



# country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## TOP STORY

# The *First* on Fiber

Co-op member says fiber optic broadband is worth the wait.



Tina Jacobs of Pierce enjoyed a Christmas bonus when her home became the first connected to high-speed fiber-optic broadband from ecoLINK.

When East Central Electric (ECE) member Tina Jacobs got the news about her co-op's fiber broadband service, she jumped on it.

Today she's an official fiber "champion" whose name will go down in history as the first ECE member connected via high-speed fiber-optic broadband. The former Illinois resident-turned-Okie lives near Pierce with her husband and mother-in-law. Like many rural residents, their cell service is spotty, and internet service inconsistent.

"I gave up on using my laptop at home because it was too frustrating," Tina recalls.

Streaming movies became an exercise in patience when buffering stalled and sometimes stymied their entertainment altogether. While Tina admits the service "was better than nothing," it cost around \$100 a month.

On December 19, the Jacobs family swapped their frustrations for what most experts agree is the best internet service in the world. Their proximity to an ecoLINK fiber hut, along with Tina's willingness to act as a tester, moved their home to first in line to receive service.

ECE created ecoLINK to provide internet and phone service via fiber optic cable. With packages starting at \$55 per month, the service will allow subscribers to stream movies, game, and use Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and video conferencing without skips, stutters, or stalls.

So far, so good for the Jacobs household. "The first thing we did after they connected us was to buy ourselves a smart TV," Tina says.

They use an antenna to watch local channels and stream internet apps through their TV for endless movies, news, sports, YouTube videos, and more.

"We couldn't be happier with the service," she says. "To be honest, we've been impressed with everyone we've dealt with through this whole process."

Now, she's spreading the word to others. "I tell everyone it's definitely worth waiting for," she adds.

ecoLINK Director Russell Lytle says happy campers like Tina Jacobs make the hard work all worth it.

"This service is going to change lives. Our members will enjoy the same level of connectivity that city residents have had for years," he says.

Testing for the first phase of ecoLINK service is near completion. "After that, we will announce our official launch, and it's game on," Lytle adds.



### Interested in ecoLINK Fiber Broadband?

For package prices and other information, please visit [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com) or call **918-756-0833**.

To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com). To contact your trustee, please call 918-756-0833.

## notes from the chair



by Lowell Hobbs, President, East Central Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees

### Time Is Valuable To Your Trustees

I was born at home while my dad went by horseback four miles to Haskell to get the doctor. Our house sat next door to the Hickory Grove schoolhouse, and a young lady from Westville named Beulah Sisk lived with my folks. It was her first school teaching job. By the time my Dad and Dr. Hamm got back to our house, my mother and Beulah presented them with a remarkable baby boy! Beulah soon married a local young man, J. H. Nelson, and became one of the most revered elementary school teachers in the history of Haskell schools.

The house I grew up in had no electricity or running water. We did have a water well out back, as well as an outhouse. We kept chickens outside the yard, and the outhouse was beyond the chicken house. We owned a big bad rooster that didn't like me and wouldn't let me get to the toilet. For years, I credited my running speed and persistence to that stupid rooster.

When I was nearly seven years old and electricity came to our farm, it never occurred to me that the electric co-op would continue to appear in life. It began when the REA (Rural Electrification Administration) brought electricity to replace our gas lights and refrigeration. After I graduated high school, I went to Oklahoma A&M. In botany class, I sat next to Bill Holcomb. Later, he became the general manager of East Central Electric.

Years later, I served on the Friends of Rural Electrification (FORE) committee. At the time, June Cumbey was the ECE director for our area. Cumbey served faithfully for 30 years. When he retired, someone suggested my name to replace

him. During the interview, I asked how much time is required to serve. The reply was one day every month. Time is important to me, but I was honored to be asked. I decided I could surely give up one day every month. On June 24, 2005, the existing board appointed me to serve the rest of Mr. Cumbey's term.

These days your trustees report the hours we devote each month to co-op business. For the first 11 months of 2019, each of your directors averaged 55 hours per month. I tell you this so you can understand how things have changed over the last 14 years.

Along with other cooperatives, East Central Electric has worked on providing electricity to some folks in primitive areas of Guatemala and Bolivia, much like I saw nearly 80 years ago. With the new era of fiber broadband, more change is coming.

Speaking for the board, I can tell you we serve because we have a passion for making life better for our members. Remember, we are also members. Our ownership of East Central Electric is no more or no less than any other member. We are responsible for making budget decisions and policies to provide you with reliable, affordable electric power. We're proud of that. We have the people in the board room needed to make the high-level decisions we have to make. Our board meetings involve 15 people. If we misuse just four minutes per person, we lose an hour. Time is important—and we use it carefully and wisely. ☺

Lowell Hobbs represents ECE District #2. To reach him, please call his cellphone at **918-695-5289**.

### Need Money For College? Apply Now.



**Scholarship applications due March 1!**

What high school graduate couldn't use extra money for college? ECE's Operation Roundup program is giving it away by the thousands. Interested students should apply by the March 1 deadline.

Every year, Operation Roundup awards one \$1,000 scholarship to a qualifying student from each school in the ECE service area. This includes more than forty schools and home schools.

To qualify, the student must be a high school senior and live in a household that participates in the co-op's voluntary electric bill roundup program. Scholarship funds may be used to pay tuition at any college, university, career or technical school. The funds must be used by January 1.

Last year, Operation Roundup awarded more than \$28,000 in scholarships to local students.

Find details and applications, under the Services/Community and Youth Services menu at [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com), or give us a call at **918-756-0833**.



**MAIL FROM  
OUR MEMBERS**

Write to us at [info@ecoec.com](mailto:info@ecoec.com).

"Give the guys a BIG THANKS for getting the power back on in this weather! We really appreciate them! I know they don't get that very often and be sure to tell them to be safe out there!"

—Gerald Inman, Checotah

## 💡 CO-OP LEADERSHIP

# It's No Picnic.

*When it's time to choose a co-op trustee, it helps to understand the job responsibilities.*

Every year, East Central Electric (ECE) asks members to elect trustees for a three-year term on the co-op board. Serving on the board isn't an easy job, says General Manager Tim Smith. The list of demands is lengthy, and those considering the role should take that into account.

"Trustees are the top brass of co-op leadership and they earn their stripes," Smith says. "They put their heart into it. To do the job right takes a lot of time, training, and reading."

First and foremost, trustees must remember that they represent the membership. "An electric co-op board functions differently than that of an investor-owned company. Co-op directors always base their decisions on what's best for members at large. Corporate boards are more concerned about strong stock prices for investors," Smith explains.

The most effective trustees work hard to understand the complexities of the electric utility industry, from power generation and transmission to delivery to members. New trustees are often shell shocked by all the information coming at them, Smith points out, but their willingness to learn promotes informed debate that results in the best overall decisions.

Trustees abide by a strict code of ethics that requires professional conduct at all times. This includes supporting and upholding the majority decisions of the board.

"Once the board votes, it should be accepted as not only the will of the individual trustees, but that of all the members those trustees represent," Smith explains.

## Planning Ahead

Monthly meetings revolve around the key duties of your elected trustees. Setting goals and making short and long range plans based on member needs tops the list. Co-op staff carry out the plans and report their progress monthly.

## Policies

Smart policies and procedures provide for and protect ECE resources and assets. The board sets the policies and monitors co-op finances and resources regularly.

## Oversight

To ensure your co-op meets its goals, the board sets controls to monitor progress. Success depends on evaluating co-

## WHAT DOES BOARD SERVICE ENTAIL?

How the three main roles of the board relate to the 10 basic responsibilities of nonprofit board members:



op policies, budgets, plans, loan covenants, contractual requirements, and more. In every aspect, trustees must ensure ECE honors its bylaws, abides by all legal requirements, and maintains its ethical integrity at all times.

As Smith points out, not every member is willing or able to deal with this level of responsibility. "Those who step up are truly committed to the co-op, its mission, and its members," he says. ☺

The ECE board is governed by bylaws established and approved by co-op members. To review the bylaws or learn more about your trustees, please visit [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com) or call 918-756-0833.

# operation round-up

MONTHLY UPDATE



Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit us online at [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com).

Applications reviewed.....	1,105
Applications granted.....	756
Applications denied.....	330
Applications tabled.....	26
Scholarships awarded.....	\$245,000
Total Disbursements.....	\$1,856,686.00
Average member contribution.....	48¢



## ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Electric blankets and heating pads take the chill off, but make sure you use it safely. To prevent your blanket from overheating while it is in use, never fold or tuck it—and don't place other items such as quilts or pets on your blanket.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

### RECIPES



## Heart Healthy Shrimp and Asparagus



### INGREDIENTS

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 3 tablespoons olive oil                | hot sauce to taste                |
| ½ lb cooked and peeled shrimp          | salt to taste                     |
| 1 lb fresh asparagus, coarsely chopped | 1 tablespoon grated Romano cheese |
| 1 tablespoon minced garlic             |                                   |

### DIRECTIONS

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Saute shrimp, asparagus and garlic until asparagus is bright green and slightly tender. Stir in hot sauce and salt. Dust with Romano cheese before serving. Note: You may substitute chicken for shrimp.

Per Serving: 190 calories; 11.9 g fat; 5 g carbohydrates; 17.4 g protein; 117 mg cholesterol; 199 mg sodium.

Source: allrecipes.com



## East Central ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

PO Box 1178  
2001 S. Wood Drive  
Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447-1178

**(918) 756-0833**  
[www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com)



### OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm.

### POWER OUTAGE HOT LINE

**(918) 756-0833**

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