

POLK COUNTY RURAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

‘The Livewire’

“Committed to enhancing the lives of our customers by providing safe, reliable and economical energy through excellence in customer service and innovation”



September 2023

What is YELC really about?

By Wade Rahn

Every year since 1980, the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA) has held the Youth Energy Leadership Camp (YELC). Like us at PCRPPD, NREA members sponsor the youth of its customers to attend this five-day camp. You may have seen advertisements from us looking for someone to attend, but like me, wondered what is the camp really about? Or maybe even thought your child doesn't want to be a lineman, so why should they attend? Let me tell you, this year, I had the opportunity to serve as a counselor for the camp and was able to witness firsthand what a fantastic camp this is. Spoiler alert, this camp is impressive! Any youth attending will learn leadership and teamwork skills, gain knowledge about Public Power, and make new friends. Attending the camp also opens opportunities for another possible experience which includes a possible trip to Washington, D.C., and learning more about how our government works.

Historically, the camp has been held at the Nebraska 4H Camp located near Halsey, but last year the camp was destroyed by a fire, so the YELC was relocated to Camp Comeca, located south of Cozad. Camp Comeca did not disappoint; they have very nice and clean facilities, including a full-size indoor gymnasium, a large indoor swimming pool, and an adventure course.

For 2023 PCRPPD had one camper attending, which was Hudson Urkoski of Clarks. Hudson returned to camp for his second year to serve as a Junior Counselor. Of the camp attendees, eight campers are selected to serve as a Jr. Counselor through being a finalist in the Ambassador Program or being chosen as a Good Egg. More will follow on what being an Ambassador or a Good Egg is.

Day One: Hudson and I set off to Camp Comeca. Once we arrived, the group gathered for check-in, cabin assignments, a quick overview of the layout, and team assignments. The campers were given a few minutes to take their luggage to the cabins and then returned to the main meeting room to kick off camp. With campers attending from all across the great state of Nebraska, very few knew each other, so the mood was somewhat reserved, but by the end of the day, all the nerves were gone. Once everyone returned to the meeting room, camp officially started with an overview of the camp and its history, an introduction of the staff and counselors, the history of Rural Electric, and how the camp would operate. Additionally, opportunities to participate in the following programs were explained:

Teams: All campers were randomly selected into different teams. These teams would meet in small groups for various activities along with being



Hudson Urkoski represents PCRPPD

assigned one of the following committees: sports, cookout, public relations/communications, tour lunch, dance, and banquet.

Board of Directors: As part of the camp, it would operate similarly to a regular Power District. One camper from each team would run and be selected by team members to represent the Board of Directors for “Comeca PPD.” Each board member is a representative of their team. Together, the representatives serve as a council whose job is to interview and select this year's general manager for the YELC. They also nominate four candidates for the “Good Egg” award. Board members are camp leaders and are called upon for assistance by the camp director and counselors. Members may be asked to introduce speakers, help organize sessions, and assist in presentations.

Continued on Page 3

Watt Matters

By Barb Fowler - General Manager

We love serving our customers because, without you, there would not be a need for PCRPPD. Our purpose is to provide you with safe, reliable, and economical electricity. Simply put, PCRPPD exists to serve you, our customer-owners. That's why our community members formed PCRPPD in 1935, to bring power to our rural communities when for-profit utilities would not. Customer-owners have always been foundational to PCRPPD.

With your assistance, we are able to better serve you, and you help us to get it right. With your feedback, we are better able to provide you with

exactly what you need. Your opinions are critical for PCRPPD's success, and we thank you for that.

We will be surveying customers later this month. Please take the time to complete the survey so we can learn what we are doing right and what we can do better. Your input provides insight that helps us evolve to improve services, processes, and relationships. We listen to what you have to say, and that is what sets Public Power apart from other privately owned utilities.

If you do not receive a survey request, please head to www.pcrppd.com and follow the survey link.

A large stadium light fixture with many glowing lights is positioned on the left side of the banner. Below it are four logos: the 'STORM' logo with a lightning bolt, a bulldog head, a circular logo with a wolf head, and a circular logo with a cat head.

WE'RE PROUD TO POWER

**FRIDAY
NIGHT
LIGHTS**

TO ALL THE PLAYERS,
COACHES, AND
SUPPORTING STAFF, WE
WISH YOU A GREAT AND
SAFE 2023 FOOTBALL
SEASON. WE'RE
ROOTING FOR YOU.

YELC continued from Page 1

General Manager: The general manager oversees committee activities and will report committee progress to the designated counselors and the Comeca Rural Electric Board of Directors. The general manager is the "liaison" between counselors and campers. If there are any problems, concerns, or suggestions that campers would like expressed, the general manager presents such concerns and suggestions to the counselors. The general manager monitors the activities of the various committees to ensure that such activities are accomplished efficiently.

Good Egg Award: The "Good Egg" award was established to recognize important qualities in YELC participants that often go unnoticed and unrewarded. These qualities were cheerfulness, friendliness, a willingness to do small "unglamorous jobs" (clean up), honesty, kindness, and a generally cooperative attitude and manner. Besides the 10 Ambassador finalists, all campers are eligible for selection as a "Good Egg."

Once the groundwork was laid out, everyone broke into their teams, Directors were elected, General Manager applications were filled out, and those wanting to participate in the Ambassador Program signed up. The first day concluded with some outdoor icebreaker activities. Though the group had only been together for part of a day, you could tell the anxiety level of the campers was gone, and friendships were being made.

Day Two: The day's activities started with a presentation by Herb Anderson, a Camp Psychologist. He spoke about challenges presented in life, how to cope with these, positivity, and life choices. After this presentation, the campers split into their teams and attended mini sessions, including a high voltage demonstration, pole climbing/bucket truck rides, and energy audit education. Later the group reassembled as a whole for presentations from Tri-State G&T about electricity and safety, followed

by NPPD talking about what they do to protect the environment. By this time, the campers had been cooped up long enough, so the swimming pool was opened, and everyone took a dip and burned off some energy. After the group got back together, those wanting to participate in the Ambassador Program got in front of the group, introduced themselves, and explained why they would be good Ambassadors. After the introduction, each camper voted for the Top 10 in the Ambassador Program.



Day Three: Tour Day! After breakfast, all campers loaded onto a bus and headed out for tours of NPPD's Gerald Gentleman Station near Sutherland, Nebraska, and the Kingsley Hydro-Electric Generating Station at Lake McConaughy. These tours were fantastic and took us inside the facilities, explaining the process of each, how they operate, along with the history of each facility. Once we returned from the tours, a cookout was held back at camp, and then the group went to the Adventure Course, where they were split into teams and worked on completing obstacles as teams which involved quite a bit of problem-solving.

Day Four: The day began with a presentation from NPPD about careers in public power, education on electricity, and the history of public power, and then a challenge to build a safe utilizing alarm circuits that would activate should someone try and break into their safe. Following this, Nebraska State Senator Teresa Ibach, who represents District 44, talked about the importance of Civic

Engagement. Once the presentations were complete, the group got together for a kickball tournament. Those not playing in the tournament could utilize the rock climbing area and shoot some hoops in the gym. The evening was filled with a banquet and speeches by the Top 10 finalists in the ambassador program. Each camper then voted for the winners of the Ambassador Program. Capping off the day was a dance that was held in the gym.

Day Five: This is the final day of camp. During the General Assembly, each camper took some time to write thank you notes and a letter to themselves that they will receive next year. The camp concluded with the announcement of the winners of the Ambassador Program and the two campers elected as Good Eggs. From there, the cabins were cleaned, goodbyes said, and the trek back home began.

While I have tried to give you some insight into the YELC camp, this article still doesn't emphasize how great it is and what those attending truly get out of it. Anyone who attends will not regret it, as this camp is a somewhat-hidden gem. If you know of a high school student entering their sophomore through senior year during next year's camp, please send them our way!





POLK COUNTY RURAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

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