

## Positive Partnerships

Teamwork comes together for the Forest Heritage Center.

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## Youth Tour Winners

Local teens win trip to Washington D.C.

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## Kilowatt Kid's Camp

CEC's free day camp for kids welcomes enrollments.

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For members of **Choctaw Electric Cooperative**

APRIL 2020

# 80<sup>YEARS</sup> CEC **inside your co-op**

## Co-op Board Member *Announces* Resignation

*George Burns resigns to run for 5th district Senate seat*

**C**hoctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) Trustee George Burns announced that he will officially resign from the co-op board on March 31. Burns, of Haworth, is resigning in order to run for the state Senate seat vacated by Joseph Silk. Sen. Silk (R)-Broken Bow, is running for the 2nd District Congressional seat held by Rep. Markwayne Mullin.

Burns must resign his trustee position to comply with a CEC bylaw that prohibits candidates for public office or elected officials from serving on the co-op board.

CEO Kooney Duncan said Burns leadership on the board helped restore trust in the co-op and helped put the co-op on the right track. Under the board's guidance, CEC reduced debt from \$71 million to \$43 million, increased equity to 53 percent, returned \$699,000 in capital credits to members, and cleared more than 2,000 miles of right of way.

"He took his job seriously," Duncan added. "He was devoted to learning as much as possible about the electric co-op industry so he could make the best possible decisions for members. We will miss him."

CEC members elected Burns as District A trustee in 2015. For two years, he served as president of the board. He

also served as CEC's representative on the Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) board of directors for three years. During his tenure as trustee, Burns completed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Credentialed Co-op Director and Board Leadership programs. He also earned the NRECA Director Gold certificate. To achieve the Gold designation, trustees must complete 22 courses requiring more than 176 hours of training.

Burns said serving on the CEC board influenced his decision to run for public office. "I have learned much by serving our co-op, and I am very thankful for the support, opportunity, and faith my district has shown in me," he said.

With an accountable board in place, Burns added that now is the perfect time to reach out and serve all residents in the 5th district. "When you listen and pay attention to the needs of the people, and do the right thing for a cause higher than yourself... this is best way I know to give back to my community," he said.



*George Burns*



**CORONAVIRUS  
COVID-19**

### **CEC UPDATE**

**B**ecause Choctaw Electric is a cooperative, we have a responsibility to act in the best interests of our members. With growing concerns over the coronavirus, CEC is taking extra measures to protect employees and members by limiting exposure, disinfecting surfaces in the office, keeping a ready supply of sanitizing wipes and Lysol in public areas, and encouraging employees to be extra vigilant about hygiene and maintaining the recommended distance of six feet between themselves and others.

At newsletter press time on March 17, the CEC lobby remained open, but we encourage members to use the telephone, drive-thru window, night deposit box, payment kiosks, and online tools such as the SmartHub app to conduct business. To reduce wait time in the drive-thru lane, please call us with your questions when possible. CEC employees will continue to make necessary service calls to residences while keeping a safe distance.

"Our goal is to decrease the likelihood of illness and resulting work disruptions so we can continue to provide our members continuity of service," said Kooney Duncan, CEO of the cooperative.

CEC also cancelled all third-party meetings on CEC premises. Other non-critical meetings, training, and travel may be canceled depending on the situation.

Questions? Please call us **800-780-6486**.

MANAGER'S REPORT



# Our Co-op Icons

*A special; tribute to CEC linemen*

BY KOONEY DUNCAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Choctaw Electric (CEC) employees know a thing or two about navigating tough times. When a storm hits, we're all working to protect your power supply. But for some members of our team, the sacrifice is especially personal.



*Jonathan Lacy*  
BIRTHDATE HERE - MARCH 28, 2018

CEC linemen give up holidays, birthday parties, and special time with family and friends to work crazy long hours in awful conditions. So we can have lights. Blazing heat, bitter cold, toad-strangling rains, floods, ice, snow and straight line winds are things they contend with to keep your electricity flowing. Poison ivy, poison oak, greenbriar, ticks, mosquitoes, snakes, skunks, mean dogs, and sometimes mean people, are obstacles they face while out in the field. It's not glamorous but what they do is absolutely essential to our lives—and they do it with an attitude of selflessness that amazes me.

Truly, CEC's line workers are the icons of our industry. They represent our co-op values, commitment, and dependability.

Jonathan Lacy was that kind of lineman. A longtime resident of Little River Ranch, Jonathan worked for CEC for six years. He had a positive attitude even the worst thunderstorm couldn't rattle. When we needed someone to

climb a pole in the pouring rain, Jonathon was the first to step up. He understood that as uncomfortable, unpleasant, and scary the job could be at times, there were people out there relying on him. Like all of our linemen, Jonathan knew the risk of injury or death went along with the job.

Jonathan died of cancer on March 28, 2018. He was 38(?).

While he was battling the disease, his neighbor, Sandra LaPlace, would spend time chatting with his young daughters on the front porch. When one of the girls had a dream about a big spider, she told Sandra about it. The story stuck with the artist, and she developed the dream into an illustrated children's book dedicated to Jonathon, everybody's friend and favorite lineman, and the Lacy family. The book is available on Amazon with proceeds going to Jonathon's three girls.

On April 13, the nation celebrates Lineworker Appreciation Day. I hope you'll take a moment to thank your local linemen who put their lives on the line for you. Please remember Jonathon, too. He was an unsung hero, and we miss him. 🙏

## Choctaw Electric Cooperative

*Serving members in Choctaw, Pushmataha, Atoka, McCurtain, Bryan and Leflore counties.*

Monday-Friday • 8 am - 5 pm

HUGO OFFICE

PO Box 758  
Hwy 93 North  
Hugo, Oklahoma 74743  
Toll Free: (800) 780-6486  
Local: (580) 326-6486  
FAX (580) 326-2492

IDABEL OFFICE

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Idabel, Oklahoma 74745  
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ANTLERS OFFICE

HC 67 Box 62  
Antlers, Oklahoma 74523  
(One mile east of Antlers)  
Toll Free: (800) 780-6486  
Local: (580) 298-3201

*On the Web:*

[www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop)



24 Hour Outage Hotline

**800-780-6486**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Brent Franks, *President*

Joe M. Silk, *Vice President*

Mike Brewer, *Secretary Treasurer*

Stacy Nichols      Bill Woolsey

George Burns      Debbie Cody

Ken Autry      Perry Thompson Jr.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Kooney Duncan, *Chief Executive Officer*

Jennifer Boling, *Executive Assistant*

Jia Johnson, *Director of Public Relations*

Tiffany Hempsted, *Chief Financial Officer*

**Lucky Acct #38852450(\$25)**

If this account number belongs to you, contact CEC by the 10th of the month to claim your \$25 bill credit. Unclaimed bill credits will roll over each month by \$25 for a maximum credit of \$100. To claim your credit, please call 800-780-6486, ext. 207.

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF YOUR CEC BOARD MEETING

Scan this code with your smartphone or tablet to read the monthly minutes of your co-op board meeting. Minutes are also available at any CEC location and online at [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop).

To scan the code, install a Bar Code Scanner app, available at the App Store.



MANAGER'S REPORT

# CEC Names Youth Tour Winners

Topics such as meatless meat, advanced robotics, and community service became winning entries in Choctaw Electric's 2020 Youth Tour competition. High school juniors Tucker Bundy of What Town; Kaelin Clay of Town; and Olivia McCarter of Town selected topics of interest and developed either a video presentation or an essay to enter in the contest. Jia Johnson, CEC Youth Tour coordinator said Youth Tour judges were impressed with the quality of the entries, especially the three winners.

"We think our winners are exceptional this year. We are proud to have them represent CEC on the tour," Johnson said.

Students will tour Washington, DC with more than 65 (?) other Youth Tour winners from across Oklahoma. The tour includes stops at



Kaelin Clay      Olivia McCarter      Tucker Bundy

major historical sites, monuments, museums and government buildings. Teens will also meet with congressional leaders, take an evening cruise on the Potomac River, and enjoy cultural attractions in and around the nation's capital.

For more information on Youth Tour, please visit [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop), or call Jia Johnson at 800-780-6486, ext. 217.

## THE HOME Energy DETECTIVE

By Brad Kendrick, CEC Energy Use Specialist



### A Mound Of Problems

When I make visits to a member's home, finding the source of their energy use problem is not always easy. Last month, I visited a home where everything appeared to be turned off, yet something was still pulling power. After testing other breakers, the member eventually flipped off the breaker for the aerobic septic system and the meter stopped. After investigating further, we discovered a mound of fire ants compacted in the pump! This caused the pump to run nonstop, and add a lot of kilowatt-hours to their electric bill.

Ants love to congregate in cool, dark places such well pumps and outside AC units. If you have any of the above, remember to service your systems regularly, and pay attention to any warning lights that signal an equipment malfunction.

**We Appreciate Your Patience!**



Efforts to contain the coronavirus may alter plans for cooperative-sponsored events such as Member Appreciation Days, Kilowatt Kid's Camp, Youth Tour, and Energy Camp. We will do our best to keep you informed of postponements and/or cancellations in advance via our monthly newsletter, website, Facebook, SmartHub and local news media. If you plan to attend any of these activities, be sure to check with us beforehand to make sure it will continue as planned. Thank you!

CHOCTAW ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# Member DAYS Appreciation

From 10 am until 2 pm on the following dates:

- Tues., April 7 | CEC HUGO
  - Weds., April 8 | CEC ANTLERS
  - Thurs., April 9 | CEC IDABEL
- Join us for one day, or attend all three! For details, please call 800-780-6486.

- COMPLIMENTARY wellness exams W/ BLOOD PRESSURE & VALUABLE HEALTH INFO
- WIN A bill credit & OTHER PRIZES
- REGISTER TO VOTE!
- LEARN ABOUT OUR energy saving services & OTHER PROGRAMS
- FREE hotdogs DRINKS & DESSERTS



Do you have questions for CEC's energy sleuth? Please call Brad Kendrick, CEC energy use specialist, at 800-780-6486, or email questions to: [bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop](mailto:bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop).

## Talk To Us. We Appreciate Your Opinion.

When you have a question or comment about your CEC service, we want to hear from you! Please message us via [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop) or our Facebook page. To chat by phone, please call 800-780-6486. Your opinion matters.



**A GLANCE BACK**

# Linemen from Long Ago

Choctaw Electric's first field crews had a big job ahead of them. As supplies and construction materials slowly became available after World War II, they got to work. A story published in the June 2005 issue of CEC's newsletter featured pioneer lineman, Ike Simpson (pictured to right), who recalled the early days.

Simpson began working for CEC in 1946, digging holes for high line poles with a shovel. Back then the co-op used mule teams to pull the line across the rugged southeast Oklahoma mountains. "When it rained, we got stuck...a lot," Simpson recalled.

Some supplies were still limited due to war shortages. The crew had one rubber glove and the foreman wore it. "The rest of us wore leather gloves, and we only had two or three hot sticks to connect and disconnect the lines," he said. "But it was start."

Today CEC employs ?? linemen. Each one has a full set of rubber gloves, as well as other critical safety equipment. ☺



*This photo of Choctaw Electric linemen from 1954 appeared in the co-op's newsletter, the Push Button News. (Front row) Billy Teague; Cyde Johnson; James Clark; and John Houchens. (Back row) Harry Nelms; Ike Simpson; Willis Brents; Odell Popchoke; Superintendent Winfield Doyle; and Elmer Hinsley. Five linemen are missing from the photo. They are James Bush; George Monday; Johnnie Rector; Leslie Moore and Berry Roan, Jr.*



## CEC Kilowatt Kid's Camp

Hugo | June 3

Idabel | June 9

CEC's Kilowatt Kid's Camp offers a fun, educational experience for kindergarteners through third graders. Campers spend the morning making crafts and playing games that teach them about renewable fuels and other energy sources, energy conservation, and how to stay safe around electricity.

CEC is currently enrolling students for our half-day camps in Hugo and Idabel. The camp is free and includes all snacks and camp activities. To enroll, please fill out the form to the right and return it CEC by May 31, 2020. For more information, please call Jia Johnson or Brad Kendrick at **800-780-6486**, ext. 241.

### 2020 KILOWATT KID'S CAMP ENROLLMENT FORM

Student Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Tele: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Tele: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Medications: \_\_\_\_\_

T-shirt Size (Circle): Youth XS (4-6) | Youth S (6-8) | Youth M (8-10)  
Youth L (10-12) | Adult S | Adult M | Adult L

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Tele: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Camp (Please circle):

Hugo Camp | June 3

Idabel Camp | June 9

K-3rd grade: 9 am to 11:30 am

K-3rd grade: 9:00 am to 11:30 am

Mail enrollment form by May 31, 2020 to:

Jia Johnson or Brad Kendrick/ CEC/ PO Box 758/Hugo, OK 74743