




A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
1000 South Wind Dr., P.O. Box 5  
Wamego, KS 66547  
800-558-1580

[www.bluestemelectric.com](http://www.bluestemelectric.com)

# Bluestem NEWS

## BLUESTEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Mark Diederich**  
President

**Donald Classen**  
Vice President

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Trustee

**Matthew Rezac**  
Trustee

**Richard Ridder**  
Trustee

### MANAGEMENT STAFF

**Michael M. Morton**  
General Manager

**Trisha Bradley**  
Manager of Accounting and Finance

**Jerod Chaffee**  
Manager of Line Operations

**Benjiman C. Easterberg**  
Manager of AMI and Mapping/OMS

**Kevin Heptig**  
Manager of Member Services

### CONTACT US

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## FROM THE MANAGER

# Reflecting on 40 Years of Service

As a new year begins, we often find ourselves reflecting on the past and thinking about the future. This new year will bring more reflection than usual as I embark on retirement. Last year, I announced my planned retirement in January 2025 and the time has come. My wife, Cleion, and I are excited to begin this new chapter in life knowing my career with the rural electric cooperatives has left an extremely positive and powerful imprint on our lives.

As I reflect on my career over the past 40 years spent with PR&W and Bluestem, I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity and all that I have learned along the way. What a blessing to live in Kansas where Christian values, importance of family and a strong work ethic still exist and to work for an organization that supports continued

growth/progress as well as "old-fashioned" values. Rural electric cooperatives like Bluestem that stand for these values, have and will continue to make rural America and the communities we serve strong and successful. Both Cleion and I were raised in this area, and we are proud to call it home. We look forward to spending our retirement here serving where God leads us to join Him at work.

As I open this new chapter of life, I would be amiss if I did not thank the people who have been so important. The Bluestem Electric Board of Trustees who presented the opportunity to



Michael Morton

*Continued on page 12D ▶*

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Never make a utility bill payment to anyone calling you on the phone, texting you or emailing you. Always call your utility company at the number provided on your bill or on the utility's website if you have a question about payment or billing information. Know your utility bill payment options — online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail or in person.

SOURCE: UTILITIES UNITED AGAINST SCAMS



## For Safety's Sake, Do Not Mess With a Meter

For your safety, never try to tamper with or pull (remove) a meter. No person other than Bluestem employees and agents of the cooperative and other persons authorized by law should access an electric meter.

Improperly accessing a meter can cause an arc flash bright enough to result in blindness and powerful enough to launch fragments of red-hot, shrapnel-like debris, according to the Cooperative Research Network. Serious injury or death from electrocution, explosion or fire is often a result of meter tampering.

If an electrician is pulling (removing) your electric meter, please call Bluestem first at 800-558-1580.

### MORE ON METER SAFETY

- ▶ Tampering with a meter is illegal in most states.
- ▶ Meters should only be installed, maintained or removed by electric utility crews or authorized persons.
- ▶ Accessing the backside of a meter can generate high voltage; pulling or tampering with a meter can cause electric shock, sparks, surges, explosions or fire.

- ▶ Electricity should always be connected or disconnected using a transfer switch or a dedicated disconnection point.
- ▶ There is no guarantee that a structure is deenergized by pulling a meter.
- ▶ If firefighters respond to a call and know they will need a disconnect, they should call the electric utility when en route.
- ▶ If firefighters try disconnecting a home by pulling a meter, it can introduce additional problems and damage.

### OTHER FACTS

If a home's electricity is shut off at a main disconnect, the house can be automatically reconnected if there is a standby generator or battery-stored power.

Only the electric utility can properly and safely disconnect a meter. Utility crews are trained in proper disconnection techniques and wear protective clothing and gear.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

# 2025 Bluestem Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting

The Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. Annual Meeting will be held on **MARCH 24, 2025**, at the Bluestem Electric Cooperative Warehouse in Wamego, Kansas. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Official Notice of the Annual Meeting will be mailed no less than 10 days prior to the meeting. We hope that you will plan on attending the annual meeting and take part in the business of the cooperative.



**MARCH 24, 2025**



**7 P.M.**



**BLUESTEM ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE  
WAREHOUSE  
IN WAMEGO**

# 2025 Teller Committee Selected

Each year the board of trustees of the cooperative shall appoint a teller committee whose function is to count and verify the ballots for the election of trustees. The teller committee was appointed by the Bluestem Board of Trustees at their Dec. 16, 2024, meeting.

The teller committee will meet on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025, at the Bluestem Electric Cooperative office located at 1000 South Wind Drive in Wamego, Kansas at 6 p.m. to tabulate and certify the election results.

The results of the election of trustees will be printed in the February edition of the *Bluestem News* located in the *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

## Statement of Nondiscrimination

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call 866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax 202-690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

## Reminder to Update Payment Information

If you are signed up for automatic bank draft or recurring credit/debit card payments for your Bluestem Electric account(s), please update your information if you change bank accounts or get new credit/debit cards. This will ensure that your account will be paid on time and avoid any penalty charges.



## 2025 HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSINGS

**JANUARY 1**

New Years Day

**MAY 26**

Memorial Day

**SEPTEMBER 1**

Labor Day

**DECEMBER 24 & 25**

Christmas

**APRIL 18**

Good Friday

**JULY 4**

Independence Day

**NOVEMBER 27 & 28**

Thanksgiving

## COMPLETE OUR MEMBER SURVEY

Bluestem Electric Cooperative is conducting a member satisfaction survey. Please scan the QR code to take the 2-5 minute survey. We appreciate your time and input. Thank you for being a member of Bluestem Electric Cooperative!



# Bluestem Offers 10 SCHOLARSHIPS

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. will award 10 scholarships for \$1,000 each to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of Bluestem Electric Cooperative.

Scholarships will be awarded to the top 10 candidates that complete a two-stage process. The first stage will include an online application and test that must be completed and submitted by **4:30 P. M.**

**FRIDAY, JAN. 10, 2025,**

In the second stage, a panel of judges will interview the finalists on

**MONDAY, FEB. 17, 2025.**

For more information, contact your high school counselor or call Bluestem Electric Cooperative at **800-558-1580.**

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Taking steps to help your home heating system run more efficiently can reduce energy use and lower your bills. Check to see if any air vents around your home are blocked by furniture, curtains or other items. Obstructed vents force your heating system to work harder than necessary and can increase pressure in the ductwork, causing cracks and leaks to form. If necessary, consider purchasing a vent extender, which can be placed over a vent to redirect air flow from underneath furniture or other obstructions.

SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV



## Reflecting on 40 Years of Service *Continued from page 12A* ▶

serve as the general manager in 2018. Their support and trust has been amazing. Thank you to retired General Manager Kenneth Maginley who opened the door to the cooperative family in 1984 as I was brought on board as the office manager of PR&W. I am deeply appreciative of his belief and confidence in me that started this career journey. Over the years I have been very fortunate to work with individuals who support the work of the rural electric cooperatives and care about people. They have made working here a privilege and an honor. I am grateful for these people and all they have contributed to the cooperative and to my life. I want to also thank the Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC), Kansas Electric Power Cooperatives (KEPCo) and the various businesses and community organizations that allowed

me to be a part of their organizations. And, of course, a huge thank you to the members of Bluestem for their support, friendship and trust in building a cooperative that truly serves the people. Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my wife of 40-plus years, Cleion, for her love and support throughout my career at PR&W and Bluestem. I could not have done it without her.

Without a doubt, the new year will bring many changes, but you can be assured that I will be continuing to count it a blessing to have had a very satisfying career with the rural electric, and your cooperative will continue to be on mission to serve the members with safe, reliable energy.

Thank you. May God bless you.

**MICHAEL MORTON,**  
GENERAL MANAGER

JOIN US FOR A **RETIREMENT RECEPTION** HONORING

# Michael Morton

Mike joined PR&W Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc. (PR&W) in August 1984 as office manager. In 1999, PR&W consolidated with C&W Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc., in Clay Center to form Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Bluestem). Mike became general manager of Bluestem in 2018.



**FRIDAY, JAN. 3, 2025**  
**FROM 2-4 P.M.**

Bluestem Electric Wamego Office  
1000 South Wind Dr.  
Refreshments will be served.

