



# WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

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## 2017 Youth Winners Announced

On Sunday, Feb. 19, students participated in Western Cooperative Electric's annual youth contest for a chance to win an all expenses-paid

trip to Washington, D.C., or Steamboat Springs, Colorado, plus a scholarship!

The winners were selected by a three-member judging panel based on an interview, a quiz about electric co-ops, and a one-page essay on the topic "Something I am Passionate About."

The top five youth in this year's contest, in order, are **KINSEY GRIFFITH**, Hill City High School, daughter of John and Terry Griffith; **KAYLA GARVERT**, Plainville High School, daughter of John and Michele Garvert; **BRETT HERRMAN**, LaCrosse High School, son of Glenn and Shanon Herrman; **RIANN PRUITT**, Ellsworth High School, daughter of Brian and Deanna Pruitt; and **SHELBY WERTH**, Ellis High School, daughter of Rod and Cristi Werth.

Griffith and Garvert will join 1,700 youth from across the nation in Washington, D.C., June 8-15. During the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, students will visit their legislators and sites of historical significance.

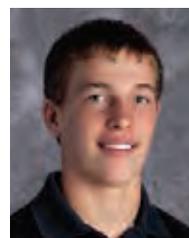
Herrman and Pruitt will join approximately 100 youth from four



Kinsey Griffith



Kayla Garvert



Brett Herrman



Riann Pruitt



Shelby Werth

states at the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp near Steamboat Springs, July 14-20. At camp, the youth will learn more about energy challenges and tour one of the largest electrical generating plants in the Rockies.

Along with the trips, each winner will receive a \$250 scholarship, sent directly to the college of their choice upon enrollment. Werth will receive the \$250 Darrell Brown Memorial scholarship and be this year's first alternate for a trip. This year's second alternates are **BAILEY WERNER**, Plainville High School, daughter of Braden and Tammy Werner; and **BROOKE WERNER**, Plainville High School, also daughter of Braden and Tammy Werner. Western congratulates the winners and thanks all contestants for participating.

## New AMI System Pays Off During January Winter Storm

Western members, please give yourself a big pat on the back for helping restore Western's electric system after Mother Nature's wallop in mid-January. Although we didn't get hit as hard as electric co-ops in the southern part of the state, the ice storm caused 2,600 outages across Western's system. Wondering about that pat on the back and how you helped bring the lights on for your neighbors?

Approximately a year ago, Western began installing advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) across Western's entire territory. AMI is a digital electronic system that has many benefits. One of the most important benefits is how it impacts the co-op's response to storm-related outages. Western's members have overwhelmingly supported their Western Board of Directors' decision to implement this advanced technology, a decision that resulted in shorter outages for Western's members and safer working conditions for our line crews during and after the January ice storm.

The new system has the ability to remotely identify outages, sometimes even before reported by members, and sends that information to Western's command center. From the command center, Western staff evaluate the outage

**Western's new AMI system resulted in shorter outages for Western's members and safer working conditions for our line crews during and after the January ice storm.**

and determine the best response.

Prior to the new technology, Western had to rely more on outages being reported by members, and that approach often resulted in line crews being dispatched in many directions. AMI allows staff to see all the outages in an area, pinpoint the cause, gather and transport necessary restoration materials, and assign the restoration to the nearest line crew.

"After the January storm, we were able to restore power to the majority of our members within 14 hours," said Ron Aschenbrenner, Western's assistant line superintendent. "Without the AMI technology, our response time would have been much longer, and I'm sure some members would have been without power well into the next day."

Traditional methods of responding to outages included not only relying on calls from members, who were unaware of the outage if not at home, but also sending staff to patrol line segments to determine the cause of the outage. The ability

of the AMI system to detect exact outage locations significantly reduces road

time for

line crews, decreasing outage time and increasing safety.

"Obviously, since the AMI system identifies the location and often the reason for an outage, our crews can get to work on it much more quickly and get the power back on sooner for our members," said Darryl Steckline, Western's line superintendent. "Probably even more important is that the AMI system keeps our crews safer since less time on the road, particularly during bad weather, means fewer chances of accidents. Our members have always shown great appreciation for the work our linemen do after storms to restore the system, and they should be proud that the new AMI system helps protect the line crews."

Yes, AMI was a star during the January ice storm—its biggest test since its implementation. Providing safe, reliable power to our members continues to be Western's mission, and the AMI is just one more way to accomplish that. However, Western still needs your help during storms to identify downed lines and outages.

"Our members are the eyes and ears of Western. They play a big part in keeping the system safe and functioning properly," said Dennis Deines, manager of members services and compliance at Western.

As a reminder, however, everyone should be very cautious around a downed power line and always assume it is energized. For instance, during the January storm, there was so much ice on a downed line that the ice acted as an insulator and allowed the line to stay energized even when it was on the ground."

Please report damaged lines or electric outages to 800-456-6720.



## May 2017

S	M	T	W	U	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

## Mark Your Calendars for May 10

Mark your calendar for the Western Cooperative Electric's Annual Meeting on Wednesday, May 10, 2017. The meeting will be held at the cooperative office in WaKeeney, I-70 Exit 128 and Highway 283, 635 S. 13th St. Registration will begin at 11 a.m., lunch will be served at noon and the meeting will be held at 1 p.m.

*We hope to see you there!*

## “The Race is On”—Western Sponsors Electrally

As the school year advances, state competitions from sports to forensics are in the history books. One competition not always recognized is electric car racing.

Each year, the Kansas Electrally, with representatives from electric utilities, high school instructors, and college vocational technical instructors, offers events in which high school students can compete. Students from across Kansas build and design a single driver, lightweight, aerodynamic, racing unit within the Electrathon America Design and Event Rules booklet. These cars are powered by two batteries with a maximum weight of 73 pounds.

Competition is based on time and distance, so a race is won by the most laps completed in one hour. Race tracks range in length with a variety of shapes, including sharp turns and curves. Surfaces consist of concrete, asphalt or a combination of both. With speeds up to 30 mph, safety is of utmost importance, so a safety inspection of the car and equipment is mandatory before competition.

Along with building and racing a car, each team is asked to submit a written report. This report is designed to build on the learning experiences of constructing and racing an

electric car. Once this report is evaluated and awarded points, these points are added to the school's total points for the competition in hopes of taking home the coveted state champion award. Fundraising for these projects can be fun while helping to build partnerships in your community with people and businesses willing to help.

This year's schedule for state races includes:

- ▶ **APRIL 13 The Touchstone Energy Electrally West** in Beloit on the campus of North Central Kansas Vocational Technical College.
- ▶ **APRIL 26 The Sunflower Electrally** in Scott City at the Scott City Airport
- ▶ **MAY 6 The Touchstone Energy Electrally East** in Olathe on the Olathe North West High School campus.

“This is an excellent hands-on project for all high school students,” said Darrin Lynch, General Manager of Western. “We are very proud to be a sponsor of this program.”

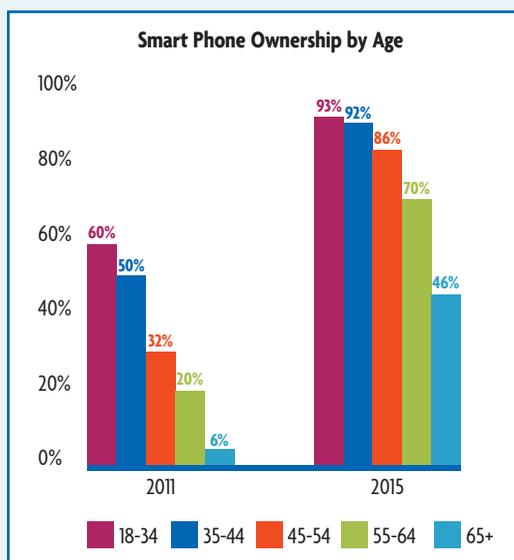
Plan to attend one of these exciting races, and as the announcer says, “Ladies and gentlemen, start your electric engines!”

## Digital Mediums Provide Potential to Keep Co-op Members Informed

Electric cooperative members of all ages are spending increasing amounts of their time online. Digital Trends reported in June that the average American spends 4.7 hours on his/her smartphone each day, and those between the ages of 25 and 54 have the highest usage.

The 2015-2016 National Survey on the Cooperative Difference reported that more than half of co-op members aged 65-74—and more than one-third of those 75 and older—own either a desktop or laptop computer, as well as have a smartphone. This increase in digital consumption highlights how a cooperative's ability to connect with members online is becoming increasingly important.

*Source: Touchstone Energy*



Get to Know Your Western  
Cooperative Electric Staff

## Alan Austin

Apprentice Lineman



Alan Austin

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

I live in Plainville with wife Lori, and we have two children; a son, Jacob, 2 ½ years old, and daughter Katy, 5 months old.

### HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT WESTERN?

3 years

### WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

Plainville

### WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Ride dirt bikes.

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?

They have all been good.

### WHAT IS SOMETHING PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU?

Not much—I am boring.

### IF YOU COULD BE AN ANIMAL, WHAT WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?

A grizzly bear—it's one of the meanest animals around.

### WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

My Grandpa Gosser. I learned my work ethic from him, and he is why I am where I am in life.

## Tip of the Month

Air dry clean dishes to save energy. If your dishwasher does not have an automatic air-dry switch, turn off the dishwasher after the final rinse and prop the door open slightly so the dishes will dry faster.

# Teaching Safety Year-Round



Journeyman Lineman Brady Bittel from Western Cooperative Electric conducts a safety demonstration for a local boy scout troop in WaKeeney.

The risk of electrocution remains one of the greatest hazards on today's farms, construction sites and even in our own back yard. Western Cooperative Electric reminds all workers, including do-it-yourselfers, to be particularly alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines, and urges a review of activities and work practices that take place around all electric lines.

"Make sure everyone knows the location of overhead power lines and notify Western when working near power lines," said **NATE BUDIG**, Safety Director for Western.

Simply coming too close to a power line while working is dangerous as electricity can arc, or jump, to conducting material or objects, such as a ladder, pole, truck or another person.

Some additional safety tips to keep in mind include:

- ▶ Never trim trees near power lines. Leave that to the professionals.
- ▶ When performing outdoor tasks, take care not to raise equipment such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs and ropes will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.
- ▶ Make sure you have the right tools

and equipment for the job. Use only extension cords that are rated for outdoor use when working outside.

- ▶ Use heavy, three-prong extension cords for tools with three-prong plugs. Never remove or bend back the third prong on extension cords.
- ▶ Electricity + water=danger. Never touch circuit breakers or fuses when you're wet or standing on a wet surface.
- ▶ If your car or a piece of equipment comes in contact with a power line, stay inside until help arrives. Getting out, with a very few exceptions, is the wrong thing to do until the line has been de-energized. If there's a fire or imminent risk of fire and getting out of the vehicle is absolutely necessary, the proper action is to jump—not step—with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Then hop or shuffle to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

Western Cooperative Electric offers safety demonstrations discussing these topics and more and are available to all ages, civic groups and schools.

For more information, call 785-743-5561 or 800-456-6720 or e-mail [western@westerncoop.com](mailto:western@westerncoop.com).