

## A sweet gig

*A young Blue Grass Energy member is official Hershey's taste tester*

By Katie Saltz

Not many third graders have a resume as impressive as Lane Hartzel. In addition to being a student at Westside Elementary in Cynthiana, his titles include Official Hershey's Taste Tester and National Commercial Star. It all started with a simple Career Day project in 2022.

Career Day is a tradition for first graders at Westside, but Lane's mother, Jennifer, almost kept Lane home from school that day. Lane has cerebral palsy and is non-mobile and non-verbal.

Watching his peers talk about their future careers was difficult for Jennifer. While she believes in Lane's potential, she knows that he has verbal and physical limitations.

"Raising a child with special needs, the waves of grief can catch you—that your child's future is not what you imagined it would be," Jennifer says.

Jennifer spoke to Lane's teachers and support team and ultimately decided that Lane would attend school on Career Day. The staff at Westside got to work so Lane could be an equal participant in the project alongside his classmates.

"His school team of teachers and therapists took over and made sure Lane felt included," Jennifer says. "That was the magic of all of this—the team stepped up and did all of it."

Some suggestions for Lane's career



Lane Hartzel dressed as a Hershey chocolate taste tester for Career Day at Westside Elementary in April 2022. Photo: Hartzel family

included an accessible playground critic, Taylor Swift's light and sound switch operator, a movie critic and a Hershey's chocolate taste tester. Using his communication device, Lane made his choice—chocolate taste tester.

Complete with an apron, chef's hat and plenty of candy, Lane was a hit among his classmates. Jennifer soon made a social media post expressing her gratitude to the Westside staff, never dreaming anything more would come from the experience.

It didn't take long for the Hershey company to take notice of Lane. A package of chocolate treats arrived in the

mail, followed by Zoom calls with executives, a visit to the Hershey headquarters and ultimately, a national commercial that reached millions.

The outpouring of love from across the country is something Jennifer never expected. Her Facebook post about Lane's experience with Hershey has led to complete strangers commenting or messaging her about their own journeys with children with special needs.

"When I made that Facebook post, never in my wildest dreams did I think it would reach that far," she says. "Countless families of kids with special needs have reached out to us and let us know what it

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Understanding the importance of voluntary curtailment

Last winter, right before Christmas, much of the country found itself in a significant polar vortex that had not been encountered in several years. Because of Winter Storm Elliott, many Kentuckians saw subzero temperatures for consecutive days. Numerous factors including the timing of the holiday season, rapid decline in temperatures and windchill and unanticipated lack of availability of natural gas greatly increased the challenges associated with the supply of electricity.

Some of you may recall we sent out social media messaging encouraging members to take reasonable energy conservation measures. I want to explain why we made that request, why we may need to do it again in the future, and help you understand why it is important to all of us.

In short, the request we made to you last winter to conserve energy can be defined as a voluntary curtailment. This is an appeal that you help limit total system power requirements, or demand.

Several parts of the country encountered rolling blackouts during Winter Storm Elliott, as did Texas and California during other recent severe weather events.

A rolling blackout is an action utilities can take in response to emergency circumstances to prevent system damage, or worse yet, much larger and much longer blackout conditions. A rolling blackout is designed to limit power supply to certain segments of the system for short durations. This pattern then rolls from one part of the system to another so no one is impacted for too long. Though this is very inconvenient for all parties involved, the goal is to keep everyone as comfortable as possible during extreme conditions.

In December 2022, we asked you to voluntarily conserve because there was some legitimate concern that parts of Kentucky may be within hours of facing rolling blackouts.

The good news is that we have a reliable grid in place. Starting locally, from your home to our substations, we have a solid distribution system. East Kentucky Power Cooperative, our power supplier, has a robust transmission system and is consistent in providing us power.

EKPC is a member of PJM, a regional transmission organization, that coordinates the distribution of wholesale electricity from hundreds of generation assets across 13 states. As a member of PJM, EKPC can tap into the extensive generation and transmission network PJM has to offer. This affords EKPC increased reliability, resiliency and

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*By President/CEO  
Michael I. Williams*



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has meant to them to see our family in a spotlight and see what Lane has done.”

The recognition within his own hometown is something that Lane’s family celebrates. Lane’s father, Tyler, says giving Lane a national platform is eye-opening for a lot of people in their small town.

“We live in a small community, and you don’t see a lot of kids in wheelchairs or with communication devices,” Tyler says. “But the reaction from the commercial shows us that the world is behind Lane. We are blazing a path for these kids (with special needs).”

While Lane doesn’t have another job on the books (yet), his parents are using the momentum from his commercial to educate others about differently abled people and what they can achieve. The Hartzels often speak to elementary students about Lane’s condition and answer questions in an honest, appropriate way. “This has opened so many doors for



Lane Hartzel prepares for his Career Day presentation at Westside Elementary School. His team of teachers and therapists developed his costume so Lane could be a Hershey’s chocolate taste tester. Photo: Hartzel family

us to be able to advocate for our son and children like him,” Jennifer says.

The spotlight on Lane has brought many perks to the Hartzel family, but for Tyler, the best one is the pride he feels as a father watching his son achieve a goal.



Lane Hartzel poses with his dad, Tyler Hartzel, at the premier of the national Hershey’s commercial starring Lane in December 2022. Photo: Elizabeth Simpson/Simpsonography Creative House

“Some parents get to watch their kid score a winning goal or ace a test,” he says. “This is my proud dad moment.”

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economics. Due to the collective performance of Blue Grass Energy, EKPC and PJM, our members are exceptionally well positioned to maintain service in drastic weather events.

Though we are well positioned, uninterrupted power is not a guarantee. One reason I am sharing this now is because we typically see the highest demand on our system during the winter. So, when we ask you to conserve energy, we really need your help. The amount of notice we can give will vary based on conditions outside of our control. We will share this request through social media channels and send text/email alerts directly to our members.

Though we cannot predict the likelihood, it is possible we could have to endure short term inconveniences to avoid a much longer service disruption. We can wait to wash and dry our clothes and dishes. And we can all get by with the thermostat a degree or two lower in the winter or a degree or two higher in the summer for a short time, even if we prefer it at a different temperature.

When we ask you to curtail, please consider what actions you can take to help your neighbors until we can weather the storm. We understand asking for your participation in curtailing usage will be inconvenient and we apologize for that. But when we work together in these critical situations, we can have a positive impact for the entire region.



## SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, apply for one of the ten \$1,500 scholarships that will be awarded by random drawing on June 6.

**APPLY AT [BGENERGY.COM](https://www.bgenenergy.com).**

## 2024 PARTNER

We are pleased to announce our employees have chosen Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Bluegrass as our 2024 charity partner.

RMHC provides comfort, care and kindness when it matters most to families with sick children. Their guests can call the House their home away from home during a time when their children are in need of medical care.

While they don't administer medical care, they keep children and families close to the critical care they need—and to each other. They provide essential care like a place of respite for parents, space for



**Ronald McDonald House Charities<sup>®</sup>**  
of the Bluegrass

children to be children and communities of support for all family members dealing with a child's medical crisis.

We are excited for the opportunity to support RMH and the people they care for.

## Connect to healthy savings

Health care expenses have been rising for decades and can account for a significant portion of a family's budget. Blue Grass Energy members can ease the pain of their health care with Co-op Connections.

Co-op members can connect to healthy savings via the free program offered as a membership benefit by Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, including Blue Grass Energy.

Members who use Co-op Connections can save on:

- **Pharmacy**—Pay up to 85% less for prescriptions.
- **Dental**—Enjoy 20-40% savings on services such as cleanings, X-rays, crowns, root canals and fillings. The program also offers savings on orthodontic and periodontic services.
- **Lab testing**—Save 10-80% on typical costs for lab work at participating clinical laboratories. Test categories include allergies, vitamin and cholesterol levels, liver function, fertility, thyroid and more.
- **Vision**—Participating vision providers, including national chains and local retailers, offer 10-60% off on glasses, contacts, laser surgery, exams and even designer eyewear.
- **Diabetic**—Co-op members get 60% off average retail prices for diabetic supplies.
- **Hearing**—Get \$100 off the lowest advertised price per pair of hearing devices at leading retailers or \$50 off a single device.



- **Chiropractic**—Treatment and diagnostic services from participating providers are discounted 30-50%.
- **Imaging**—Save 40-75% on usual charges for MRI and CT scans at credentialed radiology centers.

To begin receiving Co-op Connections discounts, visit [connections.coop](http://connections.coop). You can download the app and create your account. You will also find a full list of available discounts.

The Co-op Connections Card is just one of the many ways we are making life better, the cooperative way.