

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative K

"The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957"

July 13, 2020

VOLUME 63

# Linemen complete annual rescue training

Cooperative linemen work in a wide variety rig a rope, lower a 105-pound mannequin and of jobs, including building, maintaining and repairing electric lines, poles, transformers, meters, substation facilities and more. These jobs come with a high level of risk. One wrong move could be life changing. Performing a rescue is one of many skills linemen learn in a rigorous training program that emphasizes diligence and safety. Once a year, co-op employees are refreshed on how to handle an emergency situation while on the job.

All employees likely to be in the field perform basket rescue drills. This includes line workers, engineers, meter technicians, vegetation management and warehousemen. Pole top rescue drills are required for all linemen, the only employees trained to climb poles.

In the pole top rescue scenario, linemen place an emergency radio call giving crucial information such as location, nature of the situation and what help they need. They then put on climbing gear, climb 35 feet up a utility pole, begin lifesaving procedures.

The rescue drills are supervised by Oklahoma's Association of Electric Cooperative's Safety and Loss Control Instructor, Greg Hambrick. Cotton Electric's Safety and Loss Coordinator Jarrod Hooper assists by timing each run and watching every move to make sure linemen are being safe and efficient. The goal is for each lineman 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.

This year's training sessions looked a little different to comply with CDC guidelines by limiting the number of people gathered. Rescue exercises were carried out over two days in different locations. Line crews came to the sites in within a roped-off area.



NUMBER 11

staggered shifts and Hambrick supervised from Apprentice Case Hurst completes the pole top rescue drill. Photo by Karen Kaley, see more on Page 16.

# Rural households needed to conclude 2020 census

#### By Danielle Quickle

Have you filled out your census yet? We're asking because it matters, and the more Oklahomans who respond, the better off Oklahoma will be for the next decade.

It's a pretty basic concept. If the government does not know who lives in your community, you can't be factored into decisions about federal resources. The federal government distributes \$675 billion to local communities each year, and the census data, collected once per decade, helps leaders understand where funds and resources are most needed. The data also influences the next decade's decisions about health policy, education, political districting, economic development, emergency preparedness and countless

<b>Response Rates</b>					
Co-op Territory State of Oklahoma					
Cotton	43.9%	56.19	6		
Comanche	54%				
Stephens	55%	State's lowest/	highest		
Tillman	44.7%	response rates			
Jefferson	36.6%	Canadian	67.4%		
Caddo	33.9%	Marshall	27.5%		
Carter	53.6%		states <sup>®</sup> US		
Grady	56.9%	202			

velopment Grants and Rural Housing Preservation Grants.

the first week of July, Oklahoma's rate was 56.1%, leaving 43.9% of households unaccounted for in the census. Canadian County is reporting the state's highest response rate with 67.4% and the lowest response rate belongs to Marshall County with 27.5%. The response rates for counties in the co-op's service territory are as follows: Cotton, 43.9%; Comanche, 54%; Stephens, 55%; Tillman, 44.7%; Jefferson, 36.6%; Caddo, 33.9%; Carter 53.6%; and Grady with a 56.9% response rate.

Every household was mailed a unique census number in March, but you can still respond even if you do not know your unique number. To respond online, visit 2020census.gov. It takes only a few minutes. If you need to speak with someone or complete the census by phone, please call 844-330-2020 for English or 844-468-2020 for Spanish. Share this information with your friends and family, and we will all be better off. Participating in the census is required by law, even if you recently completed another survey from the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau will never ask you for your full social security number, bank account or credit card numbers, anything on behalf of a political party, or money or donations. Visit 2020Census.gov to learn more and see how much of your community has already been counted. All census responses matter.

other things that directly affect your family.

Many federal programs are aimed at helping people in rural areas, and funding for those programs is often informed by census statistics. There are several programs specifically geared toward rural growth, according to the Census Bureau working paper, "Uses of Census Bureau Data in Federal Funds." There are also many general programs that focus on rural subsets, like Rural Education and the Department of Justice's Rural Domestic Violence Assistance programs.

Other important programs informed by census statistics include Water and Waste Disposal Systems for Rural Communities, Rural Business De-

The more people in your community who share their basic household information with the census, the more your community benefits. When you're counted, your needs are more likely to count towards big decisions.

Typically, the census would have field representatives visiting households soon that had not yet responded, but the pandemic has put those on hold. Our nation is in danger of having a highly incomplete census because of the coronavirus disruption; we need to be extra vigilant about getting Oklahoma households counted.

The national self-response rate is 61.7%. During

July 1 – Sept. 3: Census takers will work with administrators at colleges, senior centers, prisons and other facilities that house large groups of people to make sure everyone is counted.	December: The Census Bureau will deliver apportionment counts to the President and Congress as required by law.
Aug. 11 – Oct. 31: Census takers will contact homes that haven't responded to the 2020 Census to make sure everyone is counted.	March 31, 2021: By this date, the Census Bureau will send redistricting counts to the states. This information is used to redraw legislative districts based on population changes.

2020 Census Timeline

August 2020

October 2020

December 2020

February 2021

#### **Power Cost** Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after July 1, 2020, is \$0.00312 per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$4.06 on the July bill.

June 2020 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.	
1	88	62	75	16	96	68	82	
2	91	67	79	17	96	72	84	
3	95	67	81	18	96	75	86	
4	102	68	85	19	91	66	79	
5	97	68	83	20	87	66	77	
6	96	72	84	21	88	64	76	
7	92	71	82	22	90	64	77	
8	96	67	82	23	88	69	79	
9	87	63	75	24	89	62	76	
10	88	53	71	25	92	66	79	
11	93	52	73	26	95	71	83	
12	93	57	75	27	93	71	82	
13	95	58	77	28	90	75	83	
14	94	62	78	29	95	77	86	
15	95	59	77	30	98	75	87	
Source: srh.noaa.gov/oun/								

Average Daily High: 93 Average Daily Low: 66

#### Did You Know?

The SmartHub app

provides access to your

Cotton Electric account

via your mobile device.

Manage payments, no-

tify Member Services of

issues and check your

power use all at the

Current should arrive

in mailboxes on August

The next issue of The

touch of a button.

10, 2020.

Do you have a story

**Contact Us** 

idea for The Current or

do you need to place an

We can be reached

at 580-875-3351 or by

email at TheCurrent@

a line at Cotton Elec-

tric Current, 226 N.

Broadway, Walters, OK

73572.

You can also drop us

cottonelectric.com.

ad? If so, let us know.

What's Inside

Operating Stats	2
Co-op News	2
Community	3
Co-op News	4-5
Recipes	6-7
Co-op News	8
Puzzles	9
Classifieds 10	-15

More news at cottonelectric.com

# From the CEO Cooperative available source for members

The energy industry is undergoing rapid change, and technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored and shared. Consumers are interested in more green



Jennifer Meason, CEO

energy alternatives while smart homes and apps make managing energy use and paying your electric bill more convenient than ever.

While the changing energy market has created more options for consumers, it has also resulted in more utility scams and misleading information surrounding solar installations in particular. That's because of two factors.

Utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and consumers are understandably anxious with the threat of disruption to their electric, heating or water service. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers and pop-up companies to provide misleading information or shoddy products and services.

## **Use Trusted Sources**

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you are working with a reputable company. Because this is still an emerging industry with evolving technology, there has been a proliferation of pop-up companies in the market to make a quick buck. Representatives of rooftop solar companies may have more sales experience than knowledge of the energy industry, and their primary goal could be making a sale and moving on to the next prospect.

Cotton Electric's Energy Efficiency Coordinator, Heath Morgan, can offer a candid assessment to determine whether rooftop solar is right for you. After all, Cotton Electric has a different "bottom line" that is not directly tied to the sale of a product or service.

We take a more holistic, objective view of how to achieve energy and cost savings for our members, and that may or may not include rooftop solar. Heath Morgan can be reached at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

### Avoid Phone Scams

A common phone scam typically begins

<image><section-header><complex-block><section-header><complex-block>

Do not ignore odd electrical symptoms. Flickering lights, warm or discolored outlets, frequently tripped circuits or fuses. with a phone number that appears to be from a valid utility company. The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action. The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or money order, often within a very short, urgent time frame to pay the "past due" amount.

You can combat this scam by being aware of the status of your account. Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not call. If you have a question or concern about your energy bill, call us directly at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy advisor – your local electric cooperative. We are a community-focused organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to our members.

Remember, we're just one call or click away, so please reach out with any questions about your electric service or bills.

We're here to help.



#### U

## Don't overload outlets

Plugging several cords on one circuit draws too much power and can damage electronics or your wiring and may start a fire.

I ILLINOIS EXTENSION

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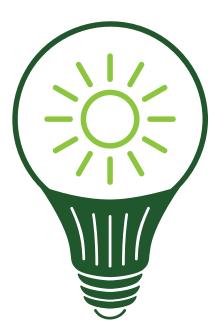
or smoky odors may mean you have a problem. Consult a qualified electrician.

lafe

Electricity.org



Mikayla Harvey, age 8, is the winner of our 4th of July coloring contest. The competition was fierce, but her use of different shades of blue is what set her apart. Congratulations, Mikayla! Thank you to all who participated.



# **Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month**

Spending more time at home? Try an online energy audit to assess the overall efficiency of your home. Visit www. energystar.gov, then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started!



## May 2020 Operating Stats

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$4,926,307	\$5,192,287
Cost of Purchased Power	3,264,864	3,368,439
Taxes	93,609	93,938
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	926	977
Average Farm and Residential Bill	130	131
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,058	961
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,655	18,452
Miles Energized	5,204	5,200
Density Per Mile	3.58	3.55
New Service Connects YTD	145	122
Services Retired	68	36



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Jennifer Meason	CEO
Bryce Hooper	Vice President of Marketing
Karen Kaley	Marketing & Communications
Danielle Quickle	Editor
Kaila Williams	Display Advertising

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If you would like your community information as we learn, plan and grow event listed in the August issue, please submit information by July 29 by calling 580-875-4255 or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com. Events that occur before August 10 will not be published in the next issue.

#### Walters hosts championship rodeo

Walters Round-Up Club hosts their 58th annual championship rodeo 8 p.m. nightly July 16-18 at the Max Phillips Arena located a quarter mile west of Walters.

Contest events include bareback riding, calf roping, bull riding, team roping, breakaway roping, adult calf scramble, saddle bronc riding, barrel racing in two age categories and trailer loading. Each night will feature prize drawings, Pony Express and Calf Scramble.

Festivities kickoff with a parade at 5 p.m., July 16. Saturday is Pink Out night. Admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for kids, children 4 years old and younger get in for free. For information, call 580-658-5533 or 641-0142.

#### Marlow garage sale begins July 17

Marlow's Second Chance Trade Days will take place July 17-18. Bargain hunters will find great deals at this annual community-wide garage sale. Marlow merchants will also have sales available to coincide with the event.

For information about the event, call the Marlow Chamber of Commerce at 580-658-2212.

#### Fort Sill hosts summer concert

For Sill is gearing up for its post summer tradition with a concert featuring country superstar Trace Adkins. They will have a concert for their troops, military families, and the Lawton community on July 25.

Officials at Fort Sill say Daughtry will no longer be able to perform as the headliner and, instead, multi-platinum country superstar Trace Adkins has been confirmed to headline the free show. Adkins last performed for Fort Sill in 2013 and has performed for service members across 12 USO Tours. Adkins has over 20 charted singles and three Academy of Country Music Awards in his multi-decade career. Previously announced appearances by special guest Clay Melton, as well as the 77th Army Band, will perform as planned. Information on social distancing procedures, show, door times and directions for parking will be released as the concert approaches.

this initiative in a safe way."

News

Additional information will be posted to the Lawton Fort Sill Open Streets Facebook page and lawtonok. gov in weeks to come.

#### International Festival canceled

The City of Lawton has canceled the annual International Festival due to COVID-19 concerns.

The 41st annual festival was scheduled to take place Sept. 25-27. Last year, the event drew more than 25,000 people and 60 vendors to Elmer Thomas Park where it is now held.

"It was a difficult decision," said Chair of the International Festival Committee Bobbi Whitson. "It is painful. We know thousands of people will miss the International Festival this year, but it was the only responsible decision. Given the information we have today, we cannot in good conscience proceed with the festival this year."

Committee members said by making this decision they are better prepared to protect the long-term sustainability of the festival.

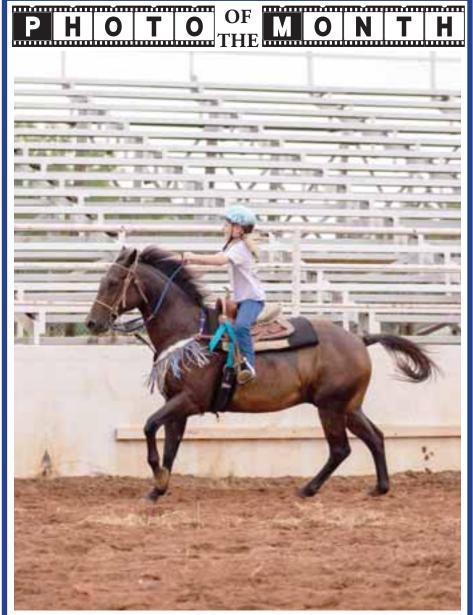
#### Duncan opens first dog park

Those with four-legged friends in Duncan may now visit the city's first dog park. The park sits at S. 15th St. and West Cypress.

The park is split into two sections, one for large dogs and one for smaller dogs. Signs indicate which side to enter. The park features self-latching gates, benches, fire hydrants, pooper scooper stations, and water fountains for dogs and their owners.

More features, such as an agility course, could be coming in the future. The park is open from 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., though it will remain unlocked throughout the night to accommodate people who work different schedules. Surveillance cameras overlook the park and are monitored by the Duncan Police Department.

#### Marlow library opens doors



Cotton Electric member April Burruss submitted this photo of her daughter, Bryleigh, practicing for the Lawton Rangers Rodeo with her horse, Warlock. Photo by Pocket Pony Photography.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for August is Hometown Pride. 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 package of CEC goodies.

## **Clothes Closet sets guidelines**

Christian Helping Hands of Comanche has established new guidelines for the Clothes Closet, located at 406 Oak Main. The new guidelines are:

- No children allowed
- No one over 70 years old
- One person per family
- Masks must be worn
- 15-minute shopping time

The Clothes Closet is open every Thursday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. No ID is required and there is no limitation to who may come shop as long as they follow the new guidelines. Everything is free.

Each family is allowed 15 clothing items and 10 household items. Toys do not count and everyone is encouraged to take home a toy. Under garments and socks are also not counted. There is a signup sheet for those in special need of furniture or appliances. Clean, smoke-free items are accepted. Mattresses and sofas cannot be accepted unless special arrangements have been made.

Before COVID-19, the Clothes Closet was serving about 200 people per month.

#### Lawton cancels fall 'Open Streets'

In consultation with City of Lawton staff and healthcare officials, the Open Streets Committee has cancelled the Fall 2020 Open Streets event in Downtown Lawton due to the ongoing COVID-19 health pandemic.

Open Streets is a health-based initiative that turns city streets into temporary public parks and traditionally takes place twice a year.

"This was a difficult decision for the committee to reach, but the safety and well-being of the community is our first priority," said Tiffany Martinez Vrska, community relations director for the City of Lawton. "Each year we look forward to coordinating and hosting this free, family-friendly event and because the committee feels Open Streets is so important to our community, we aim to continue our mission of ing. promoting healthy lifestyles and active transportation by modifying the event to safely accommodate all citizens.

Garland Smith Public Library staff have been taking important steps to reopen the facility in order to allow the community more access to available services. Located at 702 W. Main in Marlow, the library is open from noon to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

Displays are now at the front of the library and staff members are available to make suggestions and pull books for patrons wanting to browse. Computer use and access is limited to one hour maximum and a 30-minute minimum with waiting list. Keyboards have been removed from every other computer to ensure social distancing.

All physical scheduled programs have been canceled and one-on-one electronic help is suspended until at least July 1. Children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult.

All books returned to the library are being sanitized before being available for check out and computers are sanitized between each use. No groups with more than 10 people will be allowed in the building.

Curbside pickup will still be offered to accommodate those who are not comfortable with entering the build-

Library staff is making plans to continue summer reading programs while adhering to guidelines. For informa-Please be on the lookout for additional tion, call the library at 580-658-5354.

## **Upcoming Deadlines for The Current**

### August

Ad Sales	July 24
Classified	July 29
Publish Date	Aug. 10

## September

Ad Sales Aug. 21 Classified Aug. 26 Publish Date Sept. 8

#### October

Ad Sales Sept. 18 Classified Sept. 23 Publish Date Oct.

# WE LOVE YOUR ENERGY

And we think you're going to love ours. As a member of Cotton Electric Cooperative, you can help guide our future as we efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy.





# **2020 Youth Tour essay topic:**

# What do you find most interesting about electric cooperatives?



Hailey Franklin Walters High School

## **Cooperatives support local communities** What would Walters, my hometown, or surrounding areas be like without Cotton Electric Cooperative? I find it most interesting how many people are provided with a job because

of one business. Thanks to Cotton Electric, many people live in Walters because they have good jobs to support their families. This, in turn, helps the town of Walters because they spend money in our town. Cotton Electric not only provides energy to eight counties, but also helps 30 area school systems with tax money, contributions and youth activities, such as a trip to Washington D.C., so that students, like myself, can better understand the roles of electric co-ops.

TOU

helps our community by using Operation Round Up. Operation Round Up starts with co-op members and their monthly bills. If the participating member's bill is \$50.22, the total is rounded up to \$51 and the leftover \$0.78 goes to Operation Round Up. I have learned Cotton Electric I think the most considerable thing

about this project is that the money matter their strong suit. Whether that goes back into our community to different individuals and charities.

Another substantial characteristic of Cotton Electric is that since it is a cooperative, it is owned by its members. The cooperative delivers electric service to more than 20,000 meters across approximately 5,169 miles of line. Since there is a great coverage of miles, it gives more people the opportunity to be a part of this cooperative.

To me, Cotton Electric is a team. When I think of the word "team," I think of a group of people coming together to accomplish a common goal. Notice, I said a group of people. There is no "I" in team. In my opinion, one of It plays a big role in how our commuthe best things about Cotton Electric nity functions, as well as communities is that there is a job for everyone, no around us.

is Information Technology, Marketing, Human Resources, Engineering, Vegetation Management, Dispatch, Linemen, Purchasing, Accounting, Member Services or Meter and Transformer Shop Technicians, there is a job for any skill set or personality type. I want to be the individual who goes outside of Walters, outside of Oklahoma, to learn more and bring my knowledge and experience back to my hometown that has done so much for me.

I want to conclude by saying that I am so grateful to live in a town that has a cooperative like Cotton Electric.

# Vegetation Management key to power reliability

Cotton Electric strives to provide the best service to its members. One way this goal is achieved is through the co-op's Vegetation Management (VM.) The VM program is a proactive effort to ensure quality power delivery. Aggressive and preventive vegetation management is valuable to members from a service and an economic perspective. Keeping vegetation away from power lines is also a matter of safety.

Vegetation Management Coordinator Scott Crew oversees Cotton Electric's in-house four-man crew, as well as several contract crews throughout the year, as they clear vegetation and prevent re-growth.

Crew said his employees make every effort to contact land and homeowners in person as they move into an area. If members are not home, an effort will be made to contact owners by phone and, in some cases, a bright-colored door hanger will be left at the house or tied to a gate post.

## We clear certain areas in our service territory, known as rights of way, to:

- Keep power lines clear of tree limbs
- Restore power outages more quickly
- Reduce unexpected costs for repairs

Maintaining rights of way improves service reliability for you - our members!

"Spraying keeps crews from returning to the same area again and again to trim regrown vegetation," Crew said. "This saves the co-op man-hours and, in turn, saves members money."



free, untreated wood chips. Since the wood chips are untreated, it is not recommended to use them next to a structure.

Landowners looking for material to help with ero-Crews have been working across Cotton Electric's sion problems may want to contact Cotton Electric too. With the co-op's skid steer, the VM crew can deliver stumps and other debris too large to chip or mulch.

'Please call the number on the hanger or call me at 580-875-4224. Plan to leave a message," Crew said, noting that he is likely to be out on the job. "Keeping the co-op up-to-date with your contact information will help us out when we try to notify you that we are in the area."

After trees are cleared, crews return to the area at regularly scheduled intervals to apply a specially formulated herbicide that will prevent tree growth without causing harm to grasses. Spraying is done only during growing season.

service territory as needs arise while social distancing and limiting time at co-op headquarters.

The co-op has welcomed back its contractor, Northeast Rural Services (NRS). NRS has resumed their work in the west Walters circuit and will move towards east Geronimo as they progress. They will be prioritizing the clearing of vegetation to improve power quality and make room for pole changeouts.

As always, Cotton Electric's VM crew is continually looking for land and home owners in need of

Chips and large debris will be delivered to members nearest the day's work location who can be reached by phone. There is no guarantee a member will receive wood chips at any particular time.

Leave a message at 580-875-4224 to have your name added to the list of members willing to take wood chips.



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Dehart Air Conditioning offers preventative maintenance plans to keep systems healthy!

\*Rebates Available in many OMPA Member cities \*Restrictions apply



# **CECF** announces recent contributions

Even during tough economic times, it's important that we continue to support our local communities. That's the philosophy behind Operation Round Up (ORU), a charitable program governed, funded and supported by Cotton Electric members like you.

Most Cotton Electric members participate in ORU, in which power bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar. The amount rounded up each month can be as little as 1 cent and is never more than 99 cents. On average, each participating member contributes about \$6 each year.

The funds are pooled and administered by the Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF), a board of directors that meets quarterly to consider grant applications. The board consists of Jennifer Meason, the coop's CEO; Ken Layn, president of the co-op's board of trustees; and three representatives from the Cotton Electric service area: Danny Marlett, Carter Waid and Cindy Zelbst.

The board met in June to review several grant applications. Grants totaling \$21,200 will be distributed to seven of the applicants. Second-quarter grants include: • Chisholm Trail Arts Council: A \$2,000 CECF grant will purchase a computer, printer and software.

• Duncan Area Literacy Council: a \$1,500 CECF grant will help purchase children's books.

• Indiahoma Community Food Bank: A \$2,500 CECF grant will help purchase food.

• Make-A-Wish Oklahoma: A \$3,000 CECF grant will help grant the wish of a local child.

• Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma: A \$5,000 CECF grant will support the Food for Kids backpack program.

• Surgical Extraction Foundation: A \$4,200 CECF grant will purchase medical equipment for emergency extractions at scenes of accidents.

• Temple Public Schools: A \$3,000 CECF grant will help purchase STEM pods, robots and training for students.

CECF has awarded or pledged more than 500 grants totaling \$1,247,858.81 since the foundation was established in 2004.

Applications for 2020 third-quarter grants are due August 11. Downloadable applications are available at CottonElectric.com.





so her bill is **Rounded-Up** to \$93 The extra \$.25 is donated to the CECF & redistributed to local communities.

Way to go, Cindy!

# **Amount Given:**

## Since 2004,

\$1,247,858.81

has been granted to a variety of charities.

# **Next Deadline:**

Third-quarter grant applications are due by August 11

# **Co-op Connections encourages shopping locally**

#### By Danielle Quickle

As your local cooperative, we care about the communities we serve. Now, more than ever, it is important to support locally-owned businesses while also saving some cash. This is why Cotton Electric is proud to offer members local savings through the Co-op Connections program.

Receive discounts on products and services from participating businesses just by showing a Co-op Connections card. The program membership is absolutely FREE and available to you simply for being a member of Cotton Electric.

In addition to local deals you can also take advantage of deals all across the country. Here is what you get:

• Great discounts from businesses in your community, including dining, shopping, automotive and much more. See a full list of local discounts on Page 12. Use the card to shop locally!

• Big savings when you shop online.

• Discounts on most prescriptions at over 60,000



• Travel discounts including hotel rooms and event tickets.

See all offered discounts at Connections.coop.

Misplaced your card? No problem. Give us a call at 580-875-3351 and we will send you a new one, or download the Co-op Connections app from the App Store or Google Play. The app provides the same discounts and savings but in a more user-friendly format. Using your smartphone's location, you can easily search for deals near you. **10 Reasons to Shop Local** 

1. **Keep Money Local** – Sales taxes fund our communities and provide vital services such as police and fire protection, street repairs and trash collection.

2. **Local Investment** – Local businesses are less susceptible to national downturns and more likely to work harder to stay open. Local ownership means that important decisions are made by people who live in our community and feel the impact of those decisions.

3. **Locally-Made Products** – Local business owners often sell local products, which helps preserve the community's distinction and creates more jobs locally, as well.

4. **Support for Non-Profits** – Local businesses support good work in the community. Studies show that non-profits receive 250% more support from small

participating pharmacies. To find a list of pharmacy locations, visit Connections.coop.

• Discounts on eyeglasses, contact lenses, eye exams and LASIK.

• Discounts on dental care such as cleaning, x-rays, root canals, crowns and orthodontics.

• Savings on chiropractic visits, lab tests, imaging scans and hearing aids.

Any family-friendly, local business may be added to the program at any time. If you are a business owner who would like to be part of this exciting program, we would love to visit with you about how Co-op Connections can be a win-win for your business and Cotton Electric members. For details, contact Kaila Williams at 580-875-3351 or kwilliams@ cottonelectric.com.



Cotton Electric Co-op members get extra relief by presenting their Co-op Connections Card when getting prescriptions filled at participating pharmacies.

So far in 2020, members have used their cards at pharmacies in the CEC service area when filling 22 prescriptions not covered by insurance. A total of \$296.26 was discounted for an average savings of \$13.47 per use. The total savings since the program's inception in April 2008 has been \$664,563.02.

The card is free to all members and can be obtained by calling 580-875-3351.

To find a participating pharmacy call Member Services at 800-800-7616 or visit www.locateproviders.com. Type 22203 into the Group field and click 'log in' to start your search. businesses than large ones.

5. **Discover Interesting Things** – Oneof-a-kind shops and restaurants are part of what makes your hometown a great place to live.

6. **Personal Connection** – Getting to know the store owners is a great reason to shop local. They'll often go the extra mile to ensure customers are satisfied.

7. **Product Knowledge** – Local business owners are well-informed about their products.

8. **Diverse Products** – Local stores carry inventory you might not find at national chain stores. Owners choose products based on what their customers want.

9. **Cost Effective** – Sometimes prices at local businesses are better because they don't have the overhead that larger stores may have.

10. **Everyone Benefits** – Local businesses tend to buy and sell with other local businesses. *Source: Metro Family* 



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DISCOVER

# Cookout Cravings

# Appease summer appetites with grilled fare

#### FAMILY FEATURES

The first thought that comes to mind when picturing grilling in the summer sun might be a perfectly cooked steak or a juicy burger, but no backyard barbecue is complete without the all-important sides and beverages that complete the meal.

Whether you're pairing a main protein with separate side dishes or going all-in-one by combining tender chicken with veggies on skewers, the opportunities are endless for a crave-worthy cookout. Find more summer grilling recipes at Culinary.net.

#### 5 Steps for Sizzling Steak

A sizzling steak is a surefire sound of summer, and the flavors achieved from one that's perfectly grilled are hard to match.

Before you fire up your grill, consider these five basics for cooking a chef-worthy steak:

#### **Prepare Your Cut**

Taste preferences (and prices) may differ among sirloins, ribeyes, T-bones and more, but the way you prepare steaks likely won't change much from cut to cut. You'll want to trim the thickness down to 1/2-1 inch for proper cooking, and setting the meat out ahead of time allows it to warm to room temperature before hitting the grill.

#### **Add Some Salt**

Feel free to add any spices you prefer, but remember a good steak typically doesn't require fancy seasoning – a pinch of salt works just fine. Add your salt anywhere between 30 minutes to a few hours before grilling time to help retain moisture and improve flavor.

#### Aim for High Heat

A two-zone fire is usually the way to go – one side of the grill should be hot (using direct heat) with the other side not quite as warm (indirect heat). This allows you to create a sear over direct heat before finishing cooking through – without burning – over indirect heat.

#### Sear and Slide

Cooking your steak over direct heat 1-2 minutes on each side is normally about right for creating a proper sear. At this point, depending on the thickness of your steak, you'll want to check for doneness. If it's not quite to the temperature you're looking to achieve, simply slide it over to the indirect heat for a finishing touch. Keep in mind these general guidelines for doneness: 120-125 F is rare, 130-135 F is medium-rare, 140-145 F is medium, 150-155 F is medium-well and 160-175 F is well done.

#### Let Rest

Finally, as hungry as you may be at this point, resting steaks is an important last step before diving in. Giving your steaks 5-10 minutes (foil or no foil) allows flavors to redistribute and moisture to be retained in the meat.



people crave something cold and fruity. Simply combine frozen strawberries with frozen pink lemonade concentrate to create a cool concoction perfect for a sizzling day. This fizzy summertime treat can delight your taste buds and keep you quenched while enjoying the

Find more summer drink recipes at Culinary.net.

1 package (10 ounces) frozen sliced strawberries,

 2 liters lemon-lime soda, chilled
 1 can (12 ounces) frozen pink lemonade concentrate, thawed

In blender, process strawberries until blended thoroughly. Pour strawberries into large pitcher; stir in soda and pink

sweetened and thawed

**Strawberry Spritzer** Recipe adapted from Taste

sun's rays.

of Home

lemonade.





#### Less Prep, More Summer with a Skewered Solution

Make summer grilling easy and delicious by cooking your side dish and main dish together so you can spend more time outdoors and less time meal planning. These Grilled Greek Kebabs pair cubed chicken thighs with little potatoes on skewers, making for a classic cookout combo.

With no washing or peeling required, Creamer potatoes from The Little Potato Company require little prep, which helps make this recipe a breeze, and they cook quickly on the grill. Just marinate your chicken and potatoes with this zesty dressing and prepare for a taste bud-tingling backyard barbecue.

Visit littlepotatoes.com/summertime for more summer grilling recipes.

#### **Grilled Greek Kebabs**

#### Dressing/Marinade:

#### 3/4 cup olive oil

- 2 lemons, zest and juice only
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon sugar salt, to taste pepper, to taste

#### 3 teaspoons mayonnaise

#### Skewers:

- 2 cups The Little Potato Company Dynamic Duo bagged Creamer Potatoes, cut in half
- 4-6 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 8 wooden skewers dipped in water pita bread (optional)

#### Salad:

- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- 4 sliced Lebanese cucumbers
- 1/4 cup red onion, finely sliced
- 1 cup feta cheese
- 1 cup pitted kalamata olives

To make dressing/marinade: In measuring cup, mix olive oil, lemon juice, lemon zest, oregano, Dijon mustard, garlic and sugar. Season generously with salt and pepper, to taste. Pour 1/3 cup marinade into large bowl. Refrigerate remaining.

To prepare skewers: Add potatoes and chicken pieces to bowl with marinade. Mix well to coat and marinate 30 minutes, or as long as overnight in refrigerator.

Preheat grill to medium heat.

Skewer potatoes and chicken cubes alternately on wooden skewers. Grill 6-8 minutes on both sides. Grill pita bread, if desired.

Finish dressing by adding mayonnaise. To make salad: In large serving dish, mix tomatoes, cucumber, onions, feta cheese and olives. Place kebabs on top and drizzle with dressing.

Serve with grilled pita bread, if desired.



#### A Simple Stuffed Side

Whether you need a quick appetizer or something to snack on, these Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes make for an appealing bite.

Find more snack recipes at Culinary. net.

#### **Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes**

Recipe courtesy of Culinary.net

- 24-48 cherry tomatoes
  - 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
  - 2 tablespoons mayonnaise 1 modium cucumber peole
  - 1 medium cucumber, peeled and diced
  - 3 green onion stalks, diced
  - 2 teaspoons minced dill
    - fresh dill, for garnish

Cut thin slice off top of each tomato. Scoop out pulp. Invert tomatoes on paper towel to drain.

In medium bowl, combine cream cheese and mayonnaise until smooth. Stir in cucumber, green onion and dill. Spoon mixture into tomatoes. Top with fresh dill.

Refrigerate until ready to serve.



# How to Clean Up Your Summer Grilling Game

Simple, flavorful ingredients make for instant family favorites

#### FAMILY FEATURES

here's something about summertime that ushers in an easygoing spirit. The long, hot summer months are often celebrated with backyard barbecues, beach days and spending time with friends and family. It's a time to fire up the grill, slow down and roll with the punches.

So, when you're thinking about what to feed your family off the grill, it should be a breeze, and you shouldn't have to choose between good and good for you. Next time you turn on your grill, consider these tips for creating healthier, flavorful meals you can feel confident serving.

**Keep it simple**. Skip the complicated recipes that call for a wide variety of ingredients, a multitude of steps and long cook times. Instead, seek out products and dishes that are made with ingredients you recognize and have just a handful of instructions. This will ensure less time in the kitchen and more time with loved ones.

**Focus on seasonal, clean ingredients**. Get inspired by your local farmer's market. One of the best parts about summer is the abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables that can add flavor and nutrients to your plate. Plant-based meat, like the burgers, ground and sausages from Lightlife, are also a healthier swap for traditional animal meat products. The pea protein-based product line features only simple ingredients, like pea protein, beet powder and red bell pepper, and are non-GMO, gluten-free and soy-free, perfect for use in recipes like this Burger with Grilled Pineapple and Honey Garlic Barbecue Sauce.

"I know how hard it can be to create fast and flavorful meals that the entire family will love," said Dan Curtin, president of Greenleaf Foods. "That's why we're focused on making delicious food with the cleanest ingredients possible. The fact that they're all plant-based is just a bonus."

**Don't forget the sides**. Food should be a source of confidence, with everything enjoyed in moderation. To balance your spread of burgers and hot dogs, consider serving fresh asparagus or sweet corn in place of other salty, processed options. Fruits like peaches and pineapple work well on the grill, too, but remember to group produce by similar cooking times.

Aim for a quick and fun cleanup. Perhaps one of the most overlooked secrets to a stress-free meal is to cut down on cleanup. A backyard barbecue can be one of the easiest messes to maintain as most of the prep is done outside on the grill. Try setting up a buffet line on your deck or patio where your family can build their burgers with customized toppings, like cheese, veggies and sauces. Then add a little bit of fun by putting on your favorite music playlist to help make a simple, everyday meal feel even more special.

Visit lightlife.com to discover more plant-based recipes and solutions.



#### Burger with Grilled Pineapple and Honey Garlic Barbecue Sauce

Total time: 30 minutes Servings: 2

- 2 rings freshly cored pineapple
- 2 Lightlife Plant-Based Burger patties, thawed salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste 1 cup baby arugula
- 2 sesame seed burger buns, lightly toasted
- 1/4 cup crispy fried onions
- 2 tablespoons honey garlic barbecue sauce

Heat grill to medium heat. Grill pineapple slices 4-5 minutes per side until grill-marked and slightly caramelized. Cut slices in half and set aside. Wipe down grill to cook burger patties.

Season burger patties with salt and pepper, to taste. Grill 4-5 minutes per side until burgers are evenly browned with internal temperature of 165 F.

To assemble, layer handful of baby arugula leaves on toasted bottom buns, top each with burger and two cut slices each of grilled pineapple. Sprinkle on crispy fried onions, drizzle with honey garlic barbecue sauce and place toasted sesame seed bun on top.

# Conventional foods cost effective, healthy option

Unless on sale, organic foods are often more expensive than conventional foods. Concerned about pesticides, consumers believe organic foods are healthier and better for the environment. When money is tight and the food supply is unpredictable, consumers may wonder if they can afford to continue to buy organic products. If the high price of organic foods prevents you from eating fruits, vegetables, lean meat, skim milk and small amounts of whole grains, it is better to buy these items as conventional foods rather than skipping these food groups altogether. There is no scientific consensus that organic foods are healthier than their counterparts. In fact, the National Organic Program, which governs the USDA Organic label, does not include health as a part of their mission or purpose. The program exists to ensure that foods with the label "USDA Organic" are produced according to certain standards. Pesticide residue on conventionally grown crops is tested annually by the USDA. Typically, 99% of samples have residues well below levels of concern, and half of samples have no detectable residue. There are more than 50 approved synthetic compounds that can be used on organic crops, including synthetic compounds meant to control pests.



may actually be friendlier to the environment due to proximity to the consumer.

Organic foods cannot contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs). GMOs are living things that have had their genes tweaked. While that may sound scary, humans have been eating GMOs for more than 20 years and there have been no reports of or studies showing a negative impact on health. At the same time, there is no research showing GMO foods are healthier than conventional or organic foods. Lack of hormones is another frequently brought up advantage of organic foods. Hormones are not allowed in any chickens, turkeys or pigs and very few dairy cows receive hormones in the U.S. Other animals that may receive hormones are heavily regulated by the U.S. government and, again, research has not confirmed harm from consuming animals treated with hormones. If you are not financially affected by the current pandemic, and you prefer to buy organic, then absolutely buy organic. If your finances have been affected, feel confident in feeding your family conventionally farmed and raised healthy foods, and organic whenever you desire.

The environmental impact of organic versus conventional foods is contentious. There are a few Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD



studies that show a favorable environmental impact, but what is more important regarding environmental impact is investigating the specific farming practices and location of the foods you are purchasing. Foods that are grown locally with sustainable farming practices, but without the USDA organic label,





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# Common home energy myths debunked

Eating carrots will greatly improve your eyesight, cracking your knuckles leads to arthriwatching tis, too much TV will harm your vision. We've all heard the old



Heath Morgan, **Energy Efficiency** Coordinator

wives' tales, but did you know there are also many misconceptions about home energy use? Don't be fooled by these common energy myths:

### Myth: The lower the thermostat setting, the faster the home will cool.

Many people think that walking into a warm room and lowering the thermostat to 65 degrees Fahrenheit (F) will cool the room more quickly. This is not true.

Thermostats direct a home's HVAC system to heat or cool to a certain temperature. Drastically adjusting the thermostat setting will not make a difference in how quickly you feel cooler home cool while you're away. or warmer. However, this can result in your system overheating or overcooling your home beyond your normal comfort zone. Another common mistake is turning a setpoint down on your air conditioner because it isn't getting er due to wind chill. A running ceiling cool. This can actually end up caus-

maintain the temperature you have set the thermostat to, this is most likely an indication that there is a problem with the system. Dropping your setpoint even lower can lead to damaged equipment or frozen indoor coils, and water damage as a result. The Department of Energy recommends setting your thermostat to 78 degrees F during summer months, and 68 degrees F during winter months.

### Myth: Opening the oven door to check on a dish doesn't really waste energy.

While it can be tempting to check the progress of that dish you're cooking in the oven, opening the oven door does waste energy. Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees F, delaying the progress of your dish and, more importantly, costing you additional money. If you need to check the progress of a dish, try using the oven light instead.

## Myth: Ceiling fans keep your

Believe it or not, many people think this is true. Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. Ceiling fans circulate room air but do not change the temperature. Running a fan can make you feel coolfan in an empty room is only adding to ing more problems. If your a/c won't your electricity use. Remember to turn



Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees F.

your energy use.

### Myth: Reducing my energy use is too expensive.

Many people believe that reducing energy use requires expensive up-front have to be difficult. Focus on small costs, like purchasing new, more efficient appliances or construction up- ways to save energy by visiting www. grades to an older home. But the truth is, consumers who make small changes "Together We Save" section.

fans off when you're away and reduce to their energy efficiency habits, such as turning off lights when not in use, sealing air leaks and using a programmable thermostat, can see a reduction in energy consumption.

July 13, 2020

Remember, energy efficiency doesn't changes to save big. Learn more about CottonElectric.com and exploring the

# Summer heat burns a budget

#### By Danielle Quickle

Summer is here! That means we have officially entered the peak period and can expect energy demand to rise. Peak period refers to the time when energy consumption is the highest, usually between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. from June 20 through Sept. 9. Now is the time to be most aware of energy use and practice conservation.

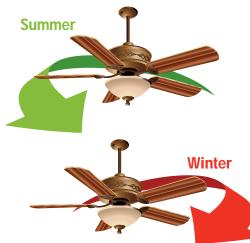
One of the easiest ways to save energy and substantial money on your energy bill is to make these changes to your thermostat:

• If you're going out for a few hours in the evening or leaving for work in the morning, nudge the thermostat up a couple of degrees. It won't take long for it to get back to normal once you return and turn the dial down a bit. • You can adjust to an indoor temperature that's slightly less cool in the summer and less warm in the winter. If you usually set your A/C at 72 degrees Fahrenheit, for instance, push it to 74 degrees for a few days until that begins to feel normal. Then, nudge it up one degree a week for a few more weeks and see how far you can go and still feel comfortable. • The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that if you set the A/C just one degree warmer before you go to bed every night you can reduce your cooling bill.



down when you get home from work or vacation. Instead, set it back to

## MAKING THE MOST OF CEILING FANS BY TURNING ON THE FAN, YOU CAN TURN UP THE SAVINGS



#### **1. FLIP THE SWITCH**

Most ceiling fans have a switch near the blades. In summer months, flip the switch so that the blades operate in a counter clock wise direction, effectively producing a "wind chill" effect. In winter, move the switch so the blades rotate clockwise, creating a gentle updraft. This pushes warm air down from the ceiling.

• Avoid cranking the A/C way

your normal temperature and let your equipment take time to cool the air. It won't take long and it will waste less energy than forcing a surge of cold air into the house.

• Use your ceiling fans when the A/C is turned on. The fans help the cool air circulate, which make the room feel more comfortable. Then you can turn the A/C temperature a couple of degrees higher.

• A programmable thermostat will do all of the resetting for you. Program it to set the A/C up a few degrees at bedtime and return to normal half an hour before you wake up. You can also "tell" it to keep the temperature constant on weekends but to save energy on work days.

For more energy saving tips, visit the energy efficiency tab at CottonElectric.com.

#### 2. ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT

In the summer, when using a fan in conjunction with an air conditioner, or instead of it, you can turn your thermostat up 3-5 degrees without any reduction in comfort.





#### **3. CHOOSE THE RIGHT SIZE**

Make sure your ceiling fan is the right size for the room. A fan that is 36-44 inches in diameter will cool rooms up to 225 square feet.





#### 4. TURN IT OFF

When the room is unoccupided, turn the fan off. Fans are intended to cool people - not rooms.



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Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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