





From the CEO

Co-op committed to helping members

As I write my column this month, the sun is shining and today’s high temperature is forecasted to be 73 degrees. It’s a dramatic contrast to what we experienced just a few weeks ago during the 10-day polar vortex.



Jennifer Meason, CEO

CEC employees layered up and continued our mission of providing power to you, addressing outages as they occurred. Many of you braved the elements as well, as you went out daily to care for livestock, breaking ice and working valiantly to save newborn calves.

During this time period, the Cotton Electric system hit a historic peak level of electricity demand. For the first time in 80 years, the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), the

power grid operator for a 14-state region that includes Oklahoma, had to implement controlled, temporary service interruptions that affected our service territory to prevent widespread blackouts.

We asked for your help conserving energy during those emergency times and you answered the call, helping our area avoid additional and lengthier interruptions. It was unprecedented.

Although we conserved, the extreme temperatures still lead to huge increases in usage. If you tracked your daily usage with our SmartHub app, you were already aware of how much yours increased. Although the thermostat may have been set at 68 degrees, heating systems worked overtime to try and maintain a manageable temperature in our homes. An illustration is on Page 5.

Typically, Oklahoma’s heating systems are made to run efficiently at 25 to 30 degrees. The temperatures we experienced reached

-12 degrees and remained below freezing for an extended amount of time. Plus, we used additional space heaters, well heaters, and heat lamps for pets and livestock. This results in dramatic increases in energy use and much larger bills.

We know these have been challenging times for our members and understand the impact of increased electric bills to family finances. We are here to help you. If you find it difficult to pay your entire electric bill, please contact us between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday – Friday at 580-875-3351. We will work with you to make a payment schedule that helps you through this trying time. We are also waiving late payment penalties during the months of March and April.

Thank you again for your conservation efforts and support of Cotton Electric Cooperative.

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 co-op’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 Zeltst.

The board met in February to review several grant applications. Grants totaling \$20,995.25 will be distributed to seven of the applicants. First-quarter grants include:

- Cotton County Sheriff’s Office: A CECF grant of \$1,908.25


will help purchase body cameras for officers.

- Medicine Park Economic Development Authority: A \$5,000 CECF grant will be used to purchase playground equipment for the community.
- Porter Hill Volunteer Fire Department: A \$5,000 CECF grant will help purchase personal protective equipment.
- Safe Center, Inc: A \$3,087 CECF grant will purchase kid-friendly furniture.
- United Methodist Women, Duncan: A \$1,500 CECF grant will provide Blessing Box support.
- Walters Police Department: A \$1,500 CECF grant will purchase body armor for officers.
- Walters Public Schools: A \$3,000 CECF grant will purchase Chromebooks and licenses to assist with virtual learning.

CECF has awarded or pledged more than 530 grants totaling \$1,313,805.03 since the foundation was established in 2004.

Applications for 2021 second-quarter grants are due June 8, 2021. Downloadable applications are available at [CottonElectric.com/grant-applications](http://CottonElectric.com/grant-applications).

How it works:



Cindy’s bill is \$92.75.  
She participates in ORU,  
so her bill is **Rounded-Up** to \$93  
The extra \$0.25 is donated to the CECF &  
redistributed to local communities.  
Way to go, Cindy!

Amount Given:

Since 2004,  
**\$1,313,805.03**  
has been granted  
to a variety of charities.

Next Deadline:

Second-quarter grant applications  
are due by **June 8**




Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

**Don’t keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 35 to 38 degrees for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees for the freezer. Make sure the refrigerator doors are sealed airtight to maximize efficiency.**

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



**COTTON**  
ELECTRIC CO-OP

**Mission Statement**  
Our mission is to be the leader in providing the most reliable and innovative electric system, with affordable rates, through the positive, enthusiastic and professional use of its resources and people.

January 2021 Operating Stats			
	2021	2020	
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$6,051,364	\$6,081,506	
Cost of Purchased Power	4,209,307	4,069,110	
Taxes	118,439	113,529	
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,050	1,055	
Average Farm and Residential Bill	174	167	
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,663	1,573	
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,837	18,540	
Miles Energized	5,210	5,201	
Density Per Mile	3.62	3.56	
New Service Connects YTD	41	39	
Services Retired	8	21	

TheCurrent

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# Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the April issue, please submit information by March 31 by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to [TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com](mailto:TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com). Events that occur before April 12 will not be published in the next issue.

*Editor's Note: We recommend checking for cancellations with local sources before attending any event.*

### ParkStomp set for March weekend

The 11th annual ParkStomp is two days of live bluegrass music in Medicine Park.

First acts perform on March 20. Performance by Black Mountain Fever begins at 3 p.m. Whiskey Mash follows at 5, Eureka Strings take the stage at 7 and the evening is concluded with Chucky Waggs at 9.

Music on the main stage begins at 3 p.m. March 21. Entertainers include Brad Fielder, Redgrass Stringband and Steelwind.

The Park Tavern is also hosting music the Thursday prior with Eureka Strings and Friday with Black Mountain Fever and The Lonesome Narrows.

For more information, visit [MedicinePark.com/Festivals](http://MedicinePark.com/Festivals).

### Home and Garsden show cancelled

Each spring we look forward to engaging with our members during Lawton Home Builders annual Home and Garden Show in Lawton. Out of an abundance of caution, the event has been cancelled for 2021.

We hope to give energy efficiency tips and allow members to ask questions about the co-op at the Cotton Electric booth at the Stephens County Free Fair in Duncan this fall.

As always, members are welcome to call Cotton Electric at 580-875-3351 for questions or assistance 24/7.

### Holy City hosts Easter pageant

"The Prince of Peace" Passion play begins at 8:30 p.m. March 27 and April 3 at the Holy City of the Wichitas in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. There will be a guided tour, music, food trucks and cast members in costume. Guests should arrive early to get a perfect spot. Be prepared for Oklahoma weather.

Admission to the nation's longest-running Easter Passion play is free. For information, visit The Holy City of The Wichitas Facebook page or send an email to [TheHolyCityLawton@yahoo.com](mailto:TheHolyCityLawton@yahoo.com).

### Rattlesnake Hunt set for April

Mark your calendars for the Waurika Rattlesnake Hunt set for April 8-11 in downtown Waurika. The event features carnival rides, games, food vendors, a flea market, thrill show and caravan hunting of diamondback rattlesnakes.

Prizes will be awarded for longest snake captured, the most rattles and more. Witness the thrill and excitement as snake handlers perform with live rattlesnakes. Daring guests can have their picture taken with a live diamondback rattlesnake or try eating some deep-fried rattlesnake meat.

For information, visit the Annual Waurika Rattlesnake Festival Hunt Facebook page.

### DALC offering classes

Can you read this? One in five adults in America can't. Duncan Area Literacy Council (DALC) has started free classes for Adult Basic Education (ABE), Citizenship, and English Language Learners (ELL) to help those

who want to read.

Learners pay nothing for tutoring, it is confidential, and attendees can walk away with confidence to fill out a job application, pay bills, understand prescriptions, follow a recipe or help their children with homework. Tutors are available in the morning, afternoon or evening and most tutoring takes place at The Duncan Public Library.

If you or someone you know are in need of these services, please contact Mary or Joy at 580-736-1170 or email [DALC73533@gmail.com](mailto:DALC73533@gmail.com) to be placed on a list for free classes.

DALC is a non-profit organization providing free services for those living in Stephens County and surrounding areas.

### Car Cruise Show begins June 11

Fire up your engines and travel to Duncan for the annual Cruisin' the Chisholm Trail Car Show, a massive display of classic cars, modified vehicles and vintage trucks beginning at 6 p.m. June 11 and at 5 p.m. June 12.

Watch rubber burn at the Burnout Contest and all the cool vehicles at the Friday Night Car Cruise. The show will also feature children's activities and live entertainment.

Make your way to the downtown area and browse through rows of vintage cars that line six blocks of Duncan's Main Street. Food trucks and vendors will also be available. Bring the whole family.

All registrants will receive a dash plaque. Registration available at [MainStreetDuncan.net/car-show](http://MainStreetDuncan.net/car-show).

### AARP offers free tax assistance

AARP offers free tax assistance and preparation for taxpayers with low to moderate income on a first-come, first-served basis through the tax due date of April 15. In 2021, the assistance is available by appointment only.

Taxpayers should take last year's income tax return, all W-2 and 1099 forms, information about any other income, adjustment and deduction documents, Social Security cards for each person on a return, and property taxes if he or she plans to itemize.

Call 580-581-3450 to be added to the list of appointments at Lawton Public Library, 110 SW 4th Street.

Information about other locations can be found at [www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp\\_taxaide](http://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide).

### Market returns to winter hours

Lawton Farmers Market, an initiative of the Southwest Oklahoma Growers Association, returns for winter months in the Cameron University Animal Sciences building at the Agriculture Facility, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday, running through the beginning of May 2021.

Shoppers will find a variety of choices at the winter market, including winter produce, sprouts, micro greens, meat, eggs, honey, nuts, and handmade and artisan items.

The building is located on Southwest 38th Street and is south of Dr. Elsie Hamm Drive and the railroad crossing. Parking is available on the south side of the building.

For more information about the market or becoming a vendor at the market, visit [LawtonFarmersMarket.com](http://LawtonFarmersMarket.com) or send an email to [lawtonfarmersmarket@yahoo.com](mailto:lawtonfarmersmarket@yahoo.com).

# PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Cotton Electric member Kaycee Wiggins took this photo of her daughter Brystol deciding her older brother Montana would make for a perfect sled.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for April is Backyard Birds. Entries can be emailed to [TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com](mailto: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.

## CTHC hosts Cowboys and Cobblers event

Cowboys and Cobblers Throwdown is a returning event to the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center (CTHC) in Duncan. It will be from 1-3 p.m. Saturday, April 10. This tasty, fun fundraiser is open to all cowboys, cattle queens and bakers ages 10 and up.

Bakers must enter their own home-baked cobbler. Limit of two recipes per contestant. Dutch oven, large cas-

serole and deep-dish cobblers are all acceptable, but pies will be disqualified.

Entry forms are available online at [OnTheChisholmTrail.com](http://OnTheChisholmTrail.com) or may be picked up at CTHC. Prizes will be awarded in four different categories in both youth and adult divisions.

For information, contact Leah or by calling CTHC at 580-252-6692.



**Not everyone** starts their day at the same time, or in the same way. But no matter when or how, Cotton Electric Cooperative is there to help you power every moment of it.

To learn more, visit [CottonElectric.com](http://CottonElectric.com)

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

April	May	June
Ad Sales March 26	Ad Sales April 23	Ad Sales May 28
Classified March 31	Classified April 28	Classified June 2
Publish Date April 12	Publish Date May 10	Publish Date June 14



STORM PREPARDNESS CHECKLIST:

❑ FLASHLIGHT

❑ BATTERIES

✓ GENERAC WHOLE-HOME GENERATOR

• 22kW Generac generator

• Automatic transfer switch, battery and equipment pad

• 50 feet of combined gas and electrical line

• Installation by a Generac certified contractor

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Previously a 7-year extended warranty

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Exclusive to co-op members

Contact Heath Morgan for details, 580-875-3351

# DIY projects that can conserve energy around the house

By Heath Morgan

Home renovation projects can pay numerous dividends. Renovations can have a positive effect on resale value, make homes more livable for residents and, in some ways, make homes more affordable.

Renovation projects that aim to conserve energy can save homeowners substantial amounts of money. Such projects don't often require considerable effort or even sizable financial investments, which can make homeowners skeptical as to just how much they can save after completing the project. But the scale of a project may have little to do with how much homeowners will save.

For example, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) notes that a relatively effortless task like turning back a thermostat between 7-10 degrees F for eight hours per day can save homeowners as much as \$83 per year. A more labor-intensive task like planting shade trees saves homeowners an average of between \$35 and \$119 per year. Just be sure to plant trees away from power lines.

When looking for ways to conserve energy around the house and save money, homeowners need not necessarily commit to expensive projects. The DOE notes that the following are some energy-saving projects and details what homeowners can expect to save after completing them. While each individual project may not result in jaw-dropping savings, homeowners who follow many of these recommendations may end up saving more than \$1,000 per year.

Seal uncontrolled air leaks

What is it? Air leaks let cool air in during winter and warm air in during summer. Exhaust vents, fireplaces, and even an unbalanced heating and air duct system can create a negative pressure within your home. This pressure difference results in unconditioned outside air being drawn in to your home. En-



Heath Morgan, Energy Efficiency Coordinator

Environmental conditions such as high winds can also result in a pressure differential. These winds create a positive pressure on one side of your home's exterior and a negative pressure on the opposite side. This can result in drafting within your home. Caulking, sealing and weather stripping all cracks and large openings can cut back on air leaks that are costing you money. Pay specific attention to doors, windows, and any places where plumbing or electric penetrates the floor or ceiling. Be sure to look for cobwebs. These are a telltale sign of air movement and can lead you to a significant air leak. The DOE recommends hiring a contractor to seal any leaks on heating and cooling ducts. Homeowners who seal uncontrolled air leaks can save between 10 and 20% on their annual heating and cooling bills.

Plant shade trees

If you plant a deciduous tree between 6-8 feet tall near your home, it will begin to shade your windows within a year of being planted. Depending on the species of the tree and the home, the shade tree will begin shading the roof within 5-10 years. Deciduous trees save energy in the summer by providing shade for your home. In the fall, they will drop their leaves allowing beneficial sunlight through to help heat your home during the winter. Coniferous trees are a great choice for wind protection. Planting these trees on the north can help to protect your home against cold winter winds. Be sure to consider mature tree height, growth rate, and safe distances to locate these trees in relation to your home before planting. The DOE notes that shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce air conditioning costs. Properly planted shade trees that are located away from power lines can reduce air conditioning costs by anywhere from 15-50%.

Insulate the water heater tank

Insulation on new water heaters is improved over older tanks, but can vary depending on the model. While these newer tanks are already insulated, adding another layer of insulation can benefit most homeowners. Older hot water tanks and tanks in-

stalled in unconditioned spaces like the attic or garage will benefit most from this additional layer. Homeowners can insulate their tanks with a water heater insulating blanket kit. These kits are available at most home improvement stores, and can be installed in a short amount of time. Be sure to pay attention to safety instructions and clearances when installing. Insulating a water heater tank can save homeowners as much as 16% on their annual water heating bills.

Even the smallest DIY projects can produce big savings. More information about energy-saving home improvement projects can be found at [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov).

2021 SPRING

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1 p.m. Saturday, March 27, 2021

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\*This bull sold 2 years ago to the Tipton's Children Home, Tipton, OK.\*

Colby Crawford 580-318-3211







✓ **Manage your account**

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✓ **Monitor energy use 24/7**

✓ **Report service issues**

✓ **Receive account notices**

Have you downloaded the SmartHub app? Through SmartHub, you can see how much energy you used during the winter storm, check your balance, pay your bill and much more. Download it here: [www.smarthubapp.com](http://www.smarthubapp.com).

Although we conserved, the extreme temperatures still lead to huge increases in energy use. If you've been tracking your daily use with our SmartHub app, you're already aware of how much yours increased. Although the thermostat may have been set at 68 degrees, heating systems worked overtime to try and maintain a manageable temperature in our homes. Heating a home to 68 degrees when its -3 degrees is the equivalent of cooling your home to 68 degrees when it's 143 degrees outside. See illustration at the bottom of this page.

## Payment options offered to members facing high energy consumption

What we experienced recently was more extreme than what southwest Oklahoma has seen in decades; below-freezing temperatures for 11 consecutive days. That's 264 hours that your HVAC was struggling to keep you and your family comfortable; that you took other measures to keep pipes from bursting and animals from freezing.

The unprecedented low temperatures are behind us but we will still feel the impact when upcoming electricity, water and gas bills arrive. Even though Cotton Electric rates have not changed, the amount of kilowatt hours consumed was higher than normal.

We know these have been challenging times for our members and understand the impact of increased electric bills to family finances. If you find it difficult to pay your entire electric bill, please contact us between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 580-875-3351.

We will work with you to make a payment schedule that helps you through this trying time. We are also waiving late payment penalties during the months of March and April.

**Community CARES Partners offers relief funds**

Community CARES Partners is a public-private program of Communities Foundation of Oklahoma. They administer coronavirus relief funds allocated by the State of Oklahoma to assist residents with rent, utilities, and internet who have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.


**Qualifications:**

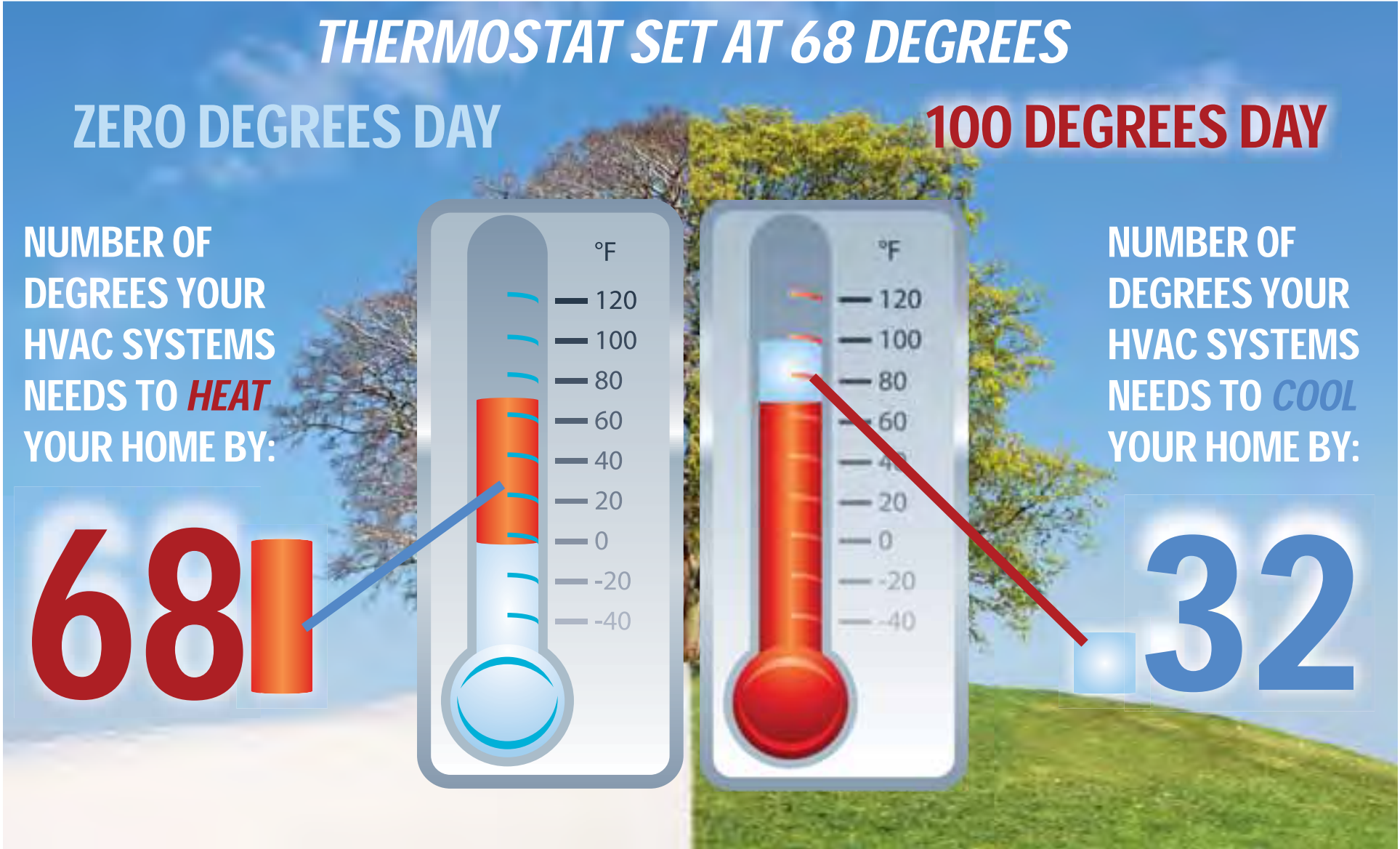
- 18 or over
- Lost job or income due to COVID-19 after March 13, 2020
- Financial need
- Rent was incurred after March 13, 2020
- No other federal funds were received for the same purpose

**Apply:**

- Apply online at [www.okccp.org](http://www.okccp.org) or call 2-1-1
- All applicants must complete the application to determine eligibility

**All funds paid to vendor on behalf of resident**







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

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

**26% Federal Tax Credit for Geothermal Systems**



### Grilled Portobello Gyros with Yogurt Dill Sauce

Recipe courtesy of Emily Weeks of “Zen and Spice”  
Cook time: 15 minutes  
Total time: 25 minutes  
Servings: 4

- 4 portobello mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 2 yellow bell peppers, sliced

#### Yogurt Dill Sauce:

- 1 English cucumber, grated
- 1 cup whole-milk Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 small lemon, juice only
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh dill
- 4 pita breads or naan
- 2 tomatoes, thinly sliced
- 1/2 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 head green lettuce
- crumbled feta cheese (optional)

Remove stems from mushrooms and brush caps with wet towel. Using spoon, carefully scrape out gills. Slice mushrooms into 1/4-inch pieces and place in medium bowl with olive oil, oregano and smoked paprika.

Preheat indoor grill pan over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms and peppers; grill, tossing occasionally, until tender, 5-7 minutes.

To make yogurt dill sauce: Squeeze grated cucumber in clean towel to remove excess liquid. Add to large bowl with yogurt, sour cream, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt and dill. Stir to combine.

To serve, place mushrooms and peppers in middle of pita bread. Top with tomatoes, onion, lettuce, feta, if desired, and big dollop of yogurt dill sauce.



Grilled Portobello Gyros with Yogurt Dill Sauce

## Hearty, Wholesome Dishes to Support Immune Systems

#### FAMILY FEATURES

If feeding your family wholesome meals is a daily goal, keep in mind you can serve up tasty foods that also feed your immune system by including ingredients like mushrooms. With their earthy flavor, mushrooms – like many other fruits and vegetables – can also play a positive role in supporting a healthy immune system.

Studies at Oregon State University concluded there are a variety of micronutrients important for supporting a healthy immune system. Consider that three of these nutrients (vitamin D, selenium and B vitamins) can be found in mushrooms, meaning these family-friendly recipes for Roasted Chicken Thighs and Veggies with Mushroom Orzo Risotto; Grilled Portobello Gyros with Yogurt Dill Sauce; Creamy Spinach, Mushroom and Lasagna Soup; and Asian Barbecue Sesame Salmon with Noodles and Veggies can help you add all-important nutrients to your family’s menu.

Find more ways to add mushrooms to family meals at [mushroomcouncil.com](http://mushroomcouncil.com).

### Roasted Chicken Thighs and Veggies with Mushroom Orzo Risotto

Recipe courtesy of Emily Weeks of “Zen and Spice”  
Cook time: 50 minutes  
Total time: 1 hour, 10 minutes  
Servings: 4

#### Chicken:

- 8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 16 ounces crimini mushrooms, quartered
- 3 zucchini, sliced in half moons
- 3 large carrots, thinly sliced
- 4 sprigs fresh rosemary, leaves removed and roughly chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced

#### Orzo:

- 4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 16 ounces crimini mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1 cup uncooked orzo pasta
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper

- 1/3 cup white wine
- 1/3 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

To make chicken: Preheat oven to 450 F.

Pat chicken dry. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. In large skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter. Sear chicken until browned, 4-5 minutes on each side.

In large bowl, toss mushrooms, zucchini, carrots, garlic and rosemary. On large baking sheet, spread vegetables. Nestle chicken into vegetables. Drizzle with butter and juices from pan.

Bake 20 minutes until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender.

To make orzo: In small pot over medium-low heat, warm broth.

Using skillet from chicken, add butter and olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, garlic and mushrooms. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions soften, 3-4 minutes.

Add orzo and black pepper. Stir and cook 2 minutes. Add white wine and cook until evaporated, about 1 minute.

Add warm broth to orzo 2/3 cup at a time, stirring until liquid is absorbed. Repeat with remaining broth, waiting until last batch is absorbed before adding more. Remove from heat and stir in Parmesan.

Serve in individual bowls with chicken and roasted vegetables atop mushroom orzo risotto.



Roasted Chicken Thighs and Veggies with Mushroom Orzo Risotto

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TheCurrent

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc. Keeping our members Current since 1957

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Number of counties reached with our paper.

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The award-winning newspaper premiered in September 1957, The Current has been the newspaper of record for the members of Cotton Electric Cooperative. The Current is a popular full-size newspaper, distributed to more than 15,000 households every month.

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**Creamy Spinach, Mushroom and Lasagna Soup**  
Recipe courtesy of Emily Weeks of “Zen and Spice”  
Cook time: 30 minutes  
Total time: 40 minutes  
Servings: 4

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium onion, small diced
- 8 ounces crimini mushrooms, sliced
- 1 jar (24 ounces) marinara sauce
- 1 can (15 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 6 lasagna noodles, broken into pieces



Creamy Spinach, Mushroom and Lasagna Soup

- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 5 ounces fresh baby spinach
- 1 cup whole-milk ricotta cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese, for topping

Heat large pot over medium heat.  
Add olive oil, garlic, onion and mushrooms. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions and mushrooms soften, 4-5 minutes.  
Add marinara, diced tomatoes, tomato paste, vinegar, sugar, basil, salt, oregano, pepper, bay leaf and broth. Bring to boil over high heat then reduce heat to low and simmer.  
Add lasagna noodles and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat and remove bay leaf.  
Stir in heavy cream and spinach until wilted, 2-3 minutes.  
Divide between bowls and top with dollop of ricotta and sprinkle of mozzarella.

**Asian Barbecue Sesame Salmon with Noodles and Veggies**

Recipe courtesy of Emily Weeks of “Zen and Spice”  
Cook time: 30 minutes  
Total time: 40 minutes  
Servings: 4

- Sauce:**
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
  - 2 tablespoons brown sugar
  - 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
  - 2 cloves garlic, minced
  - 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
  - 1 teaspoon chili garlic sauce (optional)
  - 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
  - 2 tablespoons barbecue sauce
  - 2 tablespoons water
  - 2 teaspoons cornstarch

- 1 1/2 pounds salmon (4 filets)
- 12 ounces stir-fry (pad thai) rice noodles
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 pound white mushrooms, sliced
- 1 cup sugar snap peas
- 1 large broccoli head, cut into bite-size florets
- 2-3 green onions, thinly sliced, for garnish
- sesame seeds, for garnish

Preheat oven to 400 F.  
In small saucepan, whisk soy sauce; brown sugar; rice vinegar; garlic; ginger; chili garlic sauce, if desired; sesame oil; and barbecue sauce. Bring to boil over high heat then reduce heat to simmer.  
In small bowl, whisk water and cornstarch. Pour into pan and cook on low, whisking often, until sauce thickens,

3-5 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.  
Pour 3 tablespoons sauce into small bowl. Brush salmon filets with reserved sauce and place on baking sheet. Bake 15 minutes, or until salmon is flaky. Discard small bowl sauce if any remains.  
Cook stir-fry noodles according to package directions. Drain, rinse and set aside.  
Heat large skillet over medium heat. Add sesame oil. Add mushrooms, snap peas and broccoli. Cook, stirring often, until veggies are tender-crisp, 7-8 minutes. Add noodles and remaining sauce from pan; toss to combine.  
To serve, divide noodles, veggies and salmon between plates.  
Top with sliced green onions and sesame seeds.



Asian Barbecue Sesame Salmon with Noodles and Veggies

# Americans fall short of dietary recommendations

A study exploring the association of fruit and vegetable intake and all causes of death as well as development of chronic disease such as heart disease, lung disease and cancer was recently published online on March 1, 2021 by Dong D. Wang and colleagues in American Heart Association Journal, *Circulation*.  
The authors found that five servings of fruits and vegetables per day was associated with lower risk of death, heart disease, cancer, and lung disease. The authors conclude their findings support the current recommendations of increased intake of fruits and vegetables except fruit juices and potatoes.

Digging deeper into the study, there are a few points to be considered. First, the study reports an “association” and not “causation.” This is important, because although the authors utilized statistical analyses to control for other factors that influence death and chronic



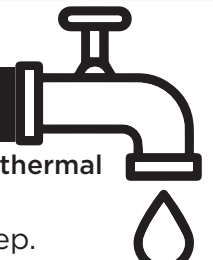
Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD



ic disease, this type of study cannot prove that eating fruits and vegetables causes less death and chronic disease. Associations are still important, particularly when they result from analy-

ses of data sets with thousands of participants. In this particular study, data was taken from over 100,000 men and women.  
Second, this study observed that eating more than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day was not associated with better results. This may make meeting the five servings per day recommendation less overwhelming. Also, when you think about how small “a serving” actually is, eating 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day becomes less daunting.  
The American Heart Association provides an infographic on their website that helps you easily visualize a serving: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/add-color/fruits-and-vegetables-serving-sizes>. One serving of fruit is about a half cup or the size of your fist. One serving of vegetables is 1 cup raw or a half cup cooked, frozen, or canned.

Third, this study did point out that the type of fruits and vegetables matter. The association of less death and chronic disease did not hold true with fruit juices and starchy vegetables such as corn, yams, peas, lima beans, potatoes. It continues to be important to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables as well as get five servings per day.  
In the recently released 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the USDA reports that 90% of the US population does not meet the recommendations for vegetable intake, and 80% do not meet the recommendations for fruit intake. Research continues to show the health benefits of fruits and vegetables, and this study points to those benefits possibly being achieved in as little as five servings a day.  
Take time each day to evaluate your fruit and vegetable intake, and make a plan to incorporate a serving at each eating opportunity.



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# It's Spring Tune-up Time

HVAC tune-up rebate program begins April 1

## Co-op offers rebate program to members

Spring is here, and now is the perfect time to start prepping for summer. From April 1 through June 20, Cotton Electric is offering to help members offset the cost of getting air conditioning units ready for high summer temperatures.

Through the HVAC Tune-Up Rebate program, the co-op will provide a rebate of 50% the cost of your spring tune-up service, excluding repairs and not to exceed \$50. The goal of this incentive program is to ensure the largest power-consuming appliance in members' homes is ready to operate at peak performance when needed the most.

When was the last time you had your home's HVAC system serviced? Heating and air conditioning systems are typically the largest purchase for homeowners, lead only by home and vehicle purchases. Like with a vehicle, lack of maintenance can have a dramatic impact on the efficiency and life of HVAC systems. Many car owners would not even consider skipping the scheduled maintenance of their vehicle, the same type of thinking should be applied to air conditioning service.

There are two schools of thought when it comes to maintaining these systems: Reactive and preventative. Reactive or "run-to-fail" practices are marked by forgoing regular maintenance and running equipment until parts fail. Preventative practices involve periodic maintenance as required by manufacturers.

There are numerous studies showing the effects that poor maintenance procedures have on HVAC systems. A majority of studies show a 5% loss of efficiency over the course of one year. This loss in efficiency can be attributed to a reduction of air flow through indoor and outdoor coils. As dirt attaches to coils, airflow is limited.

Units not properly serviced, even for just a few years, can have up to 40% loss of efficiency throughout its life.

Lack of maintenance can affect more than just the efficiency of the unit. Restricted airflow can raise operating amperage of motors and compressors, resulting in a shortened operating life span. You wouldn't drive your car with a flat tire, would you? Continu-

ing to drive with a flat tire would result in further damage. The same is true for your air conditioning system. Running components at higher amps than they are designed for will decrease the life of that component.

It may be difficult to see if your unit has a weak start capacitor or is low on refrigerant; this is why we recommend involving a professional contractor. Scheduled tune-ups allow professionals an opportunity to perform recommended cleanings and test specific components and refrigerant levels that keep your system operating properly.

Listed below are the program details. Applications will be available at CottonElectric.com, through your contractor or at one of Cotton Electric's office locations.

Beginning April 1, Cotton Electric is offering a rebate of up to \$50 per home (50% of the cost of your spring tune-up, excluding repairs, up to \$50) for members who get a tune-up for their HVAC system. In order to qualify, the following guidelines must be met:

- Must be a Cotton Electric Cooperative member. Residence must be within Cotton Electric's service territory.
- Rebate is not available for new construction.
- A completed Rebate Application is required. Application forms can be downloaded at CottonElectric.com and are available at the Walters and Duncan offices or by calling 580-875-3351. Ask for the Marketing Department.
- Application must be signed and dated by both the member and a licensed and bonded HVAC contractor.
- Member must submit a dated, itemized invoice as proof of service completion from a qualified contractor. Failure to provide required information will result in denial of rebate.
- Rebates are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until program funds have been depleted.
- Rebate not valid on gas-fired furnaces.
- Rebate limited to one tune-up per home annually.

### Tune-Up Checklist:

Tune-ups must be performed by a qualified service professional and must include the following criteria:

- Check and correct unit's refrigerant pressure and tubing
- Check thermostat settings, wiring and other electric parts and connections
- Inspect air filters
- Test AC and furnace starting capabilities
- Test safety controls
- Clean and adjust blower components
- Measure temperature difference
- Measure volts/amps on AC and furnace
- Lubricate all applicable parts
- Check temperature calibration and adjust, if needed
- Check AC evaporator coil and clean, if necessary
- Clean AC condenser coil
- Clean AC condensate drains
- Check thermostat operation

• HVAC tune-ups must be completed by June 20, 2021. Rebate applications must be received by June 30, 2021.



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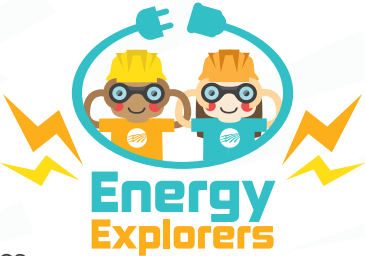



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## ELECTRIC CO-OP

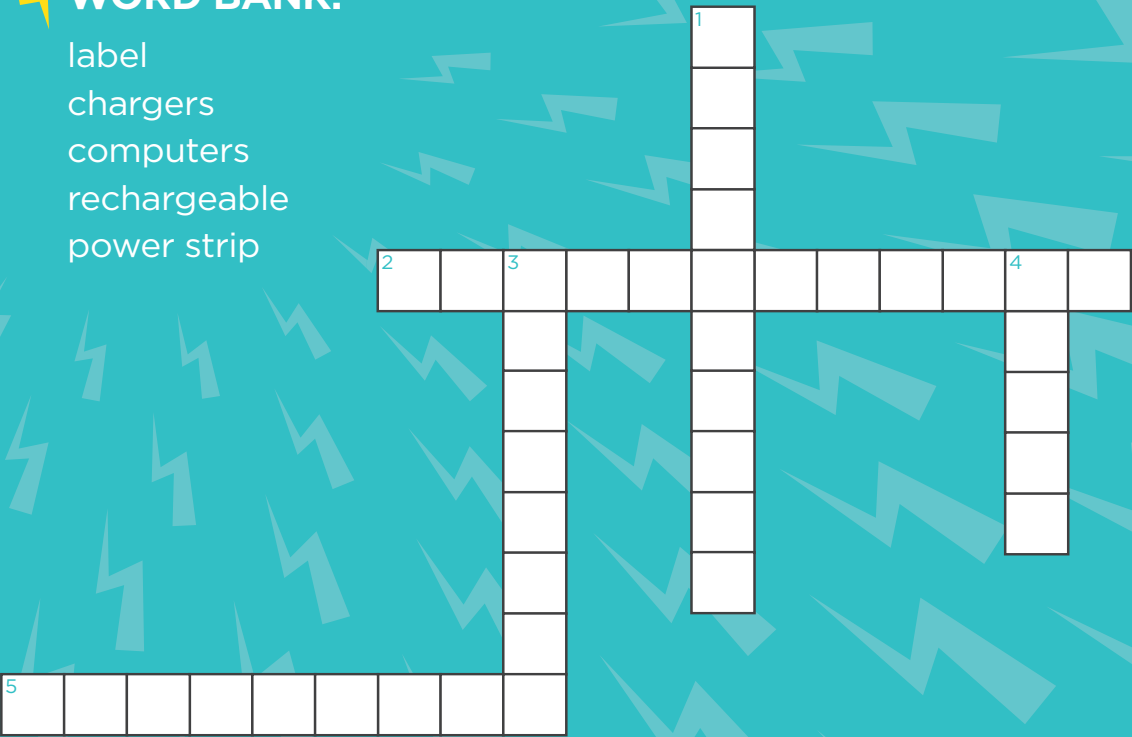
### ELECTRONICS EFFICIENCY CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Did you know there are ways you can reduce your electronics energy use? Complete the crossword puzzle below to learn about electronics efficiency.



**WORD BANK:**

- label
- chargers
- computers
- rechargeable
- power strip



**1 DOWN:** Use a \_\_\_\_\_ with an on/off switch when powering multiple electronics to easily manage energy use.

**2 ACROSS:** For devices that require batteries, use \_\_\_\_\_ ones, which are more cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

**3 DOWN:** Unplug electronic products, like \_\_\_\_\_, when you're not using them.

**4 DOWN:** Electronics that include the ENERGY STAR® \_\_\_\_\_ are the most energy efficient.

**5 ACROSS:** Many \_\_\_\_\_ come with a sleep mode or power management feature, which can save \$30 on annual energy costs.

ANSWER KEY 1. DOWN: POWER STRIP 2. ACROSS: RECHARGEABLE 3. DOWN: CHARGERS 4. DOWN: LABEL 5. ACROSS: COMPUTERS

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		8		1	6	9	2	
	1			2		5		8
				8				6
7	4						6	2
8	2							
	3	6		9	7	8	5	
				4			8	1
		1	9	5				
3	8			7	1	4		

Level: Beginner

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Here's How It Works:

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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# Securing Wi-Fi, network at home

To create a secure home network, you need to start by securing your Wi-Fi access point, sometimes called a Wi-Fi router. This is the device that controls who and what can connect to your home network. Here are five simple steps to securing your home Wi-Fi to create a far more secure home network for you and your family.

## Focus on The Basics

Often the easiest way to connect to and configure your Wi-Fi device is while connected to your home network. Point your web browser to the specific IP address documented in your device’s manual (an example of this would be <https://192.168.1.1>), or use a utility or mobile app provided by your Wi-Fi device vendor.

**1. Change the Admin Password:** Your Wi-Fi access point was most likely shipped with a default password for the administrator account that allows you to change the device configuration. Often these default passwords are publicly known, perhaps even posted on the Internet. Be sure to change the admin password to a unique, strong password, so only you have access to it. If your device allows it, change the admin username as well.

**2. Create a Network Password:** Configure your Wi-Fi network, so it has a unique, strong password as well, making sure it is different from your device admin password. This way only people and devices you trust can join your home network. Consider using a password manager to select a strong password and to keep track of all of your passwords for you.

**3. Firmware Updates:** Turn on automatic updating of your Wi-Fi access point’s operating system, often called firmware. This way you ensure your device is as secure as possible with the latest security options. If automatic updating is not an option on your Wi-Fi access point, periodically log into and check your device to see if any updates are available. If your device is no longer supported by the vendor, consider buying a new one that you can update to obtain the latest security features.

**4. Use a Guest Network:** A guest network is a vir-



tual separate network that your Wi-Fi access point can create. This means that your Wi-Fi access point actually has two networks. The primary network is the one that your trusted devices connect to, such as your computer, smartphone, or tablet devices. The guest network is what untrusted devices connect to, such as guests visiting your house or perhaps some of your personal smart home devices. When something connects to your guest network, it cannot see or communicate with any of your trusted personal devices connected to your primary network.

**5. Use Secure DNS Filtering:** DNS is an internet-wide service that converts the names of websites into numeric addresses. It is what helps ensure your computer can connect to a website when you type in the website’s name. Wi-Fi access points typically use the default DNS server supplied by your internet service provider, but more secure alternatives are available for free from services such as OpenDNS, CloudFlare for Families, or Quad9 that can provide extra security by blocking malicious or other undesirable websites. Log into your Wi-Fi access point and change the DNS server address to a more secure alternative.

Securing your home Wi-Fi access point is the first, and one of the most important, steps in creating a secure home network. For more information about securing your Wi-Fi access point, refer to the device’s manual, or if your internet service provider provided your Wi-Fi device, contact them for more information on security features.

Source: [www.sans.org](http://www.sans.org)



# Finalists announced in essay competition

To address uncertainty and in the interest of safety, Cotton Electric modified its annual Youth Tour competition into a scholarship essay contest for area students.

In November, all high school juniors within the co-op’s service territory were invited to enter an essay discussing “How do the 7 Cooperative Principles satisfy the needs of a community?” Eighty-nine essays from nine local schools and organizations were submitted electronically, as part of Cotton Electric’s “no-touch” modifications to the contest.

Entries were pared down to the 15 best essays and their authors advanced to the second round of competition, a live video interview. The question-and-answer video call between students and

independent judges determined the students who would participate in the final round of competition.

Listed by school, the top five finalists are:  
Central High School: Raley Heaton;  
Chattanooga High School: Cynthia McNally;  
Lawton High School: Brayden Johnson;  
Marlow High School: Alexis King; and Kristany Travis.

The finalists will be required to record a video of themselves reciting their essay in a speech-type format to be submitted to another set of independent judges. The two winners will be determined and announced on April 15, each receiving a \$1,500 scholarship.

# Business Owners’ Issues Go Beyond “Mom and Pop” Label

If you own a small business, you typically don’t get a lot of recognition – so you may be pleased to learn that March 29 is National Mom and Pop Business Owners Day. You might not necessarily think of your business as a “Mom and Pop” operation, but it certainly contributes to the well-being of your family now, and possibly to that of future generations,



too – if you make the right moves.

Depending on the nature of your business, you may have spent the past several months more concerned about today than tomorrow, given the serious economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still placing stress on a great many business owners across the country.

If your business has been adversely affected by the pandemic, you might be eligible for a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. As you may know, recent legislation provided \$285 billion more for this program. To learn more, and to start the application process, visit the

Small Business Administration website at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov). You have until March 31 to apply for a PPP loan. Other relief also may be available.

But regardless of whether you apply for one of these loans, you can take other steps to help maximize the benefits you get from your business – and perhaps even extend its longevity.

Here are a few suggestions:

• **Establish a retirement plan.** If you don’t already have a retirement plan, it’s never too late to set one up. As a business owner, you have several options, including an “owner-only” 401(k), a SIMPLE IRA and a SEP-IRA. All these plans are fairly easy to establish

and can offer potential tax advantages, as well as providing you with a source of retirement income in the future. You may want to work with a financial professional to pick the right plan for your needs.

• **Coordinate your business assets with your investment portfolio.** Like most business owners, you may have a great deal of your personal wealth tied up in your business. And, as the past year has certainly shown, this can be risky. Consequently, you’ll need to weigh this risk factor when deciding on investing in your retirement plan or in other investment accounts. This doesn’t mean you should try to avoid all risk only by pursuing the most conservative

vehicles – which would be counterproductive to achieving enough growth to meet your retirement income goals – but you will need to pay close attention to your investment mix to ensure it provides you with an appropriate balance to what you’ve invested in your business.

• **Develop a transition strategy.** How will you make the transition from business owner to the next phase of your life? Will you sell the business outright? Will you gradually transfer it to a family member? If so, what mechanism will you use? It’s a good idea to have these types of plans in place well before you need to enact them, so you may want to consult with your

financial, legal and tax advisors soon.

A “Mom and Pop” business may sound quaint and carefree – but, as you know, running a business of any size can be an all-consuming endeavor and always involves significant financial concerns. Get the help you need to meet these challenges.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC



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