

# The Current

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

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NUMBER 7

## Technology drives energy use changes

*Big users remain the same but gadgets, light bulbs affect overall picture*

By Karen Kaley

Energy use in the American home is ever-changing, affected by things we can't control such as the weather and the cost of fuel, and things we can such as the latest, greatest achievement of human ingenuity. It is affected also by things of a more personal nature such as whether or not a person is frugal about spending money or expending energy.

In other words, if you put in a geo-thermal heat and air system, if you insulate your home, if you have a houseful of gadgetry, you affect your power bill. If you turn off lights when you leave a room, you affect your power bill. If you have an LED in that room, you affect your power bill, even if you forget to turn it off.

Using information from NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) and Cotton Electric's Energy Use Advisor Mike Stephens, we've developed a pie chart showing how energy is consumed in a typical southwest Oklahoma home in recent years. As it has been for a very long time, heating and cooling takes the biggest bite out of the pie.

The next largest bite attributed to a single purpose is water heating at 14 percent. This energy is consumed by only one or two apparatuses.

The chart shows a pair of catch-all categories, Electronics / Miscellaneous and Refrigeration and Appliances, using 18 and 17 percent of the household energy. The percentages are higher than the water heating category but apply to a broad range of devices.

While Refrigeration and Appliances includes clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, ovens and ranges, Electronics / Miscellaneous covers a very long list of items that lengthens each time the newest gadget is introduced. That list includes coffemakers, can openers, slow cookers, TVs, cable boxes, computers, modems, routers, printers, game systems, phone and tool chargers, curling irons, hair dryers, night lights, humidifiers, bug zappers ... well, you get the picture.

That long, long list is changing the picture, too. New homes are larger than those built 25 years ago, becoming more

efficient in heating and cooling, but they have numerous power outlets to accommodate all the devices used in modern life.

We've put together three house charts showing how those devices as a group have caught up to and surpassed the amount of energy used for heating and cooling over the past quarter century. Water heating remains the second-largest stand-alone energy use in a home.

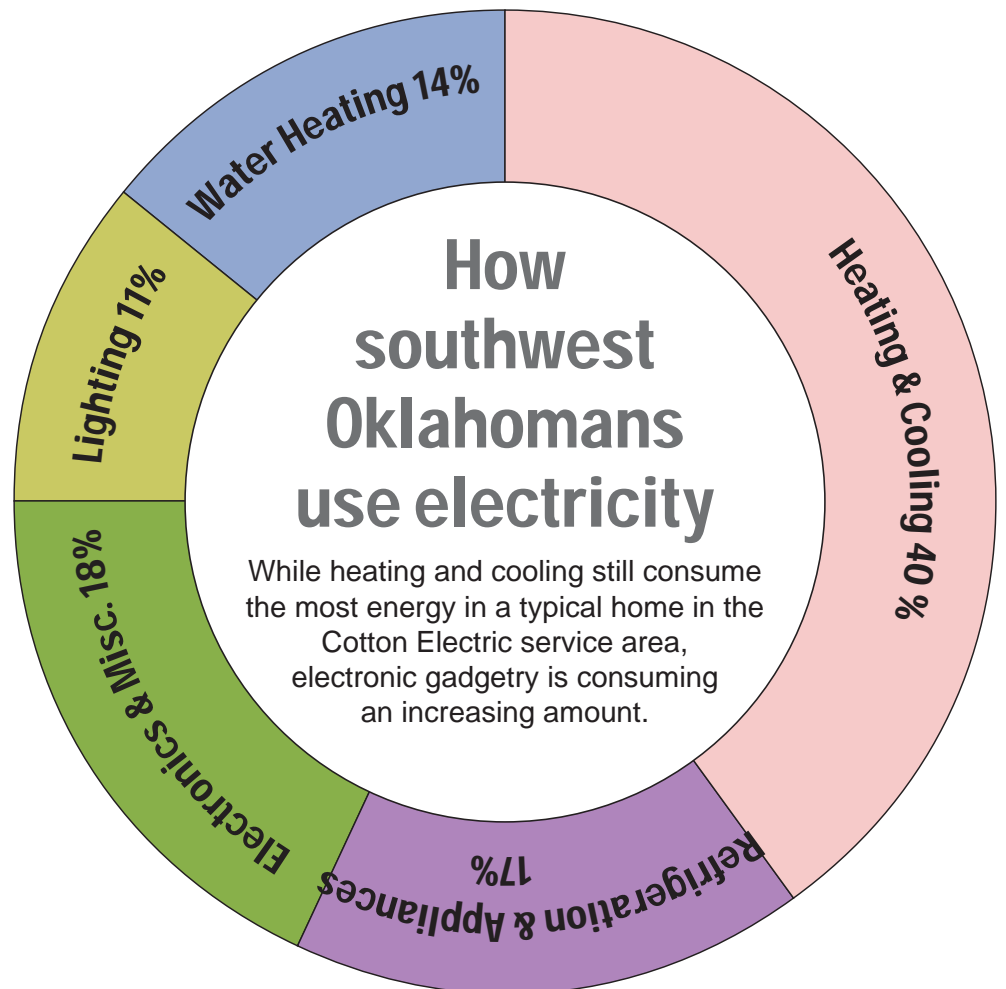
The pie chart shows lighting as consuming 11 percent of the energy in a home, but that is a number that is changing quite rapidly. Thanks to the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 signed into law by President George W. Bush, the presence of energy-wasting incandescent light bulbs in American homes has been on the decline.

At first, CFL bulbs were promoted as a good substitute. The compact fluorescent bulb is an energy-sipper at about 25 percent of its incandescent predecessor. However, its homely appearance, sluggishness at achieving full brightness and sensitivity to wobbling, dimming and dampness have it joining Betamax, Windows Vista and New Coke as ideas that just didn't catch on.

Instead, Americans have begun to embrace the light-emitting diode or LED. LEDs offer instant bright light in a variety of colors. They use even less energy, about 10 percent of incandescents. They are so sturdy that lights used for only a few hours a day have life expectancies of decades.

What has really made a difference is the price. As the lighting industry has increased production, the cost of a 60-watt equivalent bulb has dropped from about \$50 in 2010 to about \$3 in 2015, when Americans bought a few hundred million of them.

Adoption of the LED for household use has been called one of the fastest technology shifts in human history. It truly is a game-changer as far as household energy use goes, which perhaps is a good thing, considering the growing number of other items Americans purchase and plug in every day.



Heating and cooling a home in southwest Oklahoma is where most of the energy dollar is spent. Water heating is still the second-largest bite attributed to a single purpose. Lighting is taking a smaller bite of the energy pie with the adoption of LED energy-sippers, while electronics as a group is beginning to account for a larger bite.

### LED Adoption Grows

Results from the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual SYLVANIA Socket Survey\*

NEARLY 70%

of consumer have purchased at least one LED in their lifetime

48%

have purchased at least one LED in the last 12 months



39% of consumers plan on buying LEDs next time they need bulbs



38%

of consumers have switched to LEDs since the phase-out



27%

more consumers compared to last year



LEDs are now the #1 replacement option

Who's switching to LEDs in the wake of the phase-out?



35 Consumers under 35

48%



Smart technology owners

46%



Web review readers

45%

Americans are seeing the light when it comes to LEDs

94%

agree LEDs use less energy than other bulbs

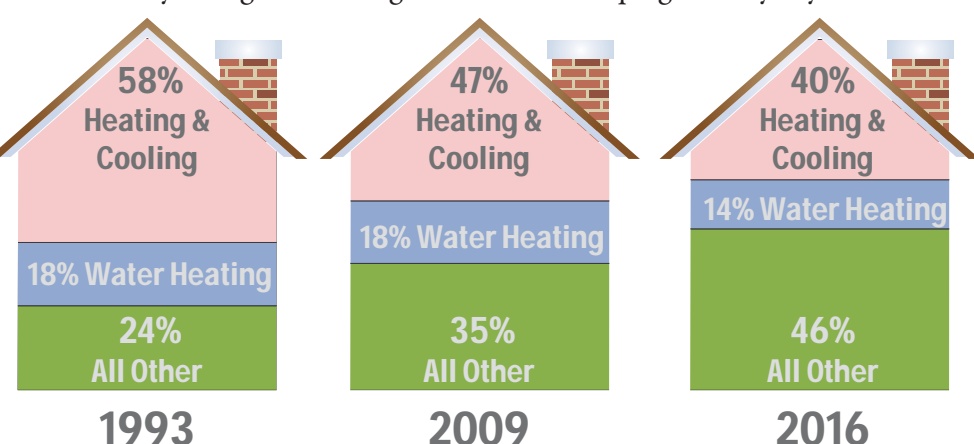
94%

agree LEDs last longer

92%

agree LEDs will save them money over time

Adoption of the LED for household use has been called one of the fastest technology shifts in in human history.



Devices as a group have caught up to and surpassed the amount of energy used for heating and cooling over the past quarter century. Water heating remains the second-largest stand-alone energy use.

#### Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after March 1, 2017, is (\$0.00445) per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1500 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a credit of (\$6.67) on the March bill.

#### January 2017 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	62	35	49	16	55	36	46
2	66	38	52	17	57	28	43
3	45	30	38	18	51	36	44
4	39	24	32	19	68	38	53
5	29	21	25	20	71	33	52
6	24	-3	11	21	69	33	51
7	37	-5	16	22	64	37	51
8	48	14	31	23	65	28	47
9	66	22	44	24	78	33	56
10	71	35	53	25	50	30	40
11	83	32	58	26	50	23	37
12	65	29	47	27	52	22	37
13	40	29	35	28	57	24	41
14	34	29	32	29	71	35	53
15	45	34	40	30	75	27	51
Source: <a href="http://srh.noaa.gov/oum/">srh.noaa.gov/oum/</a>				31	72	28	50
Average Daily High: 57				Average Daily Low: 28			

#### Did You Know?



Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 12. Turn clocks forward one hour.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on March 20.

#### 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.

#### What's Inside

Operating Stats .....	2
Co-op News .....	2
Community .....	3-4
Co-op News .....	4-6
Puzzles .....	7
Co-op News .....	8-9
Nutrition .....	10
Recipes .....	11
Classifieds .....	13-17

More news at [cottonelectric.com](http://cottonelectric.com)

From the CEO

56th OK Legislature has full slate

Our statewide elected officials hit the ground running as they work to review over 2,100 bills and joint resolutions. The First Session of the 56th Oklahoma Legislature convened on Feb. 6.



Jennifer Meason, CEO

There were 1,340 bills and 24 joint resolutions filed in the Oklahoma House of Representatives for the 2017 session. Last year, the Clerk of the House reported representatives filed 921 bills and 31 joint resolutions by the deadline for the 2016 session. A total of 831 Senate Bills were filed, along with 46 Senate Joint Resolutions and one senate concurrent resolution. In 2016, a total of 704 Senate bills were filed, along with 42 Senate 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. Many legislators are newly elected and an integral part of my duties as Cotton Electric’s CEO includes educating them about the cooperative difference and issues that affect you, our members. 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. We are tracking several bills and we will keep you updated through the Cooperative’s Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as The Current. Here are a few other tools that can help.

- Members of the public can read and download current legis-

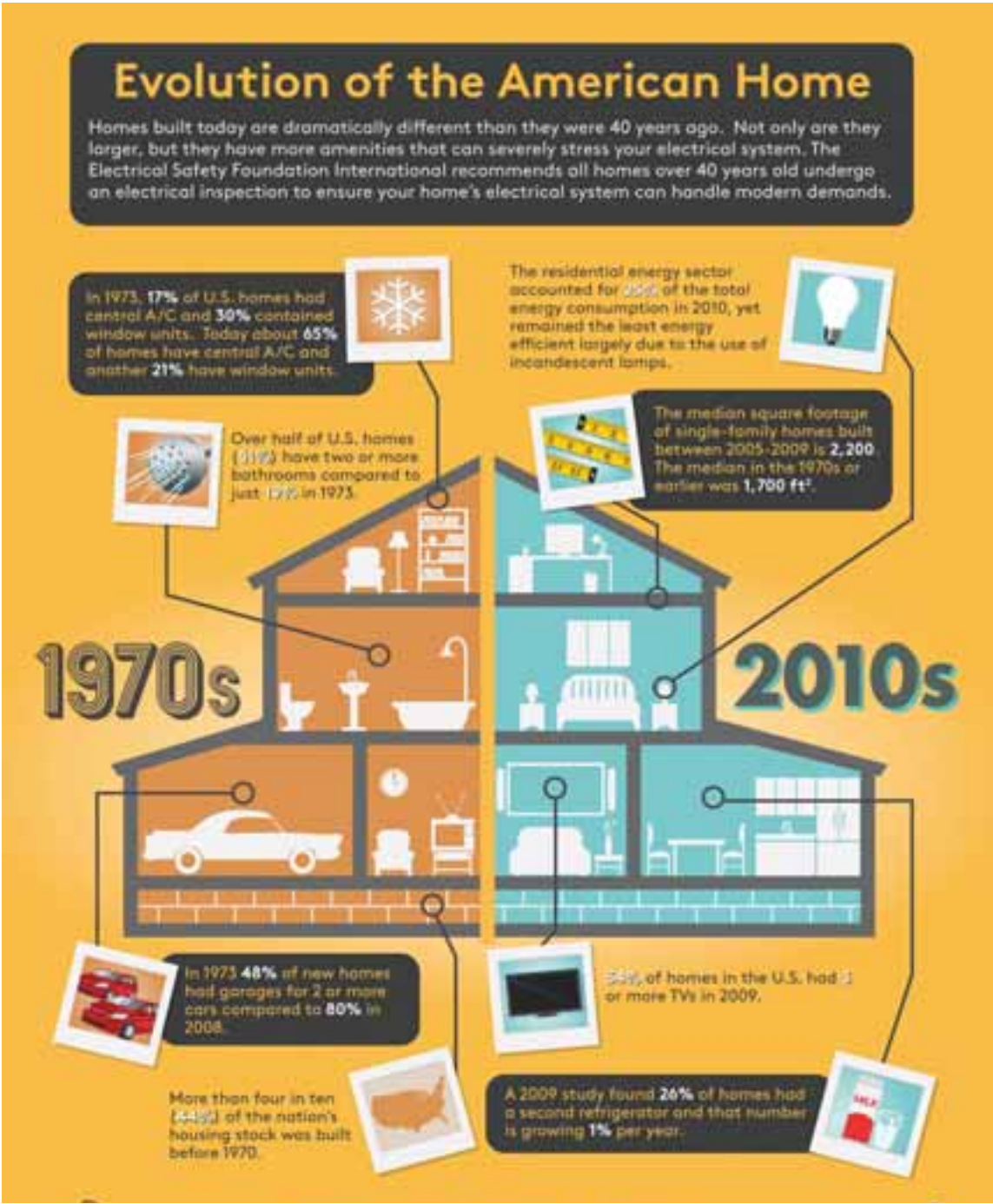
lation by going to the official State Senate website at [www.oksenate.gov](http://www.oksenate.gov) and [www.okhouse.gov](http://www.okhouse.gov) and following the link for legislation at the top of the homepage. The House and Senate websites include daily agendas, meeting notices, calendars, and other helpful information.

- On the federal level, members of the public can read and download legislation by going to the official U.S. House and Senate websites at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).
- The Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives has created a digital legislative guide featuring the 56th 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

“OAECE 56th 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 legislative concerns of electric cooperatives and provides members the opportunity to become active. 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 or go to [www.action.coop](http://www.action.coop).

I encourage you to remain involved in the political process this session. Please contact me at 875-3351 with any questions or concerns you have regarding your cooperative.



10

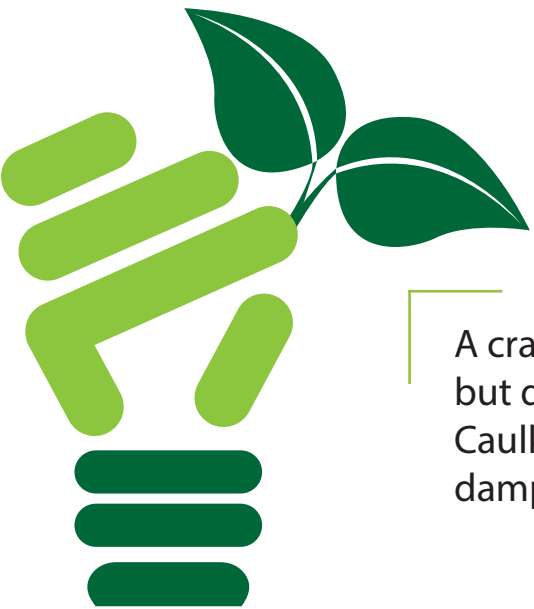
SAVE ENERGY • SAVE MONEY

TIPS

Electricity is a necessity of modern life. We consume kilowatts without thought ... until the power bill comes. If you want to control your power bill, keep this motto in mind: The cheapest kilowatt-hour is the one you don't use. To help you, The Current will offer stories and 10 energy-saving tips each month in 2017. This month, we look at electronics and lighting.

- ELECTRONICS**
  1. Turn computers and monitors off when not in use.
  2. When buying a new computer, select an Energy Star® model. Consider buying a laptop as it uses less energy than a comparable desktop.
  3. Turn large-screen TVs off completely when not in use.
  4. Check for energy saving settings on flat-panel TVs like automatic brightness control and a power saving sleep mode.
  5. Request an Energy Star® set-top box from cable or satellite provider.
  6. Turn off stereos and radios when not in use.
- LIGHTING**
  7. Replace outdoor lighting with its equivalent outdoor-rated LED bulb. LEDs work well in cold weather.
  8. Use fixtures with electronic ballasts and T-8, 32 Watt fluorescent lamps.
  9. Use outdoor security lights with a photocell and/or a motion sensor.
  10. Turn off unnecessary lighting.





## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

A crackling fire in the hearth warms the house, but don't let it heat up your electric bill! Caulk around the fireplace hearth and keep the damper closed when a fire is not burning.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy



# The Current

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December 2016 Operating Stats			
	2016	2015	
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$5,981,974	\$5,202,024	
Cost of Purchased Power	3,826,667	3,585,523	
Taxes	97,099	102,854	
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,066	1,029	
Average Farm and Residential Bill	179	145	
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,648	1,406	
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,267	18,203	
Miles Energized	5,162	5,153	
Density Per Mile	3.54	3.53	
New Service Connects YTD	255	333	
Services Retired	106	197	



**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.

# Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the February issue, please submit information by March 6 by calling 580-875-4259 or send an email to [info@cottonelectric.com](mailto:info@cottonelectric.com).

## 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 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.

## DLT presents 'Into the Woods'

Duncan Little Theatre presents "Into the Woods" at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 24 and 25 at the Simmons Center in Duncan.

This musical makes use of professional lighting, sound effects, fantastic set design and clever costuming to intertwine the plots of several fairy tales. As the result of the curse of a once-beautiful witch, a baker and his wife are childless. Three days before the rise of a blue moon, they venture into the forest to find the ingredients that will reverse the spell and restore the witch's beauty. During their journey, they meet Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel and Jack, each one on a quest to fulfill a wish. Tickets may be purchased at the door.

## Fradkin to play at McMahon

Music lovers and Beatles fans won't want to miss Les Fradkin, rated a top guitar player by Reverb Nation, performing at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 25 in McMahon Auditorium. The evening will feature a tribute to George Harrison, who Fradkin portrayed on Broadway in the hit show "Beatlemania" during the 1970s.

Coincidentally, the Lawton performance will be on the Harrison's birthday. He would have been 74.

Tickets are available at McMahon Auditorium box office.

## Pro Musica spring concert is Feb. 25

The 14th season of Lawton Pro Musica includes a spring concert at 7 p.m. Feb. 25 at Trinity Baptist Church, 1916 W. Gore Blvd.

Lawton Pro Musica Choir is composed of some of southwest Oklahoma's finest singers. The group's mission is to enrich the area with outstanding choral music. It provides opportunities for vocal artists and education and inspiration for young singers.

There is no admission fee for performances, but donations will be accepted.

## Magic Lantern screens classic films

Magic Lantern Film Society of Cameron University screens DVD presentations of classic films each month in the CETES Conference Center, Room B. Most screenings begin at 7:30 p.m., however the March 3 feature begins at 6:30

p.m. to allow for the nearly 3-hour running time.

"Once Upon a Time in the West" is a classic western masterpiece, an epic 1968 film about a widow whose land and life are in danger as the railroad is getting closer and closer to taking them over. A mysterious harmonica player joins forces with a desperado to protect the woman and her land.

Directed by Sergio Leone, the cast includes Henry Fonda, Claudia Cardinale, Jason Robards and Charles Bronson.

There is no admission charge, but donations are accepted. For information about the society, or to see a schedule of films, visit [Cameron.edu/magiclantern](http://Cameron.edu/magiclantern).

## Fish fry scheduled 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 March 3 through April 7 at the annual Lenten Fish Fry sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, Council 5168. All are welcome to dine under the blue roof at the Marlow Catholic Church at 4th & Comanche 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.

## Beekeepers to meet in Duncan

Members of the Oklahoma Beekeepers Association will buzz into Duncan for the Spring Conference on March 4. Hosted by the Southwest Oklahoma Beekeepers Association, the event at First Baptist Church, 901 W. Ash, is open to the public.

Registration will begin at 8 a.m. and the meeting begins at 9. Guest speakers include Jeff Alexander, also known as JP the Bee Man, from Metairie, Louisiana; Jayce Procter from the Department of Agriculture; and David Hawa, who will discuss remote hive monitoring.

There is no admission fee to the conference though attendees are asked to bring a side dish or dessert for the brisket lunch. For more information, call 580-736-0640 or see Southwest Oklahoma Beekeepers on Facebook.

## Horse club plans annual clinic

Duncan Lake Horse Club is having its annual Coggins Clinic from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 4 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 11.

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.

## Walters Chamber sets pancake feast

Join your Walters friends and neighbors for a delicious Pancake Supper from 5 to 8 p.m. March 7 in the Walters school cafeteria. This annual fundraiser benefits worthy causes and promotes local businesses.

The breakfast-for-dinner consists of pancakes, sausage and bacon with choice of milk, juice or coffee to drink.

Advance tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 3-5. Younger children eat for free. Tickets will be higher at the door. Put your name and phone number on the back or your ticket to be

# PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Our Snow Day photo is this peaceful morning after the snowfall at the Charon's Gardens. Cotton Electric member Darrell Nightingale took this photo in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge during the Jan. 6, 2017, snowstorm.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for March is Nature Up Close. 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.

eligible for door prize drawings.

Advance tickets can be purchased at Arvest Bank, Buzzin' Around Flowers, City Hall, Cotton Electric, Headlines, Powers Heating And Air, Quality Fence, Walters Bank and Trust, Walters Herald, Walters Public Housing Authority, or from any of the Chamber of Commerce board members, including Wes Eidson, Mary Ann Holman, Connie Landon, Brantley Tillery, Chris Watters and Craig Williams.

## MP hosts ParkStomp March 17-19

ParkStomp is three days of live bluegrass music in Medicine Park. The weekend also includes V-Dubs in the Park, a campout and show event.

First acts perform on March 17. Performance by Just Strangers begins at 7 p.m. Opal Agafia and the Sweet Nothings follow at 9 and The Squarshers take the stage at 11.

Music on the main stage begins at noon March 18. Entertainers include Sprung-billy, The Squarshers. Feast ov Fools and Opal Agafia and the Sweet Nothings.

Final performances begin at noon March 19. Acts include Just Strangers, Dance Monkey Dance, Steamboat Bandits and Arkansas.


V-Dubs in the Park is set for March 18. Open to all Volkswagens, whether air- or water-cooled, show quality or a work in progress. Only VWs will be allowed to park in the show area. Details about competition and camping are available at [MedicinePark.com](http://MedicinePark.com).

## Home, garden show begins March 24


Find practical home improvement ideas and visit professional home and garden service providers during Lawton Home Builders 53rd annual Home and Garden Show.

Doors will be open from 5 to 8 p.m. March 24, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. March 25, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 26 in the Great Plains Coliseum and Annex. Admission is free.

## More Community Spotlight on Page 4



# YOUR ELECTRICITY ISN'T SOMETHING WE TAKE LIGHTLY.



Before you switch on the lights, we've already put up the poles, connected miles of wire and flipped more than a few switches of our own. All to make sure your life is always "on." Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at [TouchstoneEnergy.com](http://TouchstoneEnergy.com).

## Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

March		April		May	
Ad Sales	Mar. 3	Ad Sales	Mar. 31	Ad Sales	April 28
Classified	Mar. 9	Classified	Apr. 6	Classified	May 4
Publish Date	Mar. 20	Publish Date	Apr. 17	Publish Date	May 15

# Community Spotlight

## Apache Rattlesnake Festival is April 13-16

Mark your calendars for the Apache Rattlesnake Festival set for April 13-16 in downtown Apache. The event features exhibits, arts, crafts, vendors, carnival rides and games, rattlesnake catching contests, food, music and fun.

While all food booth spaces are filled, vendor booth space is still available. Call 580-588-2880 to leave a clear message and get information.

Funds raised by the Apache Rattlesnake Association are funneled to service projects.

## LCT presents ‘Driving Miss Daisy’

Performances of Lawton Community Theatre’s presentation of “Driving Miss Daisy” are set for April 14-23 and 7-10 at John Denney Playhouse, 1316 NW Bell Avenue in Lawton.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning play explores the relationship of an elderly white Southern Jewish woman, Daisy Werthan, and her African-American chauffeur, Hoke Colburn, from 1948 to 1973. Initially wary of each other, the pair ultimately forms a friendly bond.

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

## CU Theatre Department offers ‘South Pacific’

Cameron University’s Department of Theatre Arts is offering performances of the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic “South Pacific” this spring.

Set on a Pacific island paradise during World War II, the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical tells not only one but two stories of love that must overcome prejudice. Featured tunes include “Some Enchanted Evening,” “I’m Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair” and “Bali Ha’i.”

Performances will be at 7:30 p.m. April 20-22 and at 2 p.m. April 23.

All performances will be in Cameron University Theatre, located in the northeast quadrant of the campus between University Drive and 27th Street in Lawton.

## ‘Power to Inspire’ is LPO spring concert

Lawton Philharmonic Orchestra presents “The Power to Inspire” at 8 p.m. April 29 at McMahon Auditorium, 801 NW Ferris Avenue, Lawton. Patrons will hear Pathetique, Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6, and “Pictures at an Exhibition” by Mussorgsky and Ravel.

To demonstrate that great music can truly inspire the creativity of those who listen, local elementary school students will create original art based on Mussorgsky’s masterpiece, as orchestrated by Ravel. Outstanding works from each grade-level will be honored at the concert.

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

## Lawton Farmers Market has winter location

Lawton Farmers Market is holding a Winter Market in the Cameron University Animal Sciences building at the Agriculture Facility each Saturday through the end of March.

Shoppers will find a variety of choices at the winter market, including winter produce, sprouts, micro greens, meat, eggs, honey, nuts, and hand-made and artisan items. Hours are 8 a.m. to noon. The building is located on Southwest 38th Street and is south of Dr. Elsie Hamm Drive and the railroad crossing.

For more information about the market or becoming a vendor at the market, visit LawtonFarmersMarket.com or send an email to lawtonfarmersmarket@yahoo.com.



# Blinky thing helps find blinking source

By Karen Kaley

Blinks are tiny moments in time that are a big frustration for Cotton Electric members and employees alike. When power blinks, members have the nuisance of having to reset clocks and other devices throughout the home. When line workers search for the cause of the blink, it’s a bit like looking for Waldo: We know it’s there, but where to start, where is it hidden?

Chace Penn, system engineer for Cotton Electric, said, “In some cases, the cause is not as obvious as one might think.”

He said animals and trees on the line or lightning strikes are usually easy to find, but sometimes a tree issue is in a blind vicinity. A trouble area may have a line feeding several taps, or secondary lines, making it more difficult to determine the source of a problem.

Some problems, such as damaged insulators, are very hard to find.

“Linemen can’t see them as they are driving down the road,” Penn explained.

“They would have to go up in a bucket on every single pole to inspect insulators,” which would be unrealistic. There are 17 to 22 poles along each mile of line and it takes a considerable amount of time to set up and stabilize the truck, pull on safety gear, go up in the bucket, conduct an inspection, reverse the process and move to the next pole.

Instead, they use a handy device called an overhead fault indicator – or blinky thing for the less technical, non-lineman types.



The gadgets are deployed in strategic locations along the problem line. When a fault, or blink, occurs, the device begins to blink and activates a red flag that is easily visible from the road.

That flag and blink eliminate lines without faults and points the line crew in a direction. Sometimes it means redistributing the devices along other branches of the indicated line, but the next incident will draw them even closer to finding the problem.

“These devices help improve reliability of our system,” Penn said. “They are valuable tools when trying to determine the cause of issues.”

He said co-op members can also play a role in resolving a blinking mystery by calling when they experience one.

“Don’t call if this thing (the fault indicator) blinks, but do call in about blinks (in the home).”

“When members see an overhead fault indicator blinking, it means we are investigating an ongoing issue in that area.

“When members call in and give details about the time and frequency of power blinks in a home or business, it helps us find the cause. Cotton Electric members play an active role in helping improve the system with those calls.”

The number is 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520. Call us day or night to let us know about the power blinks – not the blinky things.

Apache Auction Market

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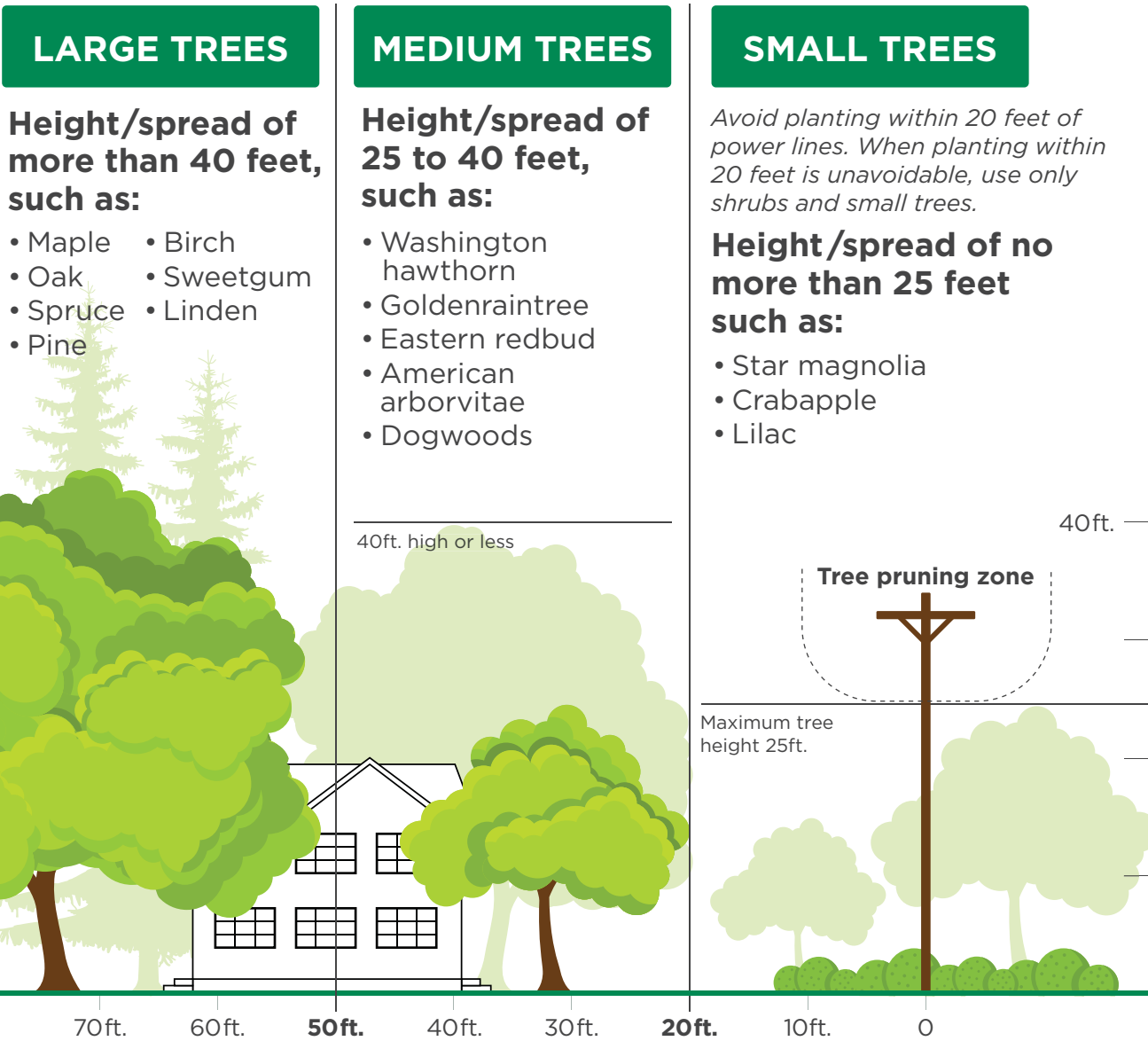
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# Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

For more tips on smart tree planting in your community, contact your local electric cooperative or visit [www.ArborDay.org](http://www.ArborDay.org).

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard... especially to power lines.



Be safe! Always call 811 before you dig to locate any buried utility lines.

Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

# Spring cleaning delivers safe and reliable power

Spring gives us a chance to thaw out after a chilly winter. We take advantage of longer daylight hours by doing a little spring cleaning and yard work. But the seasonal shift isn't all good news. The rapid change from harsh, cold air to warmer temperatures can trigger severe weather. To protect our lines and keep power flowing safely to your home, Cotton Electric maintains our rights-of-way. Think of it as spring cleaning for power lines.

Right-of-way (ROW) maintenance keeps tree limbs and other obstacles away from high-voltage power lines. It's an important part of the service we provide to you, our members, for three reasons: safety, reliability, and cost.

Our primary concern is the safety of our workers and members. Properly maintained ROW keeps our crews safe when they are restoring service and maintaining our system. Keeping trees clear of power lines also keeps your family safe. From making sure a child's tree house doesn't hit power lines to creating a safe environment while doing yard work, a well-maintained ROW helps avoid tragedy.

Power lines are a constant part of our landscape; it's easy to forget they are around. We work hard to keep the area around our lines clear, but we need your help. Be alert this spring. Don't plant trees or tall vegetation under power lines, and keep an eye out for power lines when working in your yard.

If severe spring weather blows through, a well-maintained ROW leads to fewer outages and faster response time. Managed trees are less of a threat to the system. When trees do fall, crews are able to restore service more quickly than they could with poorly maintained areas.

As a not-for-profit company, Cotton Electric strives to keep costs affordable for you, our members. Maintaining our ROW is an important part of controlling costs. Fewer and shorter outages save money for everyone. When crews work in well-maintained areas, we reduce risks for employees and equipment – another way to keep costs low.

Safety, reliability, and cost: this is why we believe in ROW 'spring cleaning.' If we compromise on one of these areas, it impacts the others. At Cotton Electric, we aren't willing to compromise. Maintaining our ROW is a priority for your safety, comfort, and pocketbook.

# What's Smarter -- Paying Off Debts or Investing?

If you're just starting out in your career, you will need to be prepared to face some financial challenges along the way – but here's one that's not unpleasant: choosing what to do with some extra disposable income. When this happens, what should you do with the money? Your decisions could make a real difference in your ability to achieve your important financial goals.

Under what circumstances might you receive some "found" money? You could get a year-end bonus from your employer, or a sizable tax refund, or even an inheritance. However the money comes to you, don't let it "slip through your fingers." Instead, consider these two moves: investing the money or using it to pay off debts.

Which of these choices should you pick? There's no one "right" answer, as everyone's situation is different. But here

are a few general considerations:

- Distinguish between "good" and "bad" debt. Not all types of debt are created equal. Your mortgage, for example, is probably a "good" form of debt. You're using the loan for a valid purpose – i.e., living in your house – and you likely get a hefty tax deduction for the interest you pay. On the other hand, nondeductible consumer debt that carries a high interest rate might be considered "bad" debt – and this is the debt you might want to reduce or eliminate when you receive some extra money. By doing so, you can free up money to save and invest for retirement or other goals.
- Compare making extra mortgage payments vs. investing. Many of us get some psychological benefits by making extra house payments. Yet, when you do have some extra money, putting it toward your house may not be the

best move. For one thing, as mentioned above, your mortgage can be considered a "good" type of debt, so you may not need to rush to pay it off. And from an investment standpoint, your home is somewhat "illiquid" – it's not always easy to get money out of it. If you put your extra money into traditional investments, such as stocks and bonds, you may increase your growth potential, and you may gain an income stream through interest payments and dividends.

- Consider tax advantages of investing. Apart from your mortgage, your other debts likely won't provide you with any tax benefits. But you can get tax advantages by putting money into certain types of investment vehicles, such as a traditional or Roth IRA. When you invest in a traditional IRA, your contributions may be deductible, depending on your income, and your money grows on a tax-deferred basis. (Keep in mind that

taxes will be due upon withdrawals, and any withdrawals you make before you reach 59½ may be subject to a 10% IRS penalty.) Roth IRA contributions are not deductible, but your earnings are distributed tax-free, provided you don't take withdrawals until you reach 59½ and you've had your account at least five years.

Clearly, you've got some things to ponder when choosing whether to use "extra" money to pay off debts or invest. Of course, it's not always an "either-or" situation; you may be able to tackle some debts and still invest for the future. In any case, use this money wisely – you weren't necessarily counting on it, but you can make it count for you.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.*

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*Scott Lovett, manager of Tri-County Cotton Gin, said the gin is having a record-breaking year.*

# BUMPER CROP

## ‘Perfect storm’ dumps cotton avalanche on southwest Oklahoma

By Karen Kaley

“Historic ... unprecedented ... never before in this region ... four times the average ... crazy,” Scott Lovett said.

Tim McCary used similar language: “Best ever ... can’t believe it ... didn’t realize how good it was.”

Lovett and McCary are Oklahoma natives who have been involved in agriculture for as long as they can remember. Lovett is the manager of Tri-County Cotton Gin, a cooperative near Chattanooga. McCary has been a cotton grower for 40 years. He has been involved with the Tri-County gin since it was established in 1979, has served on its board and currently serves as a trustee for Cotton Electric Cooperative.

Neither Lovett nor McCary could overstate the magnitude of the 2016 cotton crop in southwest Oklahoma.

Both said, “I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Lovett explained that all the right elements were present in 2016, ‘like a perfect storm.’ The planting period was longer than usual and the growing period was optimal.

“Cotton loves heat, we’ve got that in spades,” he said. “Then it has to have rain fall at the right time.”

McCary agreed, noting that “every time we needed rain, we got some.”

Lovett went on. “It stayed hot longer, into September and October, and moisture stayed good. That helped later-planted cotton go ahead and make.”

And, boy did it make. Area cotton growers didn’t really realize just how good the 2016 crop was until mid-October when harvest began.

“The yield is fantastic. Usually, if you made a bale per acre, that was something you were pleased with,” Lovett said.

A bale of ginned cotton weighs 500 pounds. McCary echoed the standard for an acre’s yield, recalling a favorite expression from the late Lloyd Patton: The first 450 pounds is easy, the last 50 is pretty hard.

Lovett said the 2016 harvest is from 283,000 acres of cotton.

“We have seen numerous instances of two or two-plus bales per acre. Some years, you might see 30 or 40 acres yield two bales. This year, we’re seeing quarters – 160 acres – yield two bales per acre.”

Lovett said ginning started about two weeks earlier than normal. As the enormous modules of harvested cotton kept coming in, he had to scramble to find enough tarps to cover them. When the gin yard was filled, he had to find another location to store modules waiting to be ginned.

The second week of January, the gin started running around the clock for six days a week. At that rate, the gin is expected to run through mid-March, a little beyond a normal completion date of late February.

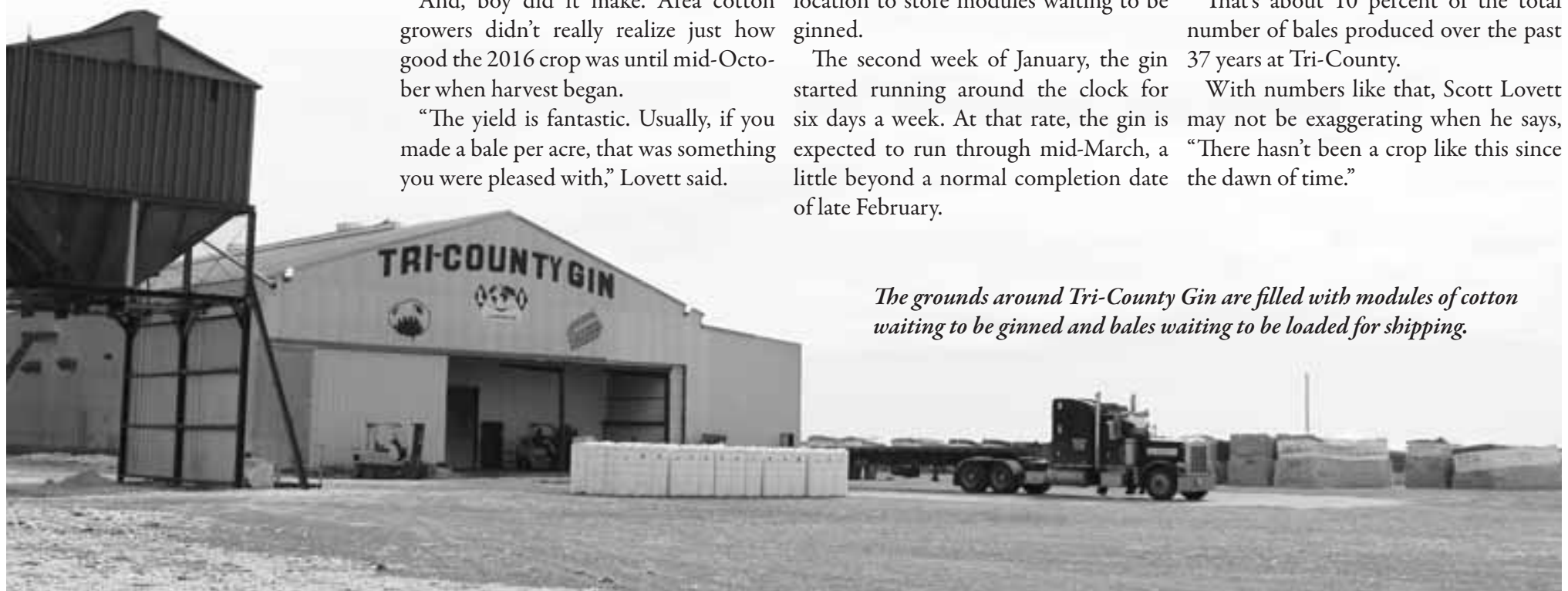
The last time the gin added a night shift was for the 2005 crop. That was a record-setting year, with the gin producing 27,131 bales. Since then, the gin has also seen a record low, not even starting up after the drought-stricken low yield of 2011.

Lovett said the average cotton production at Tri-County Gin is 9,700 bales. Total production since 1979 has been 364,856 bales. Production for 2014 and 2015 was considered good at 17,270 and 17,495 bales respectively.

How does that compare to the current crop? Lovett has done some math. The gin has taken in 2,800 modules of raw cotton. A module yields 13 or 14 bales of ginned cotton. That would mean as much as 39,000 bales of cotton for 2016.

That’s about 10 percent of the total number of bales produced over the past 37 years at Tri-County.

With numbers like that, Scott Lovett may not be exaggerating when he says, “There hasn’t been a crop like this since the dawn of time.”



*The grounds around Tri-County Gin are filled with modules of cotton waiting to be ginned and bales waiting to be loaded for shipping.*

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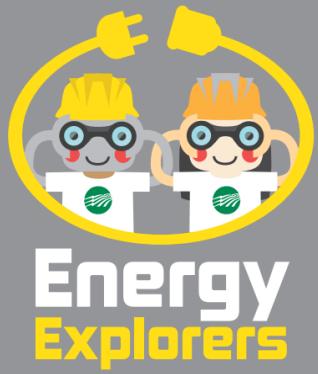
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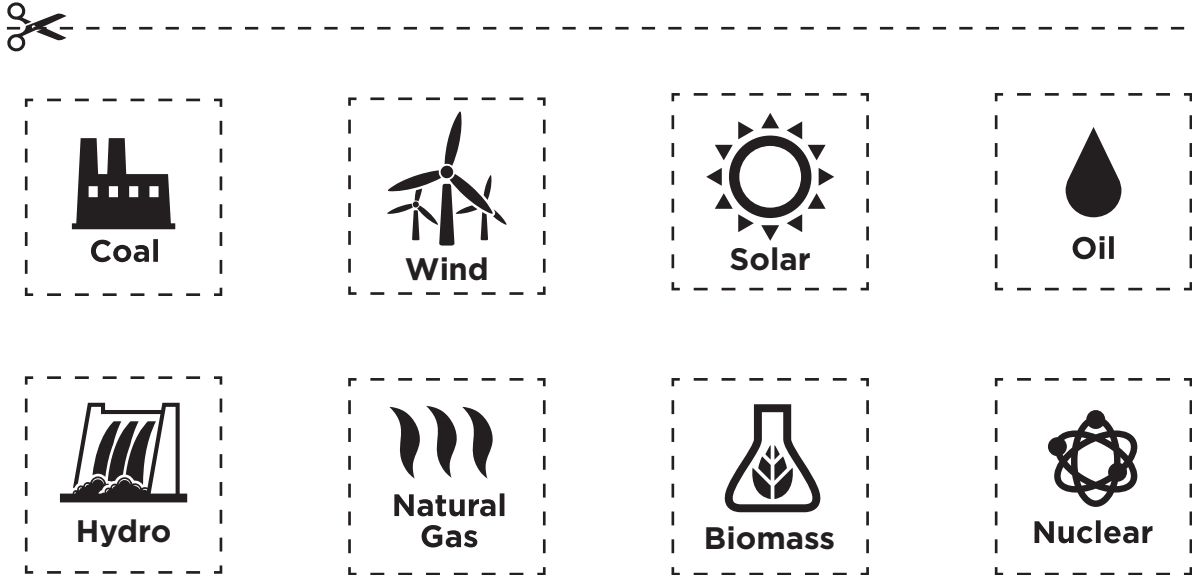
Did you know Americans use electricity that is generated from different fuel sources? Some fuel sources are renewable, meaning they harness natural energy from the Earth’s resources, and some are non-renewable, meaning they use fossil fuels.

Do you know which energy sources are renewable and non-renewable? Use safety scissors to cut out the images below and place them in the correct row. Use the answer key to check your work.

Renewable Sources

Non-Renewable Sources

Answers: Renewable Sources: Hydro, Wind, Biomass, Solar Non-renewable Sources: Natural Gas, Nuclear, Coal, Oil



- ACROSS**
- 1. Package
  - 7. Wear away
  - 13. Joins a leaf to a stem
  - 14. Worsen
  - 16. Promotes international cooperation (abbr.)
  - 17. Your folks
  - 19. Publicity
  - 20. Moves up
  - 22. Dept. of Labor
  - 23. Physicist Enrico
  - 25. Whitney and Man-ning are two
  - 26. Human foot (pl.)
  - 28. Coral is an example
  - 29. Extended error cor-rection
  - 30. Small amount
  - 31. Dash
  - 33. The greatest of all time
  - 34. Middle Eastern country
  - 36. Ravine
  - 38. Cup-like cavity
  - 40. Chemical substances
  - 41. Extremely stupid behavior
  - 43. He built Arantea
  - 44. Beverage beloved by Brits
  - 45. Cereal plant
  - 47. Signal
  - 48. A bar bill
  - 51. Comedienne Faris
  - 53. Preface to a book
  - 55. Stores grain
  - 56. In a way, medicated
  - 58. Small island (British)
  - 59. An Indiana-based hoopster
  - 60. Measures width of printed matter
  - 61. Riders use this to transport goods
  - 64. Once more
  - 65. Thin layers

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67. Says again

69. Cleans thoroughly

70. Warnings

DOWN

1. Relating to male organ

2. Indicates position

3. Covers with frost

4. Makes a soft murmur-ing sound

5. Wood

6. Type of fuel

7. Confused

8. Where you go at night

9. Canadian flyers

10. Type of birch tree

11. Beloved Welsh princess

12. Coated

13. Smooth substance of crushed fruit

15. Improves intellectu-ally

18. A sign of assent

21. Island-based Italians

24. Pragmatic

26. Peter’s last name

27. A bag-like structure in a plant or animal

30. Mexican city

32. Sir Samuel \_\_, Brit. statesman

35. Summer Olympics were just here

37. Fiddler crabs

38. Southern military academy

39. Tumors

42. Speaks incessantly

43. Sacred sound in Indian religions

46. Transactions

47. Et-\_\_

49. Reminders

50. Doesn’t interest

52. Norse gods

54. Canola is one type

55. Beloved sportscaster Craig

57. Irish mother goddess

59. Daddy

62. Press against lightly

63. Sound unit

66. Master of Ceremo-nies

68. Morning


March 1<sup>st</sup> - March 31<sup>st</sup>

Drawings held every Friday & Saturday from 7pm-11pm.

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See Comanche Club for details.


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Charles Spencer represents District 3.



Tim McCary represents District 5.



Brian DeMarcus represents District 4.



Dewayne High represents District 8.



Shan Files represents District 1.



Steve Robinson represents District 7.



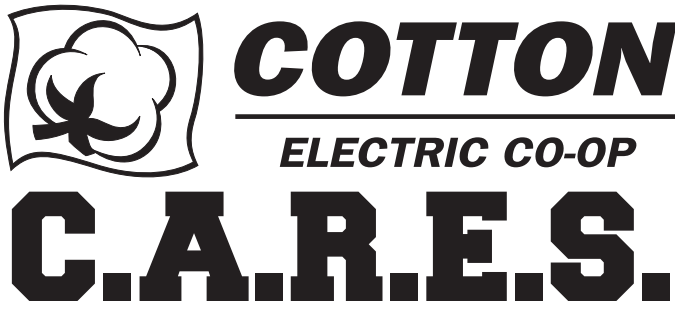
Ronnie Bohot, left, represents District 9.

## Cotton Electric Cooperative SERVICE AREA

Cotton Electric Cooperative provides electric service to some 22,000 meters in eight counties of southwest Oklahoma. Cotton Electric was organized in 1938 to provide electric services to rural areas at a time when other utilities did not consider it economically feasible. Over the course of 78-plus years, the cooperative has steadily grown while continuing to meet the changing needs of its members.

The members of Cotton Electric own the cooperative’s electric system and have an active voice in business matters. Combined with the many services offered, a local dispatcher is always on duty to assist with any unexpected problems occurring after normal working hours.

Our headquarters is located at 226 North Broadway in Walters and a branch office at 1101 West Oak in Duncan.



Cotton CARES was created to educate our members and employees about what sets Cotton Electric apart from other utilities. The program summarizes what you, the members of Cotton Electric, should expect from your cooperative.

**ACCOUNTABILITY** – Cotton Electric is owned by the members we serve. As we complete our tasks each day, we’re held accountable by you. Each decision is made with the membership in mind. When we do well or if we fall short, we are accountable to you.

## Principles keep co-op accountable

By Karen Kaley

Every three years, Cotton Electric sends out bright-colored postcards announcing district meetings. District meetings are a main point at which we are not just a power provider but a cooperative and you are not just a customer but a member of that cooperative.

A cooperative operates according to seven basic principles. One of them is Democratic Member Control, which comes into play at member meetings.

Cotton Electric’s service territory is divided into nine districts. The business and affairs of the co-op are managed by a board of trustees. The board establishes the overall policies of the cooperative.

Each trustee is a co-op member who represents one district, the area in which he or she lives. The trustees serve three-year terms. The terms are staggered so that three conclude each year. In 2016, the terms for Districts 4, 7 and 9 expired. In 2017, the terms for Districts 2, 6 and 8 will expire and, in 2018, terms for Districts 1, 3 and 5 will expire.

Trustees are elected by the membership at district meetings. If there is no election, incumbents are held over for the term.

District meetings are an excellent opportunity for members to learn more about the cooperative, its policies and its employees. As members, attendees can offer input through the election of a trustee or by discussing issues with the employees and trustees at the district meeting.

CEO Jennifer Meason, vice presidents Jeff Simpson, Mike Ottinger and Bryce Hooper, and cooperative employees from a variety of departments are on hand, and trustees from most districts are present at these meetings. We are eager to meet with the membership and take all the time necessary to answer questions and explain procedures.

Next time you get one of those bright-colored postcards from us, come on down. Come for the business meeting, come for the chance to participate in your co-op, come for the ice cream!



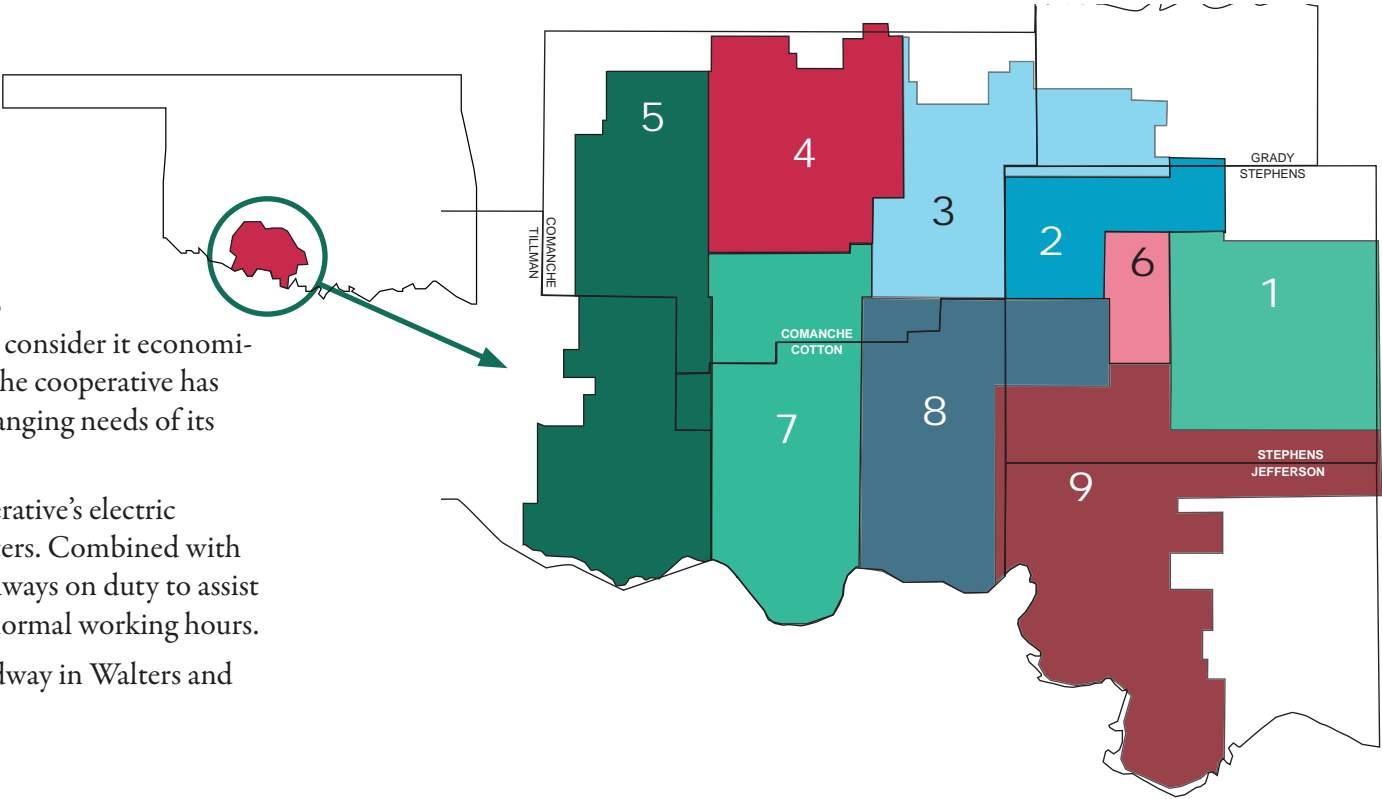
Ken Layn represents District 2.



Tommy Jones represents District 6.



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# Survive auto accidents involving power lines

Instincts tell us to flee danger. Unfortunately, in vehicle accidents that bring down power lines, these natural inclinations can lead to tragic results. Cotton Electric and Safe Electricity want everyone to know: If your car hits a power pole, or otherwise brings a power line down, stay in your vehicle and wait until the local electric utility arrives on the scene and ensures that lines have been de-energized. If you come upon or witness an accident involving toppled power poles and lines, don't leave your vehicle to approach the scene.

According to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, tens of thousands of accidents each year occur where power poles are struck by cars or large equipment. Each one of these accidents has the potential to bring down power lines. Surviving the accident itself might not be enough to stay alive without awareness of the right moves to make.

In the vast majority of those incidents, the safest place to remain is inside the car. Only in the rare instance of fire should people exit a vehicle. Then, they must know how to do so safely, jumping free and clear, landing with feet together, and hopping away. It's difficult to get out without creating a path for current to flow, which is why one should get out only if forced to.

"When people are involved in a car accident, electricity is usually the last thing on anyone's mind," Cotton Electric CEO Jennifer Meason notes.

"We're often more concerned about whether anyone was injured, or how badly the vehicle is damaged. We forget that by exiting the vehicle, we're risking bodily exposure to thousands of volts of electricity from downed power lines."

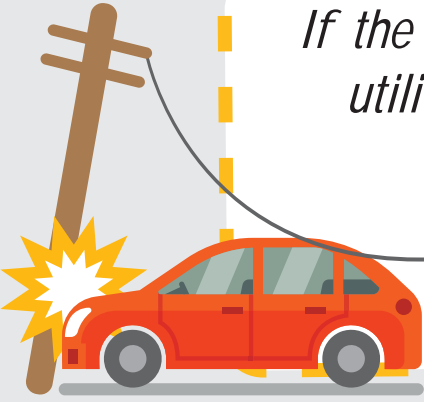
To learn more, watch a related safety video on [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org). Visitors can also check out a live power line demonstration, just like the one the Indiana teens saw at their school.

*Safe Electricity is the safety outreach program of the Energy Education Council, a non-profit organization with more than 400 electric cooperative members and many others who share the mission of educating the public about electrical safety and energy efficiency.*

KNOW  
WHAT  
TO DO



*if in an Auto Accident  
with Power Lines*



*If the car you are in hits a utility pole, your vehicle and the surrounding area can become energized.*

*Even if you do not touch lines or equipment, you can still be killed or seriously injured.*



1. Do **NOT** leave the car, and warn others to stay away.

2. Call **911** to have the utility notified.



3. Wait until a utility professional has told you it is safe.



The **only** reason to exit the vehicle is if it's on fire.

If the car is on fire, jump clear of the vehicle: **with feet together, and without touching the car and the ground** at the same time.



Continue to **hop away** with your feet together as far as you can.



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# February: The month of love and heart health

February is the month when we celebrate having a healthy heart, both emotional and physical. While love in the form Valentine’s Day celebrations gets the most attention, the physical health of the heart and associated cardiovascular system is just as deserving.

Have you had your heart health evaluated by your doctor? Do you know your levels of blood cholesterol, your blood pressure, your weight, your family history of heart disease and your associated risk of heart disease? If not, the essential first step is getting a heart health check-up.

Depending on what is discovered, you can identify prevention and treatment options. Steps for prevention of heart disease remain relatively unchanged: Stop smoking, eat right, exercise, and take care of your mental health.

The American Heart Association has launched a “Healthy For Good” campaign that addresses each domain of heart health and provides a support system for making small, simple life changes that are sustainable over time. They focus on themes we all know: Eat more meals at home versus dining out, avoid fad diets, balance the food groups and portions



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

## Food For THOUGHT

on your plate, focus on healthy fats, lean protein and fish twice a week, and incorporate fruits and vegetables of all colors.

Remember, a key to this campaign is small, simple changes with the goal of maintaining these healthy habits for a lifetime. Visit <https://healthyforgood.heart.org/> for more information and strategies to make simple changes that can have a significant impact on your heart health.



The treatment of heart disease varies based on which risk factors are out of alignment. Many prevention strategies apply to treating active heart disease, but often medication and very specific and targeted dietary changes are needed as well.

For example, high blood pressure is often treated by a healthy diet plus a sodium restriction. This requires further dietary changes, focusing specifically on eliminating added salt, both from a salt shaker and from processed foods.

High cholesterol requires different dietary changes based on the type of cholesterol that is high or low.

Lifestyle changes have the ability to overcome heart disease, or at least reduce the amount of medication needed to treat heart disease. Organizations like

the American Heart Association can help you make these changes.

As well, working with qualified health professionals such as cardiovascular physicians, registered dietitians, and those affiliated with cardiovascular rehabilitation programs are key to successful prevention and treatment.

If your risk of heart disease is low right now, make sure your diet, exercise, and lifestyle reflect prevention.

If you currently have heart disease, seek treatment strategies that combine lifestyle modification with medication.

If you don’t know your risk, make an appointment today.

What better way to celebrate the month of the heart than doing all you can to make sure it keeps beating?

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# Here’s a smooth way to start your day

(Family Features) Research shows that starting each morning with a nutritious breakfast delivers benefits throughout the day. If you’re pressed for time or simply need to mix up your morning routine, put a fresh spin on a time-saving favorite by making a smoothie bowl.

Smoothie bowls typically have a thicker consistency than traditional smoothies, and according to a recent study in

the “American Journal of Clinical Nutrition,” the thicker the smoothie, the more full you will feel.

“I love smoothie bowls because they are a satisfying and satiating way to get a ton of nutrition in first thing in the morning,” said Carolyn Brown, a registered dietitian and nutritionist at Food-trainers in New York City. “You can add in healthy ingredients that you might

not be able to eat on a daily basis like spinach, basil, mint, cinnamon, nut butters or avocado.”

Brown points out that in her experience with clients, people love to eat with a spoon and find it more mentally and physically satisfying. The same goes for adding texture, such as a crunchy topping like goodnessknows snack squares. These satisfying, gluten-free snacks are

crafted with the goodness of whole nuts, real fruits and toasted oats, with no artificial colors, flavors or sweeteners. Divided into four snackable squares per serving and nestled in a layer made with dark chocolate, one individual, two-bite square contains only about 40 calories.

Find out more about how doing a little good for yourself can go a long way at [goodnessknows.com](http://goodnessknows.com).



Recipe courtesy of Alison Ray of So Chic Life

2/3 cup rolled oats  
1/2 cup full fat coconut milk  
1 tablespoon chia seeds  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
sea salt  
1/2 cup almond milk, 2 percent milk or soy milk  
1 small banana (or 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce)  
goodnessknows snack squares (any flavor)  
grated coconut, to taste

In small bowl, mix together oats, coconut milk, chia seeds, vanilla and pinch of salt. Cover and place in refrigerator at least 30 minutes, or overnight to help flavors soak in.

In blender or food processor, combine oat mixture with remaining milk and half of the banana (or applesauce). Blend until smooth and creamy.

Pour creamy oats into bowl, and top with snack squares, coconut and slices of remaining banana half.

Tip: To thin consistency, use additional milk.

Recipe courtesy of Anna Luther of My Life and Kids

Smoothie

1/2 cup Greek yogurt  
1 frozen banana  
1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce  
1/4 cup raw oats  
1/2 cup milk (or unsweetened almond or coconut milk)  
1 tablespoon cinnamon  
1 tablespoon vanilla  
honey, to taste (optional)

Toppings

Diced apples  
Shaved almonds  
Cinnamon  
goodnessknows apple almond & peanut dark chocolate snack squares

In blender, mix all smoothie ingredients until smooth. Add honey to increase sweetness, if desired. Add toppings before serving.





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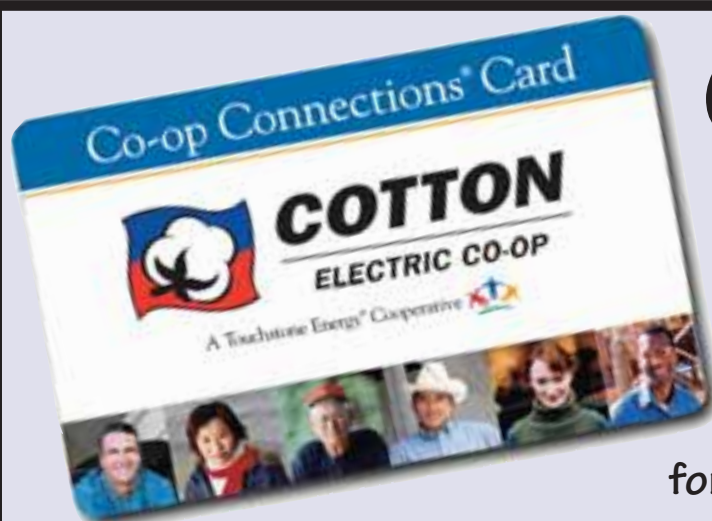
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