

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



TWO GIRLS' TULIPS

FEBRUARY 2023



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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NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Les Newkirk
ROW Services Superintendent

I haven't been all around the world, but I have seen quite a bit of our amazing country. I've done a little bit of everything in order to make a living. I suppose you could say I'm *well-traveled*.

After graduating from Jay High School in 1977, I went into construction, doing mostly concrete work. One of my first jobs was helping pour and finish floors for the former City of Faith Hospital that Oral Roberts built in Tulsa in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In between construction jobs I learned how to do fiberglass lamination and worked on everything from industrial applications to Cobra kit cars. I also used that skill to help build in-ground swimming pools across Texas and Oklahoma and a harbor for unloading ships in Oahu, Hawaii.

Never one to turn down an opportunity, I headed to Alaska for a couple of years to work in the oil field. Working on offshore drilling rigs in the Cook Inlet, Prudhoe Bay, and Deadhorse on the North Slope was a unique experience I'll never forget. I stayed in Alaska for several more months and worked for a home builder doing all of his concrete work.

I decided one day that it was time to come home. I moved back to Jay in November of 1996. On March 3, 1997, I came to work for Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative as a chemical applicator for our contract right-of-way division. I finally settled down, having found a place to start what has been a great career. I was honored to accept a supervisory position here in August 2001.

During my NOEC career, I have come to appreciate how hard our crews work to keep the rights-of-way clear and the power on for our membership. Since trees never stop growing and rights-of-way never stop encroaching on electrical lines, vegetation maintenance is a never-ending cycle. It can be somewhat of a thankless job. For a right-of-way worker, the job is never done. But that's okay. It comes with the territory.

Continued on page 2.



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NOEC BIDS FAREWELL



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MAYES COUNTY RECIPE



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TWO GIRLS' TULIPS

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, OK 74301 or email to: publicrelations@noec.coop

\$100 IS HIDING!

Search the pages of *Northeast 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, 2023, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

FUN FACT!

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative is celebrating its 85th year serving you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tulsa Boat, Sport & Travel Show
Feb 1-5 | Tulsa
Expo Square

Northeast District Livestock Show
Feb 2 | Pryor
Mayes County Fairgrounds

Monthly Meeting - Miami Arts & Humanities Council
Feb 9 | Miami
Miami Public Library

Midsouth Tackle, Hunting & Boat Show
Feb 10-12 | Pryor
Mayes County Fairgrounds

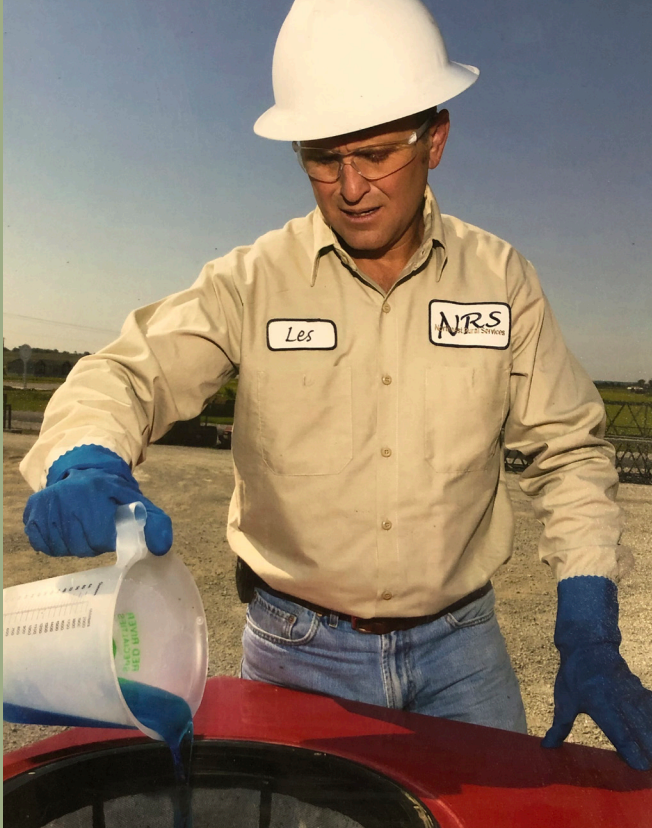
Miami 4-H Club Meeting
Feb 13 | Miami
Courthouse Annex

Man Vs. Beast
Feb 17-18 | Jay
Delaware County Fairgrounds

Home & Garden Show
Mar 3-5 | Grove
102 Lannell Drive

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





NO PLACE LIKE HOME CONTINUED FROM INSIDE COVER

I can't express enough how much NOEC has impacted myself and my family. Not only do I love what I do for our cooperative and its membership, I work with fantastic people. As I get closer to retirement, I consider every day how blessed I am to be part of the NOEC family.

There's a famous movie line that says *there's no place like home*. Sometimes you have to get out and see the country to be able appreciate what you left behind. That's been my experience anyway. Life brought me back home and I'm glad it did.



To learn more about NOEC's Right-of-Way department please visit:

noec.coop/member-services/right-of-way

Or scan this code with your smartphone:



Pictured above, (top) Les Newkirk carefully mixes herbicide for right-of-way application, and (below) Newkirk stops for a quick photo op in front of Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs, during a 2011 right-of-way conference in Chicago. (photo credit: David Cusick)

SPEAK UP FOR SAFETY



IDENTIFY HAZARDS ON THE JOB

While one workday can blend into the next, noticing and speaking up about unsafe or hazardous work conditions helps keep everyone safe. Workplace hazards can be chemical (such as a spill), physical, biological (e.g., bloodborne pathogens) or ergonomic.

The National Safety Council (NSC) recommends **taking the following precautionary measures in the workplace:**

- Wear proper personal protective equipment.
- Pay attention and avoid distracted walking.
- Use caution in high-traffic areas, such as doorways and around corners.
- Store heavy objects close to the floor and away from walkways.
- Stack materials in a way that they will not fall.
- Check workstations for exposed cords.
- Ensure cups and glasses have spill-proof lids.
- Replace burned out lighting.

In addition:

- Immediately report/address unsafe conditions.
- Always observe lockout/tag-out procedures.
- Do not skip steps or rush.

Know the process of reporting hazards and speak up for safety, regardless of your title or position.

SAFETY FIRST

Info sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for private industry, 2020 and 2021 and The National Safety Council.

NONFATAL INJURIES AND ILLNESSES

2,607,900 Total recordable cases in 2021

12 Median days away from work in 2020

266,530 Sprains, strains, and tears in 2020

128,200 Back injuries in 2020

211,640 Falls, slips, and trips in 2020

FATAL WORK-RELATED INJURIES

5,190 Fatal work-related injuries in 2021

1,253 Roadway incidents in 2021

850 Falls, slips, and trips in 2021

481 Homicides in 2021

**DON'T BECOME A STATISTIC.
WORK SAFELY!**

NOEC BIDS FAREWELL TO RETIREES

Retirement brings mixed feelings for both the departing employee and the organization for whom they worked. It's an interesting combination of celebration and sadness.

It's natural to want to celebrate a job well done and the excitement that comes with turning the page on life's next chapter. However, there is also an intrinsic sadness that comes from losing the daily camaraderie of a good friend as well as the experience and loyalty of a valued employee.

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative bid farewell to seven retirees and a combined 184 years of experience in 2022, four of whom left with more than 30 years of service to co-op members.



David Cusick

RIGHT-OF-WAY

David Cusick's career at Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative was a circuitous, 37-plus-year ride with several stops along the way. Cusick retired from

his post as Director of Right-of-Way for the co-op subsidiary on June 1, 2022.

Cusick's journey to management would include stops at Chemical Applicator, Foreman, and Supervisor. On August 15, 2001, he accepted a promotion to Manager of Right-of-Way Services for the subsidiary.

He's forged many relationships over the past four decades, but the ones Cusick will remember most are with his closest co-workers.

"It's always been a family-type of environment here," he said. "It's like no other place I know of."

The cooperative right-of-way division lost another good hand with the November 4, 2022, retirement of laborer **James Guthridge**. Guthridge began his 11-year NOEC journey on January 3, 2011.



Kim Bates

ENGINEERING

Replacing the irreplaceable is an unenviable if not impossible task, but that is precisely what the NOEC Engineering team faced when GIS

Mapping Technician **Kim Bates** hung it up after more than four decades of service. Bates worked her last day on May 23, 2022, giving her just over 43 years of cooperative service.

Bates joined the co-op on May 21, 1979 as an engineering technician. Except for a brief stint in a supervisory role, she spent her entire career at NOEC doing hands-on mapping work. It was something she not only enjoyed but something at which she was extremely proficient.

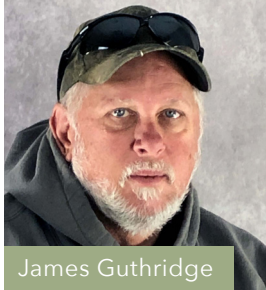
Engineering methods changed significantly over the course of Bates' career. She said great strides have been made to the tools used for mapping. Most notably, she explained, was the software itself.

"Mapping has changed so much," Bates confirmed. The original map books had to be drawn by hand and as soon as you put out an updated book it was outdated because of the daily changes that were made in the field.

Now when a change is made on in the electronic map it's seen by everyone the next morning after the updates are made overnight.

NOEC Manager of Engineering Shane Burgess acknowledged the void the Bates' retirement will create.

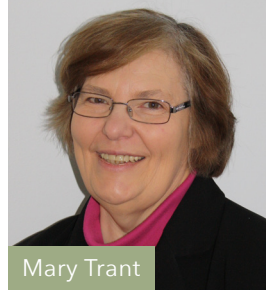
"Kim leaves a legacy of experience in the Engineering department that will be difficult to replace," Burgess said.



James Guthridge



Cathy Evans, Karen Graves, Dee Grapevine



Mary Trant



Brian Bell

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Just a few months into 2022, the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative Financial Services team found itself reorganizing after losing nearly 90 years of experience with the retirement of four employees: **Dee Grapevine, Karen Graves, Cathy Evans, and Mary Trant**. More than two-thirds of that lost experience came with the February 7 retirements of Grapevine and Graves.

Grapevine joined the NOEC family on February 6, 1990, and accrued 32 years of service. She was originally hired to fill a position in the Computer Services department, the precursor of our current IT group. Her original responsibilities included writing and editing programs, mostly for a then-burgeoning satellite division.

Graves joined the cooperative family in February 1990 as a billing clerk. She also served as an accounts payable clerk and accountant during her nearly 32 years of service at NOEC.

Evans joined the NOEC accounting team on November 1, 2005, as cost accountant for the cooperative subsidiary. In 2012, she accepted a promotion as accounting supervisor for the cooperative, the position from which she retired January 14, 2022.

Trant was with the organization nearly seven years and served as accounting supervisor for the subsidiary since coming aboard on March 2, 2015. Her last day was January 3, 2022.

MEMBER SERVICES

The NOEC Member Services team lost one employee to retirement in 2022. Member Services Representative **Brian Bell** worked for the cooperative just shy of nine years before calling it a career on December 1, 2022. Bell joined NOEC January 6, 2014, and was stationed at the Grove office the duration of his co-op career.



Connie Porter



Brayden Ingram

FRIENDS WE LOST IN 2022

Tragedy struck our cooperative family twice in 2022 when vehicle accidents claimed the lives of lineman Brayden Ingram and Connie Porter.

A valued member of the NOEC Financial Services team, Porter joined the cooperative family on September 14, 1981. She served in the position of controller at the time of her passing. She also served as general accounting coordinator, general accounting supervisor, and manager of financial services during her 41-plus-year cooperative tenure.

“Connie had an unwavering belief in our organization,” remarked NOEC General Manager Daniel Webster. “I never once doubted her dedication to the cooperative and to her coworkers or her desire and her commitment to do the right thing for our membership. She will be missed greatly.”

Ingram joined the NOEC family March 27, 2017, served as a lineman/servicemen at the time of his December 8 passing.

“The loss of Brayden is a terrible thing,” said NOEC Manager of Operations Nick Sutton. “He was more than just a coworker to so many of us—he was our friend. He would help with anything and he always made you smile and laugh. He will be missed.”

The NOEC family extends its condolences to the Porter and Ingram families as they mourn the loss of their loved ones.

Of Windmills And Wooden Shoes

What comes to mind when you think of a tulip? Windmills or wooden shoes, perhaps? Maybe colorful houses lining winding canals, or neat rows of flowers growing throughout the Dutch countryside? Those would certainly be natural associations, since it is widely assumed that tulips originated in the Netherlands.

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FUN FACT #1: A symbol of power and wealth, sultans once wore tulips on their turbans. The name "tulip" is actually derived from the Persian word "tulipan" which means "turban."

While the iconic flower has been cultivated in Holland since the 16th century, they were actually made famous in the gardens of sultans who ruled during the Ottoman Empire. Long before that, tulips were simply wildflowers that popped up in fields and along roadsides in Central Asia.

FUN FACT #2: The tulip is the national flower of Turkey and Afghanistan.

Legend has it that a certain sultan started the tradition of presenting tulip bulbs to important palace visitors. One such guest was a Flemish nobleman and ambassador. The nobleman wrote enthusiastically about the beauty of the tulip and even sent some bulbs on to a colleague. That colleague was Carolus Clusius, French scholar and botanist in the gardens of the court of the Austrian emperor. Clusius was so enamored with the gift that tulips were given a place of honor in the royal gardens. When Clusius was appointed professor at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, he brought tulips with him and planted them in the university's botanical garden. He discovered that the flower thrived in the sandy soil found in Dutch coastal areas, thus cultivating tulips was a highly successful endeavor. Clusius intended to sell the exotic flowers, but his asking price was so exorbitant that he found no buyers. As the story goes, thieves who crept into the university garden one night and stole tulips were ultimately responsible for the flower's widespread cultivation in the Netherlands.

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Blooming IN THE USA

FUN FACT #3: The United States remains the top importer of tulips and receives one billion of them annually from the Dutch.

A quick survey of the Ottawa County countryside near Miami, Oklahoma, reveals no visible Dutch-style windmills, and Jade Robertson and her family have never owned a pair of wooden shoes.

“You’ll usually find us in rubber boots, muck boots, or any other old shoes we don’t mind to get dirty in,” Robertson smiled.

The Robertsons do, however, have something unique in common with the Dutch: a deep love of tulips. That might help explain why the family opened a u-pick flower farm, Two Girls’ Tulips, in the spring of 2022. The unique venture was well-received.

“We were blown away last year by the amount of support from our community,” Robertson said. “We are so grateful and hopeful that we can continue to grow.”

Two Girls’ Tulips has indeed grown. The small, family-owned and operated farm will feature 13,000 tulips during the spring of 2023 instead of the 2,000 planted in preparation for its initial season last spring.



ALL BULBS, MIND YOU, ARE PLANTED BY HAND WHICH, ROBERTSON SAYS WITH A CHUCKLE, "CAN BE CHALLENGING YET REWARDING."

Tulip MANIA

When tulip mania swept through Holland in the mid-17th century, bulb prices soared. Because of their beauty and rarity, they commanded fantastic prices and only the wealthy could afford them. They quickly became a status symbol and wealthy Dutch and European aristocrats paid huge sums for them.

FUN FACT #4: Tulips were once the most expensive flower in the world. In the 17th century they cost more than 10 times the average worker's annual salary.



She added: "Our vision is to create a fun, outdoor activity in our area for families to enjoy," said Robertson, a registered nurse whose husband Micah is an electric lineman. The Robertsons have two daughters for whom the farm is named: six-year-old Journey and three-year-old Alivia. "Tulip farming is a hobby that we've grown to love. It's something our family enjoys doing together."

Why tulips, you ask?

"We were particularly drawn to the idea of starting a tulip farm because of their beautiful, vibrant blooms," explained Robertson. "There aren't any other tulip farms in our area so we felt it was something the community could enjoy with us."

From December 1636 to February 1637 some of the most prized cultivars, such as the coveted Switzer, experiencing a 12-fold price jump. The most expensive tulip receipts were for 5,000 guilders, the going rate for a nice house at that time. One early 17th century bill of sale recorded the following transaction for a single bulb: "two loads of wheat; four loads of rye; four fat oxen; five swine; twelve sheep; two hogsheads of wine; four barrels of beer; two barrels of butter; 1,000 pounds of cheese; a bed with linens; a suit of clothes; a silver tankard and a sizeable wagon to haul it all away."

The tulip trade was certainly a socio-economic phenomenon in the Dutch Republic, already one of the world's leading economic and financial powers in the 17th century.

FUN FACT #5: Tulips are an important part of the economy in the Netherlands, where over three billion tulip bulbs are produced annually for export and domestic use.



The Robertson Family

FUN FACT #7: Tulips bloom in the spring for only three to seven days.

PICTURE-PERFECT **Petals**

The Robertsons are not tulip “snobs” like the nurserymen of old, mind you.

“I’m partial to all varieties of tulips,” said Robertson. “Some of the special varieties do tend to be expensive, especially when buying in bulk. This year we have a variety of Triumph tulips: pink, purple, yellow, and rainbow; red Seadov; a Jumbo Darwin mix; and a white hybrid Darwin. We hope to expand our selection each year as we learn and grow.”

FUN FACT #6: There are over 150 different species and 3,000 varieties of tulips.

The Robertsons take special measures to make tulips feel at home here in northeast Oklahoma.

“We bring in topsoil to make our tulip rows since the ground on our property is rocky,” she said. “The soil also needs to drain well, so we mix in sand.”

Robertson said families or individuals are welcome to “come out, take pictures, admire the views, and pick fresh blooms to take home to enjoy.”

Jade and Micah were both born and raised right here in northeast Oklahoma. Neither imagined they’d one day have a six-acre tulip farm.

“I don’t think either of us ever dreamt we’d be flower farmers,” she said. “It was an idea that God put on our hearts after being married for several years, and we hope to be able to use it to share His love in our community.”

The tulip season is short and sweet so be ready to visit in early April, says Robertson. Since spring weather can be unpredictable, she recommends liking/following Two Girls’ Tulips on Facebook for the farm’s days and hours of operation.

“Be sure and follow us on Facebook for updates as spring arrives,” she said. “Our hours of operation will be posted on our page as soon as the tulips have bloomed. And feel free to reach out to us via messenger with any questions.”



SCAN ME!

to visit Two Girls’ Tulips



FEATURED RECIPES

MAYES COUNTY



No baking required!

CHERRY CHEESECAKE

BARBARA CHILDERS

INGREDIENTS

Crust

- 1/3 cup melted butter
- 1 1/2 cups Graham cracker crumbs
- 1 tbsp sugar

Filling

- 8 oz cream cheese
- 1/3 cup lemon juice
- 1/2 to 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 4 oz can Eagle brand condensed milk

Topping

- 1 can cherry pie filling

Step 1: To make crust mix melted butter, Graham cracker crumbs, and sugar. Pat mixture into pie shell and chill until set.

Step 2: For filling combine cream cheese and half of the milk and mix well. Then add the rest of the milk and vanilla to mixture and combine. Then stir in lemon juice and lightly mix.

Step 3: Pour filling into prepared pie crust and set in the refrigerator to chill.

Step 4: Once cooled pour can of cherry pie filling over pie and serve.

SWEET PECAN PIE

GARY JOHNSON

INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup melted butter
- 3 eggs beaten
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup white corn syrup
- 1 1/4 cup pecan halves (I prefer natives)

Step 1: Preheat oven to 350°F and line a pie dish with pie crust.

Step 2: Beat eggs then add sugar, vanilla, corn syrup, butter, and pecans. Mix-well and add filling to crust.

Step 3: Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes with pie crust covered with foil. Bake an additional 25 minutes without foil to darken and crisp the crust.



Bake time: 50 minutes