

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



CELEBRATE 25 YEARS
O.D. BAKER RETIRING FROM SERVICE

DECEMBER 2023

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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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GROVE OFFICE

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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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Pinching Pennies

Shane Burgess
Manager of Engineering

A penny saved is a penny earned is an adage most of us have heard more than once in our lifetimes. It is one that holds merit, especially when economic

conditions are less than favorable and families are stretching every dollar to its fullest.

The US Energy Information Administration reports the average household used 10,791 kWh of electricity in 2022. That's about \$1,360 dollars annually for the average household. Utility costs are a necessity. Fortunately, there are ways that members can reduce their monthly electricity consumption. Let's talk about some of the things you can do to pinch that penny this winter.

- **Use LED lights.** Switching to LED lights is an energy savings no-brainer. Why? LEDs use 90 percent less electricity than incandescent lights.
- **Consider fiber optic decorations.** Want to take holiday energy savings a step beyond LED? Consider fiber optic decorations. Fiber optic technology uses one lamp source to light multiple light points, making it the most economical and energy efficient choice.
- **Limit lit time.** Sure, we all love the ambiance lights provide our holiday celebrations. But we don't need them on all day or when we aren't in the room to enjoy them.
- **Don't peak.** As tempting as it is to check on what's cooking in the oven, the smart move is to use the oven light. Every time you open the oven door, the temperature drops as much as 25 percent.
- **Seal it.** Reducing air leaks is an effective way to cut heating costs. Caulking and weatherstripping are two simple and effective air-sealing techniques. Some common trouble areas include: windows, exterior doors, chimney shaft, recessed lighting, ducts, and exterior wall penetrations.

For more energy efficiency tips visit:
www.noec.coop/together-we-save



04

O.D. BAKER RETIRING



06

2024 YOUTH PROGRAMS



10

CRAIG COUNTY RECIPES

\$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 January 1, 2024, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

FUN FACT!

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



983491

DECEMBER EVENTS

Ketchum Christmas Parade

Dec 1 | Ketchum

Downtown

Route 66 Christmas Parade

Dec 2 | Miami

Main Street

Commerce Christmas Parade

Dec 2 | Commerce

Downtown

Quapaw Christmas Parade

Dec 2 | Quapaw

Downtown

Rotary Club Pancake Feed

Dec 2 | Miami

Miami Civic Center

Afton Christmas Parade

Dec 6 | Afton

Downtown

Vinita Christmas Parade

Dec 7 | Vinita

Downtown

Grove Lighted Christmas Parade

Dec 9 | Grove

Main Street

Jay Christmas Parade

Dec 9 | Jay

Main Street

Fairland Christmas Parade

Dec 9 | Fairland

Downtown

Pryor Christmas Parade

Dec 9 | Pryor

Downtown

34th Annual Grand Lake Christmas Light Boat Parade

Dec 9 | Afton

Cherokee Yacht Club

Chouteau Christmas Parade

Dec 11 | Chouteau

Downtown

The Isaacs Christmas Show at the Coleman Theatre

Dec 16 | Miami

Coleman Theatre

NEW FACES

CONTRACTORS HELP GET THE JOB DONE

NOTE: LEE INSPECTION IS CURRENTLY CONDUCTING POLE INSPECTIONS IN THE MAZIE AREA OF MAYES COUNTY.

Who are our contractors and what do they do?

NOEC has utilized contractors for many years. You may have seen them working around our system. Contractors are vital to the advancement of our cooperative. They provide the additional manpower necessary to complete important projects.

We have an excellent team at NOEC. Our operations and engineering employees stay busy with day-to-day maintenance and construction projects. However, there is much more work that needs to be done to accommodate constant growth and that is where contractors come in.

NOEC has a variety of contractors currently working across our system from work plan construction, pole change outs, pole inspections, right-of-way clearing and herbicide application, broadband construction, and in-home fiber installations. These contractors are experts in their respective fields and share our vision—to meet the needs of the membership.

At right is a list of contractors and their assignments.

- **Kiowa Line Builders**
Line construction, storm restoration*
- **Linetec Services**
Pole replacement, storm restoration*
- **Lee Inspection**
Pole inspection
- **United Underground**
Fiber optic construction
- **National On Demand**
Fiber optic in-home installation and set up
- **Riggs Tree Services**
Right-of-way clearing and maintenance
- **Progressive Solutions**
Herbicide application
- **APEX**
Herbicide application

* Following severe storms, Kiowa Line Builders and Linetec Services have assisted in restoration efforts. They work hand-in-hand with our team to make sure service is restored in a safe and efficient manner.

Each of the contractors working on our system will be specifically identifiable by a company logo on their vehicles. If you have concerns about a contractor, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to verify any contractor. Along the same lines, if a contractor performs its work in exemplary fashion, please let us know.

Power Pole Clutter

Flyers, satellite dishes, posters, basketball hoops, decorative lights, even hunting stands. You name it, someone has tried to staple, nail or tie it to a power pole. Here's a quick look at the dangers and pitfalls associated with unauthorized pole attachments.

Illegal

Many state and local laws and the National Electrical Safety Code prohibit any unauthorized items on poles. Utilities can face fines if these attachments aren't removed.



Pole Damage

Even small holes can allow moisture and insects past the pole sealant, which can shorten the life of the pole or weaken it and cause it to fall in a storm.



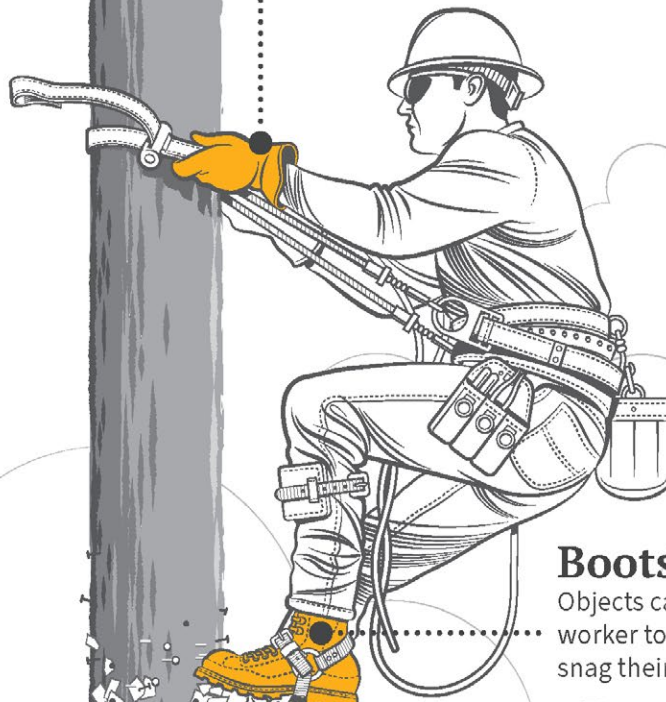
Hinders Repairs

Posters and flyers can hide identifying markers on poles and slow repair work.



Gloves

Staples, tacks and nails can puncture a lineworker's insulated rubber gloves and expose them to electric shock.



Boots

Objects can cause a worker to fall if they snag their boots.

Climbing Hooks

Nails and tacks can impede climbing hooks from sinking into the wood.



Dangerous

A person who gets too close to energized lines while attaching an object can be electrocuted.



Distraction

Some materials posted on poles, like mirrors or holiday decorations, can be a distraction to drivers.

TRUST FOUNDATION SERVICE REWARDING FOR BAKER

KANSAS RESIDENT RETIRES FROM OPERATION ROUND-UP BOARD AFTER 25 YEARS

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Phillipians 4:12

Life is good for O. D. Baker. It is especially good when the great-grandchildren visit. When that happens, he says, the rest of the world, with all of its cares, simply fades away.

“My world lights up when we get those great grandkids are down here,” Baker said with a smile.

Baker can easily recall a time when life wasn’t so good. The 76-year-old Delaware County native was born in Siloam Springs, Arkansas, and raised near Colcord. When he was seven, the family of four relocated to Tulsa, where Baker’s father secured a new job doing janitorial work at a large downtown bank building.

The family’s world was turned upside down one day when a large storage tank that Baker’s father was cleaning shifted and rolled, injuring him severely. The accident left Baker’s father permanently disabled. With no income, the family struggled to survive.

“We had an aunt and uncle that would come and help mom and dad,” Baker said. But it was still tough to keep the family fed.

“Groceries were real scarce,” recalls Baker.

For two very lean years, the family did what it could to exist. Baker even remembers he and his sister venturing out into their north Tulsa neighborhood near the corner of Pine and Lewis to rummage through dumpsters for discarded food.



O.D. presents a check to Oaks Volunteer Fire Department

“We never talked about it much, but that was where a lot of our food came from,” Baker said.

After two difficult years in Tulsa, the family moved back to Delaware County to be closer to its support network. They received a warm welcome from the community of Little Kansas and settled into a home located on the five-acre homestead owned by his grandfather, Burt Baker.

O. D. and his family have been fixtures in the Kansas community ever since.

When O.D. was a teenager, he began helping support the family when he went to work for local businessman J.O. Jones. Mr. Jones owned a grocery/general store and gave O.D. all the hours he could work, including before and after school and on Saturdays.

O.D. said he proved his worth to Jones by washing a car. But not just any car.

“He asked me what kind of work I could do and I told him I’d do anything,” recalls Baker. “So he rolled his wife’s brand new Oldsmobile out there and had me wash and wax it. I guess I did a good job because it was after that he offered me a job working in the store.”

Baker says he owes a lot to Jones for the opportunity he was given.

“He taught me a lot about business,” said Baker. “He was a good man.”

O. D. graduated from high school at Kansas in 1965, met and married his wife Rita there, and he and Rita raised two daughters there. Thanks to the kindness of the community, Baker family businesses have always been supported. The grocery store at “Baker’s Five Acres” closed in 2014 after a long run, but O. D. and Rita operated a furniture, antiques and collectibles store across from the fire station in Kansas for several more years. O. D. also did estate sales and business liquidations with Keith Davis for nearly 25 years.

Except for the years that O.D. left to obtain his teaching degree at Northeastern State University and teach at nearby Jay, Little Kansas has been home for his family.

“The community has always supported us,” O. D. confirmed. “We’ve had a lot of repeat business and that’s what you have to have to be in business in a small town. One thing I’ve always done, if I’ve ever sold you anything that I told you worked and it doesn’t, I’ll send a repairman out there to fix it or I’ll give you your money back.”

O. D. and Rita met by chance one day when she visited the store where he was working. She was from Idaho and was visiting relatives in Oklahoma.

“I was 21 and she was 18,” said O. D. “We went to the show Saturday night, went to church Sunday morning and Sunday night, and then she left and went back to Idaho. A few days later I called her and asked her if she wanted to get married. She told me she was on her way. We’ve been married 55 years.”

The Bakers have two daughters, Wadonna and Michelle, four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Life is good and O. D. says he has much for which to be thankful.

O. D. HAS MANY SUCCESS STORIES TO SHARE FROM HIS 25 YEARS ON THE OPERATION ROUND-UP TRUST FOUNDATION BOARD.

One in particular he will never forget is when assistance was awarded to a lady who could not afford the pump equipment needed to deliver a fresh, clean water supply into her home.

“I went to her home and the water inside her home at that time was black,” said Baker. “I am not sure how she ever drank it. She had a well, but she did not have money for a pump and a system to supply fresh water. That was one of the most gratifying grants we ever awarded.”

O. D. admits he was skeptical about joining the Trust Foundation board when first asked.

“When I was first approached about joining the board, I really didn’t have any interest in it at all. After I saw how we could help the communities that we serve, I agreed. Of course, I sure didn’t know I would serve for more than 16 years. We don’t get any pay for it, but it is a great reward. It is one of most gratifying things I’ve ever done in my life.”

Directly or indirectly, everyone in northeast Oklahoma has been impacted by Operation Round-Up. Perhaps you were helped or know someone who received assistance. Maybe your local fire department or police station received money to purchase equipment that may help save a life.

“It benefits a lot of people and all it costs each member is just a few pennies a month,” Baker said. “As far as I’m concerned, Operation Round-Up is one of the greatest things that the cooperative has ever done. I hope sincerely they never close that program. They should never let it go. If people could only see how much good it does.”



Operation Round-Up has given away \$3,518,000 in the 25 years that it has been in existence. With all of that generosity to talk about, it's easy to forget that the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative benevolent program owes its success to PEOPLE. There are people—cooperative members—who contribute to Operation Round-Up by allowing their monthly electric bill to be rounded up to the nearest dollar. There are also people who apply for the grants and make sure the money is put to good use.

At the very heart of the program are several individuals who oversee this process by ensuring that the money is matched with recipients where it will do the most good. These individuals make up the Operation Round-Up Trust Foundation Board of Directors. O. D. Baker is one of two individuals who has served on the board since the inception of the program in 1998. He served as the president of this board from day one. His keen judgement and sense of compassion made him the perfect individual to lead the group.

"Charlotte Corlett and I were both on the board when it was first organized," he said. "The group elected me president and I held that office ever since."

Due to physical limitations, Baker recently announced his retirement from the Trust Foundation board of directors.

"For me there was no greater reward than to serve on this board with these tremendous individuals and represent our four counties," Baker said, his voice cracking with emotion. "I've seen the needs in our communities and what we can do to help. If it hadn't been for my health, I never would have retired. I've had a lot of good experiences and have served with some of the best. It was a tremendous ride, I'll say that. It'll be one that I'll never forget."

OPERATION ROUND-UP NEEDS YOU!

Small change makes a big difference.

To learn more about the Operation Round-Up program or to apply visit: www.noec.coop/community-services/operation-round-up.

Call and round up today! 918.256.6405

Trust Foundation directors have indeed developed a close bond with one another over the years. Baker represented District 8 and Corlett, a Vinita resident, represents District 4. The remaining seven individuals on the Trust Foundation board are: Randy Parmley of Wyandotte (District 1), Mark Stunkard of Fairland (District 2), Bob Eubanks of Welch (District 3), Sandye Berga of Afton (District 5), Curt Stutzman of Adair (District 6), Linda Marlin of Locust Grove (District 7), and Mike Teel of Grove (District 9).

The group has lost some close friends who have served on the board over the years. Three former directors, including Terry Sixkiller, Don Boyett and Janet Kleeman, have passed away.

"We are very close-knit bunch—very much like a family," Baker said of the group. "We care about one another and worked well together."

Baker said each member of the board takes the responsibility seriously.

"I don't spend my money foolishly, and I did the same for the people we represented."

He added: "A lot of times we'd go into the community and talk to the people who submit an application. That gave us insight on why they need the money. If the need is there and we have the funds, we are going to do our best to help. We screen each of those applicants and give each request a lot of consideration. It can be difficult. There are tough decisions that must be made. Often, more money is requested than what can be granted. It is hard when you don't have enough money to go around."



Youth Tour Community Service Project or Essay | High School Juniors

Area high school juniors can complete a 6-8 hour community service project for a chance to win an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., June 14-20, as part of the 2024 Youth Tour contest. Winning students will also receive \$500 in spending cash. As an alternative form of entry, students can submit a 300-500 word essay on the topic "Making a Difference Where I Live." Students who are in the eleventh grade and attend school within the cooperative service area are eligible to participate in this contest. Cooperative membership is not a requirement. Entry deadline: March 25, 2024.

College/Trade School Scholarship | High School Seniors

High school seniors whose parents or guardians are NOEC members and who live in a household served by NOEC electric can apply for a \$2,000 scholarship to a college, university, or trade school. Four winners will be selected. Entry deadline: April 22, 2024.

Classroom Incentive

NOEC is encouraging area schools to get involved. If a teacher administers the Youth Tour program as part of a classroom assignment and produces a contest finalist, he or she could be rewarded with \$100 toward the purchase of classroom materials or equipment.

Community Service Award | FFA, FCCLA, 4-H

Local FFA, FCCLA, and 4-H organizations can apply for \$200 to assist with program expenses.

Safety Presentations

Area students can receive an introduction to electrical safety this school year, thanks to NOEC's "kid-friendly" safety presentations. Traveling presentations are available upon request to elementary school classrooms and local youth organizations. Presentations utilize visual aids and are geared toward a younger audience.

Visit www.noec.coop and click on the *Community Services* tab for youth programs entry forms and additional information.

Community Service Project Ideas

Pick up trash around your school campus and/or athletic field(s), your church, a park, or your town sports complex. Volunteer time at a local animal shelter, food pantry, or thrift store. Offer to mow, pull weeds, or rake leaves for an elderly neighbor. Collect non-perishable items to donate to a local food bank. Assemble goodie bags and deliver them to a local day center or assisted living facility.

Need more help? Contact the NOEC Public Relations department at publicrelations@noec.coop for a project idea in your area!



SCAN ME!

Youth Tour Contest

For Area High School Juniors

Tour Date: June 14-20, 2024 | Contest Deadline: March 25, 2024

6-8 Hour Community Service Project or 300-500 Word Essay

Four winners will be selected. Each will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., on June 14-20, 2024, as part of the 2024 Oklahoma Youth Tour. Each will also receive \$500 spending cash.

Students who are in the eleventh grade and attend public, private, charter, or home school within cooperative service area are eligible to participate in this contest. Cooperative membership is not a contest requirement.

Project must be 6-8 hours, documented with photos, and validated by a community representative for whom work is being performed. As an alternative form of entry, students can submit a 300-500 word essay on the topic *"Making a Difference Where I Live."*

Submit entry form and project photos or essay to: publicrelations@noec.coop, or mail this form and supporting documentation to NOEC, PO Box 948, Vinita, OK 74301.

Describe project _____

Why is this project important to you? _____

Community representative signature _____ **Phone** _____

Student name _____ **Age** _____ **Date of birth** _____

Guardian name _____ **Guardian signature** _____

I give permission for my child to attend Youth Tour if selected.

If you win, are you willing to attend Youth Tour? **Yes** **No**

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Phone _____ **Email** _____

School _____

Teacher name _____

If you were informed about this opportunity at school, please provide the name of the teacher so we can thank them.

\$2,000 Scholarship For Area High School Seniors

Deadline: Monday, April 22, 2024

Applicants may attend public, private, charter, or home school but must reside in a household served by NOEC, be in the top one-third of his/her graduating class, **submit two letters of recommendation (one school source & one character reference), and an official copy of their high school transcript.** Return this application with the supporting documentation listed above to: NOEC, PO Box 948, Vinita, OK 74301, or email to publicrelations@noec.coop.

I. Personal Information

Full name _____ Date of birth _____
Home address _____
Parents or guardians (*name and address if not the same*) _____
Household account # with Northeast Electric _____
Home phone number _____ Email address _____
Name of high school _____ Year graduating _____
What college/trade school do you plan to attend? _____
What will be your major field of study? _____

II. Financial Information

Annual household income \$39,999 or less \$40,000-\$69,999 \$70,000-\$99,999 \$100,000 or more
Number in family _____ Number currently in household _____
Factors or circumstances that affect your financial need _____

Other scholarships, grants, or financial awards you have received _____

III. Academic Performance & Potential: *Please Attach High School Transcript*

High school grade point average _____
Most recent ACT and/or SAT score, plus others ACT _____ SAT _____ Other _____
Honors & recognition received _____

Other academic achievements (*advanced placement, vo-tech education, concurrent college courses, etc.*) _____

IV. Other Activities: *List Includes During High School Only*

Participation in extra-curricular activities _____

Participation in school-affiliated organizations _____

Offices held in organizations _____

Work experience _____ Are you currently employed? _____
What type of work? _____ Other types of work? _____



FEATURED RECIPES

CRAIG COUNTY | HOLIDAY DESSERTS



BAKE TIME: 45 MINUTES

APPLE CRISP

DORAN HENDREN, VINITA

INGREDIENTS

Apple Filling

- 10 cups Granny Smith apples, sliced
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 tsp flour
- 1 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 cups water

Oat Crumble

- 1 cup cooked oats
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp baking powder
- 3/4 cup melted butter
- Optional: top with ice cream

Step 1: Preheat oven to 350°F.

Step 2: Place sliced apples in a 9x13 pan. Then mix white sugar, flour, ground cinnamon, and water into pan with apples.

Step 3: To create the oat crumble topping combine oats, flour, brown sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and melted butter in a large bowl. Then pour over apple mixture.

Step 4: Bake for 45 minutes then serve with ice cream.

PINK & PRETTY SALAD

DONNA CHRISTIAN, VINITA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can cherry pie filling
- 20oz crushed pineapple, drained well
- 1 can Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk
- 8oz Cool Whip
- Optional: chopped pecans

Step 1: Mix all ingredients together in large bowl.

Step 2: Cool mixture in refrigerator.

Step 3: Garnish as desired and serve.



QUICK & EASY!