



JULY 2021

# THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION



## 75TH ANNIVERSARY

By Lacey Gulbranson

Saturday, June 5th marked Wheat Belt Public Power District's 75th anniversary celebration. We had roughly 250 people join us for the event, which included breakfast. And who knew...there are actually times the wind does not blow in western Nebraska. We invited Touchstone Energy to bring their hot air balloon, hoping to be able to do tethered rides. The wind cooperated for about three hours. The balloon pilot gave 100 patrons rides. We heard things like "my parents were able to cross this off their bucket list" and "this was the most fun day I have ever had". One customer got to celebrate her birthday by taking a ride in the balloon.

Additionally, our linemen framed a pole, set a pole, climbed a pole and let some of the kids put on the linemen gear to see how good they were at climbing. We had a building set up for the kids to run, play and enjoy their time. We even had some children of employees help with the events.

Tri-State, our generation and transmission company out of Westminster, CO, brought their Tesla Model Y for "ride and drives". They too had about 100 patrons take advantage of the opportunity to either ride in or drive the Tesla. If you have not experienced the torque of the accelerator pedal, it is worth your time if you get the chance. Zero to 60 mph in three seconds is quite fun.

Also, our Customer Engagement department had a booth showing and promoting our customer mobile

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### \*\*ATTENTION CUSTOMERS\*\*

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2021: All statements will be due by 4:00PM on the 16th of each month.

Recurring credit card and bank draft payments will be drawn on the 15th of each month.

Please contact our office with any questions, 308-254-5871.

## LUCKY DRAWING

Congratulations to Tim and Susan Jackson, C4 Excavating Inc., our May "Lucky Winners"!

Tim and Susan live in Aurora, CO and three years ago bought a lake house in Albee's Subdivision at Lake McConaughy. Both being from small towns, they love their lake get-a-way and the small town feel at Lake Mac. Tim loves to fish and Susan loves to do garden work and enjoy the outdoors and what the Sandhills have to offer. We have met great friends at the lake and look forward to meeting many more. Good fishing!!

The Jacksons have received a \$50.00 credit on their account. If you would like to be included in our next drawing, and avoid the \$5 delinquent fee, please send your payment before the 16th of the month.

P.O. BOX 177, 11306 RD 32, SIDNEY, NE 69162

P 308.254.5871 | T 800.261.7114 | [wheatbelt@wheatbelt.com](mailto:wheatbelt@wheatbelt.com) | [www.wheatbelt.com](http://www.wheatbelt.com)

## 75th Anniversary continued from 12-A

app. The app allows customers to log in, pay their bill, view usage history on account(s), notifications of statement availability and upcoming due dates. Our vision is to eventually get the app to the point where an outage can be reported through the app. We also provided information regarding rebates Tri-State and Wheat Belt offer for energy efficiency.



The Technology department displayed electrical meters throughout the years. There were about twenty different meters from the past several decades on display. It was interesting to visually see the change in technology.

Thanks to all of you who joined us for a successful event. And a special thank you to the employees who worked hard and put in extra hours to put on the event.



Photos by Christy Schumacher



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## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

### Tip of the Month

During summer months, run large appliances that emit heat (like clothes dryers and dishwashers) during the evening when it's cooler. This will minimize indoor heat during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



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## Meet our new GM/CEO

Congratulations to Lacey Gulbranson! Wheat Belt Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Lacey has accepted the General Manager/CEO position. Yolanda Hruska had an opportunity to interview Lacey. Enjoy getting to know her!

**YH:** In Wheat Belt's 75-year history, you are only the fifth General Manager. How do you feel about that?

**LG:** "A little bit scary and a little bit exciting!" I am looking forward to serving Wheat Belt Public Power District's customers, employees and the Board of Directors.

**YH:** How long have you lived in Western Nebraska?

**LG:** I have lived in the panhandle for 27 years. I grew up in and graduated high school from Mitchell, NE.

**YH:** Where did you go to college? And when?

**LG:** Chadron State College from 2002 – 2006.

**YH:** What is your degree?

**LG:** I have a bachelor's degree, with a Major in Business Administration and a Minor in Computer Science.

**YH:** Do you have any other certifications or any other education?

**LG:** I hold a Project Management Professional certification, and also a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and a Certified Lean Master, both are Process Improvement certifications.

**YH:** Please tell us about your career to this point.

**LG:** Right out of college I went to work at Cabela's as a computer programmer for a short period of time. Really, I found my interest was in software implementation and project work. I moved into a Project Coordinator role which led me to many years in process roles. I finished up my career at Cabela's

in strategy development and execution. At Wheat Belt, I started as an Energy Optimization Specialist with a primary focus on data analytics and, most recently, I have been managing front office functions.

**YH:** Explain the rationale behind each of your career moves.

**LG:** A couple of big moves were from an IT Department to a Process Department. The basis of the move was, I had been introduced to process work and I enjoyed it. A position became open and I was ready to take on a challenge of building my skill sets and working with others. From the Process Department to a Project Manager role, the basis of that move was, you know people say, "you don't leave good jobs, you leave bad managers", I left a bad manager. The next move was to a strategy role. Like the first move, I was interested in the work and wanted to learn something new.

**YH:** What are your goals? Professional or personal, whichever you wish to share.

**LG:** My biggest goal is to do the best job I can do every day. If I'm doing that, then everything else will take care of itself.

**YH:** What are your biggest accomplishments? Professional or personal, whichever you wish to share.

**LG:** To be honest with you, the biggest accomplishment that I've probably ever had is teaching my son how to snow ski. This was hard work with an enjoyable outcome of skiing together! Professionally, there was a project I had worked on where it was a multiple department software implementation. We spent a lot of time and effort solving a problem that others deemed unsolvable. We solved the problem, implemented the software and it was used successfully.

**YH:** Give us one word that describes you the best.

**LG:** Probably the word I would use is... candor. I like to say honest, but others have better described it as candor.

*Continued on 12-D*



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**YH:** How are your communication skills, how do you communicate with the team?

**LG:** My goal is to be "real" with people. From a communication perspective, I'm going to tell you how it is in the nicest way possible. I'm going to be true to my word. That is important to me.

**YH:** What is or what are the biggest personnel challenges you're trying to solve right now?

**LG:** The biggest one we are working on solving right now is preparing for a finance transition. Two employees in our finance department, Carolyn Hostetler and Deb Schlaman are planning their retirement at the end of this year. We have a large undertaking of a knowledge transfer, training and education to foster a smooth transition.

**YH:** What kind of example are you setting for your team?

**LG:** I am a 'listen to what I say, also how I say it, and watch what I do'. All three need to be in alignment to model good behavior and good leadership to the organization. How can I expect my people to be doing something different, or to set a different standard to what I'm holding myself to?

**YH:** Do you promote from within? If yes, why is this important to you?

**LG:** A great question and it's kind of a hard one to answer. The answer is absolutely yes; however, it is my job to develop good capabilities, skills, and leadership to have employees capable of promoting. "If we do not promote from within it's because we haven't done a good job as leaders."

**YH:** Is there anything else you would like to add?

**LG:** As I said in the beginning, "it's an exciting place to be, it's a scary place to be and I am looking forward to serving Wheat Belt's employees and customers for quite some time."



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