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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 14, 2024

Sonnenfelt honored with NREDA President's Award

Columbus, Ohio – Devin Sonnenfelt, Senior Business Development Specialist with White River Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc., was presented with the National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA) 2024 President's Award.

The NREDA President's Award recognizes outstanding commitment to the NREDA organization and rural economic development.

Brittany Dickey, NREDA President, presented the award at the association's 2024 NREDA Annual Conference in Omaha, Nebraska, with more than 200 in attendance.

Dickey noted the following regarding Sonnenfelt's selection as this year's recipient:

"There are so many individuals that I could have picked for this award, however, one individual stood out for their contributions to NREDA this year and I wanted to make sure that they received the recognition that they so deserved. Devin hosted the NREDA regional event this year held in Republic, Missouri in April. Not only did she host the event, she helped to organize the speakers, venue, tour, food and sponsorships. Without her willingness to step up and coordinate this event, it would not have been possible. The event was a huge success!"

About NREDA:

NREDA is an organization of economic development professionals focused upon the issues and opportunities of rural America. It is dedicated to meeting the unique needs of its membership through ongoing education and networking programs, while serving as an information source and conduit for developers, site selectors and prospective businesses to NREDA members and the areas they serve. For more information about NREDA visit www.nreda.org.



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Pfannenstiel Honored with 2024 Rural Economic Development Leadership Award

Electric Power Corporation in Hays, Kansas, was presented with NREDA's 2024 Rural Economic Development Leadership Award for outstanding leadership in the field of rural economic development.

This national award recognizes outstanding leadership in the field of rural economic development. Nominees consist of economic development professionals, rural electric cooperative/rural telephone staff or board members who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in an economic development project resulting in the improvement of the quality of life, creation of new jobs, and opportunity for growth and development in rural America.

Pfannenstiel was nominated by Clare Gustin, a past president of NREDA. The award was presented at the association's 2024 NREDA Annual Conference in Omaha, Nebraska, with more than 200 in attendance.

Dennis Mingyar, NREDA Awards Chairperson, noted the following highlights related to Nikki Pfannenstiel's nomination and selection as this year's recipient:

"Early in Nikki's career at Sunflower she was responsible for packaging USDA REDLG applications on behalf of the cooperatives that own Sunflower. These projects ranged from public purposes and business development, resulting in improved medical care, public safety equipment, community facilities, and private business expansion for job creation. Her efforts resulted in the creation of revolving loan funds for four of the cooperatives that own Sunflower. Her work resulted in 36 projects supporting \$60 million in capital investment and 264 jobs.

As the manager of economic development, Nikki is responsible for the Sunflower Electric Economic Development (SEED) program, which provides comprehensive rural development support in the Sunflower member region. The SEED program supports strong local community readiness and global efforts to market the region. As the program matured, Nikki recognized the need to market the region and spearheaded the SEED brand and identity – Sunflower Electric Economic Development, Energy to Grow. The creation of the SEED website, which required creating content for both business consultants and community leaders, is promoted on Sunflower's SEED LinkedIn page, which now has 864 followers.

Nikki was instrumental in developing the first utility Certified Site Program to Kansas. Soon after the Sunflower Certified Site Program was launched, the Kansas Department of Commerce asked if it could partner with Sunflower for the statewide program. This cooperation has resulted in the Sunflower sites having dual

certification with Kansas Department of Commerce. One site has also leveraged the Sunflower certification into a railroad certification.

These are just a few ways that Nikki continues to improve the quality of life, support new job creation, and foster growth and development in rural America.”

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**Tri-County Electric Cooperative Honored with 2024 NREDA
Organization Excellence Award**

Columbus, Ohio – Tri-County Electric Cooperative in Lancaster, Missouri was presented the 2024 NREDA Organization Excellence Award. This national award is designed to recognize a utility or economic development organization or an association or government entity that has implemented a successful rural economic development program for their area. The focus is on the success of communicating the program, improvements to the business climate and measurable results and outcomes.

Stephanie Mills, Manager of Communications, Member Services, accepted the award at the NREDA 2024 Annual Conference in Omaha, Nebraska, with more than 200 in attendance.

Dennis Mingyar, NREDA Awards Chairperson, noted the following highlights related to Tri-County Electric Cooperative’s nomination and selection as this year’s recipient:

“This nomination detailed Tri County Electric Cooperative’s commitment to improving the quality of life for its members. Tri-County Electric Cooperative has consistently demonstrated a dedication to community betterment through various initiatives, and its workforce housing efforts are a testament to this commitment. By striving to provide housing solutions that meet the needs of diverse demographics within the community, the cooperative fosters a stronger economic ecosystem for our rural area. Many have witnessed the positive impact of Tri-County Electric Cooperative’s housing project, which contributes significantly to the overall development and growth in the communities. These efforts are instrumental in addressing the housing challenges faced by much of the area’s workforce. Their efforts not only make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and families but also strengthen the fabric of the rural community as a whole.”

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