

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

THE LAKEHOUSE LOCAL FAMILY SHIFTS GEARS



JANUARY 2021



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Northeast Connection is published monthly to communicate with the members of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative.

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BUSINESS HOURS

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Offices are closed Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

DISPATCHING AVAILABLE 24 HOURS AT

1.800.256.6405

If you experience an outage:

1. Check your switch or circuit breaker in the house and on the meter pole to be sure the trouble is not on your side of the service.
2. When contacting the cooperative to report an outage, use the name as it appears on your bill, and have both your pole number and account number ready.

Please direct all editorial inquiries to Public Relations at 800.256.6405 or email publicrelations@noec.coop

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2020 IN REVIEW

Daniel Webster
General Manager/CEO

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.'

The year 2020 may not have fully captured the desperation of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of*

Two Cities, but it was a year of extremes for our organization.

With all the worry and bad news created by the pandemic, you may wonder why anyone would want to revisit 2020. The truth is, however, the employees of our cooperative continued to make great strides for the membership despite COVID-19 and its many challenges.

The engineering department was very busy in 2020. Not only did they fully deploy drone technology, which will allow us to more closely and safely inspect our system and will aid during storm recovery, they also completed a full inventory of the distribution system and GIS mapping.

We made changes to our right-of-way maintenance plan and were able to accomplish far more than in years past. We also completed maintenance on 2,318 miles of line. Compare that to 2019 when we covered 543 miles.

Other system improvements in 2020 include five and a half miles of upgraded conductor, 132 upgraded poles, and 139 poles replaced following inspection.

What did all the maintenance and system improvements mean for NOEC members? It contributed to a 25% reduction in outages.

We were fortunate to have avoided devastating weather events in 2020. Our neighbors to the south were not so fortunate. We were more than happy to be able to provide recovery assistance following two Louisiana hurricanes and an unseasonably early Oklahoma ice storm.

Continued on page 2.



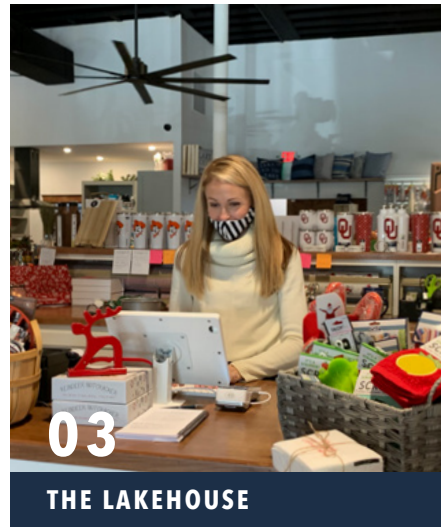
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THE LAKEHOUSE

Events are published as space allows and must be submitted at least 60 days in advance. Send information, including phone number for publication, to Northeast Connection Events Calendar, PO Box 948, Vinita 74301 or email to publicrelations@noec.coop

January events are subject to date change or cancellation. Please contact the host for most current event information.

\$100 IS HIDING!

Search the pages of NE Connection for a 6-digit account number with an asterisk on each side. For example: *XXXXXX*. Compare it to your account number, which appears on your monthly electric bill. If they match, contact the cooperative at 918.256.9337, by February 1, 2020, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

JANUARY 2021 EVENTS

Bingo for Everyone
Jan 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 | Grove
American Legion Post 178
918.786.9860

Winter Saddle Up!
Jan 22-24 | Colcord
New Life Ranch
918.422.5506

Grief Support Group
Jan 12, 26 | Grove
Nichols-Stephens Funeral & Cremation Services
918.786.6761

Wild & Free Conference
Jan 30 | Colcord
New Life Ranch
918.422.5506

Cold Weather Activity Ideas

1. Complete a puzzle: The more pieces the better! Or take on a Rubik's Cube. More of a word person? Crossword puzzle!
2. Stream family friendly workouts on your smart device and follow along.
3. Keep the house tidy with a fun cleanup game; set a timer and assign everyone a room to speed clean, or challenge yourself.
4. Take a virtual field trip to a regional or international zoo, museum, or aquarium.
5. Try meditation, even if only for a few minutes each day.
6. Take a break from social media and pick up a book you've been meaning to read.
7. Declutter and organize the area that's been on your to-do list.
8. Make a charitable donation to a local non-profit or food bank.

2020 IN REVIEW

Continued from inside cover.



Our fiber optics deployment made great strides in 2020 as well, adding 2,300 new customers. BOLT completed new construction in four areas: three in Ottawa County and one in Delaware County. Approximately 100 miles of line were added that put BOLT in front of 600 homes and businesses.

In order to keep employees and members safe, we closed our office lobbies and arranged for many employees to work from home. This presented the perfect opportunity to make much-needed repairs throughout our aging building. When we do re-open our doors, you will find a welcoming lobby and our employees will enjoy heat, air, and plumbing that work properly.

COVID-19 created financial uncertainty for everyone during 2020, which appears likely to continue into 2021. Fortunately, we were able to amend loan and financial commitments to meet the challenges of COVID-19 without an increase in rates.

I cannot look back on 2020 without applauding and thanking our membership. Your overwhelming support in approving the new bylaws told us it was important for you to bring our bylaws up-to-date and have them be meaningful to our operations.

Hats off to 2020. I hope we never have another like it.



DOWNTOWN GROVE WELCOMES THE LAKEHOUSE

LOCAL FAMILY SHIFTS GEARS TOWARD RETAIL SECTOR

One of northeast Oklahoma's most energetic and industrious families is back at it again. This time, however, there's a slight twist. Best known for building beautiful custom homes, the Bagbys—Ryan, Brecka, and twin daughters: Mia and Sophie—recently expanded their horizons to include an impressive retail venture in downtown Grove, Oklahoma.

With a veritable plethora of items for pantry and patio, The Lakehouse officially opened its doors October 23, 2020, at 27 West Third Street in Grove.

Brecka said the “wheels started turning” on the new enterprise in late 2019. She laughs as she admits the concept was likely inspired by “too much Hallmark.” In reality, Brecka was always a big fan of another Grove business with similar offerings.

“Grove used to have the most amazing kitchen store called Gourmet’s,” she said. “It relocated a few years back and I have missed having kitchen products at my fingertips. I have ordered kitchen items online and then returned them because my expectations exceeded the product. I missed being able to pick up and feel the linens or hold the stemware. I longed to go into a store and find authentic pieces you cannot find at a big box store.”

For The Lakehouse, the journey from concept to reality was no small feat. The two-story structure was once home to Jane’s Boarding House, an establishment rumored to have been popular with traveling salesmen. It has been occupied by any number of businesses since.

The Lakehouse is open year-round, Monday through Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Call 918.782.2222 for more information or find them on Facebook or online at www.lakehouseok.com.



“Jane was known for her cooking and entertaining—from what we gather,” Brecka said. “We are not completely sure what year the building was built, but the original boiler in the basement is stamped 1898.”

The Bagbys purchased the building in March 2020 and began construction in July 2020.

“With the help of our girls and a few of their friends, we started demo,” said Brecka. “The building was in good shape for what it had been used for, but with what we wanted to do, it quickly became a full-on demo.”

She said: “We put in brand new plumbing and electrical, tore the first floor down to the plaster walls and wood floor, raised the ceilings to 16 feet and added an elevator. Upstairs we wanted to preserve the integrity of the building. We kept the original floor and all of the doors, transom windows and hardware.”

Brecka wants The Lakehouse and its products to complement the lifestyle enjoyed by many here in northeast Oklahoma.

"The lake lifestyle is very unique," she said. "It is less about eating out and more about cooking and grilling at home or picnicking on your boat. Being in the building business, we know first-hand that people want to gather by the water—even in the winter."

The Lakehouse has just about every household gadget imaginable—and sometimes a variety of the same gadget at different price points. The store's variety of items is well worth your time to explore.

"We carry Vietri, which is a beautiful Italian line of dishes—but definitely on the higher end—and then we also offer Bia Cordon Bleu, which is just as beautiful but won't break the bank," Brecka explained.

Brecka said her personal favorite items might just be the Smeg appliances and Wusthof knives. You'll also find serveware from Pampa Bay, a line that has a pewter look but can go in the dishwasher, microwave and oven.

"So far, our biggest seller has been the Fire Fishing Poles, an adorable gadget that looks like a fishing pole but is used to cook marshmallows," said Brecka. "And we carry the basics such as Corkcicle, OXO, Good Grips, and Zyliss, but we were careful to carry items that you won't find at your larger stores."

The Lakehouse isn't just a "chick" store. Gents will have plenty to browse—and buy—as well.

"If you ask my husband what excites him, he would say Traeger Grills and Pelican Coolers," Brecka chuckled. "We carry all of the grills, pellets and accessories and every Pelican Cooler imaginable."

You'll see The Lakehouse inventory change with the seasons. Look for more outdoor-influenced items as the weather warms. Of course, new items are always being added.

"We just ordered Nora Flemming, which is a serveware line that has been around a while and is hugely popular," Brecka said. "And we have a ton more Stonewall Kitchen jams, sauces, mixes, and crackers on their way. We also have a brand new line of tabletop linens called Honey & Hank that should be in soon."

The Lakehouse offers some truly unique pieces that shoppers are sure to appreciate.

"We love products made by locals and made in the U.S.," Brecka said. "We carry the most beautiful, one-of-a-kind charcuterie boards. They are hand-made by a local named Max Flickenger. Each board is unique in shape, finish and material. He has collected pieces of wood and furniture throughout the years and is now repurposing them into cheese boards. One of my favorite boards is a made out of an old school desk."

She added: "Another of my local favorites is Buck's BBQ Sauce that Bradford's BBQ in Spavinaw is now bottling. And as for other unique items, we carry pet accessories and things to entertain kids."



Wine and specialty cheeses have been a popular request, so look for those additions soon. A knife sharpening service is being considered as well. The Lakehouse also has a demonstration kitchen and will be ramping up cooking classes over the coming year.

Transplants from Tulsa, the Bagbys have called Grand Lake home for 15 years. Ryan took on a commercial construction project on the lake back in 2004. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to build two custom homes in the area.

"To make the drive from Tulsa worthwhile we decided to build a spec house here as well," Brecka explained.

It didn't take the young family long to grow attached to both the lake and the community.

"We always loved vacationing on the lake during summer weekends," she said. "But then we discovered that we loved the lake during the week and winter months just as much. We became locals in 2005 and have never looked back."

With Ryan busy building homes, Brecka began utilizing her creativity and green thumb to grow a landscape business. She thanks her aunt and uncle for the green thumb.

"They lived in Norman and always had beautiful flowerbeds. When I visited them I always loved to help," Brecka said.

Brecka continued to hone her landscaping skills while pursuing a degree in Sociology at The University of Oklahoma. After receiving her Sociology degree, Brecka's career plan took a detour.

"Naturally, I went into banking. Go figure," she laughed.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

"My mother-in-law, Glo Reheman—we call her 'GG'—volunteered so much time. She is fiery, go-getter, red head with a thick East Texas accent. She has been my biggest cheerleader and helped me bring this idea to fruition. She was also able to wrangle her closest friends into helping out as well. A huge thanks to Jean, Jeanie, Jeaneen, Stan, Marj, Karen, Diane and Courtney."

-Brecka Bagby, owner



She added: "Once we moved to the lake, Ryan's customers began requesting landscape work and I was more than happy to get dirty. My landscaping enterprise was exactly what I wanted back then, but now I am old and tired and my 'man hands' need a rest."

When the Bagbys weren't managing the many demands of a successful construction and landscaping business, you were sure to find them rooting on Mia and Sophie, both of whom are gifted athletes and had successful prep athletic careers. With the girls graduating last spring and heading off to college, Brecka knew she would have substantial time to devote to a new pursuit.

"The girls have kept us running since they started basketball in the second grade," said Brecka.

"Basketball was year-round and we knew there would be a huge void when they graduated so I knew I needed project—a big one."

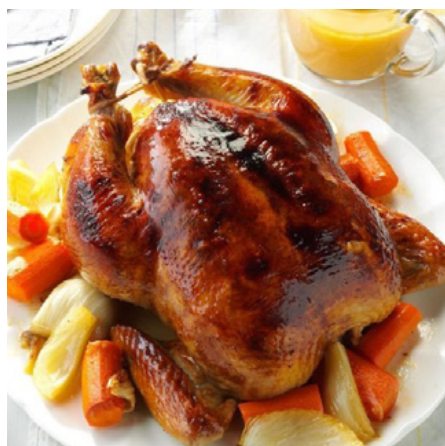
She added: "I have always been interested in doing retail and gave it lots of thought as to what kind. I narrowed it down to what I love to do most, and that is to cook and entertain. Whether I'm feeding a basketball team, our framing crew, or an intimate dinner party, I'm happiest in the kitchen. My mom taught me how to pair foods and how to stretch meals on a budget. And my late friend, Colleen Crutchmer, taught me how to pair food with wine—always have cab, she'd say—and also how to create a table setting with linens, herbs from the garden and everyday décor to make it Ina- or Martha-approved. I admit I'm not an excellent cook like my mom, but I'm going to make darn sure the presentation makes you believe I am."

Plan a visit to The Lakehouse soon. While you're there, grab a coffee and a pastry—or lunch—at Grand Lake Coffee. You can also book an appointment at Illusions Hair Salon & Spa, located on the building's second floor.



FEATURE RECIPES

COLD WEATHER FAVORITES



Prep: 30 minutes
Bake: 1 1/2 - 2 hours
Makes: 6 servings

SUNDAY ROAST CHICKEN

MAIN

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium fennel bulb
- 5 large carrots cut into 1 to 1/2 inch pieces
- 1 large white onion, quartered, divided
- 1 medium lemon
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 TBL honey
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 tsp pepper
- 1 chicken (about 4 pounds)
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 cup orange juice

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Using a sharp knife, trim stalks and root end of fennel bulb. Cut bulb lengthwise into quarters; cut and remove core. Cut fennel into 1-in. wedges. Place fennel, carrots and three of the onion quarters in a shallow roasting pan, spreading evenly.

2. Cut lemon in half; squeeze juice into a small bowl, reserving lemon halves. Stir minced garlic, honey, salt, pepper flakes and pepper into juice.

3. Place chicken on a work surface, neck side down. With fingers, carefully loosen skin from the tail end of the chicken breast. Spoon juice mixture under skin of breast; secure skin with toothpicks.

3. Place garlic cloves, lemon halves and remaining onion inside chicken cavity. Tuck wings under chicken; tie drumsticks together. Place chicken over vegetables, breast side up.

4. Pour orange juice over chicken. Roast 1-1/2 to 2 hours or until a thermometer inserted in thickest part of thigh reads 170°-175°. (Cover loosely with foil if chicken browns too quickly.)

5. Remove roasting pan from oven; increase oven setting to 450°. Remove chicken from pan; tent with foil and let stand 15 minutes before carving.

5. Meanwhile, return roasting pan to oven; roast vegetables 10-15 minutes longer or until vegetables are tender and lightly browned. Using a slotted spoon, remove vegetables from pan. If desired, skim fat from pan juices and serve with chicken and vegetables.

SUPER SIMPLE SCALLOPED POTATOES

SIDE

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups heavy cream
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp minced thyme, optional
- 3 pounds russet potatoes thinly sliced

1. Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, combine cream, salt, pepper and, if desired, thyme. Arrange potatoes in a greased 13x9-in. baking dish. Pour cream mixture over top.

2. Bake, uncovered, until potatoes are tender and top is lightly browned, 45-55 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.



Prep: 20 minutes
Bake: 45-55 minutes
Makes: 10 servings

BANANA BREAD PUDDING

DESSERT

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups cubed day-old French or sourdough bread (1 inch pieces)
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 3 large eggs, room temp
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 cup sliced firm bananas (1/4 inch pieces)

Sauce

- 3 TBL butter
- 2 TBL sugar
- 1 TBL cornstarch
- 3/4 cup whole milk
- 1/4 cup light corn syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

1. Place the bread cubes in a greased 2-qt. casserole; pour butter over top and toss to coat. In a medium bowl, lightly beat eggs; add milk, sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Stir in bananas.

2. Pour over bread cubes and stir to coat. Bake, uncovered, at 375° for about 40 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

3. Meanwhile, for sauce, melt butter in a small saucepan. Combine sugar and cornstarch; add to butter. Stir in milk and corn syrup. Cook and stir over medium heat until the mixture comes to a full boil. Boil for 1 minute. Remove from the heat; stir in the vanilla. Serve warm sauce over warm pudding.



Prep: 10 minutes
Bake: 40 minutes
Makes: 6 servings

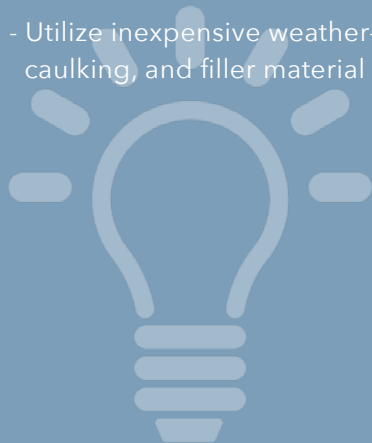
TIPS & TRICKS

FOR COLD WEATHER

As winter sets in and temperatures outside begin to fall, many of us migrate indoors to escape the cold. If indoor drafts leave you (and your heating bill) still feeling the “chill,” taking control is your best option.

Sealing attic air leaks will enhance the performance of your insulation and make a more comfortable home. Air infiltration is fairly easy to correct, the process requires a careful inspection of your home.

- Make a sketch of your home's floor plan to reference potential leakage areas, such as dropped soffits over kitchen cabinets or bath vanities, where walls (both inner and outer) meet the attic floor, slanted ceiling over stairways and any other dropped ceiling areas.
- Gather supplies and use flashlights or drop lights to create a well-lit working area.
- Wear lightweight coveralls, a hat and gloves to keep insulation off your skin, a mask to avoid inhalation of hazardous substances, and knee pads to prevent pain from crawling on attic joists.
- Walk on only trusses or joists you trust and watch for nails sticking through the roof deck.
- Utilize inexpensive weather-stripping, caulking, and filler material to seal air leaks.



Attic air sealing may be a DIY project if your attic is accessible and large enough to allow you to move around. Contact a contractor first if you inspect your attic and detect any of the following:

- Wet or damp insulation indicating a leaky roof.
- Moldy or rotted attic rafters or floor joists indicating moisture problems.
- Kitchen, bathroom, and clothes dryer vents that exhaust moist air directly into the attic space instead of outdoors.
- Little or no attic ventilation.
- If you have unsealed and uninsulated recessed can lights, special care must be taken when insulating around these fixtures.

SAFETY TIPS

FOR COLD WEATHER

Power outages during frigid winter months can endanger lives. Being prepared can help you and your family stay safe and comfortable.

BEFORE AN OUTAGE

- Check flashlights and battery-powered portable radios to ensure that they are working and you have extra batteries. A radio is an important source of weather and emergency information during a storm.
- Use caution if using candles for light.
- Have sufficient heating fuel, as regular sources may be cut off. Have emergency heating equipment and fuel (a gas fireplace, wood burning stove or fireplace) so you can keep at least one room livable. Be sure the room is well ventilated.
- Make sure your home is properly insulated. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows to keep cold air out.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside to provide insulation.
- To keep pipes from freezing, wrap them in insulation or layers of newspapers, covering the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture.
- Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing.
- Know how to shut off water valves.
- If your water supply could be affected (a well-water pump system), fill your bathtub and spare containers with water. Water in the bathtub should be used for sanitation purposes only, not as drinking water.
- During an outage, do not open the refrigerator or freezer door. Food can stay cold in a full refrigerator for up to 24 hours, and in a well-packed freezer for 48 hours (24 hours if it is half-packed).



DURING AN OUTAGE

- Dress for the season, wearing several layers of loose, lightweight, warm clothing, rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.
- Mittens are better than gloves.
- Wear a hat; most body heat is lost through the top of the head.
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Watch for signs of frostbite: loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in the extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, or the top of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical help immediately.
- Snow drifts can be used as a makeshift freezer for food. (Be aware of attracting animals.)
- Snow can be melted as an additional water source for sanitation purposes only, not as drinking water.

REC CARES

SEASON OF GIVING

Several years ago, employees of NOEC formed an employee-funded organization called Denim for Dollars. Employees paid to wear jeans to work and often hosted fundraisers such as breakfasts before safety meetings. The money collected was used to help families with food and clothing. One year, over \$10,000 was spent to provide school-aged children with warm coats.

Fast forward and the employees are still at it—working to help others in our communities. A committee of employees oversees the funds and ensures they are used properly. As employee participation grew, so did the organization. It is now called REC Cares, because that better fits the mission—to care for others.

LOCAL NURSING HOME DONATIONS

This past November members helped organize and compile care baskets for nursing homes throughout our service territory. The baskets included personal care items as well as supplies for fun crafts and activities. A big thank you to Dillingham Insurance Group for donating much needed masks for these baskets.

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2020 ANGEL TREE

Cooperative employees were blessed with the opportunity to make a more traditional Christmas holiday a reality for underprivileged children in our service territory through REC Cares.

REC Cares, once again, sponsored a Christmas angel tree in 2020.

“These small acts of kindness can be shared and enjoyed with our own families,” explained committee member Lacy Frazier. “You may be surprised at how much fun you can have together shopping for these children.”

With a number of employees working from home, Frazier said the angel tree project was a bit more challenging than usual. This year’s “virtual” tree featured a total of 56 angels, including 47 from ROCMND Youth Services. The names of nine additional children were furnished by employees.

ROCMND Area Youth Services is a community-based agency that provides therapeutic behavioral health services to children and their families at no charge in seven Oklahoma counties. The organization has residential services for youth and receives referrals strictly from the Office of Juvenile Affairs.

