

## Electric rate study in the news

Electricity and electric rates seem to be consistently in the news cycle over the last few years. Whether it is news about the

new wind farms being proposed or being built in the communities we serve, news about the local investor owned utilities merging to form a new company, or the Legislature in Kansas discussing why electric rates in

Kansas have increased over the last 10 years, it seems like it's always there.

On January 8th, a study of electric rates was released as part of a requirement by the Kansas Legislature. London Economics International (LEI) completed the study, which focused on providing the Legislature context to ensure that Kansas electric rates are regionally competitive, while also keeping electricity reliable throughout the state. Pieces of this report have been on the TV news

### KEEPING YOU INFORMED



**MARK SCHEIBE**  
**HEARTLAND CEO**

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## Pole inspection



Inspecting, testing, and treating Heartland's utility poles is an annual process, extending the life of the poles, and improving reliability. Heartland partners with a company, Osmose, to inspect the poles and help recommend pole replacements when needed.

# Operation Round Up grants awarded

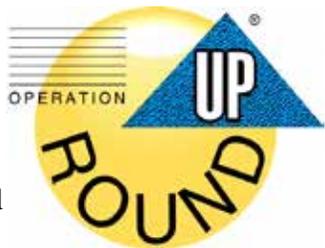
Many families in need are receiving help from 28 non-profit organizations this year as part of Heartland's Operation RoundUp.

Heartland's Operation Round Up supports programs and organizations that promote the health and well-being of Southeast Kansas residents. Heartland members donate to the program by "rounding up" electric bills to the next dollar, with each member giving about \$6 each year. A panel of volunteer trustees from across Heartland's service area awards grants to non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organizations that provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and otherwise serve those in need.

Last year, more than \$45,000 was raised by Heartland's Operation RoundUp program, which is entirely funded by donations from Heartland members and employees.

Grants awarded this past year include:

- A Meal in His Name for free community meals in Girard;
- The Alliance of Churches for Christian Living in Allen County



for food for those in need;

- The Care to Share cancer support organization in Fort Scott;
- Concern Inc.'s food pantry in Mound City;
- The Erie Area Ministerial Alliance for holiday food baskets;
- First Baptist Church of Cherokee's food pantry;
- First Baptist Church of Mound City's community programs;
- First Baptist Church of Pleasanton's food and community programs;
- First Baptist Church of Riverton's food pantry;
- First Christian Church of Pleasanton's community assistance program;
- First Missionary Baptist Church of Uniontown's food pantry;
- First United Methodist Church of Columbus' food pantry;
- Friends of the Library in Linn County food program;
- God's Pantry at First Christian Church of Chanute;
- Grady's Kids in LaCygne;
- Hope Unlimited's domestic violence shelter in Iola;

- The Humbolt Community Food Pantry;
- Immanuel Lutheran Church's community garden in Hepler;
- Camp scholarships for Greenbush's Learning Tree Institute;
- Supplies for Life Christian School in Columbus;
- Mana Depot food pantry in Columbus;
- Mound City Christian Church's assistance for those in need;
- Mound City United Methodist Church's assistance for those in need;
- Neighbor 2 Neighbor food pantry in Chanute;
- The Orange Swan Free Store at Galesburg First Christian Church;
- The Reach Out Food Pantry in Prescott;
- Supplies for disabled students at Southeast Kansas Interlocal 637 in Pittsburg;
- The Wings of Warriors program in Iola.

Recipients for 2020 grants will be selected in the fall of this year by Heartland's eight volunteer Operation Round Up trustees. For information on how to apply for a grant, call our office.

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stations and included in the local newspapers. I want to focus on a few areas that are important to pass along.

First, the LEI report affirmed that cooperative elected Board of Directors "... represent and balance the consumers' and the co-op's interests ..." and "... LEI can conclude that there are sufficient organizational and economic incentives for co-ops to set rates in a way that prioritizes the public interest." This report shows what co-op consumer-members already know: local oversight and local control that is in place at Heartland and other co-ops across the country is the best way to know their best interest is kept in mind. Our locally elected board members and annual Meeting of the Members (slated for 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 10 at Fort Scott Community College) all ensure that the concerns and priorities of our consumer-members guide the course of the cooperative.

Second, LEI discussed that electric rates have increased "... over the last decade, driven by a number of factors including flattening demand, rising transmission costs, and environmental retrofits." Heartland's power supplier, Kansas Electric

Power Cooperative (KEPCo), buys a portion of its energy needs from investor owned utilities that have spent a combined \$2.47 billion "... to meet the air quality standards introduced by the Environmental Protection Agency." While the costs of these upgrades are high, they help provide cleaner energy and are an important part to protect the environment.

The last item I want to discuss is around retail competition, also called retail wheeling. When retail competition has been introduced in other states, some classes of consumer-members (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) may save, while others pay more. New energy companies suddenly appear, and it's hard to know just what their priorities are. Residential customers have the potential of choosing a different electric provider that is solely in the business of making as much money as they can and not protecting customers from higher energy costs. Unless all classes of consumers can save money with retail competition, "buyer beware".

As the news cycle continues and electric rates continue to be an area of focus, remember that Heartland is your trusted energy provider, continually looking out for the best interest of all its consumer-members. We do this to help protect and promote the place we all call home, Rural Kansas.

For additional information on electric rates in Kansas, please visit [KSEnergyFacts.com](http://KSEnergyFacts.com)

# Community projects funded



Heartland recently awarded two community projects with \$5,000 grants as part of the cooperative's new Concern for Community Grant Program. The fund supports infrastructure improvements and capital campaigns in Heartland's Kansas service territory. Above: Heartland CEO Mark Scheibe presents a check to the Allen County Fair Board, represented by Craig Jaro, Christine Tholen and Cindy Jaro, to support improvements at the fairground's hog barn. Below: Scheibe presents a check to the Osage Township Rural Volunteer Fire Department, represented by Sherie Schenker, Cody Clark, Justin DeGarmo, Cameron Clark and Dakota Fry, to support the construction of a new fire station in McCune.



# Annual meeting set for March 10

For more than 80 years, Kansas farmers who received power through their local electric cooperative have had an active role in the management of their local utility.

That tradition continues even today as Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative holds its annual meeting on Tuesday, March 10 on the campus of Fort Scott Community College.

The annual meeting is held to give those served by the cooperative the opportunity to make their voice heard in the utility's operation. It's an opportunity to learn about the cooperative, ask questions and voice concerns.

That tradition continues at the 2020 Meeting of the Members, to be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 10 at the Ellis Family Fine Arts Center on the campus of Fort Scott Community College.

Doors will open at 6:30, with the meeting starting at 7 p.m. Representatives of the cooperative and the HREC Board of Directors will give their reports, provide an update on the finances of the cooperative, and answer questions from members in attendance.

Heartland members who attend the meeting will receive a \$25 bill credit.

In addition, a total of \$1,000 in cash will be given away during a drawing to be held at the end of the meeting.

There are no bylaw changes or voting issues on the agenda.

As in previous years, an ice cream social will be held after the meeting, which is expected to take about an hour.

As a cooperative, Heartland offers members the opportunity to make their voice heard and have a say in the operation of the company.

Members elect the Board of Directors from the membership and get to participate in the business of the cooperative at the annual meeting every year.

Local ownership and governance are what sets Heartland REC apart from other electric utilities.



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# Update your contact information with us

At Heartland, we are constantly striving to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for our consumer-members (that's you!).

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about other important programs, events and activities.

Up-to-date contact information can potentially speed up the power restoration process during an outage. For example, the phone number you provide is linked to your service address to our outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In

these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected members through automated phone messages, text messages or email, if we have your updated contact information and communication preferences.

Keeping the co-op updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use or billing. Emails and text messages are also used to notify registered members of any changes in co-op event details. In addition, discrepancies on your account can be taken care of promptly if

Heartland has accurate account information.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's likely that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many members now use a cell phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

Your contact information is not shared, but is only used by Heartland to send important information to you.

Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by calling our office at 1-800-835-9586.

You can also update your information by sending us an email at [office@heartland-rec.com](mailto:office@heartland-rec.com). By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all members of the co-op. In

