

The Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957"

VOLUME 59

April 11, 2016

NUMBER 9

April 11 is National Lineman Appreciation Day.

**"We plan together.
We stay safe together."**

Read about Cotton Electric's line workers on Pages 6 and 7.



Area youth represent our bright future

By Karen Kaley

Springtime is a great time for the final round of Cotton Electric's annual Rural Electric Youth Tour contest. The competing high school juniors deliver oral presentations that are fresh and imaginative. It can renew one's faith in the notion of a bright future.

The 52nd year of competition began in November. Information about the contest and calls for entries went to all schools within the Cotton Electric service area. Entry is open to any high school junior, regardless of whether he or she lives in a home powered by the co-op.

The 2016 topic, "A message for the co-op member of 2035 or 1940," drew 103 essay entries from students representing eight high schools and homeschools. The numbered entries were split geographi-

cally and sent to volunteer judges for the first round of scoring.

The top 25 entrants were invited to the Cotton Electric headquarters in Walters for the second round of the selection process. Following short interviews conducted by a second set of volunteer judges, the top 10 entries were determined.

On March 24, three young men and seven young women put on their Sunday best and brought teachers and family with them to enjoy a banquet and the final round of competition: an oral presentation of the essay.

Finalists included homeschool students Chayenne Hill and Katherine Livingston; Lawton High School's Corey Bell, Victoria Page, Sean Tolbert and Victoria Zapata; Courtney Gilpen of MacArthur High; Melissa Valencia and

Jackson Miller, both of Marlow High; and Charlee Alsup of Ryan High.

Each candidate's speaking ability, knowledge of subject, poise, personality and appearance were considered by judges Chris Deal, president of Duncan Chamber of Commerce; Michael Harris, marketing/PR director for National Rural Water Association; and Brianna Wall, a certified cooperative communicator with Oklahoma Electric Cooperative.

One student imagined the cooperative member of the past, and noted the impact of electricity while sitting through an extended year-end power outage. Another noted the long-ago organizers had done more than bring electricity to southwest Oklahoma, they had created a company for the people by the people.

Looking into the future, one essay-

ist foresaw the cooperative embracing new technology and renewable sources of energy. Looking back, one speaker wondered if the early members could have imagined the leaps in technology enjoyed in 2016 and the growth of the cooperative they founded.

When all speeches were delivered, the judges retired to compare notes and tally points.

While the group waited for results, they heard comments from three students who had travelled with Youth Tour in 2015: Hanna Stanton, Rachel Simon and Amber Powers. They spoke of the trip taken nine months ago with a giddiness that made it seem as though it was last week. Each agreed it had been a trip they would never forget.

See Winners, Page 10



Finalists in Cotton Electric's annual Rural Electric Youth Tour contest included, front row from left, Charlee Alsup, Katherine Livingston, Chayenne Hill, Courtney Gilpen, Victoria Zapata; and, back row, Sean Tolbert, Corey Bell, Jackson Miller, Victoria Page and Melissa Valencia.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after April 1, 2016, is (\$0.00310) per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1500 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a credit of \$4.65 on the April bill.

March 2016 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	63	37	50	16	74	37	56
2	71	35	53	17	69	50	60
3	68	39	54	18	57	39	48
4	72	32	52	19	59	33	46
5	77	40	59	20	55	29	42
6	72	45	59	21	70	26	48
7	70	61	66	22	80	41	61
8	69	56	63	23	80	49	65
9	62	53	58	24	61	35	48
10	71	54	63	25	70	29	50
11	69	51	60	26	74	47	61
12	67	55	61	27	62	37	50
13	71	50	61	28	70	31	51
14	83	44	64	29	75	49	62
15	75	43	59	30	87	58	73
				31	70	49	60

Source: srb.noaa.gov/om/

Average Daily High: 70 Average Daily Low: 43

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric has sent a total of 153 high school juniors in the Rural Electric Youth Tour since 1964. We have sponsored groups of two or four but in 1970 we sent five students to the nation's capital.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on May 9, 2016.

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

Pledge today to become a co-op voter

When was the last time you voted?

As member-owned electric cooperatives, voting is already in our DNA. It's how we maintain an electric utility that is responsive to the members we serve. But voting also plays a crucial part in our representative democracy. Federal, state and local elections offer an opportunity to exercise a civic responsibility – to select the best leaders for our communities.

Yet in places all over America, even those served by electric cooperatives, citizens aren't exercising that right.

In the 2012 national elections, voter turnout dropped overall, but the decline in rural counties was 18 percent – twice that of the nation as a whole.

And when voters miss the chance to vote, they also lose the opportunity to communicate their concern to our leaders about

the issues that matter to us, where we work, live, and raise families.

Reliable electricity, supporting education and the quality of our healthcare system are just a few issues we all care about. Still, they only become priorities if enough people show elected officials that they are paying attention. Registering to vote and voting are the most effective ways to send this message.

When we go to the polls with the cooperative principle of "Concern for Community" in mind, we instantly improve our political system. It's a system designed to produce a government "of the people, by the people and for the people." People like you and me.

I'd like you to join me in a new initiative to get every eligible person registered to vote – you, me,



Jennifer Meason, CEO

our family and friends – and take the pledge to BECOME A CO-OP VOTER.

Cotton Electric Cooperative has joined America's electric cooperatives in launching a campaign to help get out the vote and insert issues important to co-ops into the public discussion. Called "Co-ops Vote," this effort will help boost voter turnout in areas served by cooperatives across the country to ensure that our voices are heard loud and clear every day, and especially on Election Day.

Here's what you can do to help. Visit the Co-ops Vote web site, www.Vote.Coop, and take the pledge to BECOME A CO-OP VOTER to support your community and electric cooperative when casting your vote in 2016. The web site will give you information on your elected officials and candidates,

CO-OPS



A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

WWW.VOTE.COOP

the voter registration process, election dates and locations, and background about key co-op issues we want our elected leaders to understand.

Co-ops Vote is a non-partisan program developed by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA),

the national service organization that represents the nation's more than 900 private, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives. With 42 million members across the nation, electric co-ops are a powerful voice on national issues that have a local impact.

Avoid products making claims just too good to be true

When it comes to saving energy, *caveat emptor* is alive and well. We are all bombarded with claims that border on outright falsehoods, so it pays to view savings claims from third parties cautiously. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it generally is.

Electric space heaters drain energy savings from your home if used incorrectly. Companies make elaborate claims about the amount of money you can save and charge exorbitant sums for their products. The advertisements frequently target those on a fixed income, presenting false hope while extracting precious dollars from their customers. I have seen a number of these space heaters and admit they appear to be well made, but they typically offer no better economy than any other 1,500-watt electric heater. Bottom line, electric space heaters should only be used to heat small spaces – not an entire home.

Black boxes that claim to clean up power, protect appliances and reduce energy use come and go. These often require an electrician to install and claim to improve power quality, smooth out power fluctuations and store energy so you can reduce your bills. Save your money.

The concepts they present are already in use by Cotton Electric Cooperative and require utility-size equipment to deliver them. Something that can fit in a shoebox is not going to deliver any value, at least not in the areas promised. If you are concerned about protecting your sensitive appliances and electronics, talk to Cotton Electric about surge protection.

When you see the ad that reads, "The power companies don't want you to know," skip it. These are generally claims around building your own renewable energy source from parts easily obtained at the local hardware store or a motor that produces limitless "free" electricity.

I would equate these with the emails I get from foreign countries telling me I can receive millions of dollars by simply sending all my banking information. At least in the case of the homemade renewables and limitless motor you get some cool plans and parts lists. You decide if it's worth \$50 – \$200. I'd give it a pass.

There is a product that claims it will **replace basement dehumidifiers** and save tons of money. It basically is a fan system that vents all the basement air outside. Yes, dehumidifiers can be expensive to run and are a nuisance when you have to empty the water.

The problem is that when you blow all the basement air outside, it is replaced with conditioned air from other parts of the house. Now your HVAC system works harder and dramatically reduces the promised savings. Here's my solution: I set my dehumidifier to 60 percent and run a hose to my floor drain. This re-

solves the water emptying hassle and really reduces the power use while keeping my basement acceptably dry.

I will close with a non-technology warning. Scammers love to call or stop by claiming they represent the local power company. Never give anyone personal or financial information who claims to be a co-op employee without confirming their identity. Ask for a call back number from the caller, then check with Cotton Electric. Ask the door-to-door person for a valid Cotton Electric identification. If they really are a co-op employee, they'll be able to prove it.

Most of us want to save energy and keep our bills manageable. Technology can help do this, but be careful. Call Cotton Electric at 580-875-3351 before making any investments in technology that seem too good to be true. You'll be glad you did.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Earth Day is April 22. Give back to the environment by planting a deciduous tree near your home. Deciduous trees lose their leaves during the fall, allowing sunlight to warm your home. The extra shade during summer months will keep your home cooler and give your AC a much needed break.

The Current

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February 2016 Operating Stats

	2016	2015
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$4,599,212	\$5,746,372
Cost of Purchased Power	3,239,818	4,181,455
Taxes	110,644	125,472
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	942	1,086
Average Farm and Residential Bill	119	159
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,126	1,485
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,235	18,263
Miles Energized	5,154	5,152
Density Per Mile	3.54	3.54
New Service Connects YTD	31	50
Services Retired	9	26



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.

Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the May issue, please submit information by April 27 by calling 580-875-4259 or send an email to info@cottonelectric.com.

AARP offers free tax prep assistance

AARP offers free tax assistance and preparation for taxpayers with low to moderate income on a first-come, first-served basis through the tax due date of April 15 at several locations in the Cotton Electric service area.

No appointment is necessary but certain documents are. Taxpayers should take last year's income tax return, all W-2 and 1099 forms, information about any other income, adjustment and deduction documents, Social Security cards for each person on a return, and property taxes if he or she plans to itemize.

Trained IRS volunteers will be available from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays, and from noon to 4 p.m. Wednesdays at the Center for Creative Living, 3501 Dr. Elsie Hamm Drive, Lawton.

Volunteers will be on hand from 4 to 7 p.m. Mondays, 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesdays and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursdays at Lawton Public Library, 110 SW 4th Street.

The free service is available from 8:30 to 11 a.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays in the Duncan Public Library Annex, 2211 N. U.S. Highway 81.

CTAC live hosting Cimarrón

CTAC Live presents the rousing world music of Cimarrón at 7:30 p.m. April 15 at the Simmons Center in Duncan.

From the cattle-rearing Llanos Orientales, region of Colombia, Cimarrón performs the festive dance music of 'joropó', a fierce virtuoso display of rippling melodies and powerful rhythms combining Andalusian, Indigenous Indian and African roots. The musical fireworks created by harp, bandola, cuatro, bass, cajon, tambora, maracas and high-pitched voices are simply breathtaking.

For information and ticket purchases, visit ChisholmTrailArts.com.

Magic Lantern screens classic films

Magic Lantern Film Society of Cameron University screens DVD presentations of classic films in the CETES Conference Center, Room B.

The April 15 offering will be Alfred Hitchcock's "Notorious," the story of a notorious woman attempting to gain the confidence of a Nazi in order to aid the U.S. government.

The 1946 film features Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman and Claude Rains in starring roles.

There is no admission charge, but donations are accepted. For information about the society, or to see a schedule and synopsis of films, visit Cameron.edu/magiclantern.

Main Street Duncan hosts car cruise

Cruising down Main Street in Duncan is just part of the fun planned for the ninth annual Cruisin' the Chisholm Trail Car Show set for April 15 and 16. Rain dates are April 22 and 23.

Tailgate parties and a burnout competition are set for Friday night beginning at 6 p.m.

Festivities continue Saturday with live music from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be a poker run with cash prizes for the high and low hands. Car entry judging begins at 11 a.m., and trophies will be presented at 3 p.m.

For information, call Main Street Duncan at 580-252-8696.

Open house features model trains

All aboard for the spring open house of the Lawton Model Railroad Association. Young and old will want to see the new layout and learn about running model trains from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 16 at 1711 D Avenue, Lawton. Parking is at the rear of the building.

For information, call Chuck at 580-591-3004.

CU presents 'Pajama Game'

Cameron University's Department of Theatre Arts is offering a spring production of "The Pajama Game," which deals with labor troubles in a pajama factory, where workers' demands for a seven-and-a-half-cent raise are going unheeded. In the midst of this ordeal, love blossoms between Babe, the grievance committee head, and Sid, the new factory superintendent.

Performances will be at 7:30 p.m. April 21-23 and 2 p.m. April 24.

All performances will be in Cameron University Theatre, located in the northeast quadrant of the campus between University Drive and 27th Street in Lawton.

Free concert planned at Fort Sill

Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band will perform a free concert on April 23 at the Fort Sill Polo Field. There's something for everyone to enjoy as the band covers hits throughout all genres from classic rock to pop hits and everything in-between.

The Lt. Dan Band is named after the character Lieutenant Dan Taylor, who Gary Sinise portrayed in the film "Forrest Gump," and has performed hundreds of shows for over half-a-million troops and their families. The Lt. Dan Band is one of the many programs Sinise offers through his Gary Sinise Foundation.

Concert gates open at 6 p.m., opening act Stolen Silver begins at 6:30 p.m., and Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band take the stage at 7 p.m.

Arts, Crafts Fest set for April 23

Cotton County Art Council will host its annual Arts and Crafts Festival April 23 at the Comanche National Community Center east of Walters. There will be cash awards for craft and fine-art exhibitors.

Visitors can register for a Visa gift card door prize, purchase Indian tacos 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 emailing calfinator@yahoo.com.

Corum VFD plans BBQ fundraiser

Corum Volunteer Fire Department has set the annual BBQ dinner and membership drive for noon to 3 p.m. April 30. The station is at 274080 E 1860 Road in Hastings, 3 miles south of Corum.

Call 580-512-7431 for information.

2 Hip Chicks coming to Lawton

Back for the annual event, 2 Hip Chicks Road Show will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 30 at Great Plains Coliseum in Lawton. The show brings the best in boutiques, kids' boutiques, repurposed furniture, metal art, home decor, chippy, salvaged, upcycled, vintage, antiques, woodwork, MIO products, one of a kind finds, and good ole junk!

Door prizes will be given every 45 minutes.

1st UMC Marlow plans garage sale

First United Methodist Church of Marlow is hosting a garage sale to benefit BackPacks for Kids. The 7th annual sale will be from 7:30 am to 1:30 pm May 6 and 7 at Marlow Elementary School.

Items already on hand include 15 vintage theater seats, children's clothing, junior size clothing and a race car set. A large selection of holiday décor is also available.

For information, call 580-450-1424 or send an email to horningfarms@att.net with Garage Sale in the subject line.

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.

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

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

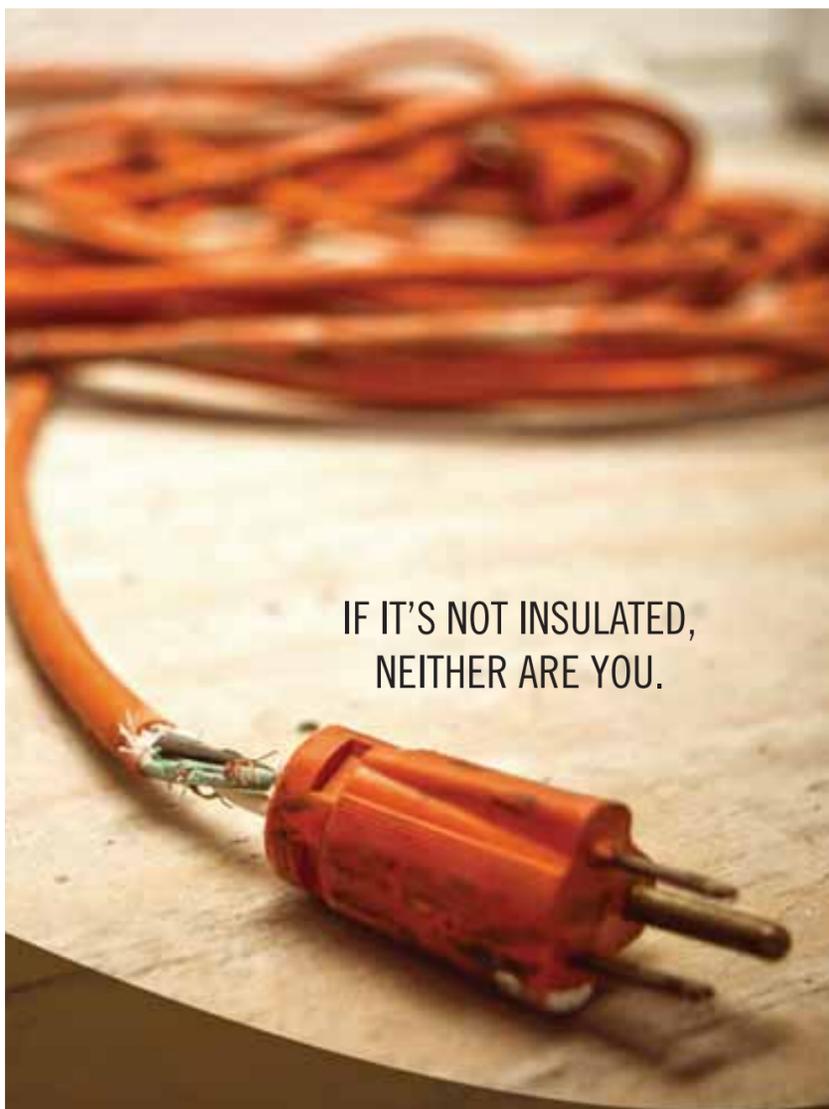


Kayden Billen's first fish was caught at Sultan Park in Walters. "My son loves to fish!" his mom said. Parents are Cotton Electric members Britni and Aaron Billen of Geronimo. Kayden's proud 4-year-old grin is one of many submitted in April's Gone Fishin' photo contest. See more on Cotton Electric's Facebook page.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for May is Man's Best Friend. Entries can be emailed to info@cottonelectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winner will receive a Cotton Electric prize package.

Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

May		June		July	
Ad Sales	April 25	Ad Sales	May 31	Ad Sales	July 5
Classified	April 28	Classified	June 2	Classified	July 7
Publish Date	May 9	Publish Date	June 13	Publish Date	July 18



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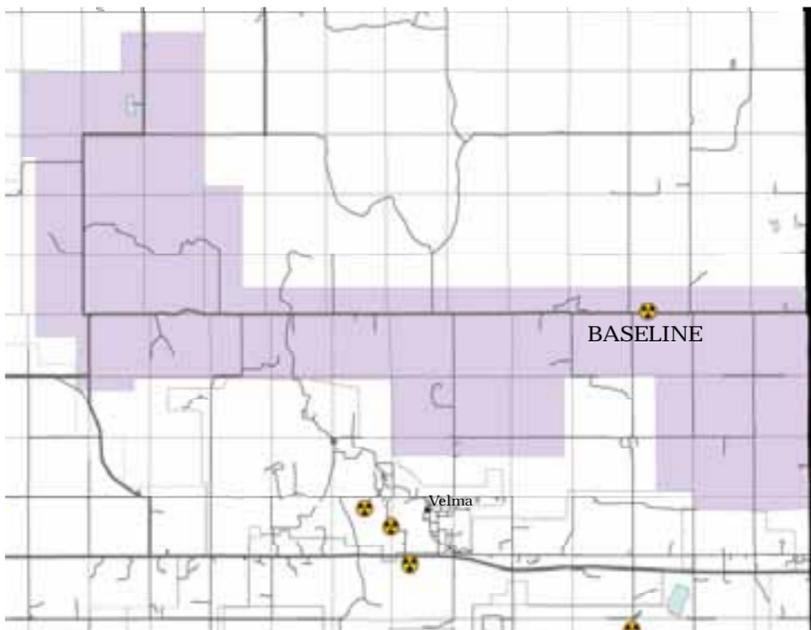
Helping members use electricity safely,
that's the power of your co-op membership.
Learn more from the experts themselves
at TogetherWeSave.com.



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Some substations are built for sharing



By Karen Kaley

Substations are a hand-off point. Electricity generated hundreds of miles away must travel at a very high voltage to make it to the area it serves. At the substation, power from the generation and transmission provider is transformed, “stepped down” to a level needed to make the last 20 or more miles along the line that distributes eventually to the final consumer.

The 26 subs spread out across the Cotton Electric service area are built and maintained by Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC), the generation and transmission provider for 17 member cooperatives in Oklahoma, along with Altus Air Force Base, plus four cooperatives in New Mexico, and other power users in Kansas and Texas.

Cotton Electric is a distribution cooperative, one of 29 serving rural Oklahoma. Cotton’s territory meets Southwest Rural Electric Association on the west, CKenergy Electric Cooperative on the north, Rural Electric Cooperative on the northeast and Red River Valley Rural Electric Association on the southeast.

Territory lines were drawn long ago. The lines haven’t moved much over time but the demand for power has changed, going up in some areas and down in others.

WFEC determines when and where new substations will be built, usually at the end of a long process. A substation is an expensive investment, so a lot of thought goes into designing and managing it for maximum impact.



Baseline substation

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- 50 Purebred & Lim-Flex Fall Pairs
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- many with calves at side sale day
- 15 Fall Bred Purebred & Lim-Flex Heifers
- 15 Fall Show-Heifer Prospects
- eligible for the TLA Shoot-Out

Limousin & Lim-Flex

PRODUCTION SALE
Saturday, May 7, 2016 ~ 1 p.m.
At The Ranch
Chattanooga, Oklahoma

plus Last Chance to purchase semen packages on **LH BLOCKBUSTER 124B**

LH BELLE 015B

Selling a flushmate sister to LH Belle 015B.

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3/1/14 - 50% Lim-Flex - HP/HP
EXAR Upshot 0562B x PBRS Touch Me Gently 798T
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Sells bred to LH Rodemaster 338R (HB/HP)

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Offering semen packages for a limited period of time (20 units for \$1,000 or 50 units for \$2,000). LH Blockbuster is a full brother to the late LH Rodemaster 338R.

Write, call or email for catalog. Available online after April 10 at:
www.hallchr.com

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Meridian, Oklahoma

Real Property consists of a 3 Bedroom Cedar Home with 4 foot Brick Facade (Approximately 1,670 Square Feet) with a Large Living Room with Fireplace (with insert), Dining Area, Kitchen with a Breakfast Area, Large Utility Room and 2 Full Baths.

Additional Improvements include a 2 Car Garage, a Sheet Metal Building (14'x24'), 2 Wooden Storage Buildings and a Sheet Metal Animal Pen and a Concrete Storm Shelter. All situated on a nice 4 Acre Tract in a Good Location.

Directions: In Duncan, Oklahoma - Go South on Old Highway 81, 5 Miles to Wisdom Road, then Go West on Wisdom Road 1/4 Mile.

\$65,000

Also For Sale -2003 Wilderness - 5th Wheel Travel Trailer (24'), Self Contained with a Full Slide (Nice)

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Baseline, Elgin subs serve cooperatives in neighboring service territories

With that in mind, it should come as no surprise that substations near the edge of a distribution cooperative's service territory might also serve members of the neighboring cooperative. There are two shared substations within Cotton Electric's service area.

Baseline sub is in eastern Stephens County. It is just a couple miles west of the county line, where one corner of Cotton Electric stops and Rural Electric starts.

Large H-shaped structures support WFEC transmission lines carrying power into the location. The high voltage feeds into two substation transformers at opposite ends of the fenced-in area. One transformer powers four circuits for Rural Electric and the other sends power to three circuits of 72 miles of line serving 192 members and a commercial customer.

Between the two transformers is a switch station. This large complex structure featuring oil circuit breakers allows for remote switching, a bonus when options are needed to divert power.

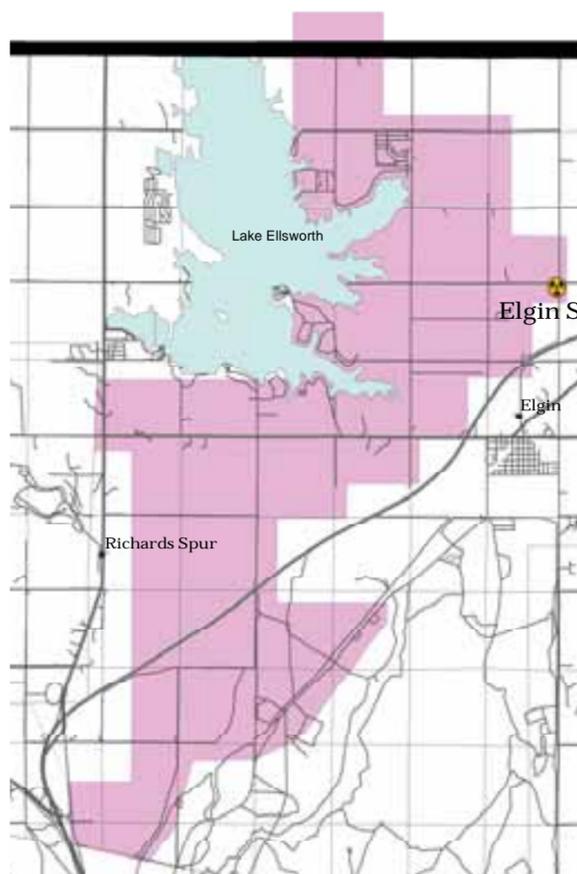
The other shared facility is the Elgin sub, about

two miles north of that town and three miles south of the Comanche County line, which is also the border between Cotton and CKenergy service territories.

The Elgin sub is the newest for Cotton, having come online only a year ago. Rapid growth and development in the area over the past decade prompted the need. Circuits from the sub serve 723 Cotton Electric members on 67 miles of line in an area to the east and south of Lake Ellsworth.

The footprint of the location is large enough to accommodate semi-trailers bearing heavy equipment if the need arises. The structure features massive steel poles and transformers built to make the most of modern technology.

Speaking of which, the Elgin sub is one of only a few in Cotton's territory that has a specialized fence within the yard. Made by TransGard, the fence is designed to keep snakes out of the substation. It is a high-tech solution to a low-tech but costly problem.



Elgin substation

DPC-0805

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Do You Have To Wrestle With Your Insurance Company?

Insurance, it's probably the only thing you keep paying for that you hope you never have to use. But when an unfortunate situation does occur, you shouldn't have to fight with your insurance provider to get the claim award you deserve.

At Bartling, we're always on your side and we'll do everything we can to expedite any claim you make in a timely manner. We're also proud to say that we offer the finest coverage for your health, your home, automobile and commercial property.

Put the strength of a solid performer behind you. Call us now for a free, no obligation, price quote assessment of your current insurance needs.

Bartling INSURANCE

Comanche 580-439-8809 **Waurika 580-228-2085**

While Paying Off Student Loans, Don't Forget About Retirement

Even if you've been out of school for a few years, you may still have a vivid reminder of college: your student loan debt. Since you've joined the workforce, you might be paying back your loans as best you can. But can you gradually reduce your debts while still putting money away for your long-term goals – such as retirement?

Of course, you might think it's premature to even think about retiring, since you probably have decades to go before you say goodbye to the working world. But the sooner you begin saving and investing for retirement, the more time you'll have for your money to grow. Plus, your early start will help you avoid having to play "catch up" later.

Still, it can be challenging to juggle payments for student loans and contributions to a retirement account, especially if your loans are sizable. How can

you meet these two separate demands on your income?

To begin with, you may have some flexibility in how you repay your student loan. Although you might have selected, or were assigned, a repayment plan when you first begin repaying your student loan, you can typically change this plan to accommodate your financial situation. You'll need to contact your loan servicer for details on adjusting your repayments.

In any case, though, if you have a large student loan, it's safe to say that you will be paying it back for quite some time. So, rather than wait for this debt to be cleared before you start saving for retirement, think about how you can take action now.

For one thing, take full advantage of your 401(k) or similar employer-sponsored retirement plan. This type of plan

certainly offers some key benefits: Your earnings can grow on a tax-deferred basis, and you typically contribute on a pretax basis, which means the more you put in, the lower your taxable income. Plus, you can fund your plan with a variety of investment choices. But for you, perhaps the biggest benefit is that your employer simply takes the money from your paycheck before you get it and puts it into your account. You don't have to pay all your bills first and then hope you still have something left to invest – it's already been done for you. Ultimately, contributing to your 401(k) can be a "painless" way of investing, and it may make it easier, psychologically at least, for you to pursue the two goals of paying your college debts and saving for the future.

If you don't have a 401(k) or similar plan, you can still follow the same prin-

ciple of essentially freeing yourself from initiating investment moves, simply by setting up a bank authorization to automatically transfer money from your checking or savings account into an IRA, which offers some of the same features as a 401(k). You can start with relatively small amounts – perhaps as little as \$50 per month – and increase your contributions as your income rises.

As you well remember, college wasn't cheap. And you don't want to make it even more costly by having your student loan payments interfere with progress you can make toward your retirement funding goals. So, think about "automating" the contributions to your retirement accounts. The effort – or rather, the effortlessness – on your part can be well worth it.

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Cotton Electric has 17 journeyman linemen serving on maintenance, construction and underground crews. They are, front row from left, Matt Winburn, Michelle Taylor, Ronnie Mansel, Chad Cowan, Scott Dennis, Larry Crowell;

and, back row, Terry Turner, Norman Condit, Evan Hays, Bobby Shortt, Clint Ingram, Jarrod Hooper, Bob Anderson, Terry Foster, Tyson Potter and T.J. James. Brian Jones was unavailable for this photo.

Helper, apprentice, operator, journeyman

It takes a lot of people with different skills to maintain more than 5,000 miles of line

By Karen Kaley

Line workers are probably the most recognizable employees of any power provider. Cotton Electric members see the hard hats and tool belts when a new service is built, and keep an anxious look out for bucket trucks when the lights have gone out unexpectedly.

Line operations is the largest segment of the Cotton Electric employee group. There are about 90 total employees and nearly a third of them build and maintain some 5,154 miles of line.

They are an interesting and lively group, rarely all under the same roof, difficult to pull together for photo sessions. They grumble and glower, then mug for the camera. Then, they scatter.

There are a number of ways to sort this group that numbered 29 during the first week of April. There is a construction crew, an underground crew, nine maintenance crews, two superintendents and one vice president. Most are linemen, some are not, all are necessary to provide quality power to rural southwest Oklahoma.

Linemen are classified by degrees of experience and certification. The three newest are lineman helpers Dillon Thompson, Charlie Wilcox and Justin King. After six months of employment, they may be eligible to enter the apprentice lineman program, joining Seth Johnson, Kyle Linthicum, Christian Soliz, Zack Smith and Dillon Wiygul.



Journeyman linemen have either completed the relatively new four-year apprentice program or accumulated comparable knowledge and experience in the years before. Cotton has 15 journeyman linemen working in line operations. They are Bob Anderson, Chad Cowan, Larry Crowell, Scott Dennis, Terry Foster, Evan Hays, Jarrod Hooper, Clint Ingram, T.J. James, Ronnie Mansel, Tyson Potter, Bobby Shortt, Michelle Taylor, Terry Turner and Matt Winburn.

The service area is split in two, and superintendents are Norman Condit on the east side and Brian Jones on the west side. Both are journeyman linemen who work closely with Mike Ottinger, vice president of operations. There is a trio of heavy equipment operators, as es-

sential as the linemen. Chuck Ballard, Darrell Loveday and Roy Mason dig holes and trenches, haul poles and fight the wild weather, too.

The different types of crews – underground, construction and maintenance – pursue specific tasks but with a great deal of flexibility. The helpers and apprentices will rotate through each crew, and the journeymen will work individually or in ever-changing pairs. The more they know about each job and each other, the better they will be as a group.

And, the safer they will be. Cotton Electric's line operations department has a fantastically dangerous job with a remarkably good safety record, thanks to the long, rigorous training. It is essential under the often-challenging circumstances.

When the power goes out, it may take a while to come back on. That's because the line crew takes time to ground the truck. The lineman pulls on protective rubber gloves and sleeves, positions a hard hat, latches a safety harness. The heavy equipment operator digs with care and is deliberate about swinging a pole into place.

Sure, the folks in line operations want to get the lights back on, but more than that, they want to go home at the end of the day ... or the night ... or the weekend ... or the holiday. So, they teach each other well, not just how to string a line or anchor a pole, but how to look out for each other and the members they serve.

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After six months of employment, lineman helpers may be eligible to enter the four-year apprentice lineman program. Cotton Electric has five apprentice linemen at various points in the program. They are, from left, Zack Smith, Christian Soliz, Seth Johnson, Dillon Wiygul and Kyle Linthicum.



The three newest members of the line operations department are lineman helpers Dillon Thompson, left, Justin King and Charlie Wilcox.



Heavy equipment operators Chuck Ballard, left, Roy Mason and Darrell Loveday dig holes and trenches, maneuver poles and fight the wild weather.



Mike Ottinger, left, vice president of operations, oversees line operations. The service area is split in two, with superintendents Norman Condit on the east side and Brian Jones on the west side.

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Joe Diaz is pretty happy about the new location of AA Computer Services in Suite 22 of Cache Road Square in Lawton.

New location, same great service

By Karen Kaley

Location, location, location. Joe Diaz admits it is an overused adage about the top three things to look for when considering a move.

"I know it's a cliché, but I firmly believe in that right now," he said recently when discussing the new home for AA Computer Services Inc. (AACS).

After about six months in Suite 22 of Cache Road Square in Lawton, Diaz said it has been a very positive move.

"Our walk-in traffic has doubled."

Good thing Diaz and his staff have an additional 1,000 square feet of space to accommodate the uptick in customers. And what a space it is.

Diaz said the suite was redesigned from the floor up.

"Paint, carpet, everything. We built it for the 22nd century."

Reflecting the blue and green of the AACS logo, a roomy lobby area includes counters of varying heights. Customers with physical challenges are also accommodated with a table-height workstation for testing repaired computers.

AA Computer Services

20% discount on services not already on special



The work space features an open plan wired for multiple work stations. A worktop along the depth of the area is lined with monitors and power accommodations for as many as 12 computers.

Most computers serviced at the new site are home computers. This is the most efficient and affordable scenario for the staff and the computer owner. Technicians work nearby while the devices are quietly having themselves scanned and debugged.

Repairing hardware and software on PC and Apple computers is just one of the services offered at AACS. The full-service facility sells hardware and software, designs and installs networks with routers, hubs and switches, and sets up wireless access points. For customers large and small, AACS staff can do all the wiring and cabling needed in any location.

AACS is especially well-versed in serving small to mid-sized businesses.

"What we do is provide a type of insurance for businesses," said Matt Bonnette, AACS business development manager.

"We protect our clients by protecting their data."

In addition to keeping business clients up-to-date with equipment, AACS can update software and monitor systems for nasty viruses remotely.

Probably the most important service AACS offers is backup and disaster recovery. As the world becomes more and more automated, businesses are dependent on a system that works smoothly and is backed up with an agility that meets their needs.

"The level of service we provide is determined by how long a business can tolerate being down," Bonnette explained.

"Whether the tolerance is five minutes, five hours or five days, we can design our

service to meet that need."

Additionally, the service is tailored to the sensitivity of the data.

"We are the only local company certified to perform HIPPA risk assessments," Diaz pointed out.

This makes AACS uniquely qualified to serve the medical community and many others throughout southwest Oklahoma, roughly the same area served by Cotton Electric.

Speaking of which, AACS is a Co-op Connections partner. AA Computer Services offers a 20 percent discount on services that are not already on special. The discount cannot be combined with another discount.

Another bonus is the willingness of Diaz, Bonnette and the rest of the staff to offer helpful advice. Computer issues are bewildering, and AACS is always willing to answer questions.

"If in doubt, call AACS. Calling us is free," Diaz said.

The number is 580-357-4482. Call today and see what the great team at AA Computer Services can do for you.

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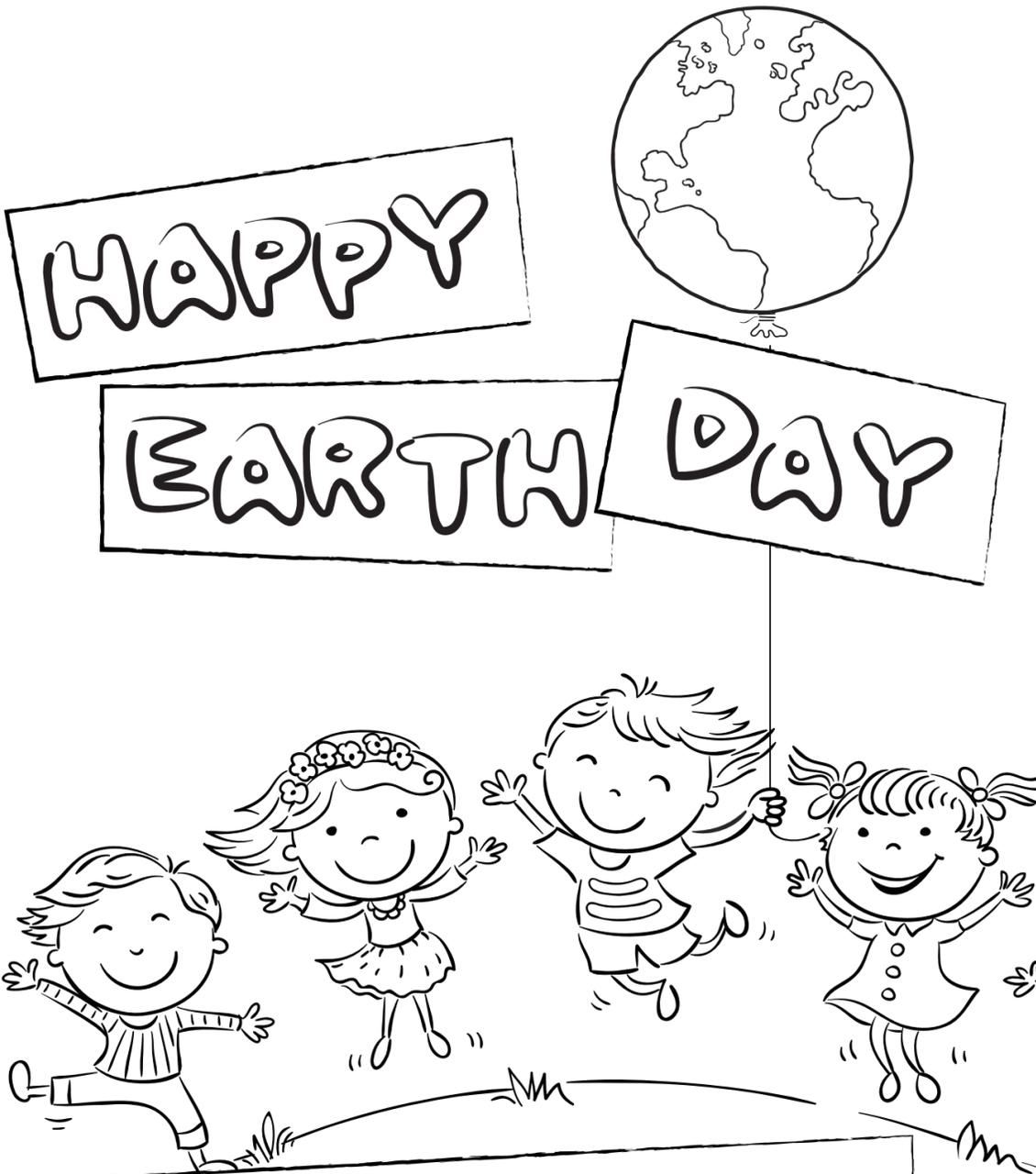
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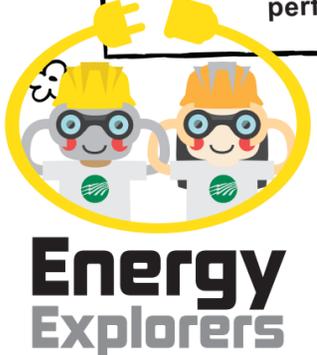
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TIP: Earth Day is April 22! Give back to the environment by planting a tree to help shade your house on hot summer days. Ask mom or dad to help you pick the perfect spot and plant the tree.



BIG BASS BLOWOUT!

WIN FISHING RODS, REELS AND THE GRAND PRIZE BASS BOAT! MARCH 27 - APRIL 30

Participants can earn E-drawing tickets starting at midnight on March 27 through 11pm on April 30, 2016 ("contest period").

- Slot players earn entry tickets by accumulating points on their Comanche Card, 1 E-drawing ticket per 10 points earned during the contest period.
- Drawings will be held every Friday & Saturday from 6:30pm to 10:30pm. A total of 5 winners will be selected during this time for a the chance to \$100.00 in Comanche Credit
- Starting April 1-30 Hot Seat drawings will be held every day from 5pm to 10pm for a chance to win a Wohali Fishing Rod and MeagaCast Reel the winners will also receive 5 E-drawing tickets for the Bass Boat giveaway
- April 30 at 11pm is when we will give the Bass Boat away.

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Thursdays 12:00-10:00PM, Comanche Club Players that earn 25 points will receive a free t-shirt. 1 shirt per week per participant.

Offer valid while supplies last. If supplies run out players that earn the 25 required points will receive \$10 Comanche Credit.

COMANCHE

New members get up to \$100 Comanche Credit. See Player's Club for Details. Valid I.D. Required

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Every Tues. 12pm-6pm Guests who are 50+ years can receive \$5 Comanche Credit & a free meal after they earn 2 points on their C Club card.

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- ACROSS**
- Brave act
 - Ejects saliva
 - A vale
 - Expression of surprise
 - Feels concern
 - Saddle horse
 - Emerald Isle
 - Silly
 - Female child
 - Cyprinids
 - Comedienne Gaster
 - National capital
 - Court game
 - Tooth caregiver
 - Supervises flying
 - Small amount
 - Degree of loudness
 - Wore down
 - Upper-class young woman (abbr.)
 - Actor Pitt
 - Red mineral
 - Have already done
 - Asian antelope
 - Forms over a cut
 - Performer __ Lo Green
 - Pressed against
 - An alternative
 - 5th note of a major scale
 - Tell on
 - Patti Hearst's captors
 - Breaks apart
 - Russian country house
 - Female grunts
 - Type of sword
 - Ottoman Empire title
 - Emaciation
 - He was Batman
 - Nonmoving
 - Group in China
 - A thought

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60						61			62		63			
64						65					66			
67						68					69			

- DOWN**
- Unreal
 - River in Norway
 - Long poem
 - Cygnus star
 - __ fi (slang)
 - Known for its canal
 - A citizen of Iran
 - Inhabited
 - Midway between south and southeast
 - Semitic fertility god
 - __ Clapton, musician
 - Lawman
 - City 3000 B.C.
 - They hold valuables
 - Department of Defense
 - Begetter
 - Check
 - Early union leader
 - Lawmaker
 - About Sun
 - Negligible amounts
 - Roll
 - Just a little bit
 - Small, spotted cubes
 - Founder of Babism
 - Father
 - Blue Hen State
 - Satisfies
 - Police officer
 - Digital audiotape
 - Covers most of Earth
 - Inflorescence
 - Find this on hot days
 - Fanatical
 - Absorption unit
 - Sitcom "My Two __"
 - Phil __, former CIA
 - Partially burn
 - __ farewell
 - Ancient Greek City
 - A way to derive
 - Women's social organization
 - Female sibling



Victoria Page, Katherine Livingston, Victoria Zapata and Courtney Gilpen will represent Cotton Electric on a June trip of a lifetime to Washington, D.C.

Winners travel to D.C. in June

Continued from Page One

Cotton Electric's CEO Jennifer Meason and Board of Trustees President Ronnie Bohot announced judging decisions and handed out certificates.

First, it was announced that Chayenne Hill and Sean Tolbert would represent Cotton Electric at the Touchstone Energy Leadership Summit in January 2017. In addition to a day of training and discussions designed to broaden lead-

ership skills and interact with like-minded peers, each student will receive a \$250 college scholarship.

The top four in the final round of the contest won an all-expense paid one-week trip to the nation's capital in June. They are Katherine Livingston, Victoria Page, Courtney Gilpen and Victoria Zapata.

The quartet will join 1,500 students and follow itineraries filled with activities from the moment

they arrive until they 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.

The students will become more familiar with the historical and political environment of the nation's capital through visits to monuments, government offices and cooperative or-

ganizations.

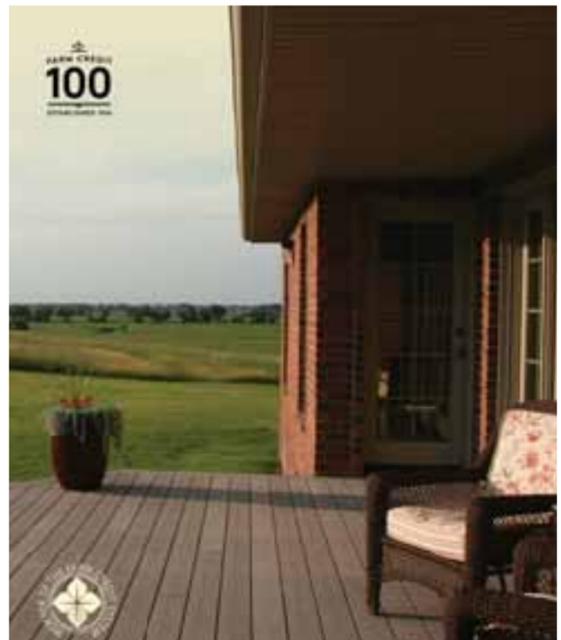
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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women worldwide.
- Nearly 160,000 Americans die of lung cancer each year.

Based on findings of the National Lung Screening Trial (NLST), we know that CT lung screening can save lives of people at high risk for developing lung cancer.

Low-dose CT (LDCT) lung screening is quick and easy and results in a minimal amount of radiation exposure. The Cancer Centers of Southwest Oklahoma is determined to raise awareness and improve access to this testing for all people at high risk. Therefore, Cancer Centers of Southwest Oklahoma and Jackson County Memorial Hospital are now offering in conjunction **FREE LDCT lung screening** to individuals who meet the established high-risk criteria.



QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

You may qualify for a free LDCT lung screening if you fall into one of these categories:

Category 1

- You are between 55 and 74 years of age
- You are currently a smoker or have quit in the last 15 years
- You have a 30+ pack-year* history of smoking

Category 2

- You are between 50 and 74 years old
- You have a 20+ pack-year* history of smoking
- You have one additional lung cancer risk factor (not to include secondhand smoke exposure)

*pack-years are calculated by multiplying the number of packs a day you smoke by the number of years you have smoked.

Example: 2 packs a day for 15 years = 30 pack-years

**Call to schedule a screening
1-877-231-4440 to see if you qualify.**

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“Who has some mighty tasty water? Jefferson County Rural Water District # 1, that’s who!”

That bit of bragging can be found on the Facebook page for the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality. Yes, the ODEQ.

The post goes on to say: “For the first time in Oklahoma history, water from our state placed at the National Rural Water Rally in Washington, D.C. Water from Jefferson County RWD #1 came in second.

“The next time we are out your way, we’ll stop for a cold glass of awesome!”

The Great American Water Taste Test (GAWTT) is an annual competition held across America. Competition begins at the state level and winners go on to the national contest.

GAWTT was designed by the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) to promote rural water as clean, safe, quality and affordable water. Judges rate each water sample on a scale of 1 to 10, based on clarity, bouquet and taste.

The folks at Jefferson RWD #1 are

pretty proud of these and a few other accomplishments.

“Most cars pass our small office building without a second glance,” Rachel Pollan said. She is the office manager at the headquarters in Hastings.

“The tall water tower might catch an eye, but no one gives much thought to what the building represents,” she went on to explain.

“That small building houses determination, perseverance and dedication.”

Pollan described the history of the rural water district, which sounds a bit similar to the history of Cotton Electric. It is a success story.

Jefferson County RWD # 1 started in the late 1970s with organizers going door-to-door to collect enough members to establish a District. Eventually, the District conjoined with the Jefferson



Rural Water and Sewer District # 2 in Addington, and became the Consolidated Rural Water and Sewer District # 1 of Jefferson County.

The District serves 2,123 members including water and sewer services for the towns

vided. The new wells have improved a number of things.

For example, the District had been under consent order from the ODEQ for TTHM violations. In early 2016, the consent order was lifted and the District is in compliance with DEQ TTHM regulations.

In 2015, Jefferson RWD #1 general manager Kenny Lovett entered the District’s water in the Oklahoma Rural Water Association’s annual Water Taste Test competition. The District came in first in the state competition, earning the right to compete at the national level.

In February 2016, the District placed 2nd in GAWTT, earning the silver medal award from the NRWA.

District board members and employees are proud of the accomplishments.

Pollan said, “They did not come easy. It took determination, perseverance, and dedication from the entire staff to make it happen.”

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513 E. Oklahoma - Walters, OK

On this auction: No Buyers Premium on real estate or personal property

Approx. 1,540 sq. ft. Brick Home - 3 bedrooms, 1 1/2 bath, central heat and air. Country kitchen with knotty pine walls - very cool home. 2-car garage. One of only a few homes in Oklahoma with a true bomb shelter. Large mature back yard with a concrete patio and squirrel cage.

Legal: E 1/2 Lot 12 and Lots 13-14 Block 4 Eastside Walters, OK Cotton County
Estimated Taxes: \$771.19
Metal buildings will be sold to be moved; they will sell at the 513 E. Oklahoma location.

Call for Showing or Details - (580) 248-6676

At 11:00 a.m. we will move over to the lot located at 318 N. 7th Street - Walters, OK

Offering .5 acres m/l with numerous outbuildings, fenced lot outside of the city limits. 3 assorted storage building, shop and sheds, 30' X 30' carport and silos.
Legal: Long legal in office
Estimated Taxes: \$58.83

These buildings are packed with every kind of shop tool you could possibly need! This is just a very partial listing ... Mark your calendar and bring a friend.

12' X 8' firecracker stand to be moved	Troybilt LTX-182 lawn tractor	Battery charger 200 amp 35 amp 2	Files
Old Christmas rocket with Santa from his front yard	DR large yard vac	Battery charger 240 amp 200 amp	Sockets
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Old pictures of Walters	Shop tables - assorted	Old lockers	Traps
Very nice old Friendship Quilt Walters family	Antique welder	Old gas cans	Fan back lawn chairs
TRACTOR, TRAILER, MOWERS	Approx. 22' electric gate	2-story ladder on wheels	Assorted dolly's
Farmall Model A	(3) Propane heaters	Large diamond tread toolbox	Fence charger
John Deere Model 70 Tractor serial #7035803	Wheatstarrow	Electrical boxes	Cream cans
Trailer with pump	Wagon wheels	Misc. galvanized tin	Lockers
Trailer with 100 gal. on spray rig	Windmill parts and pieces	Shop Made seeder	Assorted casters and wheels
Trailer with fuel tank	Seeder	Misc. galvanized pipe	Mini fridge
14' open top stock trailer	Comealongs	Misc. hog and cattle panels	IRON
Small utility trailer	Large assortment of tires	Fire extinguishers	Approx. 100+ sticks C Purlin 20'
Dual axle flat bed trailer	Old windows	4-drawer file cabinet	Angle iron 2"
Pickup bed trailer	2X4's	Assorted scrap iron	Assorted scrap metal
Ingoton trailer	2X6's	Assorted sheet metal	
Shogmade trailer, single axle with vise	Large assortment of wrenches		
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Estate of Marvin Moore FARM & EQUIPMENT AUCTION

Saturday, April 23rd • 10:00 a.m.
East of Walters, Oklahoma

Directions: 3 miles east of Walters on Hwy 53 to NS 2650, turn south 1 1/2 mile to auction site. Watch for signs!

All 3 tracts of land to be sold at this location.
Tracts 1 and 2 are located just west of auction site approx. 1 1/2 miles - watch for signs

- Tract 1 - 28.64 acres m/l located in Sec 31 T2S R10W; long legal in office. Surface rights only
- Tract 2 - 35 acres m/l located in Sec 31 T2S R10W ; long legal in office. Surface rights only
- Tract 3 (Tract 1 and 2 Offered Together) Possession at closing
- Tract 4 - 80 acres S/2 of the SW/4 Sec 33 T2S R10W. Surface rights only
- Tract 5 - 80 acres N/2 of the SW/4 Sec 33 TSR10W. Surface rights only
- Tract 6 (Tract 3-4 Offered Together) Currently leased through Dec 31, 2016

Property has approx. 6 ponds, cross fenced, rolling fields with trees, located on a corner. The 80 acres is currently leased. If you want to drive on property please call and set up an appointment to be courteous to the current renter.

FARM EQUIPMENT	Cotton trailer frame	JD offset disc	PIPE & METAL	Propane
Farm	3pt bale spear	6' disc	I-Beam	Shop table w/ vise
Fertilizer spreader	Calff feed trough	JD square baler 346	Rebar and cattle panels	Pickup headache rack
Cotton trailer w/sides	JD hay 3pt rack	Pickup bed trailer	Barn rafters, approx. 8-25'	Old oil cans
JD 3 bottom plow	Large creek feeder	Folding springtooth	11-Pipe barn tresses, approx. 45'	Misc. brick and blocks
JD brush hog	20' gooseneck stock trailer	Hopper	Ingoton pipe - Aluminum	Large tank
3pt offset disc	Irrigation pipe - aluminum	Dirt packer - 6'	3-head disc	Misc. sheet metal
3pt hopper	Grain auger	Assorted gates and panels	MISCELLANEOUS	Water tote
3pt auger	Assorted scrap iron	3pt scraper	Assorted T-Posts	Tractor tires
Grain auger	Assorted scrap metal	3pt disc	Axles	Tractor tires
Fertilizer spreader box		JD parts and pieces	50+ telephone poles	Fencing
Hay rings		Antique plows and implements		
Old pickup		Large irrigation reels		
Pull behind land leveler		JD spreader - 4-Row		

Terms on the Real Estate
Down Payment: 5% of contract sales price day of auction, balance at closing on or before 30 days from auction.
Possession: At closing on or before 30 days from auction.
Conditions: Auction is open to the public. Property sells in its AS IS condition with good marketable title. Warranty deed and up-to-date abstract. Property sells subject to owner confirmation.
Financing: Property sells for CASH. Buyer needs to have financing arranged prior to auction.
Closing Fees: Seller will bring abstract to date; taxes will be prorated to day of closing. Buyer and seller will split closing company fee 50%-50%. Buyer will be responsible for all their own loan closing costs.
Announcements made at the auction supersede all oral and printed information. All information contained in this brochure was derived from sources believed to be correct but is not guaranteed. All measurements are approximate.

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It's Spring Tune-up Time

HVAC tune-up rebate program returns

When was the last time you had your home's HVAC system tuned up? If it has been a few years, this is probably a good time to have an HVAC contractor inspect, service and clean it.

Typically, tune-ups on cooling systems that have been neglected for a few years can provide as much as 15 percent energy savings. Just as a tune-up for your car can improve gas mileage, a yearly tune-up of your cooling system can improve efficiency and comfort. Plus, an annual tune-up can increase the life of the system.

In conjunction with our Beat the Peak program, Cotton Electric is offering a rebate of up to \$50 per home (50 percent of the cost of your tune-up, excluding repairs, up to \$50) for members who get a tune-up for their HVAC system.

In order to qualify, the following guidelines must be met:

- Must be a Cotton Electric Cooperative member.
- Rebate is not available for new construction.

• A completed Rebate Application is required. Application forms are available at the Walters and Duncan offices, or by calling 580-875-3351. Ask for Mike Stephens.

• Application must be signed and dated by both the member and a licensed and bonded HVAC contractor.

• Member must submit a dated, itemized invoice as proof of service completion from a qualified contractor. Failure to provide required information will result in denial of rebate.

• Rebates are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until program funds have been depleted.

• Rebate not valid on gas-fired furnaces.

• Rebate limited to one tune-up per home annually.

• HVAC tune-ups must be completed by June 20, 2016. Rebate applications must be received by June 30, 2016.

Give us a call at 580-875-3351 for details on our Pre-Cooling Season HVAC Tune-Up Rebates.

Tune-Up Checklist:

Tune-ups must be performed by a qualified service professional and must include the following criteria:

- Check and correct unit's refrigerant pressure and tubing
- Check thermostat settings, wiring, and other electric parts and connections
- Inspect air filters
- Test AC and furnace starting capabilities
- Test safety controls
- Clean and adjust blower components
- Measure temperature difference
- Measure volts/amps on AC and furnace
- Lubricate all applicable parts
- Check temperature calibration and adjust, if needed
- Check AC evaporator coil and clean, if necessary
- Clean AC condenser coil
- Clean AC condensate drains
- Check thermostat operation



Rebates available for certain heat pumps

Cotton Electric has announced standards for the 2016 Rebate Program for the purchase and installation of energy-efficient ground source heat pumps.

Rebate funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Once rebate funds have been exhausted, the program will end for the year.

Members should note that the rebates are offered only for ground source heat pumps (GSHP). A desuperheater is not required but additional rebates are available if one is part of a new GSHP installation.

Minimum standards apply to the full load operation of a GSHP, not the partial load. The amount of rebate is determined by the size of each unit, its Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) and Coefficient of Performance (COP).

Qualifying units can receive a rebate of up to \$1,050 per ton installed if the unit meets the minimum specifications, which are 15.9 EER and 3.3 COP for closed loop units and 18.0 EER and 3.6 COP for open loop units.

Cotton Electric offers a rebate for members replacing an existing GSHP system with a more efficient GSHP system.

To qualify for a rebate when replacing an existing GSHP system with another GSHP system, the new installation must increase the EER by at least 3.0. The minimum specification for COP is 3.3 for closed loop systems and 3.6 for open loop. Rebates are \$375 per ton.

In order to qualify for the program, members will need to provide a copy of their itemized invoice and, from the HVAC contractor or supplier, AHRI certification and Manual J calculation. Verification by Cotton Electric personnel is also required to receive the rebate. The maximum rebate in 2016 will be \$5,000 per residence.

For more information about the rebate program, please contact Mike Stephens, Cotton Electric's energy use adviser, at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

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3 STEPS to ENERGY EFFICIENCY



1 Identify ways to save energy when using appliances and electronics in your home. Buy ENERGY STAR-rated appliances when possible and turn off electronics, such as computers and gaming consoles when not in use.

DIY projects can help you save energy. Caulk around drafty windows, use LED bulbs and check insulation levels in your home.



2 DIY projects can help you save energy. Caulk around drafty windows, use LED bulbs and check insulation levels in your home.



3 Check with your electric co-op about energy saving programs.

How to start saving energy and money

3 quick tips toward efficiency

By Paul Wesslund

If you want to celebrate Earth Day on April 22, start by making your home more energy efficient. Below are three efficiency tips from energy expert Brian Sloboda of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

1. Look around your home for no-cost ways to be efficient. Close the curtains in the summer and open them in the winter. Turn off your computers overnight. Also turn off video game consoles when they're not being used. Better yet, keep them off and send the kids outside to play baseball.

2. Look for small steps you can take and DIY. Caulk around drafty windows. Check the attic for the correct amount of insulation. Switch to LED light bulbs. Plant a deciduous tree on the sunny side of your house; in a few years the leaves will cool your home against the sun in summer, then fall off to warm it in the winter. Old cable TV boxes use

a lot of energy. If yours is not ENERGY STAR-rated, call your cable provider and ask for a new one. If you have a major appliance – like a refrigerator, washing machine or dryer – that's more than 10 years old, don't repair it. The energy efficiency of a newer model will likely pay for itself with energy savings in a few years. Before buying any appliance, look for the ENERGY STAR label, and learn to read it and compare products.

3. Call Cotton Electric Cooperative about energy-saving programs. We may be able to offer advice, HVAC rebates or a home energy checkup. You might be surprised to find out what's really driving up your energy costs.

Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Earth Day a great teaching opportunity

Earth Day has been around for more than 40 years. It has inspired millions to increase their awareness of, and their appreciation for, the environment.

Nowadays, children grow up learning about the environment in school and at home. For example, many households participate in their community's recycling programs, and such households are raising eco-conscious children, perhaps without even realizing they're doing so.

While a transition to a more eco-conscious lifestyle might not be seamless, it's far easier than many might suspect and even easier for kids who have yet to develop a lifetime of habits. With Earth Day on the horizon, the following are a few ways parents can get kids involved in activities or lifestyles that benefit the environment.

Address Eating Habits

Over the last several years, the opportunities to eat in an eco-friendly manner have increased dramatically. Organic foods have grown more and more popular, and parents can use this growing trend to teach their kids about the environment. When shopping for groceries, choose organic products that weren't

grown with pesticides or harmful chemicals and explain this difference to kids.

Shopping locally provides another opportunity for parents to involve food when teaching kids about the environment. Explain to kids that shopping locally reduces reliance on fuel because products don't need to be shipped, be it through the air or on the ground, to your community, minimizing fuel consumption.

Teach Conservation Techniques

Conservation provides another easy opportunity for parents to instill eco-friendly ideals in their children. Conservation is about reducing waste, so conservation techniques don't involve sacrifice. Instead, they involve being more responsible when it comes to using our resources.

Parents know full well the constant reminders kids need when it comes to dental hygiene. But use these daily reminders about brushing and flossing as an opportunity to impart a lesson about the environment.

Instead of keeping the faucet running while brushing your teeth, turn the faucet off and encourage kids to do the

same. When they ask why, explain that this helps conserve water, and show them how it's just as easy and effective to clean teeth without the water running as it is when the faucet is on.

This teaches kids that conservation is simple and often just requires minimal effort to make a big difference.

There are additional lessons about con-

servation that parents can impart. For instance, when grocery shopping, always make a list before leaving the house and explain that you do this so you don't have to make two trips to the store and waste gas the second trip would require.

In addition, encourage kids to turn the lights off when they leave a room to better conserve energy.

Every day is

EARTH DAY

at

COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP

Cotton Electric Cooperative offers a number of programs centered around energy efficiency and awareness:

Energy audits – Members can get a free analysis of their home that shows how to save money on power bills by making energy efficient improvements.

Rebate program – Members can receive rebates when they have a Spring tune-up of their HVAC system.

SmartHub – Track daily energy consumption to identify the benefits of lowering usage and be alerted to spikes that may indicate a problem.

TogetherWeSave.com – Find out how the little changes add up to big savings.

MyChoice – Control times and methods of power bill payment while saving money – no deposits or late fees.

Beat the Peak – Sign up for alerts on high consumption days and participate in conservation measures during peak demand hours.

Find out more by visiting CottonElectric.com or calling 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

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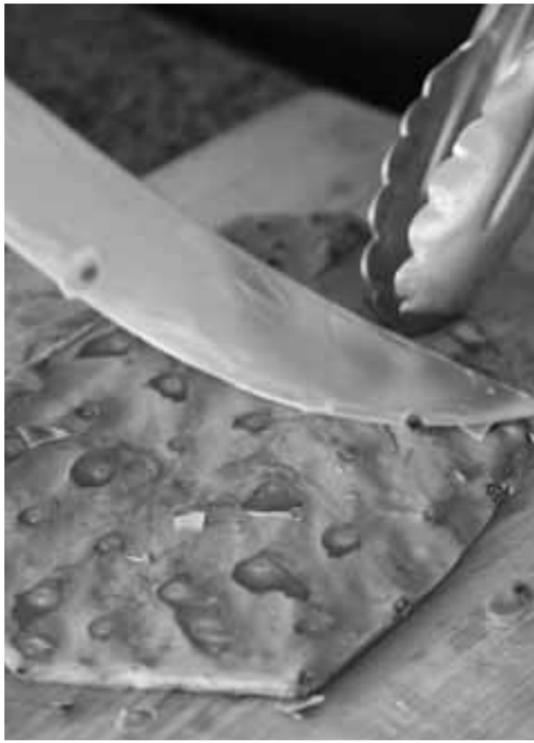
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Nopales Basics:

BUY. Some supermarkets and Latino markets sell cactus with the spines, and others sell it de-stickered and ready to use—whole or cut up. When buying whole pads, look for ones that are smooth, crisp, and small to medium size.

PREP. To remove spines from pads, put on dish gloves. Scrape a knife almost flat down the length of both sides of pads to shave off spines and barbed, fuzzy dots. Pare rims with a vegetable peeler. Trim bases; rinse pads.



Nopales Scramble

This easy breakfast or supper dish takes a cue from Mexico, where nopales are popular with eggs, and from America, where we like to add roasted potatoes.

Recipe reprinted, courtesy of MyRecipes.com
Serves 4, total preparation time: 35 Minutes

Ingredients	1 cup diced nopales (see “Nopales Basics,” above)
1 large thin-skinned potato, peeled, quartered, and thickly sliced crosswise	6 large eggs
1/3 cup very coarsely chopped red onion	1/4 teaspoon pepper
About 3 tbsp. olive oil, divided	1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt, divided	1/2 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1 large poblano chile	Hot sauce
1 large Roma tomato	

Preparation
1. Preheat oven to 475°. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper. On parchment, toss potato, onion, 1/2 tbsp. oil, and 1/4 tsp. salt. Set chile and tomato in corner of sheet pan. Bake, turning vegetables once, until browned, about 20 minutes.
2. In a frying pan, sauté nopales over high heat with 1/2 tbsp. oil and 1/4 tsp. salt until pan is mostly dry, 3 to 6 minutes, then reduce heat and cook until barely tender, 3 to 4 minutes more. Set aside.
3. Peel, stem, and seed chile; peel tomato. Chop both. In a bowl, whisk eggs with remaining 1/4 tsp. salt and the pepper.
4. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add remaining 2 tbsp. oil and the cumin; cook until fragrant, 1 minute. Stir in potato mixture, chile, to-

mato, and nopales. Cook until hot. Pour in eggs and cook, stirring often, until set, 3 minutes. Sprinkle cheese on top; stir a few times until it melts. Serve with hot sauce.

Find more nopales recipes at MyRecipes.com.

Versatile prickly pear can perk up your spread

Pads of the prickly pear cactus have been an ingredient in Mexican cuisine for many years. Nopales seem to be growing in popularity and availability in grocery stores in the southern United States. Most commonly found in the Mexican or Hispanic foods sections in cans or jars, fresh nopales are sometimes available in the produce section, already cleaned and ready to be cooked.

It is a unique vegetable for non-Hispanic cuisine and can add a new dimension to some of your favorite recipes.

Fresh nopales have been described as having a mild flavor similar to asparagus, green beans or green peppers. When cooked fresh, they exude a sticky substance similar to okra, but it disappears with longer cooking times. Fresh nopales tend to soak up the flavors of the dish.

Canned or bottled nopales, often called nopalitos, just need to be rinsed before being added to decrease the amount of salt they add to the dish. Canned nopales are tart and taste pickled, similar to a non-spicy jalapeno crossed with homemade cucumber pickles.

Whether fresh or canned, nopales are most often sliced in strips or chopped before being added to dishes. Nopales pair well with eggs, salads, vegetable dishes, beans, soups – anything that can handle some green added to it.

From a nutrition perspective, nopales have a few interesting features. Fresh cooked nopales contain a good amount of calcium per cup. 24 percent of the daily value or 240mg of calcium, without contributing too many calories, only 22 in one cup. They are also fat-free, cholesterol-free, and contain varying amounts of other vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin A and C, magnesium, phospho-



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

rus and potassium. Canned and bottled nopalitos are typically high in sodium, so it is important to remove the strips from their juices and rinse before use to decrease the amount of sodium you are adding to the dish. Overall, like most vegetables, nopales and nopalitos add volume and flavor to food without adding an abundance of calories, making them friendlier to the waistline.

Prickly pear cactus is not a super food or miracle cure for anything other than food boredom or recipe stagnation. If you are willing to give them a try, and you are a fan of pickles, pick up a can or jar of nopalitos at the store. Add them to foods where you would like a little tang or tartness.

If you are more adventurous, tackle the fresh nopales. There are many recipes on the internet and in Mexican cook books.

If cooking isn't your strength or interest, don't shy away from authentic Mexican cuisine with nopales or nopalitos. You will be surprised at how versatile and delicious a cactus can be.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Rooms that get too hot or too cold?	<input type="checkbox"/> Dust buildup within 2 days of dusting?
<input type="checkbox"/> High utility bills?	<input type="checkbox"/> Problems with your system since it's been installed?
<input type="checkbox"/> Thermostat wars with your spouse?	<input type="checkbox"/> Anyone with allergies or asthma?
<input type="checkbox"/> High humidity in summer?	<input type="checkbox"/> AC starts and stops frequently or runs all the time, and house is still not cool?
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Have been told by other contractors that the problem cannot be fixed?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, we can help!

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Quick-fix dinners can be good for you, too

(Family Features) Busy weeknights call for quick family meals, but with the right ingredients fast food can actually be good for you, too.

A meal that includes dairy is right in line with the recently released 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend three servings of dairy foods every day. That's because dairy foods such as cheese, milk and yogurt provide a unique package of nine essential nutrients: calcium, potassium, phosphorus, protein, vitamins A, D and B12, riboflavin and niacin.

Individuals and families that want an extra reminder about the importance of integrating three servings of dairy into their daily diet can take the Dairy 3 for Me pledge as motivation. There are many delicious and creative ways to get your three servings of dairy every day, such as using plain Greek yogurt in place of mayonnaise in your favorite recipes or substituting syrup on pancakes and waffles with flavored yogurt.

For more deliciously quick dinner recipes, and to take the Dairy 3 for Me pledge, visit MidwestDairy.com.



Hot and Sweet Grilled Cheese

Servings: 4
Total time: 16 minutes

Peach Jalapeno Jam

3 tablespoons peach preserves
1/2 fresh jalapeno, seeded and finely chopped (about 2 teaspoons)

Grilled Cheese

1 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter softened
4 slices 12-grain bread, divided
2 slices white cheddar cheese, divided
2 slices pepper jack cheese, divided
2 slices smoked Gouda cheese, divided
1/2 small avocado, thinly sliced, divided

To make peach jalapeno jam: in small saucepan over medium heat, combine peach preserves and jalapeno. Stir mixture constantly until preserves are melted. Re-

move from heat and set aside.

To make sandwiches; heat large nonstick or cast iron skillet over medium heat for about 2 minutes. Butter one side each of 2 slices of bread. Turn buttered slices over, buttered side down and spread peach jalapeno jam over second side of each bread slice. On top of jam side of each bread slice, layer 1 slice cheddar cheese, 1 slice pepper jack cheese, half the slices of avocado and 1 slice of Gouda. Spread jam on remaining slices of bread and place jam side on cheese. Spread remainder of butter on bread on top of sandwiches.

Place sandwiches buttered side down in pan. Partially cover with lid, allowing steam to escape, and cook for 1 1/2-2 minutes, or until bread is toasted and browned. Flip sandwiches over with spatula. Partially cover with lid and cook for additional 1 1/2-2 minutes, watching carefully for bread to brown and cheese to melt. Remove lid and check for doneness. Remove sandwiches from heat and cut in half. Serve warm.



Beef Burrito with Pepper Jack Cheese and Black Beans

Servings: 6
Total time: 9 minutes

1/2 pound ground beef sirloin
2 teaspoons minced garlic
1 cup chunky salsa, divided
2 cups cooked brown or white rice
6 whole wheat flour tortillas (9 inches)
1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed, divided
1 can (11 ounces) corn kernels, drained, divided
2 cups shredded pepper jack cheese, divided
sliced green onion, including green tops

In medium nonstick skillet, brown ground beef and garlic over medium heat, breaking beef mixture into smaller chunks with spoon. Drain fat and stir in 1/2 cup salsa; set aside.

Spread 1/3 cup rice in center of tortilla, leaving a 1/2-inch border. Scatter about 2 tablespoons of beans and 1 1/2 tablespoons corn over rice. Spread 1/3 cup beef mixture and 1/4 cup cheese over corn. Top with 2 teaspoons salsa and a few pieces of green onion.

Fold in two opposite edges of tortilla 1 inch each and roll up. Place, seam side down, on microwave-safe dish.

Repeat with remaining tortillas. Place burritos in microwave and heat 1 minute, or until heated through. Serve with remaining salsa.

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For Photos: Log onto www.auctionzip.com Enter Auctioneer ID # 17788

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Form teams by calling Jeff Zachary at 512-9384 or Jeff Simpson at 591-1446 or register with David Glenn at golf course.



Parting Shot



One of the highlights of Cotton Electric's annual Rural Electric Youth Tour finalist banquet is hearing about the trip from the previous year's Youth Tourists. We were glad to see Hanna Stanton, Rachel Simon and Amber Powers and hear them speak of the trip taken nine months ago with a giddiness that made it seem as though it was last week. Each agreed it had been a trip they would never forget.

Please Help Update Our Records

Has your address changed? Many of our members have new mailing addresses after E-911 remapping. It is up to the member to tell us the new address.

How about your phone number? Some have dropped land lines and are using cell phones.

In the event that we need to contact you, a current phone number is very important and improves the efficiency of our outage reporting system.

Why would we contact you? We may need to contact you regarding your account, a power outage, or to schedule an appointment.

Please complete the form below and return with your next payment or mail it to us at 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. You may also call us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520 to update.

Thank you for helping us improve our service.

Name _____

Account # _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Email Address _____

Home Phone _____

Business Phone _____

Mobile Phone _____



WE ARE ALL WORKING TOWARD THE SAME GOAL. Using energy wisely is the job of every electric co-op member. And when we work together, our combined strength is more than enough to accomplish anything. Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at TogetherWeSave.com.



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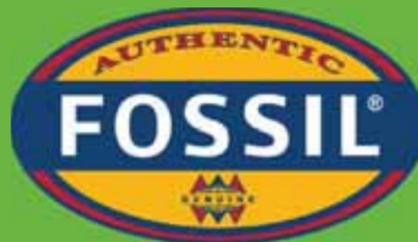
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