

NEWS, NOTES & VIEWS 12/25



Building Local Connections with the Next Generation

Students from this year's Morgan-Scott CEO class listening to presentations by co-op staff.

Nearing the midway mark of the school year, the CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) programs, unique in their focus on life, business, and leadership skills, are in full swing. The Morgan-Scott, Greene-Calhoun, and Pike programs, each with their distinct approach, consist of 62 students representing more than a dozen schools in our service territory. The

CEO program's goal is not just education but also forming a close bond with their community.

"The CEO program continues to experience remarkable growth and success in our region. This year, Morgan-Scott CEO class includes 29 students

continued...



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Students from this year's Pike CEO class (left) and Greene-Calhoun CEO class (right).



representing five high schools, while the Greene-Calhoun CEO class includes 25 students from four area schools. With a combined total of 54 participants, the largest enrollment in program history, these students are engaging in hands-on entrepreneurial experiences, developing leadership skills, and building meaningful connections with local business and community leaders that strengthen the economic future of our rural communities," said Jennifer Sellars, the Morgan-Scott and Greene-Calhoun CEO program facilitator.

The facilitator of the Pike CEO program, Colin Kutchy, is pleased with how the year is going. "It's been a busy but productive first half of Pike CEO for the students so far. They had a successful Name Badge business and are moving into their class business while learning from local business owners throughout the county. It's shaping up to be a very good year for our students and I'm excited to see what they continue to achieve."

The co-op helped start the Morgan-Scott CEO program 12 years ago, with

Greene-Calhoun and Pike programs following two years later. The impact of these programs is significant, as they aim to help retain young people in our service territory by introducing them to the opportunities right in their backyards.

As part of this, students in the CEO program hear from more than 50 local professionals and business owners from their communities who share their career journeys, experiences, and lessons learned along the way.

These connections help students develop professional networks, sometimes leading to internship opportunities and ongoing mentorships. "The CEO programs in our area have been very popular and received great support from our communities. Through this program, local students are gaining a better understanding of the region and the opportunities it can offer. We have a growing number of CEO alumni who have chosen to come back to the region to live and work," said Shawn Rennecker, Economic Development Director and chairman of the Pike CEO board.

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My co-op bill is higher than I was told.	Call IEC First. We can explain the cost savings you can expect.
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Employee Spotlight

Dalton Heavner

Fiber Staking Engineer

About the Employee

Dalton Heavner, a Pearl native, has been with Illinois Electric Cooperative since 2021. Dalton is a fiber internet technician. Dalton, his wife Darci, and their children, Stockton (3) and McKenna (2 months), reside in Pittsfield.

Dalton says his favorite part of his job is providing members with reliable internet service in areas where they'd otherwise be without it. "In today's world, it's increasingly important to have access to the internet for everyday life," Dalton shared.

When not at work, Dalton can be found spending time with his family. If he's not at home, he's most likely assisting his wife at her dance studio, S&S School of Dance, or at his parents' farm. "I enjoy giving back where and when I can give my time, helping a few different agricultural youth organizations, such as Lucky 13 livestock show in Jacksonville, Pittsfield FFA alumni, and Illinois Association FFA at their annual convention."



Dalton Heavner with his wife Darci and their children, Stockton and McKenna.



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