

Plant Trees Safely

Before you dig, call 811 to locate buried utility lines.

LOW TREE ZONE

Avoid planting within 20 ft. of power lines. If planting is unavoidable, only plant shrubs and small trees that reach a mature height of 15 ft. or less.

MEDIUM TREE ZONE

Plant medium trees (under 40 ft. when mature) at least 25 ft. away from power lines.

LARGE TREE ZONE

Plant large trees (over 40 ft. when mature) at least 50 ft. away from power lines.



Cooperative encourages safety as spring arrives

Spring is right around the corner. For many, the arrival of warmer weather sparks the urge to get outside, work in the yard or possibly finish up some do-it-yourself projects around the house.

Cotton Electric wants to encourage members to prioritize safety while engaging in these long-awaited spring-time activities.

Inspect outdoor tools before starting yard work

Can't wait to get outdoors to start sprucing up your yard for spring? Take a few minutes before you power up your lawn tools to make sure they're in good shape for the season ahead.

Here are some tips for spring cleaning your power tools:

- Dust them off. Even if you store your tools in a cabinet over the winter, they could get dusty. And even if you cleaned them before you put them away for the season, you might find some residual grime and dirt on blades and filters. Use a damp cloth to wipe down all moving parts.
- Inspect for rust. Older tools are especially prone to rusting. Use steel wool to gently rub rust from metal parts. For tough spots, use a degreaser, and then spray the moving parts with a corrosion protector/lubricant.
- Do a test run. Before you start trimming hedges or mowing your lawn, turn your tool on to learn if it's operating properly. Odd noises, dull blades, loose bolts and frayed wires are warning signs that your tool needs repairing or replacing. Working with damaged or malfunctioning tools can cause injuries.

Keep yourself and your family safe by inspecting, repairing and replacing tools that could turn a beautiful spring into a disaster.

Leave electrical jobs to professionals

There's a little bit of a do-it-yourselfer in everyone. But some projects are best left to professionals. Leave complicated jobs—especially those involving electricity—to the pros. Even the most seasoned handymen stay away from jobs that could put them in danger or start a fire.

- If you do work with electricity, your tools need insulated grips.
- Switch off the circuit breaker that corresponds to the project on which you'll be working.
- If you're repairing a lamp, appliance or other plugged-in device, unplug it before you start your work.
- Plug power tools into ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). A GFCI will prevent you from getting shocked.
- If you need an extension cord for your power tool, choose one with a cord that measures less than 100 feet.
- Water and electricity don't mix, so don't use power tools in wet areas.
- If you're drilling into a wall, check that you will not come into contact with electrical wires or water pipes.
- Shield your eyes and ears and suit up with heavy-duty gloves and other protective gear when you power up your tools.
- Wear sturdy, protective shoes and long pants when using power tools—even your lawn mower.

Prepare for spring/summer storms

Oklahoma weather can sometimes be unpredictable, but a severe thunderstorm is sure to pop up throughout the season. Being mindful of the weather and taking certain precautions can help keep you and your family safe.

- Never seek shelter under an isolated tree, tower or utility pole since lightning tends to strike tall objects.
 - Immediately vacate elevated areas, such as hills, mountain ridges and peaks.
 - Get away from ponds, lakes and other bodies of water.
 - Stay away from objects that conduct electricity, including wires and fences, and golf clubs! Approximately five percent of annual lightning deaths and injuries in the U.S. happen on golf courses, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.
 - Never lie flat on the ground.
 - Learn about your community's emergency warning for severe thunderstorms.
 - Pick a safe place in your home for family members to gather during a thunderstorm. The location should be away from windows, skylights and glass doors that could be broken by strong winds or hail.
 - Protect your animals by ensuring that any outside buildings that house them are structurally sound.
 - Your mom was right: never talk on a landline telephone during a thunderstorm. Lightning could strike whatever building you are in, and the electricity will look for the quickest route to the ground via wiring.
- Although many homes don't have landlines anymore, many businesses still do.
- Know the difference between a watch and a warning. A severe thunderstorm watch means that they are possible in and near the area. A severe thunderstorm warning means that severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar.
- A warning is serious and means that there is imminent danger to life and property.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after March 1, 2022, is \$0.00710 per kWh.

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$9.23 on the March bill.

February 2022 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	70	44	57	15	72	31	52
2	44	18	31	16	78	55	67
3	19	15	17	17	62	22	42
4	34	15	25	18	50	16	33
5	44	11	28	19	65	25	45
6	54	18	36	20	74	33	54
7	58	27	43	21	75	37	56
8	67	21	44	22	58	20	39
9	69	24	47	23	23	14	19
10	67	33	50	24	27	17	22
11	68	26	47	25	32	14	23
12	50	23	37	26	40	24	32
13	62	21	42	27	56	20	38
14	72	23	48	28	67	23	45

Did You Know?

You can report outages by calling 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520. You can also report outages by using the SmartHub app.

The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on April 11, 2022.

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.

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Source: srh.noaa.gov/oum/
Average Daily High: 56 Average Daily Low: 24

From the CEO

Co-op seeks to ease members' financial impact

Pricing Pressure

Many of us are experiencing an increase in costs as we shop for groceries and fill up at the pump. The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently reported the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for all items increased 7.5 percent for the 12 months ending January, the largest 12-month increase since the period ending February 1982.

The release also reported that energy costs nationwide are on the rise. The energy index that includes gasoline, fuel oil, electricity and utility gas service, rose 27 percent over the last year.

The increased prices have been experienced here as well, which you saw on your recent electricity bills. There were two drivers here: the cost for power that is adjusted monthly through the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) and increased kWh's used.

How does the PCA work?

The PCA reflects the increase or decrease in Cotton Electric's cost of power purchased from our wholesale power provider, Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC). Cotton Electric's cost of wholesale power is typically 70% or more of our total expenses. As a not-for-profit utility, it is critical that we recover all of the Cooperative's wholesale power cost from the members who used power. Our goal is to break even.

The base PCA for the generation and transmission of electricity included in the Cooperative's rates is 6.25 cents per kWh. When the cost of purchased



Jennifer Meason, CEO

power is more than 6.25 cents per kWh, the PCA is increased and shown as a charge in order to recover the price we paid for power. When the cost of purchased power is less than 6.25 cents per kWh, we return the difference and members receive a credit.

The PCA fluctuates throughout the year, demonstrated in the chart below.

Even if the kWh usage in a home remained the same, there would still be some variance in the bill. For example, in January of 2021, the PCA was \$0.00245/kWh, or an increase of \$2.45 per 1,000 kWh used. One year later, the PCA was \$0.01573/kWh, or an additional \$15.73 per 1,000 kWh. If you go back to January of 2020, the PCA was a credit of \$-0.00537/kWh, which would have been a credit on the bill of \$5.37.

Increased Usage

To compound the issue, we also experienced cooler weather in January when compared to last year. We measure the impact of this through Degree Days. Degree Days are measures of how cold or warm a location is and compares the mean outdoor temperature to a standard temperature of 65° Fahrenheit (F). The more extreme the temperature, the higher number of Degree Days which generally results in higher levels of energy use for space heating or cooling.

Heating Degree Days (HDD) are a measure of how cold the temperature was on a given day or during a period of days. For example, a day with a mean temperature of 40° F has 25 HDD. Two such cold days in a row would have 50 HDD, and so on throughout the month.

In January 2022, there were 795 Heating Degree

Days versus 708 in 2021. Personally, my family's kWh usage increased 11% when comparing January 2022 to 2021. If we look at the cooperative as a whole, our total kWh sales for residential and small commercial accounts also reflect that difference.

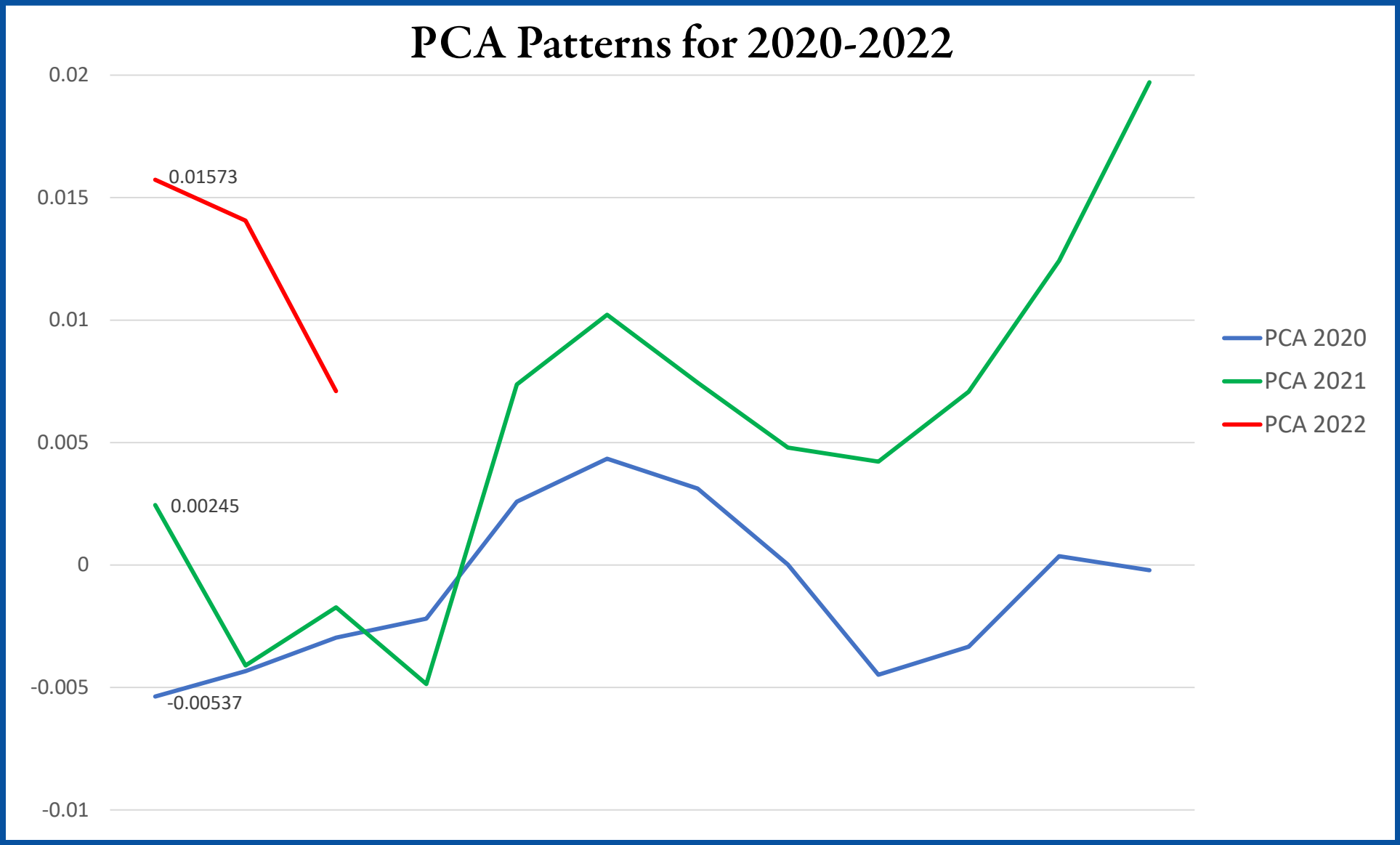
The combination of higher usage and an increase in the PCA charge resulted in higher bills for the membership. Although the revenue collection may be greater, the PCA is directly passed through without a markup and does not increase margins for the Cooperative.


We want to help

We know that increasing utility bills are frustrating and we would like to help you curb the impact to your family's budget. If you like to do research yourself, we have energy efficiency information on our website. If you would like personal assistance, we have an energy use advisor available to answer your questions over the phone or in-person through one of our free energy efficiency home evaluations to help you decide the most economical ways to improve your home's energy efficiency.

We also offer an Average Monthly Payment (AMP) Plan. With AMP, instead of high and low bills as the seasons change, bill amounts will tend to flatten and be close to the same amount each month. To enroll in AMP, members will need a 12-month billing history and the account should be in current status with no unpaid or past due balances.

We're here for you. You can reach us at our Walters and Duncan offices, by email at info@cottonelectric.com, or by phone at 875-3351.





Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

When was your cooling system last serviced? Most manufacturers recommend an annual tune up for your home's cooling system. March is a great time to schedule this service so you can beat the summer rush when the pros are busiest.

A qualified professional can check the amount of refrigerant, accuracy of the thermostat, condition of belts and motors and other factors that can greatly impact the efficiency of your system.


Source: Energy.gov



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.

	2021	2020
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$7,990,356	\$6,051,364
Cost of Purchased Power	5,577,431	4,209,307
Taxes	126,217	118,439
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	1,359	1,049
Average Farm and Residential Bill	220	174
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,830	1,663
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	19,110	18,837
Miles Energized	5,221	5,210
Density Per Mile	3.66	3.62
New Service Connects YTD	30	41
Services Retired	5	8

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Jennifer MeasonCEO
Bryce Hooper..... Vice President
Paula Huckabaa.....Marketing & Communications
Carli Eubank.....Editor

Cotton Electric Cooperative, Inc.
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Nichole Scott, Central High

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Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the April issue, please submit information by March 30 by calling 580-875-3351 or send an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com. Events that occur before April 11 will not be published in the next issue.

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

Home & garden show set for Mar.

Join the Southwest Oklahoma Home Builders Association's annual Lawton Home & Garden Show March 18-20.

An array of home and garden products will be on display. Hundreds of exhibitors and organizations will showcase creative ideas and resources. Visitors to the Lawton Home & Garden Show can expect to see beautiful landscaped displays, practical home improvement ideas and a taste of the many professional home and garden services there is to offer.

Auto swap meet in Duncan

Duncan's annual Automotive Swap Meet takes place Mar. 24-26 at the Stephens County Fairgrounds, 2002 S. 13th in Duncan.

This is an indoor and outdoor swap meet for avid muscle car and antique car enthusiasts. Located in the heart of southwest Oklahoma, the Swap Meet includes auto-related vendors, and on-site camping facilities and concessions are available.

Enjoy browsing through everything from boats and motorcycles to trucks and tractors, as well as auto-related memorabilia.

Local high school artists featured

Chisholm Trail Heritage Center will host its annual Youth Art Month Mar. 1-31. The 2022 national theme is "Art Connects Us."

The exhibition recognizes the artistic accomplishments of area students. Students from Duncan High School, FAME, Marlow, Elgin, and Tomlinson Middle school, as well as homeschooled students will have art on exhibit.

Entry to the exhibit will also be free. Other museum amenities such as theaters and interactive gallery will require an admission fee.

For more information about the Youth Art Month exhibit, call 580-252-6692 or email leah@onthechisholmtrail.com.

Music fest invades Medicine Park

Parkstomp is a free, all-ages, music festival featuring Bluegrass styles in historic Medicine Park Mar. 18-20. Bluegrass bands and other entertainers will perform at various venues throughout town. Shops and restaurants will be open as well as vendors selling food, t-shirts and trinkets.

Check out Medicine Park Events for more info at www.medicinepark.com/festivals.

Devol VFD plans fish fry

The Devol Volunteer Fire Department fish fry will be from 5-7 p.m. on April 2nd at the fire station.

This annual fundraiser helps raise money for the department's operating costs and donations are appreciated.

Bike event rolls in April 1

The April Fools Mountain Biking Festival in Medicine Park will take place Apr. 1-3. Cyclists of all ages can compete in timed races in a variety of categories.

Events kick off Apr. 1 with a 7:30

p.m. costume parade downtown. Parade participants will meet at Basecamp Adventure Outfitters one hour prior to the parade.

On Apr. 2, the festival continues with downhill bike races throughout the day. Shuttle rides to the events are available at Basecamp Adventure Outfitters. Races take place on various trails throughout the area.

The main racing event is Apr. 3 with the Fool's Dozen XC race. Cyclists must register for the appropriate category and have a USAC certification to participate.

Parkinson's support groups meet

The Parkinson's Foundation of Oklahoma offers various opportunities in Southwest Oklahoma for patients, with the support of the caregiver, to address the physical symptoms of the disease. Start 2022 off by joining other patients in classes designed to improve your quality of life.

Southwestern Medical Center, 5602 SW Lee Blvd. Lawton, hosts two speech therapy programs. Loud Crowd®, a speech therapy group, meets every Wednesday, 4:00pm and SPEAK OUT®, an individual speech therapy program that precedes the Loud Crowd® meeting. The individual speech therapy program requires a doctor's referral & evaluation by Roni Gardner. She can be reached at 580-531-6429.

The Lawton YMCA, located at 5th and Gore Blvd. hosts two exercise programs throughout the week. Rock Steady Boxing is available Tuesdays & Fridays at 1:30 p.m. and a Cycling Class for Parkinson's is offered Monday & Wednesday 1:00 p.m.

The Foundation's mission is "Inspiring Hope and Transforming Lives for Parkinson's Patients and Families in Oklahoma."

If you have questions about these programs or need additional support, visit the Foundation's website at www.parkinsonoklahoma.com.

CU performs '9 to 5' musical

The classic '80's movie hits the stage in "9 to 5," a musical comedy written by Dolly Parton. Performances are at 7:30 p.m., Apr. 21-22 and a 2 p.m. matinee on Apr. 24 at Cameron University Theatre in Lawton. For tickets call 580-581-2346.

Free tax preparation in Duncan

The AARP Foundation Tax Aid Program is again offering free tax preparation. The program is a volunteer-run, free tax-preparation and assistance service offered to low- and middle-income taxpayers with special attention to those ages 60 and older.

Taxes are prepared and electronically filed starting February 1 through April 15, 2022, at the Red River Technology Center, 3300 W Bois D'Arc Ave. in Duncan. Hours are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. Drop off service is available.

Call 580-255-2903 ext. 322 for more information.

OU Dancers at Simmons Center

On Apr 9th, OU School of Dance will perform at the Simmons Center Theater in Duncan as the last event of the 2021-2022 CTAC Live Concert Series.

For ticket information, please call Chisholm Trail Arts Council at 580-252-4160.

More Community Spotlight on Page 4

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Cotton Electric member Darren Beaver captured this beautiful sunset near his home east of Waurika for our Skies Above contest.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for April is Signs of Spring. 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 package of CEC goodies.

LCT presents Steel Magnolias

Transport yourself to Chinquapin, Louisiana, as the ladies at Truvy's beauty salon share laughter and loss in the Lawton Community Theatre (LCT) production of the dynamic drama "Steel Magnolias."

Performances will be Apr. 1-10 at Lawton Community Theatre, 1316

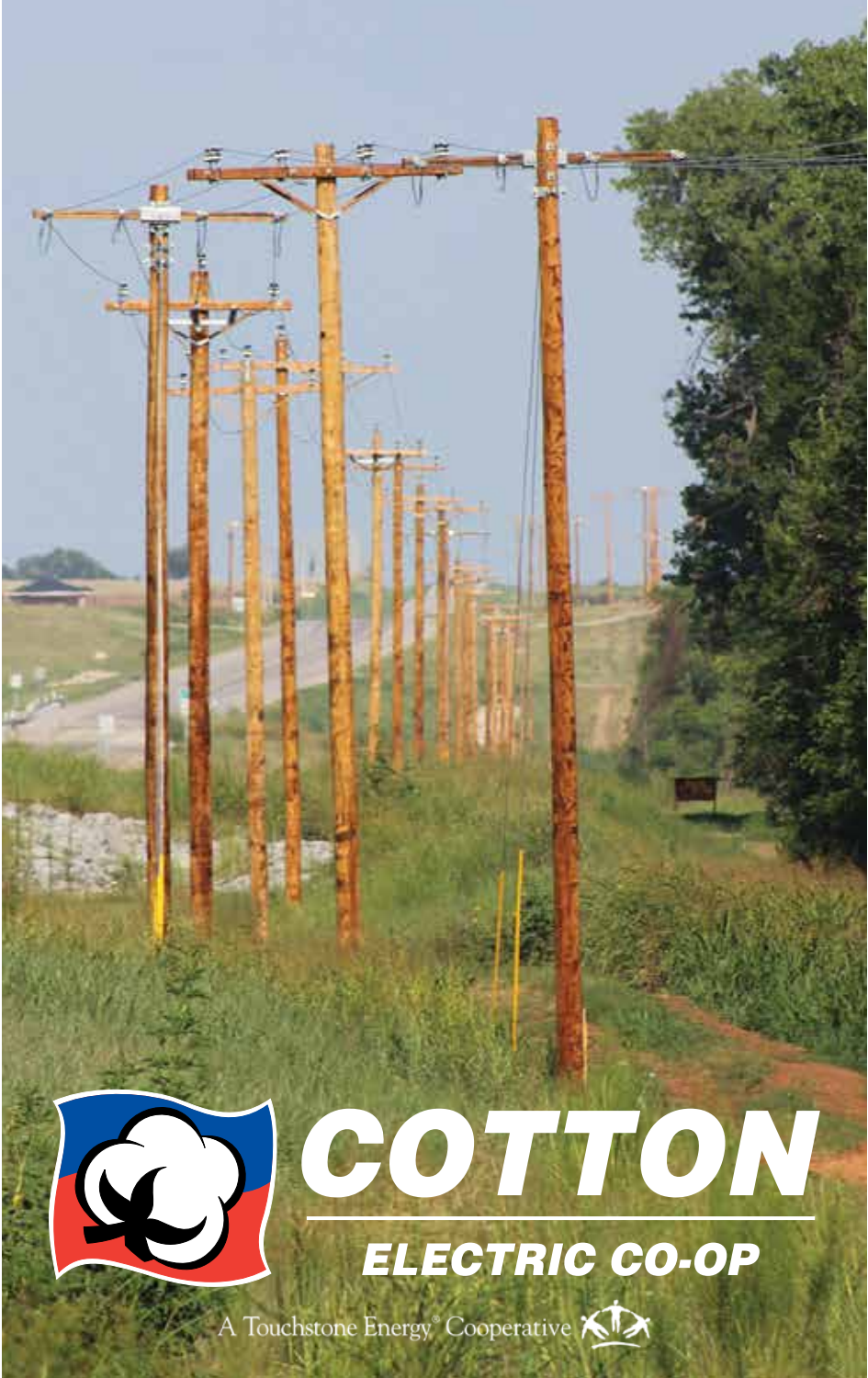
NW Bell, Lawton.

LCT Auditions for one of the most beloved musicals of all time, "Wizard of Oz," are scheduled from 6-9 p.m. on Apr. 25 and 26. Production dates will be in June.

For more information, visit www.lawtoncommunitytheatre.com

BUILT by our community.
SHAPED by our community.
LED by our community.

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POWER YOUR LIFE.**



Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

April		May		June	
Ad Sales	Mar. 25	Ad Sales	Apr. 22	Ad Sales	May 27
Classified	Mar. 30	Classified	Apr. 27	Classified	June 1
Publish	April 11	Publish	May 9	Publish	June 13

Finalists announced in essay competition

By Paula Huckabaa

Last November all high school juniors within the co-op’s service territory were invited to enter an essay contest discussing “How has the Rural Electrification Act impacted America?” Seventy-three essays from eight local schools were submitted.

Entries were narrowed down to the 15 best essays and their authors advanced to the second round

of competition, a live video interview. The question-and-answer video call between students and independent judges determined the final five students who would participate in the last round of competition.

Listed by school, the top five finalists are:

Cache High School: Isabel Moore and Liberty Pyne; Marlow High School: Tyler Hertzler and

James Stout; and Walters High School: Emma Youngblood.

The finalists recorded a video of themselves reciting their essay in a speech-type format to be submitted to another set of independent judges. The two winners will be announced in mid-March and will attend an expense-paid trip to Washington D.C. in June.



Tyler Hertzler, Marlow High School



Isabel Moore, Cache High School



Liberty Pyne, Cache High School



James Stout, Marlow High School



Emma Youngblood, Walters High School

Community Spotlight

Tai Chi classes offered

The Oklahoma Healthy Aging Initiative offers Tai Chi classes 11 a.m.- noon, Mondays and Wednesdays at the Lawton Public Library, 110 SW Fourth St. Tai Chi helps older adults reduce their risk of falling while also increasing balance and flexibility. Participants learn ways to improve their overall mind, body and spirit through a series of slow, continuous movements. It does not matter how strong, flexible or active you are; Tai Chi is designed for people at all levels of health. Register at www.ohai.org.

Pickaxe Preview at Cameron University

Prospective Cameron University students can get a glimpse of the CU Aggie life by attending Pickaxe Preview, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., Apr. 22. For more information call 580-581-2289 or email admissions@cameron.edu.

Free Alzheimer’s Support and Education

Oklahoma chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association

hosts a free monthly education presentation for non-professional caregivers of those with Alzheimer’s disease. Held online at 6 p.m., April 14 and May 10, participants will learn how to communicate with the person with dementia through the different stages of Alzheimer’s. Behaviors will also be taught, allowing caregivers to better understand how to address changes in how their loved one behaves. Register at www.alz.org/crf.

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.

Grief group meeting in Devol

First Baptist Church of Devol will be hosting GriefShare for those struggling with the loss of a

loved one or friend, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Mar. 20. This 13-week program will be held weekly. It is not necessary to attend every session, nor is it necessary for the sessions to be attended in any order. Workbooks and snacks will be provided. For more information, or if you have any questions, call 940-631-9187.

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.

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Energy efficiency tips promote ‘Going Green’

One of the most effective ways for you to “Go Green” this St. Patrick’s Day is to focus on reducing your personal energy consumption. These energy savings tips can help you save a little green at the same time.



Heath Morgan,
Energy Efficiency
Coordinator

Go Green in the Kitchen:

- Plan your meals in advance. Defrost your meat in the refrigerator instead of in the microwave. When gathering refrigerated ingredients, remove them at one time to avoid opening the fridge repeatedly.
 - Consider using a crockpot or pressure cooker instead of the oven. These cookers can use less energy running for six hours than your oven will use in one hour.
 - Once all the cooking is done, use the dishwasher rather than handwashing. Handwashing dishes can use up to six times as many gallons of water. Reducing the amount of water can cut down on your water heating cost, since most of the water used will be hot water.
- It is also important to be conscious of the amount of energy that goes in to the cleaning process for the water we use in our homes. While it may not directly affect your energy bill, you are helping to lower your local energy consumption as well.

- It costs exactly the same to wash one dish as an entire load. Go ahead and fill the dishwasher full, but fill it according to the manufacturer’s directions. This allows the machine to clean the dishes properly. If it has an air-dry feature, use it, and use energy-saving cycles when possible.
- If your dishwasher has a booster heater, you can lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120 F. It takes less energy for the booster to heat the water to 140 F than for the water heater to keep all water at 140 F all the time.

Green Up the Laundry Room:

- Wash clothes in cold water. According to Energy Star, water heating consumes about 90% of the energy it takes to operate a washing machine.
- Today’s detergents are designed to work just as effectively with cold water. When you do have a load of clothes you want to wash in hot water, consider using the warm water setting instead.

- This will reduce the total amount of hot water needed. Every little bit of energy saved counts.
- Wash only full loads. Why? Many machines use about the same amount of water whether the wash drum is full or not. Some machines, though, are built for efficiency. Look for an Energy Star-certified washer. It’ll use about half the water and electricity of a standard washer.
 - Line-dry clothes when possible. Depending on the weather here in Oklahoma, this may or may not be a viable option. Consider using a drying rack indoors when weather conditions don’t allow for line-drying.
 - If you do use the dryer, lower the temperature setting. Much like washers, the majority of the energy consumed by your dryer goes to heating. In this case, heating the air used to circulate around your clothes. Lowering this temperature setting and extending the run time can substantially lower the energy consumed.
 - Using the automatic or sensor dry feature in addition to lowering the temperature can ensure you are saving the most amount of energy possible.
 - Clean the lint filter. Clogged filters drive up drying costs. If your clothes are still damp at the end of a drying cycle, that could mean your lint screen or exhaust duct is blocked.
 - Check your outside dryer exhaust vent. Make sure it opens and closes freely.

Other Ways to Be Green Around the House:

- Choose showers over baths. Showers use around two gallons of water per minute, while filling a bathtub can vary widely based on the size of your tub.
- The smaller version of a standard tub holds 42 gallons, and will take approximately 30 gallons to fill for a bath. The large version of a standard bathtub will hold 80 gallons, taking twice the amount to fill for a bath. Larger jacuzzi tubs can hold up to 100 gallons. Try to limit your showers to less than 10 minutes to save water and energy use.
- Set your ceiling fans to reverse during the winter months. Ceiling fans normally push air down to create a wind-chill effect making you feel cooler during the summer months. When the rotation is reversed and the fan speed is slowed down, it will produce a gentle updraft. This updraft will force warm air near the ceiling down into the occupied space in each room.
 - Unplug unused appliances like



Once all the cooking is done, use the dishwasher rather than handwashing. Handwashing dishes can use up to six times as many gallons of water.

- cable boxes or game systems. If left plugged in, they will continue to consume power even when not in use. These items are known as energy vampires or phantom loads. Phone chargers, computers, TVs, and surround sound systems are just a few others to consider. The energy consumed by one of these items alone is not going to drive a dramatic increase in your bill, but eliminating the combined total of all of these devices around your home can result in significant savings over time.
- Turn off the lights when you aren’t using them, and consider switching to light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs. Saving money can be as easy as changing a lightbulb – literally.
- LED’s make more light but use less electricity than traditional bulbs. For example, an LED lightbulb uses only 12 watts to produce as much as a 60-watt incandescent bulb. LEDs last longer, too. A 60-watt incandescent bulb usually lasts about 1,000 hours before needing to be replaced. An LED, however, can last as long as 25,000 hours.

- LEDs can cost a bit more than incandescent bulbs, but with an energy savings of 80% over incandescent bulbs, the LEDs will pay for themselves.
- Be sure to keep your bulbs clean. Dust can cut light output by as much as 25%.
 - When shopping for new appliances, pay attention to the price tag and look at the two prices. One is the price for the appliance. The other price is an estimate of how much you pay for energy to run it. For example, the EnergyGuide label on a new Energy Star-certified refrigerator might read that it uses 545 kWh each year and costs \$58 to operate. Similar fridges with the same size and configuration that is not Energy Star-certified might cost \$74 a year to operate. Over the lifetime of the refrigerator, the difference can add up.
- Small steps can help you save big. To get more helpful tips to save energy in your home, visit our energy efficiency page on our website at <https://www.cottonelectric.com/energy-efficiency>.



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It's Spring Tune-up Time

HVAC tune-up
rebate program
begins April 1

Co-op offers rebate program to members

Spring is here, and now is the perfect time to start prepping for summer. From April 1 through June 20, Cotton Electric is offering to help members offset the cost of getting air conditioning units ready for high summer temperatures.

Through the HVAC Tune-Up Rebate program, the co-op will provide a rebate of 50% toward the cost of your spring tune-up service, excluding repairs and not to exceed \$50. The goal of this incentive program is to ensure the largest power-consuming appliance in members' homes is ready to operate at peak performance when needed the most.

When was the last time you had your home's HVAC system serviced? Heating and air conditioning systems are typically the largest purchase for homeowners, lead only by home and vehicle purchases. Like with a vehicle, lack of maintenance can have a dramatic impact on the efficiency and life of HVAC systems. Many car owners would not even consider skipping the scheduled maintenance of their vehicle, the same type of thinking should be applied to air conditioning service.

There are two schools of thought when it comes to maintaining these systems: Reactive and preventative. Reactive or "run-to-fail" practices are marked by forgoing regular maintenance and running equipment until parts fail. Preventative practices involve periodic maintenance as required by manufacturers.

There are numerous studies showing the effects that poor maintenance procedures have on HVAC systems. A majority of studies show a 5% loss of efficiency over the course of one year. This loss in efficiency can be attributed to a reduction of air flow through indoor and outdoor coils. As dirt attaches to coils, airflow is limited.

Units not properly serviced, even for just a few years, can have up to 40% loss of efficiency throughout its life.

Lack of maintenance can affect more than just the efficiency of the unit. Restricted airflow can raise operating amperage of motors and compressors, resulting in a shortened operating life span. You wouldn't drive your car with a flat tire, would you? Continu-

ing to drive with a flat tire would result in further damage. The same is true for your air conditioning system. Running components at higher amps than they are designed for will decrease the life of that component.

It may be difficult to see if your unit has a weak start capacitor or is low on refrigerant; this is why we recommend involving a professional contractor. Scheduled tune-ups allow professionals an opportunity to perform recommended cleanings and test specific components and refrigerant levels that keep your system operating properly.

Listed below are the program details. Applications will be available at CottonElectric.com, through your contractor or at one of Cotton Electric's office locations.

Beginning April 1, Cotton Electric is offering a rebate of up to \$50 per home (50% of the cost of your spring tune-up, excluding repairs, up to \$50) for members who get a tune-up for their HVAC system. In order to qualify, the following guidelines must be met:

- Must be a Cotton Electric Cooperative member. Residence must be within Cotton Electric's service territory.
- Rebate is not available for new construction.
- A completed Rebate Application is required. Application forms can be downloaded at CottonElectric.com and are available at the Walters and Duncan offices or by calling 580-875-3351. Ask for the Marketing Department.
- Application must be signed and dated by both the member and a licensed and bonded HVAC contractor.
- Member must submit a dated, itemized invoice as proof of service completion from a qualified contractor. Failure to provide required information will result in denial of rebate.
- Rebates are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until program funds have been depleted.
- Rebate not valid on gas-fired furnaces.
- Rebate limited to one tune-up per home annually.

Tune-Up Checklist:

- Tune-ups must be performed by a qualified service professional and must include the following criteria:
- Check and correct unit's refrigerant pressure and tubing
 - Check thermostat settings, wiring and other electric parts and connections
 - Inspect air filters
 - Test AC and furnace starting capabilities
 - Test safety controls
 - Clean and adjust blower components
 - Measure temperature difference
 - Measure volts/amps on AC and furnace
 - Lubricate all applicable parts
 - Check temperature calibration and adjust, if needed
 - Check AC evaporator coil and clean, if necessary
 - Clean AC condenser coil
 - Clean AC condensate drains
 - Check thermostat operation
- HVAC tune-ups must be completed by June 20, 2022. Rebate applications must be received by June 30, 2022.

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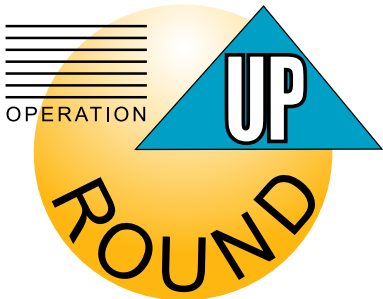
CECF announces first-quarter grant recipients

The Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF) met on Feb. 22 to review grant applications. Grants totaling \$12,715 were awarded during the first quarter of 2022.

Recipients are:

- Bray-Doyle Public Schools: \$3,000 to go toward computers for STEM and ESPORTS programs.
- Comanche FFA: \$5,715 for the purchase of a welder.
- Devol Volunteer Fire Department: \$4,000 for a new dispatching system.

Operation Round Up is a program designed to provide financial assistance to worthwhile individuals and organizations, and exists because of the generosity of Cotton Electric’s members. Every month, Cotton Electric members kick in a little extra change, rounding up their monthly power bill to the nearest dollar. Contributions ranging from one cent to 99 cents are pooled and provide the funds for CECF.



The maximum annual grant that can be approved is \$10,000 for organizations and \$2,500 for individuals. Individual applications must include a letter of referral from a reputable service agency or non-profit organization. The CECF board of directors meets quarterly to review applications from individuals and organizations in the area. Second-quarter applications are due June 14, 2022. The board of directors for CECF will meet again June 28, 2022 to review applications for the quarter. Applications can be downloaded at www.cottonelectric.com/grant-applications.

ORU encourages applicants

Operation Round Up exists because 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 CECF grant application guidelines.

Grant Application Guidelines:

- The Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (the “Foundation”) 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 Foundation 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 benefiting 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 available, etc.
- 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.

How it works:

Cindy’s bill is \$92.75.
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Way to go, Cindy!

Amount Given:

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to a variety of charities.

Next Deadline:

Second-quarter grant applications
are due by **June 14**

- 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 disability.
 - 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 welfare.
2. The organization’s services must be non-discriminatory 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 requests:
 - 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:

Request 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 visit www.cottonelectric.com/grant-applications. The deadline for second-quarter grant applications is Tuesday, June 14. Applications may be submitted by email to showers@cottonelectric.com, by fax to 580-872-4229 or by mail to 226 N. Broadway Walters, OK 73572.

Financial Advisors can Help Reduce Anxiety

The long-running coronavirus pandemic has fueled a lot of anxieties – including financial ones. But some people have had far fewer worries than others. Consider this: Among those investors who work with a financial advisor, 84% said that doing so gave them a greater sense of comfort about their finances during the pandemic,



ic, according to a survey from Age Wave and Edward Jones. Of course, many people experience investment-related fears even without a global health crisis, and that’s probably not surprising, given the periodic volatility of the financial markets. But financial guidance can come in handy during relatively normal times, too. A financial professional can help you:

- Look past the headlines – Inflation, interest rates, pandemics, elections – there’s always something in the news that could affect the investment world in the short term. But by helping

you construct a portfolio that’s built for the long term and reflects your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon, a financial advisor can enable you to look past the headlines.

- Avoid emotional decisions – Many people let their emotions drive their investment choices. When the market goes through a downturn and the value of their investments drops, they sell to “cut losses,” even though these same investments may still have good business fundamentals and promising futures. Conversely, when the market is on an uptick, some people chase after “hot”

investments, even when they become overpriced and may have very little room to grow. But a financial advisor can help keep you from making these fear- and greed-based actions by only recommending moves that make sense for your situation.

- Work toward multiple goals – At various times in your life, you may have simultaneous financial goals. For example, you could be investing for a retirement that’s decades away, while also trying to save for a child’s college education. A financial professional can suggest ways you can keep working toward both objectives, in terms of how

much money you can afford to invest and what types of savings and investment vehicles you should consider.

- Prepare for the unexpected – Most of us did not need a pandemic to remind us that unexpected events can happen in our lives – and some of these events can have serious financial impacts on us and our loved ones. Do you have adequate life insurance? How about disability insurance? And if you ever needed some type of long-term care, such as an extended stay in a nursing home, how would you pay for it? A financial advisor can evaluate your protec-

tion needs and recommend appropriate solutions that fit within your overall financial strategy.

- Adapt to changing circumstances – Over time, many things may change in your life – your job, your family situation, your retirement plans, and so on. A financial professional can help you adjust your financial strategy in response to these changes. Achieving your financial goals may present challenges, but it doesn’t have to cause you years of worry and distress – as long as you get the help you need.

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

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Two-factor authentication doubles online protection

Does it seem like cyber criminals have a magic wand for getting into your email or bank accounts and there's nothing you can do to stop them? Wouldn't it be great if there was one single step you could take that would help protect you from cyber criminals and let you securely make the most of technology?

While no sole step will stop all cyber criminals, one of the most important steps you can take is to enable something called two-factor authentication (sometimes called 2FA, two-step verification, or multi-factor authentication) on your most important accounts.

The problem with passwords

When it comes to protecting your accounts, you are most likely already using some type of password. There are several ways to authenticate yourself into an account: something you have, something you know, something you are, somewhere you are. When you employ more than one method of authentication, you are adding an additional layer of protection from cyber criminals – even if they crack one method, they'd still need to bypass the additional factor(s) to access your account.

Passwords prove who you are based on something you know. The danger with passwords is that they are a single point of failure. If a cybercriminal can guess or compromise your password, they can gain access to your most important accounts. In

addition, cyber criminals are developing faster and better techniques at guessing, compromising, or bypassing passwords. Fortunately, you can fight back with two-factor authentication.

Two-factor authentication

Adding two-factor authentication is a far more secure solution than relying on just passwords alone. It works by requiring not one but two different methods to authenticate yourself. This way if your password is compromised, your account is still protected.

One example is your ATM card; when you withdraw money from an ATM machine, you are actually using a form of two-factor authentication. To access your money, you'll need two things: your ATM card (something you have) and your PIN number (something you know). If you lose your ATM card, anyone who finds your card cannot withdraw your money as they do not know your PIN. The same is true if they only have your PIN and not the card. An attacker must have both to compromise your ATM account. The concept is similar for two-factor authentication; you have two layers of security.

Using Two-factor authentication online

Two-factor authentication is something you set up individually for each of your accounts. It is actually quite simple: you usually need to do nothing more than syncing your mobile phone with your account.

That way when you need to log into your account, not only do you log in with your account username and password, but you also use a unique one-time code you get from your phone.

The idea is the combination of both your password and unique code are required to log in. Usually, this unique code will be sent via a text message to your mobile device or email. Your phone may also have a mobile app (such as Google or Microsoft Authenticator app) that will generate the unique code for you. When possible, mobile apps are considered the most secure option for obtaining your unique code.

What makes this so simple is that you usually only have to do this once from whatever computer or device you are using to log in. Once the website or your account recognizes your device, moving forward you often only need your password to login. Any time you try (or someone else tries) to log in with your account but from a different computer or device, they will have to use two-factor authentication again. This means if a cybercriminal gains your password, they still can't access your account as they can't access the unique code.

Remember, two-factor authentication is usually not enabled by default, so you'll have to enable it yourself for each of your most important accounts, such as banking, investments, retirement, or personal email. While this may seem like more work at first, once it's set up it's very easy to use.

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One serving of 4-5 prunes packs a powerful punch of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber. Together, these nutrients form a web of vital functions that support overall health.

Whole, diced or pureed, the versatility of prunes allows you to enhance the flavor of recipes from morning to night in dishes like Citrus Breakfast Toast, which brings together vitamin B6 and copper from prunes and vitamin C from citrus to support a healthy immune system.

Try Caramelized Onion, Mozzarella, Prune and Thyme Flatbreads for a tasty family meal, and while you wait for dinner to cook, you can serve up Prune, Mozzarella and Basil Skewers. These easy appetizers provide several key nutrients. Mozzarella is a good source of calcium and prunes provide vitamin K and copper, all of which support overall bone health.

Make dessert a bit better for you but equally delectable with a vegan option like gluten-free, plant-based Prune and Almond Truffles. The soluble fiber in prunes helps lower serum cholesterol and blunt the effects of excessive sodium in the diet. Nuts like almonds provide good fats that help lower the risk for heart disease.

Find more recipe ideas at CaliforniaPrunes.org.

Caramelized Onion, Mozzarella, Prune and Thyme Flatbreads

Caramelized Onion, Mozzarella, Prune and Thyme Flatbreads
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 1 hour, 30 minutes
Yield: 4 flatbreads
Caramelized Onions:
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup butter
6 large yellow sweet onions, sliced into thin half circles
3 sprigs fresh thyme
coarse kosher salt, to taste

Flatbreads:
4 personal flatbreads
1 cup caramelized onions
4 ounces fresh mozzarella
10 California Prunes, diced small
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
sea salt, to taste
coarsely ground black pepper, to taste
To make caramelized onions: Preheat oven to 400 F. In large stockpot over medium-low heat, warm oil and melt butter. Add onions and cover; cook 20-25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add thyme sprigs and season with salt,

to taste; turn pan lid slightly ajar. Place pot in oven 1 hour, stirring occasionally.
To make flatbreads: Preheat oven to broil. On sheet pan, toast flatbreads under broiler 4 minutes, or until toasted, flipping halfway through.
Spread 1/4 cup of caramelized onions over each toasted flatbread. Refrigerate leftover onions.
Tear mozzarella and place over onions. Divide prunes among flatbreads and place flatbreads under broiler 4-6 minutes until cheese has melted and is beginning to brown.
Sprinkle flatbreads with fresh thyme and season with salt and pepper, to taste.







Prune, Mozzarella and Basil Skewers

Prune, Mozzarella and Basil Skewers
Prep time: 5 minutes
Servings: 5
5 pieces prosciutto, halved
lengthwise
(optional)
10 California Prunes
10 basil leaves
10 cherry-size mozzarella balls
If using prosciutto, fold each half in half lengthwise so width of prune is wider than width of prosciutto. Starting at one end of prosciutto, wrap one prune; repeat with remaining prosciutto. Set aside.
Wrap one basil leaf around each mozzarella ball then thread onto skewer. Thread one prune or prosciutto-wrapped prune onto each skewer.

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Prune and Almond Truffles

Recipe courtesy of Meg of "This Mess is Ours"

Prep time: 45 minutes
Serving size: 24

Servings: 24

Water

1 cup California Prunes

1 1/2 cups toasted slivered almonds, divided

**1/4 teaspoon coarse kosher salt,
plus additional, to taste, divided**

1 tablespoon cocoa powder

**1 1/2 tablespoons vanilla paste
or extract**

1/4 teaspoon almond extract

Boil water and pour over prunes. Soak 30 minutes; drain.

In food processor fitted with "S" blade, pulse 1/2 cup toasted almonds with salt, to taste, until fine crumbs form. Transfer to shallow bowl and set aside.

Add remaining almonds to food processor with 1/4 teaspoon salt and cocoa powder. Pulse 30 seconds to combine. Add prunes, vanilla paste and almond extract; process until combined. Mixture should be creamy with slight texture from almond crumbs. Transfer prune mixture to bowl and refrigerate 1 hour.

Once chilled, use small cookie scoop to portion out individual truffles on parchment-lined baking sheet. Gently roll each truffle in reserved toasted almond crumbs. Store on parchment-lined plate in refrigerator up to 2 weeks. Serve chilled.



Healthy diet key to kidney disease prevention

March is National Kidney Month, a time to do a quick check in on a key component of your body's filtration system. If you have high blood pressure, diabetes, a family history of kidney disease, or over 60 years old your physician should assess kidney health at yearly check-ups.

Catching kidney disease early is key to preventing the development of or slowing the progression of the disease. In addition to staying vigilant with your healthcare team, diet can also play a part in prevention.

A general, healthy diet is sufficient to prevent kidney disease – particularly focusing on limiting salt intake, incorporating plant-based foods, limiting added sugar, and staying hydrated.

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) specifically recommends limiting salt or sodium intake to 2300 mg (or 1 teaspoon of salt) per day and limiting sugar intake to less than 10% of calories. These turrets are very similar to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The easiest way to limit salt intake is to stick to fresh meat, vegetables, fruits,



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

whole grains, and dairy products without added sodium and become a savvy label reader.. The more processed a food item is, the more likely it contains added sodium. Sodium levels are listed on the nutrition facts label of packaged food. Some foods, particularly canned foods, mention “no salt added” on the food label. Another key is avoiding the salt shaker. Season foods with herbs and spices instead.

A plant-based diet is also recom-

mended for kidney health. It does not mean meat is eliminated, it means you incorporate plant foods like beans, legumes, nuts, seeds, grains, fruits, vegetables, and plant-based oils into your diet. Processed plant-based foods like meat alternatives are not a substitute for plant foods. They can contain preservatives like salt that make them less desirable for kidney health.

Limiting sugar intake is less about actual sugar and more about the potential health consequences of too much sugar and how that impacts your kidneys if you have diabetes.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure. More than 35% of people aged 20 years or older with diabetes have chronic kidney disease.

There are factors other than sugar that contribute to the development of diabetes, but particularly for individuals who already have type-2 diabetes, a diet high in added sugars makes keeping blood sugar in check more challenging. Out-of-control blood sugars damage the kidneys. With the new nutrition facts label, it is very easy to distinguish added sugar from sugar that is

To make prune puree: In blender, pulse prunes and water to combine then blend until smooth, pourable consistency forms, scraping sides, if necessary.

Store in airtight container up to 4 weeks.

To make bruleed citrus wheels: Place citrus wheels on baking sheet and divide sugar evenly among each piece.

Using circular motion, pass flame of culinary torch repeatedly over sugar until it boils and turns lightly charred and amber.

To build toast: Spread 2 tablespoons sunflower butter on each piece of toast. Top each with 1 tablespoon prune puree spread evenly across sunflower butter. Sprinkle each evenly with sunflower seeds and diced prunes. Top each with half broiled citrus and serve.

Alteration: Use broiler set on high instead of culinary torch to caramelize sugar.



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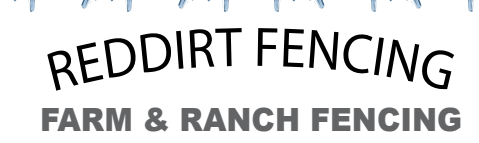
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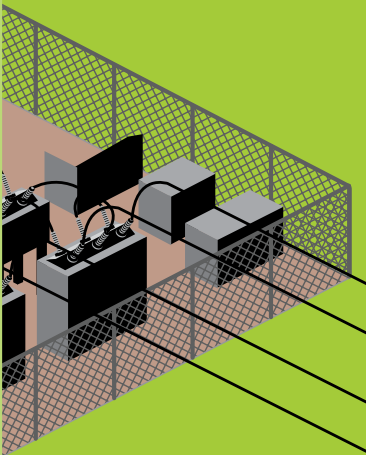
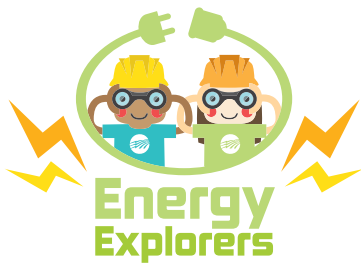
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- **Transformers** look like large metal cans on top of utility poles or big green boxes on the ground. They reduce the voltage of electricity for safe use in your home.
 - **Power lines** hang overhead or are placed underground to carry electricity from where it's generated to homes and businesses.
- Lineworkers use **bucket trucks** to reach power lines and poles when making repairs and updates to the electrical system.
 - **Electric meters** are placed on the outside of homes to measure the amount of electricity you use.
 - **Substations** are facilities that contain equipment to help control the flow of electricity.

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ACROSS

- Type of footwear
- Studies a lot all at once
- Adventure story
- Hundred thousand
- Former U.S. Vice President
- Ruler
- Indian city
- Similar
- Ship as cargo
- Volcanic craters
- Boxing's "GOAT"
- Bullfighting maneuvers
- London soccer team
- Score perfectly
- No (Scottish)
- SoCal hoops team (abbr.)
- Woman (French)
- Unwanted attic "decor"
- Peter Griffin's daughter
- Broad, shallow crater
- Large instruments
- Low bank or reef
- ___ and Venzetti
- Oil group
- Father
- Aggressive men
- Pairs well with green
- Travelers need it
- Digital audiotape
- Midway between northeast and east
- Chemistry descriptor
- S. China seaport
- Sound unit
- Heavy cavalry sword
- Thick piece of something
- Spa town in Austria
- Boyfriend

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64					65						66			
67					68						69			

DOWN

- Type of sauce
- Pattern of notes
- Plant with long seed-pods
- Map out
- Numbers cruncher
- Make a mental connection
- Italian tenor
- N. America's highest mountain peak

- Witness
- Arabic given name
- Music awards
- "The Immoralist" author
- Area units
- Units of loudness
- Political action committee
- Bar bill
- Witch
- A theatrical performer
- 2-door car
- ___ and flowed
- Papier-___, art medium
- City in Georgia
- Irregular
- Colleg sport conference
- Angry

- Partner to cheese
- S. American mammal
- Self-immolation by fire rituals
- Split pulses
- Disfigure
- Cow noise
- Erase
- Chadic language
- Reward for doing well
- Paid TV
- Millisecond
- Other
- Colombian city
- Necklace part
- Every one of two or more people
- Regrets
- They come after "A"
- Horse noise



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Journeyman Lineman Dillon Thompson, left, and Apprentice Lineman Ely King, right, practice their pole climbing skills.



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