


# NEWS



**Crawford Electric**  
A Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative 

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Crawford Electric's lead communicator  
earns national award for excellence**

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BOURBON – Laura Hengstenberg of Owensville, Crawford Electric's communication manager, has won a national award that's given to only one electric co-op communicator annually. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association recently presented her with the 2024 LaBerge Award for Excellence in Strategic Communications at the association's national conference in Baltimore. The award cites Hengstenberg's personal excellence, influence and impact advancing cooperative communications over her nearly 30-year career in the industry.

In selecting Hengstenberg for the award, the judges said, "Through her efforts, Laura has significantly advanced the integration of strategic communication within cooperative management teams nationwide."

She's also made an impact locally, according to Crawford Electric CEO Tony Mallory, who nominated Hengstenberg for the honor.

"One of the best things Laura has done for our co-op is help employees embrace their role in communicating with members. She emphasizes how everyone has a part to play in keeping our members informed," he said.

Jim McCarty, manager of special projects for the statewide Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives, said, "Laura came to the electric cooperative community armed with a journalism degree from the University of Missouri. She was determined to put it to work telling the co-op story the only way she knew how: truthfully, accurately, clearly, fairly and with the best interest of the members always in mind."

This sentiment is echoed by members of Hengstenberg's team at Crawford Electric.

"While working on any project or new initiative, she reminds us that it is important to remember our 'why,' and the question is always, 'how does it benefit the members,'" said Kortney Smart, public relations coordinator.

At Crawford Electric, Hengstenberg established a communication department that's focused on proactive use of multiple media, including the co-op's monthly member newsletter, local print and radio ads, earned media, digital and social media and face-to-face interactions. She emphasizes the importance of being a trusted source for industry news while also fostering community goodwill.

"There is something very affirming about being honored for all the years of hard work," Hengstenberg said from the conference stage after receiving the award. "Not only for personal or professional satisfaction, but also for the benefit of our members and communities."

Nationally, Hengstenberg serves as a presenter and co-chair for the New Co-op Communicators Orientation, which helps lay the groundwork for communications professionals entering the industry. She also helped forge the path for future industry leaders by creating a guidebook that defines the integral role communication plays in the success of an electric co-op.

Crawford Electric Cooperative is a member of Touchstone Energy, a national alliance of locally owned, community-minded electric co-ops with high standards of service. Crawford Electric serves about 20,000 meters along almost 3,000 miles of distribution lines mostly in Crawford, Franklin, Gasconade, Washington and Dent counties.



Crawford Electric's Laura Hengstenberg (center) accepts the 2024 LaBerge Award from NRECA's Holly Wetzel (left) and the Council of Rural Electric Communicators' Scott Gates at the 2024 Connect Conference in Baltimore. (Photo By: Denny Gainer/NRECA)