

The Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”

VOLUME 62

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NUMBER 8



Ronnie Mansel Bobby Shortt Evan Hays Zachary Smith TJ James Bob Anderson Larry Crowell Terry Foster Terry Turner



Matt Winburn Chad Cowan Scott Dennis Dillon Wiygul Shayne White Kyle Linthicum Braylin Dowlen Keeton Sallee Dillon Thompson



Conner Daniel Case Hurst Prestin Green Chase Smith Quaid Ogletree Darrell Loveday Chuck Ballard Jarrod Hooper Michelle Taylor



Norman Condit

Clint Ingram

Cooperative appreciates lineworkers

By Danielle Quickle

While most rush home in the midst of a storm to ensure the safety of their family and property, Cotton Electric linemen head out to ensure the lights stay on for our members. This is why we #ThankALineman.

This year, Lineman Appreciation Day fell on April 8. In honor of the occasion, I sat down with Operations Superintendent Clint Ingram to get a better understanding of the life of a lineman.

Ingram joined Cotton Electric as a crewman in 2002 and has since completed each step of the lineman program. Crewmen are entered into the apprentice program after being on the job a minimum of six months. Apprentice linemen then spend 3 years studying, taking tests and receiving on the job training before officially becoming a lineman. After an additional year in the field, a lineman may be considered for a journeyman position.

Ingram has been a journeyman lineman for Cotton Electric for more than a decade and was promoted to his current position in late 2018.

As Operations Superintendent, Ingram oversees the day-to-day functions of the west side of Cotton Electric's service territory.

"In this position, I am not only more involved at co-op headquarters, but

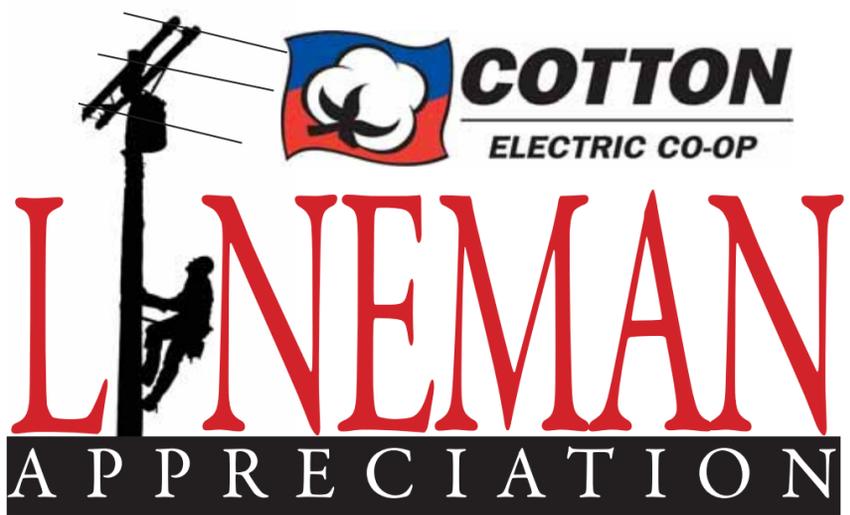
more involved throughout our entire system," Ingram said. "Instead of working with just one person regularly, I work with every Cotton Electric lineman."

Each day, linemen report to the cooperative and receive their work orders. Work orders consist of an array of tasks including line maintenance, repairing broken lights and appointments with members. Linemen schedule their day with the goal of completing all tasks in mind. However, their days are often unpredictable. If a lineman receives a call about an outage, all work stops and attention is given to the member(s) who are in the dark.

This is why we #ThankALineman.

If you have ever called Cotton Electric to report an outage, you most likely have spoken with one of the co-op dispatchers. Our dispatchers use information from members to alert linemen of issues out in the field. Linemen immediately respond but restoring power is rarely as simple as flipping a switch.

"As a lineman, whenever the phone rings you know that there is something unknown you are fixing to go up against and that it is your job to figure it out," Ingram said. "The challenge of troubleshooting issues and the sense of accomplishment once we get the lights back on for members are my favorite things about being a lineman."



Responding to outages immediately is the commitment fulfilled by every Cotton Electric lineman. Being on call 24/7, 365 days a year is a proud but costly devotion to keep.

"I have missed birthdays, Christmases, Thanksgivings and anniversaries. It doesn't happen all the time but it happens a lot," Ingram said. "My family is very supportive of what I do. This profession is a whole lifestyle, not just for linemen but for their families too."

This is why we #ThankALineman.

Despite the often-straining hours and hard work, Ingram encourages younger generations to look into a profession with the cooperative.

"College may not be for everyone, but if you have the right attitude you can learn a trade and be very successful," Ingram said. "This is a rewarding profession and people are always going to want power."

Cotton Electric proudly employs 29 linemen, crewmen and heavy equipment operators who maintain power lines and keep electricity flowing to members.

"We are continually looking at ways we can improve," Ingram said. "Our younger guys and even our veterans have bought into our recent changes and I believe the future is bright for Cotton Electric."

This is why we #ThankALineman.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after April 1, 2019, is (\$0.00063) per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1250 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a credit of \$0.79 on the April bill.

February 2019 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	45	24	35	16	63	30	47
2	40	32	36	17	68	34	51
3	36	18	27	18	70	35	53
4	33	14	24	19	73	36	55
5	49	15	32	20	68	34	51
6	56	19	38	21	74	39	57
7	66	39	53	22	76	41	59
8	60	44	52	23	80	53	67
9	77	50	64	24	75	51	63
10	52	41	47	25	67	47	57
11	59	36	48	26	71	41	56
12	66	52	59	27	78	49	64
13	71	51	61	28	74	57	66
14	61	43	52	29	78	54	66
15	59	36	48	30	54	37	46
				31	55	31	43

Source: srb.noaa.gov/oum/

Average Daily High: 63 Average Daily Low: 39

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric has sponsored a total of 165 high school juniors on the Rural Electric Youth Tour since 1964. We have sent groups of two or four every year, but in 1970 we sent five students to the nation's capital.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on May 13, 2019.

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 info@cottonelectric.com.

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

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More news at cottonelectric.com

From the CEO

Cooperative prioritizes community

We recently hosted 10 outstanding high school juniors and their guests at our annual Youth Tour banquet. Each year I look forward to the event and hearing what our area youth think about Cotton Electric. I was very proud of the time and effort that each student invested. Thank you to all of our participants and to their teachers and family who supported them.



Jennifer Meason, CEO

This year's topic asked participants to share what they thought was most interesting about Cotton Electric. Responses varied, which you'll have the opportunity to read over the next few months as we publish the winning essays, but all mentioned how Cotton Electric gives back to the community.

I wholeheartedly agree with the students. What sets Cotton Electric and other cooperatives apart from other utilities is the 7th cooperative principle of 'Concern

for Community'. It's one of the many reasons I love working for Cotton Electric.

As a cooperative, we have a different "bottom line." While our priority is always to provide reliable and safe energy, there is another equally important part of this equation. Your well-being and that of the larger community that we serve are of paramount concern.

To us, you are not just a customer; you are a member of our co-op and without you, we would not exist.

As many of our students shared, Cotton Electric was founded in 1938 to fulfill a vital need in our community that would not have otherwise been met. Concerned local leaders came together to build this co-op and bring electricity where there was none.

At that time, members of the community understood we were different because they likely knew someone who helped to create Cotton Electric.

For most people, our founding and its circumstances have been long forgotten. Over time, folks

in the community may have come to think of us as simply another energy provider. But we are not. We are a co-op that is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the communities we serve, and we are able to do this because of members like you.

While the times may have changed, our mission and outlook

have not. From what I've seen from Cotton Electric members and students like our Youth Tour participants, I'm confident that we can accomplish great things for our community now and in the future.

Please share your ideas by giving me a call at 875-3351 or email to jmeason@cottonelectric.com.

CECF announces recent contributions

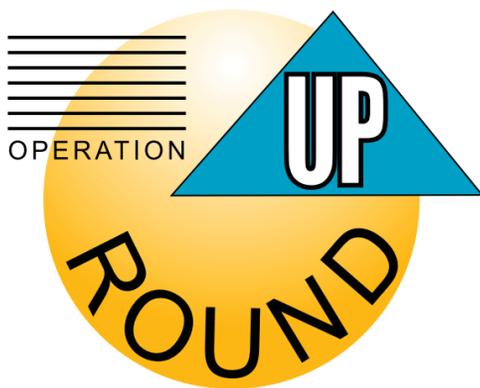
Pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters – set enough of them aside on a regular basis, and the coins add up to dollars. That's how Operation Round Up works.

Most Cotton Electric members participate in ORU, in which power bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar. The amount rounded up each month can be as little as 1 cent and is never more than 99 cents. On average, each participating member contributes about \$6 each year.

The funds are pooled and administered by the Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation, a board of directors that meets quarterly to consider grant applications. The board consists of Jennifer Meason, the co-op's CEO; Ken Layn, president of the co-op's board of trustees; and three representatives from the Cotton Electric service area: Carly Douglass, Danny Marlett and Carter Waid.

The board met in March to review several grant applications. Grants totaling \$18,170.12 will be distributed to nine of the applicants. First-quarter grants include:

- Big Pasture School District: A \$2,000 CECF grant will purchase a security camera system for the school.
- Chattanooga Police Department: A \$2,000 CECF grant will provide a camera system for their patrol vehicle.



- Duncan Special Olympics: A \$500 CECF grant will support fees for state games.
- Girl Scouts of Western Oklahoma: A \$2,000 CECF grant will support summer camping fees.
- Indianhoma Public School: A \$2,000 CECF grant will support the school's archery program and sewing project.
- Marlow Samaritans: A \$2,363.12 CECF grant will purchase a glass door freezer for their facility.
- Stephens County Honor Guard: A \$1,500 CECF grant will purchase wall lockers and flag equipment for use during ceremonies.

- Walters Community Food Pantry: A \$807 CECF grant will provide a window heat/air unit for the facility.
 - Walters Volunteer Fire Department: A \$5,000 CECF grant will support the purchase of a 3,500-gallon water tank.
- CECF has awarded or pledged grants totaling \$1,182,026 since the foundation was established in 2004.
- Applications for 2019 second-quarter grants are due June 11. Downloadable applications are available at CottonElectric.com.

Download CECF grant applications at CottonElectric.com.
Deadline for second quarter 2019 grant applications is June 11.

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program and members may opt out at any time by calling or sending a letter or email stating the account holder's name, account number and the request to be removed.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Streaming content with electronic equipment that has earned the ENERGY STAR® rating will use 25 to 30 percent less energy than standard equipment.

Source: energy.gov

The Current

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February 2019 Operating Stats

	2019	2018
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$5,774,062	\$5,736,359
Cost of Purchased Power	4,012,564	3,801,774
Taxes	121,589	122,678
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,084	1,025
Average Farm and Residential Bill	167	164
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,567	1,522
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,389	18,330
Miles Energized	5,197	5,169
Density Per Mile	3.54	3.55
New Service Connects YTD	45	40
Services Retired	24	14



Mission Statement

Our mission is to be the leader in providing the most reliable and innovative electric system, with affordable rates, through the positive, enthusiastic and professional use of its resources and people.

Members rewarded for energy efficiency

An energy efficient update can provide significant savings to your home's water heating system over its lifetime. Water heating accounts for as much as 20 percent of your home's energy use, making it the second largest consumer of energy in your home.



Heath Morgan,
Energy Efficiency
Coordinator

Although homes have become more energy efficient in the past 20 years, the percentage of energy used for water heating has steadily increased. Changes in efficiency ratings and emerging technology in the industry have made selecting a new system more confusing than ever.

Choosing the ideal water heating system can be difficult when it comes to competing technologies and approaches. Cotton Electric hopes to shed a little light on the subject to make this choice easier for our members.

In July of 2017, the Department of Energy implemented a new industry standard for measuring energy efficiency in water heaters called Uniform Energy Factor (UEF). This new UEF rating was put in place to improve on the inconsistent and unreliable interpretations of High Efficiency (EF) ratings across different manufacturers. Designed to simplify the water heater selection process, UEF defines consistent standards for measuring energy efficiency performance. While this is a great notion, adopting this new rating system across the industry has proven to be difficult. There are still

some inconsistencies in the reporting of this information.

The Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI) has provided a directory to certify and centralize the testing results of heating, cooling, and refrigeration appliances. Cotton Electric recommends that members refer to the AHRI directory website (www.ahridirectory.org) to verify the UEF of a water heater before purchase. Water heaters can be searched by type, size, model numbers, or even minimum UEF factors.

Rebate standards for new construction and fuel conversion water heaters are described on Cotton Electric's website (www.cottonelectric.com/content/rebate-program). With guidelines requiring a UEF of 0.95 or greater and a tank size of at least 40 gallons, some research will be required to find the right water heater for you. There are around 30 models of electric resistance storage tanks, ranging from 40 to 55 gallons, meeting this standard. All heat pump water heaters of at least 40 gallons will also meet the UEF requirement. Utilizing heat pump technology, these water heaters are the most efficient storage tanks by far with UEFs of 2.00 or above.

There are some factors to be considered for both types of water heating systems. Resistance tanks having a higher UEF may be larger in diameter or height to accommodate higher tank insulation values. Some may have a water inlet line located lower on the tank than standard water heaters. Some of these water heaters are listed as mobile home water heaters, but this does not



mean they cannot be installed in a traditional home. Tank size, compressor noise, and intake/exhaust air requirements are all important things to consider for heat pump water heaters.

A licensed plumbing contractor would be a great place to start inquiring about an energy efficient upgrade. They can help you with design considerations, AHRI certification, and installation.

Longtime trustee passes away

Longtime Cotton Electric trustee Thomas J. Jones Jr. passed away April 4, 2019. He was 86.

A lifelong resident of Stephens County, Jones had been a Cotton Electric member nearly all his life. In turn, he served the co-op with loyalty for 35 years, joining the Board of Trustees in 1984 and serving on Western Farmers Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees from 2009 to 2010.

Born and raised in the Duncan community, Jones made his home and livelihood in the heart of Stephens County.

Jones had a passion for rural areas. He dedicated his



Tommy Jones

efforts to the development, growth and advancement of his community. He served on numerous boards and was the recipient of a variety of awards including the Distinguished Service Award in 1965, Outstanding Citizen Award in 1974 and Duncan Man of the Year in 1979. The Duncan Chamber of Commerce recently presented him with the Lifetime Achievement Award for community service.

A supporter of many charitable causes, Jones was especially loyal to the United Way of Stephens County and Duncan Regional Hospital.

As a trustee of Cotton Electric, Jones served with members as his top priority. His devoted heart and expertise will be missed at the co-op.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Kaye; two daughters and sons-in-law and a son and daughter-in-law; a sister and brother-in-law; 13 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

KEEP US UPDATED

If your address or contact information has been changed due to E911 or for any other reason please let us know.

Information can be sent in the mail or be dropped off at Cotton Electric, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572 or at the Duncan office, 1101 W. Oak.

Information can be emailed to info@cottonelectric.com or by phone by calling 580-875-3351.

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COMMERCIAL LISTINGS

- **122 N. Broadway, Walters, OK \$35,000:** Aka: LAW FIRM. 1540 sqft. Updated interior, heat and air, 3 bathrooms, personal quarters, 4 office spaces, foyer, waiting area, large kitchen, 15x9 storage, roof being replaced. Ready for business!

LAND LISTINGS

- **ADJACENT TO THE RED RIVER CASINO, 155 PRIME INVESTMENT ACRES, \$325,000:** in an excellent location for potential future development. NE S35 T4S R13W, Cotton County: Highway 70 & 36 frontage.
- **160 ACRES +/-, \$122,000:** 120 acres in WRP water fowl, 2 large ponds, water well, rural water line at SE corner; 40 acres cultivation. SE S10 T3S R15W, Tillman County. Priced to sale!

Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the May issue, please submit information by May 1, by calling 580-875-4255 or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com.

Lawton Market open weekly

Lawton Farmers Market is open from 8 a.m. to noon every Wednesday and Saturday from April through October at the Comanche County Fairgrounds, 920 SW Sheridan Road.

In addition to local seasonal produce, expect to see specialty foods such as jams, jellies, salsas, baked goods, wine, freshly roasted coffee beans, as well as hand-made soap, herbs, plants, eggs, beef and an assortment of handcrafted items and food concessionaires.

For information, visit Lawton Farmers Market on Facebook.

Apache Rattlesnake Fest set for April

Mark your calendars for the Apache Rattlesnake Festival set for April 18-21 in downtown Apache. The event features exhibits, arts, crafts, vendors, carnival rides and games, rattlesnake-catching contests, food, music and fun.

While all food booth spaces are filled, vendor booth space is still available. Call 580-588-2880 to leave a clear message and get information.

Funds raised by the Apache Rattlesnake Association are funneled to service projects.

Find collectibles at April sale

KLAW 101, Z94, and 1073 POP-CRUSH are sponsoring Lawton's Largest Garage Antique and Collectible Sale from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 19 and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 20 at the Great Plains Coliseum. This is an excellent opportunity to sell items you no longer have room for or have fun browsing through the unique, one-of-a-kind treasures on display. Booths are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Booths start at \$45, and each additional booth is only \$40. For information, you can stop by Townsquare Media offices at 626 SW D Ave in Lawton.

LPO presents 'On The Town'

Lawton Philharmonic Orchestra presents "On The Town" at 7:30 p.m. April 27 at McMahon Auditorium, 801 NW Ferris Avenue, Lawton.

Leonard Bernstein's first musical is full of delightful tunes, rhythms and dance music. This concert will feature three guest soloists: Sherri Edelen, Ben Lurye and Tracy Olivera, as well as a cast of local performers.

Tickets may be purchased online or by calling 580-531-5043. For information, visit LawtonPhil.com.

LETRA hosts nature hike

Discover the natural beauty of Fort Sill and Lake Elmer Thomas Recreation Area (LETRA) with a guided hike beginning at 9 a.m. on April 27 from the LETRA Country Store.

Participants will learn basic hiking skills and observe wildlife. The event is open to the public, and hikers 8 years old and older are welcome.

For more information, visit Sill.ArmyMWR.com or call 580-442-5858.

Safe Center hosts annual walk

Safe Center, a crisis center for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking in Stephens and Jefferson counties, will conclude Sexual Assault Awareness Month with its second annual Awareness Walk and Family Fun Event beginning at 6:30 p.m. April 30 at Fuqua Park in Duncan.

This family-friendly event is an opportunity for the community to come together in support of the 17 percent of women and 3 percent of men who have been or will be victims of sexual violence in their lifetime. The event includes free food, fun and festivities.

Registration is free and can be found by visiting SafeCenter.info. Donations are welcomed and with each donation of \$20 or more, participants will receive one free walk T-shirt and a swag bag. For information, call Safe Center at 580-252-5324. The center encourages any victim of sexual assault, domestic violence or stalking to speak with an advocate at its 24-hour crisis hotline at 252-4357.

County Craft Show set for May 3-4

Duncan Crafts, Arts and Hobbies Association is holding its Annual Spring Craft Show from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. May 3-4 at the Stephens County Fair and Expo Center. Items handcrafted by members and local craftsmen make up 75 percent of the show, giving shoppers a unique experience.

Entrance to the show is free and will include the opportunity to win door prizes.

OHCE sponsors garage sale

Stephens County Oklahoma Home and Community Education (OHCE) clubs will sponsor a benefit garage sale for Charis Center from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. May 3 and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 4 at Heritage Oaks Church of the Nazarene, located at 4501 W. Beech in Duncan.

Charis Center is a non-profit organization aimed at helping anyone facing an unplanned pregnancy. To donate items, contact any OHCE member or call Brenda Weaver at 580-255-3460 to arrange pickup.

Annual Arts Fest set for May 4

Cotton County Art Council will host its 52nd annual Arts and Crafts Festival from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 4 at the OK Expo Center west of Walters. There will be cash awards for craft and fine-art exhibitors.

Visitors can purchase offerings from Blessed B Food Barn and finish up with one of the desserts offered by Walters Senior Citizens Center.

Information and entry forms are available on the Cotton County Art Council's Facebook page or by calling Lavonne High at 580-591-3996.

Arts For All begins May 10

Arts For All's 44th annual festival will begin at 4 p.m. May 10 and last through 5 p.m. May 12 at Shepler Square Park in Lawton.

For more than 45 years, the Arts For All Festival has been southwest Oklahoma's largest and most popular cultural event, drawing people from Oklahoma and Texas for a weekend filled with art, entertainment and food. Art from more than 70 world-class artists across the country will be on display.

Mediums include jewelry, metal, canvas, wood, silk, photography, ink and mixed media.

Guests will enjoy dancers, singers, bands, and options from several wineries and food trucks. For children, a creative art area will be available. Arts For All has something for the whole family.

This event lets the public enjoy the arts while raising funds to keep the arts strong in local communities and schools. More information can be found at lawtonafa.org.

More Community Spotlight on Page 6

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Jayne Stringfellow captured this photo of 9-year-old Kinsley Deavours and her show pig, Canadian Bacon. This is Kinsley's first year participating in 4-H and showing livestock. She and Canadian Bacon were crowned Grand Champion at the Cache local show and received first in class at the county show.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for May is RAIN. Entries can be emailed to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize package of CEC goodies.

CTHC opens art exhibit

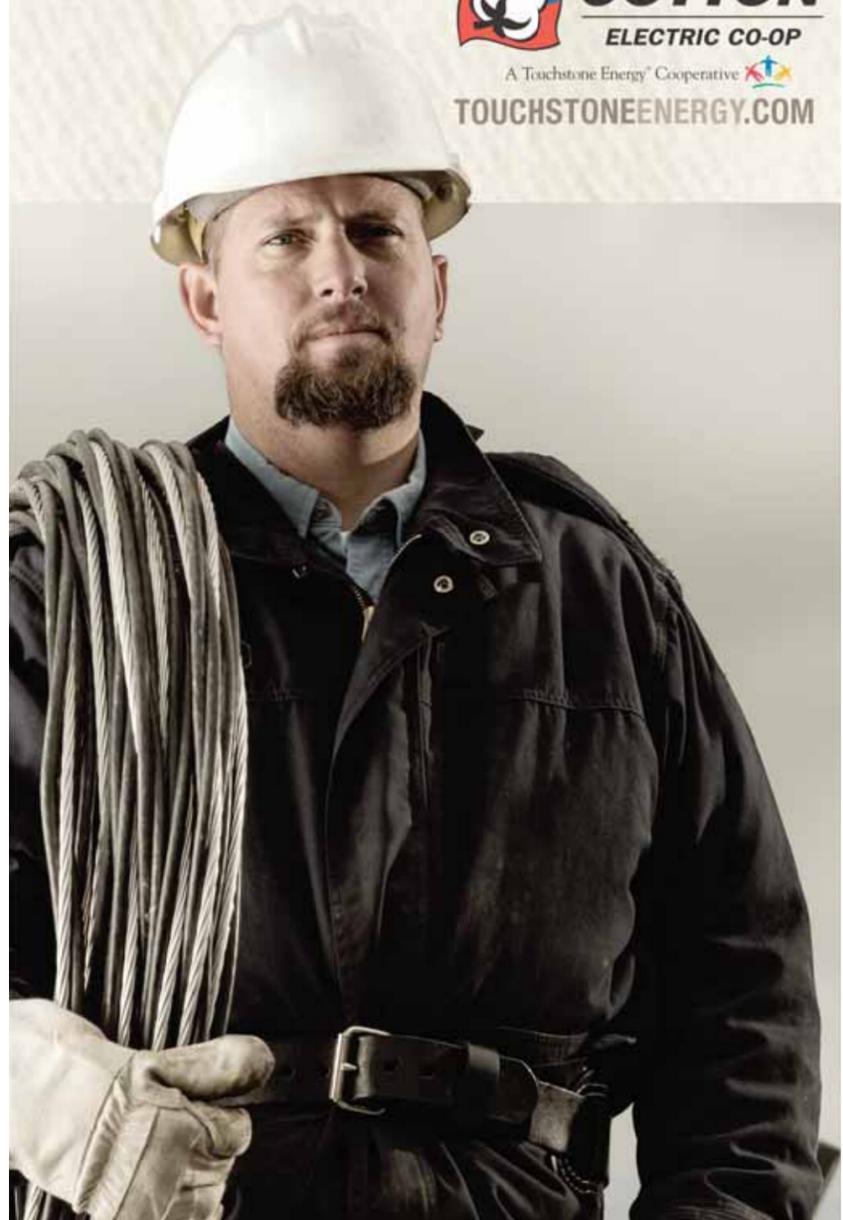
Sandy Magrath: Dogs of the Southwest art exhibit will open May 1 and run through June 30 at the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center in Duncan.

Magrath, a Norman native, is inspired by the designs and colors of the Southwest, and by her dogs. Her shelter Australian shepherd named Scooter was her first subject and she has been painting happy dog portraits ever since.

A meet the artist reception will be from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. on May 9 at the Heritage Center. Guests can visit with Magrath and purchase some of her work.

Cotton Electric members can show their Co-op Connections card at the door to receive \$1 off admission. For information, visit OnTheChisholmTrail.com.

TRUTH BE TOLD, YOUR ELECTRICITY COMES FROM PEOPLE POWER. Thankfully, there's one energy source that co-op members can always depend on – the hard-working dedication and efficiency of your electric co-op linemen. Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at TouchstoneEnergy.com.



Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

May		June		July	
Ad Sales	Apr. 26	Ad Sales	May 24	Ad Sales	June 28
Classified	May 1	Classified	May 29	Classified	July 3
Publish Date	May 13	Publish Date	June 10	Publish Date	July 15

Top 10 compete for D.C.



Finalists in Cotton Electric's 56th annual Rural Electric Youth Tour competition include, seated from left, Aryanna North, Jessie Bone, Aurelia Holguin, Jadeyn Perry, Shalei Okamura, and, back row from left, Taylor Gebhart, Breighannon Hanks, Colby Gilpen, Harli Clem, and Melinda Whiteman. Winners announced on Page 10.



Golf tourney set for June

Golf enthusiasts have a great opportunity to spend a day on an 18-hole championship course while helping to raise funds to help organizations and individuals throughout southwest Oklahoma.

The 11th annual Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF) Summer Classic will be June 24 at The Territory Golf and Country Club in Duncan. The tournament is held to raise awareness of CECF and to generate funds for Operation Round Up (ORU).

ORU is primarily funded by Cotton Electric Cooperative members who "round up" their monthly bill to the nearest dollar. The funds are administered by CECF, which meets quarterly to consider grant applications. Since its inception in 2004, CECF has awarded more than \$1 million to volunteer fire departments, youth, senior citizen and public safety organizations, schools, communities and individuals throughout the Cotton Electric service area.

Registration for the four-person scramble will begin at 7:30 a.m. with a shotgun start at 8:30. The registration fee of \$600 per team will include range balls, cart, and a meal following the round.

Individual, team and door prizes will be awarded.

To enter, players' names and handicap or average scores can be faxed to 580-875-3101. Deadline for entries and fee payment is Friday, June 14.

Two levels of hole sponsorship are available. Hole sponsors who also enter a team receive a \$100 discount on entry fees.

For information about the scramble or becoming a sponsor, call Bryce Hooper at 580-875-3351 or email bhooper@cottonelectric.com.

We have a special

Earth Day

gift for our members!

Want to create a stop on the monarch butterfly migration? We can help! Beginning April 22 – Earth Day! – Cotton Electric will hand out packets of milkweed seeds until the supply is exhausted. Flutter by our office at 226 N. Broadway in Walters or at 1101 W. Oak in Duncan.

Need to make a payment by phone? Call our automated system at

1-855-730-8711

Have your Cotton Electric account number and credit card or banking account numbers ready before making the call.

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Community Spotlight

Duncan Spring Stroll is May 11

Save the date for Downtown Duncan's third annual Spring Stroll from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 11 along Main Street. Main Street shops open their doors for all guests to see new spring offerings, enjoy in-store specials and live demonstrations. Some locations will offer a gift with purchase. Punch cards are available for \$5 to participate in the chocolate tasting event and the grand prize drawing at the end of the day. More information can be found on the Spring Stroll Facebook page or by visiting the Main Street Duncan website.

Armed Forces honored May 18

Billed in years past as the largest in the nation, the Armed Forces Day Parade begins at 10 a.m. May 18 on C Avenue in downtown Lawton.

More than 100 participants are set to march in this year's parade themed "A Step Into The Past." Celebrating Fort Sill's 150th Birthday and honoring Armed Forces history, participants are encouraged to incorporate elements of the past into their floats. The annual event serves to showcase Armed Forces and community collaboration.

Parade entries are available at visitlawtonok.com and will be accepted until 3 p.m. on May 10. For information, contact Logan Ralston at 580-355-3541 or lralston@visitlawton.com.

Get moving with Open Streets

Lawton-Fort Sill community presents the spring Open Streets from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. May 25 in downtown Lawton on C Avenue.

Brought to you by a multitude of community organizations, Open Streets is a newer concept that turns city streets into a temporary public park with activities for the whole family designed to get people moving. Activities for the family will include fitness classes, obstacle courses, imaginary playground, skate park, hula hoops, art, face painting, bounce houses, photo booth and more.

Open Streets events are increasingly common in cities seeking innovative ways to achieve environmental, social, economic and public health goals. For more information, visit the Lawton-Fort Sill Open Streets Facebook page.

Chuck Wagon Fest set for weekend in May

National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum is hosting its annual Chuck Wagon Festival from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 25-26 in Oklahoma City.

The fun-filled family weekend showcases chuck wagon food samples, live music, Western re-enactors, children's activities and much more.

General admission is purchased at the door for \$15. Children and museum members get in free. For more information about festival activities, visit nationalcowboymuseum.org/chuckwagon.

Senior center hosts weekly dances

Duncan Senior Citizens Center presents country and western dances from 7 to 9:30 p.m. every Tuesday and Saturday. Tuesdays feature Bill Dewbre and Old Country. Buzz Carter and the Shadow Riders play every Saturday. Admission is \$6 and includes free coffee and soft drinks. Donations are appreciated. For information, call the center at 580-255-6902.

Chapter of the Blind meets monthly

Duncan Chapter of the Blind meets at 1:30 p.m. on the third Saturday of each month at New Hope Baptist Church, 200 S. 42nd Street.

This is an opportunity for those who are visually impaired or blind and their caregivers to learn about the availability of services and equipment such as white cane training and large lighted magnifiers. The group

also provides information about free access to an extensive library of audio books.

For information about the group or to arrange free transportation to the monthly meeting, call 580-786-8041 or 427-2933.

Weekly kids' activities in Central High

Central High presents Story Time from 10-10:30 a.m. every Wednesday while school is in session at the high school library.

Participants will read a story, sing songs and do an activity. Children who have not yet started school are welcome if accompanied by parent or caregiver.

For more information, call 580-685-2929, Ext. 6.

Food pantry opens twice monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month. The pantry is in the old City Hall, 131 1/2 W. California Street.

Pantry organizers try to provide a two-week supply of basic staples to anyone with identification.

For information, call Roger Noland at 580-591-6826.

Honor guard serves SW Oklahoma

Seeing a need in the area, several military veterans formed an honor guard in 2007 to provide services at funerals for all military veterans. The guard is made up of veterans from all branches of the armed forces and three veterans' organizations.

The uniformed guard furnishes a 21-gun salute, plays taps and folds a flag for presentation to the family. The guard travels anywhere in Stephens, Cotton, Comanche and Jefferson counties, and has made special trips into Grady and Carter counties.

There is no charge for the service, though donations are accepted.

For information about joining the guard or securing its services, call Kenneth Youngblood at 859-684-5128 or Clinton Swanson at 580-251-0629 or visit TheSCHG.com.

Monthly lecture at The Foreman Prairie House

Join the docents and volunteers at The Foreman Prairie House at noon every third Thursday of the month for lunch and lecture. Listen to artists, historians and craftsmen while enjoying a homemade artisan-style lunch.

The subject and speaker for the lecture change every month so you get new knowledge with every freshly prepared meal.

Cost is \$12 per person. Reservations are required and can be made by dialing or texting 580-512-9153.

Senior activities find new home

A variety of activities and weekly sponsored events will continue for the Wichita Mountains Area Senior Citizens Center at the First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Medicine Park until a permanent home can be found or the Legion Building can be rebuilt.

The Legion Building hosted senior center members up until the building came down in flames on Feb. 9.

Potluck dinners, games and TV will continue to be offered every Monday from 6 to 10 p.m. Activities continue on Tuesdays and Thursdays with dominoes, other table games, Tai Chi and stretch and balance exercises starting at 10 a.m. Lunch is served at noon, with events continuing into the afternoon.

Senior Center President Puddin McKenzie encourages all of the senior center members to come to the Fellowship Center to play, eat, volunteer and help the senior citizen center recover.

For information about other activities, visit WichitaMountainSeniors.org.

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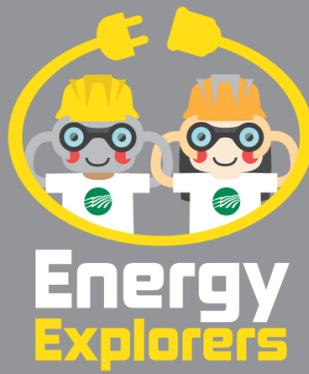
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Electric co-op lineworkers wear special gear to help them stay safe on the job. Can you match the descriptions below to the correct safety equipment? Use the answer key to check your work!



1. These provide extra protection while lineworkers work with heavy materials that could fall near their feet.

2. This material keeps lineworkers safe from electrical hazards.

3. This protects lineworkers from head injuries and falling debris.

4. These insulated protectors keep lineworkers safe from electrical shock while working on power lines.

5. These keep debris away from lineworkers' eyes while on the job.

6. This is a handy piece of safety gear that holds tools and other equipment.

Answers: 1. Work Boots 2. Flame-Resistant Clothing 3. Hard Hat 4. Insulated Gloves 5. Safety Goggles 6. Equipment Belt



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ACROSS

- 1. A way to wound
- 5. Hormone secreted by the pituitary gland (abbr.)
- 8. Shows the world
- 11. Decided
- 13. Indigenous person of NE Thailand
- 14. Dough made from corn flour
- 15. Honors
- 16. Political commentator Coulter
- 17. Expresses pleasure
- 18. Heavy clubs
- 20. Defunct phone company
- 21. Algonquian language
- 22. Salts
- 25. Act of the bank
- 30. Danced
- 31. Drummer Weinberg
- 32. Small goose
- 33. Helps evade
- 38. Certified public accountant
- 41. Periods of time
- 43. Kids' book character
- 45. Type of beer
- 47. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
- 49. A way to attack
- 50. Talk radio personality
- 55. Whale ship captain
- 56. Request
- 57. Large underground railstation in Paris
- 59. BBQ dish
- 60. No (Scottish)
- 61. Jewish spiritual leader
- 62. Tool used to harvest agave
- 63. Explosive
- 64. A reward (archaic)

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10		
11				12		13			14				
15						16			17				
	18				19	20			21				
25	26	27	28	29									
30							31						
32								33	34	35	36	37	
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					43			44					
		45	46										
47	48					49			50	51	52	53	54
55						56				57			58
59						60				61			
62						63					64		

DOWN

- 1. One thousand cubic feet (abbr.)
- 2. Polite interruption sound
- 3. Extremely small amount
- 4. Very short period of time (abbr.)
- 5. Fires have them
- 6. Sacred place
- 7. Island capital
- 8. Volcanic craters
- 9. Arthur __, Wimbledon champion
- 10. Bullfighting maneuver
- 12. Midway between east and southeast
- 14. A ceremonial staff
- 19. Cheap prices
- 23. North Atlantic fish
- 24. Oil company
- 25. A federally chartered savings bank
- 26. Paddle
- 27. Where UK soldiers train
- 28. One point north of due east
- 29. Attention-getting
- 34. Ballplayer's tool
- 35. Sun up in New York
- 36. Where golfers begin
- 37. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 39. Represented as walking (animal)
- 40. Craftsman
- 41. Unit of force (abbr.)
- 42. Dueling sword
- 44. Houston hoopster
- 45. Stone building at Mecca
- 46. __ and flows
- 47. "Beastmaster" actor Singer
- 48. American state
- 51. Swiss river
- 52. U.S. island territory
- 53. German physicist
- 54. One point east of northeast
- 58. Get free of



Keep Cool on the Grill

FAMILY FEATURES

Keep your kitchen cool and comfortable with grilled meals that banish the heat to the outdoors. Crisp, fresh greens and a perfect blend of spices and savory ingredients make each of these refreshing dishes perfect solutions for toasty days.

Featuring ingredients across the food groups, these dairy-fueled recipes from Milk Means More are ideal for well-rounded meals filled with nutritious flavor. Zesty mustard,

spicy Sriracha and rich buttermilk lend a marinated flavor upgrade to traditional grilled chicken, while homemade pesto, fresh corn and ham create a perfect harmony for a cheesy grilled pizza. Or make a salad the star of your dinner table with a simply seasoned sirloin steak, plenty of veggies and a tart twist on a creamy dressing made with yogurt and milk.

Find more refreshing meal solutions at milkmeansmore.org.

Grilled Buttermilk Chicken

Recipe courtesy of Lori Yates of Foxes Love Lemons on behalf of Milk Means More
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 16 minutes
Servings: 4

In medium bowl, whisk buttermilk, mustard powder, Sriracha, garlic and paprika.

Place chicken in large zip-top bag; pour buttermilk mixture over chicken. Seal bag and refrigerate 2 hours or overnight.

Heat outdoor grill for direct grilling over medium heat. Remove chicken from marinade, shaking off excess; discard marinade. Lightly oil grill grates.

Transfer chicken to grill and cook, turning occasionally, 16-18 minutes, or until internal temperature reaches 165 F.

Transfer chicken to serving platter. Sprinkle with parsley and serve with lemon wedges, if desired.

- 1 1/2 cups buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon mustard powder
- 1 tablespoon Sriracha
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 4 chicken drumsticks, bone in, skin on
- 4 chicken thighs, bone in, skin on
- vegetable oil, for grill
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges (optional)





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Grilled Pizza with Arugula Pesto, Corn and Ham

Recipe courtesy of Rachel Gurk of Rachel Cooks on behalf of Milk Means More
 Prep time: 20 minutes
 Cook time: 10 minutes
 Servings: 6

- Arugula Pesto:**
 2 cups fresh arugula, tightly packed
 1 clove garlic
 1 tablespoon lemon juice
 pinch red pepper flakes, (optional)
 1/3 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
 salt, to taste
 pepper, to taste

- Grilled Pizza:**
 2 tablespoons flour, divided
 1 pound pizza crust dough (at room temperature if using refrigerated dough)
 vegetable oil, for grill
 1/2 cup Arugula Pesto
 1/2 cup part-skim ricotta cheese
 1/2 cup diced deli ham
 1/2-3/4 cup fresh corn kernels (about 1 cob)

- 1/4 cup thinly sliced red onion
 1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Heat grill to medium heat (350-400 F).

To make Arugula Pesto: In food processor, combine arugula, garlic, lemon juice, red pepper flakes and Parmesan. Pulse until combined then, with food processor on, drizzle in olive oil until pesto forms, scraping down sides as needed. Taste and season with salt and pepper, to taste.

To make Grilled Pizza: Flour pizza dough lightly and stretch or roll to about 1/2-inch thickness (14-16-inch diameter).

Sprinkle remaining flour on large rimless baking sheet, pizza peel or pizza stone. Transfer dough to baking surface.

Clean grill grate and grease with oil-soaked paper towel and tongs. Slide dough off baking surface onto grill. Cover and cook until dough is bubbling on top and golden brown on bottom, 2-3 minutes.

Carefully flip dough over using peel or tongs.

Remove crust from grill to add toppings. Spread Arugula Pesto over dough. Top with ricotta, ham, corn kernels, onion and Parmesan. Return pizza to grill, cover and cook until toppings are heated through and bottom of crust is crispy, 5-7 minutes.

Remove from grill, slice and serve.

Grilled Steak Salad with Chive Yogurt Dressing

Recipe courtesy of Kirsten Kubert of Comfortably Domestic on behalf of Milk Means More
 Prep time: 15 minutes
 Cook time: 10 minutes
 Servings: 6

- Dressing:**
 1 cup plain yogurt
 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice (3 small limes)
 2 tablespoons milk
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
 1 clove garlic, peeled and minced
 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
 1/8 teaspoon black pepper

- Steak:**
 1 teaspoon kosher salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 1/4 teaspoon granulated garlic
 20 ounces boneless petite sirloin steak

- Salad:**
 3 cups baby spinach
 3 cups chopped romaine lettuce hearts
 1/2 cup sweet red pepper rings

- 1/2 cup sweet yellow pepper rings
 1 cup avocado chunks
 1/4 cup thinly shaved red onion

To make dressing: In blender, combine yogurt, lime juice, milk, chives, garlic, salt and pepper. Blend on low until smooth consistency forms and chives are completely incorporated. Transfer dressing to jar with tight-fitting lid and refrigerate until serving.

Heat grill to medium.

To prepare steak: Combine kosher salt, black pepper and granulated garlic to create rub. Sprinkle half of seasoning mix over one side of steak, pressing it into meat. Repeat with remaining seasoning on opposite side of steak.

Grill steak over direct medium heat to desired level of doneness, approximately 4-5 minutes per side for medium pink center. Remove steak from grill and let rest 7-10 minutes on cutting board.

To make salad: Toss spinach and romaine on large platter. Scatter red and yellow peppers, avocado and onion over greens. Slice grilled sirloin thinly against grain. Arrange meat slices along center of salad.

Drizzle dressing over salad just prior to serving.



Golden rules lead to healthier kidneys

Kidneys do much more than filter urine. They maintain an important nutrient balance in your blood which affects blood pressure, bone health, and the formation of red blood cells. If your kidneys fail, your life is drastically altered. How do you keep them healthy?

WorldKidneyDay.org proposes “8 Golden Rules” for kidney health: stay active and fit; control your blood sugar and blood pressure; eat healthy; maintain a healthy weight; consume enough fluid every day; do not smoke; do not take over-the-counter pills daily without checking on their effect on your kidneys; and if you are at high risk for kidney disease, get your kidney function checked regularly.

Four of the eight golden rules relate to healthy eating and physical activity. Exercise and eating impact your weight,



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

blood sugar, blood pressure, and fluid intake.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define exercise as a combination of cardio (raising your heart rate by brisk walking, jogging, dancing, bik-

ing) and muscle strengthening (lifting weights, resistance bands, pushups and pull ups, etc.). Adults should do 150 minutes of cardio exercise per week and add at least two days of muscle strengthening. If you break it down, you could take a 30-minute walk for five days and then do muscle strengthening the remaining two days. Exercise will help keep your weight, blood sugar, and blood pressure in check. It can also help remind you to hydrate.

Unless you already have kidney disease, there are no specific foods that are better or worse for your kidneys. It is important that you maintain a healthy, balanced diet. In general, healthy eating means consuming meals that balance fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains. If you think of a plate, half of the plate should be covered in vegetables

and fruits, one-quarter should be lean protein, the remaining quarter should be whole grains. A side of dairy or other calcium containing beverage is also important. Use the plate visual to quickly evaluate each meal that you eat.

Staying hydrated is very important for your kidneys. Lack of fluid can result in buildup of waste and acids in the body and contribute to kidney stones.

An easy way to evaluate if you are well-hydrated is to look at the color of your urine. Lightly colored urine generally means you are well-hydrated. Eight cups of water a day is a reasonable goal, but you may need more or less depending on several factors. Pay attention to your hydration status daily using the urine check and adjust your fluid intake appropriately. Water is best, but all fluids contribute to hydration.

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Teens to represent Cotton Electric at nation's capital

With the end of March came the end of the 2019 Cotton Electric Youth Tour competition. Since November of last year, students have been competing to win an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., as part of the Rural Electric Youth Tour program.

The competition was prompted by a call for entries answered with submissions from 92 high school juniors from 8 schools in Cotton Electric's service area. These students wrote essays that reflected the topic of "What do you find most interesting about electric cooperatives?"

Each essay was given a number as it arrived, in order to be judged anonymously. After the first round of competition, the essays were narrowed to the top 25 and the students were invited to Cotton Electric for an in-person interview.

Students were asked, among other questions, to state the difference between cooperatives and other businesses and why they would make an excellent representative for Cotton Electric in Washington, D.C. The results of these interviews are what determined our 10 finalists, listed by school:

Big Pasture High School: Harli Clem, daughter of Traci and Billy Clem; Taylor Gebhart, daughter of Carla Gebhart;

Central High High School: Aryanna North, daughter of Darlene Lawson and Zack Reeves;

Lawton High School: Shalei Okamura, daughter of Stephanie Okamura; Jadeyn Perry, daughter of Gina Perry;

MacArthur High School: Colby Gilpen, son of Billy and Amy Gilpen;

Marlow High School: Aurelia Holguin, daughter of Ted and Tosha Holguin; Melinda Whiteman, daughter of Stephen and Donna Whiteman;

Walters High School: Jessie Bone, daughter of Mike and Tracie Bone; and Breighannon Hanks, daughter of Shannon and Kimberly Hanks.

Our top 10 arrived at Cotton Electric on the evening of March 28 for the final phase of the competition. Each high school junior gave a 5-minute oral presentation of his or her essay in hopes of being selected by the judges as one of the four winners headed to the nation's capital.

Students presented their speeches to Megan Lawrence, manager of member services and marketing for Rural Electric Cooperative; Jarrod VanZant, public relations manager for Canadian Valley Electric Coopera-



Jessie Bone of Walters High School, Colby Gilpen of MacArthur High School, Aurelia Holguin of Marlow High School and Aryanna North of Central High High School will travel to Washington, D.C., in June.

tive; and Beth Pennington, billing and youth programs coordinator for Harmon Electric.

One speech showcased the co-op's local-minded values stating, "electric cooperatives consider their community residents their members, rather than customers," and another concluded with "rural co-ops are a shining example of what it means to put their community first."

One student reflected on the co-op's foundation to meet a need in the community by stating "not only are electric cooperatives known for bringing power to the countryside where it had never been before, but they are also famous for seeking ways to improve the quality of life for their members and communities," while another student highlighted Cotton Electric's continual support of the community today noting that "the co-op's community efforts involving schools, education and giving back are widespread and affect every member directly."

After each student presented, the judges retired to determine the four winners. Scoring of each speech was

weighted 50 percent on speaking ability, 30 percent on knowledge of subject, 10 percent on poise, and 10 percent on personality and appearance. Total scores revealed the students who would be representing Cotton Electric in Washington this summer: Jessie Bone, Colby Gilpen, Aurelia Holguin and Aryanna North.

The quartet will join 1,500 students from all over the United States and follow itineraries filled with activities from the moment they arrive until the day they fly back home. The students will have an opportunity to visit with Oklahoma's congressional delegation and learn about government, the cooperative form of business, and the business of rural electrification.

They will become more familiar with the historical and political environment of the nation's capital through visits to monuments, government offices and cooperative organizations. These young Oklahomans will become more knowledgeable about their country, their government and our nation's capital.

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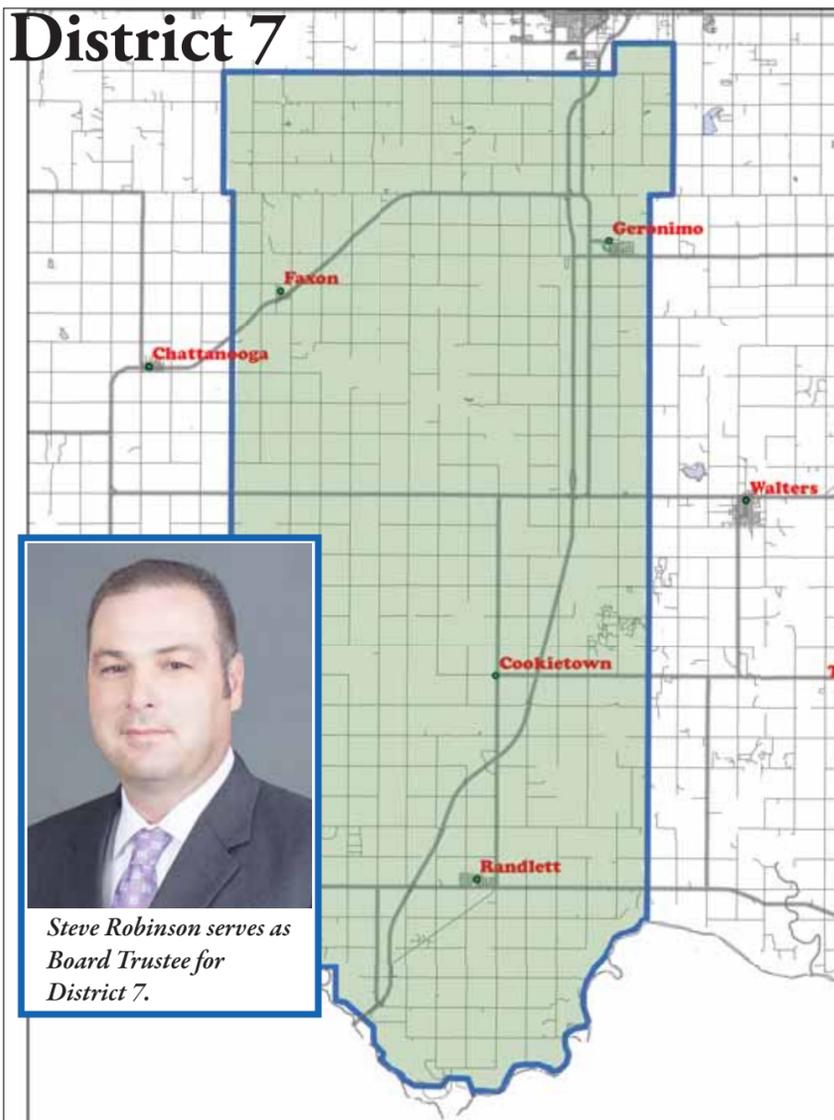
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District 7



Ronnie Mansel



Kyle Linthicum



TJ James



Conner Daniel



Dillon Thompson



Bobby Shortt



Clint Ingram

When your power goes off in the middle of the night, six line workers are on call to get your lights back on. Responding to outages in this area are Journeyman Linemen Ronnie Mansel, TJ James, Bobby Shortt, Lineman Kyle Linthicum and Apprentices Dillon Thompson and Conner Daniel. These line workers do not exclusively work in District 7 but aid the system in various places along the western side of the service territory. They are under the direction of Operations Superintendent Clint Ingram.

Robinson represents members of District 7

By Danielle Quickle

Cotton Electric is a not-for-profit organization, governed by the members it serves. Its service territory is divided among nine districts, each unique from the next. In 2019, The Current will feature information about each district, one per month.

District 7 is home to Cotton Electric's community solar project. The district takes up most of the western side of Cotton County and extends nine miles northward into the southern area of Comanche County. Included within the borders of District 7 are the communities of Cookietown, Devol, Faxon, Geronimo and Randlett. Parts of Big Pasture, Bishop, Cache, Chattanooga, Geronimo, Grandfield, Lawton, Temple and Walters school districts also fall within district borders.

Members in this area are served by five substations: Indianahoma, Grandfield, Geronimo, Essaquanahdale and Randlett. These substations distribute power across approximately 568 miles of line to residential and commercial accounts. When power distribution issues arise, specific line workers are assigned to restoring power.

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Members participate in the governing of their electric cooperative by electing a member from each district to serve a three-year term as a trustee on Cotton Electric's board. In 2015, Steve Robinson of Cache was appointed as trustee and District 7 members have retained him ever since.

Robinson has been a Cotton Electric member for nearly all of his life. He grew up on Cotton Electric lines in Indianahoma before spending a few years in Lawton and ultimately building his home in co-op service territory just southwest of the Goodyear tire plant. He and his wife, Stacy, will celebrate 20 years of marriage this year and share their home with their

two daughters, Lily and Sara.

Robinson is a lawyer and financial advisor based in Lawton. He has been in private practice since 2000. He also co-owns rental properties and storage units. He credits his life experiences for preparing him to serve on the board.

"I think in anything that you do you need a little seasoning," Robinson said. "Being in private business all these years has changed my perspective on the way businesses work."

As part of his rental property business, Robinson works with a variety of utility companies and points out the difference between being a utility customer and a cooperative member.

"As a member of the co-op, you get a voice," Robinson said. "At the cooperative, we have the mindset that every time we pick up the phone we are speaking with an owner. When members use their voice they are heard."

Robinson supports members' practice of this democratic system.

"I encourage members to call me and let me know what is going on," he said. "If there is an issue I can take care of for the membership then I will, that is my job."

He has served the membership as a trustee for nearly 4 years and was recently appointed to act as assistant secretary and treasurer for the board. Robinson continues to educate himself to best serve the membership.

"Before you get on the board, you have one perspective of what it is like to run a cooperative, but once you actually get on the board you realize how little you know," he said. "It is a lot more complicated than I was expecting. It takes quite a bit of time to get yourself prepared and educated so you ensure you are making the best decisions for the members."

Although he represents only the members in District 7, Robinson's focus is on Cotton Electric's membership as a whole. He continually strives to work closely with the other board members and Cotton Electric CEO Jennifer Meason to maintain an excellent format for governing the cooperative.

"I want the members of District 7 to know that it is not just me that makes decisions for them," Robinson said. "The board and our staff try to do things in the best interest of all the members, no matter where they are located."

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Planting the right tree in the right place

Many people plant trees during the spring, especially around National Arbor Day and Earth Day. There are many environmental and beautification benefits to planting young trees. However, Safe Electricity wants to remind everyone to be aware of electrical hazards while planting this year. Always seek help from professionals when choosing and placing trees and bushes.

Trees that grow too close to electric lines can create shock and fire hazards as well as power outages. More importantly, children can become victims of electric shock when they climb trees that have grown too close to the power lines as well. Trees growing into power lines can also create electrical hazards for people who might be trimming branches, hanging lights or otherwise working around them.

“Trees provide many aesthetic, environmental and economic benefits” said Safe Electricity Executive Director Molly Hall. “But everyone needs to be aware of the dangers and risks created when trees grow into power lines, and the importance of calling the utility or utility

locator service before beginning any landscaping project.”

Take the time to research tree selections by consulting your local arborist, tree nursery or utility. These experts can provide assistance in designing a beautiful, shade-filled yard with trees appropriate for each area of the landscape. With their help, trees can provide economical cooling in the summer, and a wind-break for harsh winter winds.

In addition, trees help combat the effects of pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO2). When trees grow, they take energy from the sun and combine it with CO2 from the air to photosynthesize. This makes trees a natural “carbon sink” or, a living source of carbon reduction. Some trees are better suited for this task than others and, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), tree species that grow quickly and live long are ideal carbon sinks.

Choosing the right tree for the right place is crucial, especially when it comes to power lines. Trees and wood in general can potentially conduct electricity and can create a safety hazard if grown close

to electric lines. Power outages or momentary interruptions can occur when branches come into contact with overhead lines. Electrical arcing and sparking from a wire to a nearby branch can also cause fires.

“Keep in mind expected height when you purchase trees to plant this year,” Hall said. “Just because a tree is far from the power line right now, doesn’t mean it always will be.”

If you have trees that appear to be growing into power lines, contact your electric utility. Never try to prune them yourself. Utilities have or can recommend skilled professionals trained to safely prune and trim trees for electric line clearance.

To avoid future electrical hazards, safe planting tips to remember include:

- Consider mature height of trees. Never plant a tree near a power line that could grow within 25 feet of it. Tall growing trees should be planted a minimum of 20 feet away from power lines, and 50 feet away to avoid future pruning. A mature height of less than 15 feet is recommended for trees planted near power lines.

• Do not plant near underground utility services. Tree roots can grow to interfere with underground pipes, cables and wires. Future repairs to these facilities also could damage the health and beauty of nearby plants and trees, or even require removal.

• Keep areas around electric meters, transformers or other electrical equipment free of any vegetation that could limit utility service access.

• Before digging, call the underground utility locator service to mark the location of underground utilities so that accidental contact, damage and injuries can be avoided. The number is 811 or 1-800-522-OKIE (6543). You can also start a ticket at OKIE811.org.

“There are many beautiful varieties of low-growing trees and shrubs that provide color, screening and shade, and enhance the quality of life in our communities and environment,” said Hall. “Consider the types of trees that co-exist well with power lines and the environment to avoid the need for trimming for line clearance.”

Source: Safe Electricity

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Protected passwords lead to protected data

By Justin Henderson

You are often told your passwords are key to protecting your accounts (which is true!), but rarely are you given a simple way to securely create and manage all your passwords. Below we cover three simple steps to simplify your passwords, lock down your accounts, and protect your future.

Passphrases

The days of crazy, complex passwords are over. Those passwords are hard to remember, difficult to type, and with today's super-fast computers can be easy for a cyber attacker to crack. The key to passwords is to make them long; the more characters you have the better. These are called passphrases: a type of strong password that uses a short sentence or random words. Here are two examples:

- Time for strong coffee!
- lost-snail-crawl-beach

Both of these are strong, with over twenty characters, easy to remember, and simple to type but difficult to crack. You will run into websites or situations requiring you to add symbols, numbers, or uppercase letters to your password, which is fine. Remember though, it's length that is most important.

Password Managers

You need a unique password for every account. If you reuse the same password for multiple accounts, you are putting yourself in great danger. All a cyber attacker needs to do is hack a website you use, steal all the passwords including yours, then use your password to log in to all your other accounts as you. It happens far more often than you realize. Don't believe it? Check out the website www.havebeenpwned.com to see what sites you use that have been hacked and your passwords potentially compromised. So, what should you do? Use a password manager.



These are special computer programs that securely store all your passwords in an encrypted vault. You only need to remember one password: the one for your password manager. The password manager then automatically retrieves your passwords whenever you need them and logs into websites for you.

They also have other features such as storing your answers to secret questions, warning you when you reuse passwords, a password generator that ensures you use strong passwords, and many other features. Most password managers also securely sync across almost any computer or device, so regardless of what system you are using you have easy, secure access to all your passwords.

Finally, be sure to write down the password to your password manager and store that in a secure location at home. Some password managers even let you print out a password manager recovery kit. That way, if you forget the password to your password manager you have a backup. Or, if you get sick or find yourself in an emergency, your spouse or trusted family member can retrieve the information on your behalf.

Two-Step Verification

Two-step verification (often called two-factor authentication or multi-factor authentication) adds an additional layer of security. It requires you to have two things when you log in to your accounts: your password and a numerical code which is generated by your smartphone or sent to your phone.

This process ensures that even if a cyber attacker gets your password, they still can't get into your accounts. Two-step verification is simple to set up and you usually only need to use it once when you log in from a new computer or device. Enable this whenever possible, especially for your most important accounts such as your bank or retirement accounts, or access to your email. If you are using a password manager, we highly recommend you protect it with a strong passphrase AND two-step verification.

It may sound silly, but these three simple steps go a long way in protecting your job, your reputation, and your financial future.

Source: SANS Security Awareness

Spring tune-ups for home efficiency

Is your HVAC ready for the shift to warmer weather?

After a long, chilly winter, we're all ready for warm summer weather. Is your air conditioning system as ready as you are?

There's nothing worse than an HVAC malfunction on the hottest day of the year. A springtime once-over can prevent that from happening.

Plus, air conditioning is your biggest energy expense during the summer. Keep summer energy bills in check by making time for a few pre-summer rituals:

- Schedule a professional tune-up for your air conditioner before the hottest days arrive so yours won't break down during the busiest time for repairs. Cotton Electric members who have a HVAC tune-up by June 20 could receive a rebate. Details can be found at CottonElectric.com.



- Turn on your ceiling fans. They increase the circulation of cool air and might allow you to move the thermostat up a notch.
- Close your window blinds during the hottest part of the day.
- Add insulation to your attic and caulk windows. Preventing cool air from leaking out of your house can reduce cooling costs by up to 20 percent.
- If you're in the market for a new air conditioner, buy one with the highest SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio) rating you can afford. These appliances are the most efficient.
- Don't buy too big. An air conditioner should "fit" the size of your home. An HVAC professional can advise you about proper sizing.

- Inspecting their cords and plugs for damage.
- Some more quick tips:
 - If you have young children at home, plug wall outlets with child-safety caps.
 - Replace appliances whose cords are frayed or worn. You can't fix those.
 - Resolve to buy new appliances that have the thumbs-up from an independent testing laboratory like Underwriters Laboratories.
 - Choose light bulbs with the correct wattage for each lamp and overhead light fixture. You'll find the maximum safe wattage imprinted on the fixture.
 - Get those electrical cords out from under your carpets! Covering cords can cause them to overheat and start a fire.
 - Put your extension cords away. They're not meant for everyday use.
 - Install waterproof covers on your outdoor outlets.

It's time for spring safety check

As long as you're doing spring cleaning and putting the house in order for nice weather, check for accidents-waiting-to-happen in your home, especially those that involve electricity.

Conduct an audit of your home—something you should turn into an annual ritual. Check that all of your appliances are still in working order by turning them on and off, listening to the sound of the motor (is it "normal?") and

- Choose light bulbs with the correct wattage for each lamp and overhead light fixture. You'll find the maximum safe wattage imprinted on the fixture.
- Get those electrical cords out from under your carpets! Covering cords can cause them to overheat and start a fire.
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Source: Pointers and Prose

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