

country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



Record-breaking Quarter for Operation Round Up

2 *Notes from the Chair*

3 *Bridging the Digital Divide*

4 *Spinach Artichoke Dip*



Local Ladle is Back

If you're looking for new recipes, or new ways to get involved in building your local community, Local Ladle is the show for you. Every other month, the co-op's Economic Development Representative Lylah Sparks prepares a meal with a guest who is doing something exciting that benefits the communities we serve. Previous guests have included Muskogee Chamber of Commerce Director Angela Wilson and Oklahoma Lt. Governor Matt Pinnell. Subscribe to the East Central Electric Cooperative YouTube channel to learn from the wonderful new guests we are cooking with in 2025.

Since 2006, small change has made a huge impact on the communities served by East Central Electric Cooperative. For every co-op member who has said, "here, round this up to a whole dollar," there is a testimony of a life transformed.

In February, 2025, the Operation Round Up Board of Trustees set a record for the highest amount granted in a single quarter, \$85,710.36. Among other recipients, the funds helped seven local fire departments purchase life-saving gear, four local nonprofits provide community services, and two individuals get emergency support after suffering house fires.

Over the course of 19 years, \$2.7 Million in loose pocket-book change has been reinvested into the nine counties that our co-op serves.

Operation Round Up Board President Faye Alexander said, "In times of hardship, we all need a hand of assist sometimes."

"Operation Round Up is God's hands and feet in the community for those who cannot afford to cover the needs they request on their own," Alexander said. "That's why I believe Operation Round Up is so valuable."

The average member contribution to Operation Round Up is 47 cents per month. The collective community value of that contribution is so much more.

2006

Operation Round Up Founded

2013

\$1 Million Granted

Pictured Recipient: Deep Fork Community Action



2021

\$2 Million Granted

2023

Record-Setting Year

Pictured Recipient: The Right Path Riding Academy



2025

Most Granted in a Single Quarter

\$85,710.36



ECE was awarded the “Advocacy Award” from the OAEC recognizing our involvement in local schools, communities, state, district, and national events, and in legislative affairs and public forums advocating for our members.

Additionally I received the Award of Merit for the article on my friend’s Dad’s tractor and the Award of Excellence for my article regarding the people of Cleveland buying my family a new 1948 Ford pickup after Daddy survived his tragic wreck.

The United Nations declared 2025 the International Year of Cooperatives with a theme of Cooperatives Build a Better World highlighting the impacts co-ops have on local communities.

We lived on the Arkansas River downstream from Cleveland before the Keystone Dam was built. We leased several acres along the river. When high flood waters came, huge drifts of anything that would float was deposited along the banks. I was riding my horse home, with my two dogs (Cub, a large dog, and Tiny, a short haired terrier (10 lbs. but tuff as a boot). They stopped at a big drift as I rode on home. When I got home Cub was with me but no Tiny. I suspected a big cottonmouth water moccasin got her.

Two days later I returned to check the cows and Cub immediately returned to the big drift and began digging. I knew he would be there a longtime digging for whatever lured him before, so, I went over to help.

I began to remove debris and trash out of the rotting log, and after about 30 minutes uncovered some black hair showing through. Afraid it was a skunk, I retreated a safe distance while Cub continued digging. All of a sudden Tiny popped out of the hollow with a rabbit clutched in her mouth! All were excited except the rabbit.

Lowell Hobbs represents ECE District 2. To reach him, please call his cellphone at 918-695-5289.

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 Vernon, District 4

Jay Emerson, District 5

.....
To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit ecoec.com.
To contact your trustee, please call 918-756-0833.



CEO Dwayne Elam and Board Vice President Larry Harvey accepted the first annual Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC) Advocacy Award on behalf of East Central Electric Cooperative in February, 2025.



East Central Electric Cooperative was awarded the recognition of Top Cooperative Communicator by OAEC in November 2024 for the creativity and effectiveness displayed in our communications with co-op members. This included two awards for columns written by Board President Lowell Hobbs.



ecoLINK: Bridging the Digital Divide

A groundbreaking for the ecoLINK Off-System Build was held on September 10, 2024 in Slick, Oklahoma.

In 2023, ecoLINK fiber hit a milestone in its quest to bridge the digital divide, making cutting-edge, affordable fiber internet available to all co-op members.

This achievement made quality connection available to 36,000 rural Oklahomans, but with more under-served communities next door, the Cooperative's mission of "Serving Our Members and Communities," was not complete.

"We recognize that access to reliable broadband is not a luxury, but a fundamental necessity in the modern world," Vice President of Broadband Operations Jeremy Hendrickson said.

So ecoLINK eagerly ventured into the next phase of its journey – the Off-System Build.

ecoLINK was awarded grant monies from CAF (Connect America Fund), RDOF (Rural Digital Opportunity Fund) and most recently ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) to extend its services beyond its electric service territory boundaries.

Completed Builds

McIntosh County: Hitchita

Muskogee County: Oktaha

Okfuskee County: Bearden, Clearview

Okmulgee County: Morris, Schuler, Henryetta south of I-40

Currently in Construction

Creek County: Slick

Okfuskee County: Weleetka, Pharoah, rural Okemah

Currently in Design

Creek County: Shamrock, rural Bristow

Muskogee County: Taft

Okmulgee County: Wilson Road (Nuyaka), Preston, Beggs

Planned

Creek County: Depew, Kiefer, rural Sapulpa

McIntosh County: Texanna, Onapa, rural Checotah

Muskogee County: Haskell, Bald Hill, Boynton, Summit

Okmulgee County: Dewar, Hoffman, Grayson, Henryetta north of I-40

Plus small extensions in Kiefer, Twin Hills, rural Muskogee and rural Coweta

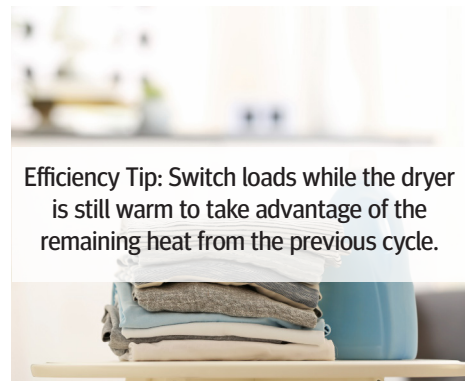
"Bridging the Divide," means more than internet access. ecoLINK plans to collaborate with local leaders and organizations to implement digital literacy programs, skill development initiatives, and educational resources.

"We envision a positive change for communities in our service area and are dedicated to bridging the digital divide," Hendrickson concluded.

Laundry Room Savings

Are you taking advantage of the unexpected energy efficiencies in your laundry room?

- 90% of the energy used by washing machines is for hot water. Using the cold cycle on lightly soiled clothing has a measurable difference in electric use.
- An Energy Star® Certified washer uses about half the water and electricity of a standard washer.
- Many machines use about the same amount of water whether you wash a full load or just one item. This is the excuse you needed to do less laundry.



Efficiency Tip: Switch loads while the dryer is still warm to take advantage of the remaining heat from the previous cycle.

Safety that Saves

- Cleaning the dryer lint filter after every load reduces fire hazard and increases energy efficiency.
- Make sure your outside dryer exhaust vent opens and closes freely to push exhaust out without leaking outside air in.



Efficiency Tip: Using the sun's energy to line dry is a classic for a reason. Zero electricity plus a fresh scent.



Operation Round Up 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.

TOTAL GRANTED
\$2,744,317.00

AWARDED LAST QUARTER
\$85,710.36

APPLICATIONS REVIEWED
1,588

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED
\$352,500

APPLICATIONS GRANTED
1,140

AVERAGE MEMBER CONTRIBUTION
48¢



Spinach Artichoke Dip

INGREDIENTS

1 (14 oz.) can artichoke hearts

1 (10 oz.) pkg. frozen spinach

1 C. refrigerated alfredo sauce

1 C. shredded mozzarella

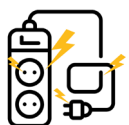
1/3 C. grated parmesan

4 cloves minced garlic

DIRECTIONS

Thaw and drain frozen spinach. Preheat oven to 350°. Drain and chop artichokes. Mix all ingredients until well blended. Spoon into a 9 inch quiche dish or pie plate. Bake for 20 minutes or until lightly browned.

SOURCE: ECE 85TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

April 21-25 is National Work Zone Awareness Week. When approaching a work zone, slow down, move over, and proceed with caution. Never drive distracted. Help keep all types of workers, including ours, safe.

SOURCE: SAFEELECTRICITY.ORG

Parenting in the digital era is hard...

ecoLINK
FAMILY GUARDIAN

- 100 Mbps Everyday Scroller Package
- bark Parental App Subscription

\$65/mo.

Call TODAY!
918-756-0833



East Central
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

PO Box 1178
2001 S. Wood Drive
Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447-1178
(918) 756-0833
www.ecoec.com



Office hours:
Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm.

COUNTRY LIVING IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY EAST CENTRAL OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., 2001 S. WOOD DRIVE, OKMULGEE, OKLAHOMA 74447. THIS INSTITUTION IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER, VETERAN/DISABLED.