

# The Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



*“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”*

VOLUME 64

December 14, 2020

NUMBER 4



MERRY  
*christmas*

*May the lights of the season fill you with warmth and joyous spirit.  
May you and those you love find true happiness and peace  
this Christmas and into the new year!*

The Board of Trustees and Employees  
of Cotton Electric Cooperative



Photo by Danielle Quickle

Meter shop technicians Josh Belcher, left, Adam Metcalfe, Sam Gonzalez and Supervisor Cody Pennington prepare a batch of meters for the Cache substation phase of a meter upgrade project that began in 2018. Meters are changed out one substation at a time. The project is helped along by fellow meter techni-

cians Rex Hiebert, Anthony Reed and Jason Red Elk and apparatus technician Zac Hoodenpyle. Linemen crews also worked on the first day of the Cache substation changeout.

## 13,995 meters upgraded, 8,370 to go

*Massive territory-wide changeout project should complete in coming year*

By Karen Kaley

How long does it take to change a meter? Under the best of circumstances, it takes about 10 or 15 minutes for a two-man crew to perform a job briefing, knock on a door to inform a member, pull the old meter out, put the new meter in, and fill out paperwork to record readings and identifiers for both meters. Factor in the drive to the next location, locked gates, mean dogs and bad weather and it can take a bit longer.

How long does it take to change all the meters on the Cotton Electric system? Our plan is to take a little over three years to execute an upgrade of 22,365 meters.

“Actually, three years is an ambitious goal,” Cody Pennington said. He and the seven other employees he supervises in the Meter and Transformer Department are handling the bulk of the changeout. They go out in two-man teams, sometimes all eight of them at once and sometimes they are joined by teams of other employees.

Pennington said this is the largest changeout the co-op has launched. Past projects were focused on upgrading single-phase meters, the devices typically measuring electricity consumption at a residence. The current project also includes three-phase meters used at larger power consumption locations.

In addition to installing the upgraded meters, Pennington said they are re-wiring some meter sites to enhance safety.

The changeout is occurring in steps, one substation at a time. Each substation collects consumption information from meters it serves. In turn, the readings are sent to the co-op headquarters in Walters, where they are processed for billing purposes.

Eight substations are scheduled for changeout in 2021. That should complete a process that began in late 2018 with pilot projects of all meters served by the newly-built Randlett substation and those served by the Pinto substation, deep in oil field territory.

The new meters replace an older style that was reaching end-of-life. “Parts and support have become more difficult to get,” Pennington said. He described the new meters as having the same technology with upgrades.

He pointed out the faster, more flexible communication between the meters and the co-op as one of the main benefits. The previous generation sent consumption information only once every 24 hours. Information delayed by as much as 30 hours – sometimes more if the line of communication was interrupted – was not as helpful to members who monitor daily consumption.

See Two-way, Page 2

### Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after Dec. 1, 2020, is (\$0.00021) per kWh.

On a member’s average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a credit of \$0.27 on the December bill.

### November 2020 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	70	40	55	16	72	29	51
2	70	34	52	17	73	32	53
3	76	35	56	18	74	33	54
4	77	40	59	19	76	50	63
5	76	45	61	20	77	52	65
6	78	47	63	21	67	52	60
7	77	52	65	22	52	38	45
8	78	57	68	23	56	36	46
9	72	61	67	24	77	45	61
10	65	43	54	25	63	36	50
11	66	33	50	26	73	32	53
12	74	42	58	27	61	40	51
13	58	38	48	28	47	37	42
14	83	51	67	29	56	37	47
15	63	35	49	30	51	25	38

Source: [srh.noaa.gov/om/](http://srh.noaa.gov/om/)  
Average Daily High: 69 Average Daily Low: 41

### Did You Know?

Cotton Electric offices will be closed Thursday and Friday, Dec. 24 and 25 for the Christmas holiday and Friday, Jan. 1, 2021 for the New Year holiday. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes Jan. 19, 2021.

### 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](mailto:TheCurrent@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](http://cottonelectric.com)

From the CEO

# Cotton Electric rises to challenges

In the midst of these challenging times, our focus at Cotton Electric has continued to be providing safe, reliable and affordable power while improving the quality of life for the members we serve.

The dedication of our employees during 2020 has been an inspiration as they have adapted and overcome obstacles. Office staff have worked diligently to make sure phones were answered, bills were paid, and vital information was communicated. After a brief delay, we resumed our vegetation management, pole inspection and pole replacement programs, which improve our system reliability



**Jennifer Meason, CEO**

during severe weather events like the October 2020 ice storm. We also continued deploying our new meter system, which assists crews as they work to efficiently restore power.

Employees went above and beyond not only for Cotton Electric members but other

cooperatives as well. Multiple crews rotated to Louisiana to assist with restoration efforts after hurricanes devastated several co-op systems. They had been back a short time when the historic October 2020 ice storm hit (more on page 4). Once outages were restored here, they continued their efforts by assisting our neighboring cooperative CKEnergy in restoring power to their membership.

Your generous giving to the Operation Round Up fund was another highlight. The Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation awarded \$77,250.97 in grants this year. Nearly \$1.3 million has been donated since the pro-

gram was established in 2004, making a huge impact in our local communities.

The definition of resilience is “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.” I’m proud to say that perfectly describes the employees and members of Cotton Electric during 2020.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Please feel free to reach out and speak directly to me about any issues or questions you might have. I can be reached at 580-875-4217.

I wish you and yours a merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

## Two-way meter communication has benefits for both the members and the cooperative

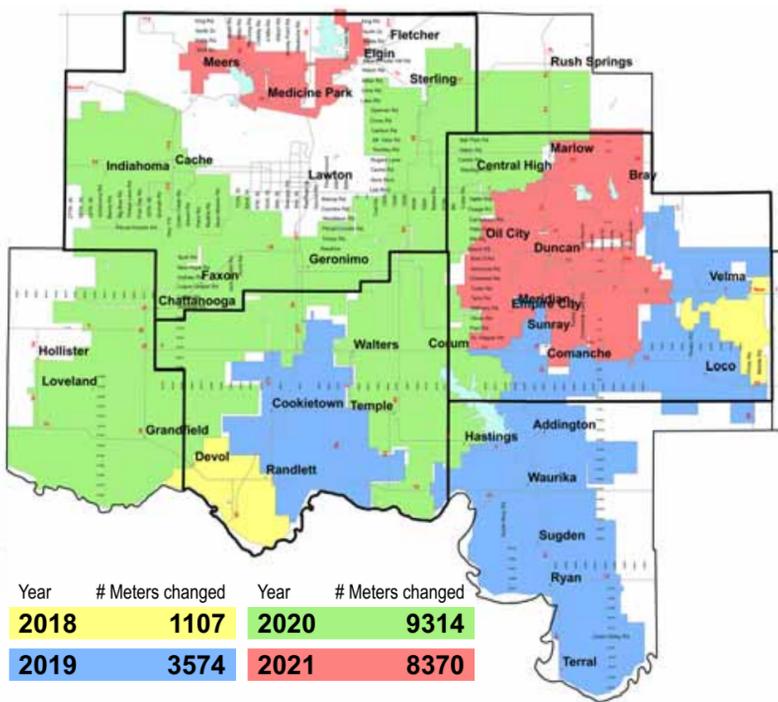
*Continued from Page 1*

From the co-op’s point of view, two-way communication is a new feature that makes outage response more efficient. Pennington said co-op dispatchers can “ping” a meter – send a message that is returned within a few minutes – to determine if power is still flowing.

“This aids tremendously in outage restoration efforts, as was demonstrated during the recent ice storm.”

He said the ping function pinpoints issues and eliminates phantom outages. “We can focus on accounts that are actually without power. That gets men and women out working storms home faster.”

Barring wild winter weather or other types of delays, plans are to begin the final year of the project in mid-January. Pennington and other Cotton Electric employees will change about 2,400 meters served by the substations known



The map above shows substation service areas affected in each year’s phase of the Cotton Electric meter upgrade. In 2021, meters scheduled for changeout are served by substations known as Medicine Park, Paradise, Elgin, Bray, Harrisburg, Stephens, Duncan and Empire.

as Paradise and Medicine Park.

The Elgin substation changeout should begin sometime in March.

The final leg of the project will be further east. Changing meters served by five substations in Stephens County is expected to finish in the fall of 2021.

Cotton Electric members can help a bit with the project. Follow us on Facebook or Instagram to see announcements about when me-

ters might be changed in your area. Let us know if we might encounter a locked gate or we need to make sure we don’t let the family pet get loose.

We’ll try to make our visit quick and easy – 10 or 15 minutes.

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**COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP**

## 2021 SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

Cotton Electric Cooperative has a scholarship opportunity available for high school juniors in the service area.

Area juniors can submit a 600-word essay for a chance to participate. The topic for Cotton Electric’s 2021 Scholarship Contest is “How do the 7 Cooperative Principles satisfy the needs of a community?”

The contest features three “no-touch” rounds: Essay submission, interview and oral presentation of the essay. Essays will be submitted electronically. Interviews will be carried out as video meetings. Final recitations of essays will be video submissions.

Information such as contest rules and regulations, entry forms, cooperative information and basic details of the contest can be found on our website at <https://www.cottonelectric.com/scholarship>.

The deadline to submit an essay is Jan. 18.

For more information regarding the essay contest, call Cotton Electric at 580-875-3351 or email [YouthPrograms@CottonElectric.com](mailto:YouthPrograms@CottonElectric.com).



## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Energy bills can increase during winter for a variety of reasons, like houseguests, more time spent at home, and shorter days and longer nights. Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water can help you save.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

**COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP**

**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.

### October 2020 Operating Stats

	2020	2019
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$4,765,723	\$4,888,439
Cost of Purchased Power	3,237,506	3,332,069
Taxes	93,210	93,039
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,005	946
Average Farm and Residential Bill	123	125
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,018	1,088
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,763	18,478
Miles Energized	5,208	5,201
Density Per Mile	3.60	3.55
New Service Connects YTD	340	277
Services Retired	141	107

## The Current

Published Monthly at Walters, Oklahoma  
By Cotton Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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“Cotton Electric Current” (USPS #134-020)  
is published monthly by: Cotton Electric Co-op,  
226 North Broadway, Walters, OK 73572  
Periodicals Postage paid at  
Lawton, OK 73501-4649

**Postmaster Send #3579**  
**To The Cotton Current**  
226 North Broadway  
Walters, OK 73572  
This institution is an equal opportunity provider & employer.

# Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the January issue, please submit information by Jan. 6 by calling 580-875-4255 or send an email to [TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com](mailto:TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com). Events that occur before Jan. 19 will not be published in the next issue.

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

### Church presents Live Nativity

As part of Holiday in the Park, Central Baptist Church of Lawton presents the Live Nativity from 6 to 8 p.m. each night Dec. 18-20 at the east entrance of Elmer Thomas Park in Lawton.

The Live Nativity is a presentation of the birth of Jesus Christ, complete with authentic costumes, live animals and narration. This family-friendly event brings the Bible alive.

### Medicine Park hosts annual Christmas Carnival

Plan to spend the day at the Christmas Carnival on Dec. 19 in Medicine Park. Beginning at 10 a.m., attractions will include pony rides, miniature golf and the foam blocks of Imagination Station. Organizers are working on a "snow pile," too.

The parade is open to all who wish to participate. Lineup begins at 1 p.m. at the water plant. Santa will toss plush toys along the route.

Children will have an opportunity to speak with Santa after the parade until the day concludes around sunset.

### CTAC presents Summer Breeze

Chisholm Trail Arts Council presents Summer Breeze at 7:30 p.m., Jan. 22, 2021, in the Simmons Center Theater in Duncan.

Celebrating 45 years, Summer Breeze was originally formed in 1976 by five young musicians with varying musical backgrounds. Summer Breeze, known as one of the top cover bands in the state, has had the opportunity to be the opening act for over 75 of Nashville's top recording artists including Garth Brooks, George Strait, Vince Gill and numerous others.

For information or tickets call 580-252-4160 or go online to [ChisholmTrailArts.com](http://ChisholmTrailArts.com).

### Market returns to winter hours

Lawton Farmers Market, an initiative of the Southwest Oklahoma Growers Association, returns for winter months in the Cameron University Animal Sciences building at the Agriculture Facility, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday, running through the beginning of May 2021.

Shoppers will find a variety of choices at the winter market, including winter produce, sprouts, micro greens, meat, eggs, honey, nuts, and handmade and artisan items. The building is located on Southwest 38th Street and is south of Dr. Elsie Hamm Drive and the railroad crossing. Parking is available on the south side of the building.

For more information about the market or becoming a vendor at the market, visit [LawtonFarmersMarket.com](http://LawtonFarmersMarket.com) or send an email to [lawtonfarmersmarket@yahoo.com](mailto:lawtonfarmersmarket@yahoo.com).

### 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.

Pantry organizers try to provide a two-week 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., Walters, OK 73572.

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

### Blessings Boutique open monthly

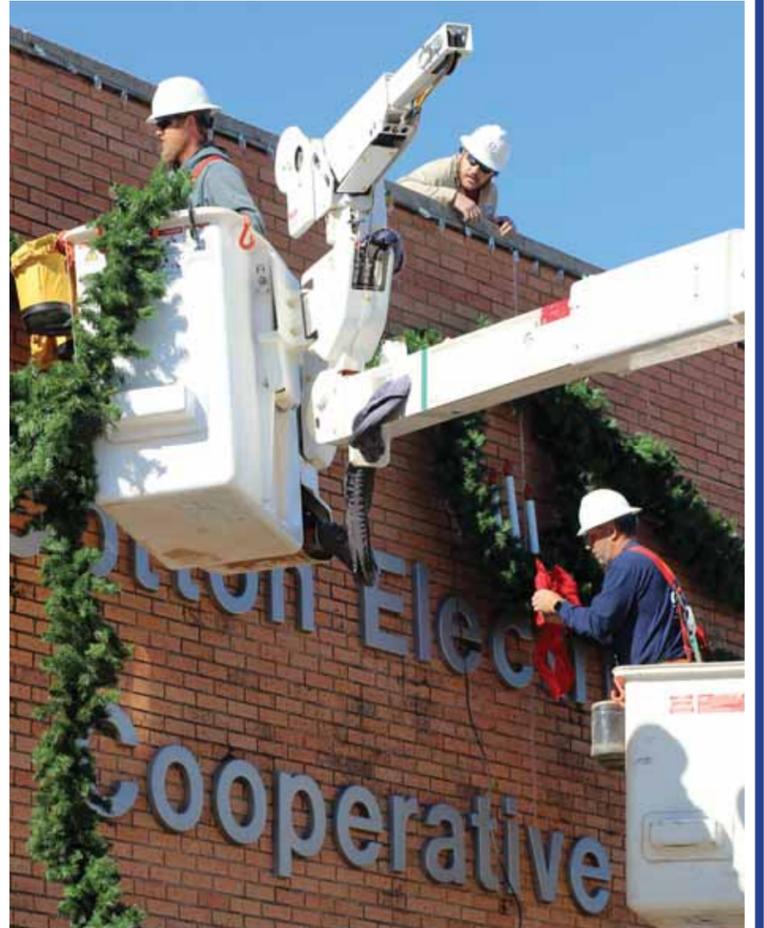
Marlow First United Methodist Church opens its Blessings Boutique from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every first and third Tuesday of the month. Clothing donation drop-off days are Tuesdays, or donors can call the church at 580-658-2765 to make other arrangements.

### Free Sunday occurs each month

A HOUSE FULL Resale hosts Free Sunday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., the first Sunday of each month, at 1821 W. Gore Blvd. in Lawton.

A variety of items will be available outside on racks and tables for free. Items include recyclables, clothing, kitchenware, books and others that would be great for projects or reuse.

## PHOTO OF THE MONTH



No submissions for our "Traditions" photo contest, so we are sharing this shot of Cotton Electric linemen Kyle Linthicum, left, Quaid Ogletree and Clint Ingram putting up Christmas decorations, a tradition at our headquarters in Walters.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for January is Smiles. Entries can be emailed to [TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com](mailto: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.

### Flu shots available at Comanche County Health Department

Comanche County Health Department offers no-cost flu shots for anyone in the community. If you have insurance, please bring your insurance card, but if no insurance is available you still are eligible for the no-cost vaccine. Anyone under the age of 18 must have a parent or legal guardian present.

The flu shot is available for those aged 6 months and up. The "high dose" flu vaccine for ages 65 and up is also available.

Shots are administered from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. most weekdays at 1010 SW Sheridan Road in Lawton. For information, call the health department at 580-248-5890.

# The Current

## 2021 Publication Schedule

The Current will complete its 64th year of publication in 2021. We look forward to serving the membership with stories, photos and the ever-popular classified ads.

Dates listed below are deadlines to reserve display advertising space, deadline to submit a classified ad and the day you should expect your copy of The Current to arrive in your mailbox.

January	
Ad Sales	Jan. 4
Classified ads	Jan. 16
Publish Date	Jan. 19
March	
Ad Sales	Feb. 26
Classified	March 3
Publish Date	March 15
May	
Ad Sales	April 23
Classified	May 3
Publish Date	May 10
July	
Ad Sales	June 25
Classified	June 30
Publish Date	July 12
September	
Ad Sales	Aug. 20
Classified	Aug. 25
Publish Date	Sept. 7
November	
Ad Sales	Oct. 29
Classified	Nov. 3
Publish Date	Nov. 15

February	
Ad Sales	Jan. 29
Classified	Feb. 3
Publish Date	Feb. 16
April	
Ad Sales	March 26
Classified	March 31
Publish Date	April 12
June	
Ad Sales	May 28
Classified	June 2
Publish Date	June 14
August	
Ad Sales	July 23
Classified	July 28
Publish Date	Aug. 9
October	
Ad Sales	Sept. 24
Classified	Sept. 29
Publish Date	Oct. 12
December	
Ad Sales	Nov. 29
Classified	Dec. 4
Publish Date	Dec. 13

## A SENSIBLE APPROACH TO RENEWABLES

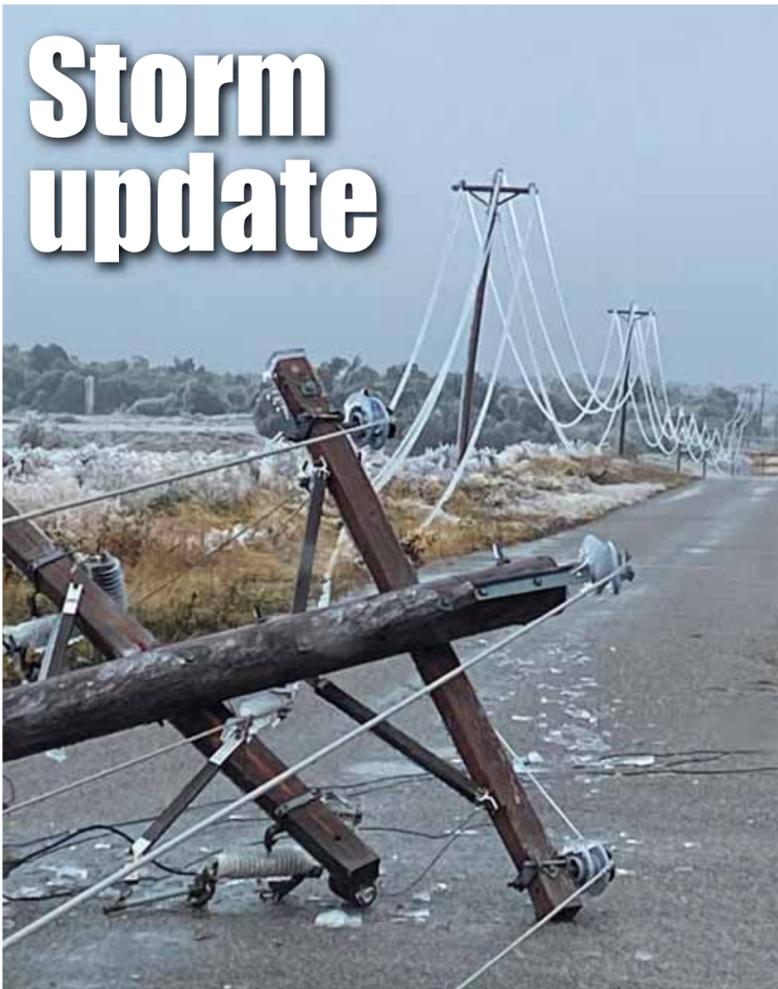
We don't follow the herd.

At Cotton Electric, we don't hop on bandwagons. We approach renewables in the way that works best for the communities we serve. It's a smarter approach to a balanced energy mix that works for everyone.

# COTTON

ELECTRIC CO-OP

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# Storm update

## Ice before leaves fall has devastating effect

By Karen Kaley

Among the oddities of 2020 weather patterns: An October ice storm in Oklahoma. This particular storm is memorable and historic for several reasons. The early date had a domino effect of ice in an unusual circumstance that magnified a very wide impact.

Ice adds significant weight wherever it collects. In the deep of winter, it collects on bare tree branches and power lines. In late October, tree branches are not bare and ice can accumulate on leafy surfaces.

More surfaces hold more ice. More ice means more weight. More weight means more limbs falling into lines which leads to more damage. Later, limbs and lines bounce up when ice melts, causing even more damage.

Mercifully, the wind played only a small role in this meteorological anomaly, blowing the ice-dumping way-too-early storm across two-thirds of the state then moving on. Cotton Electric members experienced some wind-related outages the afternoon of Oct. 26 that were resolved before bedtime.

The first ice-related outages were reported during the first hour of Oct. 27. Some 13 hours later, the storm's impact on Cotton Electric reached its peak with 8,694 members out of power. Most were in the northern part of the service area.

Cotton Electric crews were joined by contractors to keep restoration efforts going around the clock. The final known residential outage was restored shortly after midnight Oct. 30.

After a bit of a rest, Cotton crews traveled to sister co-ops to aid in res-

toration efforts. More than 400,000 Oklahomans experienced outages, some for as long as 11 days. Cotton Electric's power supplier worked to repair damaged transmission structures for the entire month of November.

Final damage tallies for Cotton Electric are not yet available but it is known that 56 poles were replaced in the immediate aftermath of the storm. As much as 7 miles of line came down, about 500 fuses were blown and the number of cross arms and transformers damaged is around 50 each.

Storm-related efforts are not finished. Cotton Electric employees continue with permanent repairs to ice storm damage. Vegetation management (VM) teams have renewed efforts to clear trees threatening power lines. The VM program is credited with keeping the storm fallout from being any worse.

Our meter department has resumed an upgrade project that proved useful in restoration efforts. The ability to ping meters – send and receive a message from the headquarters in Walters – cut down on time spent investigating phantom outages.

Cotton Electric members are preparing for the possibility of more winter storms. We have seen an uptick of inquiries about our generator program. We suggest Christmas stocking stuffers of flashlights and batteries.

The October storm may have been oddly early but there is a positive. It served as a forceful reminder to prepare homes, supplies and families for the winter ahead.

Make a plan. Be safe. Stay warm. Enjoy the holidays.



Download CECF grant applications at [CottonElectric.com](http://CottonElectric.com).  
Deadline for first-quarter 2021 grant applications is Feb. 9.

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.

## CECF announces recent grants

Even during tough economic times, it's important that we continue to support our local communities. That's the philosophy behind Operation Round Up (ORU), a charitable program governed, funded and supported by Cotton Electric members like you.

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 (CECF), 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: Danny Marlett, Carter Waid and Cindy Zebst.

The board met in August to review several grant applications. Grants totaling \$18,889.97 will be distributed to seven of the applicants. Fourth-quarter grants include:

- City of Geronimo: A CECF

grant of \$9,966 will help the city install safe playground equipment.

- Comanche Area Toys 4 Tots: A \$2,500 CECF grant will be used to purchase toys, games, books and clothing for children.

- Empire Public Schools: A \$2,500 CECF grant will help with modifications in the gym lobby to accommodate spectators with handicaps.

- Gabriel's House: A \$500 CECF grant will purchase items for food care packages to sustain students through the holiday season.

- Indianhoma Fire Department: A \$5,000 CECF grant will help with the purchase of a hydraulic rescue tool.

- Rush Springs UMC Food Bank: A \$1,800 CECF grant will purchase a freezer and food to stock it.

- Waurika EMS District Association: A \$3,795 CECF grant will purchase a Toughbook laptop computer to use in an ambulance.

CECF has awarded or pledged more than 530 grants totaling \$1,295,309.78 since the foundation was established in 2004.

Applications for 2021 first-quarter grants are due Feb. 9, 2021. Downloadable applications are available at [CottonElectric.com/grant-applications](http://CottonElectric.com/grant-applications).

# Simplify

Paying your power bill online is easy ...

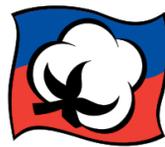
Just visit [CottonElectric.com](http://CottonElectric.com) and click the **VIEW & PAY BILL** button. Use your Cotton Electric account number and a password of your choosing to set up an online bill pay account.

Automatic bank draft is easier ...

At [CottonElectric.com](http://CottonElectric.com), click **PAYMENT OPTIONS** under the Residential menu. **Download an application form**, fill it out and send it in with a voided check. We'll arrange to draft your checking account 10 days after your billing date. All you have to do is open your bill and make a note in your check register.

Want to go paperless?

Call us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520 or send an email to [info@cottonelectric.com](mailto:info@cottonelectric.com) to request billing via email only. We will need your Cotton Electric account number, so have it handy.



**COTTON**  
**ELECTRIC CO-OP**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

226 N. Broadway, Walters • 1101 W. Oak, Duncan



ENGINEERING SERVICE & CONTRACTING

5755 N. Highway 81, Duncan, OK  
580-252-2205  
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## Current 2020 Promotions!

- FREE UV Light with every install
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Schedule your home comfort upgrade with DeHart and rake in the savings!

Call us today for more information! 580-252-2205



Cotton Electric Co-Op Rebates Available On: \*16 Seer, 17 Seer, 18 Seer(+) Air Source Heat Pumps. \*New Water Heaters And Mini-Splits. \*New Geo-Thermal Systems & Replacement Systems. [srice@dehartair.com](mailto:srice@dehartair.com)

Dehart Air Conditioning offers preventative maintenance plans to keep systems healthy!

\*Rebates Available in many OMPA Member cities \*Restrictions apply



# Defend Your Data

## Protect yourself from fake news



Generally speaking, fake news is a false narrative that is published and promoted as if it were true. Historically, fake news was usually propaganda put out by those in power to create a certain belief or support a certain position, even if it was completely false.

Social media has now created an environment where anyone with an agenda can publish falsehoods as if they were truths. People can be paid to post fake news on behalf of someone else or automated programs, often called bots, can publish auto-generated fake news.

The motivations as to why people create and distribute fake news are as numerous as there are individual opinions.

### The Dangers of Fake News

While some examples of fake news seem innocent or just an attempt at fun, a lot of it can be malicious and even dangerous. Fake news is created to change people's beliefs, attitudes or perceptions, so they will ultimately change their behavior. This means if you fall into the trap of believing fake news, your beliefs and your decisions are being driven by someone else's agenda. Also, in some parts of the world, there can be legal consequences for publishing and sharing fake news.

### How to Spot Fake News

So how do you protect yourself from fake news? The most effective way is to only trust something once you can verify it.

**Consider the Source:** Think about the actual source of the news. A local blog will not be as trustworthy as a major academic journal. What does the source stand for? What are their objectives?

**Supporting Sources:** Look at the sources cited in the article. Are they themselves credible? Do they even exist?

**Multiple Sources:** Don't just rely on a single article. The more you read from various sources, the more likely you can draw accurate conclusions. Also consider diverse sources and perspectives, for example, news from different countries or authors with different backgrounds.

**Check the Author:** Who is the author? Research them to see if they are a credible author, their reputation in the community, whether they have a specific agenda, or if the person posting is a real person. Are they authoring within their field of expertise?

**Check the Date:** Make sure that the date is recent and that it is not an older story simply rehashed.

**Comments:** Even if the arti-

cle, video, or post is legitimate, be careful of comments posted in response. Quite often links or comments posted in response can be auto-generated by bots or by people hired to put out bad, confusing or false information.

**Check Your Biases:** Be objective. Could your own biases influence your response to the article? A problem that we humans often run into is that we only read sources that simply confirm what we already believe in. Challenge yourself by reading other sources you normally would not review.

**Check the Funding:** Even legitimate publications have sponsors and advertisers who can influence an article or source. Check to see if the article is funded, and if so, by whom.

**Repost carefully:** Fake news relies on believers to repost, retweet or otherwise forward false information. If you're uncertain as to the authenticity of an article, think twice or hold off on sharing it with others.

In today's fast-paced world of social media, fake news surrounds us every day. If you are not careful, you run the risk of believing and acting upon it. Take the time to follow these basic steps to help ensure you make informed decisions based on facts.

Source: SANS Awareness

### STICKING TO A BUDGET IS EASIER WITH MY COMPUTER TURNED OFF.

Makes sense. Less power equals more savings. I'm saving \$105 a year by shutting down all the way. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at [TOUCHSTONEENERGY.COM](http://TOUCHSTONEENERGY.COM)



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

### HOLT ELECTRIC OVER 30 YEARS EXPERIENCE

Residential Commercial Industrial Estimates Remodeling New Construction

24 hour Service

580-365-4147

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Directions to Property - From Marlow, Go Approximately 5 Miles East on Hwy 29, Turn North on Cason Road and Go 2 Miles until you get to the West Entry Gate on the Right at Intersection of Cason and Ballpark (Goat) Roads. To East Entry, Go One More Mile on Hwy 29 to Goodrich Road, Turn North and Go 2 Miles North to Intersection. Turn West on Gravel Road About 1,500 Feet to East Entry Gate.

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# Four ways Santa saves energy in his workshop

*Editor's Note: Heath Morgan is helping a lot of Cotton Electric members prepare for the winter. We found a Santa's helper who offered the information below in place of the monthly column.*

The holiday season is finally upon us, and Santa and his elves have been especially busy as they gear up for their biggest night of the year.

It's no secret that Santa is known for running an efficient workshop – how else could he make all those toys in time for Christmas Eve? Rumor has it that one way Santa ensures an efficient workspace is through energy-saving measures.

Here are four ways Santa saves energy in his workshop.

1. Santa leaves his decorations up year-round, so by using LED holiday light strands, he saves on his monthly energy bills. LED holiday strands can last up to 40 seasons, which make them a great option for any festive home.

2. Santa requires several power tools to make a year's worth of new toys. That's why he insists on using cordless power tools with the Energy Star® rating. According to energystar.gov, if all power tools in the U.S. used Energy Star®-rated battery chargers, 2 billion kWh of electricity could be saved.



Abby Berry

That's equivalent to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 1.7 million tons!

3. Mrs. Claus loves to keep warm by the fire in the evenings, and Santa knows one of the best tricks to ensure fireplace efficiency. While a fireplace can keep a small area of your home cozy and warm, it can also pull a lot of heated air from the room through the chimney. That's why Santa always closes the fireplace flue when a fire isn't burning.

4. Santa also saves energy by using power strips. Power strips are ideal for workshops, craft nooks, game rooms and other spaces in your home. With one simple switch, you can conveniently control several devices and electron-

ics that are plugged into the power strip.

This holiday season, let's take a page from Santa's book and remember to save energy when possible. With these four tips, you'll be well on your way to saving – and hopefully, onto Santa's "nice" list!

*Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.*

## Repair or replace? Consider appliance age, repair cost

When an older appliance is on the fritz, it usually makes sense to replace it rather than to sink money into repair after repair. But when an appliance breaks down before its expected life span has passed, a repair could be the better option.

Before you call a repair tech or head to the nearest big-box store to buy something new, consider:

**The appliance's age.** Use the 50% rule: If your appliance is more than halfway through its useful life, and if the repair will cost more than 50% of the price of a new one, head for the store.

The National Association of Realtors estimates that a dishwasher should last a good nine years; a clothes dryer, 13 years; a garbage disposal, 12; an electric range, 13; an exhaust fan, 10; a freezer, 11; a microwave, refrigerator, 13; and a clothes washer, 10.

**The warranty.** Newer appliances usually come with a warranty of at least a year, and sometimes two, on labor and parts. If the broken device is still covered, call for service.

**Your budget.** If the repair bill is through the roof and you can afford to buy a new appliance, you could save a little money in the long run.

Newer models of refrigerators, water heaters and dishwashers are so much more energy- and water-efficient than older versions that you could see a difference on your utility bills if you replace rather than repair.

Consider the hidden costs of buying new, however. For example, will you have to pay to have the replacement appliance delivered and installed? Will you need to modify your kitchen for the new appliance to fit?



Think carefully about whether to repair or replace an older appliance. If you decide to replace, make sure the old one is disposed of properly.

### Discard unwanted appliances with care

When it's time to say good-bye to that old refrigerator or microwave, say good-bye for good.

Too often, second-hand appliances find a second life in the kitchens or basements of bargain-hunters who don't realize that discarded electrical devices can be a safety hazard and add unnecessary charges to the electric bill.

Sometimes, those discarded TVs, water heaters, computers and countertop appliances wind up in back yards, ditches and alleys, where they can attract animals and children who could get trapped inside.

So resist the temptation to pick up a few extra dollars by selling your outdated and broken devices

at a flea market or garage sale. And if you're shopping for a dorm refrigerator or space heater for the basement or for a college-bound child, find a good price on a new one rather than buying it used from a neighbor or rummage sale.

Instead of throwing appliances in the trash, look for local charities or trade schools that collect old ones and use them to teach repair skills to job-seekers. Or request a special trash pick-up from your local government, which will legally and safely dispose of the unwanted devices.

If you're replacing a large appliance with a newer, more energy-efficient version, have the delivery service haul away your old one.

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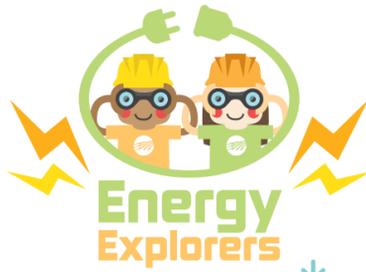
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Can you find all the words associated with winter in the puzzle below?  
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**WORD BANK:**

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- snowball
- chilly
- icicles
- cocoa
- earmuffs
- fireplace
- blanket

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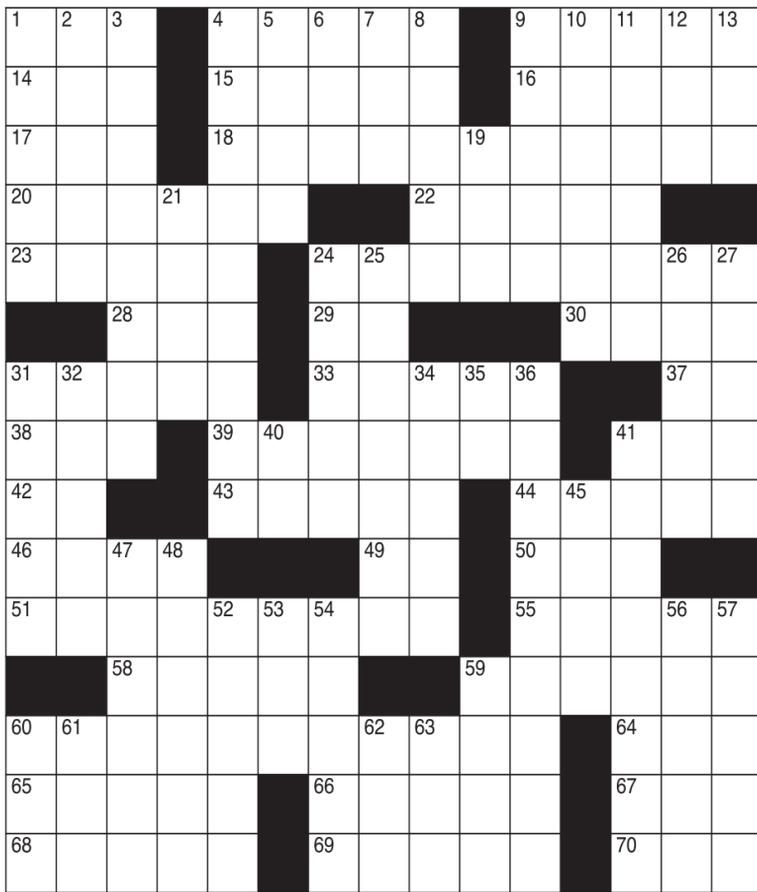
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17. Popular kids channel
18. Dodgers' skipper
20. Removes
22. The Atlantic is one
23. Badgerlike mammal
24. Foulness
28. Luke's mentor \_\_\_-Wan
29. Commercial
30. A type of gin
31. Temptress
33. Shuts in an enclosed space
37. Milligram
38. Actress Adams
39. Strive to equal or match
41. Health insurance
42. A detective's source
43. Small American rails
44. Alfred \_\_, Brit. poet
46. Crest of a hill
49. Atomic #52
50. \_\_ Caesar, comedian
51. Breaks apart
55. Register formally (Brit. sp.)
58. Worker
59. Chemical compound
60. Disgraced newsman
64. Born of
65. Chemical substance
66. Supernatural powers
67. Clothes
68. Indy footballers
69. Moves forward



70. Midway between south and southeast
- Japanese-Americans
- alien
36. Unconscious
10. Large bodies of water
40. Missouri
41. Firemen use them
11. Eurasian ryegrass
45. Pig noise
47. Greatly dismay
12. Perform on stage
13. Greek island
48. Imitator
19. 10th month of the year (abbr.)
52. Moves by turning over
21. One point east of southeast
53. Boxing's GOAT
24. Belgian city
54. Swarms with
56. Margarine
25. Praise excessively
26. River in France
57. Feudal superior
27. Edible lily bulbs
31. Quarterbacks take them
60. Reciprocal of a sine
61. Chinese city
32. Organic compound
62. Tell on
34. Tears down (Brit.)
63. United
35. Beloved Hollywood

**DOWN**

1. Driver
2. Bone cavities
3. Menacing
4. Where coaches patrol
5. Greek mythological figure
6. War-based board game
7. Midway between northeast and east
8. 18-year period in astronomy
9. Mid-century term used to describe

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# 4-H adjusts recipe for cook off

Final judging of the annual Stephens County 4-H Cook Off is always held the first Monday in November. The tasty date for the 2020 contest was about the only thing that wasn't adjusted because of the pandemic.

Traditionally a two-part competition, judging of the written recipes was folded into the taste and appearance assessments of entries in a pared-down six categories.

Participants included two Cloverbuds and 10 4-H'ers who entered recipes. Awards were presented to the top three in each category. First-place winners received a monogrammed apron and second- and third-place winners



received participation medals. Cloverbud participants received a certificate and kitchen utensil.

All awards were sponsored by Stephens County Farm Bureau Women.

## Appetizers & Dips

Brylan Sweat—Teen Leaders

### Guacamole

- 2 lg. (or 4 small) Hass Avocados
- 1/4 c. Pico de Gallo
- 1 Tbsp. mayonnaise
- Garlic salt to taste
- 1 Tbsp. sour cream
- Lime juice of small lime (optional)

Remove skin and pits from avocados. In mixing bowl, use fork to mash to desired consistency. Stir in sour cream and mayo. Add remaining ingredients, folding to mix. Serve immediately or refrigerate.

## Breads

Langtry Billings - STAR

### Nana's Banana Bread

- 1/3 cup shortening
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 tsp soda
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 3/4 cup flour
- 1 c. very ripe banana  
(Usually 3-4 bananas)



Cream shortening, sugar, and egg. Sift flour, baking powder, soda and salt. Mix all together with 1 cup very ripe bananas. Usually 3-4 bananas. Bake 350 degrees in loaf pan 40 to 50 minutes. Serves 10

## Casseroles

Hannah Riley - Teen Leaders

### Enchilada Meatballs

- Kosher salt
- Black Pepper
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 jalapeño, minced
- 1 (19-oz.) can enchilada sauce
- 1/2 (15-oz.) can black beans, drained
- 1 c. sweet corn
- 1c. shredded cheddar
- 1 c. Monterey Jack
- 1 avocado, sliced
- Tortillas, for serving (optional)
- Sour cream, for serving (optional)

Preheat oven to 375°. In a large bowl, combine ground beef, bread crumbs, egg, garlic, cilantro, chili powder, cumin, and oregano. Season mixture with salt and pepper, then form into 2" meatballs. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat 1 tablespoon oil. Add meatballs and cook 2 minutes per side. Remove from skillet and transfer to a plate while you make sauce.



Add remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil to skillet. Add onion and jalapeño and cook until soft. Stir in enchilada sauce, black beans, and corn and bring mixture to a simmer. Return meatballs to skillet, tossing them in sauce. Top meatballs with cheeses and bake until beef is cooked through and cheeses are melty, about 15 minutes more. Garnish skillet with avocado and more cilantro. Serve with warmed tortillas and sour cream. Serves 4

## Cakes & Pies

Hannah Riley - Teen Leaders

### Healthy 4-H Parfait

- 1 Box White Cake Mix
- Green food coloring
- 1 Can Diet Lemon Lime Soda
- Green sprinkles
- 1 Container Fat Free Whipped Topping
- Clear cups



1. Mix together the cake mix and can of soda. Add green food coloring until you get the desired shade of 4H green.
  2. Bake according to the package directions.
  3. Once cake is cooked layer large crumbs of the cake into the bottom of your cup.
  4. Top with a layer of whipped topping.
  5. Repeat the cake and whipped topping steps until you reach the top. Finish it off by piping a dollop of whipped topping onto the top of your cup. Sprinkle with green sugar sprinkles. (optional)
- 6 single cup servings

## Salads

Brylan Sweat—Teen Leaders

### Grape Salad

- 16 oz. sour cream
- 16 oz. cream cheese
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- Approx. 4 lbs. green seedless grapes
- Approx. 4 lbs. red seedless grapes
- Approx. 4 cups pecans

Blend cream cheese and sugar together, then add sour cream and vanilla. Fold in all other ingredients making sure to coat evenly. Reserve pecans for garnishing. Serves 15-20 people

## Cookies & Bars

Abigail Billings - STAR

### Cherry Almond Cookies

- 1/2 c. unsalted butter, softened
- 4 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. almond extract
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 36 maraschino cherries, well drained & patted dry with paper towels
- About 2 oz. white chocolate
- 1/2 tsp. shortening

Beat butter, cream cheese, and brown sugar with an electric mixer at medium speed until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add egg, almond extract, and vanilla extract; beat until just combined. Combine flour and salt. Gradually add flour and salt to butter mixture; beat until combined. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours or overnight. Roll dough into 36 1-inch balls. Place 2 inches apart on baking sheets. With your thumb, press an indentation into the top of each ball. Place a cherry in each indentation. Bake at 350 degrees until edges are light golden brown, about 12 - 14 minutes. Let cool on pan about 5 minutes; transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely. Place white chocolate and shortening in a small zip-top plastic bag. Set bag in a bowl of warm water to soften. Gently knead the chocolate with your fingers until melted and smooth, placing back in the warm water for a minute or two as needed. Snip a very small hole in the corner of the plastic bag. Drizzle white chocolate over the cooled cookies. Let stand until white chocolate is set. Store in an airtight container for up to a week. 36 cookies



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# It's a year-end tradition at Cotton Electric to honor board members and employees for their years of service.



## Focused on safety Employees recognized for years of accident-free service to co-op

Depending on who you're talking with, Cotton Electric Cooperative's main priority isn't about making something happen when a member flips a light switch.

"Safety," said Jarrod Hooper. "Some may say it's keeping the lights on, but I say safety is job number one for everybody at the co-op."

As Cotton Electric's Safety and Loss Control Director, Hooper coordinates all safety policies, procedures and training. His focus on safety is echoed by CEO Jennifer Meason and supported by the cooperative's board of trustees.

Providing electric service requires equipment ranging from computer keyboards to large digging augers. Some 88 Cotton Electric employees carry out tasks as varied as pushing reams of old documents into a paper shredder to riding a bucket 60 feet in the air to repair a high-voltage line.

Every piece of equipment and every task presents a potential accident, yet Cotton Electric employees have a pretty good safety record that extends over quite a bit of time.

That is an important accomplish-



ment, so important that once a year the co-op recognizes employees whose safety records have passed five-year increments. In 2020, 15 Cotton employees achieved those five-year marks for a combined total of 140 years of accident-free service.

Employees recognized include Dillon Wiygul, who has worked 5 years without a time-loss accident.

Chuck Ballard and Tracy Lindsey have worked accident-free for 10 years, while Zac Hoodenpyle and Bobby Shortt have 15 safe years and Kim Johnson, Scott Dennis and Stephanie Christman have 20.

Ronnie Mansel has a 25-year safety record.

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**COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP 2021 SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST**

# Nutritious beets add festive color

Red beets should be the official vegetable of Christmas - a deep red on the bottom and a brilliant green on the top. Red isn't the only beet color; they can also be golden and red with stripes. All parts are edible and are packed with nutrition.

The root of the beet plant is what most are used to eating. Although the skin can be eaten, typically the skin is removed and the remaining root is roasted, sauteed, pickled, or boiled. Beets can be eaten hot or cold and have a mildly sweet and earthy flavor. Beets are low in calories and fat and are a good source of dietary fiber, folate, potassium and manganese.

Beet greens are often discarded, but they complement the root's nutrients. Beet greens are high in Vitamin A, Vitamin K, and very low in calories. They are a good source of Vitamin C and also



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

## Food For THOUGHT

contain potassium, calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, sodium, zinc, copper and manganese.

If the array of vitamins and minerals isn't enough to convince you to give beets a try, over the past 10 years, beet juice has become a go-to for athletes looking for a com-

petitive edge. It turns out, beets are a natural source of nitrates which helps improve endurance.

You can find beets in many forms at the grocery store: Pickled, canned, frozen, fresh with the greens attached, peeled and refrigerated. If you have a sweet tooth and like pickles, pickled beets are for you. If you can appreciate a more subtle or savory flavor, try roasting beets in the oven with some olive oil. There are many recipes online that can give you other ideas on how to flavor and cook beets. Beet greens can be prepared like any other greens.

Let's review: Beets and beet greens are festive colors, packed with nutrients, and available in grocery stores in many forms. All you need is to find a recipe and give it a try, and you can take advantage of all the nutrients and flavor they have to offer.



These Roasted Portobello Mushrooms with Beets and Goat Cheese are ready in just half an hour with only eight ingredients, allowing you to dish up a flavorful bite without going overboard in the kitchen.

# Add mushrooms to your snacking menu

Mix up your snacking habits with a more nutritious option to serve ahead of a meal or on its own. These Roasted Portobello Mushrooms with Beets and Goat Cheese are ready in just half an hour with only eight ingredients, allowing you to dish up a flavorful bite without going overboard in the kitchen. Find more recipes at [senecafoods.com](http://senecafoods.com).

### Roasted Portobello Mushrooms with Beets and Goat Cheese

- 1 jar (16 ounces) Aunt Nellie's Whole Pickled Beets
- 4 large portobello mushrooms (about 1 pound)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup fresh bread crumbs, such as sourdough or whole wheat. (See note)

- 1/4 cup sliced green onions or chopped chives
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces) crumbled goat cheese

Heat oven to 400°F.  
 Drain beets. Coarsely chop 1/2 cup beets.  
 Trim stems flat and remove gills from mushroom caps using a spoon. Place caps, rounded side down, on foil-lined baking sheet; season with salt and pepper.

In medium bowl, combine chopped beets, bread crumbs, green onions and walnuts. Spoon mixture into caps and top with goat cheese.

Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until heated through and mushrooms are tender.

Note: Using a food processor, pulse a few pieces of sour dough or wheat bread several times until finely crumbled.



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 This Property Consists of: A Total of 158 Acres. There are About 100 Acres for Cultivation, 12 Acres of Trees and the Balance of 46 Acres for Pasture. Property was Cross Fenced at One Time. There is 1 Pond on the Property and is Stocked with Catfish. Improvements include a Barn, Shed and a Cattle Lot. There are Pecan Trees, Sand Plums and Blackberries on this Property!  
**Directions to Property:** From Comanche, Go West From Hwy 81 on Hwy 53 for About 5 Miles to Empire Road. Turn North and Go About 150 Yards to the Entry Gate on the Left Side. There is a Double Green Gate. From Duncan, Go West on Beech From Hwy 81 About 5 Miles to Empire Road and Turn South and Go About 9 Miles to the Entry Gate (Double Green Gate).  
**Broker's Note:** Great Land for Cultivation! Great Stocked Pond! Please Come and See!  
**REDUCED \$395,000**  
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 (Auctioneer/Broker) [garycriswellauctioneers.com](http://garycriswellauctioneers.com) (Cell Phone) 580-255-8162 • 806 West Main • Duncan, OK • 580-467-2248

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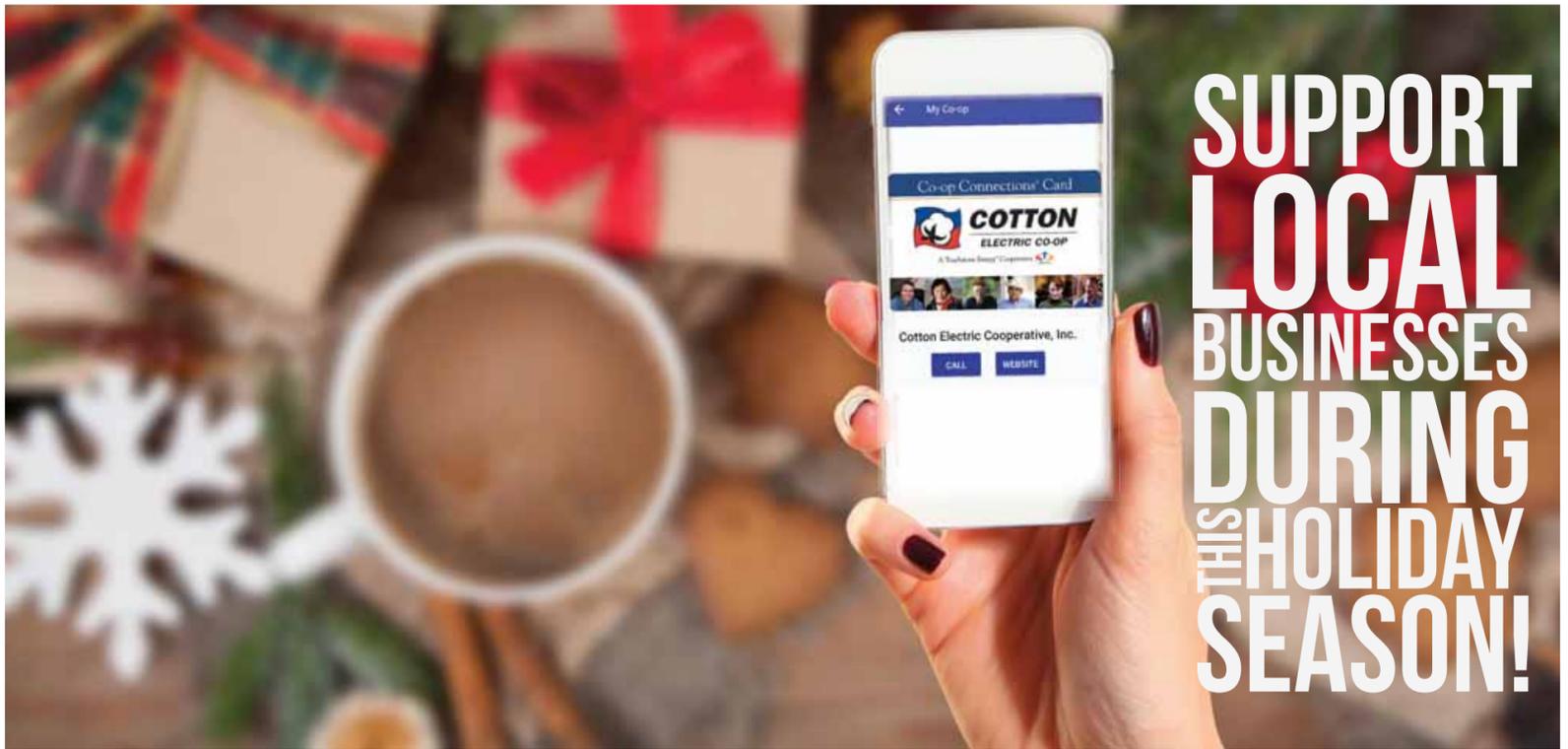
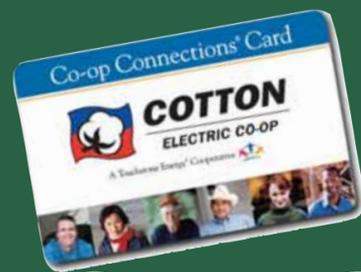
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Sat 10:00-2:00

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attractivegraphicscsp@gmail.com

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8209 NW Quannah Parker Trailway  
580-510-0925

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580-439-8111

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debbieslittlebooks.com  
580-492-4672 • Elgin

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580-355-6154 • M-F 8-5 shaneburkautoglass.com

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