

# The Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



*"The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957"*

VOLUME 65

December 13, 2021

NUMBER 4

We Wish You A Merry

*Merry Christmas*  
&  
*Happy New Year*

*May your holidays sparkle with joy and laughter!  
May the true spirit of Christmas shine in your  
heart and light your path throughout the new year!  
The Board of Trustees and Employees of Cotton Electric Cooperative.*



The meter and transformer department gathered recently to change out the last meter of a 4-year project to upgrade the entire Cotton Electric system. They are, from left, Rex Hiebert, Sam Gonzalez, Jason Red Elk, Cody Pennington, Skyler Smith, Anthony Reed, Adam Metcalfe and Josh Belcher.

## System upgrade completed

### 22,915 meters changed through cooperative effort

By Karen Kaley

On a delightfully sunny November morning, nine Cotton Electric employees gathered around a meter serving a home west of Duncan in Stephens County. Eight were formerly and currently part of the meter and transformer (M&T) department and another was there to photograph and commemorate the occasion.

Rex Hiebert, journeyman field meter technician and most senior member of M&T, stepped up to the meter and began loosening the collar holding it in place. Fellow journeyman field meter technician Anthony Reed offered tidbits of advice along with meter tester Jason Red Elk and Adam Metcalfe, a recent transfer from M&T

to the warehouse. Meanwhile, apprentice meterman Josh Belcher and meter technician shop foreman Sam Gonzalez gathered equipment.

Hiebert popped the old weather-worn meter out of its base and handed it off to be recorded by apparatus technician Skyler Smith, newest to M&T. Gonzalez worked on the meter base to replace and secure the wiring. Then M&T supervisor Cody Pennington asked for a drumroll as he pushed a new Aclara meter into the base.

Changing a single meter normally takes only two people, but these eight wanted to be present when this particular unit was installed. It was the last of 22,915 meters upgraded in an am-

bitious undertaking that began with a pilot project in July 2017.

For the pilot, upgraded meters were installed in the Randlett and Devol area where a newly-built substation had just come online. In early 2018, part two of the pilot was launched with the changeout of all meters served by another substation in eastern Stephens County.

The two-way automated communication system offered flexibility and enhanced service to the co-op's members. Same as the meters they replaced, the upgrades used the powerline carrier method to safely deliver information to the co-op's billing system.

By year's end, plenty of data had been gathered and employees suggest-

ed all co-op members would benefit from the newer devices. The board of trustees agreed and a full-system changeout began in earnest in 2019.

Pennington laid out a 3-year plan, assigning a changeout time slot to each substation. The project was unusual and ambitious in that the plan was to change every meter. Previous changeouts had been only for residential meters but this was to replace large power meters, too.

"It took a lot of hard work, a lot of cooperation and support," Pennington said. He pointed out that the project was successful and completed on time because employees from every department contributed.

See Positioned, Page 8

#### Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after Dec. 1, 2021, is \$0.01971 per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$25.62 on the December bill.

#### November 2021 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	67	49	58	16	86	39	63
2	51	44	48	17	69	48	59
3	49	44	47	18	60	29	45
4	53	40	47	19	62	25	44
5	62	39	51	20	77	42	60
6	70	36	53	21	65	42	54
7	78	39	59	22	68	27	48
8	76	49	63	23	74	30	52
9	76	58	67	24	71	52	62
10	75	54	65	25	54	25	40
11	68	45	57	26	66	22	44
12	64	35	50	27	64	34	49
13	67	30	49	28	67	34	51
14	69	36	53	29	76	29	53
15	77	34	56	30	77	33	55

Source: [srh.noaa.gov/oun/](http://srh.noaa.gov/oun/)

Average Daily High: 68 Average Daily Low: 38

#### Did You Know?

Cotton Electric offices will be closed Dec. 24 and 27 for Christmas and Dec. 31 for New Year's Eve. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on Jan. 18, 2021.

#### 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 [TheCurrent@cottonelectric.com](mailto:TheCurrent@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
Co-op News.....	4-9
Recipes .....	10-11
Puzzles .....	12
Classifieds .....	13-15
Co-op Connections .....	16

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



From the CEO

2021 has been a productive year

We all know 2021 had its share of challenges but I'm proud to report that your Cooperative made progress this year. Our founding members started this journey 83 years ago and we've seen many changes and advancements over the past eight decades. Your Cooperative utility plant is now valued at more than \$114 million and provides service to 22,915 meters along 5,217 miles of line. The Board of Trustees and employees of Cotton Electric take that responsibility very seriously. Over the past year, we've focused on projects to improve your service quality and reliability and to expedite restoration efforts when severe weather hits our area. Cotton Electric's vege-

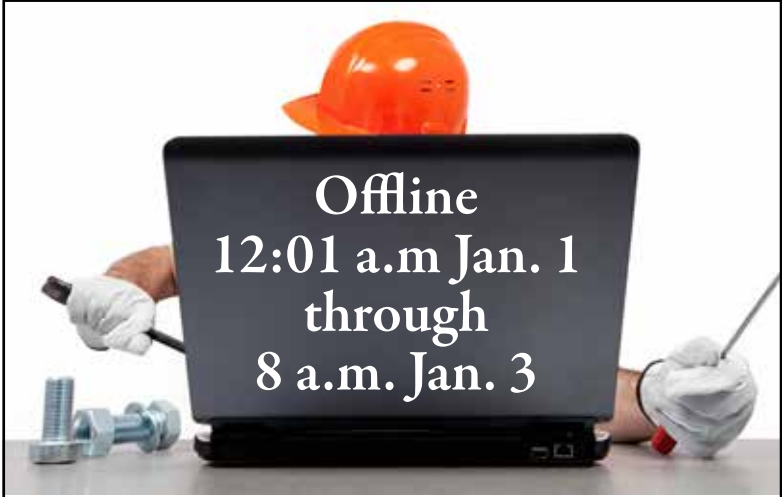


**Jennifer Meason, CEO** tation management and preventative maintenance programs are key items in our strategic plan. As part of the Cooperative's maintenance program, district line crews patrol and inspect services on an ongoing basis, making repairs as needed. Additionally, the Cooperative uses contractors to help with annual inspection of our system and replacement of worn poles. This process identifies weaknesses before they become an issue that

can lead to an outage. In 2021, 7,844 poles were inspected and 891 were replaced. This proactive approach improves safety and increases system reliability and resiliency during severe weather events. Our vegetation management program is a three-pronged approach of clear cutting, trimming in front of residences to at least 10 feet below the neutral line, and following up with an herbicide application to prevent regrowth. Throughout the year, our employees evaluate the system for vegetation issues and determine the most economical and effective methods of treatment. After this year's evaluation, crews clear cut and trimmed

562 miles of line and applied herbicide applications over 1,110 miles. Through this program, we've seen improvement in the ability of the system to weather storms with minimal damage in addition to improving power quality. Employees worked diligently throughout the Cooperative to complete our meter changeout project. The new system provides more detailed usage information that helps us assist members with billing questions and allows our crews to restore power in a more efficient manner. We appreciate our members' cooperation as we visited all of your homes over the past three years. Thank you for everyone's help in making this proj-

ect successful. Providing safe, reliable and affordable power for our members is our mission but we know our purpose goes beyond the meter. With your help, the Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation continued to make a positive impact in our communities through grants awarded in 2021. Since 2004, your generosity has provided \$1,369,071.33 to area individuals and organizations in need. We've made good progress this year and will keep the momentum going in 2022. Thank you for your support and, from the Cotton Electric family to yours, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



*Year-end maintenance will delay payment postings*


Cotton Electric Cooperative's payment system will close for maintenance from 12:01 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022 through 8 a.m. Monday, Jan. 3. This is a mandatory maintenance that must occur at the end of each year. During this shut down, payments can be made but will not post to power accounts. Please note that there will be no power cut-offs for non-payment during the maintenance period. Barring unforeseen issues, the payments will post after the system restarts at 8 a.m. Jan. 3. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. Additionally, Cotton Electric business offices will be closed on Friday, Dec. 31. As always, dispatchers are on duty 24/7 and emergency calls will be answered. Please call us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520 to report an outage. We thank you for your patience and look forward to serving you in the new year.

Winter Storm Uri

Final costs have been calculated

The mid-February 2021 winter storm, also known as the polar vortex or Winter Storm Uri, made an impact on all of us. Cotton Electric employees layered up and continued our mission of providing power to our members, restoring outages as they occurred. Many of you braved the elements as well, as you went out daily to care for livestock, breaking ice and working valiantly to save newborn calves. During that time period, the Cotton Electric system experienced a historic peak level of electricity demand. For the first time in 80 years, the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), the power grid operator for a 14-state region that includes Oklahoma, had to implement controlled, temporary service interruptions to prevent widespread blackouts. This affected our service territory and those of most other power providers across the nation's midsection. Natural gas spot market prices spiked to levels not seen before. The event also dramatically increased the price of power during that time. Our power supplier, Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC), has recently finalized those costs to Cotton Electric for our power use associated with this unprecedented event. Cotton Electric's portion is \$15.3


million. Beginning in 2022, we will repay WFEC, with interest, over a five-year term. To put the February 2021 cost into perspective, Cotton Electric's February power bill over the previous five years has averaged \$3.6 million. Unprecedented surprise costs like these are shocking and we are working with other cooperatives and industry partners to prevent this from happening again. Our goal as a not-for-profit cooperative is to break even and our rates are designed to accomplish this task in a method that is fair and equitable to our members. Beginning on your February bill for January usage, the monthly Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) will include a Winter Storm Cost Recovery Rider. The monthly PCA will be calculated and a rider of \$0.0045/kWh will be added. A member using an average of 1,000 kWh would see a monthly increase of \$4.50. This rider will remain in effect through Dec. 31, 2027. If we recover our costs earlier, the rider will end. We encourage all of our members to look for ways to conserve electricity and be more efficient. To find out more about energy efficiency, visit our website at CottonElectric.com or call us at 580-875-3351.



**Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month**

Heading out of town for the holiday season? Remember to unplug electronics that draw a phantom energy load. Some gadgets like TVs, phone chargers, gaming consoles and toothbrush chargers use energy when plugged into an outlet—even when they're not in use.


Source: Energy.gov



**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.

October 2021 Operating Stats			
	2021	2020	
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$5,811,654	\$4,765,723	
Cost of Purchased Power	5,762,214	3,237,506	
Taxes	121,522	93,210	
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,412	1,005	
Average Farm and Residential Bill	131	123	
Average Farm and Residential kWh	914	1,018	
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	19,082	18,763	
Miles Energized	5,217	5,208	
Density Per Mile	3.66	3.60	
New Service Connects YTD	399	340	
Services Retired	138	141	

TheCurrent

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# Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the January 2022 issue, please submit information by Jan. 5 by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to [TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com](mailto:TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com). Events occurring before Jan. 18 will not be published in the next issue.

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

### Church presents Live Nativity

As part of Holiday in the Park, Central Baptist Church of Lawton presents the Live Nativity from 6 to 8 p.m., Dec. 17-19 nightly at the east entrance of Elmer Thomas Park in Lawton.

The Live Nativity is a presentation of the birth of Jesus Christ, complete with authentic costumes, live animals and narration. This family-friendly event brings the Bible alive.

### MP Christmas Carnival is Dec. 18

Plan to spend the day at the Christmas Carnival on Dec. 18 in Medicine Park. Beginning at 9 a.m., attractions will include pony rides, miniature golf, mini tractors, cornhole, and the foam blocks of Imagination Station.

The parade is open to all who wish to participate. Lineup begins at 1 p.m. at the water plant and the parade will set off at 2. Santa will toss plush toys along the route.

Children will have an opportunity to speak with Santa after the parade until the day concludes around sunset.

### CTHC hosts Blackhorse exhibit

Blackhorse: A Retrospective is a special exhibit by Apache/Kiowa artist Jackie "Blackhorse" Tointigh. The exhibit will run through Dec. 31 at Chisholm Trail Heritage Center, 1000 Chisholm Trail Parkway in Duncan.

This award-winning artist has works in museums, galleries, and private collections throughout the United States and in several other countries. His work blends modern style and traditional ideas to provide a visual history of his people. His paintings are a mix of contrasting colors and techniques reminiscent of modern, contemporary, abstract-expressionism, with a traditionalist idea.

The Heritage Center is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday.

Cotton Electric members presenting a Co-op Connections Card can get \$1 off admission.

**Magic Lantern to screen 'Before Sunset'**

Magic Lantern Film Society of Cameron University screens DVD presentations of classic films each month in the CETES Conference Center, Room A. Screenings begin at 7:30 p.m.

The Feb. 11 offering is "Before Sunset." Released in 2004, it is the second installment of a trilogy of films directed by Richard Linklater and starring Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy. Nine years after Jesse and Celine first met and spent a day together, they meet again on Jesse's French book tour. They spend part of the day together before Jesse has to again leave for a flight.

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](http://Cameron.edu/magiclantern).

### CTAC Live presents Montgomery

CTAC Live concert series continues the 2021-22 season with Monte Montgomery, named one of the top 50 guitarists by Guitar Player Magazine.

The Austin, Texas-based guitarist first gained notoriety in 1999, after performing on an episode of the PBS series Austin City Limits.

Montgomery composed for the ABC TV series "Last Man Standing." In 2004, Alvarez Guitars created the MMY1 Monte Montgomery Signature Guitar, a model based on Montgomery's 1987 Alvarez-Yairi DY62C Acoustic-Electric Guitar.

Performance is set for 7:30 p.m. Feb. 11 at the Simmons Center in Duncan. Tickets are available at the door or [ChisholmTrailArts.com](http://ChisholmTrailArts.com).

### Free Sunday occurs each month

A HOUSE FULL Resale hosts Free Sunday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., the first Sunday of each month, at 1821 W. Gore Blvd. in Lawton.

A variety of free items will be available outside on racks and tables. Visitors are encouraged to bring at least one item to add to the tables.

More information is on A HOUSE FULL Resale's Facebook page.



"Holidays at Nana's brings JOY to all!" That's what Cotton Electric member Leigh Ann Womack thinks about her snapshot of grandkids Braxon, 6, pushing cousin Laike, 5, on a swing outside her home in Cache.

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

### Parkinson's Foundation offers support

The Parkinson's Foundation of Oklahoma offers various opportunities for patients and caregivers in Southwest Oklahoma.

Lawton Support Group meets at 6 p.m. on first Tuesdays at The Christian Center, 2405 SW Lee Blvd. For information, call 580-280-0114.

Central Lawton Support Group meets at 2 p.m. on second Thursdays at the Western Hills Church of Christ, 1108 NW 53rd Street. For information, call 580-699-2204.

The support group in Duncan meets at 3 p.m. on first Thursdays at The Christian Center, 720 E. Plato Road. For information, call 580-699-2204.

A caregiver support group is at 4 p.m. second Wednesdays at the Southwestern Medical Center in Lawton.

The Foundation's mission is "Inspiring Hope and Transforming Lives for Parkinson's Patients and Families in Oklahoma." For information about these programs or additional support, visit [www.parkinsonoklahoma.com](http://www.parkinsonoklahoma.com).

## GUESS WHICH HOUSE HAS BETTER INSULATION IN THE ATTIC.

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# The Current

## 2022 Publication Schedule

The Current will complete its 65th year of publication in 2022. We look forward to serving the membership with stories, photos and the ever-popular classified ads.

Dates listed below are deadlines to reserve display advertising space, deadline to submit a classified ad and the day you should expect your copy of The Current to arrive in your mailbox.

January		February	
Ad Sales	Dec. 30	Ad Sales	Jan. 28
Classified ads	Jan. 5	Classified	Feb. 2
Publish Date	Jan. 18	Publish Date	Feb. 14
March		April	
Ad Sales	Feb. 25	Ad Sales	March 25
Classified	March 2	Classified	March 30
Publish Date	March 14	Publish Date	April 11
May		June	
Ad Sales	April 22	Ad Sales	May 27
Classified	April 27	Classified	June 1
Publish Date	May 9	Publish Date	June 13
July		August	
Ad Sales	June 24	Ad Sales	July 22
Classified	June 29	Classified	July 27
Publish Date	July 11	Publish Date	Aug. 8
September		October	
Ad Sales	Aug. 19	Ad Sales	Sept. 23
Classified	Aug. 24	Classified	Sept. 28
Publish Date	Sept. 6	Publish Date	Oct. 11
November		December	
Ad Sales	Oct. 28	Ad Sales	Nov. 25
Classified	Nov. 2	Classified	Nov. 30
Publish Date	Nov. 14	Publish Date	Dec. 12

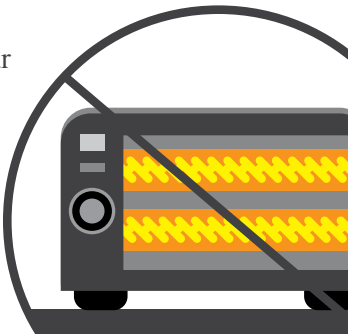




# TIPS TO DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.



# Are portable space heaters efficient for my home?

By Abby Berry

Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. But unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can really take a toll on your energy bills. The truth is, whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home’s efficiency and energy needs.

If you’re using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home.

If you’re on a tight budget, caulking and weather stripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose fill

insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy efficient but you’re cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months. Only use a space heater in small spaces that you’re occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space; most heaters include a general sizing table.

A word about safety: the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriter’s Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation (and appeal!) and maintain warmth.

We know it’s cold out there but re-

member, in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills if used improperly.

If you’re looking for alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, contact Cotton Electric at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520. We’re here to help you manage your energy use.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation’s landscape.



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# Give yourself some ‘paychecks’ for retirement

During your working years, you’ve probably met the costs of living through your salary. But once you retire, where will the money come from? Is there a way to give yourself a “paycheck” for retirement?

There is indeed – but you’ll have to do a good job of managing your available



income sources. Here are some moves that can help:

- Accept dividends and interest payments. Instead of automatically reinvesting all your dividends and interest payments into your portfolio – which is an excellent strategy for building wealth – you might want to begin receiving these payments as part of your income. Keep in mind, though, that companies can lower or discontinue dividends at any time. However, it’s also true that some companies have consistently paid, and even increased, dividends over many years, and even decades.

- Choose an appropriate withdrawal rate. Once you’re retired, you’ll likely need to begin withdrawing from your investment accounts. But you’ll need to avoid taking out too much early in your retirement – you don’t want to risk outliving your portfolio. For many people in their mid-60s, a 4% annual withdrawal rate is a good starting point, but everyone’s situation is different, and your ideal rate will depend on several factors: your age, the size of your portfolio, other sources of income, and so on. Once you turn 72, you’ll be required to take at least a minimum amount from your traditional IRA and

401(k), but you can choose to withdraw more, if necessary.

- Maximize your Social Security. You have significant control over the amounts you’ll receive from Social Security. You can begin taking these payments at age 62, but they will be much larger if you wait until your full retirement age, which will likely be between 66 and 67. (You will receive the maximum amount if you wait until you reach 70.) So, if you think you have enough income from other sources, you might decide to delay taking Social Security – but if you need the money, you may not be able to wait. And here’s something else to think

about: If your spouse had considerably higher earnings than you did, you may be eligible for spousal benefits.

- Consider an annuity. You might want to consider purchasing an annuity that provides lifetime payments. Some annuities are even indexed for inflation, meaning payments will increase or decrease each year, keeping pace with the Consumer Price Index. Annuities are not suitable for everyone, though, so, before investing in one, you should consult with a financial professional who is familiar with your situation.\*

Finally, don’t rule out the

possibility of earned income. Just because you’ve retired from your full-time job doesn’t mean you can’t work in some capacity, perhaps by doing some part-time work or consulting or even opening your own small business.

Look at all these ideas when thinking about putting together an income plan for your retirement. You may find that your diligence will pay off.


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

Edward Jones, Member SIPC

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**Edward Jones**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING





**COTTON**  
ELECTRIC CO-OP

**2022**  
**ESSAY CONTEST**



*Deadline to enter is Jan. 18, 2022*

Cotton Electric Cooperative has an opportunity available for high school juniors living in the co-op's service area.

Area juniors can submit a 600-word essay for a chance to participate. The topic for Cotton Electric's 2022 Essay Contest is "How has the Rural Electrification Act impacted America?"

The contest features three rounds: Essay submission, interview and oral presentation of the essay. Essays will be submitted electronically. Depending on safety concerns at the time, interviews will be carried out either in person or as video meetings. Health and safety conditions will also dictate whether final recitations

of essays will be during a banquet at Cotton Electric headquarters in Walters or via video submissions. Finalists will either travel to Washington, D.C. in June 2022 or, if travel is not safe, receive a scholarship.

Information such as contest rules and regulations, entry forms, cooperative information and basic details of the contest can be found on our website at [www.cottonelectric.com/scholarship](http://www.cottonelectric.com/scholarship).

The deadline to submit an essay is Jan. 18.

For more information regarding the essay contest, call Cotton Electric at 580-875-3351 or email [YouthPrograms@CottonElectric.com](mailto:YouthPrograms@CottonElectric.com).

# CECF announces fourth-quarter grants

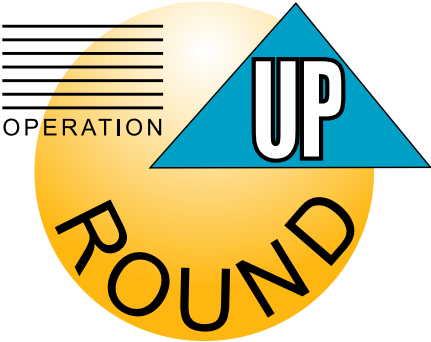
Even during tough economic times, it's important that we continue to support our local communities. That's the philosophy behind Operation Round Up (ORU), a charitable program governed, funded and supported by Cotton Electric members like you.

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

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

The board met in November to review several grant applications. Grants totaling \$18,991.80 will be distributed to seven of the applicants. Fourth-quarter grants include:

- Cache Ag Boosters: A \$2,500 CECF grant will go toward the purchase of a livestock fan to be used in a variety of settings.
- Central High Band Program: A \$3,000 CECF grant will purchase in-



struments for the growing program.

- Douglass Eastside Senior Citizens Center: A \$1,791.80 CECF grant will purchase an AED for the facility.
- Empire FFA: A \$5,000 CECF grant will go toward equipment for a new ag facility.
- Empire Public Schools: A \$1,200 CECF grant will complete efforts to outfit the school's first golf team.
- Sterling Public School: A \$2,500 CECF grant will replenish supplies for the STEM classes.
- Waurika EMS District Association: A \$3,000 CECF grant will go toward the purchase of a Toughbook for an ambulance.

CECF has awarded or pledged more than 550 grants totaling \$1,368,571.33 since the foundation was established in 2004.

Applications for 2022 first-quarter grants are due Feb. 8, 2022.

Downloadable applications are available at [CottonElectric.com/grant-applications](http://CottonElectric.com/grant-applications).

Download CECF grant applications at [CottonElectric.com](http://CottonElectric.com).  
Deadline for first-quarter 2022 grant applications is Feb. 8.

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program and members may opt out at any time by calling or sending a letter or email stating the account holder's name, account number and the request to be removed.

BE SAFE DURING THE

# HO·HO·HOLIDAYS

10 TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY JOLLY



Before you plan out your new holiday lighting scheme or repeat last year's festive design, keep these 10 safety tips in mind when decorating outdoors:

1

2

3

4

5

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10

Do not toss light strands up into the air. They could get too close to or come into contact with a power line.

Before using a ladder, always look up and assess all power line locations.

Carry a ladder horizontally when transporting it.

Keep at least 10 feet between yourself (and any item you are holding) and a power line.

Do not use staples or nails or tacks to secure light strands, cords, wires or extension cords.

String together no more than the number of strands (or fewer) recommended by the manufacturer.

Plug all lights and extension cords into GFCI-protected outlets.

Use lights and extension cords rated for outdoor use.

Do not use frayed, cracked or otherwise damaged cords, plugs or lights.

Use only lights and products certified by a reputable testing lab.



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# STAY TOASTY AND WARM WHILE

## TURNING DOWN THE THERMOSTAT

When the winter winds blow, it is tempting to adjust the thermostat up a few degrees to stay toasty and warm. However, turning to other (FREE!) ways to help keep you warm could help reduce your energy bills.



Each degree you reduce your thermostat saves 1% on your heating bill. No one home during the day? **Adjust your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting to save up to 10% annually.**

Source: Department of Energy

### Here are ways to help you stay warm when it is cold outside:



**Bundle up by wearing layers and heavy socks**



**Get your body moving and stay active**



**Use blankets while sitting still**



**Caulk windows and door frames that leak air**



**Replace or update old or ineffective door seals**



**Make sure your home's heating system is working properly**



**Keep your furnace clean and change the filter monthly**



**Let the sun shine in during the day and close window coverings at night**



**Reduce how long you use ventilation fans (they transfer warm air outside)**



**Keep a fireplace damper closed when not in use**



**Humidify your home to make the air feel warmer**

If you use a portable space heater, use it safely and for short amounts of time. Using one for extended periods can cause your energy bill to spike since it draws a lot of power.

Learn more at: 

## EV charging stations pop up across co-op territory

*By Danielle Quickle*

In early 2019, Cotton Electric added a Chevy Bolt electric vehicle (EV) to its cooperative fleet. The purchase was a result of the desire to provide co-op members considering owning an EV with first-hand experience and information.

Our most recent project with the co-op's Bolt has been centered around options for charging an EV. Charging equipment is one thing to consider when purchasing an EV. Factory level one charging equipment is included with the purchase of an EV and can take up to 68 hours to fully recharge the vehicle. Level two chargers are around four times faster than level one, bringing charging time down to around 8-9 hours for a complete charge. Cotton Electric has a level two charger installed at co-op headquarters specifically to accommodate the Chevy Bolt.

Level three chargers are the commercial chargers that can be seen at certain gas stations and shopping centers. While there is no industry standard on how quickly these chargers can bring your EV to a full charge, resources such as EV-Town, ChargeHub and ChargePoint advertised an 80% charge in 30 minutes for a 120-mile-range battery.

Within the last year, six level three chargers have been installed in Cotton Electric's service territory. Since August, Energy Efficiency Coordinator Heath Morgan has performed a series of charging tests at each charger in order to help the manufacturers of these chargers improve and to provide first-hand experience to co-op members.

"The average charging time we have experienced would allow us to go from a 20% charge to an 80% charge in roughly an hour," Morgan said. "Which is pretty accurate to the advertised charging times for our Chevy Bolt, which has a 230-mile-range battery."

Since the arrival of the vehicle, co-op employees have driven roughly 12,500 miles at a cost of only \$353 worth of electricity at Cotton Electric's residential rate of \$0.09. If we had charged solely on level three chargers, the same distance would've cost more than \$1,300 in electricity at the rate of \$0.33 per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

"Direct current (DC) level three chargers are meant for in-transit use, so when you're making a long trip that exceeds the range of your battery," Morgan said. "Using them as a primary charger can become very expensive."

Before making your trip, locate charging stations along your route. Many EV charger manufacturers have their own mobile app which will locate charging stations, let you know when stations are unavailable, activate charging and let you know when your vehicle is charged.

Once you have arrived at a charger, park and shut off your vehicle. The level three chargers in Cotton Electric's service territory have two nozzles to choose from, one universal connect and another built specifically for Teslas. Select the appropriate nozzle for your vehicle and plug it into the charging port. Activating charging can be done by credit card, through the app or by using a radio frequency identification (RFID) card. To use a credit card, simply insert your card at the charger and follow a series of prompts on the screen. Let the app know which charger you are hooked up to and follow the prompts to start activation. The RFID card is the most reliable way to activate charging. RFID cards work even when the charging stations have poor connectivity. A RFID card can be requested through the account settings of whichever mobile app you have downloaded.

"Due to where we live, connectivity has been the biggest problem with the chargers," Morgan said. Once connectivity is established, your vehicle will begin charging. Many vehicles will allow you to set a certain charge percentage instead of automatically charging to 100%. For example, if a 50% charge would be enough to get you home, you could set up your vehicle to stop charging once it hits that 50% mark.

Our experience with level three chargers has had its ups and downs.

"They seem to work okay once you learn some little tricks on how to use them," Morgan said. "It's definitely a new technology and a learning experience for all parties involved."

Since 2016, EV purchases in Oklahoma have grown from 263 sales per year to 4,674 sales annually. With more EV drivers on the road and more of our membership considering the purchase of an EV, Morgan advises drivers to be patient with level three chargers.

"I equate it to the start of the internet. Back then it took eight times to connect. Once you connected, it was really slow and if someone picked up the phone it messed everything up," Morgan said. "Now we are all walking around with the internet in our pockets, available at our fingertips. EV charging will develop and evolve just as the internet did."

If you are considering the purchase of an EV, Cotton Electric is available as a trusted resource to assist members in any way possible.



**Fun Fact:**  
Heath Morgan bought his wife an EV just months before selling his first Model-T.

*The 2020-21 newsletter contest sponsored by Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives solicited entries from Oklahoma cooperatives in several categories. Cotton Electric was among those earning honors recently.*

## Is rooftop solar a good option for your home?

**Variables to consider**

- Overall energy efficiency of the home
- Age and pitch of the roof
- Orientation of the sun in relation to the home
- Tree coverage near the home
- Weather patterns for the region

**We can help.**

As your trusted energy advisor, we can provide information so you can make a well-informed decision.



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*An Award of Merit was presented for Danielle Quickle's article about charging stations for electric vehicles. Cotton Electric's CEO Jennifer Meason earned an Award of Merit for her column about the research needed to make an informed decision about solar panels.*

## From the CEO

### Solar panel research can be enlightening

Adding rooftop solar to your house is an investment of time and money comparable to the commitment you made when purchasing the property. Think back to that time: You looked for the right place at the right price. You found out as much about it as you could. You sought a trusted source to lend their expertise in matters they understood. You had a thorough understanding before you signed the mortgage papers. You should do the same before signing a solar contract.

As your trusted energy advisor, Cotton Electric Cooperative can offer a candid assessment of your specific situation to help before you make a significant financial investment.

**Pro-Tip: We're here to help**

- Return on investment
- We encourage our members to get several quotes and thoroughly investigate the credibility of the companies researched. When evaluating sales proposals, make sure you ask questions like:
  - What electric rates does the proposal use and what inflation rate is used? How does that compare with my current rate?
  - What estimated cost is used for excess energy produced? Cotton Electric purchases energy supplied by the member at the Cooperative's avoided energy cost. For 2021, the Cooperative's avoided cost is \$0.02145/kWh.
  - Is there a large, up-front payment required or are fees spread out over time?
  - Will I own the panels or will they be leased?
  - Are there any hidden costs like replacing the inverter, installation or more.
- Is it more cost effective to invest in other energy saving measures?

Proposals that state your electric bill will go down to nothing are not correct. All members of Cotton Electric pay a monthly fee to help cover fixed costs like poles, wires, and transformers that are required to provide power whenever you need it.

Cotton Electric recognizes that member interest in green energy sources and renewables is at an all-time high. Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFECC), Cotton Electric's wholesale power provider, is a leader in the integration of renewable energy that benefits all of our members. Most recently, 249 MW of wind energy from the Skeleton Creek project was added with an additional 250 MW of solar energy and 800 MW hours of battery storage to be completed by



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17 Herefords coming with the second calves, start calving February 20, 2022, bred to Angus and Red Angus Bulls.

19 Santa Gertrudis Hereford Cross start calving February 1, 2022.

5 Black white-face heifers, calving December 20, 2021.

10 Mixed pairs; 4, 5 and 6 year olds.



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# Defend Your Data

## Don't let your guard down while traveling for the holidays

As the holiday season approaches, millions of people will be traveling. If you are among the many, here are some tips to help keep you cyber savvy and safe.

### Mobile Devices

Bring as few devices as you can. The fewer devices you bring while traveling, the fewer devices that can be lost or stolen. In fact, did you know that you are far more likely to lose a mobile device than have it stolen?

Whenever leaving a hotel room, restaurant, taxi cab, train or airplane, do a quick device check and make sure you have all of your devices. Don't forget to have friends or family traveling with you to double check for their devices too, like children who may leave a device behind on a seat or in a restaurant.

As for the devices you choose to bring, make sure you update them so they are running the latest operating system and apps. Keep the screen lock

enabled. If possible, ensure you have some way to remotely track your devices if they are lost.

In addition, you may want the option to remotely wipe the device. That way if a device is lost or stolen, you can remotely track and/or wipe all your sensitive data and accounts from the device.

Finally, do a backup of any devices you take with you, so if one is lost or stolen, you can easily recover your data.

### Wi-Fi Connections

When traveling, you may need to connect to a public Wi-Fi network. Keep in mind you often have no idea who configured that Wi-Fi network, who is monitoring it or how, and who else is connected to it.

Instead of connecting to a public Wi-Fi network, whenever possible connect to and use the personal hotspot feature of your smartphone. This way you know you have a trusted

Wi-Fi connection.

If that is not possible and you need to connect to a public Wi-Fi network (such as at an airport, hotel, or cafe), use a Virtual Private Network, often called a VPN. This is software you install on your laptop or mobile devices to help protect and anonymize your Wi-Fi connection. Some VPN solutions include settings to automatically enable the VPN when connecting to non-trusted Wi-Fi networks.

### Public Computers

Avoid using public computers, such as those in hotel lobbies or at coffee shops, to log into any accounts or access sensitive information. You don't know who used that computer before you, and they may have infected it accidentally or deliberately with malware, such as a keystroke logger. Stick to devices you control and trust.

### Social Media

We love to update others about our travels and adventures through social media, but we don't always know who every friend or viewer is online. Avoid oversharing while on vacation as much as possible and consider waiting to share your trip until you're home. Additionally, don't post pictures of boarding passes, driver's licenses, or passports as this can lead to identity theft.

### Work

If you will be working while on vacation (we hope not!), make sure you check what your work travel policies are ahead of time, including what devices or data you can bring with you and how to remotely connect to work systems safely.

Vacation should be a time for relaxing, exploring, and having fun. These simple steps will help ensure you do so safely and securely.

*Source: SANS.org*

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## High School Juniors



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## Deadline: January 18, 2022



**COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP**

# 2022 ESSAY CONTEST



Scan for rules & entry form.





Sam Gonzalez prepares the meter base for Cody Pennington to install the final meter in a 4-year project to upgrade the Cotton Electric system.

## Positioned for improvement

Continued from Page One

“Billing and the system engineer generated orders, linemen and others assisted in the field, marketing arranged social media messages,” he said. “Everybody had a hand in the project.”

Even the members. “Every member on the system got a visit from a co-op employee during the past 3 years,” Pennington pointed out.

He spoke of members walking employees to meters, talking about their homes, their animals, their use of electricity and any problems they may have had.

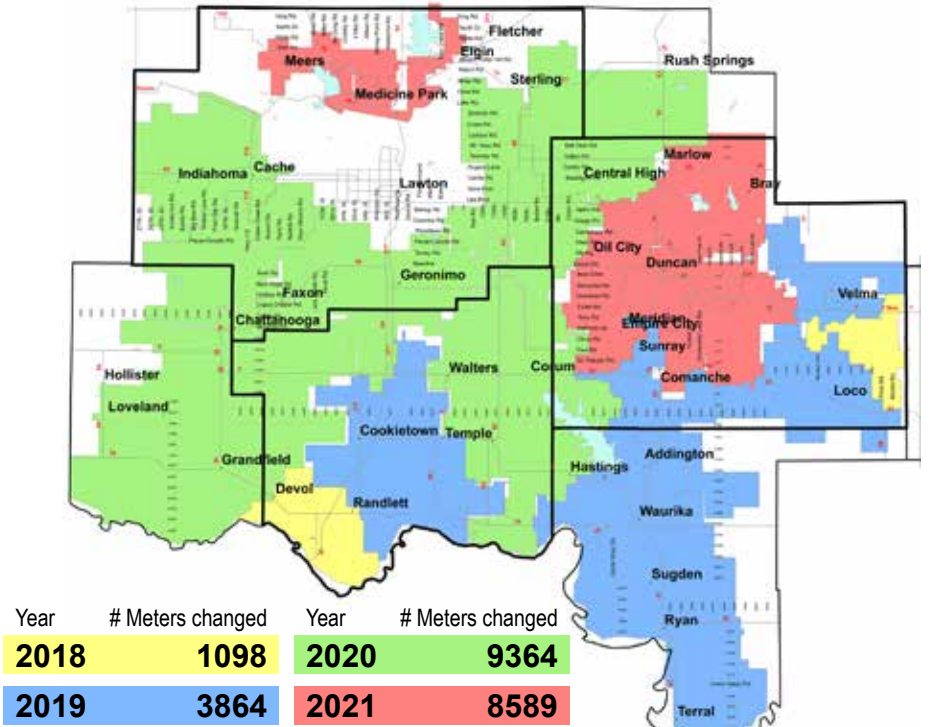
Pennington went on to offer a larger observation. “We did more than up-

grade meters; we improved teamwork at the co-op. We improved employees and their relationships with other departments. We rose to the challenges of a pandemic and supply chain issues.

“But, most importantly, we improved service and our relationship with our members. We think this new system is going to be of great benefit – in how fast power is restored and in continued accuracy on bills.”

Pennington said the members can be proud of this technological advance. “With this upgrade, we’re positioned for improvements.”

In other words, Cotton Electric’s future looks bright.



The map above shows substation service areas affected in each year’s phase of the Cotton Electric meter upgrade. The project was completed Nov. 30, 2021.

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It's a year-end tradition at Cotton Electric to honor board members and employees for their years of service.



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Chuck Ballard  
30 years



Tonya Daniel  
30 years



Greg Kohout  
30 years



David Break  
25 years



Larry Williams  
20 years



Josh Belcher  
15 years



Eric Woods  
15 years



Jennifer Kriz  
15 years



Ty Logan  
15 years



Chace Penn  
10 years



Adam Metcalfe  
10 years



Monty McDaniel  
10 years



Jennie Evans  
5 years



Ron Clifton  
5 years



Shane Bowers  
5 years



Billy Kennard  
5 years


Focused on safety Employees recognized for safe service

Depending on who you're talking with, Cotton Electric Cooperative's main priority isn't about making something happen when a member flips a light switch.

"Safety," said Jarrod Hooper. "Some may say it's keeping the lights on, but I say safety is job number one for everybody at the co-op."

As Cotton's Safety and Loss Control Director, Hooper coordinates all safety policies, procedures and training. His focus on safety is echoed by CEO Jennifer Meason and supported by the cooperative's board of trustees.

Providing electric service requires



**IF I FOLLOW LSR**  
**COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP**  
**LIFE SAVING RULES**

**JOB BRIEFING**  
**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**  
**PERSONAL GROUNDS, LOCKOUT/TAGOUT**  
**TRUCK GROUNDS**

equipment ranging from computer keyboards to large digging augers. About 88 Cotton employees carry

out tasks as varied as pushing reams of old documents into a paper shredder to riding a bucket 60 feet in the air to repair a high-voltage line.

Every piece of equipment and every task presents a potential accident, yet Cotton Electric employees have a pretty good record of safe work that extends over quite a bit of time.

That is an important accomplishment, so important that once a year the co-op recognizes employees whose safe work records have passed five-year increments.

In 2021, 15 Cotton employees achieved those five-year marks for a

combined total of 195 years of accident-free service.

Employees recognized include Kyle Linthicum, TJ James and Mackenzie Coston, who have each worked 5 years with a safe work record.

Laura Everett, Jason Red Elk and Evan Hayes have worked safely for 10 years, while Jarrod Hooper, Bryce Hooper, Anthony Reed and Chad Cowan have 15 safe years. Jennifer Meason, Talia Gammill and Sam Gonzalez have 20.

Terry Turner has a 25-year safe working record.



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# 4-H holds annual cook off

Final judging of the annual Stephens County 4-H Cook Off is always held the first Monday in November. On that tasty date in 2021, the competition included 2 Cloverbuds and 17 4-H'ers who entered recipes. Awards were presented to the top three in each category. First-place winners received a monogrammed apron and second- and third-place winners received participation medals. Cloverbud participants received a certificate and kitchen utensil.

All awards were sponsored by Stephens County 4-H Foundation.



## Cakes & Pies

Mackenzie Hankins - Empire

### Bunny Carrot Cake

- 2 cup sugar
- 2 cup flour
- 2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 teaspoon baking soda
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup oil
- 3 cups grated carrots
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

### Frosting:

- 1 8oz. pkg. cream cheese
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1 stick margarine
- 1 box powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoon vanilla
- Dash of salt



Combine dry ingredients. Add remaining ingredients together and mix. Bake in layer pans at 350 for 45-50 minutes.

### FROSTING

Blend softened cream cheese and margarine on low speed. Add vanilla, salt then powdered sugar gradually. Stir in pecans by hand. Spread over top of cooled cake. Serves 12.

## Appetizers

Hannah Riley - Teen Leaders

### Chicken Alfredo Dip

- 2 cups cooked chicken, chopped into bite-sized pieces
- 1 1/2 cups Alfredo sauce
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided use
- 1/2 cup cooked crumbled bacon
- 1/2 cup diced tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- cooking spray

Preheat the oven to 375°. Coat a small skillet or baking dish with cooking spray. Place the chicken, Alfredo sauce, cream cheese, parmesan cheese, Italian seasoning and 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese in a bowl. Stir to combine.



Spread the chicken mixture into the prepared pan and top with remaining cup of mozzarella cheese. Bake for 20 minutes or until dip is bubbly and cheese is melted. Turn the oven to broil and broil for 1-2 minutes until the cheese just starts to brown.

Top the dip with bacon, tomatoes and parsley, then serve. Serves 8

## Main Dishes / Casseroles

Maelyn Monteith - Duncan

### Gran Jan's King Ranch Chicken

- Tortilla chips
- 1 can chicken
- 1 can cream of mushroom
- 1 can cream of chicken
- 1 can Ro-Tel tomatoes
- 1 jar Cheez Whiz
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 1/2 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

In a stock pot, combine all ingredients except tortilla chips. Reserve 1 cup of shredded cheese. Over medium-low heat, cook until heated through and smooth. Spray pan with



cooking spray. Place a layer of tortilla chips in bottom of pan. Layer half of chicken mixture on top of chips. Add another layer of chips. Layer the rest of the chicken mixture on top and add the reserved shredded cheese. Bake for 45 minutes at 375. Serve over rice and with chips. Serves 8

## Soups, Stews, Chili and Side Dishes

Maelyn Monteith - Duncan

### Corn Casserole

- 1 stick of butter, melted
- 1 egg
- 1 box Jiffy cornbread mix
- 1 can sweet corn
- 1 can creamed corn
- 2 cups shredded cheese, divided

Spray 8 x 8 in. pan with cooking spray. Combine all ingredients, reserving 1 cup of shredded cheese. Pour into greased baking pan.



Top with reserved cup of cheese. Bake at 350 for 1 hour. Serves 8

## Cookies, Bars & Brownies

Dalton Anderson - Bray Doyle

### Oreo Balls

- 38 Oreo cookies
- 8 oz cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 cup white chocolate melting wafers
- 1 cup chocolate melting wafers
- For decorating: melted chocolate, Oreo crumbs, chopped nuts, sprinkles, crushed mints

Place Oreo cookies in a food processor. Pulse until they are fine cookie crumbs.

Using a stand mixer or hand mixer, beat the cream cheese until it is smooth, about 1 minute. Add the Oreo cookie crumbs and mix until well combined.

Roll the Oreo mixture into small balls and place on a baking sheet or tray that has been lined with parchment paper or wax paper. Freeze the Oreo balls for 15 minutes.

Place the chocolate wafers in a small microwave-safe bowl. Place the white chocolate wafers in a separate small



microwave-safe bowl. Melt according to instructions on packaging.

Remove the balls from the freezer and dip them into the melted chocolate. Make sure you cover the balls completely in chocolate. I like to use a fork to shake the excess chocolate off of the Oreo balls. Dip half of the balls in the chocolate and half in the white chocolate. Place the dipped balls back on the baking tray with parchment paper or wax paper. Decorate with a drizzle of chocolate, additional crushed Oreos, sprinkles, crushed peppermint or crushed nuts, if desired. Makes 33 Oreo balls.

## Breads

Katherine Gee - Empire

### Chocolate Chip Banana Nut Muffins

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 3/4 cup mashed ripe banana
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup flour
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1/4 cup chocolate chips

Mix butter with sugar. Then add egg, banana, vanilla to butter and sugar mixture.

In another bowl, mix flour, baking powder, salt, baking soda, and cinna-



mon. Slowly add to sugar mixture. At the end, stir in chopped pecans and chocolate chips. Try to find mini ones, but big ones will work too.

Spray 6 muffin tins with cooking spray and fill 2/3 full or use cupcake liners and no spray.

Bake at 350 for about 20-25 minutes. Double the recipe for more muffins. Serves 6

## Desserts, All Others

Mackenzie Hankins - Empire

### Oreo Bonbons

- 1 pkg. Oreo cookies
- 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
- 1 pkg. chocolate almond bark

Crush Oreo cookies till powdery fine, stir in softened cream cheese. Mix well. Roll into small bonbons. Heat almond bark in microwave for two minutes. Stir well. Put back in for 15 second increments, until completely melted. Dip bonbons in almond bark. Coat well. Take out with tongs, set out on wax paper. Makes 36 bonbons.



## Salads

Graycie Farris - Central High

### Tuna Pasta Salad

- 1/2 pound fusilli pasta
- 1 7 oz. can chunk tuna, in water
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 small carrot, grated
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1 big red onion, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons pickle relish
- salt
- ground pepper

1. Cook fusilli according to package directions. Drain water and rinse to let it cool down. Can be done ahead and refrigerated.

2. In a big salad bowl, toss together the pasta, mayonnaise, tuna, carrots,



celery and red onions. Add some pickle relish if desired.

3. Season with salt and fresh ground pepper. Serves 4



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# A Perfectly Layered Pie

(Culinary.net) The star of your next spread can be hidden away in the refrigerator for a surprise delight for your guests. It's topped with chocolate syrup and chopped pecans, and your loved ones just may vote it to be their favorite dish.

It's an Arkansas Possum Pie, made with three delicious layers and crunchy toppings for a show-stopping dessert.

Whether it's a holiday, birthday or reunion, this pie is a perfect conversation starter. It's sweet, crunchy and filled with creamy, delightful layers of goodness.

Find more unique dessert recipes at Culinary.net.

If you made this recipe at home, use #MyCulinaryConnection on your favorite social network to share your work.



**Arkansas Possum Pie**

Servings: 8

**Crust:**

- 3/4 cup butter
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 1/2 cups pecans, crushed

**Cream Cheese Layer:**

- 12 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 4 tablespoons heavy cream

**Pudding Layer:**

- 3 egg yolks
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**Whipped Cream Topping:**

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 4 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

chocolate syrup

- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

Heat oven to 350 F.

To make crust: In saucepan, melt butter; add flour, brown sugar and crushed pecans. Stir until combined. Press into 9 1/2-inch deep pie plate. Bake 15-20 minutes until crust be-

gins to brown. Cool completely.

To make cream cheese layer: In medium bowl, mix cream cheese until creamy. Add powdered sugar and heavy cream; mix until smooth. Spread over cooled pecan crust. Refrigerate.

To make pudding layer: In medium bowl, whisk egg yolks. Add milk; whisk until combined. Set aside.

In separate medium bowl, whisk sugar, cocoa powder, cornstarch, flour and salt until combined.

In saucepan over medium heat, add egg yolk mixture and flour mixture. Whisk constantly until pudding begins to thicken and bubble. Add butter and vanilla extract, stirring until butter is melted. Pour chocolate pudding in shallow bowl. Cover with plastic wrap touching pudding to keep it from forming skin. Refrigerate 30 minutes.

Pour pudding over cream cheese layer. Cover pie with plastic wrap. Refrigerate overnight.

To make whipped cream topping: In stand mixer bowl, add heavy cream, powdered sugar and vanilla extract. Whip until stiff peaks form. Spread whipped cream over pudding layer.

Drizzle pie with chocolate syrup and sprinkle with chopped pecans.

# Antibiotics in U.S. meat, milk a thing of the past

In the United States, it is illegal to sell meat or milk containing antibiotics. All farmers have to comply, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducts regular food testing to ensure the rules are being followed.

It has not always been this way. Claas Kirchhelle published "The History of Antibiotics in Anglo-American Food Production" in 2020. You can read it for free at [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554200](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554200). In the 1940s, scientists were discovering that antibiotics accelerated weight gain in food animals.



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

## Food For THOUGHT

By the 1950s, the "antibiotic growth effect" was gaining popularity. Subsequent decades resulted in widespread antibiotic use in food animal production. As the general

public became aware and concerned about chemicals in the food chain, the organic food movement gained traction, and the medical community became concerned about antibiotic resistance, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the USDA began to take action. It took many years and many changes in leadership to arrive at current regulations on use of antibiotics in food animals.

In 2017, the FDA completed implementation of the Veterinary Feed Directive, outlawing the use of antibiotics for any reason other than therapeutic treatment of animals

for specific health purposes. Antibiotics must be administered under the supervision of a veterinarian according to label directions and only for specific needs. The FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine also developed a 5-year plan for supporting antimicrobial stewardship in veterinary settings. This mirrors efforts in the healthcare industry to reduce the over-prescription of antibiotics.

In instances where a food-producing animal must be treated with antibiotics, farmers must withhold that animal's meat or milk for established time periods. There

are consequences for positive test results: If a farmer has more than one antibiotic residue violation in a 12-month period, the farmer's name is published on a public list available on the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service website, resulting in processing facilities refusing to purchase animals and milk.

In 2018, less than 0.5% of all meat samples tested contained detectable antibiotics. Testing protocols are routinely reviewed and updated as science evolves. You do not need to search for or pay extra for meat or milk with an antibiotic-free label.



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