

country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



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Cybersecurity Tips for a Safer Digital World

October is National Cybersecurity Month, and while good cyber hygiene should be practiced year-round, we'd like to share a few cybersecurity tips to help you bolster your online safety.

- **Learn how to spot phishing attempts.** Phishing occurs when criminals use phony emails, direct messages or other types of digital communications that lure you to click a bad link or download a malicious attachment. If you receive a suspicious email or message that includes urgent language, offers that seem too good to be true, generic greetings, poor grammar

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Co-op members Bill and Tamara Breckinridge were pleasantly surprised in 2023 when they got the results of a DNA analysis from the UC Davis Veterinary Lab. The Spanish Goat Association had ordered the tests as a means to verify that the goats had Spanish ancestry. What they discovered was even more rare.

Their family of Spanish brush goats constitute a foundation herd, a whole new bloodline, named after their home on Concharly Mountain between Bixby and Haskell.



While not a large number by ranch standards, the 50-plus animals which form the breeding pool demand a lot of work and attention. Tamara and her dogs take the herd out to graze in the late afternoon, covering a 3 or 4 mile path along the flank of the mountain. This rugged unfenced area is just right for the hungry goats. "I have learned to think like a goat," Tamara said with a laugh. "Really,



I know way too much about their behavior and eating preferences."

In 35 years with the goats on the mountain, Bill and Tamara have seen many changes.

"Goats did not get much respect back then" Bill said, "but the work they do controlling brush without herbicides or mowing while fertilizing at the same time has gained them a lot of friends. They help restore land, eliminate invasive plants, and help reduce fire danger."

Bill is enthusiastic about the benefits his herd has for fellow co-op members.

"Our goats keep brush from invading the co-op service line which crosses our property, and has eliminated the need to spray herbicides on our section of the line," Bill said.

More information about Wealaka Farm and the Concharly Spanish Brush Goat breed can be found on Facebook, where you can follow Tamara's adventures as a modern goatherd and beautiful photos of the Spanish goats at home in the Oklahoma mountains.



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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.

Our search team has advised us of many applicants for ECE's CEO position. The search team will screen the applicants for those that most nearly meet our stated standards. In October we will begin the interviews.

ECE has a reputation across the nation for our leadership in not only providing reliable and affordable power safely to our members and also leading in our efforts to provide a better life to our members through high speed internet, solar, and monitoring government policies for our members benefit. We have had the very best so we are searching for the very best to continue to lead our co-op.

October is the month we host many of the state legislators, primarily from our region. We share this occasion with our neighboring co-ops, feed them a steak dinner, with time to visit and get better acquainted with those that impact our lives through legislation. ECE has been a leader in this effort, and we are recognized as such when we attend the Capitol. Thanks to those of you who support this effort with your phone calls, texts, and emails when we seek your help. It is important to our efforts and it works!

The Board of Directors recently attended a two day training effort at the Oaec office in Oklahoma City. The first day we studied safety practices in life and in the Co-op world. It was a good session addressing the importance of a safety culture at the Co-op and beyond. The second day was devoted to cybersecurity. There really seems, to me, to be no real cybersecurity.

Once you log onto the electronic world you are there. The connections to the electronic sources are non-ending. It's a scary thing to me. I do not spend much time on the internet or the phone. My work does not allow much time for office time or screen time. At ECE we are doing all things we know to enhance your cybersecurity.

Over the years I have become the neighbor to call when things don't go right. From roads, to water, to power, to personal, all sorts of things that need someone to pay attention. I have always been taught that if there is a problem, then fix it. A few months ago as we were leaving our neighborhood headed east, I noticed an unfamiliar little red car sitting along the road with a male driver. I noticed all the neighbors' cars were at home so that reduced my suspicions of a scout looking for an unattended house to burglarize. I did record the tag number and a description of the vehicle as I drove by.

We returned home a different route so did not think about the red car until a neighbor's phone call of concern of the red car driving back and forth for the last couple of hours. I went to check it out. He was headed west, me east, so window to window we talked. I said, "Your presence in our area has caused some anxiety and I'm asking what is your reason for being here?"

He said "I'm working for the state getting water samples from the ditches and waterways."

I said, "No you are not!"

"I'm not?" he asked.

"No, I'm on the Water Quality Management Council for DEQ, and we have no program authorizing that."

Then he said "Actually I'm working for the county auditing and monitoring the ditches and drainage off county roads."

I said "No, you are not!"

He asked again, "I'm not?"

I said "No, I've been on the County Excise Board and there is no budget for that."

So then he said, "Actually I am working for the utility company inspecting the utility poles."

Again I said "no, you're not!"

He asked again "I'm not?"

I said "I happen to be a director for the ECE Co-op, and we have a pole inspection crew to do that, and you're not one of them!"

He then said he would call the sheriff, and I said "The number is 918-756-4911. You can wait right here because the next car you see coming will have a red light flashing making a shrill noise because I am fixing to call right now." He drove away. I called Eddy and told him all of what had been going on and gave him the tag # and description the name and phone number the man had provided. It was pretty quick that Eddy called back and said the guy had lied about his name and phone number. He further said he was a private investigator checking on some of my neighbors. He obviously was new to his job.

Meet Our Next Level Team: ecoLINK Network and Information Technology

Connecting and empowering communities requires a lot of physical effort, and it requires a lot of digital expertise. Our ecoLINK Network Engineers and co-op Information Technology teams keep our systems, employees, and members linked.

The Nerd Whisperer



The Network Knights



The Tech Templars



Our Vice President of Broadband Operations oversees ecoLINK Fiber as well as the co-op's information technology department. As the VP, he collaborates across the cooperative departments to ensure that all technologies meet the business needs of employees. He jokingly states that he provides for the care and feeding of nerds, so that they in turn can provide for the co-op's employees, and ultimately, all of the co-op's members and ecoLINK fiber subscribers.

Providing our communities with ecoLINK fiber is an undertaking that relies on our Network Operations Manager and Network Engineers. Their work touches every phase of the process in delivering fiber internet to subscribers homes. They plan for network growth, engineer delivery routes, coordinate the building and maintenance of infrastructure, and optimize services. If that wasn't enough, they've also been known to take subscriber phone calls and help troubleshoot network connection problems.

With 105 employees at the Cooperative, and even more interconnected devices, there is a lot of technical infrastructure within our building that needs to be maintained. Our IT Support Specialists ensure all of the cooperative's servers and computers are working properly so that others are able to perform their day-to-day functions. They are also responsible for cybersecurity monitoring and employee training to keep member information secure.

"I appreciate East Central's commitment to provide Internet to unserved members, and I am proud of the work we have done to make that a reality."

- JEREMY HENDRICKSON, VP OF BROADBAND

"I find my job rewarding because of the challenge, being able to solve problems that we have yet to come across."

- SHANE COWELL, IT SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Cybersecurity

Continued from Cover

or an unusual sender address, it could be a phishing attempt. If you spot one, report it as soon as possible—and don't forget to block the sender.

- **Create strong, unique passwords.** When it comes to passwords, remember that length trumps complexity. Strong passwords contain at least 12 characters and include a mix of letters, numbers and symbols.

Create unique passwords for each online account you manage and use phrases you can easily remember.

- **Enable multi-factor authentication when available.** Multi-factor authentication (also known as 2-factor authentication) adds an extra layer of security to your online accounts. These extra security steps can include facial recognition, fingerprint access, or one-time codes sent to your email or phone.
- **Update software regularly.** Software and internet-connected

devices, including personal computers, smartphones and tablets, should always be current on updates to reduce the risk of infection from ransomware and malware. When possible, configure devices to automatically update or notify you when an update is available.

Let's all do our part to stay cyber smart and create a safer digital world for all. Visit staysafeonline.org to learn about additional cybersecurity tips.



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
\$2,617,650.68

APPLICATIONS REVIEWED
1,560

APPLICATIONS GRANTED
1,094

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED
\$351,500

AVERAGE MEMBER CONTRIBUTION
48¢



Apple Enchiladas

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (21 oz.) can apple pie filling
- 1/2 C. white corn syrup
- 6 T. margarine
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 6-8 flour tortillas
- 1/2 tsp. almond extract
- 1/4 C. water

DIRECTIONS

Divide pie filling among tortillas, spread evenly. Roll up after sprinkling with cinnamon. Place side down in lightly greased 8-inch square baking pan. Simmer margarine, syrup, and water in a small sauce pan for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Add almond extract. Pour over enchiladas. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes.

SOURCE: ECE 85TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK



\$1,000 Winner - Jim Thomas
w/ ECE Member Relations Director
Katherine Russell



\$500 Winner - Dean Hampton
w/ Board Member Larry Harvey



\$500 Winner - Tony Nichols
w/ Board Member Max Shoemake



Empowering. Connecting. Exceeding.



Pluggy the Pug, mascot of East Central Electric Cooperative's Youth Programs, and Willie Wirehand, mascot of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, pose together at ECE's 2024 Annual Meeting.

Thank you for helping make our 2024 Annual Meeting Awesome!



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