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4 RIVERS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

CURRENTS

4 RIVERS

Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

4 RIVERS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES *Serving and Caring*

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Stacy Heins
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4 Rivers Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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FROM THE MANAGER

STAY INFORMED: Ballots, Bylaws and Protecting Our Members

Trustee election ballots have been sent out, which means the 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s annual meeting of members is right around the corner. Please make sure to join us and other 4 Rivers members at the annual meeting on March 24 at 7 p.m. at Burlington High School. Before the meeting, we will serve a delicious meal and have educational booths set up for safety, billing and more. The official meeting notice and additional details will be found in next month's magazine.

One key principle of being a cooperative is democratic member control, which ensures every member has a voice in how our cooperative is ran. By now, you should have received your election ballot. Please take a moment to fill out your ballot and return it by Feb. 20. This year, your ballot includes three proposed Bylaw amendments for consideration. I encourage you to review the proposals and vote in favor of the changes, which are designed to help us better serve you, our members. Every vote counts, so don't miss this opportunity for your voice to be heard!

A CAUTIONARY NOTE ON SOLAR SALES

Switching gears, I want to address a concerning trend that has affected some of our members. Recently, we

have received reports from our members of unscrupulous solar photovoltaic (PV) salespeople targeting our members, especially exploiting unsuspecting elderly adults and individuals with limited English proficiency. These salespeople often use high-pressure tactics and evasive strategies to push contracts for solar panels.

Before signing any contract related to solar or self-generation, please contact us. We can help you understand your rights, options and any limitations, such as the available capacity in your area (some areas have zero availability due to technical constraints).

Remember, a pushy sales pitch with promises that sound too good to be true is a red flag. While solar can be a good option for some, it's not typically cost-effective for most of our members when the full financial picture is considered. In this case, the old adage applies: Caveat Emptor — Let the buyer beware.

If you have questions about voting, solar or any other topic, don't hesitate to reach out. And don't forget to mark your calendar for March 24 — we look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting in Burlington!



Dennis Svanes

YOU HAVE A VOICE AT YOUR CO-OP



Vote in trustee elections by Feb. 20

One member, one vote. Democratic Member Control is so important to cooperative function that it stands as one of the seven principles of all cooperatives. You can exercise your cooperative member influence by voting in the current election of trustees. Ballots were mailed in January to members of all three cooperative districts. Ballots can be completed and returned in the enclosed envelopes, which must be postmarked or delivered to our Lebo office no later than

Feb. 20. Winners will be announced at our annual meeting on March 24 in Burlington. To appear on the ballot as a candidate, eligible members submitted a petition for nomination in December with signatures from at least 20 members in their district. For this election cycle, only one member from each district submitted a petition for nomination for the available board positions.

**JOIN US
MARCH 24
MEETING AT
7 P.M.
BURLINGTON**

DISTRICT 1

DAVID KUNKEL WAVERLY

David has been a cooperative member for over 50 years. He and his wife, Connie, have three grown children: Jerry, Kristi and Jennifer, and eight grandchildren. David worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 23 years as a rural mail carrier, retiring several years ago. They reside on and operate the farm where he grew up southeast of Waverly and maintain a small cow herd. He attended Independence Junior College and Emporia State University. David has received NRECA certification as a Credentialed Cooperative Director, Board Leadership and Director Gold.



DISTRICT 2

STACY HEINS OLPE

Stacy and her husband, Travis, live on a small farm in Olpe. Stacy and Travis have three children, Marley, Darren and Kinley. Stacy is a graduate of Emporia State University. She has been a teacher for USD 244 Burlington since 2001. Stacy is a member of Ebenezer Global Methodist Church in Olpe, where she currently teaches a preschool Sunday school class. Joining the 4 Rivers Board of Directors in 2017 has been an informative and rewarding experience. She was elected to serve as vice president of the board in 2023. Stacy obtained NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director certification, Board Leadership certification and Director Gold credential. The education from NRECA has been of great value, as the classes have given her insight and perspective to the electrical industry that she is able to bring to each board meeting. Stacy believes in the cooperative's goals and appreciates the time you are taking to research candidates to represent our member-owned cooperative. She has enjoyed building relationships while representing 4 Rivers and is grateful for the opportunity to serve our members.



DISTRICT 3

LOREN DICKENS CHERRYVALE

Loren grew up on a farm outside of Neodesha. He and his wife, Cindy, live in rural Cherryvale and attend Grace Baptist Church in Neodesha. They have three children and four grandchildren. Loren, Cindy and all three of their children are graduates of Kansas State University. Loren graduated from KSU's College of Veterinary Medicine in 1983 and has recently retired after 40 years of practice. In past years, Loren served on the board of Radiant Electric Cooperative as vice president, then as president. He has also served as a trustee for the co-op's insurance provider, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, ultimately serving as treasurer. Loren obtained the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Director certification, Board Leadership certification, and Director Gold credentials. He currently represents 4 Rivers on the board of Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. and has served as 4 Rivers' board treasurer since 2023. Loren considers it an honor to serve the cooperative members of 4 Rivers Electric.



CALLING ALL CO-OP STUDENT LEADERS!

High School Juniors Invited to Apply for Summer Opportunities

4 Rivers Electric's strong tradition of promoting youth leadership continues with two leadership opportunities this summer. The co-op will send two high school juniors on an all-expenses-paid trip to the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and two high school juniors to the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp.



During the **ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR**, June 14-20, 2025, students will travel to Washington, D.C., explore monuments and museums, meet with members of Congress, and make lifelong friends with students from across the country. This trip of a lifetime provides leadership lessons from our nation's history and the cooperative spirit that built our nation.

COOPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP will be July 11-17, 2025, near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. High school students from electric cooperative communities in Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming participate in this leadership camp. Together, they will create a student-led candy cooperative,

hear from dynamic speakers, experience amazing demonstrations and raft down the Colorado River.

If you know of a student with strong leadership potential who is ready for new experiences, would like to network with other student leaders, and is willing to learn more about themselves and their communities, encourage them to apply for these incredible leadership opportunities. Any high school junior living in 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative territory whose parent or guardian is a 4 Rivers member is eligible.



Contest applications are available online at www.4riverselectric.com and are **DUE FEB. 10**, so apply today! Four winners and two alternates will be selected. Visit us online for more information or contact April Engstrom at 620-364-2116 ext. 306.

SCAN TO APPLY BY FEB. 10



LIEAP BENEFITS – DO YOU QUALIFY?

Apply by March 31

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a federally funded program that helps keep families safe and healthy by assisting eligible households with a portion of their home energy costs by providing a once per year benefit.

The 2025 LIEAP application period is open; applications must be received online or in a Kansas Dept. for Children and Families (DCF) office by March 31 to be considered for eligibility. For more information or to request an application, call 800-432-0043 or visit www.dcf.ks.gov.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Understanding Factors That Impact Your Energy Bills

January and February bring the coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills.

There are a few key factors that affect electricity prices, as well as ways you can make an impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your monthly bill from 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative, you are provided with a summary of how much electricity you consumed during the monthly billing cycle. You can even see how electricity usage was higher at certain times, such as on very cold days or when extra company was staying with you.

But you might be surprised to learn that beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that impact the cost of electricity.

FUEL PRICES

As a distribution cooperative, 4 Rivers purchases electricity from our power generation partner, Kansas Electric Power Cooperative (KEPCo), at a wholesale cost, then we deliver that power to our members. The cost of generating and transmitting electricity accounts for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service to homes and businesses. The cost of fuels used to generate that electricity, such as natural gas and coal, fluctuate based on supply and demand. While these fluctuations impact the cost of electricity, we work closely with KEPCo to plan and help stabilize electricity prices for our members.

EXTREME WEATHER

While we can't control the weather, we do work together with KEPCo to review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for

extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. When temperatures become extremely cold and the demand for electricity is higher, the price of electricity can also increase.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT

To support the costs of delivering electricity to your home or business, 4 Rivers members pay a monthly service charge or "customer charge." This fee, established by the co-op's rate tariffs, helps cover the expenses of equipment, materials, labor and daily operations necessary to serve our member-owners. Maintaining reliable service requires continuous upkeep of critical infrastructure, including power lines, substations and other essential equipment. This investment ensures the dependable energy you count on every day.

ENERGY POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Federal energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As energy generation shifts to the use of more renewable sources and even stricter regulations for traditional, always-available fuel sources, such as natural gas and coal plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed and deployed. These additional costs are ultimately passed to consumers.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with members of Congress to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our local communities. We are urging the Trump Administration to take concrete steps to repeal the EPA's power plant rule and bolster the long-term reliability of the nation's grid.

YOU HAVE CONTROL

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

You can also reduce energy use by taking advantage of off-peak periods, when the demand for electricity is lower. Reserve energy-intensive chores for off-peak times, according to the season, to save energy. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

4 Rivers Electric Cooperative is your local energy partner, and we're here to help. Visit www.4riverselectric.com to learn about our rebate program designed to help you save on the cost of new energy-efficient electric appliances, such as water heaters and heat pumps. As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost.

EFFECTIVE WAYS TO LOWER HOME ENERGY USE

Outside factors, such as fuel, equipment costs and extreme weather, can impact electricity prices. But you have the power to control home energy consumption by taking proactive steps to reduce energy use.

THERMOSTAT MANAGEMENT

The thermostat is one of the best places to lower your energy use because heating and cooling account for a significant portion of home energy consumption. During winter months, adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting to reduce energy use. The Department of Energy recommends 68 degrees or lower.



SEAL YOUR HOME

According to Energy Star, about 20% of heated or cooled air that moves through a home is lost due to lack of proper insulation and air leaks. Ensure your home has sufficient insulation levels and seal air leaks around windows and doors with caulk and weatherstripping.



UTILIZE OFF-PEAK ENERGY TIMES

Plan energy-intensive chores and tasks, such as running the dishwasher or washing clothing, during off-peak energy hours when the demand for electricity is lower. Off-peak times are early in the morning or late evenings. By scheduling these activities during off-peak periods, you can help keep rates lower, reduce demand and relieve pressure on the grid.

