

# NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



**MORE THAN A HOBBY**  
WORK IN HIGH DEMAND

**FEBRUARY 2022**



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.**

## OFFICERS & TRUSTEES

**Dandy A. Risan** - District 5, President

**John L. Myers** - District 4, Vice-President

**Jimmy Caudill** - District 9, Secretary-Treasurer

**Brian Kelly** - District 3, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer

**Charles A. Wyrick** - District 1

**Benny L. Seabourn** - District 2

**Sharron Gay** - District 6

**James A. Wade** - District 7

**Nancy Kimbrell** - District 8

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Daniel Webster** - General Manager/Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

**Erik Feighner** - Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

**Sami Jo Frisby** - Administrative Services

**Ricky Hignite** - Information Technology

**Darryll Lindsey** - Member Services

**Nick Sutton** - Operations & Engineering

## VINITA HEADQUARTERS

27039 South 4440 Road, Vinita, OK 74301

## GROVE OFFICE

212 South Main, Grove, OK 74344

## 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](mailto:publicrelations@noec.coop)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found on-line at [www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call 866.632.9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax 202.690.7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).



## A NOVEL APPROACH TO BUSINESS

**Shane Burgess**

**Director of Engineering**

Conserve. Not exactly a word a consumer expects to hear from an electric utility, is it? Nor is conservation a concept one

expects to be promoted by any business that sells the same product they are encouraging you to conserve.

As a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric cooperative, conservation is precisely what Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative encourages its members to do with their electricity. In fact, we want to help members become more energy efficient by offering rebates through our partners. Doing this can to help them save more money and energy over the long haul.

Why would we do that? The answer is simple. Energy conservation is one of the most effective ways for your cooperative to ensure grid stability, increase reliability, and effectively plan capital improvement projects. For you, the member, it means immediate savings reflected on your bill and money returned as capital credits.

The events of February 2021 highlighted just how the electric grid can be challenged by unexpected energy demand. Rolling blackouts were implemented to ease the strain on equipment, and substantial price increases stemming from expensive spot generation resulted from high demand and limited supply. Additionally, when equipment is overloaded, it can fail—sometimes catastrophically. Fortunately, NOEC has been successful in managing peak demand by planning for the future.

From the generation source all the way to the meter, the grid is designed to meet energy needs for both existing consumers and forecasted load increases. Predicted load growth allows us to plan project upgrades and manage member capital responsibly through our work plan process. By conserving energy, you can help prolong improvements until they are absolutely necessary.

*Continued on following page.*



10

PROVIDING CHRISTMAS CHEER



04

MORE THAN A HOBBY



02

RECENT ORU GRANTS

### \$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 918.256.6405, by March 1, 2022, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

Conserving energy can be as simple as remembering to turn off a light when you leave the room or as sophisticated as an app-based smart home solution. A programmable thermostat to regulate the temperature of your home when you are away is a great way to reduce the run time of your HVAC unit. There are a variety of ways you can conserve energy in your home. Ideas can be found by clicking the Energy Services tab on our website at [www.noec.coop](http://www.noec.coop). Of course, we always welcome the chance to visit with you when you call us at 1.800.256.6405.

## FEBRUARY 2022 EVENTS

### Grand Lake Storytellers

Feb 1 | Grove

Grove Public Library

### Phil Dalton Theater of Illusion

Feb 2-3 | Miami

Coleman Theater

### Grand Lake Quilt Guild Meeting

Feb 4 | Grove

Grove Community Center

### VFW Pool Tournament

Wednesdays in Feb | Grove

33450 S 620 Rd

### Time After Time Vendor Fair

Feb 5 | Fairland

Time After Time Antique Mall

### Winter Concert Series

Feb 5 | Grove

Grove Performing Arts Center

### Grand Lake Renaissance Festival

Feb 12-13 | Grove

Grove Civic Center

### Valentine Dinner Special

Feb 11-12 | Monkey Island

Doc's at Shangri La

### Valentine Resort Special

Feb 11-12 | Monkey Island

Shangri La

### Super Bowl Watch Party

Feb 13 | Monkey Island

The Anchor at Shangri La

### Darryl Starbird's National Rod & Custom Show

Feb 18-20 | Tulsa

Tulsa Expo Center

### Midsouth Tackle Hunting & Boat Show

Feb 18-20 | Grove

Grove Civic Center

### Laundry Love from Grand Nation

Feb 23 | Vinita

Laundry Express

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





SCAN ME!

# OPERATION ROUND UP

## RECENT LOCAL GRANTS

A total of \$12,700 in grant funds was awarded to five different organizations during the November 2021 meeting of the Operation Round-Up Trust Foundation Board of Directors.

If you would like to sign up to participate in Operation Round-Up, or if you need additional information, contact a Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative member services representative at 1.800.256.6405.



**Centralia Fire Department** tires for fire truck



**Boys and Girls Club, Miami** food for facility



**Salvation Army, Ottawa Co.** personal items



**Wyandotte Community Food Pantry** food and dryer



**First Christian Church, Miami** backpack program

# NOEC SUPPORTS AREA SCHOOLS

## THROUGH TAX DISTRIBUTIONS .....

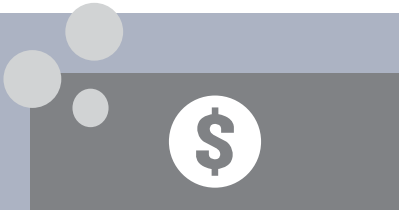
**Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative paid gross receipts tax totaling \$1,472,583.34 in 2021. This total was divided among the 32 schools in the cooperative service area.**

Not-for-profit electric cooperatives are exempt from paying federal income tax. However, they do pay fuel, state and federal unemployment tax, Social Security, Medicare and gross receipts tax, in lieu of the ad-valorem tax paid by for-profit utility companies.

Gross receipts tax collected for a given year represents two percent of each member’s electric bill. Ninety-five percent of this tax is paid directly to schools within our service area, based on the miles of line the cooperative maintains within each school district. The remaining five percent of the collected gross receipts tax is withheld by the state for collection and handling fees.

By paying a percentage of the cooperative’s gross income to support area school districts, Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative members are sharing in the responsibility of educating today’s youth. The table provided below lists the school systems and the amounts they received.

.....



### AMOUNT RECEIVED: BY SCHOOL

Adair .....	\$73,384.22	Inola .....	\$3,344.21	Pryor .....	\$43,004.40
Afton .....	\$38,044.56	Jay .....	\$144,162.50	Quapaw .....	\$36,395.53
Bluejacket .....	\$87,980.68	Kansas .....	\$69,309.28	Salina .....	\$49,501.73
Chelsea .....	\$59,675.05	Kenwood .....	\$10,079.16	Sequoyah .....	\$958.95
Chouteau Mazie .....	\$42,220.22	Ketchum .....	\$37,224.06	Turkey Ford .....	\$18,097.59
Cleora .....	\$28,841.07	Leach .....	\$21,682.58	Vinita .....	\$45,869.79
Colcord .....	\$62,734.36	Locust Grove .....	\$31,831.19	Welch .....	\$88,663.83
Commerce .....	\$19,334.37	Miami .....	\$36,574.32	White Oak .....	\$36,456.98
Fairland .....	\$54,031.02	Moseley .....	\$26,191.44	Wickliffe .....	\$15,166.52
Foyil .....	\$254.56	Oaks .....	\$13,089.83	Wyandotte .....	\$76,396.30
Grove .....	\$190,586.93	Osage .....	\$11,496.11		







# MORE THAN A HOBBY

LOCAL CRAFTSMAN'S WORK IN HIGH DEMAND

**Just west of Locust Grove, a pipe fence encircles a neatly-manicured property on the outskirts of town. A gravel drive here leads through a gate, and several hundred yards back off the road sits a nice but nondescript home and shop building. This place could be just about anywhere, except that what is happening inside the shop on any given day is anything but nondescript.**



Ten hours a day, six days a week, the 900 square-foot building is abuzz with the sounds of grinding, hammering, and CNC machining. In an adjoining room, owner Scott Reed is busy at a work bench building each knife that he will send across the country where it will be prized by a proud, new owner.

One would never guess that the knives Reed makes in this shop are shipped all over the U.S. Reed himself often wonders how he found himself in this place. It wasn't that long ago that he was constructing homes and breaking mules. Sure, he's always had a knack for creating. He's always been handy in the sense that he could build or repair just about anything, but this is something altogether different. Something special.

Reed recalls with clarity the moment seven years ago that inspired this now thriving business. That moment occurred one fall day back in 2014 while he was hunting with his father, Charles. Charles had just killed a deer. He handed his son an old knife and asked him to help gut the animal so the pair could drag it out of the woods. While Scott was performing the task, the knife handle broke.

In most cases, a broken knife would be destined for the trash bin. Charles even suggested as much. However, Scott offered an alternative.



"I said, 'How about I cut some horn off that deer and see if I can't fix it?'"

True to his word, Reed took the vintage knife home and fashioned a new handle for it from the animal's horn.

On another occasion, Reed's son, Garrett, brought home a belt buckle crafted from cow horn.

**"That gave me the idea of making a knife with a cow horn handle that would appeal to the cowboy," said Reed.**

Thus was born a hobby that wouldn't remain a hobby long. Given Reed's proclivity for creativity, word spread quickly about his craftsmanship. His designs were popular and his attention to detail second to none.

Once a hobbyist handmaking knives in his spare time, Reed is now a full-blown businessman with a large investment in CNC equipment, an investment he began making in 2019 to ensure the integrity and precision of each knife sold.

Reed's mind was—and still is—fertile ground for ideas, always searching for new concepts and ways to improve existing designs. While he has crafted any number of fixed-blade knives, his signature model is a "cowboy switchblade" that employs a functional design for single-hand opening and closing. It's a popular, non-tactical style that appeals to almost any ranch hand who might need a free hand to grab an ear tag.

How the cowboy switchblade came about is a story in and of itself.

"I was helping a friend work cattle, and I saw the need for a one-handed opening knife that would speed things up a little," Reed explained.

"I started counting the seconds between each calf, and it was about 15-20 seconds per head that we could save if we had a one-handed opening knife. When I did the math of how many head we processed that morning, it would have saved us about two hours. So, I went home and started drawing."

The project wasn't without its challenges. But in the end, his faith grew.

**"I was struggling with trying to design something that I had no concept of how to create. It was then that I remembered a scripture about King Solomon where he prayed and asked the Lord for wisdom, so that's what I did. The Bible teaches us that He'll give you the desires of your heart if you just ask, and that's what He did."**

Don't let the curb appeal of a Reed-made knife fool you. While they may be alluring, these knives are working knives. They are rugged and durable—built to take a beating in the field and stay sharp.

"My blade steel is a high-speed tool steel called CPM M4," Reed explained. "It's really, really tough. A little more difficult to sharpen but equally difficult to dull. For handles and bolsters, I use stainless steel, brass, elk horn, and cow horn. In the past year, I've started using some man-made composite materials that I really like, such as micarta."





**Reed understands there are countless practical uses for cutting instruments. Thus, he says he is also open to exploring designs that appeal to other types of consumers.**

"Up to this point, my business has been supported by the cowboy," he explained. "But I want to deviate and create another market appealing to the urbanite. I hope to do this by building a modern version of an old traditional pocket knife."

The knife gig has always been a one-man show for Reed and that creates a unique set of challenges as word spreads and demand for his product increases.

"Supply and demand are probably my biggest challenges," he said. "One guy can only produce so much. I've invested a lot of money in machinery and tools to make myself more efficient, and that's helped, but you can still only do so much by yourself. As the demand continues to increase, the ability to stay up with it sometimes causes me some anxiety. I doubt I'll ever have employees, even though I'd like to have somebody. I don't know that I can see that happening."

Hiring help may also take away from the unique artistic elements Reed gives each knife he builds. He stops short of calling himself an artist, however.

"I don't think of myself as an artist," he said. "I think of Charlie Russell and Frederic Remington as artists and whoever else paints beautiful paintings but, with that said, those guys can't hire somebody to do their work because it wouldn't be a Remington or a Russell, and to hire somebody to build my knife would mean it's not my knife anymore."

A Locust Grove native, Reed and wife Paula have been Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative members for more than thirty years. They have one son, the aforementioned Garrett.

"I've lived here all my life," he said. "I graduated from high school in Locust Grove in 1983 and started working my guts out. I cut firewood, framed houses, broke mules to ride, and raised a small family. I'm a builder. I've always liked to make things."



**For more information about Reed Knives, call 918-625-7260. You can find him on Facebook @CowboySwitchblade, on Instagram as reed.knife, or online at [www.jcargillleather.com](http://www.jcargillleather.com).**

For him, making knives is much more than simply a way to make a living. He's forged relationships along the way that he values greatly.

"It's very rewarding when an old cowboy calls to talk shop," Reed said. "Before the conversation is over he has opened up to me and I get the chance to minister to him. The discussion just flows naturally and I look for opportunities as I'm led to put God into the conversation. Many of these conversations have led to good friendships."

Business remains brisk for Reed Knives. So much so that new orders must be placed well in advance.

"Business has always been good and continues to grow," Reed said. "In fact, I had to cut Christmas orders off in August last year."

In 2020, saddle maker and friend, Justin Cargill, a Cushing native, became an authorized retailer of Reed Knives. Their partnership has helped ease inventory strain.

"Our arrangement has been mutually beneficial," said Reed of Cargill. "Moving forward, if someone wants a knife for a Christmas gift and hasn't ordered from me by summer, they may be able to find what they want on his website."

.....



# FOOD SAFETY

## WAIT! DON'T EAT THAT!

**If there is a power outage for more than an hour or two, the food in your refrigerator or freezer may not be safe to eat.**

**Unlike mold that visually warns you not to eat old bread or cheese, many foods do not scream "Don't eat me! I'll make you sick!" They can look harmless, but bacteria growing in them can bring on a slew of symptoms like nausea, chills, cramps, and vomiting.**

**During and after an outage, keep these food safety tips in mind:**

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to retain the cold air.
- Time the outage. Foods in an unopened fridge up to four hours should be safe to eat.
- Know the numbers: a freezer that is half full and is kept closed can keep foods frozen for 24 hours.
- Know the numbers: a freezer that is full and is kept closed can keep foods frozen for 48 hours.
- Never taste food to determine if it is safe to eat. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Discard perishable food in your refrigerator after four hours without power or a cold source like dry ice.
- Perishable foods include meat, fish, cut fruits and vegetables, eggs, meats, and leftovers.
- Discard any food with unusual color, odor, or texture.

**Remember, when in doubt, throw it out.**

**\*989909\***

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS

**for winter months**

- **Let the sun in during the day.** There's a reason the family cat likes to nap in sunbeams – the sun is a fantastic source of free heat. By opening your curtains and blinds during the daytime, you take advantage of the greenhouse effect and allow the sun to naturally heat your home.
- **Close the curtains at night.** Unfortunately, windows can also be a source of heat loss, as they are not as well insulated as your walls. Close your curtains and blinds when the sun goes down to prevent cold chills from cooling your home. Consider purchasing insulated curtains to maximize the energy efficiency of your windows.
- **Eliminate air leaks and drafts.** Air sealing your home is simple, effective, and relatively inexpensive. Caulking and weatherstripping usually pay for themselves in energy savings within a year. Use caulk for cracks and openings between stationary objects like door and window frames. You can use weatherstripping around anything that moves, like the door itself or window sashes.

.....





# FEATURE RECIPES

## DELAWARE COUNTY



**Cook Time:** 1 hour

### HASH BROWN CASSEROLE

RECIPE BY MEGAN SPALDING | COLCORD

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 lb frozen hash browns, thawed
- 8 oz sour cream
- 1 can of cream of chicken soup
- 16 oz shredded cheese
- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper

**Step 1:** Melt butter and combine all ingredients, set aside a small amount of cheese.

**Step 2:** Pour mixture into a 9x13 dish and sprinkle remaining cheese on top.

**Step 3:** Cook uncovered for one hour at 350° F.

**Step 4:** Serve warm.



**Cook Time:** 30 minutes

### KREUTZ CASSEROLE

RECIPE BY BOBBY KREUTZ | GROVE

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb ground venison or beef
- 1/2 lb crumbled bacon
- 1 large can baked beans
- 2 tbsp Billy Sims Barbecue Sauce
- 1 medium chopped onion

**Step 1:** Brown ground venison or beef in skillet.

**Step 2:** Layer meat, beans, and sauce in a large baking dish.

**Step 3:** Bake at 350° F for 30 minutes.

**Step 4:** Enjoy!



**Simmer Time:** 1 hour

## CAJUN CHICKEN GUMBO

RECIPE BY KAREN RICE | ROSE

### INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup oil
- 3/4 cup flour
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 bell pepper
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 lb smoked sausage, sliced
- 2 1/2 lbs chicken pieces
- 1 qt hot water
- 1 tbsp seasoning salt
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- Cayenne pepper to taste

**Step 1:** In a 4 quart pot stir in flour to hot oil to make a roux.

**Step 2:** Add onion, pepper, celery, and garlic and saute until onions are clear.

**Step 3:** Add sausage slices and chicken pieces and cook for an additional 10 minutes.

**Step 4:** Add water and seasonings and cover. Cook on low heat at a simmer for one hour.

**Step 5:** Serve hot over cooked rice, garnish as desired, and enjoy!



**Cook Time:** 5-6 hours

## TORTELLINI SOUP

RECIPE BY MELVINA SHOTPOUCH | JAY

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 bags frozen cheese tortellini
- 1 small bag baby spinach
- 2 cans Italian style diced tomatoes or Rotel
- 1 box chicken broth
- 8 oz cream cheese
- 1 lb sausage (I use hot)

**Step 1:** Brown sausage in skillet and add to Crockpot or slow cooker.

**Step 2:** Add remaining ingredients to Crockpot or slow cooker and cook on low for 5-6 hours.

**Step 3:** Garnish as desired and serve.



# PROVIDING CHRISTMAS CHEER

## 2021 ANGEL TREE PROJECT



### 15 YEARS AND COUNTING

For the 15th consecutive year, cooperative employees were blessed with the opportunity to make a traditional Christmas holiday a reality for underprivileged children in our service territory. Through the REC Cares angel tree, a total of 58 children were sponsored in 2021, including 46 from ROCMND Area Youth Services, 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.

Gift recipients ranged in age from nine months to 17 years of age.

"NOEC employees did an awesome job assembling angel tree gifts this year," commended Sarah Wilhelm, chair of the REC Cares committee. "The committee is grateful to everyone who lent a hand with the shopping, compiling, loading, and delivering of the gifts."

REC Cares provides contributions and support to local charitable and philanthropic causes, as well as to people in crisis. This includes assisting local nursing homes, troops serving overseas, disadvantaged children, and people impacted by events such as house fires or illness.

**REC Cares is funded through donations graciously received from NOEC employees. The board for this foundation is comprised of nine cooperative employees who vote on the distribution of these funds. The organization aims to provide assistance for the betterment of local communities.**

