

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



THE PERFECT SNACK
AT POPPIN' ON GRAND

MAY 2025



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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NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH

Kristen Sturgess
Manager of Human Resources

May is *National Electrical Safety Month*, thirty-one days that serve as a valuable reminder for all of us about the importance of using electricity safely at home, on the

job, and in the field. Whether you're working on a farm, running a business, or using appliances at home, electrical hazards can be life-threatening. Stay safe by following these key precautions:

Look Up and Live. Always be aware of overhead power lines when operating equipment, ladders, or irrigation pipes. Maintain at least ten feet of clearance.

Call Before You Dig. Contact 811 before breaking ground to avoid hitting underground power lines.

Use GFCIs. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (aka GFCIs) reduce shock risks, especially in damp or outdoor areas.

Practice generator safety. If using a generator, always run it outdoors in a well-ventilated area. Shut off your main disconnect to prevent back-feeding electricity into power lines, which can endanger linemen making repairs.

Know what to do in an emergency. If a power line falls on your vehicle, stay inside, call for help, and only exit if there's an immediate fire risk. If you must leave, jump clear, keeping both feet together, and shuffle away.

Electricity is essential, but it must be respected. Taking simple safety measures can protect lives, prevent property damage, and ensure reliable power for everyone.





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DELAWARE CO. 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 June 1, 2025, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.



May is National Electrical Safety Month!

May Events

Water Safety Days

May 1 | Pryor

Pryor Creek Recreation Center

Line Dance Class

May 1 | Jay

Delaware Co. Library

Citywide Garage Sale

May 2-4 | Grove

Citywide

Lil' Red & COBE

May 3 | Vinita

Water's Edge RV & Cabin Resort

Painting 101 - FREE

May 6 | Miami

Miami Public Library

State of the Park

May 7 | Pryor

MidAmerica Expo Center

Farm, Ag & Ecology Days

May 9, 10 | Grove

Har-Ber Village Museum

Lettin' the Lions Loose 5K and Fun Run

May 10 | Pryor

William Bradford Christian School

Happy Mother's Day!

May 11

Lil' Red & COBE

May 17 | Afton

Juan Montez Restaurant

Edible & Medicinal Plants Around Us

May 21 | Grove

Grove Public Library

ShrimpFest

May 30 | Afton

Shangri-La

Boys & Girls Club Teen Center GRAND OPENING

May 30 | Miami

14 1st Ave NW

COBE (Acoustic)

May 31 | Afton

The Coves Golf Club

Join the Fun!

ENERGYKIDS DAY JUNE 7



energy**KIDS**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 9AM-NOON
CRAIG COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS**

915 E Apperson Rd, Vinita, OK 74301

Attend and ENJOY:

Bounce house & obstacle course

Meet your linemen heroes

Touch-a-truck

Games & activities

Prizes for all ages

**THIS EVENT IS OPEN TO ALL CHILDREN, INCLUDING
NOEC MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS**

RSVP for energyKIDS Day

Let us know if you'll be attending energyKIDS day with your children!
To RSVP scan the code at right or visit noec.coop/5xar.



SCAN ME!

PRIZES FOR ALL AGES!

Attend and be entered to win:

- **Lifetime** 52' Basketball Hoop
- **Little Tikes** Climb & Slide Trampoline
- **Droyd** Zypster Electric Go-Kart, Blue & Pink
- **Apple** iPad 16
- **Nintendo Switch** with Super Mario Bros Games
- **Playstation 5** Astro Bot Bundle
- **Member's Mark** Explorer Sofa
- **Beats** Studio Pro Headphones
- **Adult prizes:** \$100 electric credit or gift card



Represent Your Co-op

FILE FOR BOARD OF TRUSTEES CANDIDACY

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A TRUSTEE?

Have you ever considered running for the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees?

Trustee elections for Districts 2, 7, and 9 will take place at the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting to be held later this year. Eligible members residing in Districts 2, 7, and 9, and nominated at their respective District Meetings, may serve as a Cooperative Trustee for a term of 3 years if elected at the Annual Membership Meeting. This year's District Meetings are currently scheduled for July 7 (District 7), July 8 (District 9), and July 10 (District 2) (further District Meeting details will be provided in the future). Trustee eligibility requirements are as follows:

TRUSTEE QUALIFICATIONS

SECTION 3.02. Qualifications

No person shall be eligible to become or remain a Trustee of the Cooperative who:

(a) while serving on the Board or during the five (5) years preceding nomination thereto shall have been finally adjudged to be guilty of a felony;

(b) is, becomes, or within the last five (5) years has been employed by the Cooperative, a Cooperative subsidiary, or a labor union which represents, or has represented, or has endeavored to represent any Cooperative employees;

(c) is, and if elected and seated as a Trustee will continue to be, a Close Relative of an incumbent Trustee or Cooperative employee;

(d) has not continuously been, for at least one (1) year prior to nomination, or who ceases after election to be, a Member in good standing of the Cooperative, receiving Electric Service at a permanent and year-round residence which is the Member's primary residential abode in the Trustee District from which the Member is elected; or

(e) is not at least eighteen (18) years old; or

(f) while a Trustee, and during the one (1) year immediately before becoming a Trustee, is or was employed by, controlled, owned more than ten percent (10%) of, served as a trustee, director, or officer of, or received more than ten percent (10%) of annual gross income from an Entity that advances the Entity's financial interest by: (1) competing with the Cooperative or a Cooperative subsidiary; or (2) providing electric energy or a good or service related to providing electric energy; PROVIDED, however, that a Trustee shall be permitted to serve as a director or Trustee of such an Entity on the Cooperative's behalf.

Notwithstanding the Close Relative restrictions prohibitions in Section 3.02(c), no incumbent Trustee shall lose eligibility to remain a Trustee or to be re-elected a Trustee if, during incumbency, the Trustee becomes a Close Relative of another incumbent Trustee or of a Cooperative employee because of a marriage or an adoption to which the Trustee was not a party.

OFFICIAL TRUSTEE CANDIDATE FILING PERIOD: MAY 12-14, 2025

Section 3.06 of the Cooperative Bylaws requires any member desiring to be a Trustee candidate from the District of their primary residence to file with the Cooperative their Notice of Candidacy for Trustee during the official Candidate Filing Period:

- **Monday-Wednesday, May 12-14, 2025: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

The Notice of Candidacy for Trustee MUST be filed at the Headquarters Office of the Cooperative: 27039 S 4440 Rd, Vinita, OK 74301, during the Candidate Filing Period. **Only pre-qualified Candidates can be nominated at District Meetings.**



Poppin' *on Grand*

There's something transformative that happens when heat is applied to a kernel of popcorn. The pressure that is created from the heat initiates a process of combustion that eventually converts the hard kernel into something much different—something beautiful that can be appreciated in a way it couldn't before and by senses for which it held no prior appeal.

There is something profound about this process that mirrors life itself.



Dustin, COBE, and Gigi Bell

Safe harbor

There's more to one of Grand Lake's newest businesses than meets the eye.

Poppin' on Grand is a fun and colorful little popcorn and drink shop located at the Old Time Plaza in Cleora, right next door to Goodfella's Pizzeria. The popcorn here is delicious, perhaps the best you've ever tasted. And the drinks? Well, they're wonderful too. But the best thing here isn't the popcorn and drinks—it's the family running the shop.

Dustin and GiGi Bell and son COBE could be anywhere else in the world right now doing anything else they wanted, but they chose Grand Lake. It's their home and they're happy here. For them, Grand Lake is a safe harbor from the many adversities of life.

The perfect snack

What is it about popcorn that makes it so satisfying? It's light, crispy, and crunchy. It's also warm, salty, and buttery. **Mmm-mmm.**

I think we can all agree that there's just something about the unique combination of all that yummy goodness that makes popcorn the perfect snack.





Americans crunch a bunch

When it comes to popcorn consumption, Americans are in a league by themselves. We are the **largest consumers globally**, indulging in roughly a million pounds of the tasty treat every year, often during a movie or sporting event. The North American popcorn market accounted for a whopping 48.3% of the global revenue share in 2024.

The rise of TV streaming has transformed the way we indulge in our entertainment, with many of us opting for at-home movie nights and binge-watching Netflix. Popcorn, long associated with cinema culture, has naturally become a go-to snack for these occasions.

Thanks to its low-calorie, high-fiber profile, popcorn is perceived as a better-for-you snack when compared to chips, candy, or processed snack foods. This has led to increased demand, especially among health-conscious individuals looking for satisfying yet guilt-free snack options.

A kernel of history

Humankind has been consuming corn in one form or another since the dawn of civilization. Of course, the domestic varieties cultivated today wouldn't be recognizable to our ancient ancestors, who would have been much more familiar with something that looked like teosinte, the original wild grass plant from which all modern corn derived.

Teosinte was a dietary staple in Mesoamerica several thousand years ago. Generations of selective breeding have transformed that simple grain into the corn we know today. Plants with desirable traits such as larger and sweeter kernels were carefully selected, gradually improving taste, texture, and yield.

Native American civilizations recognized the grain's value, incorporating it into their diets and cultural practices. It was eventually introduced to other parts of the world through exploration. It spread to Europe, Africa, and Asia, where it became an important crop in many regions.

The popping kind

One of the many corn variants yielded through centuries of selective breeding has become one of the world's most popular snack items. Popcorn is by no means a modern invention, however. Evidence gathered from archaeological sites in Peru suggests that corn was popped there as early as **4,700 BC**.

Popcorn was integral to early 16th century Aztec Indian ceremonies. Cortes got his first sight of popcorn in 1519 when he invaded Mexico and came into contact with the indigenous habitants. An early Spanish account of a ceremony honoring an Aztec god reads:



► "They scattered before him parched corn, called momochitl, a kind of corn which bursts when parched and discloses its contents and makes itself look like a very white flower; they said these were hailstones given to the god of water."

Observing Peruvian Indians in 1650, the Spaniard Cobo wrote: "They toast a certain kind of corn until it bursts. They call it pisancalla, and they use it as a confection."

In South America, kernels of popcorn found in burial grounds in the coastal deserts of northern Chile were so well preserved they would still pop even though they were 1,000 years old.

Oklahoma connection

Those who have discovered one of Grand Lake's newest businesses are enthusiastic contributors to the global consumption of popcorn.

Poppin' on Grand opened for business in November 2024, shortly after the arrival of the Bell family in northeast Oklahoma. If you love popcorn, you're gonna love **Poppin' on Grand** with its hundreds of flavor combinations.

"IF YOU CAN IMAGINE IT, WE CAN PROBABLY MAKE IT WITH OUR FLAVOR EXTRACTS," BELL ASSURES. "WE LOVE A CHALLENGE."

To help customers decide which flavor(s) to purchase, **Poppin' on Grand** offers complimentary samples that change every week.

Poppin' on Grand can also create one-of-a-kind flavor combinations for special events or resale. "We create a customized flavor and sell it wholesale to the business. They label it accordingly and offer it exclusively sold in their store," said Bell.

Bell said all popcorn is made fresh daily and is preservative-free. Any unsold product is **donated** to a local 501c3 charity.

GRAND LAKE O' THE CHEROKEES



Visit Poppin' on Grand:
450635 OK-85, Cleora, OK 74331

Customers searching for liquid refreshment will certainly enjoy **Poppin' on Grand's** extensive drink selection. The shop's beverage offerings include milk tea, lattes, frozen lemonade (or limeade), or creamsicles. Drinks are fully customizable, thanks to 24 syrup flavors, five flavors of popping BOBA pearls, and alcohol. You must be 21 or older to purchase alcohol-infused drinks, which are sold under the cocktails-to-go act.

Previously residents of Watonga in northwest Oklahoma, Dustin and Gigi Bell had retired from successful military and medical careers, respectively, and were looking for a change of scenery. Several options were on the table, including Grand Lake and the Caribbean island St. Lucia.

The Bells had a little fun with the decision-making process.

10% OFF YOUR ORDER

**Bring this magazine to Poppin' on Grand
to receive your discount.**

offer valid through May 2025

► “We were in our game room and threw a dart at a target with many locations,” she said. “The dart hit Grand Lake. We had never been here. We moved here and built a home in The Coves. We bought our land sight unseen and didn't see our purchase until we drove down here to sign the contract and close. We are very much faith-based people and believe **God is in control.**”

Dustin retired from the **U.S. Army** in 2006 after being severely injured in an IED explosion that claimed the life of many in his infantry and nearly his own. He was one of 77 men credited with the 2003 capture of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and was subsequently awarded a **medal of honor** from then President George W. Bush.

Gigi, meanwhile, retired from the medical profession in 2022. She was popping popcorn while practicing medicine, and even before.

“I have been popping gourmet popcorn for over 30 years. I put myself through medical school popping popcorn,” she explained. “This is my first brick and mortar store after retirement.”

Spending **quality time** with son COBE is the focus of the Bells' retirement. Now 30 years of age, COBE has been defying the odds his entire life. He was born blind—along with multiple other disabilities—and was never expected to walk, talk, or achieve significant cognitive function. At age two, COBE was diagnosed with savant syndrome, which gifted him with unique musical abilities. Twenty years later he was diagnosed with a rare form of epilepsy, casting even more uncertainty on his life expectancy.

“COBE is truly the epitome of not judging a book by its cover,” said Bell. “He is our hero and we will spend the rest of our lives grateful for the blessings he gives us every day.



Hear COBE Play!

Scan this code to access a jingle.

Unable to scan? Visit the Poppin' on Grand Facebook page.

She added: “We moved to Grand Lake to be together and enjoy life with COBE. We spend our days working at the popcorn shop together and our nights and weekends supporting his music.”

If you haven't heard COBE play the keyboard, prepare to be amazed. A savant musician who hears in **perfect pitch**, COBE has been playing since age seven and has shared the stage with the likes of Terri Clark, Phil Vassar, Heartland, and multiple local/regional artists. His keen ear for music makes him the perfect fill-in for bands since he can memorize the setlist on the way to the gig.

“HE CAN HEAR A SONG AND TURN RIGHT AROUND AND PLAY IT INSTANTLY,” SAID BELL. “JUST LET HIM HEAR IT ONCE AND AWAY HE GOES, CONVERTING IT TO PIANO NOTES.”

COBE has recently begun booking solo acoustic performances around Grand Lake. He takes requests and will even invite audience members onstage to showcase their karaoke talents while he plays the instrumentals.

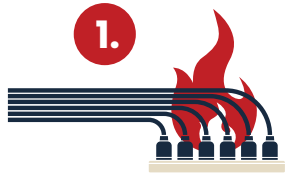
“His solo gigs offer a fun environment where the audience can expect the unexpected,” Bell said.

To meet COBE and grab a bag (or two) of your new favorite popcorn, plan a visit soon to Poppin' on Grand. The shop is open ten months out of the year, closing only for a brief respite in January and February. Call 918.257.1077 or follow on Facebook for current hours of operation.



Electric Safety 101

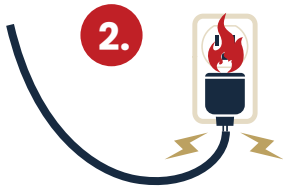
To stay safe around electricity, start with these **seven** basic tips:



1.

Don't overload outlets or circuits.

Plugging in too many items or drawing too much power on a circuit can cause overheating, fire, and damage to devices.



2.

Don't use faulty electrical cords or plugs.

Do not use cords that look frayed, worn or cracked. Do not use broken plugs. Never remove the grounding pin from a three-pronged plug.



3.

Save your electrician's phone number.

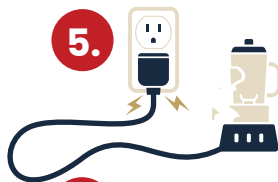
Most electrical repairs or installations are not DIY projects. Hire an expert to avoid serious injury or wiring problems.



4.

Be careful around H₂O.

Never use electricity while standing on damp or wet surfaces. Keep all electrical devices away from water, including cell phones that are charging.



5.

Evaluate your appliances.

Do not use appliances that are in disrepair. Older or broken appliances can overheat, start a fire, and cause serious injuries.



6.

Test your GFCIs.

Outlets near a water source should be equipped with GFCIs, which help prevent shock and electrocution caused by ground faults. Test monthly to make sure they are working.



7.

Make sure your home is up to code.

Your home should be properly wired and electrically sound. Contact a reputable electrician to evaluate your home.

RECIPES

FROM DELAWARE CO.



GOULASH | AVA MATHIA, GROVE

INGREDIENTS

- 1lb hamburger meat
- 1 diced onion
- 1 diced bell pepper
- 1 can crushed tomatoes
- 1 can tomato sauce
- 16oz pasta of choice
- Garlic powder to taste
- Greek seasoning to taste
- Salt & Pepper to taste

Step 1: Brown hamburger meat in a skillet and season to taste. While hamburger browns, cook pasta to desired doneness, drain and set aside.

Step 2: Add onion and bell pepper to skillet with hamburger and cook until soft. Then stir in crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, and cooked pasta and simmer for five to ten minutes.

Step 3: Serve with salad or vegetables.

REALLY DELICIOUS BAKED CHICKEN | KAREN ARTHUR, GROVE

INGREDIENTS

- 4-6 skinless chicken breasts
- 3oz dried beef
- 4-6 bacon slices
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 8oz sour cream

Step 1: Butterfly each chicken breast with a sharp knife and place two slices of dried beef inside each breast. Fold chicken together, wrap with a slice of bacon, and place in a casserole dish.

Step 2: Mix together cream of mushroom soup and sour cream and pour over chicken.

Step 3: Cover casserole dish tightly and bake for 3 hours at 325°F. Note: I sometimes add extra mushroom soup and sour cream for spooning over mashed potatoes or rice.



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