



the COOPERATOR

SEPTEMBER 2022 | For the members of Kay Electric Cooperative
A supplement to Oklahoma Living



RSVP volunteers construct a mobility ramp. Pictured from left: Darrell Salley, Dick Jacobson, Chris Martens, Mike Goodale, United Way Executive Director Tara Goldman, Bill Thomason, RSVP Project Director Lilly Freeman, John Varee, Don Fore, Brad Blakeburn, Bill Bridwell and Cecil Sparks. Photo by Cyndi Mitchell

Building freedom

K-UP grant funds mobility ramps for Kay County residents

When Bill Thomason retired and moved home to Ponca City in 2010, he didn't know he would spend his retirement years helping others to better live out theirs.

Thomason got involved with a ramp building program at a local church. At the time, the volunteer group built about 10 mobility ramps each year. In the years since Bill joined, he says that number has grown annually. By 2015 they were building 18 ramps per year.

This year the crew has built 19 ramps in Ponca City, eight in Blackwell, five in Tonkawa, one in Newkirk and one in White Eagle. They expect to build more than 50 ramps by the end of 2022.

"We build them pretty fast. We have more people, and most have been doing it and know what to do," Thomason says.

Most days, at least half of the 17-member crew shows up to help. They cut their boards and prepare materials on Sundays,

build the ramps on Mondays, and return Tuesday for finishing details. The rest of the week, they check out prospective sites.

Aging in place

Lilly Freeman serves as project director for the Kay County Retired Seniors Volunteer Program. The organization partners with United Way of Ponca City to provide a va-

Continued on Page 2



OUR MISSION

Founded in 1937, Kay Electric Cooperative remains focused on our primary mission: to provide safe, affordable and reliable power for our member-owners. Today, our service territory includes 2,400 miles of line and more than 5,800 meters located in Kay, Grant, Noble, Osage and Garfield counties.

CONTACT US

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Call 800-535-1079 or use Kay Electric's SmartHub at www.kayelectric.coop or download the SmartHub app for smartphone or tablet.

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GRANT WINNERS | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

riety of services that empower local residents to age in place. In addition to ramps, RSVP provides meals to seniors, and offers transportation to medical appointments.

Freeman says people are happier when they can stay in their own homes; it's also much less expensive than the alternative.

The ramps are especially life-changing for their recipients. She recalls the words of one recipient: "People may see the wood and ramp, but that wood is freedom. I didn't have freedom to get in and out of my house before."

Increasing costs

Like most things, the costs associated with the ramps have increased over the years. Thomason says when they started, materials for a ramp averaged \$450; now they average \$680. Still, it's a fraction of the cost of having a contractor build a ramp. Freeman says some contractors have bid as much as \$6,000—which is cost prohibitive for those on a fixed income.

In light of rising costs, community donations like a \$2,500 K-UP Foundation grant make up the shortfall and enable people to stay in their homes longer.

Recipients also have a chance to give back. When the crew finishes building a ramp, they leave the resident a note with a number to call if anything goes wrong. They also give the person an opportunity to make a donation toward their new ramp.

"Historically the people who can afford to have been very generous," Thomason says.

Going home

Thomason says they prioritize projects for those who use wheelchairs. They recently built a ramp for a woman who had been in the hospital; she needed a ramp in order to come home. Another ramp went to a woman who qualified for a wheelchair, but had to have a ramp in place first.

Freeman recalls a ramp they built for a man who had to live with relatives because he couldn't get in and out of his house. Having a ramp meant he could go home.

In total, the RSVP ramp building crew has constructed 442 ramps—and has changed that many lives for the better!

To learn more about Kay County RSVP visit www.facebook.com/RSVP-of-Kay-County-103594531797997 or call 580-762-9412. 

K-UP Foundation Grants

Created in 2015, the K-UP Foundation provides support to rural fire departments, civic organizations, community programs, youth groups, senior citizen centers, and local charities that often operate on a limited budget. Funding comes from the electric cooperative's bill roundup program. An independent board meets quarterly to review and approve grant applications. 1355002

Third quarter grant winners include Newkirk Lady Tiger Basketball: \$480 for ball racks and rebounder; and United Way of Ponca City: \$2,500 for mobility ramps.

The next application deadline is October 3, 2022. A grant application and guidelines are available at <https://www.kayelectric.coop/content/application>.



SEPTEMBER 13-17

Kay County Free Fair

STOP BY THE KAY ELECTRIC BUILDING FOR NIGHTLY PRIZE DRAWINGS!



Help keep our crews safe.
Please move over.



VOTE

A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
WWW.VOTE.COOP

**REGISTER BY
OCTOBER 14**



PEAK HOURS

Summer peak hours end September 9. Until then, please help us conserve energy, especially between 3 and 7 p.m. daily. Thank you for helping us keep our electricity affordable!

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Water heating accounts for a large portion of home energy bills. To save energy (and money!) used for water heating, repair any leaky faucets, install low-flow fixtures and insulate accessible hot water lines. When it's time to purchase a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for models that are ENERGY STAR®-certified.

Source: Dept. of Energy



GOOD COOKIN'



Chili Dog Casserole

Ingredients:

- 2, 15-ounce cans chili (with or without beans)
- 16-ounce package beef hot dogs
- 10, 8-inch flour tortillas
- 8-ounce package shredded cheddar cheese

Instructions:

Spread 1 can of chili in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Roll up hot dogs inside tortillas and place in baking dish, seam side down, on top of chili. Top with remaining can of chili, then sprinkle with cheese. Cover baking dish with foil and bake at 425°F for 30 minutes.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

PAMELA BERSCHE

HR BENEFITS ADMINISTRATOR

Pamela Bersche serves as benefits administrator in Kay Electric's human resources department, a position she has held since March 2020. Prior to Kay Electric, Pamela worked as a loan officer at Energize Credit Union, housed at the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives headquarters; she still serves on the Energy Credit Union board of directors. Pamela was born in Blackwell and grew up on her grandparents' Centennial Farm in Braman. She now resides in Blackwell with her husband, Bob. She enjoys traveling, hiking, range shooting, and spending time with her eight grandchildren. She says her grandma was one of her greatest inspirations. "She was a very thrifty lady, a jack of all trades. She taught me to be mindful of good health and the importance of relationships ... and to try and repair things first before calling a repairman." Thank you for your service, Pamela!



ENJOYS COOKING
AND BAKING



DREAM VACATIONS:
ISRAEL, ALASKA



EIGHT
GRANDKIDS

Images: courtesy flaticon

\$25 is hiding in this issue!

If you spot your account number hidden in these pages, please contact Kay Electric to claim a \$25 credit on your electric bill. If no account numbers are claimed, the prize money will carry over to the next month for a maximum bill credit of \$50. Call 800-535-1079 or email contact@kayelectric.coop to claim your prize.

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