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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

# NEWS

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General Manager

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## FROM THE MANAGER

# Thank You for Attending Western's Annual Meeting

I want to thank all the nearly 150 members and guests who attended Western Co-op's 78th Annual Meeting on May 10. It is always a blessing when we have the opportunity to share a meal and receive direct feedback from the members we serve.

The meeting's guest speaker was Sunflower Electric President and CEO Todd Hillman. Hillman replaced Stuart Lowry following his retirement in January. Before joining Sunflower, Hillman spent 18 years working for Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), a member-based, regional transmission organization and independent system operator serving 15 U.S. states.

The Kansas Legislature recently adjourned from the session, and several representatives had an opportunity to address our membership with insights into some of the issues facing Kansans.

I want to thank the Kansas Legislators in attendance: Sen. Rick Wilborn, Sen. Rick Billinger, Rep. Jim Minnix, Rep. Ken Rahjes and Rep. Barbara Wasinger.

During the meeting, we showed videos detailing the 2022 financial report, the manager's report, and a video summarizing the meeting theme of "Power and People." If you could not attend in person, visit [www.westerncoop.com](http://www.westerncoop.com) to watch the videos and recorded live stream of the annual meeting.

After the guest speakers and cooperative updates, Board Attorney E. Jay Deines presented the trustee election results. **TERRY HOBBS**, **RICHARD SHAUS**, and **DALE WEINHOLD**



Tom Ruth

*Continued on page 12D ▶*



Todd Hillman, president and CEO of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, Western's power supplier, was the annual meeting keynote speaker.

# Energy Efficiency in Your Home

Energy efficiency continues to be a major factor in home design, and will continue to be, experts say.

Energy efficiency has so many benefits that go beyond just paying the bills,” explained Todd Abercrombie, owner of Midwest Building Performance in Peoria, Illinois. “It helps make the house more comfortable, provides more even temperatures and has a lot of societal benefits as well.”

To accomplish energy conservation, contractors and consumers take a variety of approaches.

“We are all looking for higher efficiency appliances, using LED lighting throughout homes and implementing water-saving features as well as tankless water heaters so that homeowners don’t have to pay to keep a big tank of water hot all of the time,” said Andrew Brindley, a home builder from Indianapolis.

“People want better windows, better insulation, better roofs. We are doing two-by-six walls all of the time now. They want very efficient furnaces and air conditioner systems and even want zone systems on their units to control the temperature in different rooms, so that a room that may not be used all of the time is not heated or cooled as much as rooms which are utilized more often,” added Donna Youngquist of R&D Custom Homes in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Often, especially in remodels, the goal is not necessarily about saving money, said Carl Kuchar of Woodchukar Carpentry in Payette, Idaho. “Sometimes, residents will just want to get their homes tightened up so that they are easier to heat and cool. It’s a comfort thing, not always something they approach from a return-on-investment angle,” he said.

Abercrombie said energy efficiency is multifaceted. “Energy efficiency upgrades go beyond just what you would see on your utility bills,” he said. “There are a lot of beneficial unintended consequences that can happen when you improve the efficiency of a home. For instance,

moisture management, prevention of mold, improvement of indoor air quality and more.”

To make any residence — new construction or existing home — more energy-efficient, he suggests a full energy audit which looks at a variety of factors that unnecessarily cost consumers money. “It looks at the big picture and analyzes things such as insulation in the attic and walls to pinpoint all of the various gaps and cracks that might need to be sealed,” Abercrombie explained. “It’s helpful to have diagnostic equipment such as a blower door and infrared cameras.”

Additionally, an audit will look at heating and cooling systems as well as other systems including lighting, appliances and electronics.

He added that energy efficiency needs to be kept in mind even during new construction. “I’ve done blower door tests even before insulation is installed to make sure we’re getting things right; there are certain things you just cannot get to after the house is buttoned up with drywall, windows and doors.”

Abercrombie said energy efficiency is all about paying attention to details. “We’re not looking at adding products that would not already be in the scope of the new construction,” he explained. “While sometimes it is about product selection, it is more about how things are installed and not missing other factors which often get missed during the rush to construct a home.”

One place that often gets overlooked when it comes to efficiency is insulation in the ceiling of the home. “Leaky ceiling syndrome,” he calls it. “Often when builders think of building an efficient house, they think about what they can do to make the walls more airtight, whether it is with house wrap or weather resistant barriers or spray foam, but they often ignore the ceiling plane — the area between the ceiling and the attic that doesn’t get sealed as well as it should. It’s the most important boundary in the home and we have more leakage there than we do in the walls,” he said.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Looking for additional ways to save energy this summer? Your laundry room is a great place to start. Wash clothes with cold water, which can cut one load’s energy use by more than half. Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the size of the clothes load, so fill it up when you can. When drying clothes, separate the heavier cottons. Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons like linens and towels from your lightweight clothing.

# 2023 Youth Trip and Scholarship Winners



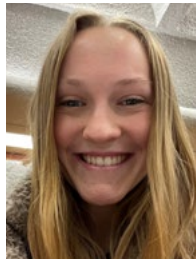
Students who applied for Western's 2023 youth programs and scholarships were judged based on a short essay, quiz on electric cooperatives, and a virtual interview with a three-judge panel.

The four students with the highest scores were awarded \$1,000 Cooperative Youth Leadership scholarships and choice of youth trips. The student with the fifth most points was awarded the Darrell Brown Memorial Scholarship and the choice to serve as the trip alternate. If a scheduling conflict existed, the student with the next highest point total was offered the trip as an alternate.

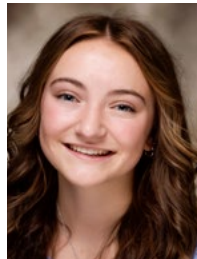
Contest details for the 2024 Youth Contest will be released in December 2023. If you have any questions, please contact [nolann@westerncoop.com](mailto:nolann@westerncoop.com).



**AUSTIN CARROLL**  
Ellis High School  
Electric Cooperative  
Youth Tour  
\$1,000 Scholarship



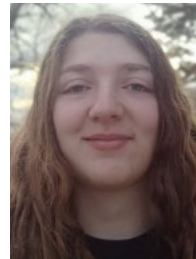
**PEYTON COONROD**  
Ellsworth High School  
\$250 Darrell Brown  
Memorial Scholarship



**KAYDENCE GREBOWIEC**  
Plainville High School  
Cooperative Youth  
Leadership Camp  
\$1,000 Scholarship



**JAIKEN PFANNENSTIEL**  
Hays High School  
Electric Cooperative  
Youth Tour  
\$1,000 Scholarship



**MARRISA REEVER**  
Bison High School  
Cooperative Youth  
Leadership Camp



**MADISON ZERR**  
Wheatland High School  
\$1,000 Scholarship

## Four Students Selected to Represent Western Cooperative this Summer

After a three-year hiatus, Western Cooperative Electric proudly resumes the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., for high school juniors June 15-22. This year's winners are **AUSTIN CARROLL** from Ellis High School and **JAIKEN PFANNENSTIEL** from Hays High School.

Carroll and Pfannenstiel will be traveling with 24 other students from across Kansas and four students from Hawaii. They will join 33 states in bringing more than 1,300 students to the nation's capital this summer.

The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is a program offered by co-ops throughout the nation to high school students from their co-op membership. Participants receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital and learn about the nation's history with visits to the Arlington National Cemetery, the U.S. Capitol, and the Smithsonian Museums. In addition, students not only meet with other participants their age from across the nation, but they also get the opportunity to discuss current issues with Congressional representatives and senators.

Two additional high school students were selected to attend the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. This year's winners are **KAYDENCE GREBOWIEC**, a junior from Plainville High School, and **MARRISA REEVER**, a junior from Otis-Bison High School.

Grebowiec and Reever will join approximately 80 students from across Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming for a weeklong leadership camp.

During their stay in Colorado, the students will create a candy cooperative, complete with a board of trustees and general manager that will hold daily membership meetings. Other activities include high voltage safety demonstrations, a tour of Craig Power Station, and leadership seminars. Students will also take advantage of their location, exploring Steamboat Village and rafting on the Colorado River.

These programs are coordinated by Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., the statewide service organization for the electric cooperatives in Kansas.

"The students selected for our youth programs are leaders, both inside and outside the classroom," Nolan Numrich, Western's assistant general manager/member services manager, said. "We know these trips to Washington, D.C., and Colorado, will provide valuable, lifelong experiences for these students and help equip them to become community leaders in the future."

To be selected for this trip, current high school juniors were scored based on a short essay, a test of electrical cooperative knowledge, and an interview. Contest details are released in late December. For information on next year's contest, visit [www.westerncoop.com/youth-tour](http://www.westerncoop.com/youth-tour) or contact your local school counselor.


# Thank You for Attending Western's Annual Meeting Continued from page 12A ▶

received the most votes and were elected to three-year terms. After door prize winners were announced, Board President Craig Crossland adjourned the meeting, and an ice cream social followed.


After the annual meeting, the Western Board of Trustees appointed officers. **NICK ZERR** will serve as the president, **TERRY HOBBS** as vice president, and **RICHARD SHAUS** as secretary/treasurer.

It is truly an honor to serve the members of Western. We have


BOARD ELECTION RESULTS



**Terry Hobbs**



**Richard Schaus**



**Dale Weinhold**

overcome many challenges over the past few years, and we look forward to the future of finding new ways to better serve our members. Regardless of the challenges we face, Western's focus remains on delivering power and serving the people.

**TOM RUTH, GENERAL MANAGER**



There were 77 members in attendance at the 2023 Western Cooperative Electric Annual Meeting. Additionally, members could view the meeting via livestream on our website.



HAPPY

★

4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY

★ ★ ★

Our office will be closed on Tuesday, July 4, for the holiday.

## Keller Retires After 27 Years at Western

**TONYA KELLER**, corporate services administrator, retired on March 31 after a 27-year career with Western Cooperative.

Although Keller wore many hats and held many different titles over the years, she got her start as a member service representative.

"I knew I wanted to work at the electric co-op, but they never had openings," recalled Keller. "I earned a few computer certifications and learned Excel in order to improve my resume in case there was an opportunity." When a job opened, Keller was hired in February 1996.

Keller always believed that customer service should be a priority for Western members. "I miss taking calls and dispatching the crews," said Keller. "Our members are family. If they were without power, it was our job to get them restored as quickly as possible. It was always rewarding to serve our members."

Keller would encourage people to consider a career with a cooperative. "You have the opportunity to work with good people and take care of your neighbors," she said.

In her retirement, Keller plans to spend more time with her husband, Ernie, their three sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren; and to go skydiving (accompanied) or ride in a hot air balloon, if an opportunity should arise.



Tonya Keller retired from Western on April 1 after serving our members for 27 years.