



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
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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

**Bruce Meyer**  
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**Amanda Gnad**  
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**Patricia Bloomdahl**  
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**Gary Buss**  
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**Brent McKeeman**  
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**Steven Ohlde**  
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**Stephen J. O'Shea**  
Trustee

**Matthew Rezac**  
Trustee

**Richard Ridder**  
Trustee

### MANAGEMENT STAFF

**Michael Leitch**  
Chief Executive Officer

**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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## Annual Meeting Highlights

Bluestem Electric Cooperative's 27th Annual Meeting was held virtually from March 2-23, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. The Bluestem Board of Trustees voted to change to a virtual format for the 2026 annual meeting. The annual meeting video is available on our website and on the Bluestem YouTube channel.

Bluestem reported a total of 5,543 members and 160 members registered for the meeting. This represented 2.87% of the total membership, which constituted a quorum for the transaction of business.

Board President Mark Diederich opened the video by discussing the commitment to be more accessible to our members and utilizing available technology to present the 2026 annual meeting virtually.

Diederich touched on the new rates that went into effect October

2024. They are working as intended and ensure that Bluestem is financially healthy. He mentioned that the trustees take decisions about rates very seriously and understand the impact changes have on individual members.

Diederich also reminded members that *Kansas Country Living* is Bluestem's primary means of communicating important information to its members.

CEO Michael Leitch spotlighted Bluestem's linemen making it home to their families safely each night in 2025 and addressed safety as the No. 1 priority to the cooperative. He spoke about changes and challenges within the electric industry.

Leitch addressed many tools that members have access to that can provide better service and help control costs. A paperless billing campaign ran from Jan. 1 to March 31. Members who

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## Annual Meeting Highlights Continued from page 12A ▶

signed up for paperless billing during that time received a one-time \$5 bill credit. Going paperless helps Bluestem save money on paper, printing, processing, postage and staff time.

Leitch discussed our SmartHub system. When members sign up for SmartHub they have the capability to view their electricity usage and past statements, and make payments.

Leitch's final topic of discussion was the new strategic plan that contained five goals:

- 1 MODERNIZING MEMBER ENGAGEMENT** through a reimagined annual meeting and voting process.
- 2 PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN BOARD GOVERNANCE** through education, evaluation and strategic leadership.

**3 MAXIMIZING THE VALUE OF TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS** through data, efficiency and member empowerment.

**4 BUILDING A STRONGER WORKFORCE** through comprehensive employee development and engagement.

**5 FOSTERING A CULTURE OF SAFETY AND CYBERSECURITY** for employees, members and the community.

The video concluded with a brief overview of the 2025 financial report. The detailed financial report was published in the March 2026 edition of *Kansas Country Living*.

### BLUESTEM SUMMER ELECTRIC RATES EFFECTIVE JUNE 1

Bluestem's Summer Electric Rates (typically residential) are effective June 1 and will apply to electrical usage from June 1 through Sept. 30.

Why do electricity costs increase in the summer? The main reason is that the demand for electricity goes up due to the demand for air conditioning and crop irrigation.

Utilities must have enough generating capacity during the entirety of the year to meet their greatest demand for power, which is usually in the summer months. The cost of owning and operating the additional generating capacity necessary to meet the high summer peaks is reflected in the higher rates charged in the summer.

If you have any questions regarding the summer rates, please contact Bluestem's office and also ask about other optional rates for which you may qualify.

## Reminder — Be Aware of Utility Poles When Burning!



Before burning, check the property for electrical equipment and power poles to avoid damage and potential outages. Always assume any downed power line is energized. Keep everyone away and call 911 immediately. If any poles or equipment are damaged by a fire, the person starting the fire could be liable for the damage to Bluestem Electric's equipment and the cost associated with repairing the damage.



# Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## Announces 2026 Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the 2026 Bluestem Electric Cooperative Scholarship winners **ANNELISE BERGGREN, BOSTON CRAIG, JACOB DEROUCHÉY, ANNALEA HENDRICKSON, ALYSSA JUENEMAN, JOSIE PARKER, KYLIE PFIZENMAIER, KADENCE PIERSON, KRISTA PORTER** and **GRANT ROESER**.

Bluestem Electric Cooperative's scholarship program provided 10 scholarships totaling \$10,000 to high school seniors whose parents are members of Bluestem Electric Cooperative.

Winners are selected based upon online application data, scores received from an electric cooperative test, and a personal video, which was reviewed by the scholarship committee judges.

What a great group of young people we have representing Bluestem Electric Cooperative! We wish each of them success as they complete their senior year in high school and begin their college education.

**ANNELISE BERGGREN** is the daughter of John Berggren and Elizabeth Koerner of Clay Center. Annelise attends Clay Center Community High School and plans to major in human development and family sciences at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

**BOSTON CRAIG** is the daughter of Heath and Mikhaela Craig of Wakefield. Boston attends Clay Center Community High School and plans to major in dietetics at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

**JACOB DEROUCHÉY** is the son of Joel and Julene DeRouchéy of Wamego. Jacob attends Wamego High School and plans to major in agribusiness at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

**ANNALEA HENDRICKSON** is the daughter of Ron and Jerrilyn Hendrickson of Clifton. Annalea attends Clay Center Community High

School and plans to pursue a degree in architecture at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

**ALYSSA JUENEMAN** is the daughter of Michael and Elaine Jueneman of Washington. Alyssa attends Washington County High School and plans to pursue a degree in accounting at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

**JOSIE PARKER** is the daughter of Brett and Amanda Parker of Waterville. Josie attends Valley Heights Jr/Sr High School and plans to pursue studies in feed and pet food science at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

**KYLIE PFIZENMAIER** is the daughter of Luke and Jaclyn Pfizenmaier of Clay Center. Kylie attends Clay Center Community High School and plans to study architecture and interior design at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

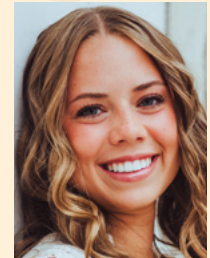
**KADENCE PIERSON** is the daughter of Kevin and Lisa Pierson of Blue Rapids. Kadence attends Valley Heights Jr/Sr High School and plans to study entrepreneurship and innovation at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

**KRISTA PORTER** is the daughter of Bryce and Nicole Porter of Waterville. Krista attends Valley Heights Jr/Sr High School and plans to major in animal science at Kansas State University in Manhattan.

**GRANT ROESER** is the son of Justin and Elizabeth Roeser of Manhattan. Grant attends Junction City High School and plans to study heavy equipment operation at Fort Hays Tech North Central in Hays.



Annelise Berggren



Boston Craig



Jacob DeRouchéy



Annalea Hendrickson



Alyssa Jueneman



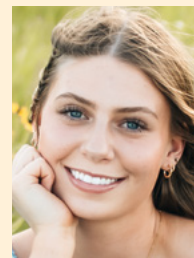
Josie Parker



Kylie Pfizenmaier



Kadence Pierson



Krista Porter



Grant Roeser

# Bluestem Electric Cooperative and CoBank Partner to Provide Funding to Area Nonprofit Organization

Bluestem has partnered with CoBank to provide \$20,000 worth of monetary donations to four local charitable organizations; **CARING COMMUNITY FOUNDATION** in Onaga; **SHEPHERDS CROSSING** in Manhattan; **THE CRISIS CENTER** in Manhattan; and **WASHINGTON COUNTY FOOD BANK** in Washington. The donations were part of CoBank's "Sharing Success" Charitable Contribution Program for 2026. CoBank, headquartered outside of Denver, Colorado, is a cooperative bank serving agribusinesses and rural infrastructure providers such as Bluestem Electric and Farm Credit associations throughout the United States. CoBank established Sharing Success in 2012. Since then, the bank and its customers have worked together to contribute funds to groups such as volunteer fire departments, local schools and hunger relief programs, the majority of which are located in rural communities.

Bluestem committed and provided a \$2,500 donation to each organization, Caring Community Foundation, Shepherds Crossing, The Crisis Center and Washington County Food Bank, which was then matched by CoBank. Throughout rural America, cooperatives are working to improve the quality of life in their communities.



From left: CCF Board Chair Jay Rezac and CCF Executive Director Valarie Ramage, receive a grant check from BEC Trustee Matthew Rezac.



BEC Manager of Member Services Kevin Heptig (left) presents Shepherds Crossing Executive Director Beth Klug with a grant check.




Kathy Ray, executive director of The Crisis Center of Manhattan, displays grant checks from CoBank and Bluestem.



Jennie Walker (left), Washington County Food Bank volunteer, and Jill Duis, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church pastor, hold their Sharing Success grant check.


The Bluestem Board of Trustees are excited and proud to be able to assist these local organizations with funding to continue helping those in need.

## TIPS TO AVOID UTILITY SCAMS



If you receive a call from someone stating you have overpaid your energy bill and you should provide your banking information or a credit card number to receive a refund, hang up because it's likely a scam. If you overpay your bill, your utility will apply the overpayment credit to your account balance. They will not call and request your banking information to issue the refund.

SOURCE: UTILITIES UNITED AGAINST SCAMS



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

As temperatures start to rise, many homeowners focus on staying cool. Don't forget about the small gaps around windows and doors. Tiny cracks and worn weatherstripping allow cool, conditioned air to escape and hot, humid air to seep indoors. This forces your air conditioner to work harder than necessary and increases energy costs. Take a few minutes to check for drafts, replace weatherstripping and seal leaks. A tighter home keeps you more comfortable and helps manage energy use. SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV

## SAFETY TIP

When planning a controlled burn, stay far away from power poles and overhead lines. Even a well managed fire can damage a pole, sometimes from the inside out, creating serious electrical hazards. Keep suppression tools such as a shovel, water source or fire extinguisher nearby. Never burn during high winds or when wildfire warnings are in effect.

SOURCE: WWW.SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

