

# The Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

*“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”*

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*Cotton Electric right-of-way helper Quaid Ogletree, above left, and USAg helper Dwain Perkins strip instruction booklets from empty triple-rinsed containers. At left, Perkins hands containers up to USAg General Manager Scott Mosely, who feeds them into a grinder. In a matter of seconds, the containers are reduced to dime-sized and smaller chunks of plastic, as shown below. The ground plastic is rinsed, dried and rebagged to be sold to a corrugated pipe manufacturer.*



## Free service recycles plastic ag containers

By Karen Kaley

Spring is just a few weeks off. It is a time when farmers, ranchers and Mike Darnell's thoughts turn to – among other things – fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.

Darnell is the contractor coordinator for Cotton Electric. He oversees the co-op's right-of-way program, an important aspect of enhancing the quality of power delivered to more than 20,000 meters along some 5,150 miles of line in south-west Oklahoma.

The right-of-way program is an ongoing two-phased effort to manage vegetation that interferes with power lines. The first phase involves removal or trimming of trees. The second phase uses carefully selected herbicides applied at regular intervals to suppress the regrowth of trees.

Darnell is always searching for ways to make the different aspects of the program work for everyone involved. He is mindful of the desires of co-op members, the safety and training of employees, and never forgets that Mother Nature is an active part of the equation.

With that in mind, Darnell invited Scott Mosely and his crew to pay a November visit to the co-op's headquarters in Walters. Mosely is the general man-

ager for USAg Recycling, Inc. based in Waller, Texas.

Darnell had been saving up for the visit. On the crisp morning that Mosely arrived, there were just under 100 large plastic containers almost ready for the service he offered.

Mosely and his helpers, Dwayne Perkins and Lewis Warren, parked the semi-truck in an alley and jumped out to take a look at Darnell's collection.

It was the first time USAg had come to the co-op. Darnell had triple-rinsed the containers as instructed, but hadn't known the containers also needed to be stripped of caps and the informational booklets still glued to the sides. The men made short work of pulling them off.

The big rig towed a long flat trailer carrying a grinder at one end. Mosely fired up the grinder and Perkins and Warren fed it the empty, cleaned and stripped 15- and 5-gallon containers. The containers were reduced to about 300 pounds of dime-sized and smaller chunks of plastic in less time than it had taken to pull off the caps and booklets.

The USAg crew had a number of other stops to make on its semi-annual swing through Oklahoma. They would fill up the trailer and head back to Waller where

tons of ground plastic would be washed, dried, rebagged and sold to Advanced Drainage Systems, a producer of black corrugated pipe.

Both Mosely and Darnell said this was a much better way to dispose of large plastic container than to send them to a landfill.

“Those containers will be there for a thousand years and won't change a bit,” Darnell said.

“That's right,” Mosely said. “When they're buried like that, they won't break down.”

Darnell is excited about discovering this service. It is a responsible way to dispose of plastic containers and, best of all, it is free.

“We plan to have them come back in the fall of 2016. We will have a lot more containers this time, since we know they are coming.”

Darnell thought farmers and ranchers in the Cotton Electric service area might want to know about this, too.

“After applying fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides, they may want to keep all the large plastic containers until we let them know USAg is returning. We can serve as a central collection point for a couple of weeks beforehand.”

There are a few specifics:

- USAg processes plastic containers used for agriculture purposes ONLY. These are HDPE (high density polyethylene) #2 grade containers that hold crop protection products such as fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides.

- No household plastics such as milk jugs, soap containers or pop bottles are accepted.

- No petroleum containers are accepted for recycling.

- All containers must be triple-rinsed and stripped of caps, foil seals and informational booklets.

- Containers up to 250-gallon size are eligible. Some larger containers need special preparation. Some larger containers are not acceptable.

For information about container eligibility, preparation and rinsing, visit the website, [USAgRecycling.com](http://USAgRecycling.com), or call 800-654-3145.

Cotton Electric will announce designated collection dates in the fall. Those interested in bringing plastic containers to Cotton Electric during the designated pickup time can send their contact information to [info@cottonelectric.com](mailto:info@cottonelectric.com) or leave a message for Mike Darnell at 580-875-4253.

### Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after Feb. 1, 2016, is (\$0.00612) per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1500 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a credit of \$16.65 on the February bill.

### January 2016 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	44	29	37	16	46	27	37
2	51	29	40	17	51	25	38
3	51	22	37	18	37	22	30
4	50	28	39	19	53	27	40
5	45	25	35	20	40	20	30
6	48	40	44	21	44	33	39
7	63	36	50	22	41	24	33
8	48	31	40	23	51	24	38
9	39	27	33	24	65	35	50
10	37	20	29	25	61	38	50
11	49	28	39	26	52	26	39
12	60	25	43	27	58	20	39
13	62	22	42	28	70	24	47
14	67	26	47	29	78	28	53
15	58	39	49	30	80	31	56
				31	63	41	52

Source: [srh.noaa.gov/om/](http://srh.noaa.gov/om/)  
Average Daily High: 54 Average Daily Low: 28

### Did You Know?



Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 13. Turn clocks forward one hour.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on March 14.

### Contact Us

Do you have a story idea for The Current or do you need to place an ad? If so, let us know.

We can be reached at 580-875-3351 or by email at [info@cottonelectric.com](mailto:info@cottonelectric.com).

You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.

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More news at <a href="http://cottonelectric.com">cottonelectric.com</a>	



From the CEO

# Apps make legislation tracking easy

February 1, 2016, marked the first day of the second regular session of the 55th Oklahoma Legislature. Members of the Senate filed 704 Senate bills and 42 Senate Joint Resolutions. The House of Representatives filed 921 bills and 31 joint resolutions. Our elected officials have an immense task in front of them as they research, evaluate and vote on hundreds of bills this session.

There will be many decisions made by our legislators in the days ahead. A major part of my duties here at the cooperative include working with our elected officials to educate them about the cooperative difference and issues that affect you, our members. As



Jennifer Meason, CEO

your CEO, it is my job to stay on top of the issues – both at the state and federal levels – and advocate on your behalf to ensure that fair and balanced energy-related bills are passed.

As the legislative session progresses, I will keep you updated of any bills that concern cooperatives through the co-op's Facebook and Twitter accounts as well as The Current. I encourage you to remain involved in the political process. Here are a few tools that can help.

The Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives has created a digital legislative guide featuring the 55th Legislative Session that is a free download. The app provides detailed profiles, interactive

contact links, a comprehensive list of state and federal electric officials and a map that can be personalized. To find the app, enter "OAEC 55th Legislature Guide" in the Google Play or iTunes stores.

Another way for you to participate in the legislative process is through NRECA's Cooperative Action Network (CAN). CAN is a website explaining the legislative concerns of electric cooperatives and provides members the opportunity to become active. Visit the website at Action.coop.

There is also an Advocacy App that includes talking points, a congressional directory, breaking alerts, and the ability to take action on issues important to electric co-ops. Search for "NRECA Advocacy" in the app store.

Cotton Electric and other cooperatives in the state and the nation closely follow lawmakers' actions in accordance with two of our seven guiding principles. As stated in the fourth principle, cooperatives are self-sustaining, self-help organizations controlled by their members. Cooperatives must be their own advocates.

The fifth principle addresses education, training and information. It mentions providing knowledge for both members and elected representatives, as well as for directors, managers and employees.

By monitoring and interacting with local, state and national legislators, we all contribute effectively to the development and success of Cotton Electric Cooperative.

## Starting point for savings: Top 5 home energy users

By Anne Prince

While most homeowners would like to be more energy efficient and save money, often it feels overwhelming because many people don't know where to start. How can the average family use less energy, lower their utility bill and still meet their daily energy needs? To help jumpstart your effort, it is useful to know what the top energy users are in your home. With this knowledge, you can choose a path that works best for your family.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Agency, the top five energy users in U.S. homes are:

1. Space cooling
2. Space heating
3. Water heating
4. Lighting
5. Refrigeration

### Adjust the temperature

Together, home heating and cooling use the most energy and take the biggest bite out of your energy budget. On the bright side, there are ways you can achieve at least 10 percent savings by taking a few simple low-cost or no-cost steps.

- During cold weather, set your thermostat to 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- During warm weather, the recommended indoor temperature is 78 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Cleaning the filters of your HVAC system can cut costs from five to 15 percent.
- Clean the coils around your electric baseboard heater to maintain maximum efficiency.
- Caulk and weather-strip around windows and doors to prevent heat from escaping to the outdoors.

No matter what the climate or time of year, proper use of a programmable thermostat can save you 10 percent on your monthly utility bill.

### Shine the light on savings

Take a fresh look at the lighting in your home. If you still use incandescent lighting, your light bulbs are operating at only 25 percent energy efficiency. Replacing your home's five most frequently used bulbs with Energy Star-certified LEDs can save you \$75 per year. Another

easy way to save is to always turn lights off in rooms that are not being used.

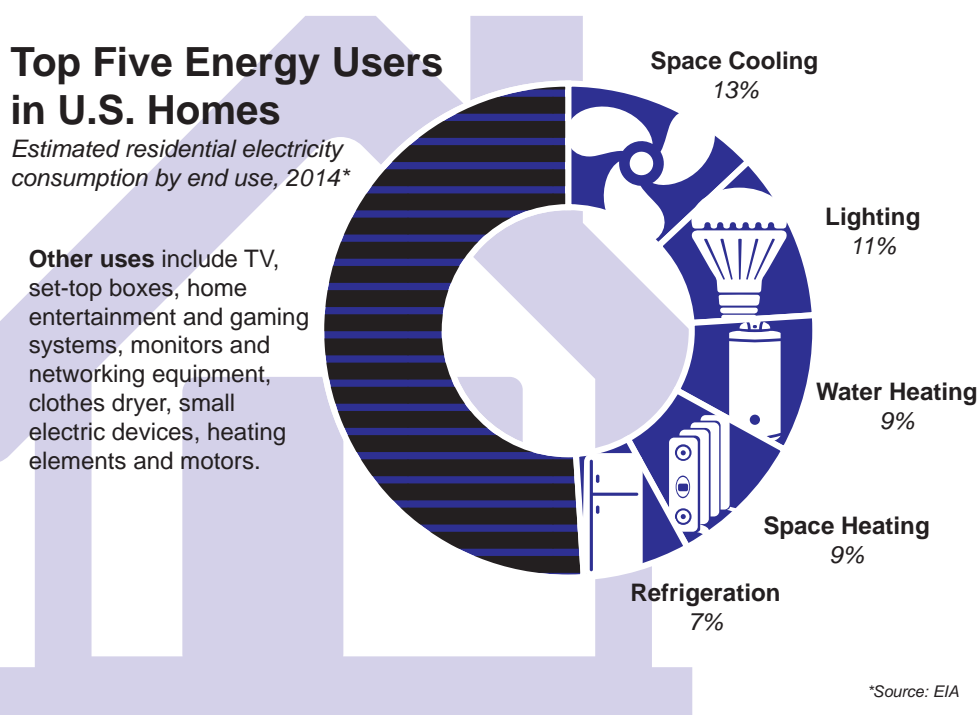
### Water heating efficiency

Just as it is energy-wise to insulate your roof, wall or floor, it also pays to wrap your hot water heater with an insulating blanket. This is all the more critical if you have an older unit. Make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions. For additional efficiency and savings, insulate exposed hot water lines and drain one to two gallons of

### Top Five Energy Users in U.S. Homes

Estimated residential electricity consumption by end use, 2014\*

Other uses include TV, set-top boxes, home entertainment and gaming systems, monitors and networking equipment, clothes dryer, small electric devices, heating elements and motors.



\*Source: EIA

water from the bottom of your tank annually to prevent sediment build-up.

### Save some cold hard cash

If your refrigerator was purchased before 2001, chances are it uses 40 percent more energy than a new Energy Star model. If you are considering an appliance update, a new Energy Star refrigerator uses at least 15 percent less energy than non-qualified models and 20 percent less energy than required by current federal standards. Regardless of the age of your fridge, there are additional steps you can take to save energy and money. For example, don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends temperatures of 35 – 38 degrees Fahrenheit for the fresh food compartment and 0 degrees Fahrenheit for separate freezers (used for long-term storage).

By understanding how your home uses energy, you can determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet. For additional ways to save, contact Cotton Electric's energy experts at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.



## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Save energy and money by lowering your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. This will also slow mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.

Source: energy.gov

## The Current

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### December 2015 Operating Stats

	2015	2014
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$5,202,024	\$6,555,161
Cost of Purchased Power	3,585,523	4,556,901
Taxes	102,854	119,454
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,029	1,177
Average Farm and Residential Bill	145	174
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,406	1,544
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,203	18,273
Miles Energized	5,153	5,151
Density Per Mile	3.53	3.55
New Service Connects YTD	333	361
Services Retired	197	164



#### 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.



# Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the March issue, please submit information by March 2 by calling 580-875-4259 or send an email to [info@cottonelectric.com](mailto:info@cottonelectric.com).

### AARP offers free tax prep 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 at several locations in the Cotton Electric service area.

No appointment is necessary but certain documents are. 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.

Trained IRS volunteers will be available from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays, and from noon to 4 p.m. Wednesdays at the Center for Creative Living, 3501 Dr. Elsie Hamm Drive, Lawton.

Volunteers will be on hand from 4 to 7 p.m. Mondays, 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesdays and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursdays at Lawton Public Library, 110 SW 4th Street.

The free service is available from 8:30 to 11 a.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays in the Duncan Public Library Annex, 2211 N. U.S. Highway 81.

### Fish fry set for Lenten Fridays

Fish, fries, slaw, beans, dessert and drinks are on the menu from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. every Friday from Feb. 12 through March 18 at the annual Lenten Fish Fry sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, Council 5168. All are welcome to dine at the Marlow Catholic Church at 4th & Comanche under the blue roof or take a great meal home.

Meals are \$9 for adults, and children under 12 eat free. All proceeds go to community projects serving children and those less fortunate.

### Passion Play rehearsals begin

Rehearsals for the annual performance of "The Prince of Peace" will be at 2 p.m. for six weeks prior to the pageant performances at 8:30 on March 19 and 26 in the Holy City of the Wichitas.

This 91st performance of the birth, life, death and Resurrection of Jesus in is need of volunteers for many roles. No acting skills are necessary.

For information, visit [TheHolyCityLawton.com](http://TheHolyCityLawton.com) or send an email to [TheHolyCityLawton@yahoo.com](mailto:TheHolyCityLawton@yahoo.com).

### Career Expo set for Feb. 18

More than 70 employers from a variety of fields are planning to participate in the Red River Career Expo from 1 to 3:30 p.m. Feb. 18 in the Aggie Rec Center on the Cameron University campus.

The event is open to the public. Job seekers should wear business attire.

For information, call Cameron University Career Services at 580-581-6769 or visit [Cameron.edu/RedRiverCareer-Expo](http://Cameron.edu/RedRiverCareer-Expo).

### CU offers two musical productions

Cameron University's Department of Theatre Arts is offering two spring productions.

"Fallen Angels" is a 1925 Noel Coward farce about two wealthy British women tempted by the return of a Frenchman who once bedded both of them. The champagne-bubbly, dryly witty romp about the foibles of the British upper class also deals with such universal themes as the lure of lustful sex, marriages gone stale, the nature of commitment, and the sexual double standard.

Performances will be at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 18-20 and at 2 p.m. Feb. 21.

"The Pajama Game" deals with labor troubles in a pajama factory, where workers' demands for a seven-and-a-half-cent raise are going unheeded. In the midst of this ordeal, love blossoms between Babe, the grievance committee head, and Sid, the new factory superintendent.

Performances will be at 7:30 p.m. April 21-23 and 2 p.m. April 24.

All performances will be in Cameron University Theatre.

### DLT presents 'Beauty and the Beast'

Duncan Little Theatre's presentation of "Disney's Beauty and the Beast," is set for 7:30 p.m. Feb. 19, 20, 26 and 27 and 2 p.m. Feb. 21 at the Simmons Center in Duncan.

This "tale as old as time" is the classic story of Belle, a young woman in a provincial town, and the Beast, who is really a young prince trapped under the spell of an enchantress. If the Beast can learn to love and be loved, the curse will end and he will be transformed to his former self.

### Horse club sets annual clinic

Duncan Lake Horse Club is having its annual Coggins Clinic from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 5 at Duncan Lake Pavilion. In addition to Coggins testing, other vaccines will be offered, including Eastern/Western, tetanus, rabies, West Nile and flu/rhino.

Coggins testing will be \$15 per horse. The clinic, conducted by Dr. Connie McLemore of Countryside Veterinary, is open to the public with no limit on the number of horses. Rain date will be March 12.

Other DLHC activities that day for members include the annual Chili Cook Off at 6 p.m. at the Pavilion. New members are encouraged to attend these events. Annual dues are \$12 for an individual and \$15 for a family.

For information, call 580-475-7190.

### Home, garden show begins March 18

Find practical home improvement ideas and visit professional home and garden service providers during Lawton Home Builders 52nd annual Home and Garden Show.

Doors will be open from 5 to 8 p.m. March 18, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. March 19, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 20 in the Great Plains Coliseum and Annex. Admission is free.

More Community Spotlight on Page 4

## Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

March		April		May	
Ad Sales	Feb. 29	Ad Sales	Mar. 28	Ad Sales	April 25
Classified	Mar. 3	Classified	Mar. 31	Classified	April 28
Publish Date	Mar. 14	Publish Date	Apr. 11	Publish Date	May 9

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## PHOTO OF THE MONTH



"God's beauty was the inspiration for this photo," Christina Taurman said. "Ice was causing such chaos, but watching Queenie bask in the sun shining through the ice-covered branches was simply beautiful."

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for March is Oklahoma! Entries can be emailed to [info@cottonelectric.com](mailto:info@cottonelectric.com) or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize package of CEC goodies.

## Please Help Update Our Records

Has your address changed? Many of our members have new mailing addresses after E-911 remapping. It is up to the member to tell us the new address.

How about your phone number? Some have dropped land lines and are using cell phones.

In the event that we need to contact you, a current phone number is very important and improves the efficiency of our outage reporting system.

Why would we contact you? We may need to contact you regarding your account, a power outage, or to schedule an appointment.

Please complete the form below and return with your next payment or mail it to us at 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. You may also call us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520 to update.

Thank you for helping us improve our service.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Account # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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Around here, there's more to trust than making sure your lights come on when you flip the switch. We also must have information you can trust, whether it's about local renewable energy options or ways to lower your bill. For more, visit [CottonElectric.com](http://CottonElectric.com).

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# Community Spotlight

## LPO plans Basso Profundo

Lawton Philharmonic Orchestra presents Basso Profundo at 8 p.m. Feb. 27 at McMahon Auditorium, 801 NW Ferris Avenue, Lawton. Patrons will hear pieces by Beethoven, Vivaldi, Mozart and Ravel.

The performance features Lawton native Jonathan Moots singing powerful pieces from Mozart and Ravel. The Vivaldi will feature husband and wife duo Lisa and Larry Reed, LPO's principal oboe and bassoon, in rousing concerto for both instruments, while Beethoven's Coriolan Overture and the extraordinary Symphony No. 7 bookend the program.

Buy tickets online or call 580-531-5043. For information, visit LawtonPhil.com.

## Magic Lantern screens classic films

Magic Lantern Film Society of Cameron University screens DVD presentations of classic films in the CETES Conference Center, Room B.

The March 4 offering will be "The Diary of a Lost Girl," the story of a rich man's daughter who gives birth to an illegitimate child and is then placed in a correctional house.

The 1929 film features Louise Brooks, Fritz Rasp and Josef Ravensky in starring roles.

There is no admission charge, but donations are accepted. For information about the society, or to see a schedule and synopsis of films, visit Cameron.edu/magiclantern.

## MP hosts ParkStomp March 18-20

ParkStomp is three days of live bluegrass music in Medicine Park.

First acts perform on March 18. Performance by Tyler Gregory begins at 7 p.m. The Squarshers follow at 9, and Ca-

lamity Cubes take the stage at 11.

Music on the main stage begins at noon March 19. Entertainers include Sugar Britches, Tyler Gregory, Dance Monkey Dance, The Squarshers, Chucky Waggs and Dirtfoot.

Final performances begin at noon March 20 on the main stage. Acts include Opal Agafia and the Sweet Nothings, Dance Monkey Dance, Steamboat Bandits and Von Stomper.

The event is free and open to the public. Visit MedicinePark.com for more information.

## LCT presents 'Catfish Moon'

Performances of Lawton Community Theatre's presentation of "Catfish Moon" are set for April 1-3 and 7-10 at John Denney Playhouse, 1316 NW Bell Avenue in Lawton.

"Catfish Moon" will be LCT's OCTA Festival submission. It is a comedy featuring old friends meeting for a fishing trip on a favorite old pier. The friends discover that true friendship is too important to let slip away.

For information, visit LCT-OK.org or call 580-355-1600.

## CTAC Live presents Cimarrón

CTAC Live presents the rousing world music of Cimarrón at 7:30 p.m. April 15 at the Simmons Center in Duncan.

From the cattle-rearing Llanos Orientales, region of Colombia, Cimarrón performs the festive dance music of 'joropo,' a fierce virtuoso display of rippling melodies and powerful rhythms combining Andalusian, Indigenous Indian and African roots. The musical fireworks created by harp, bandola, cuatro, bass, cajan, tambora, maracas and high-pitched voices are simply breathtaking.

For information and ticket purchases, visit ChisholmTrailArts.com.



## Skurnack gains leadership tips, earns scholarship

High school senior Alexis Skurnack represented Cotton Electric Cooperative at the 16th annual Touchstone Energy Leadership Summit held Feb. 6 at Chesapeake Energy Finish Line Tower in Oklahoma City. She was among 25 students from across the state selected to participate in the event sponsored by Cotton and other Touchstone Energy cooperatives in Oklahoma.

Alexis was chosen from the finalists participating in Cotton Electric's 2015 Youth Tour essay contest. She attends Walters High School and is the daughter of Dennis Skurnack.

During the summit, students had the opportunity to hear Rhett Laubach,



Brandon Baumgarten and Kelly Barnes, all nationally known speakers and Oklahomans. They presented topics to encourage and inspire the students to reach within and find their inner leader.

In addition to leaving the workshop energized with new communications tools and greater leadership knowledge, each teen in attendance took home a \$250 college scholarship.

At the conclusion of the action-packed leadership training, students and their families were treated to an Oklahoma City Blue basketball game at Cox Convention Center. The Blue beat the Toronto Raptors 905, with a final score of 101-92.

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

In January 2016, members used their cards at pharmacies in the CEC service area when filling 123 prescriptions not covered by insurance. A total of \$3,914.08 was discounted for an average savings of \$31.82 per use.

The total savings since the program's inception in April 2008 has been \$585,760.

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.



DPC-0805

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# Watch for Changes to the 2016 FAFSA

If you have a child in college, you're probably familiar with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which must be completed to help ensure that students don't miss out on federal and state grants, work-study jobs and loans. But you might not know that some important changes will be coming to the FAFSA during 2016 – and these changes can affect both the process of filing for aid, and, possibly, the amount of aid your child will receive.

Here are three key changes to watch for:

Earlier availability of the FAFSA – Currently, you need to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after Jan. 1 – which means you're probably filling out the form even before you've filed your taxes, which aren't due until April. As a result, you may have to estimate your

income and update the information later. However, beginning with the 2017–2018 school year, you can complete the FAFSA starting on Oct. 1 of the previous calendar year, rather than wait until January. At that point, you will already have filed your 2015 taxes, so in filling out the FAFSA, you won't have to rely on estimates of your income.

For 2016 only, this change presents something of an anomaly – specifically, you should fill out the FAFSA as soon as possible for the 2016–2017 school year, using an estimate of your 2015 income, and then complete the FAFSA again in October for the 2017–2018 school year, using your actual 2015 income. In future years, you'll only have to complete the FAFSA once, with applications accepted beginning each Oct. 1.

Lower "asset protection" al-

lowance –When you report your financial information on the FAFSA, some of your assets – such as your IRA and 401(k) – are not counted toward the resources you're expected to contribute to your child's education. Some other assets are considered available, but a percentage of these assets can be sheltered, with the exact amount depending largely on your age and marital status. For the 2016–17 school year, this sheltered asset amount has been reduced significantly. However, while this reduction could have some effect on your student's aid package, it shouldn't be too severe because income, more than assets, is a bigger factor in the federal financial aid formula.

No more shared mailing list – When filing the FAFSA, students can choose up to 10 colleges to receive their financial information. Previously, when

students sent their FAFSAs to multiple colleges and universities, these schools could see the other institutions on the mailing list. But starting with the 2016–2017 application, schools will no longer have this information. This could actually benefit your child. Previously, if a school saw it was listed first on the FAFSA, it might have assumed it was the student's first choice and, as a result, may not have felt the need to be flexible in awarding financial aid. Now, though, without a list of its competitors, a school might be more open to negotiating a more favorable aid package for your child.

It's a good idea to stay current on the changes connected to the FAFSA because it helps determine financial aid eligibility – and financial aid is a key component of your strategy to pay for your child's (or grandchild's) education.

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# Conservation seedling sale returning



**ODA foresters plan stops in Medicine Park, Walters**

The truck carrying seedlings for the annual sale won't be hard to find on March 9 in Walters.

In a state known for the wind sweeping down the plain, there is an economical way to manage the effects of the wind while enhancing a property's wildlife habitat. All it takes is a few hours of the landowner's time to plant tree seedlings purchased from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODA).

At 90 cents or less per tree or shrub seedling, the annual

conservation tree seedling sale offers one of the best bargains around.

A refrigerated semi-truck full of seedlings will be in the Cotton Electric service area on March 15. From 8:30 a.m. to noon, it will be parked at the J.A. Manning Fish Hatchery off of Oklahoma Highway 49 in Medicine Park. It will then travel to Walters to continue the sale from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

in the Cotton Electric Community Room.

The low-cost seedlings are available through the ODA Forestry Division to aid landowners in good land management. Some examples of uses for conservation trees include establishing windbreaks, curbing erosion, protecting watersheds and riparian areas, livestock protection, improving wildlife habitat, timber production, Christmas

## 10-Tree Bonus

The first 20 Cotton Electric members purchasing two bundles of trees at either location during the seedling sale will receive another 10 tree seedlings. To get the bonus, members will need to provide their Cotton Electric account number when purchasing the minimum two bundles of seedlings. Type of bonus seedling will depend on availability on the day of the sale.

trees and firewood plantations.

Kevin Keys, a forester with ODA, said, "It is remarkable how a few well-placed trees will improve a site."

"Oak trees, persimmons, pecans, plums, lilac and Osage orange can improve wildlife habitat. Osage orange, Arizona cypress, Scotch pine, shumard oak, and arborvitae are a few of the species that can provide an effective, attractive farmstead or field windbreak."

Trees can help with energy conservation. Keys pointed out that a properly placed and maintained windbreak can reduce home-heating costs in the winter by up to 30 percent.

Windbreaks also dramatically increase soil moisture available to crops and help reduce soil erosion caused by wind. Properly planted black locust seedlings can significantly reduce the growth of an eroding gully or stream cutbank, as well as provide wildlife habitat and firewood potential.

Pecan and black walnut seedlings are available for timber and nut production.

The species mentioned above

are just a sampling of the trees that may be available at the sale. Seedlings are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. This may limit the variety of choices available.

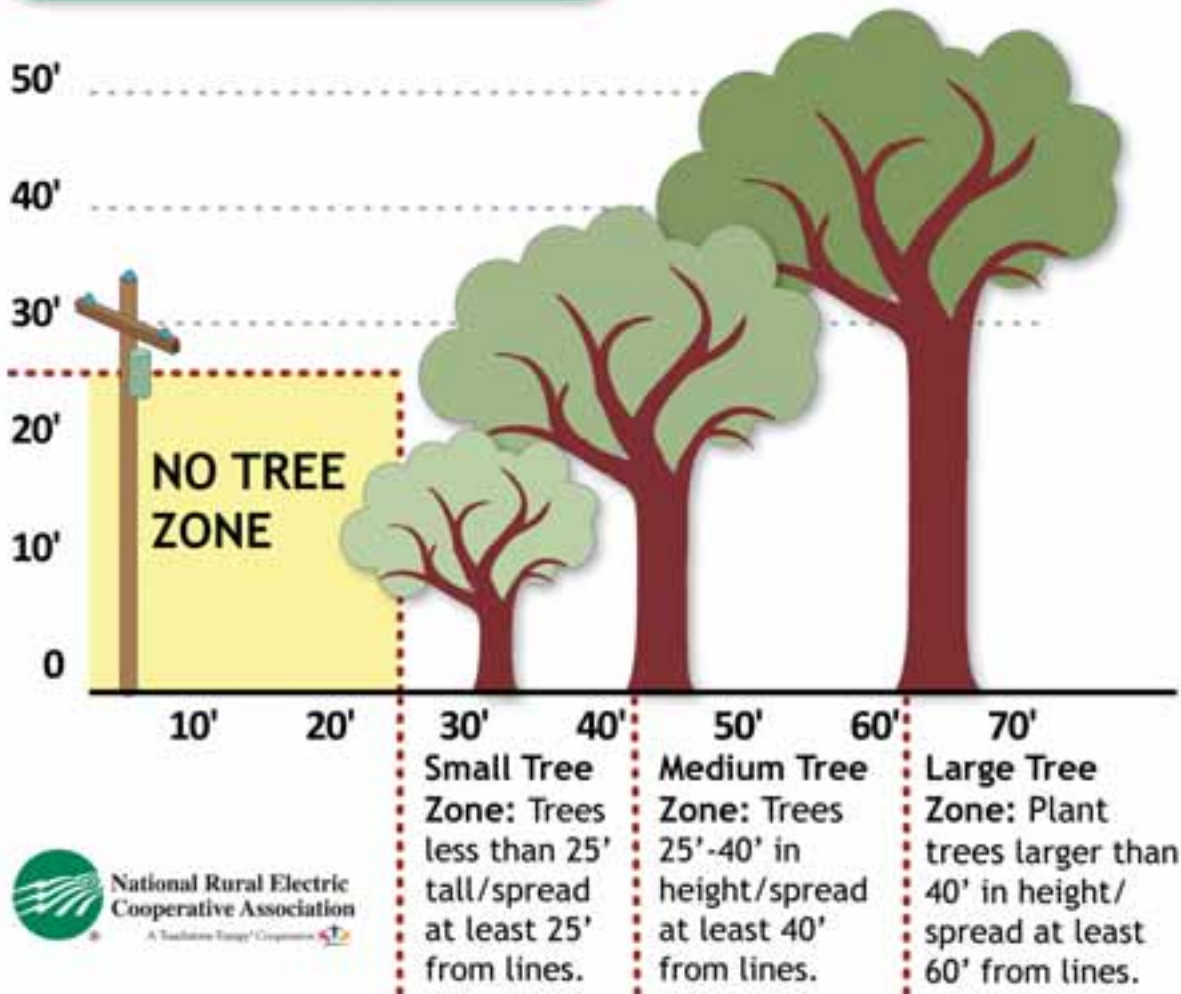
There is a minimum purchase of 100 bare-root forest tree seedlings in bundles of 50. Prices of the seedlings vary according to the variety of trees. Discounts apply for larger quantities purchased.

A state forester will be on hand to provide information and make recommendations about the type of tree to choose, planting and care. For information about the sale or any other forestry-related matter, call Keys at 580-223-3973.

Because trees and power lines don't mix, Cotton Electric employees will also offer planting guides to help prevent problems in the future.

To keep from damaging underground lines, call 1-800-522-OKIE (6543) at least 48 hours before digging. This free service will mark the location of lines. Location requests can also be made at callok.com.

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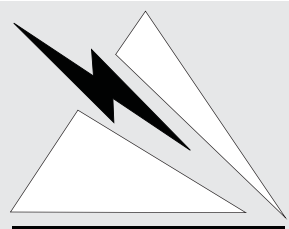
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**CESI**  
Departmental Spotlight

Cotton Electric Services, Inc.



Staff at Cotton Electric Services, Inc., includes, front row, CEO Jennifer Meason, Lab Supervisor Eric Woods, COO Bryce Hooper, and, back row, part-time lab helpers Michael Taylor, Jake Lawler and Brad McLain, CESI Representative Tracy Lindsey, and lab technicians Angie Garza, Shelly Sebrt, Ryan Noland and Karen Holt. Buck Calfy, not pictured, is the route driver.

# It's all in the details for CESI staff

Safety is the first priority at Cotton Electric Services, Inc. It is the primary reason the CESI test lab exists.

Established in 1984, CESI specializes in testing, repairing and selling special safety equipment to electric providers nationwide. Six full-time and four part-time employees use state-of-the-art cleaning and dielectric testing procedures to ensure personal protective equipment is up to national standards.

Attention to detail is essential, said Eric Woods, lab supervisor.

"Our job is to identify the tiniest of flaws in order to ensure each piece of equipment's safety," Woods said.

CESI tests items used every day by line workers, such as new and used gloves, blankets, sleeves, line hose, hot sticks, jumpers, grounding chains, hoods, bell and elbow covers and other protective equipment. The staff cleans and then

scrutinizes each item for visual signs of wear and tear before subjecting them to electrical testing.

Lab technicians include Karen Holt, Angie Garza, Shelly Sebrt and Ryan Noland. Lab helpers include Michael Taylor, Brad McLain and Jake Lawler.

The testing facility has exceeded the strictest standards established by the National Association of Independent Laboratories and maintains its NAIL accreditation for protective equipment testing.

If items do not pass the tests and must be discarded, CESI serves as a supplier for replacements. An on-site warehouse holds an extensive inventory of products in an effort to provide customers with materials they need at an affordable cost.

Finishing the year with a good sales record is important, too. Final tallies for 2015 show sales were well above the \$1 million mark at the stand-alone for-

profit subsidiary of Cotton Electric Co-operative.

Bryce Hooper, chief operating officer for CESI, said annual sales figures beyond \$1 million have been reached six times in the company's 31-year history, and that 2015 was the highest year for total sales.

Tracy Lindsey, CESI representative, compiled the final numbers for 2015. The lab tested a total of 90,866 items for 471 customers. That's a 3.2 percent increase over the number of items tested in 2014.

Hooper cited a couple of reasons for the positive numbers.

"CESI does well when our customers do well. Many of our customers are experiencing load growth in their areas, both residential and commercial. An increased demand for contractors also contributed to our business increase in 2015."

Hooper said excellent customer service is another reason the lab is doing well. For example, a number of customers have come to depend on the monthly visits from Buck Calfy, a CESI representative who picks up personal protection equipment to be tested and drops off items that have passed inspection.

There are two routes, one to the west and another to the south of the headquarters in Walters. Calfy travels nearly 3,000 miles each month to service the routes.

The entire staff at CESI is dedicated to providing top-quality service.

"We know lives depend on the excellence of products and services we provide," Hooper said.

"We focus on quality and safety throughout the sales and testing process, and our staff does an excellent job of taking care of our customers."

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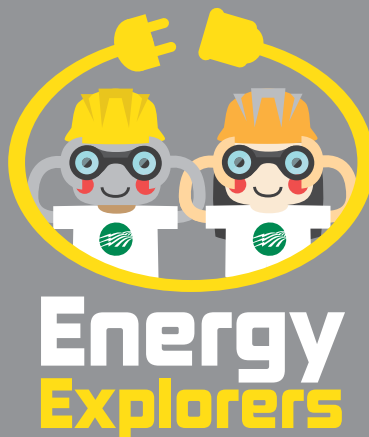
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# ELECTRICAL SAFETY QUIZ



Electricity is great! We use it to light our homes, watch TV with our families and enjoy many other activities. But electricity can be dangerous if we aren't careful when using it. Test your electrical safety knowledge by answering the questions below.

- It is safe to run extension cords under carpet or rugs in your home.
  - False
  - True
- How often should smoke alarms in your home be tested?
  - Once a year
  - Once a month
  - Once every three months
- How far should items be kept away from space heaters?
  - At least one foot
  - At least five feet
  - At least three feet
- Overloaded outlets can overheat and cause a fire.
  - True
  - False
- When using an electrical appliance or playing with an electrical toy outside, what is the minimum distance you should keep between yourself and any wet surface or swimming pool?
  - Ten feet
  - Five feet
  - Three feet

How many did you get right? Check the answer key below!

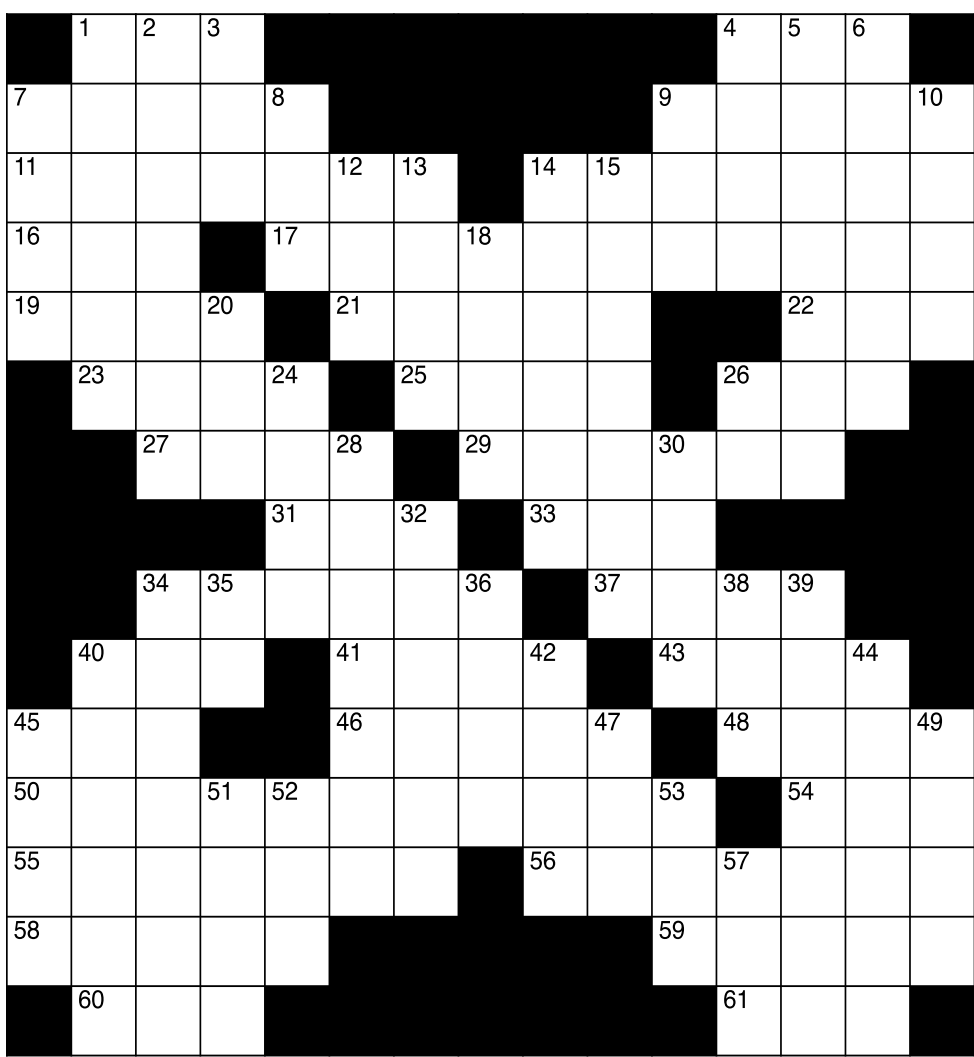


**COTTON**  
ELECTRIC CO-OP

Answers: 1) A, 2) B, 3) C, 4) A, 5) A

**ACROSS**

- Basics
- Paper container
- Diving ducks of N America having a bluish-gray bill
- Spruce
- Sacred choral composition
- Ear lobe decoration
- S Am. wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers
- Wolf drama series
- Straight, bowling or bobby
- Cotton growing region in W. Central India
- Tax saving retirement account
- Expresses pleasure
- Synoptical
- Peseta
- Oceans
- Weekday
- Octagonal motif in rugs
- Beam out
- Escargots
- Mother of Apollo in ancient mythology
- Fed
- A sleeveless garment like cloak but shorter
- Yugoslavian River
- Patti Hearst's captors
- Representational likeness
- Plundered
- Clothier
- \_\_\_ de Janeiro
- Peaceful relations
- Replaced union workers



- African people of Senegambia
- Every 24 hours
- 1/100 yen
- Summate
- Gum arabic
- Crazy, loco, wacky
- Unconnected
- Whirring sound
- Tartness
- A group of individuals
- Bard
- Buddy
- Not an amateur
- North-central Indian city
- Chit
- Reverences
- Inspire with love
- Endocrine gland
- Biblical name for Syria
- The woman
- Heroic tale
- Daddy
- Killing yourself
- In a way, discolors
- Artiodactyls
- Resistant to change
- Northeast
- Watering places
- A way to pave
- Value excessively
- Poplar trees (Spanish)
- Elk Grove High School
- Abroad
- Author George Bernard
- Old world, new
- Tiny insectivorous W. Indian bird
- British School
- Moroccan coastal region
- Radioactivity unit
- Sheep sound

**DOWN**

## Paint The Town Green



Participants can earn E-drawing tickets starting at midnight on March 1 through 11:00pm on March 26, 2016.

- Slot players earn entry tickets by accumulating points on their Comanche Card, 1 E-drawing ticket per 5 points earned during the contest period.
- Drawings will be held every Friday & Saturday from 7pm to 11pm. A total of 9 winners will be selected during this time for the chance to win up to \$500 cash!



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Thursday, March 17, 2016 12pm-10pm

A total of 21 hot seat drawings will be held throughout the promotional period. Guests must be actively playing at the slot machine with their own card to be eligible. Approximately one winner will be announced every 30 minutes.

Patron Management's random rewards monitor will be used to select a hot seat winner. Once this winner has been confirmed they will receive \$25 Comanche Credit. Every other player actively playing with their card on the hot seat winner's bank of slots will also receive \$10 Comanche Credit.

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Gracie Lucas waits for Crisi Chapman to record her latest Charm It purchase.

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# Find something for anyone at Dear Friends

By Karen Kaley

Dear Friends is owned and run by a family that lives right here in southwest Oklahoma, just like nearly every local business listed as a Co-op Connections partner on Page 13.

However, one could not call Dear Friends a mom-and-pop store. It is operated by three generations, and it would be more accurate to call it a mom and grandmom and great-grandmom store, with an aunt or two thrown in, and occasional assistance from various pops.

A lot has changed since The Current visited with Crisi Chapman (mom) and her mother, Pat Rosen (grandmom), back in April 2013. At the time, the shop carried women's clothing and children's diversions, was called Blue Eyed Girls – Dear Friends and was on North U.S. 81 Highway.

Blue Eyed Girls was a clothing shop first set up by mother and daughter in 2009. They bought Dear Friends, the gift store next door, in 2011 and hyphenated the names. Before long, the gifts and toys for those aged 0 to 104 took over, pushing the clothing out of the store and Blue Eyed Girls out of the name.

Popularity, variety of offerings – everything about Dear Friends continued to grow except the space it occupied. It seemed to shrink.

About a year ago, a friend told Crisi about a space coming available on Main Street. Mom and grandmom and Ollive Graham (great-

**Dear Friends**  
10% discount on regular priced items



grandmom) decided the move would be good for Dear Friends. With the help of extended family and support from Main Street Duncan's Destiny Alfenger, the shop relocated to the heart of Duncan in August 2015.

"It's been great! Amazing!" Crisi and Ollive said of the first six months at 826 W. Main.

Crisi said traffic has increased and Main Street events like Boo Review and Holiday Stroll have been big successes.

"We had so many people in here during the Stroll," she said of the elbow-to-elbow crowd, "there was barely room to move around."

This in a space that added 1,000 square feet to the floor plan.

Dear Friends is stuffed full of what has become the store's tagline: Awesome gifts and fabulous finds. The offerings run from new twists on old ideas to collectibles to the very personal, with items sure to suit young and old, male and female.

The women feel they have something for everyone and Ollive said they could offer suggestions for even the most challenging person on a gift list.

"We just ask a few questions about the person, their age and what they like. We can usu-

ally come up with something."

There are indestructible books for the very young and relaunched Fisher Price Chatter Phones for toddlers. Children's offerings are sparkly or goey, bookish or silly, scientific or creative, simple or complex. Flamingos and giraffes are the type of stuffed animals found at Dear Friends.

There is a section for teens and a section for adults. Some of the gifts are whimsical and some are quite sophisticated.

Probably the best thing about Dear Friends is the service. All customers are greeted as though a dear friend has come through the door. Crisi, Pat and Ollive are familiar with all the store has to offer and can be quite helpful in selecting from the myriad of choices.

And, they keep track of what appeals to potential gift recipients. In addition to a baby registry, they can create Christmas and birthday wish lists. They keep a card file of charms a young person may already have for their Charm-It bracelet or necklace.

These Dear Friends are in the store from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. Call them at 580-475-0577 if you can't make it in by 5 and want to run by to pick something up.

Cotton Electric members should remember to bring their Co-op Connections Card. Dear Friends offers cardholders a 10 percent discount on regular-priced items.

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## Take care of your home's electrical system as it ages

To help prevent injury and illness there are things we know we have to do to care for ourselves – especially as we get older. Our homes also have to be maintained to stay in good shape, and an important part of that maintenance includes a home's electrical system.

The National Association of State Fire Marshals reports that older homes are more than three times more likely to have an electrical fire than newer homes. An electrical system's insulation can eventually wear out from a variety of factors including age, animal gnawing, and overloaded circuits.

According to the U.S. Department

of Energy, with increasing energy consumption the electrical demands on older homes can have an impact on the household wiring. The National Electric Code's minimum standard for residential electric service is 100 amps.

Be aware of the signs of electrical wiring problems, which include dim or flickering lights as well as a burning smell, smoke, shocks, or discoloration when using an electrical outlet or switch. Also look out for frayed wires, breakers that trip or blow, and signs of potential rodent damage that may affect insulation.

If you suspect a problem, shut the outlet or switch off at the circuit breaker, and

contact an electrician to make repairs.

To check on the status of your home's electrical system, contact a qualified electrician to perform an electrical inspection of your home. The U.S. Consumer Product and Safety Commission (CPSC) suggests the following timeframes for inspections:

- **If the last electrical inspection of your home was 40 or more years ago:** an inspection is overdue.
- **If the last inspection was 10 to 40 years ago:** an inspection is recommended, especially if electrical demands have increased significantly or you have noticed warning signs of electrical problem.

• **If the last inspection was less than 10 years ago:** an inspection should not be needed unless you have noticed any of the warning signs of an electrical problem or any temporary wiring has been added.

The CPSC further suggests that if you are not sure when the last time your home had an electrical inspection, you might be able to find a label or tag with that information on your electrical panel door or cover. If there is no label or tag, then use the age of the house as a guide to the probable need for an inspection.

To learn more about home electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

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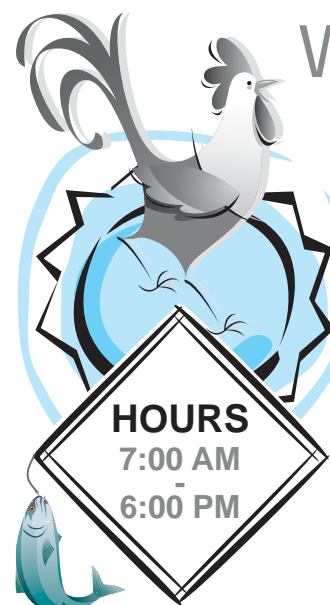
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# Substation 101

By Karen Kaley

Cotton Electric members heard a lot about substations during restoration efforts following the post-Christmas ice storm. Co-op updates talked about damage to transmission structures causing substations to lose power. We said we would try to back-feed and that we were adding circuits slowly.

If a person's best knowledge about electricity is "I flip a switch and the lights come on," some of that language didn't really explain why the lights didn't come on.

Would you like a little more information about substations? Read on.

Substations in the Cotton Electric service area are where our power supplier hands electricity off to us. Western Farmers Electric Cooperative is a generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Anadarko. Cotton Electric is one of 22 member-owners of the Western Farmers Electric Cooperative, or WFEC.

WFEC serves 17 Oklahoma cooperatives, Altus Air Force Base, four New Mexico cooperatives and other power users in Kansas and Texas. Power is generated by a diversified mix of resources at locations across the state.

Power must travel hundreds of miles in some cases before reaching substations. It takes a great deal of electromotive force, or high voltage, to traverse the distance. High-voltage lines are suspended on huge structures that are built to endure most weather challenges.

Heavy ice and high winds combined can take down even the strongest of those structures. The late December storm damaged about 60, many in the Wichita Mountains area. Power was shut off until the structures could be rebuilt and it was safe to resume delivery.

## Indiahoma sub



## Cache sub

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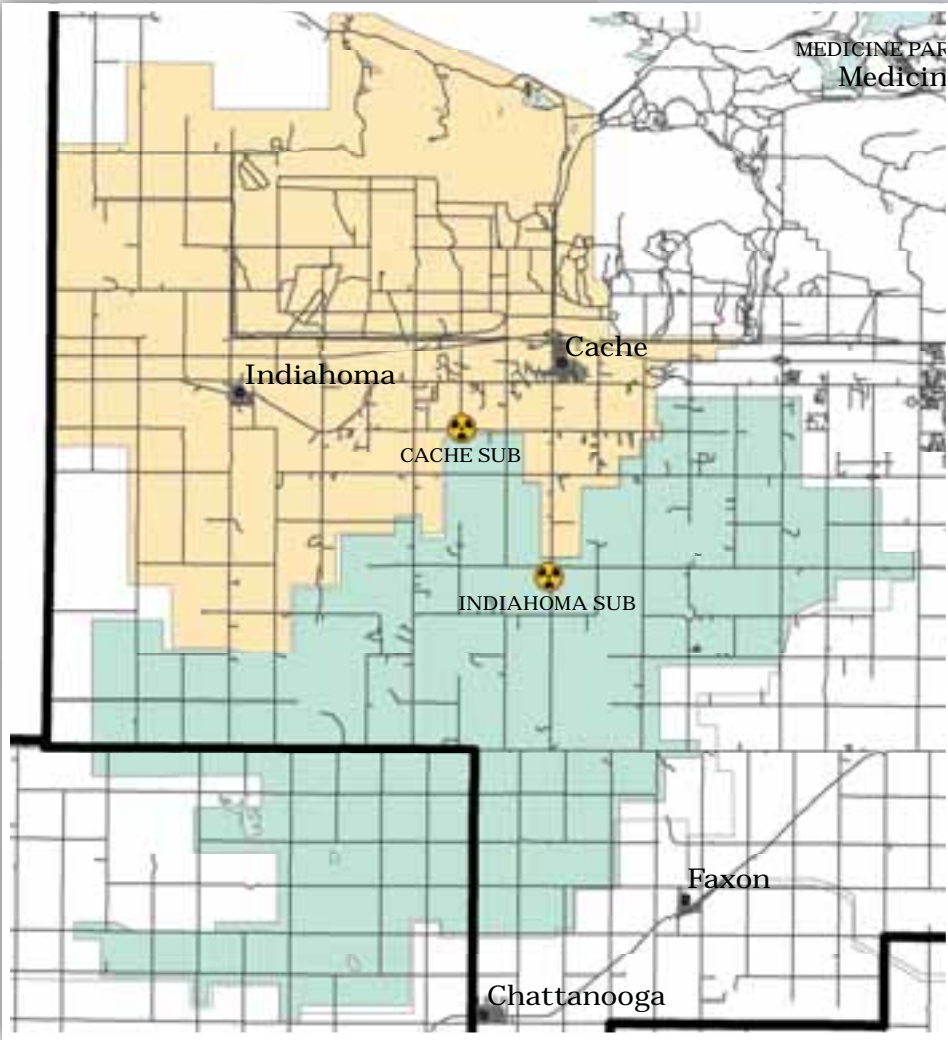
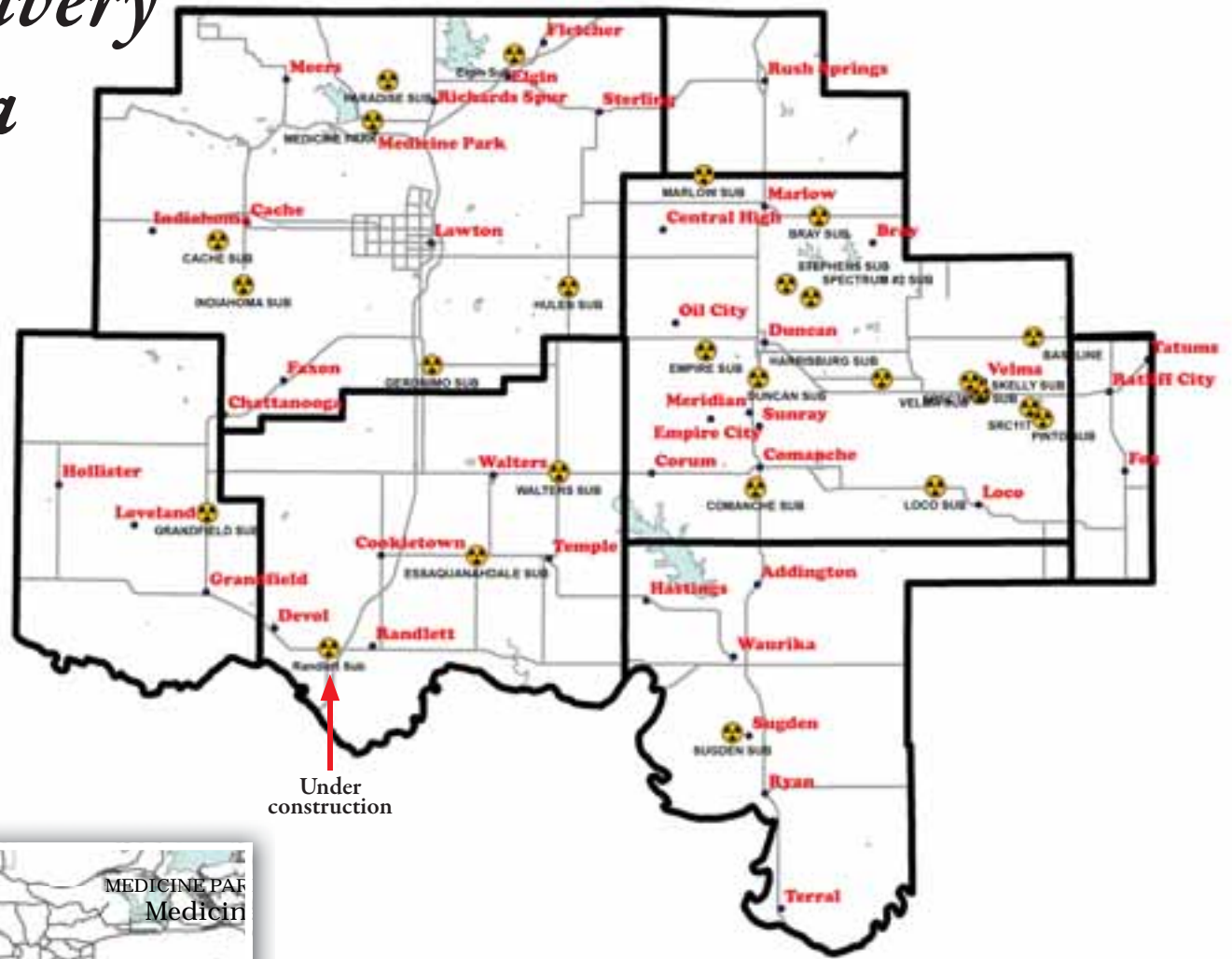
# A look at power delivery throughout the area

One transmission line may serve several substations, or subs. In the case of the winter storm, the damaged WFEC line included the one that powers the Cache, Indiahoma, Grandfield and Essaquanahdale subs.

There are 27 active subs in the Cotton Electric service area and one under construction. They are built and owned by WFEC. Maintenance is a joint responsibility of WFEC and Cotton Electric. We help with monthly inspections and information gathering. Cotton line workers can perform some repairs up to a point. More technical repairs and all transmission line repairs are the responsibility of WFEC.

Transmission lines criss cross the territory in such a way that sometimes power can be rerouted or backfed while maintenance or repairs are performed. Sometimes not.

The Cache and Indiahoma subs have characteristics that help each other when one or the other is challenged but they are energized by the same transmission line, which was damaged in December.



There are 28 substation locations in the Cotton Electric service area, shown above. The map at left shows the areas served by the Indiahoma and Cache substations.

The sub called Indiahoma was rebuilt last year. High voltage comes into the WFEC substation, is transformed, or stepped down, and goes out in four directions, or circuits. The Cotton Electric circuits from this sub serve 756 meters along 191 miles, mainly rural residential areas such as Pecan Lakes and Bradford Estates. The circuits also form loops to the Cache, Grandfield and Geronimo subs, all of which lost power after the storm.

The Indiahoma sub and Cotton Electric lines serve some, but not all, of the town of Cache. In fact, there are some streets where houses next door to each other are served by different power providers. This is especially noticeable when

there is a large outage like an ice storm and one provider restores power before the other.

The sub called Cache has only two circuits and powers 1,245 meters along 199 miles of line. Communities served include Indiahoma, Holsey Acres and the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The only sub that can backfeed to the Cache sub is the Indiahoma sub.

In the coming months, we'll take a look at some of the other substations in the Cotton Electric service area. We'll include a map of the area each sub serves and provide a bit of information about their function. We know you can hardly wait for the next installment of this electrifying topic.

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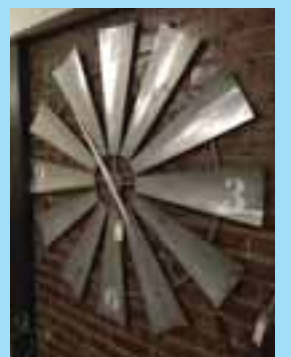
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# Winter is citrus season

Citrus season starts in November, but these lovely fruits stay in season for most of the winter. Oranges, tangerines, lemons, limes, grapefruit and pummelos are the most common citrus fruit in U.S. grocery stores.

The citrus family gets its name from the genus of the tree family called "citrus." Citrus trees are native to Asia, but they are cultivated all over the world. The U.S. enjoys access to citrus fruits all year long, but they are considered "in season" in the winter months.

Citrus fruits are commonly known for being high in vitamin C. They are also contain fiber, potassium, folate, calcium, thiamin, niacin, vitamin B6, phosphorus, magnesium, copper, riboflavin, pantothenic acid and a variety of phytochemicals which are increasingly being studied for their cancer-fighting properties.

Citrus fruits are naturally free of fat, sodium, and cholesterol. They do contain sugar and carbohydrates, but these are naturally occurring. In addition to the vast nutritional positives, these fruits are low in calories, making them a healthy snack. An added bonus is vitamin C in citrus fruits, which helps absorb iron from plant foods.

When ripe, citrus fruits are sweet, tangy and juicy. The key to shopping for ripe citrus is to look for fruits that are heavy for their size and are free of dark spots. Citrus fruits like oranges, grapefruit and tangerines are great for snacking and often come in seedless varieties. Mandarin varieties such as clementines and satsumas are very



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

## Food For THOUGHT

easy to peel, making them perfect for lunch boxes for the little ones.

Citrus fruits are widely used in cooking. Lemons and limes are more commonly used for cooking than snacking. They brighten dressings, desserts and meat dishes as well as help prevent browning of cut fruits like apples. Lemon and lime juice in marinades also help tenderize meat, and in a seafood dish called ceviche, citrus juice causes the meat to look and taste cooked by denaturing the protein and making the meat firm.

Nutritionally, citrus fruits are best consumed whole so you get the full benefit of the fiber. Juice should be consumed sparingly as it is a concentrated source of calories without the full nutritional benefit of the whole fruit.

If you are still working on your health-focused new year's resolutions, citrus foods can help by adding flavor without busting your calorie budget.



## Bring warmth, freshness to your winter breakfast

(Family Features) During the cold and dark winter months, it's important to stay warm and well-nourished. Using in-season ingredients and produce is a simple way to brighten your winter blues and introduce authentic vitamin-rich flavor to your meals.

"Florida Grapefruit reaches its best taste during the heart of winter, making it a great source of fresh, nutrient-rich fruit at a time when many others are not available," said Emily Richards, cookbook author. "I like to add Florida Grapefruit and its juice to salads, savory dishes and snacks."

Follow this recipe from Richards for Quinoa Grapefruit Blueberry Breakfast to add Florida sunshine and a boost of energy to your blustery mornings. This refreshing breakfast combines hot quinoa with Florida Grapefruit and blueberries for a new twist on breakfast.

To learn more about Florida Grapefruit and find more recipes, visit [GoFloridaGrapefruit.com](http://GoFloridaGrapefruit.com).

### Quinoa Grapefruit Blueberry Breakfast

Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cook time: 15 minutes  
Serves: 4

- 3/4 cup Florida Grapefruit Juice
- 1/2 cup water
- 3/4 cup quinoa, rinsed
- 2 tablespoons liquid honey or maple syrup
- 2 Florida Ruby Red Grapefruit, segmented
- 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1 cup 0% vanilla or plain yogurt
- fresh mint leaves

In small saucepan, combine grapefruit juice, water, quinoa and honey. Bring to boil; cover and simmer for about 15 minutes, or until liquid is absorbed.

Stir in grapefruit and blueberries; divide into shallow bowls and top with yogurt. Garnish with mint to serve.

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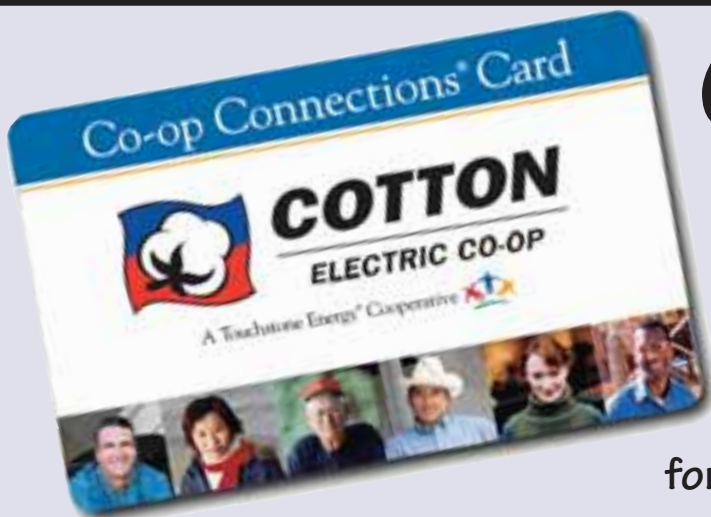
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8176 State Hwy. 17, Elgin  
580-492-4744  
Sharla Spencer, owner

## Sylvan Learning

Tutoring/Education  
Schedule an assessment and \$60 will be deducted from the cost. This is a lifetime assessment fee, no charge for further testing at our center.  
2603 NW Cache Rd., Suite 2, Lawton  
580-351-9100

## Tans Plus

Tanning salon, gifts and accessories  
10% off monthly tanning packages  
1 mile N. of Comanche on Old Hwy. 81  
580-439-5767

## The Branded Bear

5% discount on \$100 purchase  
Medicine Park  
580-529-3656

## The Vine & The Fig Tree

Event center with catering & tea room.  
5% off Food/ Up to \$25 off in-house catering and 5% off Rentals. Regular prices only & must present card.  
1304 W. Hwy. 7, Marlow  
580-658-3377

## Walters Super Stop

2 slices of pizza & 20-oz. fountain drink for \$1.99 + tax  
311 W. Missouri, Walters  
580-875-2001

## Waurika QuikMart

All fountain drinks & all coffee \$0.82  
South Main & Hwy. 70, Waurika  
580-228-2560

## Wichita Furniture

10% off new purchases  
1127 NW Cache Rd, Lawton  
580-355-7425  
9am-6pm: Mon-Sat



Keep up with all the local and national discounts by downloading the Co-op Connections Card phone app at [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop).

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

In 2015, members used their cards for discounts on 1,007 prescriptions not covered by insurance. A total of 29,691.52 was discounted for an average

savings of \$29.48 per use. 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](http://www.locateproviders.com). Type 22203 into the Group field and click 'log in' to start your search.

