



FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

# The Outlet

### FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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**Mark Wulfkuhle**  
Lawrence

#### STAFF

**Christopher Parr**  
CEO

### DISTRICT OFFICES

#### MCLOUTH OFFICE

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

#### TOPEKA OFFICE

1100 S.W. Auburn Road  
Topeka, KS 66615

#### OFFICE HOURS

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

### REMINDER

Members will see the board-approved rate changes reflected on their monthly bill starting this month.

### FROM THE CEO

## Working for You and All Cooperative Members

As we start the 2025 legislative session, I wanted to let our members know that late last year I was elected by other Kansas electric cooperative managers to lead the Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. Legislative and Regulatory Review Committee. This leadership position includes collaboration with cooperatives, legislators and government agencies to advocate for policies that promote reliable and sustainable energy across Kansas. The relationships we build with decision-makers at all levels have the potential to help shape the regulatory and legislative environment that affects every part of the energy industry.

FreeState is more than just a utility. It's an important part of the communities we serve. Our mission goes beyond providing you with electricity. It includes the promise to protect each member-owner's well-being and prosperity. And that also means actively engaging with those who make decisions that impact us all.

Here at FreeState, we pride ourselves on collaboration. It's one of our core values that our staff understand and practice internally and externally. Part of being a cooperative is working beyond our cooperative. We are lucky to have staff that serve on local, state and national committees and boards that help drive decision-making at all

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Chris Parr

**“We are lucky to have staff that serve on local, state and national committees and boards that help drive decision-making at all levels.”**



**Trustee election ballots will be mailed beginning March 24, 2025.**

**Your vote matters.**

- Vote by mail.**
- Vote online.**
- Vote at the annual meeting in McLouth on April 15.**
- Vote by proxy.**

# Operation Round-Up and 2024 Grants

FreeState's Operation Round-Up program has been helping area organizations and communities for eight years. In that time, contributing members have assisted 119 organizations with \$486,219 to make impacts in the communities we all call home.

Operation Round-Up is funded by donations from member-owners of FreeState Electric Cooperative who voluntarily round-up their monthly electric bill to the nearest dollar.

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](http://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 2024, Operation Round-Up made donations to the following 10 organizations totalling \$38,752. 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 PARKS PROJECT — \$2,500**

In Auburn, Kansas, their vision and mission is to help connect people and their motto is, “We are happy you are here!” The parks project will provide a permanent concrete cornhole game installation at the City Park.

**ROSSVILLE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION — \$5,000**

The Rossville Community Foundation came to be in 2002 with the mission to build a new pool, and they continue to partner with other community projects to this day. They applied for funds to complete a mile long walking track.

**MCLOUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY — \$3,000**

Funding will be used for a summer reading program for all ages. Something very magical can happen when you read a good book.

**USD 330 MISSION VALLEY — \$5,000**

Funding will be used for Mission Valley USD 330 STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) LEGO® Robots.

**CAPPER FOUNDATION — \$2,500**

Since 1920, Capper Foundation has been changing lives of children, teens and adults with disabilities. Funds will be used for computer upgrades in all seven of their residential locations.

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

Funds distributed to the Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas help support the basic needs of the Leavenworth Family Support Center.

**NORTONVILLE LIBRARY — \$10,000**

Funding for the Nortonville Public Library will be used to purchase a new circulation desk.

**TOPEKA COMMUNITY CAT FIX — \$1,500**

Funds will support the mission of the Topeka Community Cat Fix: to reduce and stabilize the over population of community cats living in Shawnee County through Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (TNVR) programs.

**DOUGLAS COUNTY 4-H FOUNDATION — \$2,000**

Funds will support “Day on the Farm” activities for fourth grade students in Douglas County.

**DOVER COMMUNITY CENTER — \$2,252**

The Dover Community Center came to be in 2004 when USD 330 gave the building to the community. Funds will be used for the purchase of new lighting equipment that will then be installed by International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) volunteers.

## 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.

One student will have an opportunity to visit Washington, D.C., for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in June, and one

student will experience Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, in July. The two selected high school students will also receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

Any high school junior living in the FreeState Electric Cooperative territory whose parent or guardian is a FreeState member is eligible.

**FIND OUT MORE AND APPLY AT [WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH](http://WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH) BY FEB. 14, 2025.**

## Working for You and All Cooperative Members *Continued from page 12A*

levels. It's one way your cooperative stays proactively engaged and works for your interests.

By engaging with decision-makers, cooperatives can ensure that members are well represented and that any changes in laws or regulations do not adversely impact the ability to power and serve communities across Kansas.

Advocating for fair and equitable policies is important because electric cooperatives are primarily based in rural areas, and we have unique challenges that are different from investor-owned utilities. Our challenges are maintaining infrastructure over sometimes sparsely

populated areas, and this can cost more and be logistically challenging. Having open conversations with policymakers allows us to communicate the needs we have, and lawmakers can work toward securing funding and support for areas that need infrastructure updates to ensure that rural areas receive the same level of service as urban areas.

Building relationships locally, in Topeka and Washington, D.C., is one way to stay informed about potential changes in legislation and regulations. Being proactive enables us to anticipate changes that could impact how we

do business or serve members. By advocating for favorable policies and staying informed, cooperatives can use relationships to explore innovative solutions to challenges that may come up.

Working together, rather than against each other, means we can access resources that can help our communities and continue to provide reliable power for a brighter Kansas. It's all part of the cooperative difference.

As always, if you have any questions, we encourage you to contact us. You can email [customerservice@freestate.coop](mailto:customerservice@freestate.coop) or call the office.