



# country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## Co-op Improvements

### Building Renovations Underway To Meet Rapid ecoLINK expansion

Construction begins in August on building renovations required to adjust to the rapid expansion of our fiber internet service, ecoLINK.

When East Central Electric (ECE) first began construction on our fiber project in 2019, it was a six-year project.

“With the pandemic, the public interest level in fiber went through the roof,” said ECE General Manager Tim Smith. “We ramped up construction to meet our members’ needs, and we are now scheduled to be complete by the end of 2023.”

The acceleration in the project timeline has put a strain on our available space for employees and warehousing.

“We are currently renting space, and that cost will be eliminated with this expansion,” said ECE’s

Director of Broadband Operations Jeremy Hendrickson.

The \$9.5 million building renovation project will both add space, and re-purpose existing space, to maximize the benefit to our members and ecoLINK customers.

The cost of this project for our members will be minimal at first and will shrink over time as the cost is offset by the ever-increasing customer base and expected growth in ecoLINK revenue.

Building renovations are scheduled to be complete

by August 2022.

“The purpose of this expansion is all about serving our members to the best of our ability,” Hendrickson said.

For more information on ECE building renovations or ecoLINK broadband service, please call 918-756-0833.

**“The purpose of this expansion is all about serving our members to the best of our ability.”**

—JEREMY HENDRICKSON, DIRECTOR OF BROADBAND OPERATIONS

### ECE District Meetings Worth Your Time

Members in ECE Districts 2 and 5 will appreciate the information available at their virtual meetings on June 8, but the prizes are the icing on the cake!

- **\$10 bill credit** for the first 50 members who register from each district.
- **\$50 and \$100 bill credits** for one randomly drawn member from each district.
- **One free month of 1Gbps service** from ecoLINK for three randomly drawn members from each district.
- **Three free months of 1Gbps service** from ecoLINK for one member from each district.

Please register on meeting day at [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com) to be eligible for prize drawings. Stay up-to-date on our meetings via our District Meeting and Annual Meeting Facebook events, visit



**SCAN ME**  
for details on District Meetings.

**SCAN ME**  
for details on Annual Meeting.



To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com). To contact your trustee, please call 918-756-0833.

## notes from the chair



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

### Good Steering

**A**t our April board meeting the outside auditors met with the board in executive session to reveal the audit report. ECE got a clean audit. This is an annual requirement by the RUS. The auditor remarked that we are the most pure Co-op that their firm audits. We expected those results, but it's always good to hear.

We also signed off on our new facility build out. This is needed to allow all our employees to be housed in one facility along with inside storage for much of the broadband material and other updates to our facility.

We now have over 5,000 members with broadband working in their homes and increasing by 20-25 new ones each day. Your turn is coming soon.

Again I remind you this is the year for Districts 2 and 5 to meet virtually in June. The ECE Annual Meeting will again be a drive through event on Thursday, July 22, 2021. We have added additional time and more traffic lanes to help eliminate the delays of last year.

My favorite class in high school was vocational agriculture. The Future Farmers of America (FFA) was a national organization of farm boys studying vocational agriculture in high school. In later years girls were included in the class, and now the program is only referred to as FFA.

I might mention that my Dad was the Vo Ag teacher. To my advantage my teacher and my Dad agreed on

every assignment. I made A's in Vo Ag and A's in English (my Mother taught English). I tell people now if my Dad had been Superintendent I could probably have made straight A's in every class.

Showing livestock at fairs was my thrill. If you exhibited a steer you were required to bring him to town on a regular basis for weighing and lead him up and down Main Street to condition him for public exposure. This was also an effective way to involve the business men and women in our school program. My Hereford steer was a good student and was easy to teach to lead and stand at attention for the judge.

Now comes show time at the Pawnee County fair. I could not get my steer to lead into the show ring. He was big and I was little, and it wasn't working to get him in the ring. Two of my classmates got behind him and literally picked up a hindquarter each and wheelbarrowed him into the ring! I was the only entry in that class and the judge announced, "Even though this is the only entry in this class and would normally get a first place ribbon, I am only giving a 2nd place because he is obviously untrained. He is a good steer but doesn't deserve a first place because of his lack of training." I was so embarrassed! Then when I exited the ring with my 2nd place ribbon, he led out in perfect style. Go figure!

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

### Meter Reminder

ECE Members, we are resuming work on the changeout to our new meters. We will be sending letters and making phone calls before we show up on your property to install a new meter. More information about this project is available on our website, [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com).



### Stay Cool This Summer

A few tips to help you cool your home more affordably:

- **Inspect, clean, or change air filters once a month.** A dirty filter can increase energy costs and damage your equipment.
- **Get a HVAC checkup.** Dirty coils reduce the system's ability to cool your home and cause the system to run longer, increasing energy costs. Too much or too little refrigerant will make your system less efficient. A plugged condensate drain can cause water damage in the house and affect indoor humidity levels. And airflow problems can reduce your system's efficiency by up to 15 percent.
- **Check your home for air leaks and proper insulation.** The Environmental Protection Agency estimates homeowners can save roughly 15 percent on heating and cooling costs, or 11 percent on total energy costs, by air sealing their homes and adding insulation in attics, floors over crawl spaces and basements.



*Making A Difference***Operation Roundup Reaches \$2 Million In Local Donations**

**E**ast Central Electric members have hit a new milestone of community support, officially donating more than \$2 million since 2006.

“Wow, what a great program that allows our members to contribute a small amount each month on their bill that is then returned to our communities to help those most in need,” said East Central Electric General Manager Tim Smith. It’s another great example of member helping member just like they did when the cooperative was first formed.”

Members’ voluntary contributions into Operation Roundup— simply rounding up their bill to the next whole dollar and donating the change—have made a huge impact in their local communities.

“Roundup programs help fill a niche that is often left by cash-strapped social and medical services,” Program Administrator Lylah Sparks said.

One of the many local nonprofit organizations helped by member donations is the Okmulgee County Homeless Shelter (OCHS).

OCHS Executive Director Brenda Brewer said, “It makes a huge difference when you can depend on something like Operation Roundup to make a difference quickly in rural Oklahoma.”

In the last five years, Roundup donations have helped the Okmulgee County Homeless Shelter (OCHS) repair a leaking roof, purchase a commercial sized refrigerator, freezer, and also stacking washer and dryers so that more

than one resident can do laundry at a time.

“Operation Roundup has helped me with so many projects and things that we need,” Brewer said. “This building still needs a lot of work, but Operation Roundup is helping.”

OCHS gives the homeless population of Okmulgee, McIntosh, Hughes and Okfuskee counties a place to lay their head, do laundry, and eat while they look for work and try to get back on their feet. On any given month there have been 15 to 25 people staying in the shelter, adding up to more than 9,000 people served since 1995.



OCHS Executive Director Brenda Brewer is hands on every day at the facility and the thrift store. “To serve the homeless and strive to prevent homelessness,” is not just her organization’s mission, but her life mission as well.

**“It makes a huge difference when you can depend on something like Operation Roundup to make a difference quickly in rural Oklahoma.”**

—BRENDA BREWER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
OKMULGEE COUNTY HOMELESS SHELTER

“A lot of people stigmatize the homeless as lazy, self-sabotaging and mentally unstable, but they are really just people,” Brewer said. “Some lost their jobs in the COVID economy. We’ve had several fire victims

over the last several months. And even those with mental illness or recovering from drug addiction, they just need a little support.”

OCHS serves as the only homeless shelter in a 45-mile radius, but it also stands alone in other ways. They give vouchers for free clothing and home supplies from their thrift store. Occasionally, they give bus tickets and transportation to job interviews and doctor visits. Shelter staff help clients with resume building, job seeking, and permanent resource assistance for those who need disability and public housing.

“My staff is very compassionate. They go the extra mile,” Brewer said, adding that a few staff members have first-hand experience overcoming homelessness and addiction.

“We hire people that have a heart for the homeless, and our employees make a difference,” Brewer said.

Brewer told the story of a mother and daughter who left the shelter in early April. The mother had tears in her eyes as she hugged all the staff goodbye.

“She said she couldn’t have done it without us ... that we pushed her to do better,” Brewer said.

Brewer thanks Operation Roundup contributors for the growth their organization has been able to achieve over the last five years.

“If they ever wonder what their contribution means to us, it means the world,” Brewer said. ☺

For details on Operation Roundup and how you can apply for assistance, please visit [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com).



Donations from East Central Electric members paid for two large commercial refrigerators like the one seen here, to store donated food.

# operation roundup

MONTHLY UPDATE



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).

Applications reviewed.....	1,208
Applications granted.....	836
Applications denied.....	359
Applications tabled.....	13
Scholarships awarded.....	\$284,500
<b>Total Disbursements.....</b>	<b>\$2,017,481.88</b>
Average member contribution.....	48¢



## ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Docks and boats carry sources of electricity. Faulty wiring or the use of damaged electrical cords and other devices can cause the surrounding water to become energized. NEVER swim near a marina or near a boat while it's running.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

## Your Favorite Recipe Could Win A Prize!



**recipe**

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_ PREP TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ SERVINGS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*ingredients*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*method*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SUBMITTED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**How To Enter:**  
Use this card to copy your favorite recipe. Bring the card with you to the ECE Annual Meeting on July 22. You will be entered into a special prize drawing for recipe contributors and your recipe may appear in ECE's special edition cookbook.



### East Central ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

PO Box 1178  
2001 S. Wood Drive  
Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447-1178

(918) 756-0833  
[www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com)



OFFICE HOURS:  
Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm.

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(918) 756-0833

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- Pay online at [www.ecoec.com](http://www.ecoec.com) using SmartHub, or download the app.
- Pay by phone using VISA, Mastercard or Discover at **866-999-4584**. Available 24/7. *Convenience fee associated with payments.*
- Pay with cash or credit/debit card at participating Moneygram or Pay Site locations. *Convenience fee associated with payments.*
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