

country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

The Days That Followed

ECE Apprentice Lineman Tate Peters talks to three volunteers from the Lutheran Church Disaster Response Ministry during storm clean up on March 10.

This is not a story about tragedy. It is not the EF3 tornado that hit Beggs on March 6 or the lives it cut short. It is not the damaged classrooms or the feeling of loss.

Those who were lost, and all that was changed, are honored and remembered.

The value now is in the story of how a community came together.

The response began within minutes of touchdown on that Friday night. Oklahoma Task Force 1 and Okmulgee County Emergency Management jumped into action.

Barriers were put in place during search and rescue, and East Central Electric Cooperative crews were not permitted entry until dawn.

For the residents of Grimes Road, it was the early morning sunlight that brought reality into focus.

"It destroyed my daughter's home, wiped it smooth out," said Gennie

Clay, whose neighboring home also sustained minor damages.

"You hear on TV when people talk about, after a tornado hits, it looks like a bomb has gone off. You never really realize how bad it really is until you get hit," Clay said. "It looks like somebody took a fighter jet and just bombed all the way down the road. Everything is gone."

Saturday and Sunday were the domain of the emergency response teams. The American Red Cross brought in a canteen and served lunch. The Muscogee Creek Nation provided a generator for the Beggs Water Treatment Plant. Utility crews worked around the clock to get basic services restored.

Crossroads Baptist Church became the center of action, a hub for people and resources.

"It was all hands on deck, it was amazing to watch everybody come together," said Ali Herman, who

stepped into the role of volunteer coordinator. Herman spent the weekend putting together the legal requirements of volunteers and sharing information across social media.

By Monday morning, the response belonged to the community. Beginning with Shift 1 at 8 a.m., volunteers got to work.

"We had over 140 volunteers," Herman said. "From all over the state, people were coming in with dump trucks and skid steers."

The Lutheran Church Disaster Response Ministry helped to clear and remove \$48,000 worth of uprooted and damaged trees at no cost.

Other organizations, like Harlan Ford and the Okmulgee County Rotary Club, also made a difference.

Every day, there were boots on the ground.

Continued on Page 4



notes from the chair

How We Communicate May Change, but the Value of Relationships Doesn't

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

It appears our most important tool of today is the cell phone. My early experience with a phone was a large wooden box affair that hung on the wall of my grandparents home.

It had a crank on the side and a receiver on a cord hanging on the other side. Our ring was two longs and a short. The other neighbors on our party line had other combinations of longs and shorts.

Two bare wires carried the messages along the line. A central operator could help out, and she was necessary to complete your long distance call (the next town).

When we moved to town we had a 'modern' phone with a dial and no party lines. Then we moved to the country (starting my seventh grade) — NO PHONE, and that continued until I left for college.

The progress made in the phone industry, in my opinion, exceeds all other advances. Everyone has a cell phone, even small children, and long distance and party lines are not even heard of. The cell phone provides more information than I can list, and most of you know more about the value of a cell phone than I do.

I was doing pretty well managing my phone until U.S. Cellular joined T-Mobile and now the new company

has completely changed my phone set up. I have never liked drastic changes.

Several years ago, Donna's brother and sister-in-law, Doug and Terri, packed up and moved to Canyon City, Colorado. At that time, I was serving on the National Cattleman's Beef Board. Board meetings were held in Denver. I did not enjoy flying so I would drive and could see the country.

On one of my backroads trips I met the family of Kimmie and Dave Lewis.

We became good friends. Their ranch was between Kim, Colorado and LaJunta, about 160 miles from Canyon City.

Doug and Terri became friends to the Canterbury family and were

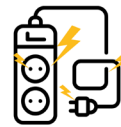
invited to meet their friends that were coming to see them from Muddy Valley Ranch near Kim.

As the introductions began and Kimmie was introduced to Doug as being from Oklahoma, Kimmie immediately asked if he might know Lowell Hobbs. Doug was speechless thinking he was the victim of some joke, but soon admitted to being my brother-in-law.

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

I have never liked drastic changes.

- LOWELL HOBBS



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

It is never safe to swim near a marina or boat dock. The water can easily become charged with electrical current due to faulty wiring on the dock itself or nearby boats, which can lead to electric shock drowning if you come into contact with it.

SOURCE: SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

2025 Annual Report Highlights

Measuring Member Ownership



Total Liabilities & Equities
\$428,222,941
Capital Credits & Equities
\$105,409,094

Member Equity
24.66%

Where the Dollar Comes From



65.42% - Residential Sales

20.6% - Commercial Sales

13.98% - Other

Where the Dollar Goes



51.26% - Purchased Power

12.28% - Depreciation

13.82% - Operations

7.59% - Administrative

12.61% - Interest & Debt

2.44% - Member Services

See full report online at ecoec.com/annual-reports

You can also call our office at 918-756-0833 to request to have a print copy mailed to you.

We BELIEVE!

THREE WAYS WE'RE BUILDING BETTER CONNECTIONS

At ecoLINK, we BELIEVE connection changes lives. From backyards, to growing communities, to making it easier to get connected- we're here for what matters most.



yardLINK
Take your connection outside!



Firepits &
Gatherings



Backyard
Movie Nights



Porches &
Patios



Poolside
Streaming

GROWING COMMUNITIES

Dewar, you're up next!



Thanks to ARPA and OBO funding and East Central Board approval, we're bringing reliable, high-speed fiber internet and phone service to homes and businesses in Dewar.

IT'S A GREAT TIME

to Get LINKed!

**WE'RE WAIVING
THE STANDARD
RESIDENTIAL
INSTALLATION FEE!**



Now is the perfect time to get LINKed and start enjoying the legendary benefits of reliable, high-speed fiber internet and phone service.



ecolink.coop



918-756-0833

ecoLINK

powered by  East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative

The Days that Followed

Continued from Cover

Some of those boots were on East Central Electric Cooperative team members. System Operator KT Hewitt said, "The silence was loud. The storm was gone but the devastation you could see told the story of the chaos that had taken place."

"Every personal item we picked up made the situation that much heavier," Hewitt said. "Just hours before these were items in someone's home."

Subscriber Support Representative Jana Fowler, whose twins graduated this year from Beggs High School, said, "Tornadoes may damage homes and property, but they cannot destroy the spirit of a community that stands together."

It actually gave me faith in humanity again.

- GENNIE CLAY

"Seeing neighbors helping neighbors during a difficult time made me proud to be part of a community that truly cares," Fowler said.

The community helped not just with time and labor, but also with money, through Operation Round Up. In total, eight co-op member families with damage from this storm received \$1,000 emergency grants from Operation Round Up. These funds were made possible thanks to members who choose to round up the change at the end of their electric bill every month.

"It was such a blessing. In the beginning, I didn't feel like we were worthy of that, because we didn't suffer like everybody else suffered," Clay said, thinking of the homes and lives that had been lost. "But that money, I cannot tell you how much it helped."

Clay and her husband used their grant funds in the first week just to feed the 11 people now residing in their house, and to take care of their daughter and grandchildren who had lost everything. What was left has been used here and there to make minor repairs that would have been too much of a hassle with insurance and their mortgage company.

"I still fight the urge to fall apart, because when you drive, the whole landscape, everything has changed," Clay said.

"I cannot say thank you enough for all those who stepped up and helped," Clay said. "It actually gave me faith in humanity again. All the volunteers and East Central Electric [...] there are really no words to describe the warmth and the love I felt from everybody."



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
\$3,079,488.61

AWARDED LAST QUARTER
\$65,088.82

APPLICATIONS REVIEWED
1,829

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED
\$394,000

APPLICATIONS GRANTED
1,318

AVERAGE MEMBER CONTRIBUTION
48¢

Cover photos, from left: East Central Electric employees volunteered during cleanup efforts; personal belongings recovered from the debris served as reminders of lives disrupted.

Team members featured: Stacey Settlemyre, KT Hewitt, Lael LeBlanc, Dylan Hammon, Tate Peters, Mike Beardsley, Amy Helt, Katherine Russell, Jana Fowler, Josh Bennett, and Kayleigh Harrison.

Back page photo, KT Hewitt and Tate Peters wind up damaged wire fencing and debris into a bale.



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.