



## NREDA News Brief | November 2023

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### President's Message



I hope that everyone enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving weekend with family and friends. Earlier this month we were able to gather in sunny Myrtle Beach, SC for our annual conference. If you couldn't make it, you missed quite a treat. The program was packed with great speakers and content, and as always, I enjoyed networking with colleagues from across the country.

As my time as NREDA President draws to a close, I've been able to reflect on our accomplishments as an organization in 2023. You may recall that I stated my focus as President would be Member Engagement and I believe we have been successful in that regard. In 2023, we added more than 40 new members, hosted over 400 participants in our webinars, enjoyed a record number of applicants for our scholarship program, and had the 2nd highest attendance for our annual conference since at least 2014.

It has been my honor to serve as NREDA President in 2023. I truly appreciate the support of our board of directors, our members, and my employer, Jackson EMC. I want to thank our outgoing board members. In particular, I want to recognize Dan Boysel of Consolidated Cooperative in Ohio. Dan has served on the Board of Directors since 2016 and fulfilled his term on the Board after serving 2023 as Past President. Thanks for your service, leadership, and friendship, Dan!

Finally, I want to encourage you to offer support to our Incoming President, Brittany Dickey with Corn Belt Power Cooperative in Iowa. Brittany is a bright and thoughtful leader. She will do an incredible job in 2024 and take NREDA to new heights!

## 2023 NREDA Annual Conference Recap



Thank you to those who attended, presented and sponsored our NREDA annual conference held in Myrtle Beach this month! We had a great turnout with 154 people registered for the event. Jeff Black was our keynote speaker this year and spoke on inspirational and influential communication, so we were all aware of our stage presence and communication after his presentation. If you are interested in purchasing his book, it is “Unleash Your BS (Best Self): Putting Your Executive Presence to the Test” and can be found on Amazon. A special thanks to Jeff for being so easy to work with and doing a great job!

We also had a great panel of site selectors this year with Richard Blackwell from Agracel moderating. This panel was very insightful and hit home with a rural focus. Other conference highlights included our mobile classrooms (which you will find summaries in the newsletter on); panels on entrepreneurship, housing, financing and broadband. The closing session was facilitated by Brad Thomas and we shared economic development stories, advice and projects. What an amazing week it was!

Please remember to rate conference sessions/provide feedback on the Whova app if you haven't done so already. If you have any ideas or suggestions for next year's conference, feel free to send Lisa Hurley or myself a message. Next year's conference will be held November 13-15 in Omaha, NE. Lisa Hurley is the conference chair and will start preparation meetings soon. It isn't too late to join the committee if are interested! Lastly, a special thank you to the conference planning committee, Sandy Davis, Tracey Hogan and Karla Dunbar for a wonderful conference in Myrtle Beach! It wouldn't have gone so smoothly without you all.

Hope to see everyone in Omaha!

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Annual Conference Mobile Classroom Experience Recaps

**Myrtle Beach Downtown Redevelopment**



Myrtle Beach is five years into a 20-year downtown redevelopment plan. The \$2 billion project is split into three different phases: Resident-Centric Experience, Scenic & Episodic Experience, and Overall Lifestyle Experience. Planning is also underway for a fourth phase, the Public Art Connection.

The overall goal involves connecting Broadway Street to the beach, as well as improving trails along the Rails to Trails route. It also includes diversifying the downtown economy, growing the base of downtown residents through amenitization, and facilitating equitable economic development.

The investments of the project include \$24 million in public commitment, \$35 million in infrastructure improvements, \$300 million in anticipated public investment, and \$1 billion in private investment. The project also includes 47 acres in new development.

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## Manufacturing Facilities Using Technology-Surteco



Our mobile tour took approximately 30 NREDA Conference attendees to the Surteco North America design and manufacturing facilities located in Myrtle Beach. The design center provides the inspiration for the creation of decorative surfaces. As one of the world's leading full-service providers of decorative surfaces, Surteco develops seamlessly

matched products such as furniture and flooring that are ideal for rooms we want to live in today and in the future.

The Surteco Design Center is a "think tank" where visions become reality. In this innovative space, designs are developed from wood, stones, metals or anything else they desire to replicate. An in-house carpenter processes the raw material to bring out natural characteristics and add life. Then it is ready for the next step, with a state-of-the-art scanner, the materials are easily transformed into digital information. The design team then enhances the digital image to meet the desire of the end user often looking for the "movement" of trends two years out.

In the manufacturing plant we were able to see the production of products such as decorative paper, release paper, finish foil, and edgebanding. These products are used to in the production furniture and flooring. The paper replication of woods, stones, and other surfaces can include the look and feel of the actual surfaces. The tour included a walk through from stock of special rolls of paper to the finished product being prepared for shipping within the US and internationally. Surteco is a clear leader in their market and offers a unique option of a one stop shop from design through production. A special thanks goes out to Jonathan and Susie for being our tour guides at the production facility and design center.

## Myrtle Beach Airport



The Mobile Classroom experience offered our group a unique, behind-the-scenes look at the Myrtle Beach International Airport. The airport is owned and operated by Horry County and is located on the former Myrtle Beach Air Force Base. It employs more than 2,000 people in their commercial operations and is also home to a flight academy. Currently, the only major airline that doesn't operate there is JetBlue. In early 2024, the airport will begin an expansion that will expand their gate capacity from 12 to 18.

We learned from our host that the airport works closely with the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and Sandy Davis of the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation. With the chamber they focus on tourist travel while focusing on business and industry recruitment with the EDC. Approximately 80% of their travel is leisure-related and they experience much higher traffic in the summer.

We had a private tour that gave us access to the baggage handling area, communication center, rental car facility, and ramp. The baggage handling area contains a complex set of conveyors and scanning machines. This equipment is oversized to accommodate the large volume of golf bags that are transported through the airport. The newly designed communication center is the operations epicenter where access to all areas of the airport is monitored and controlled. The rental car facility was bustling, and we learned that the largest source of revenue at the airport is through rental cars and parking. Finally, we were toured the ramp area where we were able to watch a Delta Boeing 717 flight from Atlanta land and we learned about their onsite fire department. This department is responsible for any aircraft or onsite fires but deals primarily with medical issues experienced by travelers or employees.

## 2023 NREDA Annual Award Winners



*Pictured (from left to right): Dennis Mingyar, NREDA Awards Chairperson; Jenny Robbins; Julica Oharah; Stacy Davis; David Cleveland, NREDA President*

**We would like to extend our sincere congratulations to this year's award winners! Awards were presented at the NREDA 2023 Annual Conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina!**

### **2023 President's Award**

Jenny Robbins, Manager, Community & Leadership Development with the Georgia Electric Membership Corporation, was presented with the National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA) 2023 President's Award by NREDA President David Cleveland, Managing Director, Business Development & Governmental Affairs with Jackson EMC. The NREDA President's Award recognizes outstanding commitment to the NREDA organization and rural economic development.

### **2023 Rural Economic Development Leadership Award**

Stacy Davis, Executive Director with the Sumner County Economic Development Commission in Wellington, Kansas, was presented with NREDA's 2023 Rural Economic Development Leadership Award for outstanding leadership in the field of rural economic development. This 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.

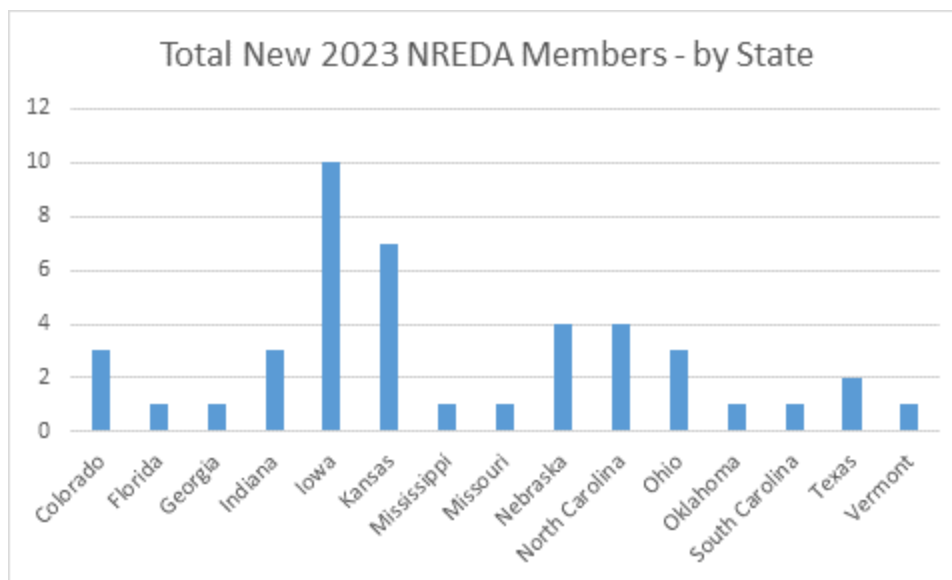
### **2023 Organization Excellence Award**

Sherman County Community Development Corporation (SCCD) in Goodland, Kansas was presented the 2023 NREDA Organization Excellence Award. This 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. Julica Oharah, Executive Director with SCCD, was in attendance to accept this award.

For more information and to view the news releases for all three of this year's award winners, [CLICK HERE](#).

## **2023 New Member Challenge**

### **Congratulations to Iowa for Winning NREDA's 2023 New Member Challenge!**



Iowa members – You earn the bragging rights as the **state** with the most **new** NREDA members in 2023!

Thank you to all of our awesome current members for promoting NREDA membership and benefits, and bringing on **43** NEW members this year! Be sure to look for information regarding next year's new member challenge early in 2024!

## 2024 Membership Renewals

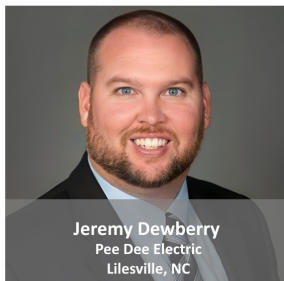
We would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support as a National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA) member! We hope you are already planning to renew your membership for 2024 to continue to enjoy the many valuable benefits that NREDA has to offer. Members receive discounted registration to the Annual Conference and the opportunity to attend webinars throughout the year at no charge, among the various benefits detailed below. And, we hope you have your calendar marked to attend the 2024 Annual Conference to be held November 13-15 in Omaha, Nebraska!

We encourage member engagement on one of our committees, as well. You may view more information and submit your interest at <https://www.nreda.org/committees>. We value all contributions, and membership is the lifeblood of our organization. Your involvement is important and very much appreciated!

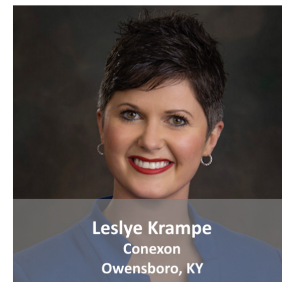
**Membership renewal invoices went out to current members on November 13th. If you did not receive yours please email Karla Dunbar at [NREDA@AssnOffices.com](mailto:NREDA@AssnOffices.com) to request your 2024 membership invoice to remain part of our incredible community of professionals.**

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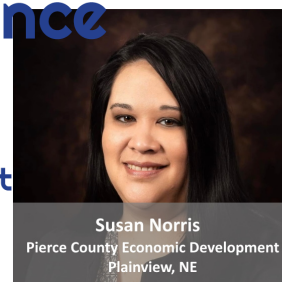
## New Member Spotlight



# Welcome New **NREDA** *National. Rural. Connected.* **Members!**



## NREDA Annual Conference



November 13-15, 2024

Marriott Omaha Downtown Capital District  
Omaha, Nebraska



Registration will open next summer!

### Job Postings

NREDA provides current members space to post a position on the NREDA website, plus inclusion in the NREDA News Brief, at **no charge**.

**Manager of Business & Community Development**  
Prairie Energy Cooperative

[Click Here](#) for more Information



## News Brief Guidelines

NREDA would love to share your unique stories, industry trends, best practices, white papers, and - of course - your successes in our bi-monthly e-newsletter!

### **Guidelines:**

- E-newsletter distribution is bi-monthly at the end of the month – 2024 months are January, March, May, July, September, & November.
- Please email your article to Tracey Hogan at [tracey@assnoffices.com](mailto:tracey@assnoffices.com) by the 15th of each e-newsletter month. Please include the subject line **NREDA Newsletter Article Submission**
- Please submit your article in a an editable format (Microsoft Word or text in the body of an email preferred).
- Feel free to include a photo with your article.
- Please send information, educational, and/or newsworthy items.
- Please no ads or sales/marketing articles.
- Articles submitted by current NREDA members receive priority.



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