What's Inside



Local business provides color and comfort for any occasion Page 8



Driven member makes dream come true Page 11



Cherries are the star of this Valentine's Day treat Page 15



A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative K

"The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957"

VOLUME 67

February 9, 2024

NUMBER 6

Members provide feedback through annual survey

We are the stewards of your cooperative, a responsibility we carry out with you in mind. Our goal is to improve your quality of life. We do that by delivering electricity to homes and businesses at the most affordable rates, and by sharing ways members can save energy and manage their bills.

Each year, we check in with the membership more formally, conducting a random survey to see if we are meeting our goal and if we need to make any adjustments.

Results from our most recent survey indicate our efforts have not gone unnoticed, but we understand there is always room for improvement. We appreciate everyone who participated in the survey and provided supportive comments along with areas in which we can communicate more effectively.

Cotton Electric received an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI[®]) score of 85 out of a maximum score of 100.* Our Cooperative Attitude and Performance Score (CAPS) rating is 89.

Cotton Electric's ACSI score of 85 is also much higher than all publicly measured municipal energy utilities and investor-owned energy utilities. In 2023, investor-owned energy utilities held steady at

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The 2023 survey took place in October and November. Postcards and emails were sent to randomly selected members, inviting them to participate in the survey online or by telephone. Conducted by Inside Information of Smithville, Missouri, Cotton Electric has relied on their member research expertise to help with surveys since 2018.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®) is the only national cross-industry measure of customer satisfaction in the United States. Each year, the ACSI uses data from interviews with roughly 300,000 customers as inputs to an econometric model for analyzing customer satisfaction with more than 400 companies in 46 industries and 10 economic sectors. ACSI data have proven to be strongly related to several essential indicators of micro and macroeconomic performance.

The ACSI publishes an annual Energy Utilities Index, which is an independent customer satisfaction measure of the U.S. top 30 investorowned, municipal, and cooperative utilities.

The Cooperative Attitude and Performance Score (CAPS), is a co-op performance model developed by Inside Information. It is an industry specific benchmarking tool used to gauge performance in service areas deemed most important by cooperative members: Trustworthiness, well-

72, with municipal energy utilities remaining at 71, per the industry ratings in the 2023 ACSI Utility Sector Report.

One of the key drivers of the survey results were questions related to electric service and rates. The mission for Cotton Electric employees is to safely provide you, our member-owners, with reliable and affordable power, day and night. Your co-op is here to help members by providing information on how to be prepared for extreme weather and ways members can save on their bills throughout the year.

For more information on how your home can run more efficiently, visit www.cottonelectric.com/ energy-efficiency. That section lists information about home energy efficiency evaluations, our "Hey, Heath" video series, what to consider before signing a solar contract, and much more.

Another helpful resource our website provides is our Outage Center found at www.cottonelectric. com/outagecenter. Members can view current outages, know what to do before and during an outage, and learn about our outage texting system, TextPower. To report an outage, members can call 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520, report through SmartHub or text "OUT" to 580-875-3351.

Hear from your co-op's CEO, Jennifer Meason, about how Cotton Electric is continuing to research and work toward preventing service quality issues on Page 2. Members were also curious about what makes Cotton Electric and other electric cooperatives unique from municipal and investor-owned energy utilities. Members may hear about the "cooperative difference" and the "cooperative culture", but they're more formally known as the Cooperative Principles. Each of the seven principles provide a guideline for how a cooperative can provide excellent member service and improve the quality of life in our local communities.

Thanks to our members who participate in Operation Round Up (ORU), this program is one of the ways your cooperative follows the seventh Cooperative Principle: Concern for Community. When members voluntarily round up their bill to the nearest dollar, those funds are pooled and administered by the Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF). For more information about ORU and CECF, visit www.cottonelectric.com/operation-roundup.

Your cooperative is also committed to providing opportunities for local youth. Each year, Cotton Electric opens essay contests for students in eighth grade for the chance to attend Energy Camp and for high school juniors to explore Washington, D.C., during Youth Tour. For more information about managed, cares about members.

our youth programs, visit www.cottonelectric.com/ youth-programs.

Cotton Electric also provides presentations to local schools and community groups about energy efficiency, electrical safety, cooperative careers and more. To schedule a presentation, contact the Marketing Department at 580-875-3351.

At Cotton Electric Cooperative, your satisfaction is our number one goal. It's why we were formed many years ago to fulfill a uniquely local purpose. We've come a long way since then, and your needs continue to evolve. However, a few things will remain the same at Cotton Electric Cooperative: providing excellent service, serving our local communities and working hard to keep the lights on for you, our valued members.

We are here to serve you. Please visit www.cottonelectric.com or call 580-875-3351 for questions or more information we can provide.

*Results based on data provided by Cotton Electric Cooperative, collected between Oct. 2 and Nov. 7, 2023. ACSI[®] did not regulate the survey administration or sample size. ACSI is a registered trademark of the American Customer Satisfaction Index LLC.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after Feb. 1, 2024, is \$0.00126 per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$1.63 on the February bill.

January 2024 Temperature Extremes

	Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
-	1	42	23	33	16	26	3	15
l	2	50	23	37	17	48	9	29
	3	55	27	41	18	56	20	38
•	4	54	26	40	19	31	14	23
ſ	5	48	39	44	20	33	13	23
	6	53	29	41	21	37	25	31
	7	58	23	41	22	35	30	33
	8	55	32	44	23	44	35	40
	9	47	24	36	24	47	40	44
-	10	65	21	43	25	52	42	47
	11	67	25	46	26	48	43	46
-	12	45	20	33	27	53	30	42
5	13	27	8	18	28	64	26	45
2	14	14	4	9	29	71	29	50
,	15	22	5	14	30	72	35	54
/	Source:	srh.noaa.	gov/oun/		31	72	33	53
Average Daily High · 48					Averao	e Dailv	Low	\mathcal{D}_{4}

Average Daily High: 48 Average Daily Low: 24

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric Cooperative offices will be closed Monday, Feb. 19 for Presidents' Day. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

The next issue of *The Current* should arrive in mailboxes March 8, 2024.

Contact Us

Do you have a story idea for *The Current* or do you need to place an ad? If so, let us know.

We can be reached at 580-875-3351 or by email at TheCurrent@ cottonelectric.com.

You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.



Mission Statement Our mission is to safely deliver reliable and affordable power, provide excellent member service, and improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.



From the CEO

Service Quality Team addresses system reliability

t Cotton Electric Cooperative, we strive every day to provide you, our member-owners, with quality electric service. Part of the cooperative difference is being accountable to those we serve, and when service quality issues occur, our job is to address those problems.

Cotton Electric's Service Quality Team is a multidepartmental group who regularly reviews outages and safety incidents. We discuss and analyze the causes and find solutions for outages that

meeting included an overview of our reliability statistics for 2023, which include the frequency, duration and cause of outages.

If you felt like we had more outages in 2023, you are correct. The frequency and duration outages were higher than in previous years. The majority of outages in 2023 were attributed to lightning, tornado and wind damage (32%) as Mother Nature dealt our service area several blows resulting in broken poles and downed power lines on our



A new transformer was recently installed at the Stephens substation in Duncan. Photo by Carli Eubank.

are preventable. Our most recent distribution system as well as the transmission system providing power to our co-op.

When high winds and storms move through, we experience immediate outages due to broken poles and downed power lines but their effect can be longer lasting. Once the storms have passed – particularly those with lightning – equipment may receive damage but continue to function and provide power temporarily. Sometime down the road, the piece of equipment previously damaged fails and causes an outage, frequently on a clear, blue-sky day. Equipment failure was attributed to 21% of outages in 2023.

outages required for the safety of line personnel performing system maintenance and construction projects (7%), while others were caused by animals and birds (6%), motor vehicle accidents (2%) and power supply (2%), which includes transmission lines and substations. The message via the SmartHub app. remaining 30% of outages were spread over 15 miscellaneous categories.



Jennifer Meason, CEO

Regardless of the reason for the outage, the result is still an inconvenience to our members, and we are diligently working to identify and execute plans to remedy preventable outages. In 2024, we will continue our vegetation management program, pole inspection and replacement, and system improvement projects.

As a member of the cooper-Other causes include planned ative, you have a voice. If you notice blinking lights or experience service quality issues, please let us know by calling 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520. I can be reached at these same numbers if you have questions or concerns. You can also email us at info@cottonelectric.com or send a

> We appreciate your continued support as we work to improve your cooperative.





Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet cozy on cold winter days.

Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table. Area rugs can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier.

Source: www.energy.gov

December 2023 Operating Stats

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$6,490,491	\$7,858,883
Cost of Purchased Power	4,360,155	5,836,687
Taxes	115,475	140,478
Total Operating Expense per Mile	1,171	1,531
Average Farm and Residential Bill	163	205
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,411	1,659
Total Meters Billed (Farm, Residential) 19,538	19,325
Miles Energized	5,265	5,251
Density per Mile	3.71	3.68
New Service Connects YTD	434	562
Services Retired	190	141

Upcoming **Deadlines for** The Current

March

Ad Sales	Feb. 23
Classified	Feb. 23
Publish	March 8

April

Ad Sales March 29 Classified March 29 Publish April 12



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Jennifer Meason	CEO
Shane Bowers	Vice President
Zach Young	Director
Carli Eubank	. Communications Specialist

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Energy Efficiency

Current News

The good kind of evaluation that can help your home's efficiency

sults in higher energy bills, by-room assessment. and with winter in full a free co-op service that can help you boost efficiency and save money.

believe savings and efficiency are within reach for everyone, and we want to help you get there. That's why Cotton Electric Cooperative offers free home malfunction and other key factors. energy evaluations.

provides a holistic view of your home's efficiency. Understanding how your home uses energy can help determine the best ways to adjust energy consumption, improve problem areas and ultimately keep more money in your wallet. An energy evaluation can also identify potential safety issues surrounding electrical wiring and HVAC systems, making your home safer.

So how does it work? First, request the energy evaluation by calling and speaking with our energy efficiency coordinator. We will start the process by reviewing the billing history for your location. The audit is conducted at your home by one of our trained and certified energy advisers.

What to expect during an energy evaluation

The initial free evaluation is composed of the in-home assessment, thermal inspection, and a detailed list of recommendations.

First, our energy adviser conducts a walk-through of your home, examining energy use and identifying problem areas. The adviser will look at specific elements of your home impacting energy use such as doors, windows and insulation levels and examine major appliances, including your heating and

During the assessment, the adviser swing, we'd like to remind you about will ask about your energy-use habits and review past energy bills. The adviser will also conduct thermal imaging As your trusted energy partner, we of the home to detect heat loss that is invisible to the naked eye. Thermal imaging can reveal inadequate insulation levels, HVAC airflow, radiant heat

If the adviser determines further test-A home energy efficiency evaluation ing may be beneficial, they may recommend a blower door and/or duct blaster tests.

> your home by creating a negative pressource of any air leaks or drafts.

The second test helps the adviser determine how much air your HVAC ductwork system is leaking. These leaks your property value – all the more rearesult in energy being wasted heating son to schedule an energy evaluation members in mind, putting the power or cooling spaces, like your attic or for your home.

older weather typically re- cooling system and conduct a room- crawl space, that are not intended to be conditioned.

The power to save is in your hands

Finally, the adviser will provide you with a detailed evaluation of your home's efficiency. This is a written report with a description of your home, an analysis of your energy-consuming appliances, and recommendations regarding energy consumption and steps you can take to improve efficiency and save money.

One of the greatest values of an The first test evaluates the seal of energy evaluation is helping you understand how you use electricity and, use it more efficiently. Additionally, making improvements and upgrades Program and our annual HVAC Tunebased on the evaluation can increase up rebates. These programs and ser-



Heath Morgan, **Energy Efficiency** Coordinator

Free energy evaluations are just one of the many perks of your co-op membership, so we hope you'll take advantage of this valuable service. For more sure inside the home to identify the more importantly, identifying ways to ways to save, check out our additional efficiency offerings such as our Rebate vices are designed with Cotton Electric to save in your hands.

Four Ways an Energy Evaluation Can Benefit You

A home energy evaluation can determine the overall efficiency of your home or business and ways to improve it. Here are the main benefits of conducting an energy evaluation.

An evaluation will identify where most of your energy use is going and ways to use energy more efficiently to save money.

sized for the home or business.

It can determine if appliances and heating/cooling equipment are properly An evaluation can identify potential safety issues with home wiring and ventilation.

Making changes based on the evaluation recommendations will raise your property value.

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LOCALLY OWNED BY OUR MEMBERS

Cooling Degree Day Calendar

Heating Degree Day and

JANUARY

HDD YEAR CDD



Degree days measure how cold or warm a location is by comparing the average of the high and low (mean) of the outdoor temperatures recorded in that location to the standard U.S. temperature, which is 65 F. The assumption is that we don't need heating or cooling to be comfortable when this is the outdoor temperature.





A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 🔨





Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation

Krasser appointed to CECF Board

Polly Krasser has been appointed to serve on the Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF). She fills a seat formerly held by Danny Marlett for more than seven years, and he has decided to allow another person the opportunity to serve in his seat. The CECF would like to thank Danny for his years of service. Krasser will fill out her term due to expire in 2026.

The CECF Board of Directors is comprised of the CEO of Cotton Electric Cooperative, the President of the Board of Trustees of Cotton Electric Cooperative and three individuals from the service area. All five members serve on a voluntary basis. The CECF Board of Directors receives and evaluates all requests for funds through Operation Round Up (ORU) and determines how they will be distributed to local communities.

Krasser is a native of Oklahoma, growing up southwest of Lawton in Faxon. She graduated from Chattanooga High School and furthered her education at Cameron University. Now, she lives across the pasture from where she was raised on her father's homeplace with her husband, Jerry. They have a daughter, Lindsey Billen, who married John Billen, and they are raising two daughters named Lila and Blakely.

After 38 years of teaching, Krasser retired from Chattanooga Public

Schools. Krasser has continued her joy of teaching by helping the school's Student Council and other events. She is also a member of the President's Partner at Cameron University.

When she's not working at the school, she enjoys spending time with family, taking pictures and working outside on the family farm.

Before being appointed to the coop's Charitable Foundation, Krasser knew of Cotton Electric through Youth Tour and Energy Camp.

"I had the privilege of attending numerous speech contests that were held by Cotton Electric for an opportunity to win the Oklahoma Youth Tour," Krasser said. "When I was still teaching, I remember students working very hard on their speeches, and many of our past students have had the opportunity to attend Energy Camp and Youth Tour."

Krasser is looking forward to serving on the CECF Board because of the opportunities there are to make a difference in surrounding communities.

"Through the funds raised with ORU, the Charitable Foundation gives organizations an opportunity to help meet the many needs of the Cotton Electric service territory," Krasser said. "I am very excited to play a small part in helping others and to serve on the CECF Board."

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REMINDER

First-quarter CECF grant applications are due

Feb. 13



YOUR FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT!

We embrace new and innovative treatments that emerge each year in the fight against cancer! Our doctors and nurses are cancer specialists. Our staff is highly trained to support you as a patient. You will not fight alone.

We encourage you to get routine cancer screenings. **Early detection improves outcomes and saves lives.**



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For more information, visit our website **CCSWOK.COM**









Cotton Electric seeks addresses for returned capital credit checks

WFEC capital credit checks totalling \$500,000 the member. Checks addressed to members listed were issued recently to people and businesses.

A retirement of capital credits demonstrates incorrect or insufficient addresses. how a not-for-profit electric cooperative works. Annually, money over and above the cost of operations and other necessary expenses and reserves is declared margins. When the board of trustees determines that a portion of those margins can be refunded, members who contributed to those margins receive a share.

A share of the capital credits was allocated among active and inactive members and a check was mailed to the latest known valid address for THE MEMBER'S IDENTITY.

Α

ABASTA, HENRY J ABBOTT, ZACHARY ABSHER, LEWIS O. III ABSHIRE, RON ACREY, RALSTON ADAMS, PHIL ADAMS, LOUISE ADAMS, JULIA ADAMS, JOHN Q. ADAMS, RICHARD D. ADAMS SKYF AHLSKOG, RICHARD H. ALBERTSON, DEVERA ALEXANDER, L. T. ALEXANDER, LEONA T. ALEXANDER, VANESSA G. ALFORD, SHARON ALLEN, DALE ALLEN, R ALLEN, THORSTEN H. ALMANZA, RAYMOND ALMENDAREZ, CARRIE ALMON, CHRISTOPHER R. ALVEY, JAMES ANDERSON, DUSTIN W. ANDERSON, ARLA F. ANDERSON, CHARLES ANDERSON, ROBERT E. ANDERSON, MARGIE F. ANDERSON, AMANDA ANDREWS, BERTA L. ARA, JAMES A. ARBUCKLE, A. J. ARGROW, KATIE K. ARMENTROUT, STEPHANIE ARMSTRONG, CRISTY ARMSTRONG, CHRIS C. ARMSTRONG, MISTI S. ARNETT, THOMAS J. ARNOLD, WALTER ARTER, RODGER K. ASHCRAFT, LOIS J. ATWOOD, DOROTHY N. AUGUSTINE, DANIEL A. AUTREY, MEGAN AVANTS, KARLEY M AVANTS, EUGENE N. В BAGLEY, DANA K. BAIRD, GUY T. BAKER, BARBARA S.

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BALDWIN, RONALD

BALL, JENNIFER A.

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CAVEL, WANDA J.

CAVES, JOHN

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CHAMP. CRAIG

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CHRISTIAN, BETTY L.

CLAGG, KILEY

CLAIR, DOVEY

CLARK, BETTY A.

CLARK, NOEL D.

CLARK, DANIEL

CLARK, RONALD L.

CLAYBORN, MARK

CLARK, ROSEMARIE

CHRISTENSEN, LORENA V

CHACON, DANNY

CHAMBERLAIN, DENNIS

CHARLSON, SHERRY A.

CECIL, J.

here were returned to the cooperative because of

Cotton Electric Cooperative needs help finding the people listed here. If you see a name on the list that you recognize and if you have information about a current address, please call 580-875-3351 or email info@cottonelectric.com.

TO CLAIM YOUR CAPITAL CRED-IT CHECK, WE REQUIRE A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER TO VERIFY

COBB, R. CRAG COCHRAN, GARY P. COFFEE, WAYNE F. COFFMAN, VIRGIL R. COHEF BETSY S COHN, EDWARD COLE, LOUISE COLE, C. L. COLE, WILLIE R. COLLIER, MARSHALL T. COLLINS, DAVID CONE, TIMOTHY P. CONDIT, TONNIE CONING, CHAD CONSTANT, CHARLES K. COOK, JEREMY A. COOKE, JAMES D. COOPER, GENE V. COOPER, MICHAEL W. COOPER, STEVE L. COOPER, LACETA COOPER, MARCIA D. COOPER, BENNIE A. COPLEY, DONNAL. CORDES, EDMUND J. COUGHRAN, JONATHAN COURTRIGHT, OMA COWAN, BRENT COX, ALTON COX, JIMMY COX, LYN CPFFMAN, ANDREW W. CRABTREE, KIRT L. CRAVEN, MICHAEL L. CRAVENS, SHERA A. CRAWFORD, SIGRID CREED, MAMIE CROTWELL, MARIA CROW. JOYCE CROWDER, ESTHER CROWELL, JAMES E. CROY, DOYCE E. CRUMP, JACK CRUZ, ALEJANDRO CRUZ, ROSE L. CSASZAR, FRANK K. CUDDEBACK, OWEN CULP. GREG L CUMMINGS. JERROLD CUNNINGHAM, JEFFREY H. CURTIS, BOBBY D.

D

DAILY, LENA M. DALRYMPLE, SCOTT B. DALY, NOELLE L. DARLING, JESSICA DAVENPORT, JESSICA R. DAVIS, GARRY DAVIS, STELLA C.

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WHEELER, MICHAEL WHISLER, CAROLINE WHITE, BRANDY D. WHITEHEAD, GERALD W. WHITMAN, NITA WHITMER, RANDAL WHITMORE, C WHITNEY, LARRY E. WHYBARK, CHRISTINE WICKWARE, STEVE M. WIDENER, TOREY F. WIERSIG, LYDIA J. WIGGINS, JEROME WIGINTON, KEITH E. WILKERSON, MEDEA WILKINSON, JOSH M. WILLCOX, MARK WILLIAMS, MARILYN S. WILLIAMS, TANDY WILLIAMS, JIMMY D. WILLIAMS, KIRSTEN D. WILLIAMS, KELLY WILLIAMS, MICHAEL D. WILLIAMS, JEREMY R. WILLIAMS, DON WILLIAMS, CHANCE A. WILLIAMS, GLENN L. WILLIAMS, PAT L. WILLIAMS. JOHN WILLIAMSON, BESSIE WILLIS, JERRY S. WILSON, JOANIE A. WILSON LEF WILSON, TONYA WILSON, BENNIE .H WILSON, GINGER G. WILSON, JAMES WILSON, KAY WILSON, HARVEY L. WING, SIDNEY H. WINKLER, W WINTER, EDWIN D. WISELEY, LARRY WITHAM, DAVID B. WITT, JEFFREY S. WIYNINGER, D. J. WOLVERTON, JANICE K. WOMACK, JESSICA D. WOMACK, KEITH WOOD, STANLEY C. WOOD, DENNIS WOOD, J WOOD, BILLIE C. WOODALL, CHARLES L. WOODS, TRACY J. WOODS, MARTY D. WOODS, JANEEN M. WOODS, ROBIN W. WOODS, JOHNNY E. WOODSON, NANCY M. WORTHAM, JEFF D. WRIGHT, GARY L. WRIGHT, KENNETH H. WRIGHT, JAMES T. WRIGHT, ALYSHA M. WRIGHT, JACE Y

YAKESCH, FRANK YANDELL, SCOTT YARBROUGH, AQUARION D. YEAHQUO, CARL YOCUM, LARRY D. YORK, MICHAEL A. YOUNG, WALTER H. YOUNGER, JAMES

Ζ

ZAMARRIPA, JOSE ZAVALA, MAX

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OATMAN. STEVEN L. OBERENDER, HAROLD R. OETINGER, LEAH OGLE, AMANDA M. O'GORMAN, LILITH K. OHOLOROGG, DANA L. O'KELLEY, KATY OLDS, FLORA M. OLIVER, NORMAN O'NEAL, JO OQUENDO, MIGUEL OSBORNE, JUDY A. OTT, KATHLEEN M. OTTO, ISTAR OVERCASH, JASON OVERSTREET, COURTNEY A. OVERSTREET, DEBORAH G. OWEN, CINDY OWENS, MARIAN OXFORD, JOE

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PAHDOCONY, CHIINAPI D. PALMER, TERESA L. PAPROSKI, CHRISTINA W. PARKER, DEWEY L. PARKER, GEOFF PARKHURST, PHILLIP P. PARKS, HOLLY M. PARKS, GLYNA PARNELL, SUZANNE PATE, JUDY L. PATTERSON, RONNIE PATTERSON, MICHAEL D. PATTON, HAROLD PAUKEN, NICHOLAS J

SMITH, RAYMOND C. SMITH, ROGER D.

SMITH, KENYA R.

SMITH, MARTY K.

SMITH OSCAR

Businesses

To claim a capital credit check for a business, we require a Federal ID number.

81 KWIK MART, LLC APACHE PETROLEUM CORP AUSLEY SECURITY ACADEMY BARR ENERGY LLC **BKEP CRUDE LLC** BRANCH-SOUTH-VAN EATON CAMINO NATURAL RESOURCES, LLC CAROLE PETROLEUM, LLC CENTERPOINT GAS TRANSMISSION CHAPPARRAL ENERGY LLC CHARLES JENKINS ENERGY CO CHARLIES CATFISH CO CHISHOLM CORNER STORE #16 CHOICE WIRELESS AMERILINK CLINE'S STORE COASTAL PLAINS ENERGY COKER OIL CO COM TEL-CHOICE WIRELESS COMPADRE DRILLING & EXPLORATION COMTEL PCS MAINSTREET LP CONOCOPHILLIPS PIPE LINE COM CONOCOPHILLIPS PIPE LINE COM CROWN CENTRAL PETRO CORP **CWR CONSTRUCTION INC** DAVIS OIL CO DEYO MISSION DIAMOND SQUARE RANCH LLC DILLON CONSTRUCTION CO DON W BULLARD ETAL EDELWEISS F B I CATTLE CO F GRANT REALTORS

FAIRVIEW BAPTIST MISSION FIVE POINT SERVICE INC **GLENMAR COMPANY** GRACEWAY BAPTIST CHURCH GREAT LAKES D & D CO HARRIS CORPORATION HIGH SIERRA CRUDE OIL HIGH SIERRA TRANSPORTATION LLC HIGH SIERRA WATER SERV MIDCONTINENT C-44 HOMCO INT, INC J & J OIL CO JERAL W JACKSON, INC KEN'S CONSTRUCTION KOETTER FARM ACCT LANDIS WELDING LDS CHURCH LEFTY 7 FARMS LIPPERT BROTHERS CONST LITTLE O OIL CO MCFALL & MCFALL MEEK'S AUTO SALES NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY NATURAL GAS OPERATIONS CO NORMAN GAS TRANSMISSIONS CO OBSERVATION POINT GUEST HOUSE LLC OCSI OSU-UML PARTNERS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT PB&W 1, LLC PERKINS PRODUCTION CO PLACER OIL CO

PONTOTOC ROAD CO POWER SECURE, INC RC-LK CATTLE CO RED RIVER AIR INC RED WOLF OPERATING LLC SALT & PEPPER FENCING, LLC SAMSON RESOURCES CO SENTRY INTERNATIONAL SOUTH 81 PLAZA INC SOUTHWEST MACHINE TOOL SUN OIL CO SUN OIL CO SUNRAY DX OIL CO T & W OIL AND GAS LLC **TAUBERT & STEED** TERRY BELL ESTATE THE BASKET CASE TIDE WEST OIL CO TOTAL PIPELINE INC TRANS OK LLC TRULUCK ENTERPRISES TWO STAR PETROLEUM CO **U S POST OFFICE** UNION PAC. RESOURCES CO **USA NIGHTCLUB VBLCINC** W & B OIL W T ROBINSON & SONS TRUCKING WELBUILT CONCEPTS, LLC WILKINSON PAYTON REAL ESTATE





No posting zone: Power poles

Most jobs do not require you to climb 40 feet in the air and conduct business within a few feet of high voltage power lines that carry 7,200 volts of electricity. However, for many utility workers, this is just another day at the office.

Across the nation there are millions of utility poles that provide the electricity that powers everything in your daily life — including the brewing of your morning cup of coffee and the lighting you turn off before going to bed. The electricity we depend on would not be possible without the utility workers who maintain and repair these utility poles.

Cotton Electric Cooperative urges everyone to keep utility poles free from all personal materials such as balloons, fliers, and metal objects like staples or tacks. By

Most jobs do not require respecting utility poles, you ou to climb 40 feet in the air can help keep your commund conduct business within a nity powered, and your local ww feet of high voltage power utility workers safe.

> This practice is not only illegal in many areas, but also creates hazards for the line workers who repair and maintain utility poles and other electrical infrastructure and can increase your monthly utility bill.

> Utility workers use specialized climbing devices to perform regular maintenance and repair damaged power lines at the top of utility poles. Nails and other metal objects used to attach objects to utility poles can interfere with the safe operation of the climbing boots used by utility workers.

> Foreign objects that are embedded in utility poles can also snag or damage the protective clothing that keeps line workers safe from electrical

shock. These men and women already work in extremely hazardous conditions, so everyone who relies on electricity should take steps to make their job as safe as possible.

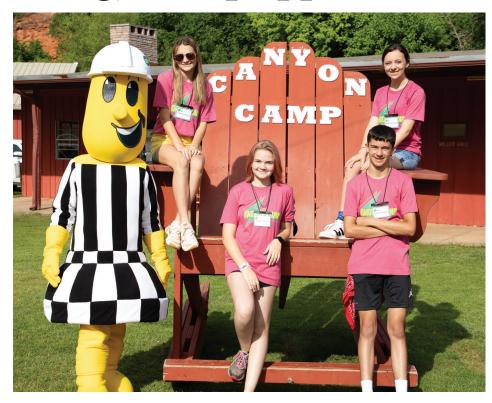
Other items that have been found on utility poles include tree stands for hunting. If you plan on hunting, do not place tree stands or other objects on utility poles. Doing so not only creates a risk for utility workers, but it is also extremely dangerous for yourself or anyone who uses it. For your own safety, please keep as much distance between yourself and overhead power lines as possible.

For more information on staying safe around power lines, utility poles, and electricity, visit www.cottonelectric.com or www.safeelectricity.com.



Keep utility poles free from all personal materials such as balloons, fliers, and metal objects like staples or tacks to help keep your community powered, and your local utility workers safe. Photo courtesy of Safe Electricity.

Energy Camp application deadline open until March 29



(Left to right) Katelyn Patterson, Abigail Bowman, Tanner Bordelon and Katie Deurmyer were Cotton Electric's essay contest winners for the 2023 Energy Camp. Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Applications for the 2024 Energy Camp are available for all incoming and current eighth graders attending schools within the Cotton Electric service territory. The deadline to submit an entry is 3 p.m. on March 29.

Put on by Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives, Energy Camp is a hands-on, immersive camp experience that will be held May 28 -31 at Canyon Camp in Red Rock Canyon, southeast of Hinton.

Four campers will win an all-expense paid, firsthand experience learning about cooperative principles, running for leadership positions, and climbing a power pole, just like electric lineworkers do.

This contest has two rounds. The first round is the essay contest, where contestants submit an essay between 50 and 100 words to the co-op about why the entrant would like to attend the 2024 Energy Camp. Writers of the top 15 essays move to the second round for a live video interview between students and judges where the final four will be selected to attend the 2024 Energy Camp.

To enter the contest, visit www.cottonelectric.com/energycamp. For questions or more information, contact the Marketing Department at 580-875-3351 or email at zyoung@cottonelectric.com.







Local business provides color and comfort for any occasion

Nita's Flowers and Gifts

10% discount on purchase



By Carli Eubank

Located along Broadway Street in Marlow is a storefront familiar to many locals. For decades, Nita's Flowers and Gifts has served flowers to local communities for many of life's occasions. Helen Thomas, owner of Nita's Flowers and Gifts, and her lifelong connection to flowers inspired her to share the wide range of emotions that flowers bring to others.

Ever since she can remember, Thomas has had a love for flowers. When she was a kid, Thomas remembers her dad bringing in fresh cut flowers from the yard and arranging the vibrant-colored blooms in a vase before placing them on the kitchen table. This fond memory inspired her to pursue a career in the floral industry, working at a flower shop in Duncan for 16 years before attending design school in Houston and later purchasing the building in Marlow from the previous owner, Nita, in October 1971.

"Flowers have been a lifetime love for me," Thomas said. "Now, I get to share that love with others."

When Cotton Electric members show their Co-op Connections card, they can receive 10% off their purchase at Nita's Flowers and Gifts. The business offers many different products, like walk-in-ready fresh flower arrangements, silk flower arrangements, fresh plants and more, but Thomas' favorite aspect of the job is creating fresh flower arrangements, especially bouquets for weddings. Thomas shared how one family chose Nita's Flowers and Gifts to provide floral arrangements and decorations for weddings of three generations.

"We are one of the longest-standing businesses in Marlow, so we usually don't get a lot of one-time customers," Thomas said. "We are grateful for the returning and continuing support from our community and satisfied customers."

Thomas and her employees have worked together for many years, and they pride themselves in providing the freshest flowers possible and excellent service by "treating the customers the way they would want to be treated."





Nita's Flowers and Gifts offer walk-in-ready fresh flower bouquets. Photo by Carli Eubank.

Throughout 52 years of business, Thomas has moved along with many trends in the floral industry, such as different colors, styles, materials and design. But along with those changes, come the different reasons behind each floral arrangement request.

"We serve a wide range of emotions through the language of flowers," Thomas said. "Flowers are present for all occasions. They show happiness, they show sorrow, they show sympathy, and they show healing. So, pleasing our customers during whatever time or season they are going through is always our priority."

For more information or to place on order at Nita's Flowers and Gifts, call 580-658-2714, visit their Facebook page, or stop by the store at 114 N. Broadway St. in Marlow.

Don't have your Co-op Connections card? No problem! They are available to all members and can be downloaded in the app, printed online, or picked up at Cotton Electric offices in Walters or Duncan. You can also visit www.connections.coop.com or www.cottonelectric.com under the Member Services tab to discover how you can be part of this free, money-saving opportunity.

Oklahoma electric cooperatives co-sponsor 2024 SKIE Awards

Cotton Electric Cooperative is excited to promote the 2024 SKIE (Supporting K20 Innovative Educators) awards, sponsored by Oklahoma's electric cooperatives and the K20 Center for Community and Education Renewal.

We know there are teachers in our community who go above and beyond for their students. The SKIE awards celebrate educators or teams of educators across the state who have demonstrated the ability to link student learning with the innovative use of technology and the K20 IDEALS.

Oklahoma educators who have forward-thinking ideas and techniques for their classroom could win \$1,000 thanks to your nomination. This award will honor five regional winners (Northwest, Southwest, Northeast, Central and Southeast regions).

If you know of an innovative educator who "reaches for the sky" to promote students learning, please consider nominating them for the 2024 SKIE award.

SUPPORTING K20 INNOVATIVE EDUCATORS



For more information or to make a nomination, visit www.k20center.ou.edu/ skie/. The deadline for nominations is March 15. Applications are open to all teachers in the state and must be filled out by May 24. Winners will be awarded in the fall.





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Guard against utility service scams, other forms of fraud and identity theft



It is the world we live in today – the necessity to pause and consider before we click, answer or respond to someone seeking information. No industry, person or business is off limits to scammers, who even try to con their way into the utility industry.

The Better Business Scam Tracker reports that victims usually lose \$274 in all types of scams and \$500 in a utility scam.

When it comes to power bills, scammers make threatening phone calls to consumers to demand immediate payment, or else their service will be shut off. This deceiving claim is often made during the height of summer or winter, when people want to stay comfortable during the extreme heat or cold.

Utility scams: How they get you

Scammers request that immediate payment be wired, loaded on a reloadable gift card or debit card or sent using cryptocurrency (a digital money system that does not rely on banks for verification). Only scammers request this type of payment and threaten immediate service disconnection. Do not provide any information (including your utility account number) or agree to immediate payment; instead, hang up and check with your utility by calling the phone number listed on your power bill. Fake numbers and links can appear in emails and texts.

Utility bills that double the amount due may be a utility scam. Utilities are closely regulated and may not have the right to raise prices substantially. Consumers should trust their gut reaction; if it seems like a fraud, it probably is.

Protect personal info

When supplying your utility (or any business or person) with sensitive information such as a social security number, proof of address or death certificate, do not email the information. Additionally, do not give out sensitive information to anyone who calls you. Verify the phone number and call the utility directly to discuss any matter that would involve providing personal information. In general, some companies do have password-protected, secure methods to obtain personal information via an app or portal, but always verify this before using.

At your door

Door-to-door scams may involve impersonators of utility workers saying the meter is broken or offering to perform other repairs or an energy evaluation. Your utility will contact you in advance, prior to arriving at your home for service or for any other reason. Do not let someone in the house without a pre-approved appointment.

Scams in general

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) warns that phishing emails and texts attempt to convince individuals to make payments or provide personal information. Thieves use stolen information to open accounts and pass charges on to the victim.

Caller ID can fib

Over the phone, calls appearing to be local are not always an accurate assessment of who is calling. AARP has a fraud watch network that provides alerts of new frauds; do an internet search for the fraud watch network to learn more.

Scams are everywhere

Non-utility-related scams may include the announcement of an inheritance or pop-ups on a computer warning that technical support is needed. There are student loan forgiveness scams and onetime password bot scams.

Hackers even prey on the many smartphone users who have cracked screens. It is called the "chip in the middle attack," and scammers get ahold of a screen replacement and install it on your phone with a spyware chip. Always verify a screen-fix-it phone number or take your phone to a store/servicer you trust. If the company cannot be verified by a search engine, do not trust it.

No matter the scam, the goal of the scammer is to gather personal information. Do not share Social Security numbers, account details, credit card numbers, bank information, death certificates or birth dates. Thieves can use this information to steal their victim's identity.

If you become a victim of a scam, report it to the local police and your bank. Consumers can protect themselves by blocking unknown callers and keeping software updated on phones and computers.









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Brooks Meat Market

Cast & Bang Outfitters Authorized ASF Dealer

10% Off ASF Products and 5% Off Guided Hunts. Discount can not be food and lodging on guided hunts.

> Chisholm Trail Heritage Center

Cinnabon Cinnabon location Cosmetic Specialty Labs, Inc.

- TRAVEL - HEALTH

MUCH MORI

Debbie's Little Books 10% off of regular purchase price of

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Horse Sense Graphics 15% off orders over \$100.

Infinity Computer Systems

Johnson & Johnson Locksmith and Door

Ligon's Garden Center

Linda and Sarah's Carpets

Marlow Kwik Lube

Medicine Park Aquarium & **Natural Sciences Center** 10% off admission or

Nita's Flowers

Pink Rebel Clothing Co. **Rick Wylie Construction** 5% discount on 8x10 & 6x8 storm shelters; 10% discount on 8x12 and

Showman's Choice 10% off Professional's Choice

Stephens County Humane Society

Sue Cabelka, Realtor \$500 off seller's closing costs.

Sylvan Learning Schedule an assessment and \$40 will be deducted from the cost.

The Salt Cellar 15% off non-sale items, excluding boxed cards and gift cards.

Wichita Furniture 10% off new purchases.







Driven member makes dream come true

By Carli Eubank

hen you walk in the door from the early morning air, warm smells of sugar and cinnamon mixed with strong coffee meet your senses. Before you is a bakery case filled with a variety of doughnuts, cookies, turnovers and other pastries. After you've closely studied which treat to order, the sound of footsteps grows closer. When you stand up and look over the bakery case, you are greeted with a friendly smile as Mrs. Chadwick asks, "What tion with her friend, Chadwick can I get for you today?"

Medicine Tucked inside Park is Mrs. Chadwick's Bakery, owned by Cotton Electric member Dianne Chadwick. Before opening her own bakery, Chadwick had always had the "bug" for baking since she was a kid.

"My great-aunt was an incredible baker, and she is how I got interested in baking as a kid," Chadwick said. "It started when she taught me how to make rum cake, which was my favorite recipe of hers."

Chadwick had made poundcakes for a couple of years before she made plans to meet with a friend of hers and shared something that had been on her mind recently: to open a bakery in Medicine Park. Her friend stared back in awe and responded how she had been praying for someone to move a new business in to Medicine Park, and she believed Chadwick was the answer to her prayer. "I don't know why I was drawn to this location," Chadwick said. "We do have some family ties to Medicine Park, and it seemed like such a great place to work and grow."

from her twin boys who were born with autism. She wanted to create a space where her boys could work. Her oldest son liked to work alone and enjoyed making cookies in the back of the shop, and her youngest son would work in the front of the bakery.

"Even though both of my boys have grown up and moved on to other jobs, they really encouraged me to keep the bakery open after they left," Chadwick said.

Not long after the conversaand her husband met with the owner of a building in Medicine Park, and they both liked the space that had not been occupied in a few years. Six months later, they were able to get inside the building, transform the space with the help of their family and open their door to the public in May 2011.

Surprises are bound to come up when running a business, and Chadwick experienced a shocking challenge not long after opening the bakery.

At the end of that summer, Chadwick had a mammogram scheduled, and when the results came back, everything seemed great with no concerns. One morning, Chadwick noticed a lump in her armpit. Assuming it their customers the best prodwas just an infection, Chadwick went to the doctor expecting to leave with some antibiotics, but instead, left with a surgery scheduled to remove the lump. When she awoke from the surgery, Chadwick was met with the news that she had breast cancer. Every week of the first year of her bakery opening, Chadwick went to chemotherapy Wednesday, recovered Thursday, and chose to work at the bakery Friday.



One of the many treats Mrs. Chadwick's Bakery creates are custom cakes. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Chadwick's Bakery.

so much help around me," Chadwick said. "I had my family and friends, people in Medicine Park, and so many others who visited and prayed with me. I eventually had reconstructive surgery, worked through that too, and now, I am cancer-free. All of this was a God thing."

The bakery has seen a lot of change and growth over the years, such as adding doughnuts to the menu and her sister as partner of the bakery, but serving ucts possible remains the same. "I love what I do because it's something new every day," Chadwick said. "I enjoy the excitement of making new recipes and products. When you are creating something and really concentrating on the task, you kind of just get lost in the work." The most popular menu item was created from the combo of a customer and a dilemma. One day, a customer ordered a coffee ice cream shake and Chadwick's

"It was exhausting, but I had husband informed her that they were out of coffee ice cream. Then, an idea came to his mind to blend a shot of espresso with vanilla ice cream, and the customer loved the new product. After a few modifications to the recipe, they decided on mixing one shot of espresso with coffee ice cream to make the well-known Espresso Slurry.

> "Since opening the bakery, there has never been a morning when I've gotten up and dreaded going to work," Chadwick said. "I choose to not look at what I do as a job. I look at it as something I get to do every day because I can, and it's been an incredible experience." Mrs. Chadwick's Bakery is open Thursday through Sunday, serving sweet treats and filling custom orders for customers. To learn more about the business, search their Facebook page, visit their website at www.mrschadwicksbakery.net, or stop by the bakery in Medicine Park.

Two sources of Chadwick's inspiration to open a bakery came



The bakery case is filled with a variety of sweet treats. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Chadwick's Bakery.



Pairing Mrs. Chadwick's Bakery's popular cinammom rolls with a cup of coffee is a popular combo at the baker. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Chadwick's Bakery.



Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the March issue, please submit information by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com by Feb. 23. Only events occurring after March 8 will be published in the next issue.

Editor's Note: We recommend checking for cancellations with local sources before attending any event.

Wichita Mountain Quilt Guild hosts local show

See many beautiful quilts at the 2024 Quilt Show presented by the Wichita Mountain Quilt Guild. There will also be a silent small quilt auction each day, a quilt raffle, American Girl doll raffle, themed baskets raffle, a Janome 3160 door prize, vendors and demonstrations. General admission is \$8. The event is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Feb. 16 and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Feb. 17 at the Great Plains Coliseum Annex in Lawton.

Annual Coin Show in Duncan

Head out to the Stephens County 55th Annual Coin Show in Duncan to browse through gold, silver, coins, currency, tokens and more to buy, sell and trade. Find out what your treasured coins are worth or hunt down the elusive coin you've been searching to find. This coin show features antique coins and more from all over the United States. Free parking and admission. The show is from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Feb. 16, and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Feb. 17, at the Stephens County Fairgrounds, 2002 S. 13 St. in Duncan. For more information, call Dan at 580-467-0168 or Ed at 580-475-4570.

How-To festival with local vendors

Ever wanted to learn how to line dance? Train dogs? Budget? Join the Lawton Farmer's Market for a free Orchestra performs in Lawton's Mc-Mahon Memorial Auditorium with a wide variety of performances scheduled for each season. Depending on the tickets purchased, admission is \$10-\$50. The event is from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Feb. 24 at the McMahon Memorial Auditorium. For questions, more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.lawtonphil.com.

CU wraps up annual academic festival

The theme for Cameron University's 12th academic festival is "Care and Health: A Generational Approach." One of the final events of the festival is a presentation from Leighann Lord, where she will bring a realistic yet humorous personal perspective on mental health support for caregivers and the individuals they support. Lord hosts her own podcast, People with Parents, co-hosts Point of Inquiry, created Hanging In There with Leighann Lord on YouTube and has a daily social media post called #LightheartedHistory. Lord has become one of the hottest public speakers working today, discussing caregiver tips. Lord's presentation is Feb. 27 at Cameron University. For more information, call 580-581-2211, email publicaffairs@ cameron.edu, or visit their website at www.cameron.edu/public-affairs/academic-festivals/.

Food pantry open once monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month. The pantry is in the old City Hall, 131 1/2 W. California Street in Walters. Pantry organizers try to provide a twoweek supply of basic staples to anyone with identification and proof of Cotton County residency. Monetary donations may be sent to Food Pantry, c/o Paul Metcalfe, 211 E. Colorado St. in Walters. For questions or more information, call Roger Noland at 580-591-6826.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Julian Bowers, son of Cotton Electric Vice President of Administration Shane Bowers and Dalana Bowers is "loving life" playing with puppies.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. The theme for March is Take Me Out to the Ballgame! Entries can be emailed to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a prize.



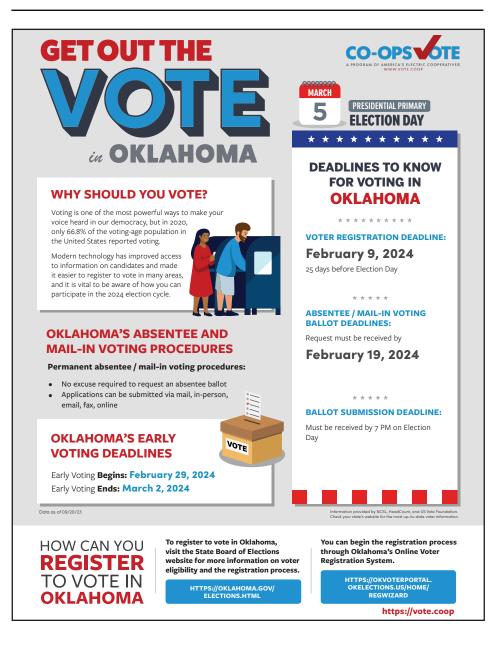
educational experience where several booths with community members will be ready to demonstrate "how-to." This family-friendly even is from 2 to 6 p.m. of Feb. 17 at the Lawton Farmer's Market at 77 NW 4th St., Lawton. For more information, visit their Facebook page.

Classical concert in Lawton

Enjoy music from the classic film, *Amadeus* as the Lawton Philharmonic Orchestra performs Mostly Mozart. With a history of more than 50 years of music, The Lawton Philharmonic

Blessings Boutique open monthly

Marlow First United Methodist Church opens its Blessings Boutique from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every first and third Tuesday of the month. Clothing donation drop-off days are Tuesdays, or donors can call the church at 580-658-2765 to make other arrangements.





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Eating a good breakfast sets you up for a successful day





Breakfast is generally defined as the first meal of the day eaten within two hours of waking. Eating breakfast has been associated with improved mental function, heart health, maintaining a healthy weight, and controlling type 2 diabetes. Successful breakfasts contain as many food groups as possible, 20-35% of your daily calorie allotment, and should be high in protein and fiber.

sandwich, last night's leftovers from dinner can all be consumed at breakfast. Evaluate the food against the successful breakfast criteria (how many food groups, portion size, protein, fiber) and fill in gaps. With pizza, is it a whole grain crust with vegetables as a topping? If not, add a side of fruit or vegetable and focus and upgrading the side to a fruit. Juice would be a on whole grains for other meals or snacks.

tein, fiber, and heart healthy fats improves the natural secretion of hormones that make you feel full for longer periods of time. This can help you avoid making less desirable food choices later in the day. Breakfasts high in simple carbohydrates result in a faster rise in blood sugar, which is great if you are exercising immediately after breakfast but not so great if your normal activities are less active. Spikes in blood sugar can result in a hormonal cascade that makes you feel sluggish. The goal of a balanced breakfast is to produce a slow release of glucose into the bloodstream so your cells have a sustained energy source.

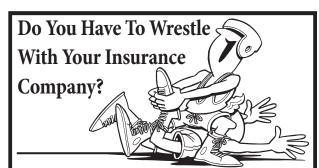
If you are a numbers person, here are some targets for a successful breakfast: 200-500 calories, 20-30g protein, 5-10 grams of fiber, 5-10 grams of heart health fat (more unsaturated fat than saturated fat), source of calcium/vitamin D, other vitamins and minerals. The protein and fiber amounts are absolute; calories and fat should be adjusted to maintain weight, hence calories being a target range so you can adjust based on your individual calorie needs.

Making your breakfast at home is the simplest way to achieve a successful breakfast. Consuming breakfasts away from home require special attention to Breakfast can consist of any food item. Pizza, portion size and ingredients. Think about your typical fast food breakfast - biscuit/croissant/english muffin, breakfast meat, cheese, side of fried potatoes. This type of breakfast has protein but also too many calories, saturated fat and very little fiber. Ways to make it healthier include only ordering the sandwich better option than regular soda, but coffee, unsweet

Balance is important at breakfast. Combining pro- tea, and a side of fruit would be healthier options. Think about your typical restaurant/employee cafeteria breakfast - large portions contribute to excess calorie consumption. The best bet is to order your restaurant breakfast with protein, high fiber bread, side of fruit/vegetable, and plan to save some for later so you don't overeat.

> Shakes and smoothies need to follow the same criteria - include protein, vegetables, fruits, fiber and limit simple sugars and watch portion size to control calories. To add fat, nut butter and avocado are heart healthy options. Because shakes and smoothies are already broken down, it is essential to get protein, fat, and fiber into the mix to feel full and avoid blood sugar spikes.

> Here are some of my favorite successful breakfasts: egg and veggie breakfast taco on corn tortilla or high fiber tortilla; avocado on high fiber toast with fruit; ham and veggie omelet with side of tomatoes; protein pancake, nut butter, sliced banana; yogurt parfait. For fast food, an english muffin/egg/ham with side of fruit. Break your fast with these guidelines in mind to start your day with breakfast success.



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Breakfast tacos are a great option for a successful breakfast. Photo courtesy of MetroCreative.







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Students make winning recipes

The annual Stephens County Cook-Off was held on Oct. 30, 2023. Participants included many Cloverbuds and 4-H'ers who entered more than 60 total recipes. The young cooks prepared recipes to be judged on taste and appearance.

Awards were presented to the top three in each category. First-place winners received a monogrammed apron, and second- and third-place winners received kitchen items. Cloverbud participants received a certificate and kitchen spatula. Awards were sponsored by Stephens County Farm Bureau Women.

The Current has included recipes from the winners in each category.



Nana's Chicken and Noodles Number of Servings: 6

By Paxton Jones

Ingredients:

- 4 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups wide egg noodles
- 3 tbs. butter
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 2(5.2 oz) canned chicken
- 1 (10.5 oz) cream of chicken soup
- 1 (15 oz.) English Peas, drained

Directions:

dles, salt, pepper, and butter. Bring is not enough.

to a full boil until noodles are tender (approximately 15 minutes). Do not cover. Keep fire low, so it does not boil over. Stir frequently.

When tender, add remaining ingredients: chicken, cream of chicken soup, and English Peas. Bring back to a boil, stirring constantly until mixed thoroughly and hot all the way through.

Cover and set aside for 10 minutes. In a 3 qt. saucepan, place broth, noo- Hot water can be added if desired juice



Lemon Blueberry Bread

Number of Servings: 1 loaf (about 12-15 pieces) By Graycie Farris

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour 1 tsp. baking powder 1 tsp. salt 1/3 cup unsalted butter, melted 1 cup granulated sugar 2 eggs 1 tsp. vanilla extract 2 tsp. lemon zest, fresh grated 4 tbs. fresh lemon juice 1/2 cup milk 1 cup blueberries

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F and line a 9/5 loaf pan with parchment paper (or lightly grease with butter).

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.

In the bowl or an electric mixer, blend together the melted butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Mix until well combined. While slowly mixing, add flour mis- sugar, lemon juice and vanilla, then ture and milk into two batches (some pour the glaze over the loaf. Allow to flour, then some milk, then the rest of set a few minutes, then enjoy!

the flour and the rest of the milk). Stop mixing as soon as it is combined.

Rinse off the blueberries (if using fresh) so they have just a bit of moisture on them. Then, in a small bowl, toss the blueberries and 1 tbs. flour. This flour coating will help prevent the blueberries from sinking to the bottom of your loaf while baking.

Add the flour coated blueberries to the batter and gently but quickly stir, by hand, to combine.

Immediately pour better into prepared pan and bake for 55-65 minutes, or until a tookpick inserted in the center of the bread comes out clean. Cool bread in the pan for about 30 minutes, then move to a wire cooling rack with a baking sheet below (to catch the glaze you are about to add).

Prepare glaze by sampling whisking

Reese Peanut Butter Brownie Cupcakes Number of Servings: 24 (depending on batter) By Katherine Gee

Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter 2 cup sugar 2 tsp. vanilla extract 4 eggs 3/4 cocoa powder 1 cup all-purpose flour 1/2 tsp. baking powder 1/2 tsp. salt 36 Reese cups Icing: 1/3 cup vegetable shortening 1/3 cup butter 1 tsp. vanilla extract 4 cup powdered sugar
- 4-6 tbsp. milk

Directions:

Place butter in a large microwave bowl. Microwave on medium until melted. Stir in sugar and vanilla. Add star tip on the end. Pipe a large star on eggs, one at a time, beating well with a top of the cupcake and top with a piece spoon after each addition. Add cocoa of Reese peanut butter cup. powder and beat until well blended. Add flour, baking powder, and salt. a thin ribbon of chocolate syrup over Beat well.

Put muffin liners in tin. Fill to 1/2full and push a Reese cup into the middle of each muffin.

Bake at 350 degrees F for 22-25 minutes or until the middle comes out clean or you see cracking on top of muffin. Let cupcakes cool.

Icing:

To making icing, cream butter and shortening together on medium speed. Then, add peanut butter and vanilla. You will need to stop mixture and scrape sides of bowl several times during this to make sure everything is mixing together.

Slowly add 4 cups of sifted powdered sugar. Mixture will look dry. Add 4-6 tbsps. of milk until the mixture becomes light and fluffy.

Put icing in an icing bag with a large

For extra yumminess, you can put the top of each cupcake.



Kyson's Super E-Z Punch

Number of Servings: 20 cups By Kyson Cox

Ingredients:

1 gallon Lime Sherbert 2 liters of Ginger Ale 2 liters of Sprite

Directions:

bert in a medium punch bowl.

Pour half of the ginger ale and half of the Sprite over the sherbert. Stie mixture. Mixture should be frothy.

Replenish sherbert, ginger ale and Sprite, as needed.

Can substitute 7-Up for a less sweet Place 1/2 of the softened lime sher- taste. Other type of sherbert can be substituted, as well.

Congratulations!

CHISHOLM A R T S COUNCIL TRAIL

together the melted butter, powdered



Nanny's Coconut Cream Pie Number of Servings: 6 By Jude Moore

Ingredients:

1/4 cup. all-purpose flour Dash of salt 3 large egg yolks 2 cups whole milk 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract 1 1/4 cups sweetened, shredded coconut 1 baked pie shell Meringue: 3 large egg yolks 1/8 tsp. cream of tartar 6 tbsp. sugar

Directions:

In a saucepan, combine the sugar, flour and salt. In a separate bowl, combine the egg yolks and milk. Slowly mix wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until smooth.

Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly until mixture is smooth and bubbly.

While whisking, think about who you are making this for. Imagine your love for them trickling down into the food. Your emotions will transfer to your food.

Reduce heat to low and continue cooking and stirring for 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

Stir in vanilla and 1 cup coconut. Add mixture into the pie shell.

For meringue, beat egg ehites and cream of tartar, starting at low speed and slowly increasing, until still peaks form. Slowly add in sugar until peaks are glossy and stuff. Spread the meringue over the filling and use a spoon with an upward flick to create peaks.

Bake at 350 degrees F for 12-15 minutes until meringue is golden. Let cool before serving.

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Cherries are the star of this Valentine's Day treat

Tart, red cherries and Valentine's Day seem to be the perfect pair. Not only do cherries align with a Valentine's Day color scheme, they even resemble little hearts when hanging from their stems.

Celebrating Valentine's Day involves many different traditions, and enjoying decadent desserts is among them. Purchasing ready-made treats from a local bakery is one way to indulge in a sugary confection, but crafting a recipe at home is another way to show that special someone how much you care.

"Cherry Pie Bars" are not exactly a pie, but a pound cake with a cherry pie filling swirl. They can be made for many different occasions, but make for something sweet on Valentine's Day. Whip up this recipe from "Butter, Flour, Sugar, Joy" (Sourcebooks) by Danielle Kartes.

Cherry Pie Bars

Yield: One 9-by-13-inch pan

Ingredients:

2 cups sugar 1 cup butter, softened 4 eggs 2 cups all-purpose flour 1 teaspoon baking powder 1/2 teaspoon salt 1 21-ounce can cherry pie filling

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a 9-by-13-inch pan with parchment paper.

In a stand mixer, or with a hand mixer, cream sugar and butter on low. Add squares. Enjoy!

the eggs one at a time. Beat until just combined.

Add the flour, baking powder and salt. Spread a little over half the cake batter into the pan. Evenly spread the pie filling over the top, and spoon the rest of the cake batter over the pie filling. It's fine if the cherries show through.

Bake 35 minutes or until the top has turned slightly golden. Do not overbake. Allow to cool and slice into



Give Your Back a Break...Stop Adding Salt to Your Softener

Minerals in your water form scale deposits that build up inside your pipes, water heater, shower heads, and other water using equipment like cholesterol in your arteries. These deposits significantly decrease the efficiency of your plumbing systems. Drinking water and icemakers are also negatively affected, as are health quality of water and taste. Hard water is not safe for you, your family or your home.

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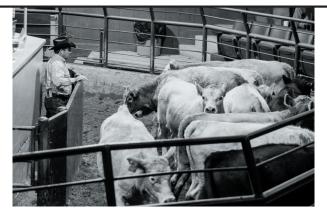
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Serigrapq II of VII, Pueblo Potter by Katlin Ehling Original Batik (2), Self Portrait of Oklahoma Artist Sam Echols, Portrait of a Woman by Sam Echols (2), Bradford Exchange Songbirds in

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nvesting for your future is Limportant — but it can be challenging. How can you navigate the complexities of the financial markets and make the right decisions for your situation?

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• Developing a personal financial strategy – Many



factors go into creating a long-term financial strategy. What is your risk tolerance? When would you like to retire? What sort of retirement lifestyle have you envisioned? What are your other important goals? A financial advisor will ask these and other questions in getting to know you, your family situation and your hopes for the future. By taking this type of holistic approach, a financial advisor can help you create financial and investment strategies appropriate for your needs.

• Avoiding mistakes – A financial advisor can help you avoid costly investment mistakes. One such mistake is attempting to "time" the

market. Investors pursue market timing when they try to "buy low" and "sell high." In theory, of course, this is a great idea — if you could consistently buy investments - stocks, in particular when their price is down and then sell them when the price has risen significantly. you'd always make some tidy profits. The main drawback to this technique, though, is that it's virtually impossible to follow, especially for individual investors. Nobody, not even professional money managers, can really predict with any accuracy when stock prices have reached high or low points. Consequently, those who try to make these guesses could

miss out on opportunities. For example, investors who are determined to buy low might not want to purchase investments when the market is up — but this practice could lead to taking a "time out" from investing just when the market is in the midst of a rally. But a financial advisor can steer clients toward a more disciplined approach, such as buying quality investments and holding them for the long term, regardless of the ups and downs of the market.

accepted with positive ID.

 Checking progress toward your goals - If you were to invest without any guidance, you might not be looking at your investments' performance with the proper perspective. For example, some investors simply compare their portfolio returns against a widely used market index, such as the S&P 500. But this comparison may not be that useful. The S&P 500 only measures the stock prices of the leading publicly traded U.S. companies by market capitalization — but your investment portfolio, if properly diversified, will include investments other than U.S. stocks, such as bonds, government securities, international stocks and more. Consequently, the performance of your portfolio won't track that of the S&P 500 or any other single index, either. Your

financial advisor can help you employ more meaningful benchmarks, such as whether your portfolio's progress is on track toward helping you meet your financial goals. Also, a financial advisor will review your portfolio and investment strategy regularly to determine what changes, if any, need to be made, either in response to the markets or to events in your life.

Investing for your future can be exciting and rewarding — and you can feel more confident in your decisions when you have someone helping you along the way.

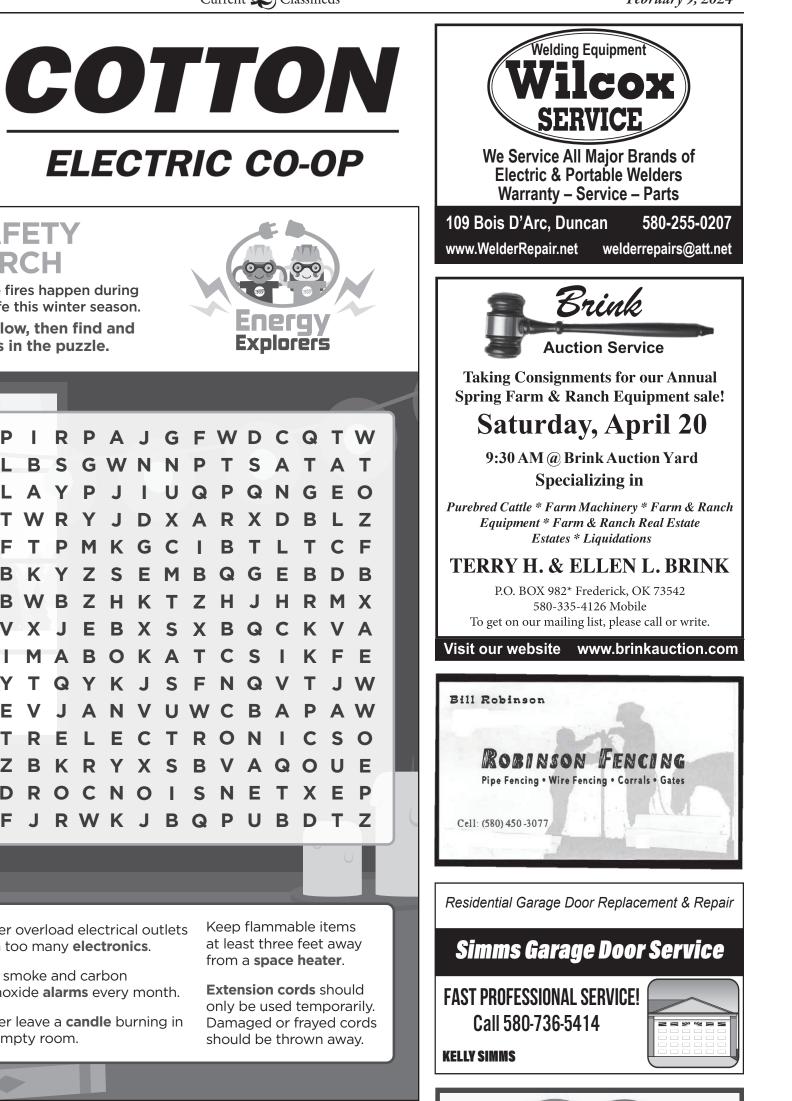
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WINTER SAFETY WORD SEARCH

0

Did you know most home fires happen during colder months? Play it safe this winter season. Read the safety tips below, then find and circle the bolded words in the puzzle.

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Never overload electrical outlets with too many electronics.

Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms every month.

Never leave a candle burning in an empty room.

		8		3				5
		3		1		2		
		7			2		4	
			1	2		6		7
			9					
	6			4	8			
		5		7			1	
8					4			
		9	8					4

Level: Advanced

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



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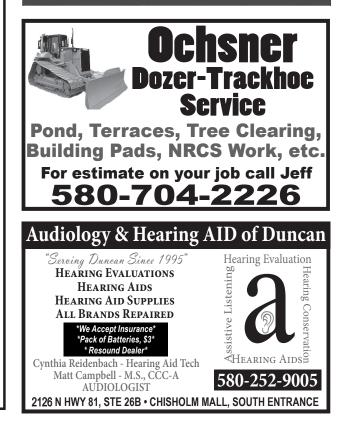
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Parting Shot



(pictured left to right): Cotton Electric Journeyman Lineman Marc Bohall, Cotton Electric Lineman Case Hurst, Cotton Electric Superintendent Chad Cowan, and Cotton Electric Apprentice Lineman Taylor Rains visit before the January safety meeting. Photo by Zach Young.

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