

JULY 2024

# COUNTRY LIVING



FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## WELCOME TO

## THE NEXT LEVEL



# We'll See You at Annual Meeting

### WHEN

THURSDAY, JULY 25th  
11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

### WHERE

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
1801 E. 4th St., Okmulgee

### WHY

\$1,000 GRAND PRIZE & MORE  
Flip to Page 3



Your Recipe  
Could Win  
You \$25  
at Annual  
Meeting!

**2** *Calls to Action*

**3** *Annual Meeting*

**4** *Proposed Bylaw Change*

**5** *Capital Credits*

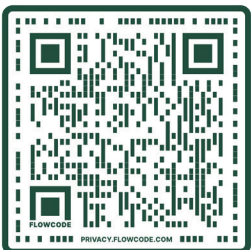
**6** *Scholarships*

**7** *Meet Our Next Level Team*

**8** *Submit Your Recipe*

Did you see Willie Wiredhand's adventures  
through our Next Level Co-op?

Scan the QR Code to Watch:



## notes from the chair

### Calls to Action

*By Lowell Hobbs, President, East Central Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees*

East Central Electric Co-op's annual meeting will be Thursday, July 25, 2024 at OSUIT in Okmulgee. The drive thru option has proven to be popular, and our staff is continuing to provide rapid and convenient methods to vote and register for prizes. We will continue the on site vendors' booths, and at the end of the day the indoor meeting will conclude the event. We hope you will participate.

At the date of this writing, Jay Emerson, incumbent director of District 5, and Lowell Hobbs, incumbent director of District 2, are the only announced candidates for director positions. Other candidates could surface later, but not in time for OK Living Magazine publication. The filing period to be placed on the ballot is June 10-21. All eligible candidates will be listed on our website, [ecoec.com](http://ecoec.com).

At the recent annual meeting of Associated Electric Co-op we were updated on government's mandate to end fossil fuel use to generate electricity in the U.S. Big problem! We do not have a way developed to produce reliable electric power without coal and natural gas. Wind and solar are being touted as replacements, but at this time not reliable for the continuity and demand for our needs, much less our wants. Without continuing electric power our whole nation would be shut down. What a thought!!! But real. The executive branch has by-passed the legislative branch and told the EPA to issue rules to end fossil fuel use. The legislature may need to intervene. We may call on you to help inspire our elected to act.

Soon after Donna and I married, a nice almost new home was for sale just across the road from property I already owned. I knew where a small patch of wild strawberries were, so we saddled our horses and rode across to enjoy the berries. We remounted and started to lope across the wheat field when her horse began to buck. She was thrown off and knocked unconscious for a few minutes. As she began to regain consciousness, I could tell she wasn't right so I began to keep her down while holding onto my horse and pleading with her to lay still. I was more than a quarter mile from our pickup and across a creek crossing that had not been used for over 6 months when we had planted wheat. The field was also wet from recent and plentiful rains. It was about mid morning and I was afraid if I left her to go for help she might get up and wander off into the brush and be impossible to find, so I stayed with her hoping she would recover. I was almost 1/2 mile from the county road so no help there. I waved at airplanes as they flew over—many miles high. Noon came and went and still no change. In desperation I threatened to slap her face if she did not lay still until I returned. I was still holding onto my horse. I mounted and without looking back raced to the pickup, unhooked the trailer, went across the wet wheat field, across a small log in the creek nervous that I would get stuck in the 2 wheel drive pickup, but got to Donna who, surprisingly, was still near where I had left her. We made it to our house, and I called my Mother to come take us to the hospital. I was afraid I could not keep Donna in the truck and drive too. When Mother came in the house we were in the bathroom, so

she didn't see us and left to go back to the corral where she thought we might be. When she came back and found us in the bedroom, it scared her and she and Donna both screamed! I got in the back seat with Donna and Mother took us to the Muskogee hospital. Soon the staff there stated we needed to transfer her to Tulsa where a neurologist could evaluate her. As we were leaving Muskogee with sirens blaring, Donna looked at me and said, "Let's do something else, I'm tired of this." I concurred! When we got to the hospital and I was in the waiting room, trying to call her brother as she had one time advised me that in case of an emergency, he could go in person and tell her folks. As fate would have it, her brother's phone was busy. After many unsuccessful attempts to call, a lady in the waiting room asked of my dilemma. I told her my precious wife got bucked off her horse and wasn't right. She replied to me, "My friend had that happen and she died!" I said, "I really appreciate your sharing that with me!" After several more failed attempts another lady told me I might as well sit down and relax. I said I might sit down, but I'm not gonna relax! I finally asked the operator (this was back in the days of operator assisted calls) to intervene in her brother's call as I had an emergency call to him. Her brother was instantly on the phone, and I asked him to advise her folks. The next morning on their hourly calls, the nurse asked Donna (as she had every hour through the night) 'Do you know your name and where you are?' Donna replied, "I'm Donna Hobbs and I'm in St Francis Hospital." They released us to go home soon after that.

Lowell Hobbs, District 2  
President

Larry Harvey, District 1  
Vice President

Dwight Luther, District 7  
Secretary / Treasurer

Jim Hall, District 6  
Assistant Sec. / Treasurer

Max Shoemake, District 3

Michael Vernnon, District 4

Jay Emerson, District 5

Tim Smith, Chief Executive Officer



# Prizes

## \$20 BILL CREDIT

Every co-op member who registers at Annual Meeting, whether through the drive-thru or by attending our in-person event, will receive \$20 off their next electric bill.

## ALL REGISTREE DRAWING FOR:

Grand Prize - \$1,000

2 - \$500

3 - One free year of  
1GB ecoLINK service

4 - Three free months of  
1GB ecoLINK service

10 - One free month of  
1 GB ecoLINK service

60 - \$100



## GIFT BAGS

Every co-op member who attends Annual Meeting will receive a gift bag containing your 2023 Annual Report, information about co-op goods and services, and an ecoLINK cap. Be sure to grab your goodies.



# Options



## DRIVE-THRU ANNUAL MEETING

All the highlights of Annual Meeting in 15 minutes or less.

Drive up, collect your goodies, register, vote, and be on your way.

Do it on your schedule, any time between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

South Entrance to OSU-IT Campus, by Pistol Pete.

## IN-PERSON ANNUAL MEETING

Our event activities inside Covelle Hall offer co-op members the opportunity to converse with board members and employees, learn and ask questions about their Cooperative, and have the chance to win additional prizes.

Registration & Voting: 5 - 7 p.m.

Scholarship Presentation: 6:30 p.m.

Business Meeting: 7 p.m.

# Contests

## In-Person Giveaway

Sitting through our annual business meeting deserves a special prize!

We will have a special prize drawing of two \$100 bill credits, exclusively for those co-op members who attend our in-person business meeting at 7 p.m.

## Cool Car Contest



Turn the Drive-Thru into a car show!

Drive your cool vehicle through our drive-thru Annual Meeting.

When you get to the registration tent say, "Picture This."

A co-op employee will take a picture of your car, grab your contact information, and at the end of the day all of the coolest rides will be compiled into a Facebook post. Anyone can go on Facebook to vote for the favorite.

The car with the most likes by 3 p.m. on Thursday, August 1st, will win \$50 off their next electric bill.



# 2024 Ballot Breakdown: Key Info for Co-op Members

During the 2024 Annual Meeting, voting will be conducted on iPads, using a trustworthy, third-party service. Every member will have the opportunity to vote for District 2 & 5 board candidates and on the proposed bylaw change. Information about board candidates will be available on [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com) beginning July 8th.

## Proposed Bylaw Change

Bylaws modifications will be presented for approval to the members of East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc. at the Annual Meeting scheduled for July 25, 2024. These modifications are recommended by the East Central Board of Trustees to update Article IV, Section 3 of the current Bylaws, **Trustee Qualifications**.

**Item No. 1:** extend the length of membership from one (1) year to five (5) years. This change will encourage members with more experience with their cooperative and their community to provide guidance for the Cooperative.

**Item No. 2:** clarify definition of “close relative” as it pertains to Trustees. This change will bring our cooperative more in line with other organizations that are governed by the members.

**Item No. 3:** allow the current Board of Trustees to remove an individual that fails to meet all the qualifications. Current Trustees interact with each other on a regular basis and will know if someone no longer meets all the qualifications.

**Item No. 4:** updated qualifications language. Revised the qualifications section to help everyone understand the words without changing the content.

## Existing Version

Last AMD 2019

SECTION 3. QUALIFICATIONS. No person shall be eligible to become or remain a Trustee of the Cooperative who:

(a) is not a member of the Cooperative or has not been a member continuously for at least one (1) year prior to nomination; or

(b) who ceases to be a member of the Cooperative after election as a Trustee; or

(c) who does not receive electric service from the Cooperative at his/her primary permanent residential abode in the Trustee District from which he/she was elected as Trustee; or

(d) is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy, services or supplies to the Cooperative or its subsidiary businesses; or

(e) is the incumbent of or candidate for an elected public office in connection with which a salary or compensation in excess of \$1000.00 per annum is paid; or

(f) has been convicted, pled guilty or pled nolo contendere to a felony; or

(g) is, becomes, or was an employee of the Cooperative, a subsidiary of the Cooperative or a labor union which represents, or has represented, or has endeavored to represent any employee of the Cooperative during the preceding five (5) years prior to time of filing or being nominated; or

(h) is, and if elected and seated as a trustee will continue to be, a close relative of an incumbent trustee or of an employee of the Cooperative. A “close relative” means a person who is related to the principal person, by consanguinity or affinity, to the third degree or less - that is, a person who is either a spouse, child, grandchild, great grandchild, parent, grandparent, great-grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, nephew, or niece, by blood or by law of the principal.

## Proposed Version

SECTION 3. QUALIFICATIONS.

A. No person shall become or remain a Trustee of the Cooperative who:

i. has not been a member continuously for the previous five (5) years; or

ii. ceases to be a member of the Cooperative after election as a Trustee; or

iii. does not receive electric service from the Cooperative at the Trustee’s primary, permanent residence in the Trustee District from which the Trustee is elected or appointed; or

iv. is in any way employed or financially interested in any manner in an enterprise or a business competing with the Cooperative or its subsidiaries or which sells or provides services or supplies to the Cooperative or its subsidiaries; or

v. is the incumbent of or becomes a candidate for an elected public office which pays a salary or provides compensation in excess of \$1000.00 per year; or

vi. has been convicted of a felony or who has pled guilty, no contest or nolo contendere to a felony, whether such plea results in a conviction or not; or

vii. is or becomes or was an employee of the Cooperative or of a subsidiary of the Cooperative or a labor union which represents or has endeavored to represent an employee of the

Cooperative or its subsidiaries within the previous five (5) years; or

viii. is or becomes a “close relative” of another Trustee, or of a current employee of the Cooperative, or of a person who was an employee of the Cooperative within the previous five (5) years. A “close relative” is a person who is related to the Trustee, by consanguinity (blood) or affinity (marriage), to the third degree such as a spouse, child, grandchild, great grandchild, parent, grandparent, great grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, nephew, or niece by blood or marriage and also any person who resides with the Trustee.

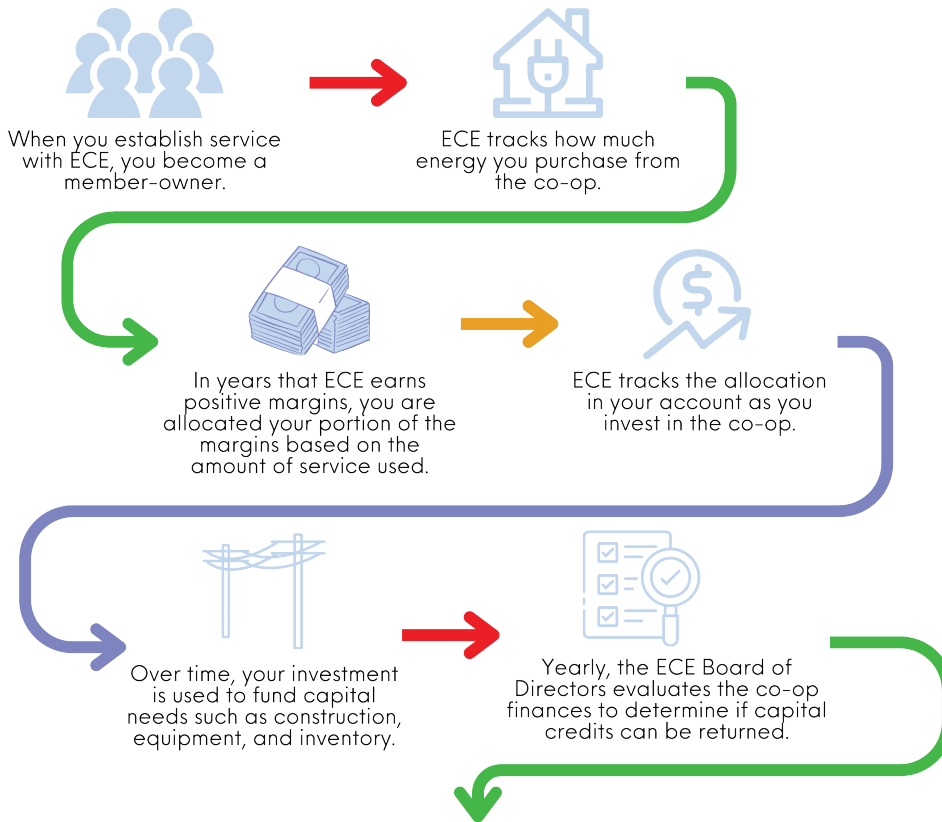
B. No person shall be eligible to remain a Trustee of the Cooperative who:

i. does not meet or continue to meet the qualifications of Section 3 (A); or

ii. does not follow all Cooperative policies acting in good faith to represent the best interests of the Cooperative as a whole.

C. When a Trustee does not comply with the Trustee qualifications of this Section 3, the Board of Trustees shall have the responsibility and authority to remove such non-compliant Trustee by a majority vote of the other Trustees. The Trustee who allegedly does not comply with the Trustee qualifications may participate in the removal meeting but shall not vote on removal.

## East Central Electric Cooperative Capital Credit Allocation Process



### Your Investment in ECE is returned!

**\$1,100,000 returned to members and estates in 2024.**  
**Over \$32 Million returned since 1963!**

## East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative Earns an ACSI® 2024 Customer Satisfaction Award



East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative (ECE) is honored to have earned a 2024 Customer Satisfaction Award\* from the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®) based on our member survey results. Members were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with us, how well we lived up to their expectations, and how well we measured up to their ideal co-op experience. While these were not the only questions in the survey, we included these specifically because they are the core components of the proprietary ACSI methodology.

ECE's ACSI score substantially outperforms the industry average score earned by publicly measured utilities reported in the 2024 ACSI Energy Utility Study. This Award is a testament to ECE's ongoing efforts to provide the best possible member experience.

The 2024 Customer Satisfaction Award affirms that ECE's hard work has been noticed by its members. ECE is grateful for its members and will continue to strive for excellence through constant dedication to improvement.

*\*Award criteria are determined by the ACSI® and are based on customers rating their satisfaction in a survey independent of the syndicated ACSI Energy Utility Study. For more about the ACSI, visit <http://www.theacsi.org/badges>. ACSI and its logo are registered trademarks of the American Customer Satisfaction Index LLC.*

## SIGNS OF AN

### ENERGY SCAM

#### High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

#### Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

#### Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.

**When in doubt, hang up on the caller and call the co-op directly at 918-756-0833.**



# 2024 Scholarship Recipients

- Beggs High School - Cassidy Lamborn
- Bixby High School - Bella Mares
- Bristow High School - Abigail Morgan
- Checotah High School - Jacob Jones
- Depew High School - Lillian Ingram
- Dewar High School - Madisen Goff
- Eufaula High School - Parris Wingo
- Faulk Academy - Grace Faulk
- Glenpool High School - Ryan Cody
- Haskell High School - Raylin Morgan
- Hilldale High School - Steven Cheater
- Kiefer High School - Jake Dolan
- Liberty High School - Brady Cornwell
- Mason High School - Blake Gill
- Midway High School - Hayden Burdick
- Morris High School - Callie Ledbetter
- Mounds High School - Cali Jones
- Muskogee High School - Rakiya Lang
- Okemah High School - Hailey Shepard
- Oktaha High School - Faith Blackwell
- Preston High School - Easton Shaw
- Stroud High School - Makenna Hall
- Warner High School - Rachel Moss
- Weleetka High School - Kyleigh Yandell
- Wilson High School - Trinity Shanks



Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit us online at [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com).



## CHANGE TO CHANGE THE WORLD OPERATION ROUNDUP SPOTLIGHT



Eufaula Memorial Library received a grant in May to support their Summer Reading Program. Adventure really does begin at your library! This summer, sign up by visiting <https://eols.beanstack.org>. You'll track how many minutes you read right in the app, then go to your local library for awards as you go along. There is no charge to participate, so come have a fun, educational summer at the library!



# Meet Our Next Level Team: Accounting & Finance

Our Cooperative is owned by our members. You invest in the co-op with every electric bill you pay. And when the co-op takes in more than we need to cover expenses, you get a return on your investment in the form of Capital Credit. Thanks to the diligence of our Accounting & Finance Team, our co-op has been able to regularly return capital credits to our membership since 1963. We run a tight ship.

## The Currency Commodore



Our Vice President of Accounting and Finance isn't just the captain of one ship, but leads the fleet of co-op services, from electricity, to internet, and more. As the VP, she is the primary liaison with the federal government and national cooperative banks on loan applications and co-op financials. She works closely with third-party auditors to ensure the co-op is doing right by the membership every year. She also oversees budget forecasting to ensure the co-op Board can plan for the future.

## The Ledger Lookouts



Our supervisory and administrative team provide checks and balances that keep the co-op in solid financial standing. Our Accounting Supervisor manages general accounting functions, accounts payable, treasury, general ledger, and oversees the plant accountant and accounting clerk. The Controller performs general accounting tasks, oversees special projects, and manages the staff accountants. Our Administrative Assistant is responsible for tasks that keep the department rolling such as scheduling, filing, creating reports, processing reconciliations, and creating power points and business letters.

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“The most enjoyable part of my job is coming in everyday and being able to learn something new that will help me do my job to the best of my capability for years to come. ”

- JUDI WOLFE, STAFF ACCOUNTANT

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## The Cashflow Crew



Our Payroll & Benefits Clerk and our Accounting Clerk work swiftly on tight deadlines to ensure the co-op's employees, contractors, and bills get paid. This also includes processing invoices, writing checks, paying taxes and workman's compensation claims, and completing annual filings with the state and federal government.

## The Solvency Sailors



Our Plant Accountant and Staff Accountants handle the day-to-day load of information entry and verification. The plant accountant maintains plant records, submits work order records for federal loans, and keeps track of the miles of line the co-op has built and maintains. Our team of staff accountants tackle the important tasks of auditing invoices and work orders, maintaining the financials for ecoLINK Fiber and our Operation Roundup foundation, and reconciling bank accounts.

Your Favorite Recipe  
Could Win You

\$25

Off Your Next Bill

How to Enter:

- Use this card to copy your favorite recipe.
- Bring this card with you to the ECE Annual Meeting on July 25th.
- Hand it over to an employee when you register.
- You will be entered into a special prize drawing for recipe contributors and your recipe will appear in the 90th Anniversary ECE Member Cookbook.



ELECTRICAL SAFETY  
TIP OF THE MONTH

When thunder roars, go indoors. Did you know lightning can strike up to 15 miles away from the heart of the storm? If your day at the lake is interrupted by a summer storm, seek shelter in a four-sided building or hard-topped vehicle.

SOURCE: SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

Your Favorite Recipe

TITLE

INGREDIENTS

DIRECTIONS


NAME & ADDRESS

PROUD MEMBER OF THE

 **conexon**  
**100 Club**





 **East Central**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
powering  
**ecoLINK**

  
ELECTRIC CO-OP 100% FTTH COMPLETION  
2024  
conexon



**East Central**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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