

Shana was excited to share the news and get us in contact with Blake, saying, "It's always so satisfying to see when these student leaders become community leaders."

Blake was recognized for his leadership even among the other students at CYLC. One of their activities is to form their own cooperative for the duration of camp. Blake was elected by his peers to serve on the camp cooperative board.

After returning, Blake said, "Being a member of the board had a big impact on me. It allowed me to work on my leadership skills and to work as a team. It also showed me just how much our cooperative board members do for us."

We reached out to Blake and were excited to find that he was just as gracious and impressive as a grown-up as the student selected for camp seven years ago. He was happy to answer our questions about his experience, in hopes his testimony may help future youth program winners feel more at ease and get as much value from the opportunities as they can.

DID YOUR EXPERIENCE REINFORCE THE FUTURE YOU HAD PLANNED OR INFLUENCE YOU TO TRY SOMETHING NEW?

CYLC furthered my leadership experience and made me more interested in public service. I had the opportunity to serve on the board at CYLC, which was a great experience that



Today, Blake Phillips is working as a scheduler for Congressman Tracey Mann in Washington, D.C.

allowed me to develop leadership skills and gave me friends and memories that will last a lifetime.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU DID OR LEARNED AT CAMP THAT MADE A LASTING IMPRESSION OR THAT HAS BENEFITED YOU IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

Throughout camp, I loved getting to meet local electric cooperative members and hearing their stories. The care and passion that electric cooperatives show for youth is incredible, and I appreciated all they did to make our experience at camp great.

HAVE YOU KEPT IN TOUCH WITH ANY OF THE CAMPERS YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE?

Yes! I ended up going to college with several campers and took classes or did activities with many of them. You'll be surprised how often you'll run into people you went to camp with.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO THIS YEAR'S YOUTH TOUR AND LEADERSHIP CAMP WINNERS?

Put yourself out there and enjoy the experience! Whatever you put into the opportunity is what you will get out of it. Don't be afraid to try new things and make new friends!



Blake Phillips (back row, far right) with new friends at Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, in July 2018.