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Electronews

The Victory Electric Cooperative Assn., Inc.

Board of Trustees

- John Leis** – President
- Pat Morse** – Vice President
- Daryl Tieben** – Secretary/Treasurer
- Cedric Drewes** – Trustee
- Gary Gillespie** – Trustee
- Jim Imel** – Trustee
- Terri Larson** – Trustee
- James Ochs** – Trustee
- Randy Quint** – Trustee
- Ken Schulte** – Trustee
- Kenny Wehkamp** – Trustee

Staff

- Shane Laws** – CEO
- Amy Grasser** – Vice President of Corporate Services
- Mikey Goddard** – Vice President of Safety
- Rob Henry** – Vice President of Engineering
- Denzil McGill** – Vice President of Information Technology
- Ryan Miller** – Vice President of Operations
- Jerri Whitley** – Vice President of Communications
- Angela Unruh** – CFO

CEO MESSAGE

Serving Members During a Pandemic



Shane Laws

The past few months have certainly been challenging times for both our country and our local communities. Families, schools, businesses, healthcare providers and governments have responded like never before to the challenges of a pandemic to protect our families and loved ones. Unfortunately, the COVID19 response had a devastating effect on many individuals and businesses, as well as local, state, national and global economies. It also brought many changes to our communities and affected the way we live, work and interact with each other.

Throughout the pandemic, one thing has remained constant — Victory Electric's commitment to serving you and your energy needs in a safe manner. We are one of the many essential services responding to the national emergency, and our employees continue to adapt and work to ensure our members, communities and businesses have the power they need.

Early in the crisis, Victory Electric developed a business continuity plan as well as an action plan to mitigate

exposure of the coronavirus to our members and employees. Following guidelines in both our action plan and the Kansas stay-at-home executive order, we chose to close our office to the public.

Beginning March 17, we began to strategically schedule and distance our linemen and service crews to ensure adequate staffing for the continued operation and maintenance of the electric system and the delivery of reliable service to our consumer-members. Furthermore, many Victory Electric employees started working remotely. This meant our staff quickly uprooted their offices and made significant changes to their work processes — all without service disruptions to our members. I'm extremely proud of the "can do" attitude and the willingness to adapt to operational changes that I've observed across our cooperative.

We know the response to COVID-19 placed a hardship on many people in our community and many businesses serving the public were forced to close their doors temporarily. As a member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative, we operate in the best interest of our members. To help lessen the financial strain on consumer-members and to comply with Governor Kelly's state

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REA

An Electrifying

75TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

While 90% of urban dwellers had electricity by the 1930s, only 10% of rural residents and farms were powered with electricity. The Rural Electrification Association (REA) helped establish 417 cooperatives, which served 288,000 households.

It's amazing what communities can accomplish when they work together.

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). Congress endorsed this action by passing the Rural Electrification Act. At the time, electricity was commonplace in cities, but was largely unavailable on farms, ranches and in other rural areas.

Community members in the late 1930s and early 1940s knew rural areas deserved safe, reliable and affordable power. The passing of the rural electrification act made it possible for groups of local people to band together and gain support to create a cooperative. These people went door-to-door to the homes of their friends and neighbors. They formed a board of trustees and held meetings to carve out the details of what would later become The Victory Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

The first board of trustees was comprised of President Bert H. Anderson of Dodge City, Vice President Roy Ely of Ensign, Secretary/Treasurer Roy Marler of Bucklin, Lloyd L. White of Bloom, Frank W. Kittle of Cimarron, L.S. Durr of Dodge City, and Chet Ross of Jetmore. In these initial meetings, the board would determine the cooperative's name, the number of voting districts, membership application, guidelines for annual meeting and write the bylaws.

On June 1, 1945, Victory Electric received its charter. Marler was selected by the board to become the first manager of the cooperative. Ross was elected secretary/treasurer, and Paul Mages of Spearville filled the open seat.

The first several years were full of crafting plans, recruiting members and employees, and building the business infrastructure needed to operate the cooperative and distribute power. Many special meetings were held to ensure the success of the cooperative.

In 1946, the board called a special meeting. A total of 27 members attended the meeting to authorize the cooperative to accept loans from the REA and incur debt. Doing so allowed the board to sign and negotiate the mortgage, loan contract, and deed of trust of the cooperative. Since the members were also the cooperative's owners, they needed their vote of approval. The authorization approved by the members at that special meeting allowed the board to secure a headquarters facility and purchase line-building materials.

An office and pole yard was rented from the Dodge City Co-op Exchange. The staking of the electrical infrastructure began in April 1946 and line construction began on Oct. 14. Power lines were built section-by-section, each categorized by a letter. Later, a wholesale power contract was signed with The Western Light and Telephone Company of Great Bend.

As the cooperative transitioned into 1947, the ever-expanding number of power lines were a visible measure of the cooperative's progress. By spring, the board adopted rates, increased to nine districts, and determined the cooperatives service boundaries.

In May 1947, 700 people attended Victory Electric's first annual meeting at the Hoover Pavilion in Dodge City. At this inaugural meeting, the members were served sandwiches, doughnuts, coffee and ice cream. It would also be the first time members



Past

voted on bylaw changes and board of trustee positions.


Not long after, Victory Electric moved its headquarters to 1511 W. Chestnut St. in Dodge City. The first-ever newsletter, a four-page, black and white spread called "REA Facts" was mailed. In early August, the board finalized the process, regulations and schedule for billing and payments. All that remained was to flip the switch and energize the newly built lines.

It took roughly three years to go from a dimly lit idea that was shared in so many living rooms, kitchens and crop fields, to a live voltage line system built to power communities. It was on Aug. 13, 1947, that the system was energized and our communities' need for safe, reliable and affordable electricity was finally met.

Over the next several decades, Victory Electric continued to adapt to member expectations and made changes to better serve its members. In those years, the cooperative grew to serve parts of nine counties with just over 300 miles of transmission and distribution line.

Today, Victory Electric has 72 employees and provides service to approximately 19,000 meters with more than 3,200 miles of line in southwest Kansas.

Victory Electric was built by the communities we serve and remains community-focused today. Our cooperative may have gotten a little bigger, but our members and our communities are still at the heart of everything we do.



Victory Electric linemen use hotsticks to repair a pole.

Serving Members

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orders, Victory Electric made the decision to temporarily suspend disconnect procedures and waive late fees until further notice.

We are sensitive to our consumer-members' ability to pay their bills. Every situation is different. Victory Electric is dedicated to assisting those who have been impacted by the pandemic as well as working with consumer-members to set up payment plans. If you are unable to pay your bill due to the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to call and set-up a payment plan before your past due balances become unmanageable. Continuing to make payments, even if it is not the full bill amount, will help you avoid a large past due balance in the future.

With so many people staying home these days, your energy use is likely going up. Our SmartHub website/mobile app is the easiest way to check your energy use and offers many other easy-to-use functions, like reporting an outage and bill payment options.

Victory Electric's goal of providing members with safe, reliable power has not and will not change. We continue to develop solutions to ensure members receive a seamless customer service experience. Our experience facing challenges during crisis situations like ice storms and tornados has given us the knowledge to adapt to the challenges of operating an essential business during any crisis. It's been hard for everyone not knowing how the COVID-19 situation is ultimately going to unfold, but I'm proud to be a part of an organization dedicated to doing what's best for members and our communities.

Thanks, Shane

CoBank Sharing Success Grant Deadline Approaching



The 2019 recipient of the CoBank Sharing Success grant was the Ingalls Recreation Commission. Their goal was to make repairs to the Ingalls community pool.

One of Victory Electric's most unique and exciting community programs is the CoBank Sharing Success program, a matching grant opportunity, capped at \$15,000, open to local nonprofit organizations. Aimed at supporting local communities and people, the grant is made possible by Victory Electric's board of trustees, in partnership with CoBank — a national nonprofit cooperative bank owned by the rural American cooperatives it services.

"In the last eight years, Victory Electric awarded \$85,000 in Sharing Success grants and we are excited to offer the program again this year," said Jerri Whitley, Victory Electric vice president of communications.

CoBank's \$4 million Sharing Success fund matches charitable contributions made by its cooperative members to local nonprofits in their individual communities. The matching grant program is designed to celebrate the vital role cooperatives play in individual communities across the country.

Since its inception in 2012, the program generated more than \$36 million in total charitable donations, primarily in rural areas across the country. In early 2019, CoBank announced its board of directors increased the size of the bank's annual

Sharing Success charitable giving program from \$3 million to \$4 million and raised the maximum matching amount from \$5,000 (\$10,000 total grant) to \$7,500 (\$15,000 total grant).

"Thanks to Victory Electric's board of trustees and CoBank, the Sharing Success Grant enables us to give back to the communities we serve," said Shane Laws, CEO of Victory Electric. "We urge all eligible nonprofits to take advantage of Sharing Success and together we can make a meaningful impact in rural Kansas."

2020 will be the ninth year Victory Electric awards a Sharing Success grant. Previous recipients are the Bucklin Library, Mission of Mercy Dental Clinic, Stauth Memorial Museum, Manna House, Depot Theater, Ford County Historical Society, Ford County Sheriff's Office, and last year the Ingalls Recreation Commission received the grant to make repairs to the Ingalls community swimming pool.

Any organization interested in applying for the 2020 CoBank Sharing Success grant must be a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The application is available on our website at victoryelectric.net/content/cobank-sharing-success-grant and due to Victory Electric's office no later than **5 P.M. ON JULY 24, 2020**.