What's Inside



Local students compete in second annual statewide competition



Members help local organizations fight food insecurity in local communities



A super easy, super sweet treat Page 15



A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



"The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957"

November 13, 2023 VOLUME 67 **NUMBER 3**

Another year of success for annual safety training

By Carli Eubank

An overcast sky with a cool breeze were prime conditions for Cotton Electric employees during the annual pole top and bucket rescue safety training on Oct. 23 at the coop headquarters in Walters.

Crews brave extreme conditions to keep the lights on, so it's vital for them to stay up to date on safety trainings to prevent accidents and injuries on the job. Cotton Electric Director of Safety, Loss Control and Vegetation Management Jarrod Hooper strives to have a safety meeting for employees every month, and one of the mandatory trainings for crews is the annual pole top and bucket rescue.

Supervised by Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives Safety and Loss Control Instructor Greg Hambrick, lineworkers are timed during each rescue drill.

The goal for each lineman is to complete the drill in four minutes or less, as recommended by the American

minute that passes, the victim's chance of survival decreases by 10%. Completing the drill in four minutes allows for a 60% chance of reviving the victim.

Pole top rescue drills are required for all lineworkers, the only employees trained to climb a pole.

The line worker makes the mayday call on the radio, straps on climbing gear and climbs up the pole to a mannequin that mimics an employee who has been injured on the job. Then, the line worker drives a screwdriver into the pole to loop a rope over before tying the other end around the mannequin's chest. After the mannequin's safety belt is cut with a knife, the mannequin is lowered to the ground. The line worker descends the pole and begins CPR once they reach the ground.

All cooperative employees who could possibly work in the field go through bucket

Heart Association. For each rescue drills once a year. That includes line workers, meter technicians and vegetation management workers.

> They make the same mayday call and climb onto the back of a bucket truck to switch control of the basket and boom to the lower panel located on the bed of the truck. Next, they lower and tilt the bucket, climb down and reach into the bucket as if to pull a colleague out.

Crews worked hard and shared many laughs and smiles throughout the morning, exemplifying the strong sense of family between coop employees. While observing the pole top and bucket rescue training, the hope of never having to use these exercises in the field creeps into the mind, but being prepared and maintaining safety for our members and employees remain top priorities at Cotton Electric Cooperative.

More photos on Page 9



Cotton Electric Journeyman Lineman Terry Turner throws rope above the crossarm to tie around the mannequin. Photo by Carli Eubank.

THANK YOU, VETERANS



James Apriesnig U.S. Marines



Kevin Barrineau U.S. Army



Heath Morgan U.S. Air Force



Jason Red Elk U.S. Navy



Dillon Wiygul U.S. Marines

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after November 1, 2023, is \$0.00431 per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$5.60 on the November bill.

U	CLODE	51 ZUZ	25 Tel	прега	ture	Extrem	168
Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Av
1	93	61	77	16	69	39	54
2	92	60	76	17	78	36	5'
3	94	71	83	18	83	42	6.
4	91	67	79	19	87	42	6.
5	84	58	71	20	91	45	6
6	82	54	68	21	88	49	6
7	71	47	59	22	88	50	6
8	82	44	63	23	82	64	7.
9	85	51	68	24	77	63	7
10	88	51	70	25	73	66	7
11	83	64	74	26	85	66	7
12	90	67	79	27	72	50	6
13	75	56	66	28	51	39	4:
14	69	49	59	29	39	36	3
15	66	41	54	30	49	27	3
Source: www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/				31	54	24	3
Average Daily High: 78				Average Daily Low: 51			

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric offices will be closed on Nov. 23 and 24 for the Thanksgiving holiday. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

The next issue of *The* Current should arrive in mailboxes on Dec. 11, 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.



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.

Mission Statement

From the CEO

Serving up savings this holiday season

just around the corner. I always look forward to this time of year as my family gathers for Thanksgiving and gives thanks for the blessings we've received. Traditionally the day after Thanksgiving has been reserved for Christmas decorations, but I have a feeling our tree might make an early appearance this year.

Amid all of the hustle and bustle of cooking, family gatherings, and decorations, higher-than-usual energy bills can occur. With that in mind, I thought this month would be a good time to remind Cotton Electric members of a few programs and efficiency tips to help lower your monthly energy use and keep the Grinch at bay.

Programs designed to help you

Winter months typically bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. Making minor, lowcost improvements, like weatherstripping exterior doors and caulking around old, drafty windows can make a positive impact on energy bills. If you're not sure where to start, contact Cotton Electric to schedule a free energy efficiency home evaluation.

The energy efficiency home evaluation, performed by Heath

The holiday season is Morgan, our energy efficiency coordinator, consists of a thorough inspection of your home's foundation, floors, walls, doors, windows and attic. During an evaluation, careful measurements are taken of your home's insulating factors and heat loss areas are identified.

> Our team of member service representatives are available to help, and I encourage you to give us a call if you'd like to learn about specific programs and services that can lower your bills.

Be festive without breaking the bank

Over the next few weeks, boxes (and boxes) of our Christmas decorations will be brought down from the attic as we decorate inside and out. With holiday lights adorning our home for well over a month, we decided to make the switch to LEDs to save energy.

LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent holiday lights. To put that into perspective, the Department of Energy estimates that with standard holiday decorations, LED lights typically increase energy bills by about \$5 to \$7. But with incandescent lights, energy bills will typically increase by \$33 or more. For homes that go above and beyond with incandescent

holiday lighting (think Clark Griswold), energy bills could increase by as much as \$350. Beyond energy savings, LEDs provide additional benefits, such as being shock resistant, shatterproof and cool to the touch, making them safer for the home.

You can also lower energy use by conveniently managing holiday lighting. Smart light timers can help you save energy by connecting to a smart phone app or voice assistant to program lights to turn on and off at set times. If you don't use smart home technology, you can still save energy by using traditional timers. I prefer one with a photocell light sensor to automatically switch ours on and off.

Additional easy ways to save during the holiday season include turning off overhead lights and using your Christmas tree to illuminate your home. If you have a fireplace, remember to close the flue when you're not burning a fire to ensure heat doesn't escape through the chimney.

Cook up energy savings in the

If you plan to have family and friends during the holidays, you can cook up energy savings by using small countertop appliances like microwaves, air fryers



Jennifer Meason, CEO

and slow cookers when possible, as they use much less energy than the stovetop or oven.

When using the oven, bake multiple dishes at once for maximum efficiency. Afterall, it takes as much energy to cook one dish as it does to cook several. Turn the oven off a few minutes before the recipe's end time, and allow the residual heat to finish baking the dish. When using the stovetop, match the pan size to the burner to maximize the stovetop's efficiency.

I hope a few of these tips will be helpful as we approach the holiday season. Remember, we are here to answer any questions you have about managing energy use or your monthly bills. With a little planning upfront, you can find efficient ways to save on everything from Christmas lights to your favorite holiday recipes.

From your friends at Cotton Electric, we hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving. We greatly appreciate your continued support and are thankful for you!





Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen! When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances instead of the stovetop or oven. Smaller appliances like slow cookers, air fryers and Instant Pots consume less energy.

When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster, and you'll use less energy.

Source: www.energy.gov

September 2023 Operating Stats

	_	
	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$6,615,200	\$7,852,968
Cost of Purchased Power	4,543,264	5,639,220
Taxes	165,106	167,140
Total Operating Expense per Mile	1,217	1,408
Average Farm and Residential Bill	159	185
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,312	1,275
Total Meters Billed (Farm, Residentia	1) 19,542	19,287
Miles Energized	5,266	5,245
Density per Mile	3.71	3.68
New Service Connects YTD	329	390
Services Retired	137	94

Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

December

Ad Sales Nov. 24 Classified Nov. 24 **Publish** Dec. 11

January

Ad Sales Dec. 29 Classified Dec. 29 Publish Jan. 12

The Current

Published monthly at Walters, Oklahoma by Cotton Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Jennifer MeasonCEO Shane Bowers......Vice President Zach YoungDirector Carli Eubank......Communications Specialist

Cotton Electric Cooperative, Inc. **Board of Trustees**

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Energy Efficiency

Five ways to safeguard your home this winter

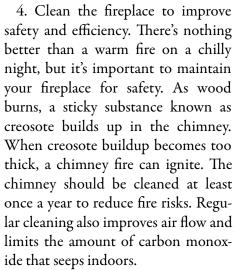
Lthere's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

- 1. Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. If your detectors are battery operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month, and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.
- 2. Inspect electrical cords. We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, exten-

s the temperatures drop sion cords or portable heaters. Before and the days grow shorter, using any corded items, double-check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip.

3. Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.



5. Practice safety in the kitchen. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces, and be



Heath Morgan, **Energy Efficiency** Coordinator

mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.

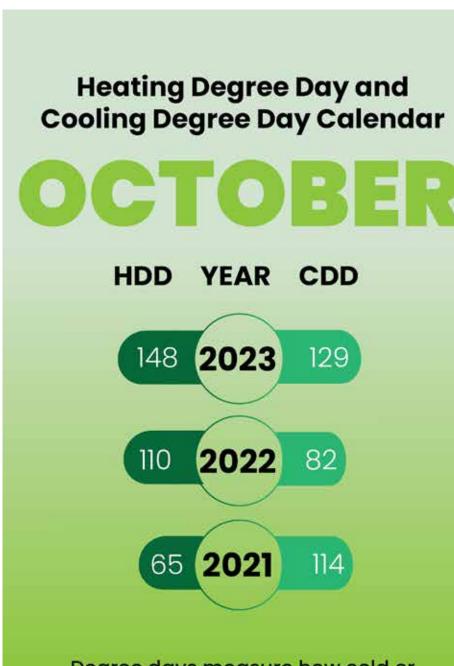
Cotton Electric Cooperative wants you and your family and friends to stay safe during the winter season. Call 580-875-3351 or visit www.cottonelectric.com/safety for additional safety tips.



Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors once a month and clean them to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris. Photo source: Rigby 40, Pixabay



Inspect electrical cords before using them this winter season. Photo courtesy of Kelly Sikkema, Unsplash.



Degree days measure how cold or warm a location is by comparing the average of the high and low (mean) of the outdoor temperatures recorded in that location to the standard U.S. temperature, which is 65 F. The assumption is that we don't need heating or cooling to be comfortable when this is the outdoor temperature.







Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation

ORU encourages applicants for last quarter

Operation Round Up exists because available, etc. of the generosity of Cotton Electric's members and is designed to provide financial assistance to worthwhile individuals and organizations.

For those interested in seeking funds for local individuals or organizations, below is a portion of the Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation grant application guidelines.

Grant Application Guidelines:

- The CECF provides funds for charitable purposes within the service area of Cotton Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CEC).
- Grant applications are reviewed quarterly. Applications are to be received in the CEC offices by the close of business 14 days before the quarterly meeting of the CECF Board of Directors.
- Grants to any group, organization, charity or similar organization will not exceed \$10,000, and grants to individuals will not exceed \$2,500.

Requirement for school applications

All applications for grants benefitting schools require the signature of the school superintendent.

This includes applications submitted by booster clubs, parent-teacher organizations and other school-related groups, teachers and principals. This requirement was established to ensure coordinated communication on projects that fit a school district's priorities.

Application instructions:

Please complete all sections of the application. If an item is not applicable to your organization, please make note in the space provided.

- If you are exempt from income tax, please attach verification such as a copy of letter 501(c)3 from the Internal Revenue Service or an explanation of why your organization is considered to be exempt.
- Please include a recent financial statement. If your organization completes an annual audit, please attach a copy with your application. If your organization does not complete an annual audit, please attach a copy of your treasurer's report and bank statements to verify your source of funding, funds

 Please be specific when describing how the funds will be used if approved and attach price estimates if available.

Categories of assistance:

- 1. Communities
- Programs, projects and organizations that are important components of a community's overall quality of life, with emphasis on public safety, health care, self-sufficiency, and basic human needs.
 - 2. Education and youth
- Programs and projects designed to combat critical social problems affecting youth, particularly children and teens at risk.
- Programs and projects that promote youth wellness.
- Programs and projects that work to provide supplemental materials and equipment for schools.
- Programs and projects to enhance school facilities.
- 3. Seniors
- Programs and projects to support organizations and the facilities serving senior citizens.
- 4. Volunteer fire departments
- Programs and projects to enhance volunteer fire department facilities and vehicles.
- Equipment and gear purchases and upgrades.
- 5. Individuals
- An individual or family in need of assistance may request a grant. Examples of need conditions may include the consequences of a disaster, catastrophic illness, or permanent disabil-
- Individual applications must include a letter of referral from a sponsoring group such as a church, civic organization or other group wanting to raise funds for the individual.

The Foundation will not consider requests for general operating funds, capital campaigns or support for salaries. The Foundation prefers requests for program needs.

The Foundation will not consider requests for the benefit of an individual or family unit unless the application includes a letter from a sponsoring group. Grants will be issued to the sponsoring group.

Applicant eligibility:

Contributions will generally be made only to not-for-profit organizations that have been granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service; and to civic-based entities.

- 1. The organization must contribute to the community's health and/or wel-
- 2. The organization's services must be nondiscriminatory in nature.
- 3. Activities affiliated with a religious organization with a secular community designation are eligible for the Foundation's consideration of support. A secular designation is defined as an organization separate from the church or religious organization that provides services to people regardless of their religious beliefs and does not propagate a belief in a specific faith. (Example: A food bank that is a separate 501(c)(3) organization from a church and provides food and meals to anyone who qualifies for services, regardless of religious belief.)

Evaluation factors:

- 1. The following factors will be considered in the evaluation of all funding
- Potential benefit to residents of the CEC service area and the entire community.

- Prior contribution level of Foundation or community support for the program or project or the organization requesting the funds.
- Fiscal and administrative capability of the organization to deliver a quality service or program.
- Results that are predictable and can be evaluated.
- 2. The Foundation's Board of Directors shall evaluate all funding requests and determine whether to issue a grant for all or a portion of the funds requested.

Project timing:

Requests for funding should state whether the funds are intended for ongoing operations or for a specific project that will terminate at some point in the future. Whenever possible, requests for funding should be for projects that will be completed within 12 months following the Foundation's approval of the grant application.

For a complete overview of CECF grant application guidelines, please www.cottonelectric.com/ grant-applications. Applications may be submitted via email to zyoung@ cottonelectric.com, online at www. cottonelectric.com/grant-applications or mailed to 226 N. Broadway Walters, OK 73572.







- 160 Acres North of Grandfield, Oklahoma. All grass with good fences. City water available. (SOLD)
- 160 Acres 7 miles east of Grandfield, Oklahoma. 70 Acres of knee high B-Dahl grass, has 2 ponds and corrals. Needs 1/4 miles of fence repaired. 1/2 Mile highway frontage on Highway 70.
- 80 Acres 7 east 3 north Grandfield, Oklahoma on Co. Rd. 233. Super grass with rural water.
- 160 Acres south of Temple, Oklahoma has a home (needs repair), 3 barns, rural water and good grains.

LAND SALES PAST 6 MONTHS

Tillman County Stephens County Cotton County 640 Acres - \$1850 per acre 160 Acres - \$1850 per acre 80 Acres - \$3000 per acre 360 Acres - \$3500 per acre 480 Acres - \$2000 per acre 160 Acres - \$2450 per acre 160 Acres - \$2100 per acre

160 Acres - \$2500 per acre

IF YOU HAVE LAND FOR SALE GIVE ME A CALL!!!

I HAVE INVESTORS NEEDING LAND!!!!! WE'LL BUY YOUR LAND AND LEASE IT BACK TO YOU.

Members to be issued capital credit retirements

You may receive two items from collected in excess of actual operating Cotton Electric in the mail over the next few weeks: this newspaper and a capital credit retirement check. Capital credit checks represent your contribution toward the construction, upgrades and maintenance of Cotton Electric and Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC).

This year, \$500,000 in capital credits from WFEC will be retired. WFEC is a generation and transmission cooperative owned by Cotton Electric and other electric cooperatives in Oklahoma and New Mexico. The amount of checks is based on the amount of electric power purchased by each member.

Members should cash or deposit their checks promptly; otherwise, banks may not honor the check if brought in after Jan. 18, 2024. Checks are void after 90 days.

If the amount of the WFEC retirement is less than \$5, a check will not be issued. Instead, it will be carried forward and added to any amount authorized for distribution the next time capital credits are retired.

When a resident or business owner signs up to receive electric service from Cotton Electric, they become a member and owner of the cooperative.

Members' Economic Participation is the third cooperative principle, and as owners, members have a responsibility to help finance their cooperative. They do this by using our services and by allowing the co-op to retain any money costs. The money is used to build and maintain the facilities needed to serve the co-op's members and to service our long-term debt.

This money is considered to be capital furnished by the members that will be returned to members at a later date. While the co-op uses the money, members' capital credits are considered "allocated" but not "retired."

Capital credits are retired at the discretion of the cooperative's Board of Trustees. Before retiring capital credits, trustees consider the financial condition of the co-op and the impact on electric rates.

Your cooperative is financially strong and, as a result, is able to share this economic benefit with the members. The Board of Trustees has determined conditions are appropriate for returning capital credits to current and former members.

Because the retirements are meant for active and inactive members. Cotton Electric needs changes of address, even if a person has moved and is no longer a member of the not-for-profit cooperative. Members are encouraged to keep the co-op informed of any change of address, as several hundred checks are returned to the co-op for lack of proper address each time capital credit checks are issued.

Simple changes make a big difference and add up to savings.

Learn more at www.cottonelectric.com or www.touchstoneenergy.com.

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WHAT ARE CAPITAL CREDITS?

Cotton Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit cooperative with members who share in the ownership, construction, maintenance and prosperity of the co-op.

When a person establishes service with us, they become a member and are eligible for capital credits. Capital credits represent a member's share of the co-op's margins during the time they have membership.

At the end of each year, any funds (margins) remaining after expenses have been paid are allocated, based on percentage of electricity used, to the member's account. The allocated funds are used as operating capital for system improvements and maintenance.

Annually, the Board of Trustees evaluates the financial condition of the cooperative to determine if we can retire capital credits. We may not retire capital credits every year. When the Board elects to retire capital credits, we calculate the amount to pay each member.

Checks are mailed to members due a retirement of more than \$5. Retirements less than \$5 are not issued a check, and the allocation remains in the member's capital credit account.

\$ =

ALLOCATION

An allocation is made annually for each member, based on the amount of electricity purchaséd. An allocation is the member's share of the net margins. The co-op sets this money aside to be used as operating capital for improvements and maintenance over a period of years.

RETIREMENT

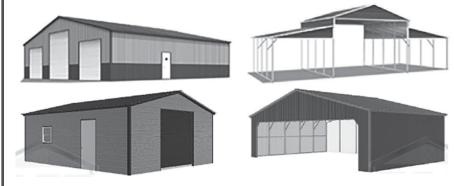
A retirement is the amount a member receives back as a refund. It is a portion of the total allocation. When capital is no longer needed for operating expenses, it is retired. The amount paid is decided annually by the Board of Trustees based on the financial needs of the cooperative.

REDEEM CHECK PROMPTLY

CAPITAL CREDIT CHECKS ARE VOID AFTER 90 DAYS



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Do your investments match your goals?

As you go through life, you'll have various financial goals — and to achieve them, you'll need to invest. But just recognizing the need to invest is not as useful as matching specific types of accounts or investments with specific goals. How can you make these connections?

Let's look at some



common goals and how with appropriate accounts

and investments: • Saving for a down payment on a house -When you're saving for a down payment, you want a certain amount of money available at a certain time so, for this goal, you won't want to take too much risk. Consequently, you might consider investing in certificates of deposit (CDs), which will pay you regular interest payments and return your principal when the CDs mature. CDs are issued in a range of maturities, from one month to 10 years. Other vehicles you

common goals and how might consider are money they could possibly be met market accounts or other cash equivalents.

• Saving for a child's *education* – If you have children, and you'd like to help them pay for some form of higher education, you may want to consider a 529 education savings plan. Any earnings growth in a 529 plan is federally tax free, provided the withdrawals are used for qualified education expenses, and you may also receive state tax benefits. A 529 plan can be used for college, approved trade school programs, student loan repayments and some K-12 costs. And if the child you've named

as a beneficiary chooses not to continue their education, and doesn't need the money in a 529 plan, you can generally switch beneficiaries to another immediate family member.

• Saving for retirement - This is the one goal that will remain consistent throughout your working years — after all, you could spend two or even three decades in retirement, so you'll need to accumulate as many financial resources as you can to pay for those years. Fortunately, you likely have access to several good retirement-savings vehicles. If you work for

a business, you might have a 401(k) plan, which offers you the chance to put away money on a tax-deferred basis. (If you have a Roth option in your 401(k), your withdrawals can be tax free, although, unlike a traditional 401(k), your contributions won't lower your taxable income.) If you work for a public school or a nonprofit organization, you may be able to participate in a 403(b) plan, which is quite similar to a 401(k), and the same is true if you in mind and take the steps work for a state or local government, where you might have a 457(b) plan. And even if you invest in

any of these plans, you can probably also contribute to an IRA, which gives you another chance to invest on a tax-deferred basis (or tax-free basis, if you're eligible for a Roth IRA). Try to take full advantage of whatever retirement plans are available to you.

Here's one final point to keep in mind: While some investments and accounts are appropriate for certain goals, they may not necessarily be suitable for your individual situation so keep all your options that are right for you.

Edward Jones, Member SIPC

Kelsey Avants

1110 N. 10th Street | Duncan, OK 73533 | 580-255-4408 kelsey.avants@edwardjones.com | www.edwardjones.com Edward Jones MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Local students compete in second annual statewide competition

By Carli Eubank

On Oct. 25, more than 115 seventh and eighth grade students from Oklahoma electric cooperatives traveled to the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC) conference center in Oklahoma City for the second annual Co-opreneur Day. Students were divided into teams to form a cooperative and present a business plan that meets the needs of imaginary communities.

Competitors were divided into three categories: seventh graders, eighth graders and a blend of seventh and eighth graders.

Cotton Electric was represented by two seventh grade teams and one eighth grade team from Walters Middle School. Hope Academy of Stephens County and their blended team of seventh and eighth graders were first-time attendees of the event. The Walters Middle School team, named Devil's Current, won second place in the eighth grade category, and Hope Academy's team, named Daily Slay, won third place in the seventh and eighth grade category.

The event was broken into three sections. First, students learned about the definition, business model and principles of electric cooperatives. A group activity demonstrated how cooperatives operate by businesses working together to alleviate problems each of them were experiencing. After the

demonstration, each team elected a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer to represent their group.

The second activity was led by Amy Lee from the Oklahoma Council on Economic Education. She discussed with students the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur.

Since students had learned about cooperatives and entrepreneurship, the third activity combined what students learned in the previous sections. They created a cooperative business plan addressing concerns in their communities. Students were given an hour to create a plan before presenting it to judges.

After team members presented their plan, students enjoyed a nice lunch and snack spread and participated in a few activities while waiting for the final results of the contest. Canadian Valley Electric Cooperative provided a crossarm display where students could get an up-close look at electrical equipment on power lines. Students also lined up and put on different props before posing for a picture at the

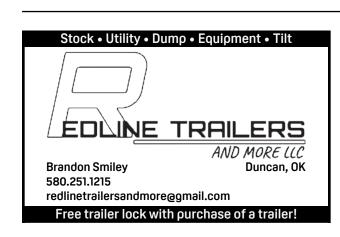
Co-opreneur Day is one of the many ways electric cooperatives invest in local youth and encourage strength and leadership opportunities. Cotton Electric is proud of the students representing the cooperative during the competition. The future of electric cooperatives is certainly shining bright.



Hope Academy of Stephens County won third place in the seventh and eighth grade category of the 2023 Co-opreneur Day. Photo courtesy of OAEC.



One of the three teams from Walters Middle School won second place in the eighth grade category of the 2023 Co-opreneur Day. Photo courtesy of OAEC.





Marlow, OK 73055

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Cotton Electric opens 2024 youth program contests

Cotton Electric Cooperative is ready to kick off the annual Oklahoma Youth Tour essay contest for all high school juniors in the cooperative's service territory where two finalists will go on an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C.

Youth Tour is a week of hands-on learning while making memories that will last a long time. Student finalists will learn about government and the cooperative business model, see historic monuments, gain experience leadership and meet new people.

To be eligible to enter the competition, contestants must be high school juniors in the Cotton Electric service territory. Students and their families do not have to be Cotton Electric members; however, children of Cotton Electric employees and eligible to participate.

The contest is broken into three rounds. For the first round, applicants will submit an essay of 400-500 words on this topic: "You are in charge of getting as many cooperative members as possible to attend an Annual Meeting. How would you do it?" 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.

The top 15 essays to move on to the second round - a live video in-

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 2024.

The deadline to submit an essay is 3 p.m. on Jan. 17, 2024. For more information or to apply online, visit www. cottonelectric.com/ youthtour. For questions, please call us at 580-875-3351 or email zyoung@cottonelectric.

Energy Camp

Cotton Electric Cooperative has another opportunity

Board Members are not terview, via Zoom. The exclusive to 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 handson, immersive camp experience that will be held May 28 through 31 at Canyon Camp in Red Rock Canyon, southeast of Hinton.

> The layout of this competition is similar to the Youth Tour contest described above. For the first round, contestants will submit an essay between 50 and 100 words to the co-op about why the entrant would like to attend the 2024 Energy Camp. Writers of the top 15 essays will move on to the second round for a live video interview between students and independent judges. Last, the final four will be selected to attend an

all-expenses-paid trip to the 2024 Energy Camp, where they will have firsthand experience learning about electric cooperative principles, running for leadership positions, and climbing a pole just like electric lineworkers do.

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

The deadline to submit an essay is 3 p.m. on March 29, 2024. For more information or to apply online, visit www. cottonelectric.com/ EnergyCamp. For questions or more information, call us at 580-875-3351 or email zyoung@ cottonelectric.com.



Scan for more information about 2024 Energy Camp.



(Left to right) Katelyn Patterson, Abigail Bowman, Tanner Bordelon and Katie Deurmyer were Cotton Electric's essay contest winners for the 2023 Energy Camp. Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.



Scan for more information about 2024 Youth Tour.



Cotton Electric's 2023 Youth Tour essay contest winner Owen Long (far left) and his small group pause for a fun photo in front of the Washington Monument. Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.











The Cotton Electric Services Inc. front lab upgrades included new testing equipment, an additional transformer and new lighting. Photo by Carli Eubank.

Increasing production and efficiency with new testing equipment

By Carli Eubank

Since 1992, the cooperative's subsidiary company, Cotton Electric Services Inc. (CESI), has been testing high-voltage equipment for electric cooperatives and businesses across the country. With over two decades of operation, CESI has seen and experienced many changes in the industry. Recent installation of improved equipment and technology for testing line hoses and blankets is one of the many ways CESI stays safe and efficient while completing orders.

CESI Supervisor Eric Woods began to think about how to increase production in the lab. Before the lab upgrades, there were four pieces of testing equipment that ran on one transformer, slowing production down for employees.

"You had to be strategic in the lab," Woods said. "One day you would come in and test nothing but sleeves, and the next day you would test nothing but blankets or whatever the case may be."

Increases in orders and production led to one of the testing machines beginning to wear and tear to the point where it needed to be replaced. With projected positive forecasts, Woods submitted an order to replace the line hose and blanket tester. After the

two-year lead time, the new equipment finally arrived at CESI this fall.

Along with the new tester was the installation of another transformer, splitting four testing machines between two transformers and leading to an increase in job production and ability to make deadlines more efficiently.

"As the business grew, we needed to grow, as well,"

Technology in personal protective equipment has experienced a lot of growth over the years. The previous piece of equipment was chain driven with manual meters. CESI's new testing machine comes with touchscreens and the ability to receive remote programming assistance from the equipment's manufacturer if issues arise.

"The advances in technology and being able to use reliable equipment to get the job done are just a couple things I am looking forward to seeing," Woods said. "I am very grateful for my team, and the Board and cooperative's support of us being able to update our equipment."

More upgrades are hoped to be made in the coming year to encourage and maintain CESI's mission to provide safety to employees across the nation.



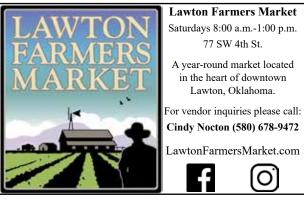
The new line hose and blanket tester arrived at CESI this fall. Photo by Carli Eubank.















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Cotton Electric Journeyman Lineman Ronnie Mansel climbs up the pole during his timed rescue. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Cotton Electric Journeyman Lineman Prestin Green cracks a smile during his pole top rescue. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Cotton Electric Vegetation Management Foreman Joe Moore lowers the bucket during his timed bucket rescue. Photo by Carli Eubank.

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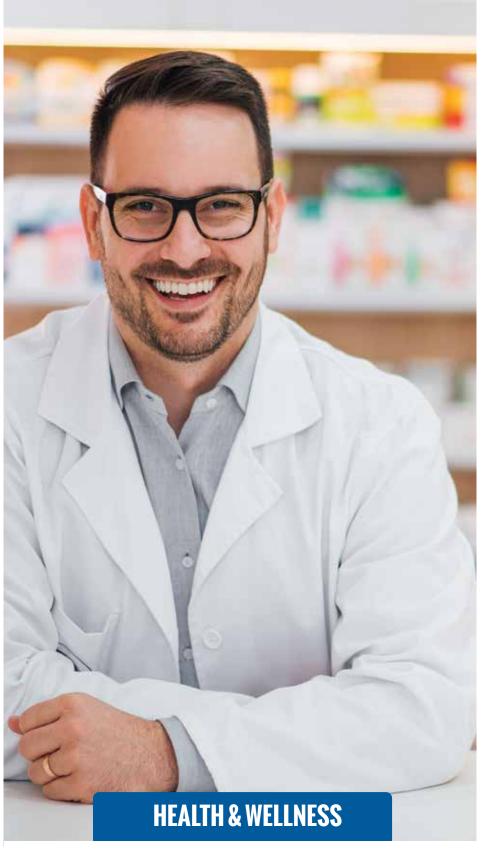
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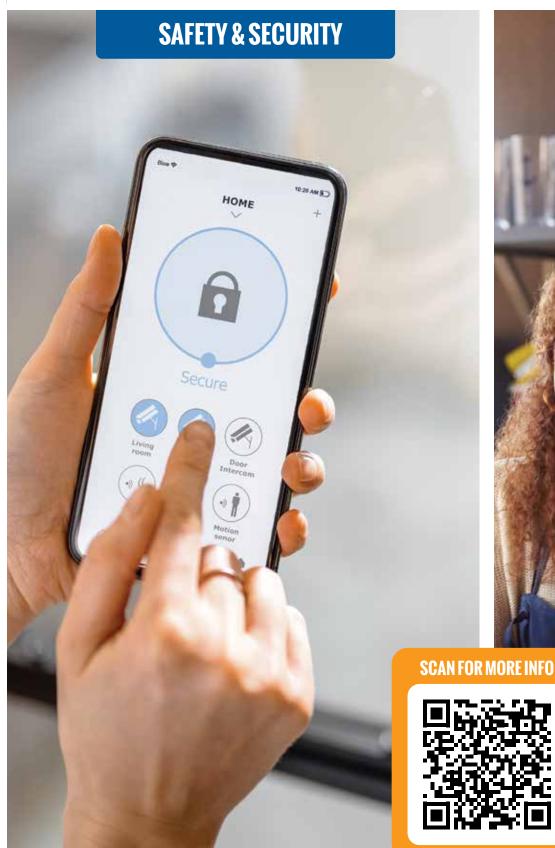
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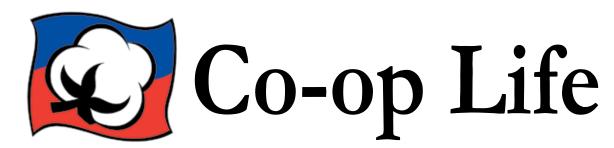
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Members help local organizations fight food insecurity in local communities

By Carli Eubank

Concern for Community is one of the cooperative principles that Cotton Electric and other electric cooperatives strive to follow each day. Thanks to our members participating in Operation Round Up (ORU), local churches and organizations are able to show the same interest with the help of Cotton Electric Chariable Foundation (CECF) grants by serving families that come through their food pantries and Blessing Boxes.

Rush Springs United Methodist Church received a CECF grant earlier this year that will go toward purchasing food for Thanksgiving and Christmas boxes to distribute this holiday season.

Pastor Chris Stinnett has been involved in various food banks for almost 20 years and continued serving when he became pastor at the United Methodist Church in Rush Springs five years ago. The church's food pantry is a joint effort with Vimy Ridge Baptist Church in Rush Springs and has been feeding families for many years. Currently, they supplement about 35 families once a month.

"I think one of the biggest fears people have today is asking for help," Stinnett said. "Here, we have people who are ready to help and simply say, 'Hello.' If I see somebody not smiling, I want to give them a reason to smile before they leave."

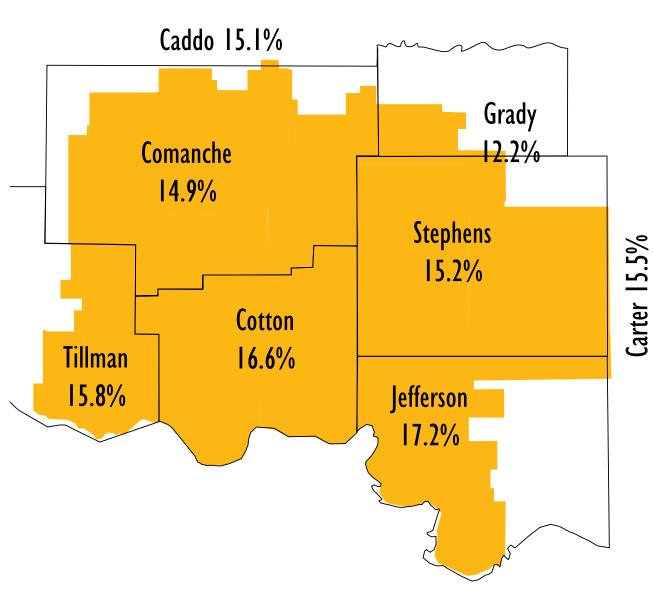
Volunteers gather at the church every Wednesday to create the menu, order food, review the budget, and complete other necessary tasks. Valetta Bentley is a long-time volunteer with the food pantry. After she retired from teaching, her role with the food pantry grew to a full-time volunteer about five years ago.

"I've really enjoyed what I do," Bentley said. "I didn't think I would ever get this much enjoyment, but I do. Maybe it's the people I work with or the people that come in who need food, but being here is a blessing."

Bentley shared how sometimes it's heartbreaking to hear stories of members in the community, but her hope comes from the chance to be able to help individuals each time they come to the food pantry.

'If we can help a little bit, I think that's what we're supposed to do," Bentley said. "We all need help, but some of us need more than others, and if we can serve them in any way, then I think it's wonderful."

At the end of last year, the United Methodist Women's group in Duncan received a CECF grant for support of their Blessings Box. Gina Flesher and Cheryl Dowell have been volunteers for many years and share approach her at the Blessings Box and thank her for lots of positive memories while serving together. Flesher and Dowell are now looking forward to opening a new Blessings Box with New Beginnings Methodist



Food insecurity rates in the Cotton Electric Cooperative service territory. Source: www. regionalfoodbank.org

factor, as well as if the area is considered a food desert. Volunteers at the church and throughout the community rotate days to restock the Blessings Box to ensure it's filled for those who are in need, Dowell explained.

"The need for food in this town is tremendous," Flesher said. "We try to supplement the right things so residents can spend money on what they need, such as prescriptions, paper towels or other items."

When donating food items, Flesher encourages individuals to focus on nonperishable, easy-to-eat items, such as canned tuna, and to also consider what appliances families may or may not have access to. If certain foods require preparation, make sure those items can be provided. For example, if donating a cake mix, try to include the eggs, oil and other ingredients needed for

Flesher shared that her best memories are when someone is at the Blessing Box when she stocks it. One afternoon when Flesher drove up to the Blessings Box, a little boy was donating food. While visiting with the child, she found out he lived with his grandma nearby and when they received some food that he couldn't eat, his grandma encouraged him to donate the items.

Dowell also shared stories when individuals would what she was doing.

they can, but we don't really have control over how much someone takes from the Blessings Box," Flesher When choosing a location for a Blessings Box, the said. "We focus our encouragement on the positive sto-

Over the past several years, the Walters Community Food Pantry has received a few CECF grants that went toward food and appliances for the organization. In 2011, the building that was previously Walters City Hall was transformed into the town's food pantry when churches from around the community came together in support of this service.

With donations provided from the Food Bank of Oklahoma and community residents, the Walters Food Pantry serves around 35 families once a month. Community residents have the ability to shop and browse the pantry's stock, such as chicken, canned vegetables and other items.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in a publication on www.hungerfreeok.org, 15.5% of households in Oklahoma experienced food insecurity in 2015. It also states that the Oklahoma food insecurity rate is significantly higher than the national average. For more information about food insecurity and how you can help, visit www.hungerfreeok.org, www.regionalfoodbank.org or contact your local food pantry.

Since the CECF and ORU program was established in 2004, members have helped contribute more than \$109,234 in grants that went toward supporting local "Residents can take what they need and leave what food pantries. Combined with cooperative members' generosity and the mission of food pantries and Blessings Boxes, improving the quality of life in the communities we serve remains a shared purpose while fighting



One of the Blessings Box locations in Duncan is near Hillcrest Park. Photo by Zach Young.



(Pictured left to right) Valetta Bentley and Chris Stinnett volunteer at the Rush Springs United Methodist Church food pantry. Photo by Carli Eubank.



The Walters Community Food Pantry is open once a month, located in the old City Hall building. Photo by Carli Eubank.



If you would like your community event listed in the December issue, please submit information by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to The-Current@CottonElectric.com by November 24. Only events occurring after December 11 will be published in the next issue.

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

A sweet evening of laughter

Enjoy a night of coffee, sweet treats and laughter while supporting Charis Center's annual fundraiser at Comedy and Coffee. This event will feature Viridian Coffee, Special Days Cakes and a family-friendly entertainment provided by comedian Jason Myers. Tickets can be purchased at Charis Center for \$30 (or \$50 for two) or for \$40 at the door. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the show will begin at 7:15 p.m. on Nov. 14 at the Simmons Center. For questions or more information, call 580-786-6000.

CU performs Julius Caesar

Spend an evening at the theatre enjoying the play *Julius Caesar* performed by the Cameron University Theatre. Showings are set for Nov. 16-18 at 7:30 p.m. and Nov. 19 at 2 p.m. at the Studio Theatre at Cameron University. To purchase tickets, contact the Cameron University Box Office at 580-581-2478.

Holiday in the Park

Celebrate the holidays with family-friendly events at Lawton's Holiday in the Park. The festivities begin at 6 p.m. on November 18 with a themed parade. Throughout the season, Elmer Thomas Park will be completely decorated with colorful light displays, ornaments and cutouts. Take a ride in a horse-drawn carriage, drive your own car or walk through the park to enjoy all of the holiday cheer. Check out the Winter Rink for ice skating during the week or hockey games on Saturdays.

Additional activities include Stories with Santa, the Snider Petting Zoo, a living Nativity, hay rides, movie nights, holiday concerts, food trucks galore, and much more. For questions or more information about the event, call 580-355-3541 or visit www.lawtonfortsillchamber.com.

Enjoy Breakfast with Santa

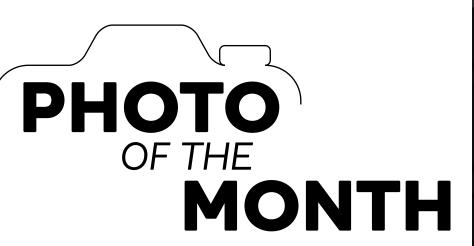
Santa Clause will be stopping in Duncan for United Way Stephens County's Breakfast with Santa event. At this fundraiser, each child will receive a special souvenir, as well as have their picture taken with Santa, and a breakfast meal will be available. Children must be accompanied by an adult, and each person must have a ticket to attend. Tickets can be purchased online by Dec. 7. The event is set for 8 to 10 a.m. on Dec. 10 at the Applebee's in Duncan. For questions or more information, call 580-255-3648 or visit www.unitedwayofsc.org/ breakfastwithsanta.

Food pantry open once monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month. The pantry is in the old City Hall, 131 1/2 W. California Street. Pantry organizers try to provide a two-week supply of basic staples to anyone with identification and proof of Cotton County residency. Monetary donations may be sent to Food Pantry, c/o Paul Metcalfe, 211 E. Colorado St., Walters, OK 73572. For information, call Roger Noland at 580-591-6826.

Blessings Boutique open monthly

Marlow First United Methodist Church opens its Blessings Boutique from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every first and third Tuesday of the month. Clothing donation drop-off days are Tuesdays, or donors can call the church at 580-658-2765 to make other arrangements.









Cotton Electric member Joy Zgleszewski snapped this photo of a beautiful sunset near Velma.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. The theme for December is Oklahoma Skies! 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.

Take action for National Diabetes Month



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food 2 **THOUGHT**

November is National Diabetes Month. The 2023 theme encourages everyone to take action to prevent diabetes-related health problems. Uncontrolled diabetes can damage the eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart, and puts people at higher risk for certain types of cancer. Taking action means having regular wellness visits with your primary care physician to assess risk of developing diabetes or being diagnosed with diabetes, then creating a care plan to manage risk or diagnosis.

prevent health complications associated with diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates there are 8.5 million adults who currently have diabetes and have not been diagnosed. Scheduling your annual wellness visit and paying attention to signs and sympat night, excessive thirst, unexplained weight loss, blurred vision) are key to diagnosis. Even before these signs and symptoms occur, your annual wellness

visit could uncover a condition called prediabetes, where your blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough for an official diagnosis of diabetes. Managing prediabetes can prevent or delay the onset of diabetes.

Adjusting diet and exercise are key to managing prediabetes and diabetes. There are many resources online to assist (American Diabetes Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are good places to start). Your primary care group may also have certified diabetes educators and registered dietitian nutritionists to help support your treatment plan. In general, all foods can be incorporated into a healthy diet, but individuals who are most successful at managing diabetes pay close attention to the types and amounts of carbohydrates they eat as they follow general healthy diet recommendations. They get their carbohydrates from fruits and vegetables and whole grains with plenty of fiber, and they limit the amount of added sugars in their diet. Light-intensity physical activity like walking is associated with better blood sugar control, especially when conducted after a meal or a snack. A study by Buffey and colleagues published in the journal Sports Medicine in Diagnosis is key to taking action to 2022 uncovered a correlation between standing breaks and light-intensity walking (at least 2 minute standing/walking every 20 minutes or at least 5 minutes standing/walking every 30 minutes) and a reduction in blood sugar versus sitting.

Prioritize your health this month by setting up your annual wellness visit if toms of diabetes (frequent urination you haven't done so this year, taking action on a treatment plan if diagnosed with prediabetes or diabetes, and encouraging your family and friends to do the same.





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Impress friends and family with a quick appetizer

(Culinary.net) If you're looking for a new dip for your next get-together and tired of the same boring salsas and layered dips, this Cowboy Caviar may quickly become a family favorite.

Also known as Texas Caviar, this bean salad can be a hit with loved ones at birthdays, holidays, graduations, reunions and more. It serves well with tortilla chips but can be enjoyed in a variety of ways. Plus, it's a breeze to make and can be even simpler when prepared the night before your big event.

Visit Culinary.net to find more quick and simple appetizer recipes.



Cowboy Caviar

1 can (15 ounces) sweet corn

1 can (15 ounces) black beans

1 bunch cilantro

3 Roma tomatoes

2 jalapenos

1/2 red onion

bell peppers (mix of green, red, orange and yellow, as desired) tortilla chips, for serving

Dressing:

1/3 cup olive oil

1/3 cup red wine vinegar

1 tablespoon honey

1 tablespoon paprika

1 lime, juice only salt, to taste

pepper, to taste

Drain and rinse corn and black beans; dry well.

Finely chop and dice cilantro, tomatoes, jalapenos, onion and bell peppers.

To make dressing: Combine olive oil, red wine vinegar, honey, paprika and lime juice. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

Mix vegetables with dressing. Serve with tortilla chips.



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Chocolate Covered Pumpkin Pretzels

Prep time: 10 minutes Cook time: 5 minutes Yield: about 36 pretzels

3/4 cup orange candy

1 bag (16 ounces) mini pretzel twists

1/4 cup mini green coated chocolate candies

Directions:

Line baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.

In medium microwave-safe bowl, melt candy melts 30 seconds then stir. Working in 15-second intervals, continue microwaying until melted and smooth, stirring between intervals. With fork or dipping utensil, dip 36 mini pretzel twists, one at a time, into

melted orange chocolate and gently tap side of bowl to remove excess.

Lay each covered pretzel on parchment paper. Using remaining pretzel twists, break apart enough to equal 1/4 cup.

Place one mini green chocolate candy (to form leaf) and one broken pretzel piece (to form stem) on top of each dipped pretzel. Repeat with remaining pretzels and chocolate candies.

Let set until solid. Pretzels can harden on counter about 30 minutes, or placed in refrigerator or freezer 5-10 minutes.



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- High humidity in summer?
- There doesn't seem to be enough airflow?
- House just never seems comfortable?
- 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?

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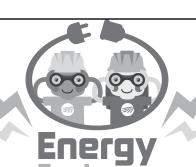
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THE STEPS TO **ESTORING POWER**

When the power goes out, line crews work hard to restore electricity as quickly and safely as possible. To ensure the process is done efficiently, line crews follow specific steps to restore power. Can you order the steps below to match how power is restored?

Hint: Check your work in the answer key.



STEP#

Tap lines are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers that are either mounted on utility poles or placed on pads for underground electric service.



STEP#

Distribution power lines are inspected. These are the lines you typically see on the side of the road that deliver power to communities.



STEP#

Large, high-voltage transmission lines are inspected for damage. These power lines deliver large amounts of electricity over great distances.



STEP#

Service lines are inspected. These are the power lines that run **between the transformer** and your home.



STEP#

Distribution substations are inspected. These facilities lower the voltage of power, then send power to distribution lines.

10

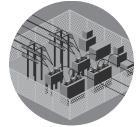
14

28

34

41

17



Answer Key: 4, 3, 1, 5, 2

20

21

ACROSS

- 1. Beats per minute
- 4. Hindu deity
- 10. Polynesian garland of flowers

- 11. Not chained to
- 12. Metric ton
- 14. Tall, rounded vase
- 15. Musical composi-

tion

- 16. St. Francis of ___
- 18. Discover the location of
- 22. Compact group of mountains

23. Mend

- 24. Not current
- 26. Atomic #64
- 27. Young hawk
- 28. Or ___
- 30. Pouches
- 31. Southern Thailand

isthmus

- 34. Mends with yarn
- 36. Downwinds
- 37. One of two equal parts of a divisible whole

39. Italian archaeological site

- 40. Cold appetizer
- 41. Yes
- 42. Peninsula
- 48. Of that
- 50. A way to divide
- 51. Relating to the physical senses
- 52. One who makes

51

- money
- 53. __ Spumante (Ital-

59

53

ian wine)

54. Inconvenience

(abbr.)

- 55. South Dakota
- 56. Snow sport
- 58. The products of
- human creativity
 - 59. Change mind
 - 60. Born of

 - **DOWN**
 - 1. Similar to the color
- of a clear unclouded sky

3. Made smaller

- 2. Former name of thor of Siddhartha Iran

4. Type of meter

11

15

18

23

26

42

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58

60

- 5. Revolt
- 6. Killed with rocks
- 7. Gregory __, US tissue
- dancer
 - 8. Nullifies
 - 9. Home to the Flyers 12. Female parent
 - 13. Pre-1917 Russian
- emperor
 - 17. Outsourcing
- (abbr.)
 - 19. Regal
 - 20. Line
 - 21. Hermann ___, au-

 - 25. Clearing up

29. No seats available

- 31. Leaves of an Arabi-
- an shrub

30

36

32. Groove in organ or

55

- 33. Not of this world
 - 35. Cooking device
 - 38. Forget
 - 41. Operational flight
 - 43. Actress Danes
 - 44. Poke holes in 45. A way to discolor
 - 46. Shouts of welcome
- or farewell
- 47. Pharrell s group
- 49. Red fluorescent dye
- 56. Jr. s dad
- 57. Electronics firm



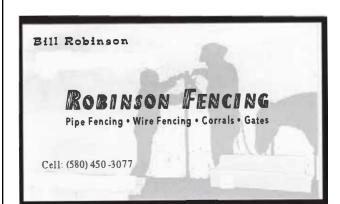
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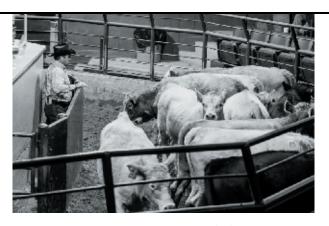
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Parting Shot



Cotton Electric Cooperative meter technician Josh Belcher snapped this photo in front of his shop, The Hotrod Hangout, at the Walters Car Cruz. Belcher placed first and second in Class 29 for vehicles under construction. Congratulations, Josh! Photo courtesy of Josh Belcher.



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