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The Current

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957"

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NUMBER 3

Cotton Electric youth programs spark opportunities for leadership and learning

By Carli Eubank

Cotton Electric is excited to announce two incredible youth programs full of learning and leadership opportunities for incoming and current eighth graders and high school juniors in the co-op's service territory. Combining the Cooperative Principles of Concern for Community and Education, Training and Information, Oklahoma Youth Tour and Energy Camp are just a couple of ways Cotton Electric invests into students in our local communities.

This year's youth program contests opened at the beginning of November, and submissions are due at the beginning of 2025.

Oklahoma Youth Tour

If you or someone you know is a high school junior looking for an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., next summer, then look no further than Oklahoma Youth Tour. This weeklong experience is a fun mixture of learning about the cooperative business model; touring historic monuments; museums and memorials; gaining leadership experience; networking with students across the state and country; and making memories that will last a lifetime.

Contest information

To be entered into the running for Oklahoma Youth Tour delegate, contestants must be a high school junior in the Cotton Electric service territory. The student and their families do not have to be Cotton Electric members; however, sons or daughters of Cotton Electric employees and Board Members are not eligible to participate.

This year's contest is broken into two rounds. First, applicants will write a professional letter to a local, state or federal elected official about a topic that is important to them. Writers of the top 10 letters will move on to the second round for a live video interview with independent judges arranged by Cotton Electric. The top two presenters will be awarded the all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., and represent Cotton Electric in June 2025 at Oklahoma Youth Tour.

The deadline to submit an essay is 3 p.m. on Jan. 16, 2025. Contest deadlines, resources, and contest submission can be found on our website at www.cottonelectric.com/youthtour.



cottonelectric.com/youthtour. For questions or more information, please call 580-875-3351 or email zyoung@cottonelectric.com.

Energy Camp on Page 7

DeMarcus appointed Cotton Electric Board president



Brian DeMarcus

Brian DeMarcus has been appointed president for the Cotton Electric Board of Trustees. He fills a seat formerly held by Shan Files for the past three years.

DeMarcus has served on the Cotton Electric Board of Trustees since 2013.

The business and affairs of Cotton Electric are managed by a board of nine Trustees representing geographical districts with similar densities of service. DeMarcus represents District 4, which is situated on the northern side of Comanche County, with more than 1,601 members served by approximately 700 miles of line in District 9.

DeMarcus serves as an executive vice president and branch manager at All America Bank in Medicine Park, and currently serves on the bank's Board of Directors. With a mission of serving the community, DeMarcus is also a member of the Meers Fire Department and a member of the Cache Lions Club. He and his wife, Cassie, live in the Meers area, and they have three children.

To learn more about your Board of Trustees, visit www.cottonelectric.com/board-trustees.



Cotton Electric Board President Brian DeMarcus interacting with members at the Coffee with Cotton event in his district. Photo by Carli Eubank.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after Nov. 1, 2024, is \$0.00414 per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kWh, this will amount to a charge of \$5.38 on the November bill.

October 2024 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	87	58	73	16	67	39	53
2	91	53	72	17	73	34	54
3	96	56	76	18	79	50	65
4	96	59	78	19	81	53	67
5	91	56	74	20	82	42	62
6	92	55	74	21	86	50	68
7	88	60	74	22	92	52	72
8	91	54	73	23	91	57	74
9	93	59	76	24	94	57	74
10	96	69	83	25	81	62	72
11	95	64	80	26	79	51	65
12	96	55	76	27	85	47	66
13	89	53	71	28	92	64	78
14	78	51	65	29	89	69	79
15	93	48	71	30	89	56	73
				31	69	47	58

Source: www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/
Average Daily High: 87 Average Daily Low: 54

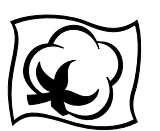
Did You Know?

Cotton Electric offices will be closed Nov. 28 and 29 for the Thanksgiving holiday. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

The next issue of *The Current* should arrive in mailboxes Dec. 13, 2024.

Contact Us

Do you have a story idea for *The Current*, or do you need to place an ad? If so, let us know. We can be reached at 580-875-3351 or by email at TheCurrent@cottonelectric.com. You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

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

From the CEO

Energize your wallet: Unveiling the power of federal energy incentives

Do you hit the snooze button when someone starts talking about kilowatts, electricity usage, or energy efficiency? It's true—sometimes these can be pretty dry topics. What if you could get serious money back to make your home more energy efficient? What if you could continue to keep more cash in your wallet every month because of those efforts?

Here's the scoop

Uncle Sam will pay you to make your home more energy efficient. If you've upgraded appliances or made home weatherization improvements to your primary residence since 2023, you may be eligible for tax credits or rebates for energy-efficient improvements.

Here's a sampling of what's covered: upgraded exterior windows and doors, insulation, high-efficiency (think Energy Star-rated) heat pumps, water heaters, heating and cooling equipment, appliances, and switching to an electric vehicle

or adding a home charger or rooftop solar system.

More money, more comfort

So, how does it work? Federal tax credits of up to \$3,200 per year can be claimed with your federal income taxes for the year when the upgrades are made. Just complete IRS Form 5695, follow IRS instructions and include the form when filing your tax return. You will need to know the total cost of the upgrades and include relevant receipts.

Given how annual total limits are structured, consider spreading your home energy efficiency improvements over a few years. Planning your upgrades can help maximize the annual credit amounts you can claim. As with any tax matter, consulting a tax professional is a good idea. For more information, visit www.energy.gov/save/home-upgrades.

Don't leave money on the table

While the federal tax credits are managed by the IRS, federal energy rebates are handled by the states. Visit www.energy.gov/save/rebates to see if your energy efficiency improvements qualify for a rebate. Keep in mind, you'll need similar documentation and the total amount spent on the upgrades. Your wallet will thank you for the effort needed to get the cash back.

Cotton Electric has additional incentives and cashback opportunities for our members. For more information, visit www.cottonelectric.com/rebate-program or www.cottonelectric.com/energy-efficiency.

Play it again

Let's recap why it pays to amp up your energy efficiency efforts. Energy-efficient upgrades typically reduce consumption, lower utility bills over time and lessen the environmental impact. Not to mention, you can say goodbye to drafts and cold spots with energy-efficient windows and doors, and hello to improved indoor air quality with cleaner heating and cooling systems.

The bottom line

Cotton Electric Cooperative can help decode energy efficien-



Jennifer Meason, CEO

cy incentives and rebates to maximize savings and other benefits. Your cooperative also has a rebate program for air-source heat pumps, mini-splits and water heaters installed under certain conditions. After all, we're all about helping our members save money and energy. Follow us on our social channels or check out www.cottonelectric.com/rebate-program to learn more about our program and start putting more money back in your wallet.

Check out the Department Of Energy's Energy Savings Hub at www.energy.gov/save to learn more about how to claim federal tax credits, strategies to maximize your federal tax savings and how the tax credits work for homeowners.

THANK YOU, VETERANS



James Apriesnig
U.S. Marines




Kevin Barrineau
U.S. Army



Heath Morgan
U.S. Air Force



Dillon Wiygul
U.S. Marines



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

If you're heading out of town during the holiday season, remember to set your home to vacation mode. You can save energy while you're away by lowering your thermostat a few degrees or creating an "away" schedule with a smart or programmable thermostat. Newer water heaters include a vacation mode setting to help you save on water heating costs, or you can simply lower the temperature manually.

Small actions can also stack up to energy savings. Unplug devices that consume energy when they're not in use, including phone chargers, toothbrush chargers, TVs and gaming consoles.

Source: www.energy.gov

September 2024 Operating Stats		
	2024	2023
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$6,529,258	\$6,615,200
Cost of Purchased Power	4,503,149	4,543,264
Taxes	148,153	165,106
Total Operating Expense per Mile	1,184	1,217
Average Farm and Residential Bill	153	159
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,342	1,312
Total Meters Billed (Farm, Residential)	19,755	19,542
Miles Energized	5,278	5,266
Density per Mile	3.74	3.71
New Service Connects YTD	340	329
Services Retired	160	137

Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

December	
Ad Sales	Nov. 29
Classified	Nov. 29
Publish	Dec. 13



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Shane Bowers..... Vice President
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Carli Eubank Communications Specialist

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Energy Efficiency

Stay safe and warm: Your winter home readiness guide

Preparing your home for winter involves several key steps to ensure safety, efficiency and warmth. Here are top tips to help you prepare before the temperatures drop and a few ways to stay safe if a power outage leaves you snowbound.

Inspect your heating system

- Have your heating system professionally serviced.
- Replace air filters if needed.
- Ensure vents and radiators are unblocked for efficient heat distribution.

Prepare pipes and water supply

- Insulate exposed pipes to prevent freezing.
- Drain and shut off outdoor faucets and irrigation systems.
- Know the location of your water shut-off valve in case of emergencies.

Maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

- Replace batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Test detectors to ensure they are functioning properly.

Prepare your home's exterior

- Clear gutters and downspouts of leaves and debris to prevent ice dams.
- Trim trees and bushes away from the house to prevent damage from heavy snow.
- Ensure downspouts extend away from your home's foundation.
- Drain and store garden hoses to prevent freezing.
- Service and store outdoor equipment such as lawnmowers and trimmers.
- Gather winter tools such as snow shovels and ice melt.

Increase home energy efficiency

- Seal gaps and cracks around windows and doors with weatherstripping or caulk.
- Set ceiling fans to rotate clockwise to circulate warm air.
- Lower your thermostat a few degrees to save on heating costs.

Stock emergency supplies

At home, have enough nonperishable food and water for 72 hours in case of power outages or severe weather. Experts suggest storing 1 gallon of water per person per day.

Include these essentials in your emergency kit:

- First-aid kit
- Radio
- Toiletries
- Flashlights and batteries
- Warm clothing
- Blankets
- Phone chargers and backup charger sources

Gather important documents, medical supplies/medicines and medical records. Don't forget your pets. Make sure you have enough supplies for them as well.

What to do if the power goes out

Winter weather is unpredictable, with high winds and ice storms. These conditions can cause hazardous roads and power outages.

If the electricity goes out due to a winter storm, you might be in for a prolonged power outage as crews work through the harsh weather to get the power back on.

If this happens, contact your cooperative as soon as you can so they know you have lost power.



Heath Morgan,
Energy Efficiency
Coordinator

Other actions you can take to stay safe are:

- Avoid travel. Stay inside and dress warmly in layered clothing.
 - Place a draft block at the bottom of doors to minimize cold drafts from entering the house.
 - When using an alternative heat source, follow operating instructions and be sure to ventilate properly.
 - Keep grills, camp stoves and generators out of the house, basement and garage.
 - Use a tarp and portable canopy when using a portable generator if conditions are damp or wet.
 - Move fuel-powered generators at least 20 feet away from the house.
 - Keep a close eye on the temperature in your home. Infants and people over the age of 65 are often more susceptible to the cold. You may want to stay with friends or family or go to a shelter if you can't keep your home warm.
- For more information on keeping your family safe during and after a winter storm, visit www.cottonelectric.com/safety or www.safeelectricity.org.

READY YOUR HOME
for winter

For helpful tips, visit:
SafeElectricity.org

Heating Degree Day and Cooling Degree Day Calendar

OCTOBER

HDD	YEAR	CDD
28	2024	235
148	2023	129
110	2022	82

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

NEW

PAY BY PHONE

Cotton Electric Cooperative is upgrading our Pay By Phone program! This new system will offer faster call flows and an improved overall experience when making payments.

You can easily access the updated service by calling our new number:

1-855-940-3923



Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation

REMINDER

Fourth-quarter CECF grant applications are due

Nov. 12



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Co-ops empower future leaders at Co-opreneur Day

By Carli Eubank

On Oct. 15, more than 100 seventh and eighth grade students from Oklahoma electric cooperatives traveled to the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC) conference center in Oklahoma City for the third annual Co-opreneur Day. This event focused on teamwork, creativity, and innovation as students were divided into teams to form a cooperative to resolve community challenges with imaginative business plans.

Cotton Electric was represented by two eighth grade teams from Walters Middle School and two blended teams of seventh and eighth graders from Hope Academy of Stephens County. One of the Walters Middle School teams, named Unbreakable Blue, snagged second place in the eighth grade category, and Hope Academy's team, named The Three Musketeers, clinched first place in the blended seventh and eighth grade category.

The day was split into three sessions. First, students learned about the definition, business model and principles of electric cooperatives from

OAEC Director of Member Services Stacy Howeth. Next, a group activity demonstrated how cooperatives work together to alleviate problems each team was experiencing. After the group exercise, each team elected their own president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

The second session was led by Amy Lee from the Oklahoma Council on Economic Education, who shared the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur.

Implementing what they learned in the previous two sessions, students were tasked with creating a cooperative business plan that addressed an ongoing issue in their communities. Students were given an hour to create a plan before presenting it to judges.

Co-opreneur Day is filled with fun activities, snacks and photos, but it is also one of the ways Oklahoma electric cooperatives invest in the youth throughout local communities. The future of electric cooperatives is certainly shining bright, and Cotton Electric is proud of the students representing the co-op during the contest.



One of the teams from Hope Academy of Stephens County won first place in the blended seventh and eighth grade category of the 2024 Co-opreneur Day. Photo courtesy of OAEC.



One of the teams from Walters Middle School won second place in the eighth grade category of the 2024 Co-opreneur Day. Photo courtesy of OAEC.

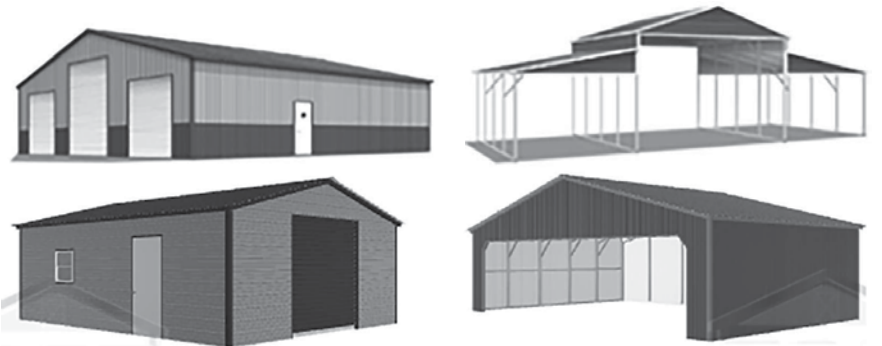


Students participated in group activities demonstrating how cooperatives work together. Photo courtesy of OAEC.

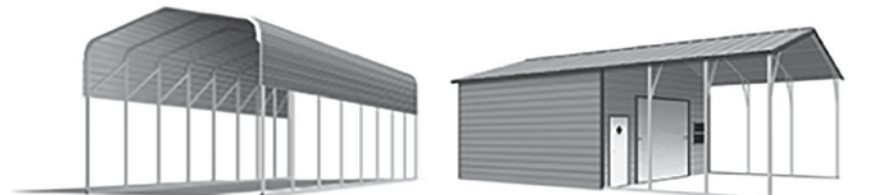


Students learned about electric cooperatives from OAEC Director of Member Services Stacy Howeth. Photo courtesy of OAEC.

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Cutting spending can help boost retirement savings

Like most of us, you may someday want to enjoy a comfortable retirement. Your ability to achieve this goal will depend on how much you save — but it also matters how much you spend.

And saving and spending are certainly related: The more you can reduce your spending, the more money you could have available to

save for retirement through your IRA and your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. Over many years, even relatively small amounts diverted from spending to saving and investing could add up substantially.

How can you go about potentially reducing your spending? Here are a few suggestions:

- Use a budgeting tool. If you're not already doing so, you might want to consider using a free online budgeting tool. Among other capabilities, these apps can place your spending in categories — groceries, travel, entertainment, and so on — which can reveal redundan-

cies that, once eliminated, could save you money. For example, you might find that you're spending a not-insignificant amount on streaming services you rarely use. Or you might be surprised at how often you go the grocery store, rather than consolidating your visits and reducing the likelihood of "impulse" purchases.

- Take advantage of employee benefits. If you work for a mid-size or large company, you may have an extensive employee benefit plan, which could include discounts on some products and services. Also, if you are enrolled in a high-deductible health plan through

your employer, you might have access to a health savings account (HSA) or flexible spending account (FSA), either of which may let you lower your out-of-pocket health care costs by using pre-tax dollars to pay for deductibles, copayments, coinsurance and some other qualified expenses.

• Shop around for insurance. To some extent, we are all creatures of habit, which can be good in some circumstances and not so good in others. In the "not so good" category, many people stick with their auto, homeowners and life insurance policies year after year, even though

they might be able to save some money by switching to another company. But even if you stay with your current company, you might find ways to save money by taking steps such as adding a home security system. Check with your insurer to learn more.

• Compare credit cards. There's a piece of financial advice that essentially says: "Pay cash for everything" — and this isn't a bad idea. Ideally, you might want to use a credit card strictly for items such as car rentals or hotel reservations, and you should pay off the bill each month to avoid interest charges. Sometimes, though, you may

need to use your card for other purposes, and it may not always be possible to pay your bill in full. That's why you'll want to review credit cards periodically to find one with lower interest rates, a favorable balance transfer offer and a better rewards program.

It's not always easy to cut down on your spending, but when you do, it can provide more peace of mind — and an opportunity to boost your savings for what could be a long and active retirement.

Edward Jones, Member SIPC



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Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Groundbreaking hosted for new units at Anadarko Plant

Project will add same technology already in existence at site

ANADARKO, OKLA. – (October 17, 2024) – WFEC’s Board of Trustees and distribution cooperative staffs were on hand for a groundbreaking ceremony, Tuesday, Oct. 15, hosted at the future site of two new GE Vernova aeroderivative LM6000VELOX generators. These new units will expand the Anadarko Plant to 650 megawatts (MW) of output.

The new turbines are named Roulet 12 & 13, in honor of Gary Roulet, the current CEO of WFEC who will soon celebrate 50 years with the generation and transmission cooperative. WFEC’s Board of Trustees felt the naming of the units was appropriate since Roulet has been instrumental in this project and it is under his leadership that the project was discussed, planned and now will soon be underway.

“These are challenging times, and Gary has been a champion in leading us (Board of Trustees) into new age technology and has kept us focused on moving forward,” commented Donnie Bidegain, who serves as president of the Board of Trustees. “This is a large step forward into the future

for WFEC,” Bidegain commented, adding that this project is looking after cooperative member’s needs.

Steam units that have served WFEC’s Anadarko Plant for more than 60 years will be replaced with innovative technology that is identical to other units already existing at this location. Planning for this project has been underway for several years, with evaluation of technologies, engineers and construction companies.

These aeroderivative units, derived from jet-engine technology, have the ability to start quickly and ramp up/down quickly. This capability is important to follow variable renewable generation assets like wind turbines and solar farms that are slightly less predictable by their very nature. Conversely, the LM6000s that rely on clean burning natural gas to power them, will be a great complement to WFEC’s robust portfolio of almost 1,000 MW of renewable projects already in service or scheduled to be in service by the end of the decade.

Bidegain noted that the Board started talking about adding capacity during a strategic retreat in March of

2023, which was followed by collaborative efforts among personnel who were all dedicated to this task.

Roulet explained that this project is good for Anadarko - the Anadarko Plant – and for WFEC’s cooperative members for many years to come. “Our Board had the long-term foresight of building new capacity, plus a great vision for the future by ensuring adequate capacity, and high reliability for rural members, at a time when it is needed,” Roulet noted.

“Adding two more combustion turbines identical to the existing five units at the Anadarko Plant, will increase reliability, lower maintenance costs, and help keep electric rates as low as possible for our distribution members,” he said.

“Retiring units 1, 2 & 3 (obsolete units that only ran sparingly, and were very inefficient) and using their existing transmission for units 12 and 13 that are new, efficient and state of the art, will provide benefits to cooperative retail customers as soon as they are commercial,” Roulet pointed out.

“The cooperative model ‘owned by those we serve’ sends a clear message

to keep electricity reliable and affordable,” he noted.

“I appreciate the Board of Trustees’ commitment to the future generation needs of our member-owner distribution cooperatives,” said Justin Soderberg, WFEC’s vice president of Generation.

WFEC has been working with Sargent & Lundy as the engineer for the addition of Roulet Units 12 and 13. Sargent & Lundy has worked hand in hand with WFEC staff on selecting the appropriate technology for these new units and developing a turbine specification.

GE Vernova was selected as the winning bidder, with the development of an Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contract specification and subsequent selection of Fagen, Inc. as the EPC Contractor.

Construction of the new units will start in late 2024 and finish in late 2026. At the peak of construction, Fagen will have 90 construction workers at the Anadarko Plant.

Source: WFEC



WFEC’s Board of Trustees took part in a groundbreaking ceremony, hosted on Oct. 15, in recognition of two combustion turbine units to be constructed at the Anadarko Plant. Board members include (from left) Mike Lebeda, Ronnie Tharp, Ken Autry, Eric Segovia, Clint Pack, Tyson Littau, Chris Mackey, Jean Pence, Brian DeMarcus, Gary Jones, Jeff Willingham, WFEC CEO Gary Roulet, Donnie Bidegain, John Graham, King Martin, Gary Highley (manager & alternate trustee), Gene Peters, Jim Hall, David Ray, Gary Olsen (alternate trustee), Don Ellis, Chuck Wagner and Heath Sirmons (Altus Air Force Base). Photo courtesy of Western Farmers Electric Cooperative.

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Energy Camp

Cotton Electric has another exciting experience next summer at Red Rock Canyon for all incoming and current eighth graders looking to develop leadership skills and learn about rural electrification. When students attend Energy Camp, they will have opportunities to watch safety demonstrations, climb a pole, learn about the cooperative business model and network with students from other Oklahoma electric cooperatives.

Contest information

For the first round of the contest, applicants will submit an essay between 50 and 100 words to the co-op about why they would like to represent Cotton Electric at the 2025 Energy Camp. Writers of the top 10 essays will move on to the second round for a live video interview with independent judges arranged by Cotton Electric. Lastly, the top four applicants will be selected to attend the all-expense-paid trip to the 2025 Energy Camp.

The deadline to submit an essay is 3 p.m. March 20, 2025. Contest deadlines, resources, and contest submission can be found on our website at www.cottonelectric.com/EnergyCamp. For questions, please call us at 580-875-3351 or email zyoung@cottonelectric.com.

Cotton Electric is thrilled to invest in future community leaders through our youth programs, and we look forward to students experiencing these incredible opportunities. For questions or more information, visit www.cottonelectric.com/youth-programs or call 580-875-3351.

Energy Camp
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Cotton Electric Journeyman Lineman Marc Bohall completes his timed rescue. Photo by Carli Eubank.

Annual safety training builds safety for employees and communities

On a cool October morning, Cotton Electric crews gathered for the annual pole top safety training at the co-op headquarters in Walters. These rescue drills are required for all lineworkers, who face challenging conditions to keep the lights on, making it crucial for them to stay up to date on different safety trainings to prevent accidents or injuries on the job.

Jarrod Hooper, Cotton Electric Cooperative's director of safety, loss control and vegetation management, emphasized the importance of having monthly safety meetings or trainings for employees, and one of the mandatory trainings for crews is the annual pole top rescue. Under the guidance of Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives Safety and Loss Control Instructor Greg Hambrick, lineworkers were observed and timed during each rescue drill.

The goal for each lineworker was to complete the drill in four minutes or less, as recommended by the American Heart Association. For each minute that passes, the victim's chance of survival decreases by 10%.

Completing the drill in four minutes allows for a 60% chance of reviving the victim.

The lineworker made the mayday call on the radio, strapped on climbing gear, and climbed up the pole to a mannequin that mimics an employee who has been injured on the job. Then, the lineworker hammered a screwdriver into the pole to loop a rope over before tying the other end around the mannequin's chest. After the mannequin's safety belt was cut with a knife, the mannequin was lowered to the ground, and the lineworker descended the pole, beginning CPR once they reached the ground.

Throughout the morning, laughter and words of encouragement filled the air – demonstrating the strong bond among co-op employees. While the hope is that these drills will never have to be applied in the field, the commitment to preparedness and safety for both members and staff remains a top priority at Cotton Electric Cooperative.



Cotton Electric Apprentice Lineman Michael Edgmon climbs up the pole during his timed rescue. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Cotton Electric Apprentice Lineman Taylor Rains releases the belt holding the mannequin after lowering it to the ground. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Cotton Electric crews complete the annual pole top safety training. Photo by Carli Eubank.

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Help keep your family safe: Don't overload your home's electrical system

With power strips and outlet converters (a multiple outlet "bar" plugged directly into an existing outlet), we can plug in multiple items in or near the same outlet. However, just because we can, doesn't mean we should.

Attempting to draw too much power from an outlet or circuit can overload your home's electrical system. Depending on how your home is wired, you may get away with it — or you may not. If too much current is drawn, usually a circuit breaker would trip or fuses would blow, but this is never guaranteed.

The results of overloading a circuit could range from a damaged appliance to starting a fire. That is because when too much electrical current flows through a circuit, things can overheat. Whether it is a wire, an outlet, or any other part along the electrical path, excess heat can cause serious problems.

Cotton Electric and Safe Electricity remind you of the following electrical safety tips to help prevent overloading a circuit:

- Do not plug too many things into one outlet, extension cord, power strip, multi-outlet device or outlets on the same circuit.
- Look for loose connections or damaged or corroded wires.
- If you continually upgrade your home with more electrical demands (lighting, appliances, electronics and so on), your home's circuits may not be able to handle the increased load.
- Plug in a space heater to a dedicated outlet (with nothing else plugged in) and do not plug a space heater into an extension cord.
- Major appliances (e.g., refrigerator, stove, washing machine) should be plugged into their own outlet since they draw a lot of power. For smaller appliances, do not plug more than two into one outlet.
- Know how much power you draw on an outlet or circuit; some experts recommend no more than 1,500 watts per outlet or circuit.
- Consult a qualified electrician to assess your home's electrical system, especially if you have an older home.

Although we take for granted that our homes are electrically sound or that we can plug in "just one more thing," don't take chances. When in doubt, have a qualified electrician assess your home, and mention any odd symptoms you may notice, like flickering or dimming lights, warm or discolored outlets or cover plates, and frequent blown fuses or tripped circuits.

For more information about electrical safety, visit www.cottonelectric.com/safety or www.safeelectricity.org.

FREE & EASY ways to save energy

(Spoiler Alert: Your clothes and dishes won't know the difference)

Major home appliances account for approximately 16% of an average home's energy consumption.

16%



1. Run full loads of laundry instead of several smaller ones.
2. Use cold water to wash your clothes.

3. Keep your refrigerator at 35° to 38°F and your freezer at 0°F.
4. Regularly defrost manual-defrost freezers and refrigerators.



5. Skip the heat-dry setting on your dishwasher.
6. Fully load your dishwasher before washing.

7. When buying new appliances, consider Energy Star versions.
8. Unplug appliances you're not using.



Time to replace that old appliance? Replacing older versions with energy-efficient models can save the average household more than \$500 per year.

Sources: National Resources Defense Council, U.S. Energy Information Administration

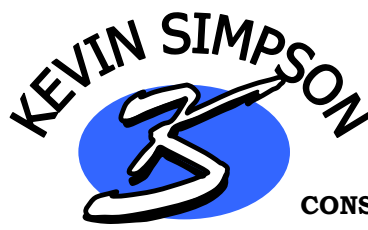
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Co-op Life

Co-ops share cooperative spirit with Guatemalan communities

Cotton Electric Journeyman Lineman Case Hurst and fellow Oklahoma electric cooperative volunteer wiring power poles in Guatemala for the 2024 Energy Trails Project. Photo courtesy of OAEC.

By Carli Eubank

The heart, determination and skill set of a line-worker powers them through many situations to keep the lights on for our members and local communities. Whether it's service orders, long hours or severe weather, every job is met with spirit fueled by compassion and commitment. Recently, Cotton Electric Journeyman Lineman and first-time Energy Trails volunteer Case Hurst carried the cooperative spirit with him as he and 14 other Oklahoma electric cooperative volunteers traveled to electrify Guatemalan villages for the 2024 Energy Trails project.

Partnering with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) philanthropic arm, NRECA International, volunteers from multiple co-ops participate in the mission project program, named Energy Trails. This year's Oklahoma Energy Trails project consisted of 51 poles, three transformers and about 5 miles of line, powering 19 houses and two elementary schools.

Each day started with breakfast and discussion of the jobs for the day before crews broke into groups and drove to the job site. From rolling out wire to installing the wire in homes, each group had a different task for the busy day. Hurst's responsibilities were mainly framing and wiring poles.

"The local utility strung all the primary wire and dug holes for the poles and anchors before we arrived," Hurst said. "Once the poles were set, our crew framed them, temporarily tied the wires, then permanently tied the wires once they had some tension, and finally, we grounded all the guy wires. We would end up climbing the same pole four times during that process."

The project was filled with action-packed days and occasional surprises. Whether it was working

through a random, quick rainstorm or pulling the tension on primary wire over a river by hand, the crew's exhaustion paled in comparison to their positive spirits and focus of the mission.

Hurst shared the most memorable part of his experience was interacting with the local Guatemalan communities.

"Part of this project was providing power to two schools in the area, so we were able to interact with the kids quite a bit throughout the project and hand out different gifts, like Hot Wheels and coloring books," Hurst said. "Every day we turned the corner to arrive at the job site, there would be a line of kids, waiting to wave and yell at us, and if we were working near the house that day, they were glued to us."

One of the greatest gifts Hurst took home with him was a sketchbook filled with different drawings from students at the local schools and thank-you cards from the lighting ceremony at the end of the project.

Even though Hurst recently boarded a plane to return to Oklahoma, the memories experienced during this year's project will always connect him back to Guatemala.

"A big influence for me on deciding to volunteer for Energy Trails was the chance to help others," Hurst said. "It definitely was a humbling experience and great opportunity to use a special skill set we have that can benefit someone else."

Oklahoma's electric cooperatives have established a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, The Oklahoma Energy Trails Foundation, to support this cause. All contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible. Learn more at: <https://oaec.coop/co-op-difference/energy-trails/>.



Cotton Electric Journeyman Lineman Case Hurst shared that interacting with the local students was one of the most memorable parts of the project. Photo courtesy of OAEC.



Hurst asked students from the local schools they were providing power for to draw in his sketchbook as a keepsake. Photos courtesy of Case Hurst.



Hurst's (left) main responsibilities were framing and wiring poles. Photo courtesy of OAEC.



Hurst and 14 other Oklahoma electric cooperative volunteers traveled to Guatemala for the 2024 Energy Trails Project. Photo courtesy of OAEC.

Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the December issue, please submit information by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com by Nov. 29. Only events occurring after Dec. 13 will be published in the next issue.

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

Honoring local veterans

Save the date for the Veterans Day Parade hosted by AMVETS Post 11 in Duncan. Marching groups, floats, military vehicles, veteran groups and more will be participating in the parade with the theme of "All of Us." The parade is scheduled to start at 10:30 a.m. Nov. 9 along Main Street in Duncan. For questions or more information, call 859-684-5128 or 580-693-0602.

A sweet evening of laughter

Enjoy a night of coffee, sweet treats and laughter while supporting Charis Center's annual fundraiser at Comedy and Coffee. This event will feature Viridian Coffee, Special Days Cakes Boutique and a family-friendly entertainment provided by comedian Kerri Pomarolli. Tickets can be purchased at the Charis Center, the Simmons Center, or online at www.eventbrite.com/e/comedy-and-coffee-cake-tickets-971286121937. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the show will begin at 7:15 p.m. on Nov. 14 at the Simmons Center. For questions or more information, call 580-786-6000.

Holiday in the Park

Celebrate the holidays with family-friendly events at Lawton's Holiday in the Park. The festivities begin at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 16 with a themed parade, CANDYLAND. Throughout November and December, Elmer Thomas Park will be completely decorated with colorful light displays for the holiday season. Check out the Winter Rink, movie nights, train rides, holiday concerts, food trucks, vendors and much more. For questions or more information about the event, call 580-355-3541.

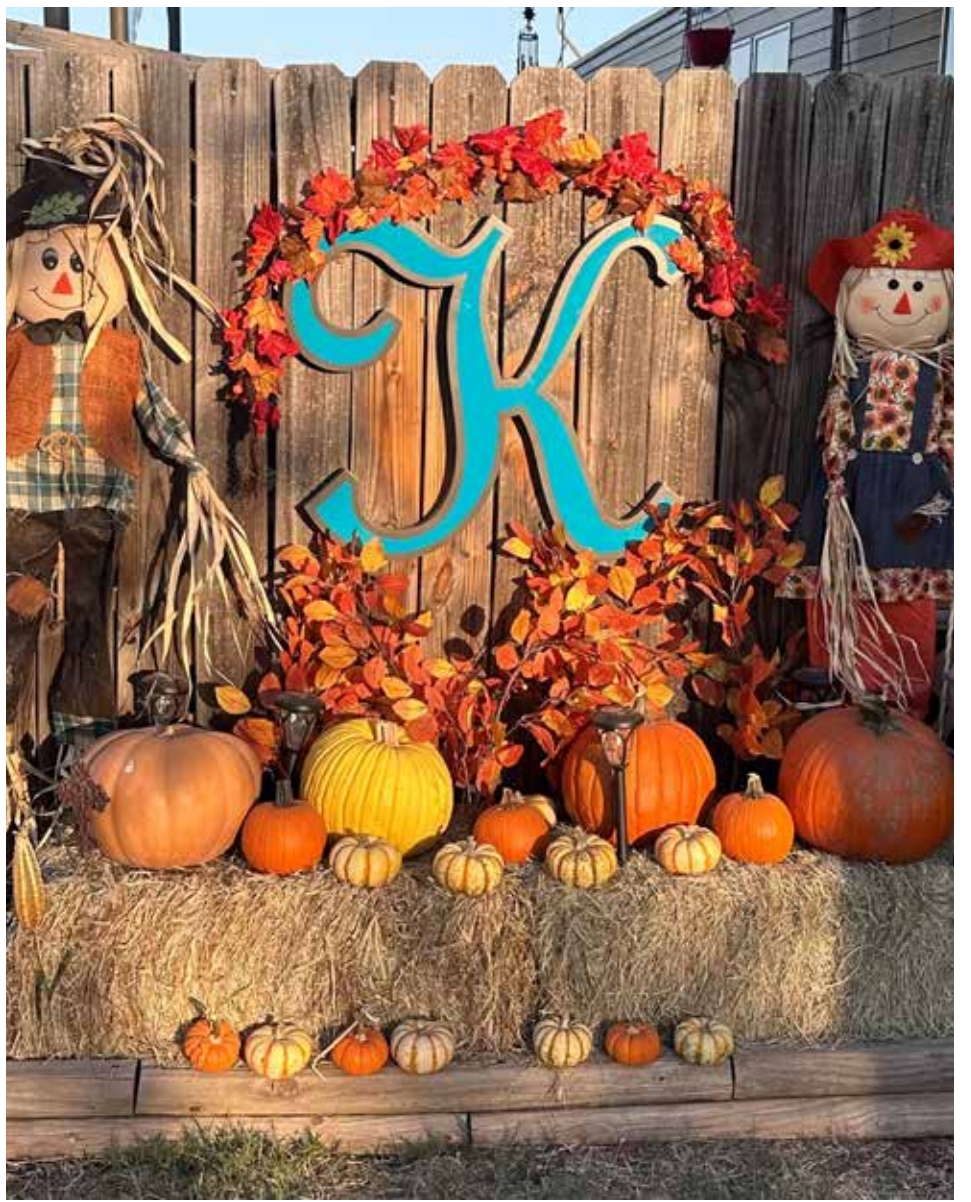
Food pantry open once monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 to 11 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month. The pantry is in the old City Hall, 131 1/2 W. California St. 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 questions or more information, contact 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. To make other arrangements or for more information, call 580-658-2765.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Cotton Electric member Diane Keenan puts together fall decorations each year and enjoys rearranging the setup for the season.

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



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UPCOMING EVENTS

- November 23 Antiques Association Passport Pickup
- December 7 Santa Pies/Cookies and Hot Chocolate
- December 14 Give Aways All Day
- December 21 Finding Jesus Hunt



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Can diet manage symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis?



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease where the body mistakenly attacks joints, leading to pain, inflammation, swelling and stiffness. Approximately 0.5% to 1% of people in the United States are affected by RA, and rates are higher in women than men. Treatment typically requires prescription medication, but lifestyle changes can help manage symptoms. As with any chronic condition, it is important to discuss lifestyle changes with your health care team.

Specific to diet, there is an association with following the Mediterranean diet and reducing RA symptoms and associated conditions, like obesity, heart disease and diabetes. The Mediterranean diet focuses on intake of less inflammatory foods, helping to better manage inflammation and lessen some of the side effects of uncontrolled inflammation in the body.

This diet focuses on fruits, vegetables, legumes, fish, whole grains and unsaturated fats like olive oil and limits sweets and alcohol. It is high in less inflammatory fats, fiber and phytochemicals, which have associations with better managing inflammation in the body. The Mediterranean diet is also associated with a decreased risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

In addition to following the Mediterranean diet for better management of RA symptoms, researchers recommend supplementation with omega-3 fatty acids. The main types of omega-3 fatty acids are DHA, EPA, and ALA. DHA and EPA come from animal sources and marine algae, while ALA comes from plants. DHA and EPA are considered superior because ALA must be converted to DHA and EPA in the body, and that conversion process is inefficient.

The recommended amount of omega-3 fatty acids for individuals with RA is 2 grams per day. This is not the same as 2 grams of fish oil per day; on average, 1 gram of fish oil contains 300 mg of EPA and DHA. It is important to work with your health care team to find a high-quality omega-3 supplement to get 2 grams per day of omega-3 fatty acids. It is also important to understand that this recommendation is in addition to con-

suming foods that contain omega-3 fatty acids, such as fatty fish.

To maximize the benefits of the Mediterranean diet, it is important to adopt it fully and daily. Working with a registered dietitian nutritionist can help you find foods that fit your tastes, culture and budget while achieving your nutritional goals. It is also essential that you review your dietary intake and any type of supplementation with your health care team.



A diet that focuses on vegetables, fish, whole grains and other key nutrients can help mitigate inflammation and rheumatoid arthritis symptoms. Photo courtesy of MetroCreative.

Save time and money with this 2-for-1 family meal

(Family Features) One of the easiest ways to save money in the kitchen is avoiding food waste. Save that leftover chicken for this quick, creamy Chicken Spaghetti that can feed the entire family with enough leftovers to freeze and enjoy next week.

Since you have to cook once, you might as well make enough to double dip to save money, time and trouble. Find more family meal inspiration by visiting Culinary.net.

Chicken Spaghetti

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"

Servings: 4

2 pounds spaghetti noodles
1 box chicken broth
water
3 cups chopped, cooked chicken
2 tablespoons garlic powder
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 can (10 ounces) cream of celery
1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes and green chiles
salt, to taste
pepper, to taste
1/2 block pasteurized cheese
shredded cheese or Parmesan cheese (optional)
French bread (optional)
salad (optional)



In large Dutch oven, cook spaghetti noodles in chicken broth and water. While noodles are cooking, add chicken and let water reduce until almost gone and noodles are moist.

Turn off heat and add garlic powder, onion powder, cream of celery and diced tomatoes with chiles; add salt and pepper, to taste. Cut cheese into chunks and add to Dutch oven. Mix well and cover Dutch oven with lid, about 5 minutes.

Serve spaghetti with shredded cheese or Parmesan on top, if desired. Serve with French bread and salad, if desired.

Tip: Leftovers can be placed in disposable aluminum pan and covered with foil. Freeze up to 1 month. When ready to eat, heat oven to 350 F and bake 30 minutes with foil on then 5 minutes with foil removed. If dry, add 1/2 cup chicken broth during final 5 minutes.

Find comfort in food with crispy chicken strips

(Family Features) Cooler weather brings the joy of comfort food, and it's hard to find a dish more comforting than fried chicken. This Fried Chicken Tenders recipe makes it easy to cook tasty strips to golden perfection – just pair with your favorite dipping sauce (or none at all) for a classic weeknight meal.

Find more fall meal ideas at Culinary.net.

Fried Chicken Tenders

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"

Servings: 4

Oil of choice, for frying	2 cups flour
1/2 stick butter	1/4 cup barbecue seasoning of choice
2 eggs	1/4 cup mesquite seasoning
2 cups milk	salt, to taste
3 pounds chicken breast, cut into strips	pepper, to taste
	dipping sauce of choice (optional)

Directions

Fill Dutch oven or large frying pan halfway with oil and butter; heat over medium heat.

In large bowl, mix eggs and milk then place chicken strips in mixture.

In separate bowl, mix flour, barbecue seasoning and mesquite seasoning. Add salt and pepper, to taste.

Remove 4-6 chicken strips from milk mixture and cover completely in flour mixture.

Drop pinch of flour in hot oil; if it crackles, it's hot enough. Once hot, fry battered chicken 4 minutes then, using tongs or fork, turn over and fry 4 minutes. When done, chicken will be golden and almost float. Remove from frying pan and repeat with remaining chicken.

Serve with dipping sauce of choice, if desired.



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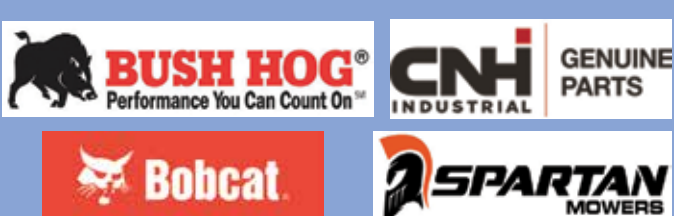


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Tomato-Tortellini Soup

Recipe adapted from Better Homes and Gardens

When the weather is frightfully cold and you need something quick to warm you up, try this recipe for Tomato-Tortellini soup. With only 4 ingredients, you'll be warm and cozy in no time.

For more comfort food ideas, go to www.culinary.net.

Ingredients

2 14 ounce cans reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 9 ounce package of refrigerated tortellini
1 8 ounce tub cream cheese spread with chive and onion
1 can tomato soup
Fresh chives (optional)

Directions

In a medium sauce pan bring broth to a boil. Add tortellini then reduce heat to simmer uncovered for 5 minutes.

In a bowl whisk 1/3 cup of hot broth into the cream cheese spread. Whisk until smooth. Pour contents into sauce pan.

Stir in tomato soup and heat through.
Serve with fresh chives, if desired.



Find comfort in a One-Pot Pie

(Family Features) That first day of chilly weather always feels the coldest before you're accustomed to it, and an easy, warm, filling meal can help hit the spot. Better yet, this rendition of Shepherd's Pie is made with just one pot so cleanup can be a snap.

Visit Culinary.net for more one-dish meal ideas that bring comfort to cool days.

Shepherd's Pie

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"

Servings: 8-12

1 pound ground beef	1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste
6 medium potatoes, peeled	1/2 cup beef broth
2 teaspoons thyme, divided	1 tablespoon garlic powder
salt, to taste	1/4 cup heavy cream
pepper, to taste	1 bag (12 oz.) frozen mixed veggies
1 tablespoon onion powder	

Heat oven to 350 F.

In Dutch oven, brown ground beef and drain fat.

Boil potatoes until fork tender and mash them. Add 1 teaspoon thyme, salt and pepper, to taste, and set aside.

Place ground beef back in Dutch oven and mix in onion powder, tomato paste, beef broth, garlic powder, cream and remaining thyme. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Mix in frozen veggies.

Cover meat mixture with potatoes and bake 25-30 minutes.

A Go-To Sweet Potato Side

Recipe adapted from Better Homes and Gardens

(Family Features) Sweet potatoes seem to scream "fall," especially this roasted version that pairs well with a wide variety of family favorites like fried chicken. It can be your go-to recipe when comfort cravings call for a savory (not sweet) side.

Pair your favorite fall meal with more side dish inspiration from Culinary.net.

Roasted Sweet Potatoes

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"

Servings: 4

2 large sweet potatoes, washed and cubed	garlic powder	2 tablespoons butter
1/2 tablespoon garlic powder	salt, to taste	
1/2 tablespoon onion	pepper, to taste	
	oil, for drizzling	



Heat oven to 425 F.

In bowl, mix cubed sweet potatoes with garlic powder, onion powder and salt and pepper, to taste. Drizzle with oil; mix well.

Place sweet potatoes in baking dish and bake 30 minutes. Remove from oven and spoon butter over sweet potatoes, mixing well.

Note: If using small sweet potatoes, use four (one per serving).



(Family Features) Apple, cherry and blueberry crumbles may get all the adoration, but when fall comes around, you may as well lean into the flavor of the season: pumpkin. This simple dessert satisfies the sweet tooth with some fiber to boot.

Discover more desserts designed for pumpkin lovers at Culinary.net.

Pumpkin Crumble

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"

Servings: 8-12

1 can pumpkin	3/4 cup chopped pecans
1 can evaporated milk	3/4 cup chopped white chocolate chips
1 cup brown sugar	1 1/2 cups melted butter
2 eggs	
1 tablespoon pumpkin spice	
1 teaspoon cinnamon	
1 box cake mix (yellow, white or spice)	

Whipped Cream:
1 cup heavy whipping cream
2 tablespoons sugar

Directions

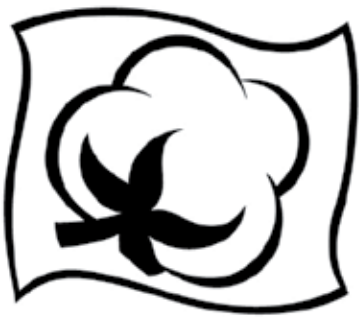
Heat oven to 350 F.

In bowl, mix pumpkin, evaporated milk, brown sugar, eggs, pumpkin spice and cinnamon. Pour into greased 9-by-11-inch baking dish.

In separate bowl, mix cake mix, pecans and white chocolate chips. Sprinkle over pumpkin mixture. Pour butter evenly over top. Do not mix or stir. Bake 1 hour.

To make whipped cream: Using hand mixer, whip heavy whipping cream and sugar until thick.

Serve crumble with whipped cream.



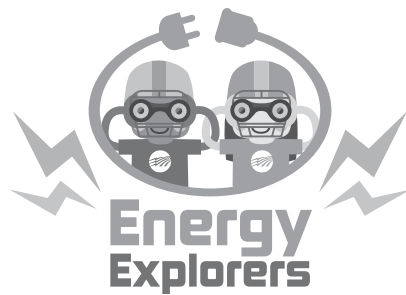
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Read the sentences below and unscramble the bolded letters to complete the energy efficiency tips. Check your work in the answer key.



1. Turn off **gllhsit** when you leave a room.

2. Unplug smaller electronic devices like phone **reahgcsr** when you're not using them.

3. Reduce your **nesecr** time to save energy and spend more time outdoors.

4. Turn off the **reatw** while brushing your teeth.

5. Keep doors and **swdwnio** closed when your home's heating/cooling system is running.

6. When it's cold, wear an extra layer of **tohgncil** inside instead of adjusting the thermostat.



Answer Key: 1. lights 2. chargers 3. screen 4. water 5. windows 6. clothing

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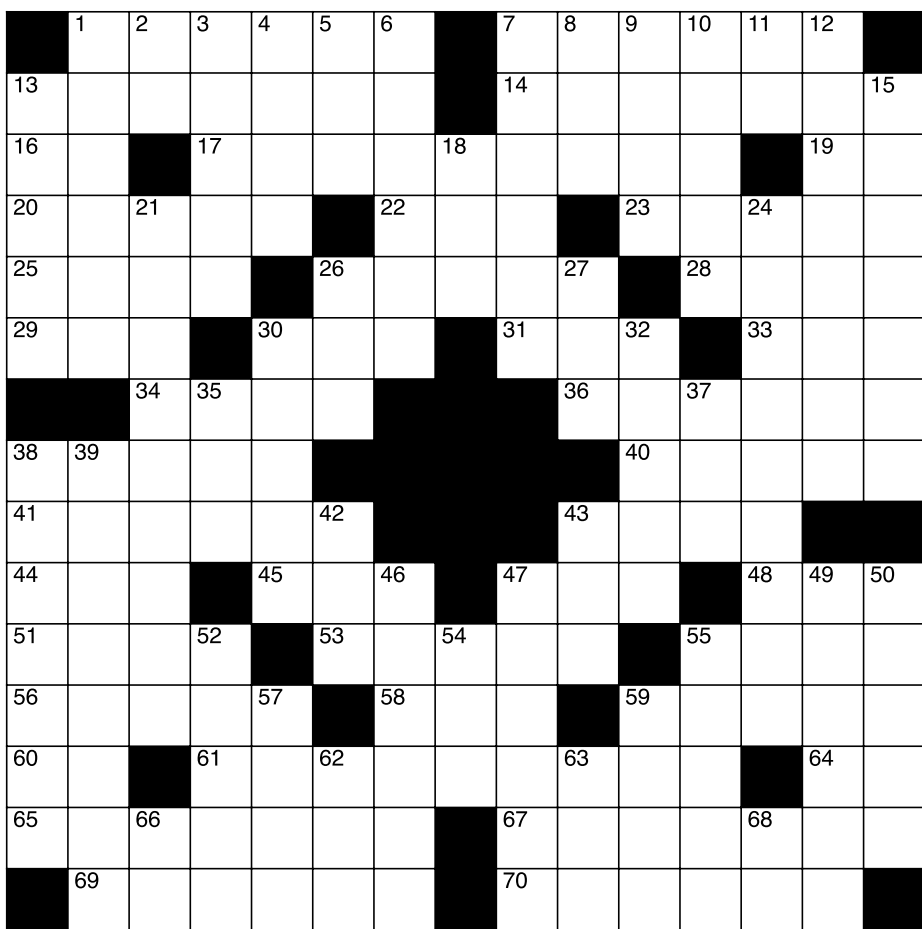
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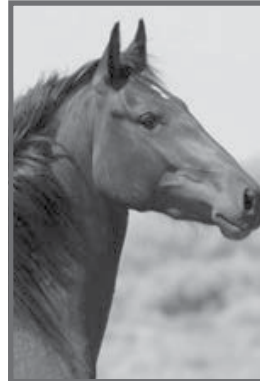
1. Schoolhouse tool
7. Martens
13. Slags
14. One who scrapes
16. Centiliter
17. White wine
19. Of I
20. Former Syracuse great Warrick
22. Relating to the ear
23. Sandwich shops
25. Victories
26. White (French)
28. Self-immolation by fire ritual
29. Genus of parrots
30. Unhappy
31. Talk incessantly
33. Type of Squad
34. Unit of perceived loudness



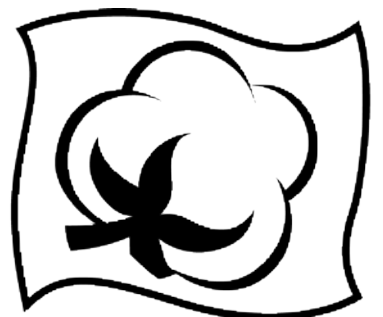
36. Violent seizure of property
 38. Agave
 40. Sound units
 41. Removes from record
 43. Partner to Mama
 44. Mythological bird
 45. Dash
 47. Hair product
 48. Two-year-old sheep
 51. Signs a deal
 53. Conifer
 55. Autonomous republic in NW Russia
 56. Wife of Muhammed
 58. British Air Aces
 59. Ears or ear-like appendages
 60. Not caps
 61. Deep-bodied sea dweller
 64. Rural delivery
 65. Feeling
 67. Study of relations of organisms to one another
 69. Room to argue
 70. Question
- DOWN**
1. Cream puff
 2. Road open
 3. Stressed syllable
 4. Thailand's former name
 5. Cologne
 6. Recounted
 7. Garment of cloth
 8. Airborne (abbr.)
 9. Reproduced
 10. Emits coherent radiation
 11. "Westworld" actor Harris
 12. Smallest interval in Western music
 13. Unstressed central vowel
 15. Lives in
 18. When you expect to get somewhere
 21. Storage bags
 24. One who covers with plastic
 26. Cast out
 27. Automobile
 30. Repaired shoe
 32. Belonging to the bottom layer
 35. Possesses
 37. Soda
 38. Programs
 39. In an unexpected way
 42. A bag-like structure in a plant or animal
 43. For each
 46. Unbelief
 47. Seized or impaled
 49. Arrive on the scene
 50. Especially happy
 52. Classic western film
 54. Split pulses
 55. Frida __: Painter
 57. Start again
 59. Employee stock ownership plan
 62. Young women's association
 63. Frozen water
 66. "The First State"
 68. Computers need one



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Parting Shot



The City of Comanche Fire Department recently received a \$1,000 donation from Cotton Electric due to this year's addition to the prize drawing at the 2024 Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Day. Pictured left to right: Cotton Electric Chief Operating Officer Bryce Hooper, Comanche Fire Department Fire Chief Scooter Bivins, Cotton Electric Vice President of Administration Shane Bowers, and Cotton Electric Trustee Dell Farris. Photo by Carli Eubank.



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