



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

# The Outlet

## FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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### 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.

## Tip of the Month

Turn off kitchen, bath and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you're finished cooking or bathing. When replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.

### FROM THE CEO

## Rural Revitalization & Economic Development



Steve Foss

As we look across our territory, we see a mix of rural and urban areas, and from a financial standpoint, these two demographics are vastly different.

However, in Kansas, we consider ourselves rural no matter where you live. There are challenges we are facing; especially in some of our smaller communities, and sometimes thinking about those can be daunting. FreeState Electric Cooperative is continually looking at ways we can bridge gaps between our demographics and how we can provide the same benefits to each member, no matter where they live within our territory.

The betterment of rural life is why economic development matters at FreeState. We want to see growth in our territory because, in the long run, we all benefit. However, growth is more than just jobs. Access is another issue facing our most rural areas. Is there access to basic human needs, healthcare, internet, or culture and experience?

Did you know that FreeState has a unique opportunity for rural-based entrepreneurs or small businesses? FreeState has access to loans through the **RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LOAN AND GRANT PROGRAM, OR**

**REDLG.** This program is helping small communities and businesses across the country.

FreeState looks at potential projects with a close eye. We want to benefit communities, our members, and the cooperative.

Another way we are helping strengthen our communities and promoting the support of local and small businesses is the launch of the **CO-OP CONNECTIONS CARD** program. Every member is eligible to participate, and any company, too. This program gives FreeState members access to national discounts through the cooperative network, nation-wide and locally. There are more than 27,000 businesses signed up across the country.

We hope that you take advantage of these discounts, and small businesses take advantage of joining the connections card network. Businesses throughout FreeState territory that are interested in joining this network can contact us about this free program.

There is more information within this month's centerspread on how to access these discounts and more information about how the program can help you save money and build connections within the community.

As always, if you have questions about this content, we encourage you to contact us at 800-794-1989 or email [customerservice@freestate.coop](mailto:customerservice@freestate.coop).

# Commitment to Community

*FreeState Lineman joins Auburn Community Library for Storytime to help teach local youth about power and electricity and to continue learning during the summer months.*

Summertime for youth typically means fun in the sun, pool days, vacations, and endless playdates with friends while the thought of school doesn't cross their thoughts and minds. The Auburn Community Library, however, formed a program to try to keep youth's knowledge expanding during summer vacation.

The program, Storytime, starts each summer in May and ends the first week of August. The idea behind the program is to create a space for parents to bring their kids once a week to learn about letters of the alphabet, create crafts, and socialize.

"Having Storytime really helps our community youth," said Patty Boone, a parent in the community. "As much reading as our kids can get in the summer, the better. It is extremely important they don't lose out on education during the summer."

Every Thursday from 10 to 11 a.m. kids from one to nine join Storytime Coordinator Sharon Heitman for a lesson featuring one or two letters of the alphabet. To ensure fun and attention throughout the hour, snacks, crafts, and sometimes special guests are included and associated with that week's lesson.

"My favorite aspect of my job is taking the week's lesson and finding books, activities, snacks, and other items to associate with the lesson," Heitman said. "They help tremendously with helping kids retain and recognize the letter and words—especially for those who are more visual."

Heitman said Storytime is an important program for community youth to get involved with because it helps them understand the importance of books. It also allows them to get acquainted with the library and all it has to offer at an early age.

"Kids are able to learn so much from the written word," Heitman said. "Reading helps them expand their vocabulary and ability to recognize words and literature."

FreeState Electric Cooperative had the opportunity to help teach these kids by sending Lineman **DAVID**

**Kids are able to learn so much from the written word. Reading helps them expand their vocabulary and ability to recognize words and literature.**

**SHARON HEITMAN**  
STORYTIME COORDINATOR

Gechter to Storytime on July 27 to relate to the week's lesson of the letter "P" and speak to the youth about power. After reading "I'm Junior Lineman" by Chauna Dickson, Gechter took the kids out to get an up-close view of the truck while demonstrating equipment used by linemen on a daily basis.

Storytime is a great example of giving back to our communities and offering local youth the opportunity to learn in a fun and creative environment where they look forward to learning.

"Kids love to go to Storytime," Boone said. "It's their favorite time of the week, and they love the stories and they love Sharon."

FreeState is proud to work with community programs such as the Auburn Community Library's Storytime.

Learn about more ways FreeState gets involved in the community by visiting [www.freestate.coop](http://www.freestate.coop).





Youth attending Auburn Community Library's Storytime learned about "power" for the week's theme of the letter "P"



Community youth try on gloves used by linemen when working on electrical poles.



David Gechter shows local youth equipment linemen use and how they are important to safety.



FreeState lineman David Gechter reads *I'm Junior Lineman* by Chauna Dickson to youth at the Auburn Community Library's Storytime.



David Gechter gives youth an inside look into trucks linemen take onto jobs.



Local youth watch as David Gechter describes the bolts and glass insulators used on electrical poles.



# Cooperative Youth Local Youth Experience the P

Fitting in and being part of the group can be challenging for anyone, especially high school students. It is this sense of belonging, of being part of something bigger, that sets electric cooperatives apart from other utilities. The Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC) in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, aims to bring high school students together in a collaborative setting to learn the cooperative principles while cultivating students' leadership and teamwork skills.

This year's CYLC hosted 37 Kansas high school students and other hand-picked scholars from Colorado, Oklahoma and Wyoming from July 13-19.

FreeState Electric Cooperative is pleased to have sponsored **BLAKE PHILLIPS**, Tonganoxie High School, and **LAURA HESKETT**, Tonganoxie High School, for this opportunity.

At CYLC, youth gained a greater understanding of how their electric cooperative operates by creating a candy cooperative. The students learned leadership and teamwork skills while participating in daily membership meetings, establishing committees, and electing a general manager and board of directors. They also learned about generation

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

**BLAKE PHILLIPS, TONGANOXIE**



Nearly 100 campers from Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Wyoming attended the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, from July 11-19.

# Leadership Camp

## pillars of a Cooperative

by touring Trapper Mine, a surface coal mine, and the neighboring Craig Station Power Plant. Phillips and Heskett were chosen by FreeState through an application and interview process.

“Students are selected based on their leadership potential,” said Sarah Farlee, PR and marketing specialist. “This includes their academic achievements and community and extra-curricular activities, along with their attitude when faced with adversity.”

“FreeState sponsors these experiences because it is vital to expose our youth to leadership, and the co-op way,” Farlee added. “Our hope is that it sparks an interest to serve in the future.”

While at camp, students participated in group activities and educational sessions while learning the importance of inclusivity and collaboration. Even the scheduled leisure activities offered

learning opportunities as the students worked together maneuvering their river rafts down the Colorado River, competed in a volleyball tournament and showcased their entertaining skills at the annual talent show. The students also toured downtown Steamboat Springs, enjoyed a dance, and swimming.

Established in the 1970s, the CYLC is sponsored by FreeState and coordinated by Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc (KEC). KEC strives to represent the interests of the electric cooperatives of Kansas through its focus on state legislation, as well as by providing safety services and programs, and educational and leadership opportunities for the state’s youth.

FreeState is pleased to have sponsored Phillips and Heskett for this leadership opportunity.



Heskett (fourth up) with other youth representing electric co-ops from Kansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming and Colorado.

**Going into camp I was nervous and didn't get out of my shell much. Throughout the week, I grew in confidence in myself and I learned that these things are not as hard as they may seem.**

**LAURA HESKETT, LEAVENWORTH**



Blake Phillips (left) and Laura Heskett (right) represented FreeState at CYLC.





Laura Heskett

The Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp was definitely the highlight of my summer! Getting onto the camp bus, I was nervous and did not know what to expect. Luckily, throughout the seemingly endless bus drive we began to come out of our shells and make friendships with each other that will last a lifetime.

We kicked off camp with some indoor skydiving at iFLY where we did not only skydive, but also got to learn the science behind the machine. We also took a trip up to Lookout Mountain where we experienced an absolutely gorgeous view of the mountains and some delicious fudge at the gift shop.

After a few more hours of driving, we finally arrived to camp at Steamboat Springs and met campers from the Colorado area. From here, we built our own cooperative with the members of our camp. We elected a board for our cooperative and created committees inside the cooperative. Through this activity, we were able to experience what it is like to be part of a cooperative as both members of the cooperative and the committees.

We also got the opportunity to visit the Craig Power Plant and Trapper Mine. On these tours we got the chance to learn about the making of electricity from a more visual aspect. We also got to visit with some of the workers and learned about the many careers included in power plant and the mine.

Even though we only spent a week together, leaving was the hardest part. On this trip, we created incredible friendships with each other in only a week. I am very thankful I got the opportunity to go to this camp and make memories I'll never forget.



Blake Phillips

Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp was an amazing experience that I am grateful to have been a part of. At first, I was nervous because I didn't know what to expect. I was about to meet around 50 people I had never met. But as soon as the trip started, I knew it would be great.

We started as a bus full of strangers, but as the ride went on we became a bus full of friends through traveling games, music, and conversation.

While the bus ride was a blast, arriving at camp the second day was when the fun really started. Having almost no cell phone service, I was truly able to be fully invested into camp. Some highlights included going indoor skydiving, participating in a white water rafting splash war, visiting Craig power plant and trapper mine, and many other exciting adventures.

Running as a board member at camp was by far the best decision I made at camp as I got to develop leadership skills and form bonds with our group of board members.

At the end of camp, all of the campers voted on what to do with the funds we raised through canteen sales at camp. Based on the vote, about \$400 was donated to a fund to electrify two villages in Guatemala and provide them with clean drinking water. This was easily our most proud moment at camp.

Unfortunately, camp was over almost as soon as it started. There were a lot of heartfelt goodbyes as friends I had made throughout the week had to leave. While leaving was hard, it doesn't change the fact that the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp was an experience that I will remember for a lifetime.



Kansas electric co-op youth show their excitement for a week's worth of fun, memories, life lessons, and friendships made at the 2018 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp.

# We Are FreeState: Information Technology

*As a member-owner of FreeState Electric Co-op, your knowledge of and engagement with our co-op 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 year-long 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](http://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.*

Behind the scenes of every successful and secure business is a team of technology professionals to increase security and efficiencies in the workplace. Businesses may have an IT department or contract that work to a third party.

To continue to help save FreeState members money, an IT department was created about two and a half years ago with the hiring of **BRENT EDGECOMB**, director of informational technology. Since then, two more positions were filled within the IT department to better serve the growing needs of FreeState and our members.

"The IT department is important to the success of FreeState because we are an efficiency department," Edgcomb said. "Our IT tools and technologies make our current staff more efficient and productive rather than having to increase staffing."

While many may assume IT's roles primarily consist of fixing technology and equipment issues that may arise, their re-

sponsibilities remain a bit more complex. The tasks of the department vary from project planning, applications and systems maintenance, vendor relations, program training, and budget initiatives.

"For us there really isn't a 'typical' work day," Edgcomb said. "I primarily work with budget items and vendors on budget initiatives and planning quarters this year and/or the upcoming. As the year goes on, I am spending more time in the next year than the current, usually evaluating and working with vendors on projects."

As Edgcomb works more into the upcoming year, the rest of his department is focusing on projects for the current year.

"My main responsibilities are to work on supporting applications and acting as the main point of contact for our operating system," said **SHAD SHAFFER**, enterprise applications administrator. "I also work on improving updates and on training plans for IT systems."

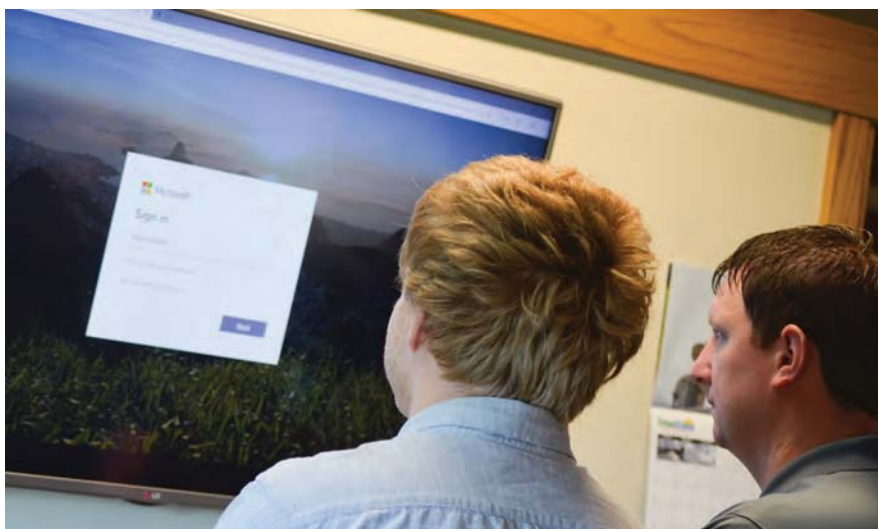
While applications, systems, and

projects play a major role in the workflow of FreeState, there must also be a secure infrastructure and space for information to be stored.

"My job mostly consists of working with Brent and Shad to maintain and improve our infrastructure and ability to do business in a secure environment for our data and users," said **MICHAEL KAY**, systems administrator. "Everything we do as a cooperative involves computers and technology so we want to keep it safe, fast, and simple to use to add value to our business."

With modern technology always advancing, it is important FreeState stays on the cutting edge in order to keep a successful and secure business for our member-owners. Our IT department works hard to ensure we are continuously improving and staying secure.

For more information about the work of our IT department or exclusive content, visit [www.freestate.coop/WeAreFEC](http://www.freestate.coop/WeAreFEC), or call 800-794-1989.



Systems Administrator Michael Kay (left) and Enterprise Application Administrator Shad Shaffer work on troubleshooting technical issues in the office.

# Get in Touch With Your Community At Health & Energy Fairs

FreeState Electric Cooperative is hosting two of our annual community events in October this year. This will be the 10th year for the Community Health Fair at our McLouth office and the second year for the Community Energy Fair at our Topeka office.

The Health Fair will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 2, from 4 to 6 p.m., and the Energy Fair will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 24, from 4 to 6 p.m.

Each of these events are open to the public and are organized as part of FreeState's commitment to community. These events provide an opportunity for members to speak with local businesses on various topics in their profession.

Businesses in fields pertaining to mental, physical and financial health

**These community events are an excellent opportunity to engage with FreeState members, surrounding communities and counties, and local businesses.**

will be present at the Health Fair while topics regarding energy conservation, monetary savings, electrical products and services, and energy efficiency will be available at the Energy Fair.

To provide our members and communities with quality local businesses featuring advice and products in these fields, we are inviting area businesses and organizations to participate this year as vendors. Vendors interested

in providing information regarding physical, mental, and financial health are encouraged to sign up as a vendor at the Health Fair, while those looking to offer information regarding energy efficiency, electrical products and services, and energy conservation are encouraged to sign up as a vendor for

the Energy Fair.

- As a vendor, you will be provided:
- ▶ one 8-inch table and two chairs (additional chairs available upon request)
  - ▶ electrical service is available upon request
  - ▶ opportunity to include information or promotional item in bags distributed to attendees
  - ▶ logo recognition on signage at the event

These community events are an excellent opportunity to engage with FreeState members, surrounding communities and counties, and local businesses. Each event is free for members to attend and for vendors to reserve a space, and a meal will be provided.

If you are interested in becoming a vendor for either of these events, visit [www.freestate.coop/HealthFair](http://www.freestate.coop/HealthFair) to find and fill out the form. For questions regarding the Health or Energy Fair, contact Sarah Farlee at [sarah.farlee@freestate.coop](mailto:sarah.farlee@freestate.coop), or call 800-794-1989.

## Save the Dates



Wednesday, Oct. 24  
4 to 6 p.m.  
Topeka office  
1100 S.W. Auburn Rd.



Tuesday, Oct. 2  
4 to 6 p.m.  
McLouth office  
507 N. Union

**Your local communities have you covered *inside and out.***

Each event is free to attend, and a meal will be provided.