



FREESTATE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE, INC.

# The Outlet

## FROM THE CEO

### The Power of Paying It Forward

In times like these, when uncertainty feels constant and budgets are stretched, it's natural to wonder how, or even if, we can give back. Many of us want to help our neighbors and causes that we are passionate about within our communities, but it can be hard to know where to start. The good news is that making a meaningful difference doesn't always require a big gesture.

Sometimes, it starts with just a few cents.

That's the simple yet powerful idea behind **OPERATION ROUND-UP**.

Operation Round-Up allows members to voluntarily round their monthly bill up to the nearest dollar. Those extra cents, less than 99 cents per month and no more than \$12 per year per meter, get collected and returned directly to our communities through grants.

Individually, the impact may seem small. Together, it becomes something truly transformative.

Through Operation Round-Up, we can support local nonprofits, schools, first responders, food pantries, youth programs and community projects that improve the quality of life for everyone. These grants help fund everything from emergency assistance to educational initiatives and community improvements. These are projects that might otherwise go unfunded.

Every dollar raised stays local, working right here in the communities we all call home.

What makes this program especially meaningful is that it reflects

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Chris Parr

**“Every dollar raised stays local, working right here in the communities we all call home.”**



### IS YOUR CURRENT ELECTRIC RATE A GOOD FIT?

Give us a call at 785-478-3444. Our member service representatives can check your usage patterns and go over the updated 2026 rate options to help you determine if you are set up on the best rate.

MOVING TO A DIFFERENT RATE REQUIRES A ONE-YEAR MINIMUM COMMITMENT.

## FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Larry Butel**  
Overbrook

**Bill Conley**  
Delia

**Karol Lohman**  
Leavenworth

**Don Montgomery**  
Burlingame

**Jeanine Murphy**  
Leavenworth

**Ralph Phillips**  
Mayetta

**Rob Sage**  
Maple Hill

**Matthew Turecek**  
Valley Falls

**Mark Wulkuhle**  
Lawrence

**STAFF**  
Christopher Parr  
CEO

### DISTRICT OFFICES

#### MCLOUTH OFFICE

P.O. Box 70  
McLouth, KS 66054-0070  
Mon.-Thu.: 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

#### TEMP. TOPEKA OFFICE

7332 S.W. 21st St.  
Topeka, KS 66615  
Mon.-Thu.: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

### NOTICE

As our GIS Audit continues, you may see people walking or riding ATVs along the right-of-way or easement areas to take pictures of our infrastructure.

# Operation Round-Up



FreeState's Operation Round-Up program has been helping area organizations and communities for nine years. In that time, contributing members have assisted more than 119 organizations with over half a million dollars to make impacts in the communities that we all call home.

Funding for Operation Round-Up is donated by member-owners of FreeState Electric Cooperative who voluntarily round-up their monthly electric bill to the nearest dollar amount.

The FreeState Foundation Committee facilitates the program with the help of a volunteer member committee. Members on this committee meet to review and award grant monies quarterly.

The volunteer member committee includes: **MELINDA HARWOOD**, McLouth; **MORGAN STARCHER** (Murrfield Farms), McLouth; **DERON JOHNSON**, Silver Lake; **WAYNE SYLVESTER**, Perry; **MISTY STEPHENSON**, Lawrence; and **CAROL MARPLE**, Wakarusa. The committee is looking for potential volunteers. If you are interested in serving as a volunteer, please contact the office.

The committee allocations are made possible by the generosity of the members participating in the program. No matter how great or small the act, each time we give back, we strengthen our community. A few extra coins a month can quickly add up to a significant change for our local communities and volunteer-driven organizations across the FreeState service territory.

"It's so exciting to get the applications and get a peek into the good work planned or already happening in our communities," said Elizabeth Miller, FreeState's senior member services representative and Operation Round-Up program coordinator. "It gives our volunteers plenty to consider when distributing funds."

For more information or to apply for funding, visit **WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/ORU**. **APPLICATION DEADLINES ARE MARCH 1, JUNE 1, SEPT. 1 AND DEC. 1 OF EACH CALENDAR YEAR.**

If you would like to opt out (or in) of Operation Round-Up, call our office at 800-794-1989.

In the first three quarters of 2025, Operation Round-Up made donations to nine organizations totaling \$37,175. They are listed on Page 12C. Fourth-quarter awards had not been determined before the press deadline. For a complete list of recipients, visit [www.freestate.coop/ORU](http://www.freestate.coop/ORU).

These dollars provided funding to carry out the cooperative principle Concern for Community across FreeState's nine-county service territory. We sincerely appreciate members who participate in this charitable giving program. We could not do what we do for our communities without you.

## **AUBURN COMMUNITY CENTER — \$9,050**

Multiple repairs and upgrades are in the scope of work for the request. These are: repairs to two HVAC systems, main entry upgrades, ceiling tile replacement, lighting upgrades, stage sanding and resealing, some floor tile repair, and repairs of ceiling fans in four rooms.

## **CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NORTHEAST KANSAS — \$5,000**

This request is for ongoing support to continue to move community members out of crisis through the use of CCNEK stabilization services, food and personal dignity items, direct financial assistance, pregnancy support services and other long-term case management services.

## **HOPE, INC. (HELP OVERPOPULATION OF PETS ECONOMICALLY) — \$5,000**

Funding to purchase surgery equipment packs for cats and dogs. Each pack costs \$850 and can only be used once a day. By increasing the number of packs, they can perform more surgeries per day. They service Leavenworth and Jefferson counties.

## **JARBALO COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH — \$1,750**

Requested funds are for the replacement of the basement entry door and door frame that leads into the fellowship hall of the church.

## **JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY — \$3,700**

This is the initial phase of a multi-phase plan to increase accessibility at Old Jefferson Town. Phase 1 focuses on remodeling the restroom for safety and accessibility. This work includes updates to the women's restroom (making it handicapped), replacing the sink, toilet, installing grab bars, lowering the light switch, and installing level door handles on five doors (the restroom and others).

# **2025 GRANTS**

## **OSKALOOSA RURAL HOUSING**

### **DEVELOPMENT — \$7,000**

The scope of the project is to remove two existing decks at the Madison Apartment complex and replace them with decks of similar size.

## **RACE AGAINST BREAST CANCER — \$3,000**

This funding covers the cost of 15 mammography services for community members who live in the immediate 15-county area and meet financial guidelines.

## **SILVER LAKE PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION — \$1,675**

The Silver Lake Public Library proposes to upgrade its current fluorescent lighting system to energy-efficient LED lighting. This project aims to replace all 24 existing fluorescent bulbs throughout the library with modern LED fixtures, improving both the functionality and aesthetics of the library's interior spaces.

## **STULL COMMUNITY OF FAITH CHURCH — \$1,000**

Funding for Community Cupboard, Community Closet, and Back to School Drive services that are operated by the church. Each of these are completely supported by community volunteers and the church budget.



## **COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE NO. 7: CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY**

At FreeState, we view our role as a catalyst for good and making our corner of the world a better place. Employees and members of cooperatives understand that their efforts and contributions serve a larger purpose. We are all in this together.

## The Power of Paying It Forward Continued from page 12A ▶

who we are as a cooperative. We are built on the cooperative principle of Concern for Community, focusing on neighbors helping neighbors. Operation Round-Up is a modern extension of that value, proving that when we come together, even spare change can create a lasting impact.

There's also something else worth noting. Giving doesn't just help the recipient, it helps the giver, too. Research consistently shows that generosity is linked to increased happiness, reduced stress, and a greater sense of purpose and connection. In challenging times, when it's easy to

feel overwhelmed or disconnected, acts of giving, even a few cents per month, can remind us that we're part of something bigger.

I know every dollar matters these days. That's exactly why Operation Round-Up works. It's an easy, manageable way to contribute without feeling additional financial strain. A few cents each month, combined with the participation of other members, adds up to a powerful force for good.

Enrolling in Operation Round-Up is simple. You can sign up anytime through SmartHub, or by calling or emailing our office. The FreeState team

is always happy to help. Participation is completely voluntary, and you can opt out at any time. The choice is yours, and the impact is shared by all.

When you choose to participate, you're not just rounding up a bill. You're helping a local organization serve a purpose. You're supporting programs that strengthen our towns. You're investing in the places we live, work and raise our families.

Together, we can turn small change into big impact. I encourage you to join us in Operation Round-Up and help us help the communities we all proudly call home.

## YOUTH TOUR APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

FreeState Electric Cooperative invests in our youth through opportunities designed to provide dynamic, personal interactions with fellow youth, cooperative employees and legislators.

These experiences guide students to develop leadership and communication skills important to becoming employable adults. Youth programs are all-expenses-paid trips that are truly experiences of a lifetime for area youth.

**FIND OUT MORE AND APPLY AT [WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH](http://WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH) BY FEB. 12, 2026.**

