

NEWS RELEASE



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FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EMPLOYEES GRADUATE FROM LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

NEW LONDON, OH — Firelands Electric Cooperative is celebrating several employees who recently completed a statewide program that aims to hone the skills of the next generation of electric cooperative leaders. The co-op would like to congratulate Engineering and Operations Data Coordinator Melissa Wilson, Lead Lineman Evan Clemons, and Director of Operations Rick Bowers on their achievements.

On January 20, Wilson and Clemons graduated from Ohio's Electric Cooperative's Leadership Edge program, an intensive hands-on development and training framework offered by Firelands Electric Cooperative's statewide organization, Ohio's Electric Cooperatives. The year-long program requires six courses, personality and emotional intelligence assessments, and a capstone project. Coursework focuses on skill building, coaching employees, managing conflicts, adapting communication approaches, carrying out difficult conversations, and delivering results.

Wilson joined Firelands Electric in September 2018 as an engineering data analyst. Promoted to the position of engineering and operations data coordinator in 2020, Wilson manages several employees in the cooperative's operations department. She is responsible for maintaining and updating the cooperative's digital mapping system, including location information, easements, poles, transformers, wires, and other equipment. She also handles all utility pole connections with the cable and internet companies that utilizes the co-op's poles. In addition to her operations department duties, Wilson also assists with numerous internal IT tasks at Firelands Electric.

"Leadership Edge challenged me to rethink what leadership means. I've learned that leadership isn't always loud or visible; it can be steady, quiet, and rooted in reliability. It's about stepping up when needed, listening with intention, and working together so everyone can succeed," Wilson says.

Wilson lives in the New London area with her husband, Josh. The couple has three children, Peyton, Paige, and Pailee. With both college and high school students, the Wilsons enjoy supporting their children's many activities, as well as spending time with family and friends.

Clemons has been with the cooperative since January 2007. He began as a groundman and quickly advanced to apprentice lineman. Clemons reached journeyman lineman status in 2011 after receiving his power lineman certification from Marion Technical College. Firelands Electric promoted Clemons to a lead lineman in 2022. He is responsible for overseeing a line crew and handles all types of electric power line issues like overhead and underground distribution lines, transformers, reclosers, and substations. His duties also include line construction and maintenance tasks, such as changing out poles, transformers, and wires.

"The program taught me that everyone communicates in different ways, and that finding out how to work with different types of people is a great skill," Clemons says. "In addition to learning new skills, I was able to make connections with other co-op employees from around the state."

Originally a native of the Greenwich area, Clemons resides in the New London area with his wife, Megan, and daughter, Sophia. He enjoys hunting, showing livestock with his daughter, and outdoor activities.

"Ohio's Electric Cooperatives Leadership Edge training program is a great opportunity for co-op employees to develop the skills necessary for effectively leading people at all levels of an organization," Director of Operations Rick Bowers says. "We are really proud of Evan and Melissa for their accomplishments, and are pleased to have them on our team."

Bowers, a 2022 alumni of the program, just completed the Leadership Elevate program, an advanced, next-step program for graduates of their Leadership Edge program. The Leadership Elevate initiative specifically targets senior executives who are responsible for strategic decision-making and setting company culture, while also aiming to prepare them for upper-level leadership positions within the co-op system. It focuses on enhancing strategic skills and fostering long-term organizational success.

"Our role extends beyond just supplying electricity," Firelands' General Manager Don Englet stated. "We're here to enhance the quality of life, work, and service in our communities. Firelands Electric continually invests in employee training and development with the goal of serving its consumer-members with top-rated talent and skills. This includes investing in our employees' growth and development."

"We are very proud of the dedication to continued excellence displayed by Melissa, Evan, and Rick, and I feel blessed to have them as part of our cooperative's team," Englet added.

Firelands Electric Cooperative is a member-owned, not-for-profit electric utility serving more than 9,200 homes and businesses in rural areas of Ashland, Huron, Lorain, and Richland counties that ranks among the highest energy utilities in the country for customer satisfaction. Visit the cooperative's website at www.firelandsec.com, [Facebook page](#), or [Twitter feed](#) to learn more about reliable and affordable power.

ATTACHED PHOTO — Firelands Electric Cooperative's Lead Lineman Evan Clemons (left), Director of Operations Rick Bowers (center), and Engineering and Operations Data Coordinator (right) recently graduated from leadership programs from Ohio's Electric Cooperatives.

