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country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Strong Connection

Oklahoma Co-ops Unite As Advocates For Fiber Broadband

Years ago, electric cooperatives conquered the challenge of electrifying rural America by working together. Under the cooperative's shared banner, their strong, collective voice helped them advocate for those desperate for affordable and reliable electric service.

Today, a group of nine Oklahoma electric co-ops is applying the same philosophy to their fiber broadband mission through the newly formed Cooperative Broadband Coalition.

"As co-ops offering fiber broadband, we have similar issues that we need to address, and issues that we need to address as a group. This coalition provides the framework so we can do that more effectively," said Tim Smith, East Central Electric (ECE) general manager and president of the Cooperative Broadband Coalition.

Smith said one of the group's essential purposes is to monitor state legislation that could affect a co-op's ability to offer broadband service to its members.

The coalition will operate under the guidance of the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC). Based in Oklahoma City, the OAEC provides beneficial services for its 27 member cooperatives, including legislative support.

Smith pointed out that creating a separate coalition within the OAEC also ensures a more equitable dues structure for OAEC member co-ops.

"Co-ops who aren't offering broadband shouldn't feel like their statewide dues are subsidizing those of us who are," he said.

The Cooperative Broadband Coalition currently meets twice a week via Zoom to discuss the unique challenges they face in extending fiber to their members.

"The challenges we face in bringing fiber broadband to our members are the same reasons other companies aren't doing it—low population density and the expense involved in building the service," he said. "It's no different than the challenges we face in providing electric service."

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—TIM SMITH, ECE GENERAL MANAGER

For example, ECE averages 5.6 consumers per mile, but density drops to one or two members per mile in some places.

"We have to find a way to bring our service to every member, regardless of where they live. Financially, that is tough to do," Smith said.

But cooperatives are well-positioned to help narrow the digital divide because the cooperative business model is proven to work.

"It worked when we brought electricity to rural America, and it still works today," Smith said.

For information on your co-op's ecoLINK fiber broadband services, please call us at 918-756-0833, or visit www.ecoec.com.

To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit 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

Mindful of Your Needs

At our October board meeting we discussed the progress on fiber to your home at length, and the decision to accelerate the installation will continue with enthusiasm. I urge you to visit the East Central Electric (ECE) website at www.ecoec.com, or call 918-756-0833 to pre-enroll in fiber broadband. You will receive updates on the fiber build and will be notified when it is time to place your fiber installation order.

My folks yearned for a better life through more education. After my sister and I were born, they gave half of their 160 acres to my Dad's folks to take care of me and my sister while they went to college at Oklahoma A&M in Stillwater. They graduated in three and half years and Daddy took a job as superintendent of the A&M Research Station at Heavener, Oklahoma.

The research station was located on 160 acres. Our house was situated on the southeast corner of the property, and Forrest Hill School was on the northwest corner. We walked almost a mile to and from school. I started school our second year there. I was five years old.

The first four grades were in the same room, different rows. If one misbehaved, the punishment was termed "standing on the floor." This consisted of standing alone, by the teacher's desk, facing the rest of the classes.

One day, for some unknown reason, the teacher commanded me to the front of the room to "stand on the floor."

My mother apparently liked corduroy pants because that is what I had to wear. She ordered them from

the Montgomery Ward mail order catalogue, and they were always too big so I could grow into them. I was embarrassed, and also scared my dad would learn I'd caused trouble at school. That would not be good.

As I stood there almost in tears, I asked if I could go to the toilet, which was located outside. "No," she exclaimed. "You're standing on the floor!"

Back then, they used floor sweep—sawdust mixed with oil—to control the dust on the wooden floor and soak up moisture. To this day, I can still see my teacher's head extend with her neck out of her shoulders, as we watched yellow pee run down the aisle.

The room was heated with this rather large upright coal heating stove. I couldn't walk home wet, so I stood by the stove to dry out, which took a lengthy time. Corduroy holds a lot of moisture. You can imagine the smell as I stood there. My teacher never refused to let me go to the toilet again!

As your elected trustees, we are always mindful of other's needs. We work hard to consider all aspects of the cooperative when making decisions. Just as my parents yearned for a better life back then, rural Oklahoma now yearns for a better life through modern technology. Our fiber project will help bridge that gap. We realize the past helps shape our future, and we look forward to what the fiber broadband project will provide for all our members in years to come. 🇺🇸

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



Merry Christmas

from your friends at
East Central Electric Cooperative

Holiday Hours:

Closed December 24-25, 2020
and January 1, 2021.

SAVE MONEY ON MEDICARE

New program offers help for your prescriptions.

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services is asking electric co-ops to help them reach persons who may be eligible for two new programs that could save them money.

The **Extra Help Prescription Program** helps qualifying people on Medicare save an average of \$4,900 a year on their Part D expenses and prescription medications.

The **Medicare Savings Program** helps cover Medicare premiums and help pay for your hospital benefits and doctor visits by reducing or eliminating your co-pay and/or deductibles.

For details and information, please call **405-521-2281**.

Do your part this holiday season to help your local shops stay in business. Here's how:



❖ **Order less from Amazon.** Check your local shops for the same items you buy online. If you aren't comfortable going in, ask if they take online or telephone orders. Buy the bulk of your holiday gifts, decorations and food from locals.

❖ **Go to farmer's markets.** What could be better than locally grown vegetables as side dishes or locally made pies, cookies or candy?

❖ **Shop for the holidays and beyond.** As long as you're shopping, think about birthday and anniversary gifts you'll need over the next year—and buy them now. You'll give

your local businesses a boost when they need it the most. Plus, you'll be prepared for all those special occasions.

❖ **Order carry-out.** Buy your morning coffee from a local café instead of from a national chain store. Find a favorite restaurant with outdoor dining and go there whenever you're feeling

like a socially distanced dinner out. Order carry-out from a locally owned restaurants a little more often than you ordinarily would.

❖ **Write a review.** Get on Yelp and on the website of your favorite businesses and talk them up. Online reviews attract customers, and it will only take a minute to post. It could help save a local business from closing up for good.

QUICK ENERGY TIPS



Stay cozy indoors this winter without sending your energy bills soaring. Here's how:

- Check to see if your home insulation levels are up to par.
- Seal leaks around doors, windows, and electrical outlets.
- When heating your home, set your thermostat to 68°F to save energy.
- Electric space heaters can cost more than \$100 per month to operate. Minimize use, except for limited spot heating. Turn off when leaving the room.

To learn more about our energy saving services and rebates, please visit www.ecoec.com, or give us a call at 918-756-0833.



Make the holidays brighter for someone in need!

The holidays can be tough for those on a limited income. When a family struggles to afford basic necessities, there's not much left over for Christmas.

By donating to Give A Watt, you can help a struggling family pay their electric bill and enjoy a merrier Christmas.

To participate, please choose from the following ways to give:

- Drop your donation at the ECE drive-thru window or night drop located at: 2001 S. Wood Drive in Okmulgee. (Drive-thru is open Monday - Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm.)
- Mail your donation to: East Central Electric Attn: Give A Watt PO Box 1178 Okmulgee, OK 77447-1178

Please make your check payable to East Central Electric, and write Give A Watt in the memo area.

Recipients and donors remain anonymous.

Thank you for giving!

operation roundup

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.

Applications reviewed.....	1,182
Applications granted.....	804
Applications denied.....	354
Applications tabled.....	12
Scholarships awarded.....	\$265,500
Total Disbursements.....	\$1,956,056.05
Average member contribution.....	48¢



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Avoid plugging too many holiday lights and decorations into a single outlet. Overloaded outlets can overheat and cause a fire. Also, be sure to keep all decorations at least three feet away from any heat source, including fireplaces and space heaters.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONALZ

RECIPES



Sugar Coated Pecans

INGREDIENTS

1 egg white	¾ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon water	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 pound pecan halves	½ cup chopped pecans
1 cup white sugar	

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 250 degrees F. Grease one baking sheet.

In a mixing bowl, whip together the egg white and water until frothy. In a separate bowl, mix together sugar, salt, and cinnamon.

Add pecans to egg whites, stir to coat the nuts evenly. Remove the nuts, and toss them in the sugar mixture until coated. Spread the nuts out on the prepared baking sheet.

Bake at 250 degrees F. for 1 hour. Stir every 15 minutes.

Source: allrecipes.com



East Central

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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OFFICE HOURS:

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

POWER OUTAGE HOT LINE

(918) 756-0833

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PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Pay online at www.ecoec.com using SmartHub, or download the app.
- Pay by phone using VISA, Mastercard or Discover at **866-999-4584**. Available 24/7. *Convenience fee associated with payments.*
- Pay with cash or credit/debit card at participating Moneygram or Pay Site locations. *Convenience fee associated with payments.*
- Pay using our drive-thru/night drop window Monday - Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm.
- Pay via automatic draft of your checking or savings account. Sign up online or download the ebill form for easy automatic payments at www.ecoec.com.