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Electronews

The Victory Electric Cooperative Assn., Inc.

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of Operations

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CEO MESSAGE

Tips to Manage Your Energy Use and Save Money

Because electricity is an invisible commodity, at times we all forget what it does for our lives. When members pay an electric bill, they are paying for kilowatt-hours consumed by all gadgets consuming electricity in their homes or businesses, such as appliances, computers, lighting, heating, etc.

We all have the power to manage our own energy costs and become more energy efficient, and Victory Electric is committed to helping our members understand and manage their energy use wisely. We believe that in helping our members understand how these items affect their electric bill, they can better manage how their electric dollar is spent.

By managing your energy use wisely, you can reduce your household electric bills while helping to conserve natural resources and maintaining the quality of our environment.

Utilize SmartHub and Discover Ways to Conserve Energy

In addition to energy efficiency tips and tricks to help save electricity, Victory Electric offers members access to SmartHub, an online, interactive tool to make saving even easier! Not only will it help you understand and manage your energy usage, but it also helps you discover new ways to conserve energy

while reducing your electric bill!

SmartHub is Victory Electric's online account management system for members to manage all aspects of your Victory Electric account, including checking your energy use. In addition, view and/or pay your electric bill, set up AutoPay or paperless billing, sign up for outage alerts, and report outages or service issues.

Monitoring your daily electric use can help determine how to make adjustments to your energy consumption and directly see the effects of those changes the next day. Daily monitoring can also alert you to problems with your air conditioning unit or other equipment.

When you use electricity is just as important as how much you use. For example, during the summer, most households use more power in the afternoon when temperatures are at their highest. Members can save money by reducing electric use during these high demand times.

Access SmartHub via our website from a desktop computer or on the go from a



Shane Laws

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Annual Report and Voting Ballots Mailed to You

Look for your annual report in the April issue of the *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

Ballots for the board of trustees election will be mailed separately and contain the candidate profiles, ballot, return envelope and your registration card for the meeting on April 20. Ballots must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, April 19, the day prior to the annual meeting. No voting will be held electronically or at the annual meeting. Results will be announced at the meeting.

Why vote? Purchasing electric power from Victory Electric gives you membership in the cooperative and, as a member, you have voting rights. Your participation is a fundamental power that flows from you to your electric cooperative. You have the power to discuss issues with friends and neighbors and elect your board representation. That democratic right — which includes one vote by every cooperative member — is one of several important differences between electric cooperatives and investor-owned electric utilities. Informed and concerned members stay involved by electing those people who value their way of life and work to improve the quality of life in southwest Kansas.

JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

Join us on **TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2020**, at the Western State Bank Expo (11333 U.S. Highway 283 in Dodge City).

REGISTRATION AT 5:30 P.M.

Please bring the registration card you receive in the mail for express registration.

► **BUSINESS MEETING STARTS AT 6 P.M.**

To ensure the health and safety of all in attendance, it will be an abbreviated business meeting lasting no more than 30 minutes and we will be practicing social distancing.

NO MEAL WILL BE PROVIDED.

Members of the board of trustees are responsible for directing the business and affairs of the cooperative. Like you, trustees are cooperative members but with a special perspective. Your board members live throughout the Victory Electric service area. The trustees' primary function is planning and policy oversight, establishing the long-term objectives of the cooperative, and providing resources to meet those objectives.

Nominating Committee Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the nominating committee of The Victory Electric Cooperative Assn., Inc., was held Monday, Feb. 15, at the office of the cooperative in Dodge City.

The following members of the nominating committee were present: **ALAN SCHNEWEIS, DILLON KELLER, REX AISTRUP, LEVI BENJAMIN, JASON JOY, RAYMOND RIDGWAY JR., STEVEN FRY** and **LISA MAZZA**.

Dave Snapp, attorney for Victory Electric, Shane Laws, CEO, Kenny Wehkamp, board representative, and Rae Jean Amy, who recorded the minutes, were also present.

Snapp called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Thereupon, Snapp reviewed trustee qualifications and eligibility requirements, as set forth in the cooperative's bylaws, to determine if potential nominees were eligible for election based upon the information available and the bylaws.

Thereupon, motions duly made, voted on and carried, Lisa Mazza was elected as chairman of the nominating committee and the inspector of elections. Chairman Mazza then took over the meeting and asked for nominations from Districts 1, 3, 8 and 10.

Thereupon, motions duly made, seconded and adopted, the following persons were nominated to stand election as candidates for trustee of the cooperative for a three-year term:

► **DISTRICT 1: DARYL TIEBEN**

► **DISTRICT 3: KENNY SCHULTE**

► **DISTRICT 8: CEDRIC DREWES**

► **DISTRICT 10: TERRI LARSON**

With no further business to come before the nominating committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Brown Promoted to Journeyman Meterman



Ray Brown

Victory Electric's engineering department recently announced the promotion of **RAY BROWN** to journeyman meterman.

The title "journeyman"

is given to those who possess the experience and training to be considered a master of their trade. In the field of metering, this requires each meterman to complete a series of four textbooks each with 10 accompanying tests. With the last test being a cumulative 200 question test.

After putting in countless hours of trainings, on-the-job learning, and long nights studying, Brown has become the first meterman at Victory Electric to complete his journeyman training. After spending the last two years hitting the books, it's hard for Brown to remember a time when his career plans included teaching from a book.

"When I started college, I was studying to be a teacher. Eventually, I realized I didn't want to do that," Brown said. "I decided it was a better fit for me to learn a trade. I'd done a little electrical work before and enjoyed the science and physics involved, so it just seemed like a good fit."

Brown began his career with Victory in 2018 as a third-class meterman. Before accepting the position with Victory Electric, the Ford native worked as an electrician for several southwest Kansas area electrical contractors.

Though Brown's formal training may be complete, he is still excited to expand his metering knowledge. Ever-

changing advances in technology and the increasingly vital role electricity plays in everyone's day-to-day life supplies Brown with many opportunities to be a lifelong learner. This quality is one Brown demonstrates every day on the job, and one of many qualities that made his supervisor sure Brown was ready to become a journeyman.

"On top of completing his certification, Ray has a strong work ethic and a good attitude about the job and the company," said Heith Konecny, manager of metering technology. "He's a team-player, a great communicator, and I know when I send him out on a job it will get done. Over the past two years, Ray has greatly expanded his metering skillset and I'm confident he will continue to do so."

Brown's original career goal was to be an educator until a change landed him in a profession requiring him to remain a lifetime student. Luckily, this next chapter won't require as much studying.

In his free time, which he looks forward to having more of now that he passed all the tests, he enjoys playing video games and spending time with his wife, Daisy, and daughter, Arabella. Brown also enjoys watching Arabella pursue her most current interest (right now, it's basketball).

"Between the two of them, I stay pretty busy keeping them happy," Brown said.

Victory Electric is excited to recognize the hard work and commitment Brown put toward achieving this certification. We look forward to his continued success as he advances to the next part of his metering career. Congratulations Ray!

Barnett Hired as Mechanic

Victory Electric is excited to welcome mechanic, **KELLY BARNETT**, to the cooperative.

Born and raised in Spearville, Barnett gleaned an interest in mechanics in high school while working on his first car. This interest encouraged him to begin the automobile mechanics technology and welding program at Dodge City Community College while still attending high school.

"It's always been my thing to tear something apart and put it back together," Barnett said. "I enjoy the self-gratification that comes from taking something broken, figuring out what's wrong, and making it work again."

After high school, Barnett completed the automotive collision and repair program at Northwest Kansas Technical College in Goodland.

Barnett then spent more than two years working at an automotive body shop before spending five years at Right Cooperative in Wright as a grain and feed mill operator. After Barnett's stint with the agricultural cooperative, he resumed mechanical work at Foley Industries in Dodge City. Barnett remained at Foley for 15 years prior to accepting the position with Victory Electric.

Barnett is eager to tackle the challenges associated with managing an electric utility fleet, because he understands the important role he plays in the cooperative's operation.

"The guys are very dependent on their trucks operating properly and being up to code. It's my goal that every time I see one of our trucks coming up the road, I am confident in the knowledge that it is well maintained," Barnett said. "This job will be something slightly different for me, but still in the same line of work. I love the constant movement in this profession. Victory Electric has around forty pieces of equipment, any of which could go down at any time. It's kind of exciting because you never know what you will be working on next."

Kelly has been married for 18 years to his wife, Melissa. He has two children, Destiny and Travis, and two grandchildren. When not working as a mechanic for Victory Electric, Barnett enjoys working on a few of his own garage projects, off-roading and maintaining his personal fleet of vehicles.

Welcome to Victory Electric Kelly! We are happy to have you on the team!



Kelly Barnett


Happy St. Patrick's Day 

Tips to Manage Your Energy Use and Save Money *Continued from page 16A* ▶

tablet or mobile device. The free app is easy to use and offers many features to provide secure account management right at your fingertips. Visit the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store and search for “SmartHub” to download. Signing up is easy and fast, and you can start using it immediately.

Victory Electric's Top 10 Tips for Saving Energy

1. Replace any lightbulb, especially ones that burn more than one hour per day, with a light-emitting diode (LED) bulb.
2. Seal from the inside. Air sealing is an inexpensive way to lower energy costs and improve comfort. Seal gaps and holes in walls, floors, and ceilings with caulk or foam sealant. Look for cracks around windows and where wires and pipes pass through.
3. Plug electronic devices such as cable boxes, printers and TVs into power strips to turn off during vacations or long periods without use. Smart power strips make it an easy task to save money.
4. Close shades and drapes during the day to help keep your home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.
5. Change your central HVAC system filter when dirty according to the manufacturers recommendations. Dirty filters can impact your home comfort and increase your electricity bill.
6. A one degree increase on your thermostat when heating or decrease in cooling can increase energy use by 3-5%.
7. Have your duct work checked for leaks. Leaks at the return, air handler and supply can be a major source of high bills. Mobile homes check at the grill, cross over duct and down flow air handler, for leaks.
8. Set both the upper and lower water heater thermostats no higher than 120 degrees.
9. An electric space heater can cost more than \$100 per month to operate. Minimize their use, except for limited or temporary spot heating. Turn space heaters off when leaving the room.
10. Ensure refrigerator door seals are tight. Eliminate unnecessary refrigerators.

Members can also visit Victory Electric's website for more energy efficiency tips.

Thanks, Shane

Hernandez-Gonzalez Earns Journeyman Certification



Marlon Hernandez-Gonzalez

All linemen seek to achieve the highest classification in their field by becoming a journeyman lineman. Recently, Victory Electric's operations department recognized **MARLON HERNANDEZ-GONZALEZ** for completing his journeyman lineman certificate.

Hernandez-Gonzalez, a Dodge City local, enrolled in the electrical power technology program at Dodge City Community College shortly after graduating high school.

“Originally, I thought the program was supposed to be training for indoor electrician jobs. One day, they sent us outside and had us start learning how to climb poles and I liked it,” Hernandez-Gonzalez said.

After completing his training in 2015, Hernandez-Gonzalez began interning with Victory Electric. Following his internship, Hernandez-Gonzalez moved to Wichita to work at Westar Energy. In 2016, he returned to Victory full-time as a fourth-class lineman.

During his five years with the cooperative, Hernandez-Gonzalez has never shied away from

working extra hours or “climbing” the extra mile. Aside from picking up additional on-call shifts, he is a frequent volunteer at company events.

“Whether it's driving a line truck in a parade, overseeing the go-carts at the pumpkin festival, or greeting members at annual meeting, Marlon is always there when you need him,” said Jerri Whitley, vice president of communications.

Always willing to represent Victory Electric as a volunteer, Hernandez-Gonzalez has also represented the cooperative competitively on an international level. Though it was definitely not this native of a historically “wild western” cattle town's first rodeo, his passion for climbing poles lead him to participate in one. In both 2017 and 2018, he pulled on his climbing boots and hooks to represent Victory Electric at the International Lineman's Rodeo. This annual event allows line-working professionals the opportunity to learn and flex their skills through competitions based on traditional line work tasks.

The road to becoming a journeyman lineman is not short. Each lineman earning the classification must have a combination of four years of experience plus successfully passed exams covering material in four textbooks. For every textbook, there are 10 exams with a final accumulated exam at the end.

“You definitely have to put in the work to become a journeyman. Getting the promotion is great, but it helps to have people in your corner to motivate you and remind you what going out and ‘getting this bread’ is for,” Hernandez-Gonzalez said.

For Hernandez-Gonzalez, those people are his mother, Guadalupe, his girlfriend, Adriana, and their son, Santana, who was born in April. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family and friends.

Linemen will tell you working on a line crew is a brotherhood, and earning the journeyman title requires dedication and a concentrated effort. Each lineman has their own source of motivation and their paths to becoming a journeyman are all different. With the addition of Hernandez-Gonzalez, Victory Electric now has a total of 21 journeymen linemen.

“Becoming a journeyman lineman ensures lineworkers are qualified, independent and can supervise a crew,” said Ryan Miller, vice president of operations. “We are excited to add another one to the crew.”

Victory Electric is proud of the dedication, leadership and skills journeymen linemen provide, and we congratulate Marlon on this accomplishment!