

country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



2 *The Dance*

3 *Meet Our Next Level Team*

4 *Spicy Chicken Soup*

2023 was a year for wrapping up loose ends and looking back at past accomplishments.

Our co-op completed our fiber build-out to all members and recognized 85 years of continuous service to our members and communities.

It may be cliché, but as we start a new year, we are looking forward to what comes next. What new services are our members looking to us to provide? In what ways can we continue to improve?

How can we meet the needs of our under-served rural communities?

We're **empowering** our members with safe, reliable, affordable electricity. We're **connecting** our members to the world with high-speed fiber internet. And now we're **exceeding** expectations, with programs designed to improve our members' quality of life. **E.C.E.**



Fun Fact: The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) held a mascot contest in 1948, with a \$50 prize for the best design. Freelance artist Andrew McLay designed "Willie the Wired Hand." The name is a play on, "hired hand," a common term for farm workers.



© NRECA

With his name shortened, Willie Wiredhand won. For the last 70+ years, Willie Wiredhand has represented electric co-ops and promoted electricity as "the never-tiring, always available hired hand to help the nation's farmers."



3-year-old Alesia McAvoy hugs Willie Wiredhand at the 2023 Annual Meeting. Adding a little extra cuteness to the photo, Alesia didn't know it was her father, ECE Staff Accountant Tim McAvoy, inside the mascot costume.



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To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit ecoec.com. To contact your trustee, please call 918-756-0833.

Jim Matheson, the CEO of the NRECA, recently wrote an article on the Co-op mission to provide reliable electricity to our over 42 million Co-op members across the U.S. I will use some of his wisdom to share with you. Many of the nations' power generating plants are fueled with coal and natural gas. As the push is geared to produce electricity carbon free, it reduces the reliability factor immensely. Last year we saw rolling blackouts across nine states as demand for power exceeded the available supply across the Tennessee Valley and the mid-Atlantic. Electric reliability is not a simple issue. Federal energy policies should incentivize smart decisions with a focus on reliability, responsibility and affordability at the core.

The Co-op world has come together on this issue and speaks with one voice. That causes the policy makers in Washington to pay attention. That's cause for celebration and is a great reflection of our Co-ops' collective strength as we continue fighting to ensure co-ops have the ability to provide affordable, reliable power to our members without the threat of unreliable and burdensome regulations.

ECE continues to be involved with our state and national policy makers so our elected representatives have first hand knowledge of our mission for co-op members and the voters that elect them.

I am often asked how and where did I meet such a charming lady, Donna.

I have shared with you in earlier stories how I was raised by my Grandma and Grandpa Hobbs for 3 1/2 years while my Mother and Daddy went to college without the burden of babysitting with a sick kid and missing class. My grandma was very stern in her beliefs and passed "some" of them on to me. No dancing, card playing, telling untruths, and wash your face and hands, comb your hair before each meal, shirt on and buttoned up, prayer before each meal and before bed.

My grandparents did not support the Catholic beliefs. Grandpa was full blood Baptist and Grandma went to the Baptist Church but had some Pentecostal showing. She never cut her hair but kept it braided and rolled up in a bun. No makeup, no jewelry. The girls always wore dresses, too—no slacks.

An adopted cousin, who had been out of my life for about 15 years, showed up and started a series of visits after my first wife and I divorced. He wrangled a promise from me that he would come to our Cattlemen's picnic if I would go with him and his wife to a square dance training and get together.

I agreed, and when he ushered me to the location, it was a Catholic church on a Sunday evening, Two of Grandma's influences ignored—Catholic church on Sunday and

dancing, no less. I was looking for an interesting lady—when I started up to talk to her she was already sitting between her sister and another man.

The next session was at the same church (Catholic) on Wednesday night. I made my way to where Donna and her sister were sitting and boldly asked if she would be my partner. (Beginners were supposed to dance with an experienced dancer.) She asked me if I had any experience—I replied, "Girl, I've got a lot of experience but not about dancing."

It was an immediate attraction for both of us, so we soon danced right out the door. Before long I brought her to the ranch and took her to meet my Grandma and Grandpa Hobbs. Grandma visited with Donna for several minutes and then said, "Oh Son, she is so nice, where did you meet her?" Thoughts raced through my mind—at a "dance" on Sunday afternoon and Wednesday night in a "Catholic Church," but God seemed to provide me with an acceptable answer as I said "in Church!" We never revealed the rest of the story to Grandma or Grandpa. We met the last part of September, married 60 days later on November 28, 45 years ago.

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

Meet Our Next Level Team: Operations Management and System Operators

Over the decades, our co-op has earned a reputation for reliability and responsiveness. That reputation would not exist if not for the leadership and dependability of our Operations team.

The Chief Conductor



Our Manager of Engineering and Operations empowers 8 departments throughout the co-op: engineering, fleet, linemen, mapping, metering, right-of-way, system operations, and warehousing. He also negotiates contracts with all of our contractors and is involved in shaping the co-op's strategic plan and 4-year work plan for system improvements. While managing several teams and people, his most member-facing role is in problem solving, to ensure the best outcomes for co-op members.

“The most rewarding aspect of my job is knowing we are always striving to improve and meet the needs of our members today and for the future.”

- STACY MCELHANNON, SYSTEM OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR

The Eagle-Eyed Operators



In years past, we would have called this group Dispatchers, because they dispatch linemen to address outage calls and maintenance needs. The reality is, these ladies do so much more. Our System Operators are responsible for remotely energizing and de-energizing electric lines to keep crews safe, contacting members ahead of planned outages, calling members to help linemen get passed locked gates and angry pets, overseeing the construction of new builds, and being the first point of contact for any emergency that occurs.

The Grounding Rod



Our General Superintendent oversees the day-to-day operations for all linemen and contractors. He ensures everyone has a job to do and the work gets done. He is also the point of quality control, helping to ensure that members are satisfied.

“The most rewarding part of my job is all our crews going home safely to their families at the end of the day, which reinsures that I have done my job properly.”

- KT WILLIAMS, SYSTEM OPERATOR



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.

TOTAL GRANTED
\$2,462,770.11

APPLICATIONS REVIEWED
1,441

APPLICATIONS GRANTED
1,024

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED
\$327,500

AVERAGE MEMBER CONTRIBUTION
48¢



Spicy Chicken Soup

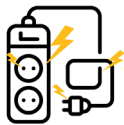
INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 can Ro-tel | 8 oz. cream cheese |
| 1 can corn | 1 packet dry ranch dressing |
| 1 can black beans (drained & rinsed) | 1 T. cumin |
| 2 frozen chicken breasts | 1 tsp. onion powder |
| | 1 tsp. chili powder |

DIRECTIONS

Put all ingredients in a crock pot and cook 6-8 hours. Shred chicken, and enjoy!

SOURCE: ECE 85TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

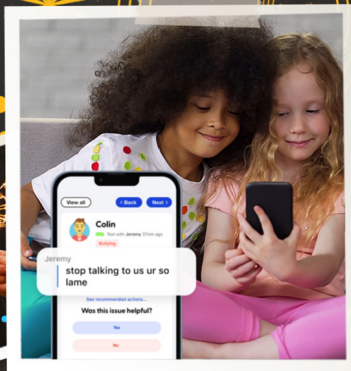
During an ice storm, you may witness galloping power lines. A combination of high winds and ice accumulation causes forceful movements that can result in the ice or lines breaking loose. Stay far away from galloping lines, and be sure to report any equipment damage you see.

SOURCE: SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

Defending Your 2024

- Monitor** - text, email and social media messages and activity
- Location Sharing** - helps you keep track of your kid on-the-go
- Get Alerts** - so you can talk and make sure everything's OK
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Office hours:
Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm.

COUNTRY LIVING IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY EAST CENTRAL OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., 2001 S. WOOD DRIVE, OKMULGEE, OKLAHOMA 74447. THIS INSTITUTION IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER, VETERAN/DISABLED.