



Cotton Electric announces rebate standards for 2023



Local non-profit celebrates big in school cafeterias



Warm up with baked potato soup this winter

The Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”

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NUMBER 5

Energy Camp contest now open for area eighth graders

Cotton Electric Cooperative has a summer opportunity available for all incoming and current eighth-graders attending schools within the Cotton Electric Cooperative service territory. Put on by Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives, Energy Camp is a hands-on, immersive camp experience that will be held May 30 through June 2 at Canyon Camp in Red Rock Canyon, southeast of Hinton.

Four campers will win all-expense paid, first-hand experience learning about cooperative principles, running for leadership positions, and climbing a pole just like electric linemen do.

“Energy Camp is a chance to meet new friends from across the state and make connections with cooperative professionals who care about your future,” says Stacy Howeth, Energy

Camp Director. “This camp offers education on cooperatives, electric safety, leadership development, career readiness, networking and much more.”

Cotton Electric Communications Specialist Carli Eubank explained how watching the campers form friendships and working together was encouraging to see. She served as a camp counselor in 2022.

“You could watch the campers’ curiosity about cooperatives grow as the week progressed, and it was really exciting to see when our mission clicked for them,” Eubank said.

This contest has three rounds. The first round is the essay contest, where contestants submit an essay between 50 and 100 words to the co-op about why the entrant would like to attend the 2023 Energy Camp. Writers of the top 15 essays move

to the second round for a live video interview between students and independent judges. Last, the final four will be selected to attend the 2023 Energy Camp. Contest deadlines and guidelines can be found at www.cottonelectric/energycamp.

When campers attend Energy Camp, they will get to experience fun and educational opportunities while making friends from across the state, explained Zach Young, Cotton Electric director of marketing and communications.

“I highly encourage eighth-graders to take advantage of this unique and incredible opportunity,” Young added.

Information packets with rules, cooperative information and basic details of the contest have been distributed to schools in Cotton Electric’s service territory.

To enter the contest, visit the www.cottonelectric.com/energycamp, or contact the Marketing department at 580-875-3351. We can also be reached by email at zyoung@cottonelectric.com.



Ethan Miller, a 2022 Energy Camp winner, climbs a pole during an Energy Camp session.



2022 Energy Camp winner Ava Woods straps on lineman gear to climb poles at Energy Camp.



2023 Youth Tour essay contest deadline quickly approaching

Jan. 17 at 3 p.m. is the deadline for area high school juniors to submit their essay for the Youth Tour contest. Two winners will be selected to attend an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., this summer.

Youth Tour is a week of hands-on learning while mak-

ing memories that will last a long time. Student finalists will learn about government and the cooperative business model, see historic monuments, gain leadership experience and meet new people.

To be eligible to enter the competition, contestants must be a high school junior

in the Cotton Electric service territory. The student and their families do not have to be Cotton Electric members; however, sons or daughters of Cotton Electric employees and board members are not eligible to participate.

The contest is broken into three rounds. For the first round, applicants will submit an essay of 400 to 500 words on this topic: “Cotton Electric Cooperative operates on the Seven Cooperative Principles. Which three of these resonate most with you, and why?” Sources must be cited and do not count toward the word count.

Essays will be judged by the following criteria: knowledge of subject, 40%; originality, 30%; composition, 10%; grammar, 10%; and spelling and punctuation, 10%. All submissions are made anonymous before submission to judges. Employees and board members of Cotton Electric will not serve as judges.

Next, the top 15 essays will move onto the second round – a live video interview via Zoom. The question-and-answer interview between students and judges will be arranged by Cotton Electric.

From there, the top five contestants will advance to

the final round. They will be required to submit a recorded oral presentation of their essay.

The top two presenters will be awarded with an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2023, or a \$1,500 scholarship. The scholarship will be awarded only if safety conditions do not allow for travel.

The deadline to submit an essay is 3 p.m. on Jan. 17. Apply online at www.cottonelectric.com/youthtour.

For questions, please call us at 580-875-3351 or email zyoung@cottonelectric.com.



Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after January 1, 2022, is \$0.01452 per kWh.

On a member’s average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$18.88 on the January bill.

December 2022 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	51	27	39	16	48	28	38
2	74	47	61	17	50	25	38
3	52	35	44	18	54	21	38
4	56	36	46	19	58	38	48
5	80	48	64	20	44	29	37
6	60	43	52	21	42	28	35
7	52	42	47	22	39	8	24
8	61	46	54	23	22	8	15
9	59	46	53	24	36	11	24
10	54	48	51	25	52	16	34
11	49	42	46	26	55	19	37
12	59	47	53	27	59	17	38
13	65	39	52	28	73	41	57
14	51	33	42	29	69	44	57
15	51	29	40	30	58	32	45
				31	67	30	49

Source: srh.noaa.gov/oun/
Average Daily High: 55 Average Daily Low: 32

Did You Know?

Have you downloaded the SmartHub app? With SmartHub, co-op members can check energy use, pay power bills and more! Download SmartHub in Google Play or the Apple Store.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on Feb. 13, 2023.

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.

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



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

Mission Statement
Our mission is to safely deliver reliable and affordable power, provide excellent member service, and improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.

From the CEO

Changes coming in 2023 for members with distributed generation

The New Year will bring a positive change for Cotton Electric's Distributed Generation accounts as the Avoided Energy Cost will now be updated monthly.

Members with Distributed Generation (solar or wind installation) receive a credit for any energy generated in excess of consumption. The value of the credit is based on the Cooperative's Avoided Energy Cost.

Previously, the Avoided Energy Cost was updated by our wholesale power provider annually. Beginning in 2023, the Avoided Energy Cost will be updated on a monthly basis and more closely reflect the value of the energy in the month it is produced.

In order to facilitate these changes, the cooperative has created a new billing cycle for all members who have Distributed Generation (DG). To close out the year, DG members' next billing statement will include usage/production through December 31, 2022. Members on Cycle 1 billing will receive their statements on January 5, 2023 and those on Cycle 3 will receive theirs on January 15, 2023.

Beginning February 2023, DG accounts will be billed on the 10th of every month for the previous month's usage/production. The Avoided Energy Cost will be the previous month's average of the hourly day ahead market clearing locational marginal price (LMP) at the WFEC

System Aggregate Pricing Node (WFEC_WFEC), as determined by the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). We will post the monthly Avoided Energy Cost at www.cottonelectric.com/solar.

Considering solar? We can help.

Over the past few years, we've heard from many of our members who are considering solar installations at their home, farm or business. If you are considering solar, please reach out so we can assist you with a candid assessment of your specific situation to help before you make a significant financial investment.

To help determine whether rooftop solar is right for you, consider this:

- Overall energy efficiency of your home/building currently
- Orientation of the sun in relation to the home/building
- Tree coverage near the home
- Weather patterns for the region
- The timing and pattern of your electricity usage
- 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 time of day do I use electricity the most? When determining the size of your solar installation, we can help you analyze your usage patterns using your meter data to see when you're using the most electricity and how to maximize the value of the energy produced from your solar panels. This analysis also helps members determine the size of the installation needed.

• What estimated cost is used for excess energy produced? CEC purchases energy supplied by the member at the Cooperative's avoided energy cost. Beginning in 2023, the Avoided Energy Cost will be updated monthly. It is paid to members when they generate more electricity than they are using at the time of generation.

- 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 roof before installation or marketing, advertising or research fees?
- Are there ongoing maintenance fees?
- Are there rebates or other financial incentives available?
- Are the estimated energy savings worth the investment?
- Is it more cost effective to invest in other energy saving measures?

Keep in mind that proposals that state your electric bill will



Jennifer Meason, CEO

go down to zero or less than your monthly service availability charge 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.

CEC recognizes that member interest in green energy sources and renewables is at an all-time high. Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC), Cotton Electric's wholesale power provider, is a leader in the integration of renewable energy that benefits all of our members.

Currently, WFEC purchases or produces energy from 956 MW of wind and 53 MW of solar in Oklahoma and New Mexico. Over the next few years, WFEC plans to add an additional 30 MW of solar energy in New Mexico and 250 MW of solar energy with 800 MWh battery storage from the Skeleton Creek project in Oklahoma.

We stand ready to help our members determine their best options and welcome your questions. We can be reached at 580-875-3351.



Get tips on staying **safe and warm** during a winter power outage.

Safe Electricity.org



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know insulating your electric water heater could reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%? This could save you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs.

Insulating your electric water heater is an easy, inexpensive project that can improve energy efficiency and save you money each month. Visit energy.gov for project tips and additional considerations.

Source: Energy.gov

November 2022 Operating Stats		
	2022	2021
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$6,910,452	\$6,393,703
Cost of Purchased Power	4,920,740	4,193,264
Taxes	123,112	121,748
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,246	1,093
Average Farm and Residential Bill	160	134
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,183	955
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	19,327	19,090
Miles Energized	5,389	5,208
Density Per Mile	3.59	3.67
New Service Connects YTD	524	377
Services Retired	129	147

Upcoming Deadlines for The Current	
February	
Ad Sales	Jan. 27
Classified	Jan. 27
Publish	Feb. 13
March	
Ad Sales	Feb. 24
Classified	Feb. 24
Publish	Mar. 13

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Carli Eubank..... Communications Specialist

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Energy Efficiency

Three DIY Efficiency Projects to Tackle This Year

A New Year brings new opportunities to save energy—and money. You may think energy efficiency upgrades require a great deal of time and expense, but that's not always the case.

If you're interested in making your home more efficient but don't want to break the bank, there are several DIY projects you can tackle to increase energy savings.

Let's take a look at three inexpensive efficiency upgrades that can help you save energy throughout the year.

Trim Dryer Vent

Level of difficulty: easy.

Supplies needed: tin snips, gloves, measuring tape and masking tape.

Estimated Cost: about \$25 depending on the supplies you already have.

If your dryer vent hose is too long, your dryer is working harder than it has to, using more energy than necessary. The vent hose should be long enough for you to pull the dryer out a couple feet from the wall, but the shape of the hose should form a line—it should not have a lot of slack, with twists and

curves. A shorter, unobstructed vent hose increases the efficiency of your dryer, dries clothing faster and reduces lint buildup, which can create potential fire hazards.

Simply measure, mark and trim the hose to the desired length, then reattach the hose to your dryer and exterior vent. If you're unsure about the hose length, check out YouTube.com for a quick video tutorial.

Seal Air Leaks

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed: caulk and caulk gun, weather stripping, gloves, putty knife, paper towels.

Estimated Cost: \$25 to \$50 depending on the materials you purchase.

Sealing air leaks in your home can help you save 10% to 20% on heating and cooling bills. Apply caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing to seal in conditioned air. You should also weather strip exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help you control energy costs.

Types of caulking and weather stripping materials vary, but ask your local

hardware or home store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies you need.

For more information, the Department of Energy provides step-by-step instructions for caulking and weather stripping at www.energy.gov.

Insulate Attic Stairs Opening

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed (if you build the box yourself): rigid foam board, faced blanket insulation, tape for foam board, measuring tape, utility knife, caulk and caulk gun, plywood.

Estimated Cost: \$50 to \$100.

A properly insulated attic is one of the best ways to optimize energy savings and comfort in your home, but many homeowners don't consider insulating the attic stairs, or the opening to your attic space. Even a well-insulated attic can leak air through the stair opening, but luckily, there's an easy fix.

An insulated cover box can seal and insulate the attic stairs opening. You can build your own insulated cover box or purchase a pre-built box or kit from a local home improvement store like



Heath Morgan,
Energy Efficiency
Coordinator

Sutherland's, Home Depot or Lowe's for about \$60.

If you decide to build your own, check out these step-by-step instructions from the Department of Energy: at www.energy.gov.

It should also be noted, if your attic opening is located in a garage that you do not heat and cool, this upgrade will not be as effective.

Saving energy doesn't have to be hard. With a little time and effort, you can maximize energy savings and increase the comfort of your home. To learn about additional ways to save, visit our website at www.cottonelectric.com/energy-efficiency.



Make sure your dryer vent hose isn't too long to prevent it from using more energy than needed.



Caulking and weather stripping around doors and windows can seal air leaks and help save on energy bills.



Insulated cover box and properly sealed attics are another way to avoid air leaks in your home.



Consider these DIY projects when looking for ways to save energy and money this year.



HELP KEEP ELECTRIC LINE WORKERS SAFE



Be patient when the power goes out. Workers need to work efficiently and **safely** to restore power.



ZONE IN ON SAFETY

Respect **roadside** work crews.



Don't drive distracted.
Reduce your speed.
Change lanes.

1 work zone crash occurs every **5.4 minutes**

70 work zone crashes result in **injuries each day**

12 work zone crashes result in at least **1 fatality each week**



Never plug a generator into a wall outlet in your home or garage. The power that back feeds into the electric line could **electrocute a utility worker** or neighbor.



DON'T post signs on **utility poles**.

Foreign objects can **tear utility workers' protective clothing**, which is the first line of protection from an **electric shock**.



Electric line workers **RANK 15** on the list of **25 MOST DANGEROUS JOBS** in America. Help keep them safe!



Learn more at 

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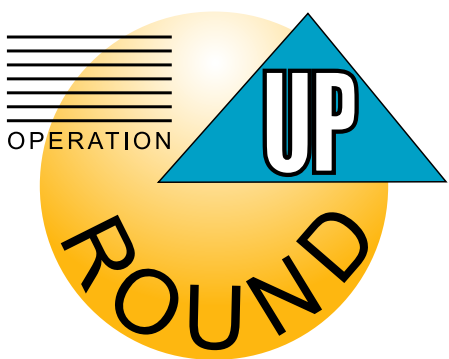




COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

At Cotton Electric, we're proud to be a part of it, bringing people together by providing energy for all the things you love.



Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation

Members contribute \$73,026.79 through ORU during 2022

Pennies, nickels and dimes do not seem like much, but when you add them all together with more than 15,000 members, the impact can be great. That is the mission of Operation Round Up.

When members participate in Operation Round Up, their power bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar and all of those partial dollars are pooled. It adds up to some significant funds that can make a significant difference in the quality of lives through-

out the Cotton Electric service area.

During 2022, CECF issued 28 grants for a total of \$73,026.79. Grant recipients included schools and youth programs, volunteer fire departments, non-profit organizations and communities.

Since its beginning in 2004, Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation has distributed \$1,450,882.07 to assist the needs of more than 200 organizations and individuals in our community.

2022 grant recipients include:

- Addington Baptist Church
- Beautiful Day Foundation
- Bray-Doyle Public Schools
- Break Bread Together
- Chattanooga Fire and Rescue
- Chisholm Trail Heritage Center
- Chisholm Trail Kiwanis Club
- Comanche FFA
- Community Presbyterian
- Devol VFD
- Douglass Community Residence Inc.
- Family Promise of Lawton Inc.
- Geronimo VFD
- Giddy Up 'N Go
- Grandfield VFD
- Horace Mann Elementary
- Indiahoma Fire Department
- Jefferson County Free Fair
- Marlow Elementary School
- Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma
- Safe Center Inc.
- United Methodist Women (Duncan)
- United Way of Stephens County
- Velma Fire Department
- Walters Public Schools
- Walters VFD
- Waurika EMS District
- Wichita Mountains Prevention Network



A Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF) grant was awarded to Marlow Elementary School for smartboards and tablets. Pictured left to right: Cotton Electric Vice President of Administration, Shane Bowers; Marlow Elementary School Principal, Kim Kizarr; and Lyndse Sager, Marlow Elementary School PTO President.



A recent CECF grant will support the United Methodist Women (Duncan) Blessing Box. Pictured left to right are Cotton Electric Communications Specialist, Carli Eubank; Ron Bechtel, Kay Bechtel, Katherine Rogers, Cheryl Dowell, Trish Lister, Judy Tomlinson, Gina Flesher, Wendy Brownlee, Debbie Savage and Paula Toler.



The Beautiful Day Foundation recently received a CECF grant to purchase children's books. Pictures left to right: Board Member, Trevin Stephenson; Board Member and President-elect, Kimber Budowsky; Board Member and Co-Founder, Leah Miller; Board Member and Kindred Community Chair, Jan Palovik; Operations Manager, Jill Waller; Board Member and Co-Founder, Michele Johnson; Cotton Electric Marketing Specialist, Zach Young; Executive Director, Kelsey Roberts; Board Member, Telise Ensey; and Beautiful Day Liaison, Cheryl Imel.

CECF grant applications are now available online!

Scroll to the online form at www.cottonelectric.com/grant-applications

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*Rebates Available in many OMPA Member cities *Restrictions apply

Cotton Electric announces rebate standards for 2023

Cotton Electric has announced standards for the 2023 Rebate Program for the purchase and installation of certain energy-efficient equipment and fuel conversion measures. The program expanded in recent years to include rebates for air source heat pumps, mini-splits and water heaters installed under certain conditions. Rebate funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Once rebate funds have been exhausted, the program will end for the year.

The maximum rebate in 2023 will be \$4,000 per residence. Heat pumps and mini-splits must be installed by a licensed contractor. Indoor and outdoor equipment must be replaced at the same time. Members will need to provide a rebate application, a copy of their itemized invoice, AHRI certification and Manual J calculation from the HVAC contractor or supplier in order to qualify for the program. Verification by Cotton Electric personnel and an Energy Efficiency Home Evaluation are also required to receive the rebate.

Ground source heat pumps (GSHP)

Rebates are paid on new installations or GSHP to GSHP replacements. A desuperheater is not required but additional rebates are available if one is part of a GSHP installation. Minimum standards vary for closed and open loop installations and apply to the full load operation of a GSHP, not the partial load. The amount of rebate is determined by the size of each unit, its Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) and Coefficient of Performance (COP).

- Qualifying units can receive a rebate of up to \$750 per ton installed if the unit meets the minimum specifications, which are 15.9 EER and 3.3 COP for closed loop systems and 15.9 EER and 3.6 COP for open loop.

- To qualify for a rebate when replacing an existing GSHP system with another GSHP system, the new installation must increase the EER by at least 3.0. The minimum specification for COP is 3.3 for closed loop systems

and 3.6 for open loop. Rebates are \$300 per ton.

Air source heat pumps / Mini-splits

Rebates are paid on replacement of existing heat pumps, new construction or conversion from natural gas or propane furnaces to total electric heat pumps. Rebates are per unit, not per ton. To qualify, units must meet standards that vary with the Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) rating.

- A unit with a 17.00 to 17.99 SEER must have an SEER2 of 16.2 to 17.2. Rebates are \$500 per unit for a replacement and \$750 per unit for a fuel conversion or new construction.

- A unit with an 18.00 to 19.99 SEER must have an SEER2 of 17.1 to 19.0. Rebates are \$600 per unit for a replacement and \$850 per unit for fuel conversion or new construction.

- A unit with 20.00 or greater SEER must have an SEER2 of 19.1 or greater. Rebates are \$750 per unit for a replacement and \$1,000 per unit for fuel conversion or new construction.

Heat pump water heaters

Rebates are offered for heat pump water heaters replacing traditional resistance water heaters. Conversion from natural gas or propane to an electric, and new construction projects, also qualifies for a rebate.

- Rebates are \$250 per unit for a replacement and \$500 per unit for a fuel switching or new construction.

Water heaters should have a minimum 40-gallon capacity, an energy factor of 2.8 or greater and a manufacturer's warranty of 10 years or greater. Tankless water heaters are not eligible. Collecting the rebate requires a rebate application, AHRI reference sheet, invoice or receipt dated after Jan. 1, 2023, and an inspection by Cotton Electric.

To arrange an inspection or for more information to make sure your purchase is eligible, please contact Heath Morgan, Cotton Electric's energy efficiency coordinator, at 580-875-3351 or visit www.cottonelectric.com/rebate-program.

Rebate applications are available online at www.cottonelectric.com/rebate-program.

LIHEAP offers assistance for energy bills during winter period

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally-funded program through Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) that provides payment assistance to approximately 131,000 Oklahoma low-income households each year to help them meet the cost of home energy.

One program under the LIHEAP umbrella is the Winter Heating assistance program. This program provides assistance through one payment per year, per household, during the cool winter period. OKDHS began accepting online applications Jan. 10 and will be accepted until all funds are used.

Eligibility requirements for LIHEAP assistance are based on income, household size, available resources and responsibility for payment of home energy cost. A "household" is defined as an individual's one utility meter or energy source.

If eligible households are already receiving assistance through OKDHS, they can be pre-authorized to receive LIHEAP assistance during the winter period



with no application required. Households that are not pre-authorized but currently receive assistance through OKDHS will be notified by mail and should apply online.

For LIHEAP payments made on behalf of eligible households, they must be applied to the structure's primary source of heating.

If you or anyone residing in your home belong to a federally-recognized American Indian tribe, you may apply for energy assistance through OKDHS or your tribal nation, but you cannot receive

assistance from both during the same Federal Fiscal Year.

For people applying to this program, you will need to include everyone who resides under the same roof at the same service address. Applicants should also have the most recent heating bill information for their home and utility supplier, along with their ID, social security number and verification of income.

For more information and to apply for benefits, visit www.okdhslive.org or call 405-522-5050.

Apache Auction Market

Thursday 8 a.m.

Stockers, Feeders, Cows, Bulls & Pairs

Apache Video

Wednesday 10 a.m.

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UNCOMFORTABLE?

Does your home have any of these symptoms?

- Rooms that get too hot or too cold?
- High utility bills?
- Thermostat wars with your spouse?
- High humidity in summer?
- House just never seems comfortable?
- There doesn't seem to be enough airflow?
- Dust buildup within 2 days of dusting?
- Problems with your system since it's been installed?
- Anyone with allergies or asthma?
- AC starts and stops frequently or runs all the time, and house is still not cool?

Have been told by other contractors that the problem cannot be fixed?

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions, we can help!

Pippin Brothers has specialists that can pinpoint and correct these problems and, in many cases, you don't even have to replace your equipment, with the solution usually being easier and costing a lot less than you may think. There is no other contractor in Lawton more qualified than Pippin Brothers at diagnosing and correcting these annoying, inconvenient, unhealthy, comfort-compromising and energy-wasting concerns. Call us today and let us make your home **Feel As Good As It Looks!** After all, your home is your largest investment and you and your family deserve to be comfortable - don't you?

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Insurance, it's probably the only thing you keep paying for that you hope you never have to use. But when an unfortunate situation does occur, you shouldn't have to fight with your insurance provider to get the claim award you deserve.

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Securely leveraging your browser while online



Browsers such as Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Apple Safari, or Mozilla Firefox are one of the most common ways people interact with the Internet. We use them for reading the news, checking email, shopping online, watching videos, and playing games. As a result, browsers are also a target for cyber attackers.

Many people assume browsing online is safe if you only visit well-known, trusted websites. However, it is quite easy to accidentally click on or visit an unsafe web page, sometimes without even knowing it. In addition, the very websites you know and trust can be hacked, with cyber attackers installing malicious software on them. Finally, today's browsers have many new

features, which often can be confusing, and if misconfigured, expose you to even more dangers.

Here are key steps to protecting yourself:

Updating:

Always use the latest version of your browser. Updated browsers have the latest security patches and are much more secure. With today's computers this has become much easier as you simply enable automatic updating on your system. Or for some browsers you simply restart your browser whenever it tells you there is a new update. After an update, check for new security features from which you can benefit.

Warnings:

Today's browsers can often recognize certain malicious websites

designed to cause you harm. If your browser warns you that the website you are about to visit is dangerous, close your browser tab and find what you need on a different website.

Syncing:

Never sync your work browser with your personal browser or any personal accounts. Syncing is when you enable browsers on different devices to talk to each other and share your browsing information, such as your browsing history, bookmarks, and saved content.

Passwords:

Many browsers support the option of saving your passwords to different sites. Instead of storing your passwords in your browser, we recommend you use a ded-

icated password manager. Password managers are a separate security application that have far more security features and functionality.

Plug-ins:

Plug-ins or extensions are small pieces of software added to browsers that can add functionality. However, each new plug-in you add can also add more vulnerabilities. For your work computer, only add plug-ins that are authorized and approved, and just like your browser, keep them updated. Remove plug-ins that you no longer need or use.

Privacy Mode:

Most browsers offer a privacy option (also referred to as "incognito mode"). This means when you open a browser tab in privacy mode,

you limit what information is collected about you. For example, your browser does not collect cookies, does not track browsing history, and will not store nor distribute sensitive information about you.

Live Chat:

Some websites now offer a live chat feature where you can ask questions. Only engage in these online chats with known, trusted websites. In addition, limit the information you share during a live chat session, as you have no idea who is collecting your information, what they are doing with it, and to whom they may be selling it or sharing it.

Beware of Remote Control:

Fraudulent websites will attempt to

hack your computer by posting a fake security pop-up warning to your browser that your computer is infected and pressuring you for an online chat session to fix your computer. They will then urgently request that you allow them to install a remote agent to allow them to fix your computer. In reality your computer is fine. Instead, they are attempting to trick you into installing malicious software so they can steal your passwords and your data, and track all of your online activity.

Log Off:

When you are finished visiting a website, be sure to log off to remove sensitive login and password information before closing the browser.

Source: sans.org

Is Your Water Safe?

Give Your Back a Break...Stop Adding Salt to Your Softener

Minerals in your water form scale deposits that build up inside your pipes, water heater, shower heads, and other water using equipment like cholesterol in your arteries. These deposits significantly decrease the efficiency of your plumbing systems. Drinking water and icemakers are also negatively affected, as are health quality of water and taste. Hard water is not safe for you, your family or your home.

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Worried about inflation? Consider these moves.

As you know, inflation was big news throughout 2022. But will it continue in 2023? And looking even further ahead, how should you account for inflation in your long-term plans?

In regard to the first question, many experts predict that inflation will cool off this year, though there are no guarantees. The



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high inflation of last year is thought to have been caused by some unusual factors, such as a spike in the demand for consumer goods as the world came out of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to supply chain issues. Also, the war in Ukraine drove up oil prices, increasing the cost of manufacturing and shipping and driving up the price of wheat and other commodities.

In any case, last year reminded us that inflation needs to be reckoned with as you work toward your financial goals. But how you respond to inflation will depend somewhat on your stage of life. So, here are some suggestions to consider:

If you're still working ...

- Contribute more to your retirement plans. If you can afford to put more money away in your IRA and 401(k), you may want to do so. The more resources you'll eventually have available in retirement, the better protected you are against the rising cost of living.
- Adjust your portfolio objectives with your financial professional. Using tools such as "hypothetical" illustrations, a financial professional can show you some different paths you might take with your investments, given different rates of inflation. So, for example, if you feel that

inflation may be higher for a longer period than you once thought, you could request a hypothetical showing how you might need to adjust your investment mix to achieve your long-term goals, given your risk tolerance and time horizon.

If you're already retired ...

- Consider part-time work or consulting. Once you retire from your career, it doesn't mean you can never do any paid work again. If you've accumulated years of experience and expertise, you could use your skills as a consultant. Also, many part-time jobs are available for retirees. With the added income from employment,

you may be able to delay taking withdrawals from your retirement accounts and other investments, possibly extending their longevity. (Once you turn 72, though, you will need to begin taking money from your 401(k) and traditional IRA.)

- Delay taking Social Security. You can begin taking Social Security when you're 62, but your monthly checks will be substantially bigger if you wait until your full retirement age, which will likely be between 66 and 67. (You could even wait until 70, at which point your monthly benefits will max out.) Of course, the ability to delay taking Social Security depends

on whether you can afford it, but it may be possible if you work longer than you once planned or if you work part time in retirement. But even if you do need to take Social Security before your full retirement age, your payments will be adjusted annually for inflation — in fact, for 2023, benefit checks will rise 8.7% over 2022.

We'll always have to deal with some level of inflation — so it's a good idea to be prepared.

Edward Jones, Member SIPC



Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Smart tips for using space heaters and electric blankets during cold seasons

When cold weather sets in, covert battles over thermostat settings take place at many homes and businesses. Some people just can't seem to get warm, while others feel that they're suffocating from the heat. Not everyone experiences the same level of comfort at the same temperature. As a result, many people turn to space heaters or electric blankets for added warmth.

Cotton Electric and Safe Electricity reminds those who use space heaters and electric blankets to keep safety considerations in mind and use these devices with caution.

While space heaters and electric blankets can provide needed warmth and comfort, they can also be deadly if they are not used with care.

When buying a space heater or electric blanket, check for approved safety certification marks to verify that the product has been tested for safety. Look for a space heaters and electric blankets with safety features, including an automatic shut off.

Be very cautious about buying used space heaters or electric blankets. They may not have up-to-date safety mechanisms. Your safety is worth the investment in a new heater or blanket.

To help you have both a warm and safe winter, Cotton Electric and Safe Electricity shares the following tips for using space heaters and electric blankets:

- Review and follow all manufacturer directions.
- Plug space heaters and electric blankets directly into outlets; avoid using an extension cord.
- Always remember to turn off space heaters and electric blankets when not in use. Never leave one of these devices on unattended or after going to bed.
- Many fires start when flammable products are placed too close to heating devices, such as space heaters. Space heaters should be kept at least 3 feet from blankets, clothing, paper, and other flammables.
- Place space heaters out of high-traffic areas and on a level, hard, non-flammable floor surface — not on carpets, furniture, or countertops
- Be aware of pets and children near heating appliances. Pets should never be allowed to sleep on top of electric blankets.
- Keep space heaters and electric blankets away from water. If they become wet, do not turn them on to dry.
- Regularly examine cords to make sure there

is no cracking or fraying. Do not use damaged appliances. Also inspect your electric blanket to ensure that it is not worn or damaged. It should not have any charred or dark areas. Replace old or damaged blankets.

• Store your electric blanket in a manner which avoids creasing. If it cannot be stored flat, loosely fold or roll the blanket in a cool, dry closet.

To help you and your family stay safe, also be sure to check smoke detectors every month, and replace batteries twice a year.

Also, develop and practice an escape plan. A good plan is known by all household members and includes an outside meeting location away from danger of the fire.

When it comes time to get rid of an old or damaged space heater or electric blanket, do not dispose of your electrical appliances with your general waste. Check with your local recycling facility to see if they accept space heaters and electric blankets.

For more information, on how to avoid electrical hazards, visit www.SafeElectricity.org or www.cottonelectric.com/safety.

Source: SafeElectricity.org

feeling chilled?
HEAT YOUR SPACE SAFELY

1. Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away
2. Place on a flat, level surface
3. Make sure the cord is not frayed or cracked
4. Plug it directly into an outlet
5. Follow all instructions and use models endorsed by a reputable testing lab
6. Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which can overheat
7. Do not use around small children or pets
8. Do not use one with a damaged plug or prongs

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Understanding your electric bill

Your monthly Cotton Electric bill includes a lot of information. The example below shows a typical residential bill and explanations of expanded information.

Call us at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520 to get help with:

- Discontinuing paper bills through the mail and having them delivered via email instead.
- Signing up for automatic bank drafts, or switching from traditional to prepaid billing.

Account information

A member's account number, contact information, service address and statement date for this bill. In the case of a bill for multiple meters, there will be a member number and invoice number listed here.

Account Detail

This area will list your meter(s), bill type, service dates, readings and energy use recorded by the meter.

Energy Use Graph

Shows energy use history over the past 24 months. Members can spot their energy use trends at a glance.

Monthly Comparisons

Compares this month's energy use with the previous month and also the same month from the previous year.

Contact Us

General information about our business hours and phone numbers is located in the upper right corner. The Pay By Phone number can be used to make electronic check or credit/debit card payments.

Current Amount Due

We know most members want to know only two things: What do I owe and how soon do I need to get it paid? That's why we made this big and put it at the top, so you can tell at a glance. If an account has an outstanding balance, the outer circle will be in red. Avoid a late fee and pay before the delinquent date.

Kiosk Bar Code

Unique to each member account, this bar code will automatically pull up the account when exposed to the code reader of a payment kiosk at the Cotton Electric office at 1101 W. Oak in Duncan. Cash or credit/debit card payments can be made at any time at this outside kiosk.

Service Detail

This shows a detailed breakdown of charges. **There are no increases or additions to the fee structure;** we're just breaking everything out for you. This section shows the previous balance, payments, and the components of current charges.

Depending on the type of service a meter provides, the Service Detail box may include some of this information:

Facility Charge A cooperative member's equal share of fixed costs so power can be available at your location. This includes the cost of poles, wires, trucks, billing, vegetation management, meters, transformers and substations. This is a fixed cost attached to all meters.

Energy Charge The amount of electricity used as measured in kilowatt-hours, multiplied by the current rate. The amount of electricity used is controlled by you, the member.

Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) This can be a decrease or increase, depending on the true cost of wholesale power purchased from our energy supplier. PCA is applied to kWh consumed and to fees for lights.

Outdoor Light Charges vary according to the type of light installed.

Gross Receipts Tax Cotton Electric is required to collect a 2% state gross receipts tax on all power bills. This is NOT a sales tax and is not eligible for exemption.

Operation Round Up Participants in Operation Round Up can see how much the bill is rounded up to the nearest dollar, an amount that will never be more than 99 cents.

COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Account #: 1234567890
CURRENT BILL AMOUNT \$186.00
BALANCE FORWARD \$0.00
AMOUNT DUE BY 03/01/2020 \$186.00
AMOUNT DUE AFTER 03/01/2020 \$191.58

Office Hours: 8 AM - 5 PM Monday - Friday
580-875-3351 or 1-800-522-3520
Pay by Phone: 855-730-8711
Pay Online: www.CottonElectric.com

ACCOUNT NUMBER 1234567890
Member Name COTTON MEMBER
Member # 5555
Statement date 02/15/2020
Phone # 580-555-3351

Service Address: NW-00-0N-00W

Meter #	Description	Bill Type	Reading Dates From To	Days	Readings Previous Present	Meter Multiplier	kWh Billed
AA00001	HOUSE	Regular	01/07/20 02/06/20	30	28119 31013	1	1680

ENERGY USE COMPARISON
This Month: 1680 kWh (30 Days)
Last Month: 1650 kWh (31 Days)
This Month Last Year: 2310 kWh (30 Days)

PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN THIS PORTION WITH YOUR PAYMENT

Account #: 1234567890
226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572
1101 W. Oak, Duncan, OK 73533

ANY MEMBER
123 ANY STREET
ANYTOWN, OK 00000

3602221700002000027952000026791030520191

2023 Electrical Rates

General Service Monthly Rate

Customer Charge:
Single-Phase Service \$30.00 per month
Three-Phase Service \$35.00 per month

Energy Charges:

All kWh \$0.08950 per kWh
The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in our base charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available to general service customers for farm, home and residential use subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase, at available secondary voltage or three-phase at the discretion of the Cooperative.

Minimum Charges:

- (1) A charge of \$30.00 per month for single-phase service and \$35.00 per month for three-phase service; or
- (2) Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.
- (3) A charge of \$30.00 per month for single-phase service and \$35.00 per month for three-phase service, plus a charge of \$1.00 per kVA of transformer capacity in excess of ten (10) kVA.

Adjustments:

The listed rates do not include power cost adjustments, Winter Storm Uri recovery, gross receipts tax and franchise taxes where applicable.

Service Reconnection:

When a reconnection of service is made for a Member at the same location within a 12-month period after the date the service was disconnected at the Member's request, a charge equal to the sum of the minimum monthly bills determined for the months that service was disconnected will be billed to the customer and must be paid, in addition to the charges for connection in compliance with Operational Policy 553 of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

General Service HD Monthly Rate

Customer Charge:

Single-Phase Service \$25.00 per month
Three-Phase Service \$30.00 per month

Energy Charges:

All kWh \$0.07690 per kWh
The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in our base charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available to residential consumers in franchised municipal areas with a line density of 11 customers per mile or greater, subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase, at available secondary voltage or three-phase at the discretion of the Cooperative.

Minimum Charges:

- (1) A charge of \$25.00 per month for single-phase service and \$30.00 per month for three-phase service; or
- (2) Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.
- (3) A charge of \$25.00 per month for single-phase service and \$30.00 per month for three-phase service, plus a charge of \$1.00 per kVA of transformer capacity in excess of ten (10) kVA.

Adjustments:

The listed rates do not include power cost adjust-

ments, Winter Storm Uri recovery, gross receipts tax and franchise taxes where applicable.

Service Reconnection:

When a reconnection of service is made for a Member at the same location within a twelve-month period after the date the service was disconnected at the Member's request, a charge equal to the sum of the minimum monthly bills determined for the months that service was disconnected will be billed to the customer and must be paid, in addition to the charges for connection in compliance with Operational Policy 553 of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Commercial Service Monthly Rate

Customer Charge:

Single-Phase Service \$40.00 per month
Three-Phase Service \$45.00 per month

Energy Charges:

All kWh \$0.08620 per kWh
The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in the base charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available for commercial and industrial consumers up to fifty (50) kVA of transformer capacity, subject to the rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Available for commercial and industrial consumers to one hundred fifty (150) kVA of transformer capacity at the discretion of the Cooperative. Service under this rate is not available wherein transformer capacity requirements exceed one hundred fifty (150) kVA. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase or three-phase at available secondary voltages.

Minimum Charges:

- (1) A charge of \$40.00 per month for single-phase and \$45.00 per month for three-phase service plus a charge of \$1.00 per kVA of transformer capacity in excess of ten (10) kVA; or
- (2) Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Adjustments:

The listed rates do not include power cost adjustments, Winter Storm Uri recovery, gross receipts tax and franchise taxes where applicable.

Commercial Service HD Monthly Rate

Customer Charge:

Single-Phase Service \$35.00 per month
Three-Phase Service \$40.00 per month

Energy Charges:

All kWh \$0.07940 per kWh
The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in our base charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available for commercial and industrial consumers up to fifty (50) kVA of transformer capacity, in incorporated areas with a line density of 11 customers per mile or greater, subject to the rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Available for commercial and industrial consumers to one hundred fifty (150) kVA of transformer capacity at the discretion of the Cooperative. Service under this rate is not available wherein transformer capacity requirements exceed one hundred fifty (150) kVA. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase or three phase, at available secondary voltages.

Minimum Charges:

- (1) A charge of \$35.00 per month for single-phase service and \$40.00 per month for three-phase service plus a charge of \$1.00 per kVA for transformer capacity in excess of ten (10) kVA; or
- (2) Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Irrigation Rate Monthly Rate

Customer Charge \$32.50 per month
Energy Charge \$0.06650 per kWh
Horsepower Charge \$2.70 per horsepower of connected load per month

Available To:

Available to Members for pump irrigation service subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Service under this rate shall be under the standard Cooperative contract. Motors shall be ten (10) horsepower or greater. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Type of Service:

Single-phase or three-phase, at available secondary voltages.

Minimum Charges:

- (1) \$32.50 plus a charge of \$2.70 per horsepower of connected load per year; or
- (2) Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Service Reconnection:

When a reconnection of service is made for a Member at the same location within a twelve-month period after the date the service was disconnected at the Member's request, a charge equal to the sum of the minimum monthly bills determined for the months that service was disconnected will be billed to the customer and must be paid, in addition to the charges for connection in compliance with Operational Policy 553 of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Interruptible Irrigation Monthly Rate

Customer Charge \$32.50 per month
Energy Charge \$0.06650 per kWh
Horsepower Charge \$2.70 per horsepower of connected load per month

The Interruptible Irrigation Rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power in the basic charge for electricity. Any amount above or below 6.25 cents will be computed in the Power Cost Adjustment.

Available To:

Available to Members for pump irrigation service subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Service under this rate shall be metered with "Time-of-Day" metering or shall have "load interrupting" devices installed on the service. Electric power and energy usage under this rate is prohibited from June 20 through Sept. 9, between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Each year, Members will be given credit for horsepower charges, applied toward but not to exceed energy charges, if no power was used during the prohibited time period. No resale, standby or auxiliary service permitted.

Minimum Charges:

- (1) \$32.50 plus a charge of \$2.70 per horsepower of connected load per year; or
- (2) Compliance with Operational Policy 556, if applicable, of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Service Reconnection:

When a reconnection of service is made for a Member at the same location within a twelve-month period after the date the service was disconnected at the Member's request, a charge equal to the sum of the minimum monthly bills determined for the months that service was disconnected will be billed to the

customer and must be paid, in addition to the charges for connection in compliance with Operational Policy 553 of the Terms and Conditions of Service.

Large Power Rate

Large Power Rates are available for large industrial loads with a transformer capacity of more than 50 kVA. For details about LP Rates, contact the cooperative at 580-875-3351. Special rates also are available for Cotton Gins.

Outdoor Lighting Monthly Rate

- (1) Where an approved Outdoor Light is installed on an existing pole; and (a) where the Outdoor Light is installed on the Cooperative's side of the meter, the monthly charge per light shall be \$8.81 for 175-Watt Mercury Vapor, 100-Watt High Pressure Sodium or LED; and \$20.87 for 400-Watt Metal Halide; or (b) where the Outdoor Light is installed on the consumer's side of the meter, the monthly charge per light shall be \$2.60 for 175-Watt Mercury Vapor; \$3.12 for 100-Watt High Pressure Sodium or LED; and \$5.98 for 400-Watt Metal Halide.
- (2) Should the Member desire a location other than an existing pole, the cost of installation shall be determined by figuring the total cost of labor, materials installed, plus digging and hauling charges, and will be incurred by the consumer. The wire, pole and material will become the property of the consumer.

Available To:

Available to all Members of the Cooperative for illumination of outdoor areas at any point on the distribution or service lines, subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative.

Vandalism:

In the event the Outdoor Light is damaged by vandalism, such as gun shots, rocks, or any other type of vandalism, the Member shall be responsible for the cost of repairing the Outdoor Light.

Adjustments:

The listed rates do not include power cost adjustments, Winter Storm Uri recovery, gross receipts tax and franchise taxes where applicable.

Cotton Electric is required to collect a 2% state gross receipts tax on all power bills.

Power Cost Adjustment:

Due to fluctuations in the cost of fuel for generating wholesale power, it is impossible to buy electricity at the same cost per kWh each month. The base rates include 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power cost. Any variation above or below 6.25 cents per kWh of wholesale power cost must be computed as Power Cost Adjustment. The actual PCA factor is indicated on each power bill and is reported in your monthly Cotton Electric Current. Occasionally, when hydro or other low cost generating power is available, a credit is shown on your bill.

This adjustment shall be based on 70 kWh per month per 175-Watt Mercury Vapor Light, 40 kWh per month per 100-Watt High Pressure Sodium Light or 160 kWh per month per 400-Watt Metal Halide, applicable to Rate (1), Plan (a).

Adjustment for the recovery of Winter Storm Uri costs:

For rate classes with a Power Cost Adjustment, an adjustment for the recovery of Winter Storm Uri costs will apply. Charges for these rate classes shall be up to \$0.0045 per kWh for the costs associated with Winter Storm Uri in February 2021. This charge shall remain in effect until the entire cost obligation has been recovered, but in no event longer than December 31, 2027.

Be proactive in preventing electrical fires in your home

Take steps to help prevent electrical fires by identifying possible issues before they occur.

When assessing your home, the first step is to hire a qualified electrician to check that all wiring is up to code and that the electrical system can handle the demands of your electrical needs. Beyond that, watch for possible issues as they arise.

Symptoms of issues include flickering lights, discolored outlets and switch plates, damaged cords, frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses.

Check these electrically related items in your home:

1. Electrical outlets:

Check for loose-fitting plugs and loose wall receptacles. Replace missing or broken wall plates. If you have children, install tamper-resistant outlets if your home does not have them. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

2. Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs):

Make sure GFCIs are installed in your kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, workshop, basement, garage and outdoor outlets. GFCIs help protect against electrical shock. Use the Test and Reset buttons monthly to ensure they are working properly.

3. Cords:

Check that cords are not frayed or cracked, placed under rugs, wrapped around an object or located in high traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors or other objects.

4. Extension cords:

These are not intended to be permanent solutions, so use them temporarily. If you find that you need more electrical outlets, consult your electrician.

5. Light bulbs:

Verify your light bulbs are the correct wattage for the fixture they are in.

6. Appliances/electronics:

If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, it is time to discard it and replace it. Use surge protectors to protect expensive electronics. Make sure your appliances and electronics are placed in dry locations.

7. Circuit breakers/fuses:

Make sure circuit breakers are working properly. Fuses should be properly rated for the circuits they protect.

8. Electrical wiring:

If an outlet is not working, it may be an indicator of unsafe wiring. Also, check for loose wires and lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. If light switches are hot to the touch or lights spark and flicker, immediately shut them off at the circuit breaker and contact a qualified electrician to make repairs.

9. Arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs):

AFCIs, which monitor the flow of electricity throughout your home, should be properly installed. If an AFCI detects any abnormality, it shuts the system off to prevent a fire. An electrician can assess whether your home is properly protected.

10. Service capacity:

If fuses blow or trip frequently, you may need to increase the capacity of your electrical service or add new branch circuits. Contact a qualified electrician.

For more information on electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org or www.cottonelectric.com/safety.

THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF
ELECTRICAL FIRES

- Incorrectly installed wiring
- Overloaded circuits and extension cords
- Defective or improper plugs, switches and outlets
- Misuse or poor maintenance of lighting

Safe Electricity.org

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Co-op Life

Local non-profit celebrates big in school cafeterias

By Carli Eubank

“The day you were born was a beautiful day. Your life and existence is worthy of being celebrated.”

That is the mission behind a local non-profit that recently received a Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF) grant for \$1,600 to provide children’s books as a gift to students on their birthday month.

What started with a rough summer of losses within the Duncan youth community, sprouted an idea between two women, Leah Miller and Michele Johnson, who wanted to help kids feel special and allow community members to pour positivity and love into the lives of local kids. In 2013, they co-founded what is known today as the Beautiful Day Foundation.

Beautiful Day volunteers visit schools once a month to celebrate kids whose birthday falls in that month, said Kelsey Roberts, Beautiful Day executive director. Volunteers, led by a local community member, fill

the cafeteria with birthday decorations, serve a special meal, deliver cupcakes and grow relationships with the kids, she added.

“The real magic behind Beautiful Day is community members sitting at a table with the kids and having a conversation with them,” Roberts said. “You get to ask them about their day and learn more about them and some of the answers will surprise you, make you laugh and might break your heart.”

Motivated to make a difference in the community’s youth, the duo proposed their vision of Beautiful Day to the Duncan Public Schools superintendent. They were then guided to begin at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School. After Beautiful Day’s first year of celebrations, work spread quickly across southwest Oklahoma.

Since 2013, around 1,500 Beautiful Day registered volunteers have celebrated 46,115 students of all ages and grades in 28 Oklahoma schools in 19 counties.

Many Beautiful Day programs are within schools located in the Cotton Electric service territory, including Bray, Central, Comanche, Duncan, Elgin, Empire, Marlow, Rush Springs, Ryan, Temple, Velma and Waurika.

“Your cup gets filled,” Roberts said. “The kids love it, but I would argue that the adults and volunteers love it more.”

Roberts explained how becoming a volunteer for Beautiful Day is a diligent and important process of background checking and more to ensure a safe environment when visiting schools.

Schools interested in starting a Beautiful Day program can visit the foundation’s website at www.beautifulday-foundation.net. Information for community members wanting to become a liaison for their school’s Beautiful Day program can be found on the website, as well. Multiple trainings are required for this role, Roberts said.

Not every student re-

members taking reading tests or other school events, but many can say they remember how they felt when they saw the groups wearing shirts with “Beautiful Day” printed on them.

High school students who were part of Beautiful Day celebrations have the chance to engage with kids who were in the same seat as they were many years ago, Roberts described.

“We just want kids to know that they are important,” Roberts said. “We believe they are the community’s future, and we want to give them a space to feel part of that.”

An initiative of Beautiful Day is Kindred Community. Created in 2014, this program provides a monthly meal and fellowship meeting specifically for widows, allowing them to see that “Beautiful Days” still lie ahead.

If interested in getting involved with Beautiful Day or Kindred Community, please visit the foundation’s website at www.beautifuldayfoundation.net.



Beautiful Day volunteers travel to 28 schools in southwest Oklahoma to celebrate birthdays for each month. Photos courtesy of Cactus and Pedal.

Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the February issue, please submit information by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com by Jan. 27. Only events occurring after Feb. 13 will be published in the next issue.

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

Grief group meeting in Duncan

The Heritage Oaks Church of The Nazarene will be hosting a "Grief and Bereavement" group starting at the beginning of January. The focus of the group, led by Phil and Nancy Evans, is to offer a safe place for those who have gone through the passing of a loved one to share their feelings, to create an environment where it is conducive to find friendship with others going through the grief process, and to bring healing and hope to those who have struggled with loss.

Starting Jan. 3, the group will meet each Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Heritage Oaks Church of The Nazarene, 4595 W. Beech, Duncan. For questions or additional information, please contact the church at 580-255-2869 or Pastor Jon at 580-730-9431.

CTHC art program returns

Cowpokes and Brushstrokes provides creative, process-based art experiences for kids ages 2-4 years old. Sponsored by the Oklahoma Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts, this eight-week program begins 1:45 to 2:30 p.m. on Jan. 9 at the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center, 2150 Chisholm Trail Parkway, Duncan. Children can attend one or all classes. Pricing options and more information can be found at www.on-thechisholmtrail.com.

Duncan hosts monster truck event

Experience the thrill of 12,000-pound monster trucks in head-to-head competitions at Duncan Monster Truck Wars. Watch as world-famous trucks battle it out in the dirt arena. The event will also feature kids' power wheel races, where your child can bring their own power wheels and race them around the fairgrounds. Attendees can also reserve a spot to ride on a real monster truck.

Monster trucks will be on display from 1 to 5 p.m. on Jan. 21 at America's Car-Mart of Duncan, 1238 U.S.-81, Duncan. A matinee showing of the Monster Truck Wars will be from 1 to 3 p.m. and an evening show will be from 7 to 9 p.m. on Jan. 22 at the Stephens County Fairgrounds, 2002 S. 13 St., Duncan. Tickets for adults are \$20, children ages 3-12 are \$10, and VIP tickets are \$30. To purchase tickets or for more information, visit www.attendstar.com/events.

Cattle show returns to Lawton

Wichita Mountains Classic Cattle Show is back on January 27-29 at the Comanche County Fairgrounds with a 70% payout. Two rings in two days showing heifers, pre-junior show, steer and showmanship. For questions or more information, contact Stacy at 580-355-3541.

LCT to perform "CLUE"

Musical theatre fans will delight in Lawton Community Theatre's upcoming presentation of "CLUE." Show dates are Feb. 10-19 at Lawton Community Theatre, 1316 NW Bell Ave., Lawton. To purchase tickets or find out more information about upcoming shows, visit www.lawtoncommunitytheatre.com.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



(Pictured left to right) Cotton Electric members Shelia Floyd Wood, Margie Floyd, Lisa Wood Miller and Michael Roberts gather around baby Gryfyn Roberts.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. The theme for February is Pets.

Entries can be emailed to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.

Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize.

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It's time to get moving for a healthier 2023

Adults aged 60 and older who are physically active are at reduced risk for death, fractures, falls, cancer, and cognitive decline including dementia and Alzheimers, and depression. Less than 25% of older adults in the United States meet the recommendations for physical activity. For a healthier 2023, it's time to get moving.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines physical activity as anything that gets your body moving. For adults age 65 and over, the CDC recommends at least 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, balance activities at least 3 days per week, and strength training at least 2 days per week.

Moderate intensity activity is defined as something similar to brisk walking. Your heart should beat faster



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

and your breathing should be more difficult than when you are sitting. If you were to rate your activity level on a 10 point scale, where 0 is sitting and 10 is working as hard as you can, moderate intensity would be defined as a 5 or a 6. Vigorous physical activity is defined as a 7 or an 8, where your heart rate increases significantly and you are breathing hard, unable to say more than a few words without stopping to catch your breath.

You can combine moderate and vigorous physical activity to meet your weekly physical activity requirements in less time. 1 minute of vigorous activity is the same as 2 minutes of moderate activity.

Balance activities can be as simple as standing on one leg or more complex like yoga. The goal is to improve balance to prevent falls. Strength training also contributes to balance and is defined as repetitive muscle strengthening movement. The CDC has examples of balance and strength training activities in their "Growing Stronger - Strength Training for Older Adults"

guide which can be downloaded at www.cdc.gov. The Mayo Clinic also has a slide show on simple balance exercises at www.mayoclinic.org. Physical activity needs to become just as important as food for your body. The benefits are numerous and the cost of not doing it is significant. It is never too late to start, and some exercise is better than no exercise. You do not need a gym and you do not need special equipment. You may need a quick check in with your doctor if you have any chronic health condition or physical impairment just in case a medication needs to be adjusted or your impairment needs to be accommodated. Your doctor may also be able to help connect you with a physical therapist to set up a customized and safe exercise regimen. It's time to get moving. Make physical activity a priority in 2023.

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OSU Extension offers Master Gardener Classes

By Kimbreley Davis

Have you ever wondered what that weed in your yard is or how to take better care of the plants in your house? Do you want to expand your knowledge of vegetable gardening or caring for the trees in your yard? Oklahoma Extension has an educational program for you. Starting in January through February, OSU Extension will be offering Master Gardener Classes for anyone who wants to learn about lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, and gardens.

The Oklahoma Extension Master Gardener Classes will be held on Tuesdays starting Jan. 17 and go for six weeks ending Feb. 21. Classes will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

To be named a Master Gardener you must attend 12 classes. This course is offered once a year receiving half the credit this year and the other half of the classes in 2024.

This year, six classes will be offered in Comanche, Cotton, and Stephens Counties.

On Jan. 17, the program will kick off this year's education learning about Herbaceous Ornamentals at the Cotton County Fairgrounds in Walters. On Jan. 24, Soils will be covered at the Comanche County Fairgrounds in Lawton. Vegetable Gardening will be the topic on Jan. 31 at the Stephens County Fairgrounds in Duncan.

On Feb. 7, classes will be back in Lawton at the Comanche County Fairgrounds to learn about Woody Ornamentals. Feb. 14, the program will cover Landscape Design at the Stephens County Fairgrounds in Duncan. Feb. 21 will conclude classes with the topic about Insects on Feb. 21 at the Cotton County Fairgrounds in Walters.

The course is open to area residents with a high school diploma, who are interested in learning the latest Oklahoma State University research-based home horticulture information and practices.

The registration fee is \$60 for first year participants and \$30 for continuing participants and is nonrefundable. All past Master Gardeners Graduates are welcome, and classes are \$10 for the set.

There will be a virtual op-

tion for individuals who request that service. Registration Fees cover weekly lecture from experts in the field, master gardener manual comprised of OSU Fact sheets ranging from topics on soils to Oklahoma Proven plants,

fertilizers and pesticides, and much more.

For information and registration please contact Kimbreley Davis at the Cotton County OSU Extension Office at 580-875-3136 or Kimbreley.Davis@okstate.edu.



OSU State Horticulture Specialist, David Hillock teaching Botany to a previous Master Gardener Class. Photo courtesy of OSU Extension.

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- 4 large baking potatoes
- 2/3 c. butter or margarine
- 2/3 c. flour
- 6 c. milk
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 4 chopped green onions, divided
- 12 slices bacon, fried, crumbled
- 1 1/4 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 8 oz. sour cream

Wash potatoes and prick several times with a fork; bake at 400 degrees for one hour or until done. Let cool.

Cut potatoes in half lengthwise, then scoop out pulp; set aside. Discard skins.

Melt butter in a heavy saucepan over low heat; add flour, stirring until smooth. Cook for one minute, stirring constantly.

Gradually add milk; cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is thickened and bubbly.

Add potato pulp, salt, pepper, two tablespoons green onions, half cup bacon, and one cup cheese. Cook until thoroughly heated; stir in sour cream. Add extra milk, if too thick.

Serve topped with remaining onion, bacon, and cheese.

TACO SOUP

- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 1 lb. hamburger meat
- 1 can (24 oz.) cut up tomatoes
- 1 small can tomato paste
- 1/2 c. picante sauce
- 2 cans pinto beans
- 2 cans corn
- 1 pkg. taco seasoning
- 1 pkg. ranch dressing mix
- 3 c. water

In a skillet, brown bell pepper and hamburger meat. Combine with all other ingredients in large pot and simmer for 30 minutes.

Serve soup in bowls topped with tortilla, taco chips, shredded sharp cheddar cheese, and a dollup of sour cream.



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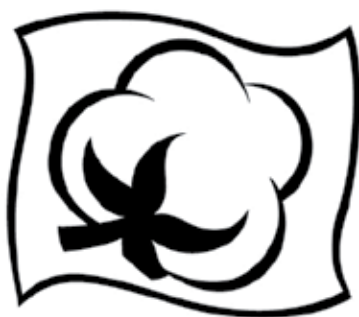
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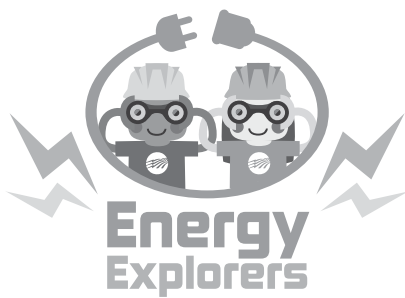


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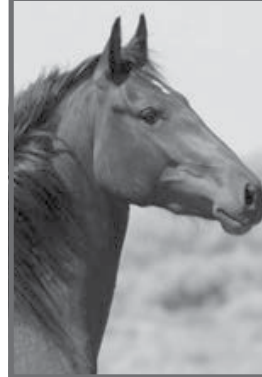
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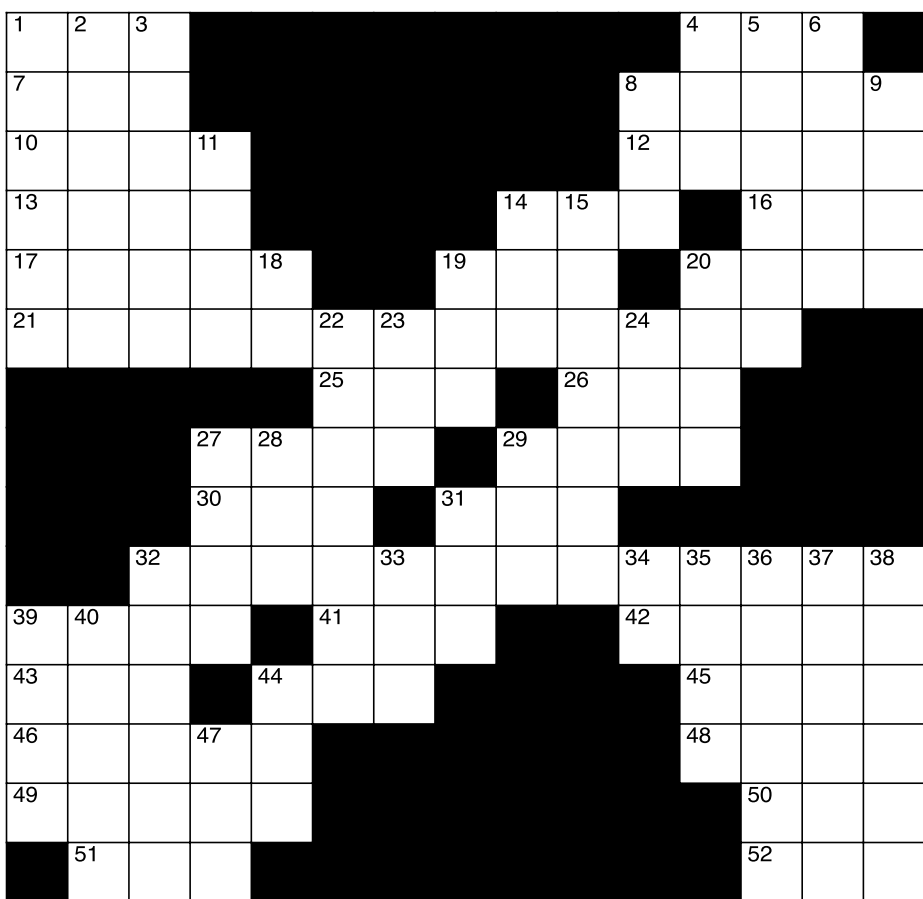
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12. Deal a blow to
13. Relating to the ear
14. Thyrotropin
16. Loud, unpleasant noise
17. Large intestines
19. Move with a curving trajectory
20. Witnesses
21. You need both to live



25. Dash
26. Network
27. Dig
29. C. European river
30. Supplement with difficulty
31. Corporate executive
32. Carroll O'Connor's onscreen wife
39. No variation
41. Airborne (abbr.)
42. "Heidi" author
43. Affirmative
44. Pie ___ mode
45. W. Asian country
46. Grotesque or bizarre

48. Delicacy (archaic)
49. Textile
50. Denial
51. Electronic data processing
52. Attempt

DOWN

1. Engulf
2. Waterside hotel
3. Printed cotton fabric
4. Defensive nuclear weapon
5. One who follows the rules
6. Lace up once more
8. Fire byproduct

9. Hankerings
11. Outer
14. One-time aerospace firm
15. Seafood
18. Commercial
19. Epoxy hardener (abbr.)
20. Samoan monetary unit
22. Type of gland
23. Arrest
24. Check
27. Past participle of be
28. Alias
29. A major division of geological time
31. Kids programming channel (abbr.)

32. Joked
33. Helps little firms
34. Roman numeral 50
35. Impressive in size or scope
36. Domineering leader
37. A person who delivers a speech
38. One after 89
39. Young hawk
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The judiciary faces many new issues on a state-wide basis. Many courts are operating with reduced staff, including necessary court reporters, that make the efficient operation of the courts and the disposal of cases even more difficult. I promise to work tirelessly in an attempt to deal with these issues, and to provide the citizens of these counties prompt, fair and unbiased justice, and access to the courts.

I want to take the time to personally thank my campaign managers Marty and Dana Askins, treasurer Mahlon Hemphill, C.P.A., and the many others who worked so hard to see that I was allowed to continue the profession that I cherish and respect. I also want to thank my wife, Jeanna, and the rest of my family who, without their continued support, the dedication necessary to perform the role of Judge would be much more difficult.

Again, please accept this offer of gratitude for the trust you have placed in me.

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