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Emporia, KS 66801

# 4 RIVERS

## Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

## 4 RIVERS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# CURRENTS

### FROM THE MANAGER

## #ThankALineworker on April 13

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**Dennis Svanes**

Lineworkers serve on the frontlines of our nation's energy needs, and on Monday, April 13, electric cooperatives across the country will

honor the brave men and women who work hard to keep the lights on. At 4 Rivers, we recognize the dedication of our hardworking line crew and appreciate their efforts to maintain our system and serve our members safely and reliably.

Line crews work around the clock, sometimes in difficult and dangerous conditions, to keep power flowing to our local communities. Whether they are restoring power after a major storm or maintaining critical infrastructure to our electric system, lineworkers are at the heart of our co-op.

When a storm hits, they set aside their personal priorities because Mother Nature does not work around holidays, vacations and birthdays. A service-

oriented mentality is one of the many admirable characteristics of an electric lineworker. 4 Rivers Electric is proud to honor the 22 lineworkers who maintain over 4,000 miles of powerlines in our service territory.

We invite all co-op members to take a moment and thank a lineworker for the important work they do. On April 13, you can use #ThankALineworker on social media to show your support for the brave men and women who power our lives.



## URGENT UPDATE

## 4 Rivers Postpones Annual Meeting, Closes Offices in Proactive Response to COVID-19

4 Rivers Electric Cooperative's concern for community extends to the health and welfare of each and every member, neighboring friends and all those we do business with each day.

The CDC's "All of Community" approach to slowing the transmission of COVID-19 includes minimizing social contact. With that in mind, 4 Rivers' board of directors and management decided in March to postpone the Annual Meeting of Members and temporarily close 4 Rivers' offices to the public. Such social distancing is prudent in helping to slow the transmission of the virus.

4 Rivers is also taking steps now to be prepared in the event there is a significant impact from the novel coronavirus in our communities. We are focused on maintaining a healthy workforce, and keeping key personnel — such as line workers and member service representatives — available so that we can continue to provide the excellent service you expect from us.

Look for more information in our local pages in the May issue of *Kansas Country Living* magazine, on our website at [www.4riversselectric.com](http://www.4riversselectric.com), social media channels, and through local media announcements.

## Youth Tour Winners Announced

4 Rivers Electric is pleased to announce the winners of the co-op essay contest "Beneficial Electricity" — **PENNER FOX** and **DILLON STEELE**, juniors at Fredonia High

School, and **JOHN HOWARD**, junior at Burlington High School. These three students will represent our cooperative in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) Electric Cooperative Youth Tour this summer.

Every year, electric cooperatives across the nation select area students as their representatives for Youth Tour hosted in our nation's capital. Over 1,800 students from 45 states will be attending the Youth Tour, June 18-25, 2020, where our student representatives will join 35 other Kansas co-op youth who also travel with a four-student delegation from Hawaii. 2020 marks Kansas' 60th year in the Youth Tour program.

Student delegates will have the opportunity to visit the monuments and memorials at the National Mall, meet our state's U.S. senators and congressional representatives, as well as tour Capitol Hill to learn more about how our government works, leadership and the co-op industry.

"I'm beyond excited to be chosen to participate in the Youth Tour and am looking forward to the trip this summer," Dillon Steele, son of co-op members Shala and Kevan Steele, said. "I can't wait to make new friends while continuing my education and spending a week in our nation's capital. I deeply appreciate 4 Rivers giving us students this opportunity!"

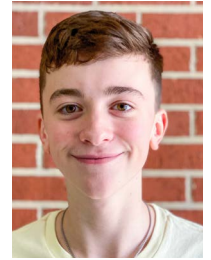
Before flying to D.C., these delegates will get the opportunity to tour the Kansas Capitol and FreeState Electric Co-op in Topeka. While touring D.C., they will have the opportunity to visit several sites including the White House,



Penner Fox



John Howard



Dillon Steele

the U.S. Capitol, Ford's Theater, the National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Archives, the National Aquarium, the Law Enforcement Museum, Fort McHenry, and the Smithsonian museums.

Penner Fox, daughter of members Seth and Angela Fox, also applied for the Youth Leadership Council to represent Kansas. One student from each state is selected by NRECA to come back to Washington, D.C., in July for a leadership workshop that will focus on the electric co-op industry.

"4 Rivers Electric Cooperative believes in investing in our youth because we are creating the leaders of tomorrow," says General Manager Dennis Svanes. "4 Rivers Electric looks to our youth to carry the knowledge they learn and advocate for the rural communities when they return to their hometown or when they move away."

**I'm beyond excited to be chosen to participate in the Youth Tour and am looking forward to the trip this summer. I can't wait to make new friends while continuing my education and spending a week in our nation's capital. I deeply appreciate 4 Rivers giving us students this opportunity!**

DILLON STEELE

## Electric Four Win KidWind Regionals

The Electric Four, a group of four Lebo Homeschool Co-op students, won first place at the KidWind Challenge's Southeast Regionals on March 6 in Burlington. 4 Rivers sponsors the KidWind Challenge and is excited to see the success of this group of innovators from our community. The Electric Four, made up of **CALEB DURST**, **DANIEL RAUSCH**, **GARRISON KNIGHT** and **JESSE DURST**, started competing in the KidWind Challenge last year, where they made it to Nationals and received the Rookie of the Year award.



The Electric Four, shown here with Mike Tweedy of 4 Rivers Electric, took the top prize at the March 6 KidWind Regional competition in Burlington.

challenges move on to compete at the statewide competition.

The Electric Four will compete at the statewide competition on April 4 in Topeka. Winning teams at the statewide KidWind Challenge are invited to the National KidWind Challenge. This year, the National Challenge will be held in Denver the first week June.

We wish the Electric Four all the best in their endeavors!

## Co-op Welcomes New Employees

The 4 Rivers Electric line crew gained three new team members in February.

**COLTLYN HALE** is a journeyman lineman at the North District office and has been assisting the construction crew with pole replacement and new services. Hale and his family relocated to Kansas from Wisconsin.

**TATE LINDBERG**, journeyman lineman,

is working in the North District, assisting the area serviceman with daily maintenance and outages. Lindberg lives in Ottawa and grew up around Erie.

**ALEX WOOD** is a first-year apprentice at the South District office working with the construction crew, recently assisting with a three-phase line conversion on Brooks substation. Wood completed an apprenticeship with Radiant Electric several years ago and called Fredonia home for many years.

We are pleased for Coltlyn, Tate and Alex to join the co-op!



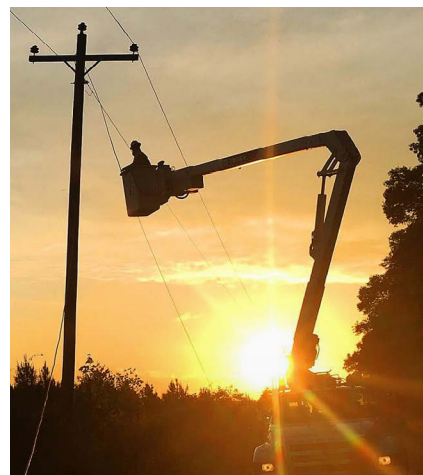
Coltlyn Hale



Tate Lindberg



Alex Wood



## 10 REASONS WE APPRECIATE

### LINeworkERS

Although we appreciate each and every co-op employee, it takes a special kind of person to be an electric lineworker. Here are the top 10 reasons we appreciate our lineworkers.

- 10 They are specially trained to work on power lines and related equipment.
- 9 They are dedicated to safely and efficiently restoring power following weather or outages.
- 8 They work overtime, many holidays and get up in the middle of the night to help restore power.
- 7 They enjoy serving our communities.
- 6 They aren't afraid of heights.
- 5 They help other electric co-ops with major outages at a moment's notice.
- 4 They lend their talents in many ways, including educating the public about electrical safety.
- 3 They have each other's backs.
- 2 They are trained to work safely on both dead and live power lines.
- 1 We couldn't provide excellent service without them or any of our other dedicated employees.

# Beautify Your Yard, Not Utility Equipment

Green or grey utility boxes, known as pad-mounted or padmount transformers, are part of the supply chain that helps provide power to your neighborhood. Those boxes sit on an easement allowing our utility workers access to them.



**Be cognizant when landscaping near pad-mounted transformers. Planting too close to a transformer (above) can cause safety hazards or delays when restoring power during outages.**

What are the green boxes for? Their job is to step down high-voltage electricity to a lower voltage needed for the underground wires supplying power to the lights and appliances in homes.

Please do not paint, enhance, block or otherwise obstruct padmount transformers. By respecting all utility equipment, including meters and transformers, you can help keep the power on and your local utility workers safe.

As you beautify your yard this spring and summer, 4 Rivers Electric reminds you of these safety tips:

▶ **Do not plant shrubs and trees close to green box transformers or other utility equipment.** Limiting or restricting access to the box in your yard could delay restoration work during an outage and create a serious safety hazard. Our crews need at least 10 feet of

clearance in front of the transformer (the side that is padlocked), as well as 4 feet of clearance on the other three sides.

- ▶ **Contact us with questions about landscaping around or installing fencing near a padmount transformer** (or any other changes) to learn what is allowable.
- ▶ **Contact us if the transformer becomes unlocked** or if it or any other type of utility equipment appears to be damaged.
- ▶ **Call 811** prior to digging around a transformer and respect the clearance requirements noted above. If you dig near a transformer (even if it is beyond the clearance requirements), you could inadvertently hit a live underground cable. Always call Kansas One-Call at 811 before digging so they can mark underground lines and help prevent a digging accident.
- ▶ **Don't forget that with time, erosion or root structure growth may shift the locations of utility lines**, so remember to call 811 each time you are planning a digging job.
- ▶ **Keep in mind, 811 does not mark private utility lines** such as privately installed electric lines, sprinkler systems or invisible fences. To have these utilities located and marked, you will need to contact a local private utility marker.
- ▶ **Keep a clear path to the transformer.** Even though the transformer seems like it is in your yard, it is technically on an easement, and our workers need clear access to it to maintain equipment and keep power running smoothly.

Contact us with any questions or concerns about the safety of padmount transformers. Always teach children that they should not sit on, open or play around the green boxes.

## Planning a Yard Project? Don't Just Dig In

April is National Safe Digging Month. It reminds us all that as we begin beautifying our yards, we shouldn't just dig in. According to 811, the "Call Before You Dig" national hotline, an underground utility is damaged every nine minutes because someone didn't call before digging.

Whether it is a do-it-yourself project or you are hiring a professional, call 811 at least two full working days, not including the day the notice was placed, prior to starting any digging project to request that all underground utilities be marked. The service is free and can help prevent costly repairs to underground wires later.

You may think it won't hurt anything to dig in an unmarked yard when landscaping, install-

ing a fence, deck or mailbox, or even planting a small flower bed or bush, but damaging an underground cable can have serious consequences. Hitting a line could result in serious injuries and disrupted service for you and your neighbors. It could also make a dent in your wallet for repair fees or other fines.

The 811 hotline points out that there is more than one football field's length of buried utilities for every man, woman and child in the U.S. Before digging:

- ▶ Notify Kansas One-Call by calling 811 or making an online request at [kansasonecall.com](http://kansasonecall.com) at least two full working days, not including the day the notice was placed.

- ▶ Wait the required amount of time for affected utility operators to respond to your request.
- ▶ Confirm that all affected utility operators have responded to your request and marked underground utilities.
- ▶ Dig carefully around the marks.
- ▶ Remember that privately owned underground lines will NOT be marked by location flaggers. Examples of private lines/equipment include well and septic, underground sprinkler systems, invisible fencing, gas or electric lines serving a detached building, as well as any lines (electric, water, sewer) from the meter to your home.