

1850 W. Oklahoma, P.O. Box 368  
Ulysses, KS 67880  
620-356-1211 or 800-794-9302  
www.pioneerelectric.coop



PIONEER ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE

# NEWS

## Pioneer Electric Cooperative, Inc.

### Board of Trustees

**Melvin Winger**  
President

**Alfred Alexander**  
Vice President

**Perry Rubart**  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Jim Bell**  
Trustee

**Mike Brewer**  
Trustee

**Fred Claassen**  
Trustee

**Martie Floyd**  
Trustee

**John Jury**  
Trustee

**Charles Milburn**  
Trustee

### Staff

**Steve Epperson**  
CEO

**Randy Magnison**  
Executive Vice President, Assistant CEO

**Lindsay Shepard**  
Executive Vice President and General  
Counsel

**George Bushnell**  
Vice President of Engineering and  
Operations

**Chantry Scott**  
Vice President of Finance and  
Accounting

**Anita Wendt**  
Vice President of Energy Services

**David Norton**  
Editor

## In Case of an Outage

If your electricity is off for more than a few minutes, call 888-551-4140. After-hours calls will be answered by dispatch and forwarded to standby personnel.

## Connections Discounts Continue to Grow

Pioneer Electric is always looking for ways to increase the benefits of being a member of our cooperative. The Co-op Connections Card is just one of the benefits of being a member of a cooperative. The free national discount card program offers discounts at local and national businesses.

We recently added three new area businesses, including **ACOSTA'S FAMILY RESTAURANT** and **TRIPLE J'S PIZZA** from Satanta and **HEAVENLY BLOOMS** in Ulysses. So make sure to head over and grab a bite to eat or pick up a beautiful floral arrangement for that special someone.

The Co-op Connections Card program also has great discounts nation-wide. So whether you want to order a pizza from a local business, book a hotel or rent a car in another city, Pioneer Electric's Co-op Connections Card can help you save on your every day purchases.

The Co-op Connections Card now offers an easy to use app. Visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop) to download the app. The app allows you to search

## Co-op Connections



Touchstone Energy  
Cooperatives

for discounts, save your favorite deals, and find a nearby participating business using your phone's GPS feature. The app also includes a virtual card, so you will always have your card wherever you go.

The best thing about the Co-op Connections Card? It's free! Not only is the card 100 percent free to use, but it requires no sign up or activation. Simply stop by Pioneer Electric and pick up a card. After that, all you have to do is show it to one of the area's participating businesses and get ready to save.

In addition to providing savings for our members, the Co-op Connections Card program also helps our support our communities by encouraging people to shop local. While it gives a discount to card holders looking for that bargain, it also helps businesses grow through the special promotions being offered.

If you have questions about the Co-op Connections Card or if your business would like to participate in the program, please call Pioneer Electric at 620-356-1211.

## New Local Co-op Connections Deals

### Acosta's Family Restaurant, Satanta

10% discount on meals of \$15 or more

### Heavenly Blooms, Ulysses

10% off any fresh flower arrangement

### Triple J's Pizza Satanta

Three topping pizza for

the price of one topping

Co-op Connections® Card



# Dedication at the Heart of Billi

Growing up, his youthful pursuits included hunting, fishing and working. But as an adult, this Pioneer Electric lineman became a dominating force on the softball field and was inducted into the United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) Four State Hall of Fame in 2015.

**MARV BILLINGS** has earned a reputation as one of Pioneer Electric's most dedicated crew members. That dedication is evident in his work, as well at play, with his wife, Kim, encouraging him along. A model of dedication herself, Kim has spent countless hours to help her husband fine tune his softball skills.

"My wife—there's no one else who would have pitched that many balls to me," said Billings. "When she wasn't sitting at some diamond while I was playing, she was pitching from behind a screen I built—100 pitches a night in the early years, Billings said."

After spending his childhood in Springfield, Colorado, Billings moved to Ulysses where he joined with the

local Happy Painters roustabout crew and began to play softball.

"In 1979, a bunch of good guys here in Ulysses asked me to come out and play for them one day. That team was called Lamberson Carpet and that's where it all started," said Billings.

Billings describes the team as a group of good friends from the area who just wanted to have a little fun and play some softball after long day's work. While the team was competitive, it's main purpose was to get out a couple of nights per week during the summer for fun.

"One night, we finally got to play against the top team in the area, Brown-Dupree [Oil Co.]," said Billings. Those players took notice of Billings' skill and recruited him for their team.

"The next summer, [Brown-Dupree] came to me and said 'you're playing for us,' and that's how it happened. That's when it really got going," added Billings.

In 1982, the Brown-Dupree's team gained a full-time coach, Kent Bailey. Bailey would go on to help Billings throughout his entire

softball career, mentoring him for the next three decades and coaching some of the region's greatest teams.

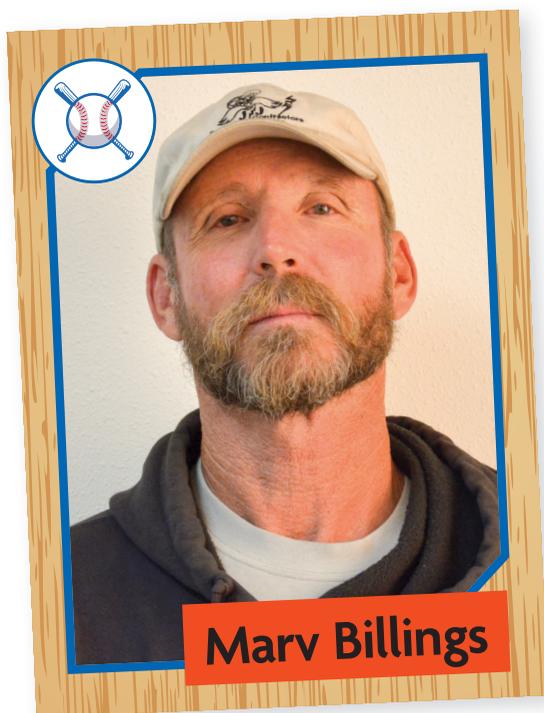
"If it hadn't been for [Bailey] and being able to get the right people, I mean, it just escalated from there," said Billings.

Along with the coaches' skills came the coach's wife, Janet—who Billings referred to as the "team's voice of reason." For 30 years, Janet kept the team grounded with pointed critiques and tough calls meant to better the team. "That wasn't a hit. It was an error," she would exclaim.

It was also around this time that Billings was hired at Pioneer Electric. Starting in May of 1986, his new coworkers also encouraged Billings love of the game, as long as it was after work hours.

"When I signed on at Pioneer Electric they said, 'You know the hours right?'" Billings recalls with a chuckle. "I will always say that Pioneer Electric gave me the opportunity [to play]], along with the late Herald Dupree and Jerry Brown."

According to Billings, he always



Billings with his 1980 Brown-Dupree Oil Co. team. Billings was picked up by Brown-Dupree after one season with Lamberson Carpet, where it all began.

# Billings Co-op and Softball Careers

Billings saw his job as that of a servant. He served the cooperative and, in turn, the community—working hard so people could go about their daily lives without hassle. Billings would readily pick up shifts and would remain vigilant when on call. If you ask his coworkers about Billings' work ethic throughout the last three decades, you will hear high praise.

"You call him, he's there—whenever you need him," said NAME. "His athleticism and high drive is ideal for line work and obviously helped him on the field, as well."

While the Brown-Dupree team never won a state championship, Billings marks that time as a turning point for his illustrious career on the diamond. In 1985, following a three-year stint with Brown-Dupree, Billings joined the Kansas Merchants and played with what he calls the "real nucleus" of his great teams for the first time.

"The most important thing I got out of it and I'll take this to my grave, is the camaraderie of people who are your best friends for life," said Billings. "We would play from April to September and then maybe not see one another until spring rolled around, but these people are the deepest people in your hearts and would do anything for you."

Members of his team included Ryan Engle, Phil Lumis, Hoarse Jefferson, Tim Reynolds, Ray Potter, Bobby Siddell and Coach Bailey, just to mention a few. Their dedication to each other and the game is evident as seventeen of Billings' former teammates have been inducted into the Four State Hall of Fame.

Recollecting the assortment of teammates from his path, Billings still recalls these various men as heroes—not just on the field, but in their respective communities around Kansas.

"We had a guy who was a prison guard at Leavenworth. Another guy was a school counselor, a 6-foot-8 guy who was huge, but he took care of troubled youth and was the gentlest guy you could imagine. Our shortstop was a fireman and if my house was on fire, I'd want him coming in after me," Billings said of a



Billings, middle-row center, along with his Kansas City Merchant teammates during their 1985 Regional Slow Pitch Softball Championship in Springfield, Missouri. A core "nucleus" of men from this team would continue to play together on various teams, culminating with the Dodge City Budweisers and their 21 State Championships, 17 of which were consecutive.

few of his teammates.

With this core group of players, Billings and his comrades went on to play for Kruse Dirt out of Liberal, Wolf Medical Supplies in \_\_\_\_\_ and finally the Dodge City Budweisers. Excelling from the plate and in both the infield and outfield, Billings and the Buds won 17 straight state championships, and 21 state championships overall.

Overall, Billings was a part of 27 state championships, two American Softball Association Regional Championships, 2 USSSA Masters World Championships and one USSSA Co-Ed World Championship. He was also selected to the all-world team in 2003 and named MVP twice during the state championship runs, once during regionals and was also the 1996 USSSA Co-Ed Championship Offensive MVP in 1996. There are two constant themes in Billings' careers both on the diamond and at Pioneer Electric—camaraderie and hard work. While he may be known more widely for his ability to knock one out of the park or getting someone's electricity back up and running, what people close to him will mention is not the memory of the act itself, but the way in which he did it—with humility and dedication, no matter the task.

**You call him, he's there—whenever you need him. His athleticism and high drive is ideal for line work and obviously helped him on the field as well.**

NAME

## Claassen and Jacome Attend Leadership Camp

Joining their peers from Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Wyoming, high school students Paige Claassen (Rolla) and Meleny Jacome (Stanton County) developed leadership skills at the 41st annual Cooperative Leadership Camp in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Approximately 100 youth learned about the cooperative principles at the week-long educational retreat in July.

Claassen and Jacome began their adventure meeting campers as they rode across the plains. When the bus arrived in Denver, Colorado, they were treated to a snorkeling experience at the Denver Aquarium where campers swam face-to-face with a school of cownose rays, moray eels, nurse sharks and 400 other exotic underwater species.

The group then arrived at Glen Eden Resort and immediately began forming friendships through various activities. Several demonstrations and presentations introduced students to the cooperative model and the reach of cooperatives throughout their communities. Campers competed to build a model transmission line out of craft supplies, formed their own candy cooperative, held daily

membership meetings, toured Trapper Mine and Craig Power Plant, checked out a solar array and experienced a high-voltage safety demonstration. The campers also raised \$390 to donate to the NRECA International Foundation.

"It was amazing to see how everyone was willing to step-up and lead," said Claassen. "Nobody was afraid of leaving their comfort zone and by the end of the trip it was cool to see how close and supportive everyone became."

"The leadership activities were amazing!" said Jacome. "This whole experience has helped build my confidence and allowed me to meet some awesome people."

The week-long experience also gave participants an authentic camp feel with river rafting, a volleyball tournament, swimming, a dance and a talent show. In between activities, campers had the opportunity to hangout and meet one another.

"The helpers and fellow campers inspired me to want to become a



Meleny Jacome and Paige Claassen represented Pioneer Electric during the 2017 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC). Claassen will return as an ambassador for the 2018 CYLC.

better leader," said Jacome. "Every story and lesson I learned I will take with me forever."

By the camp's end, students demonstrated the leadership skills they attained by running for an ambassador position at next year's camp. Claassen along with three other campers will return as ambassadors for the 2018 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp. As an ambassador, Paige will return to camp as a junior counselor and facilitate camp leadership activities, while serving as a role model for incoming campers.

Preparations for next year's Youth Leadership Camp are well underway. Pioneer Electric will open up applications for the 2018 Youth Tour this fall. Sophomores and juniors who attend Elkhart, Hugoton, Lakin, Moscow, Rolla, Stanton County, Syracuse and Ulysses High Schools are encouraged to apply.

"Youth Tour is a great opportunity for our students," said Pioneer Electric Communications Specialist, Drew Waechter. With the ongoing support of our members, we hope to continue this opportunity in the years to come."

Additional information regarding Youth Tour and other programs offered by Pioneer Electric is available online at [pioneerelectric.coop](http://pioneerelectric.coop).



Delegates from Kansas and Oklahoma pose for a quick picture during a tour of Trapper Mine and Craig Power Plant.