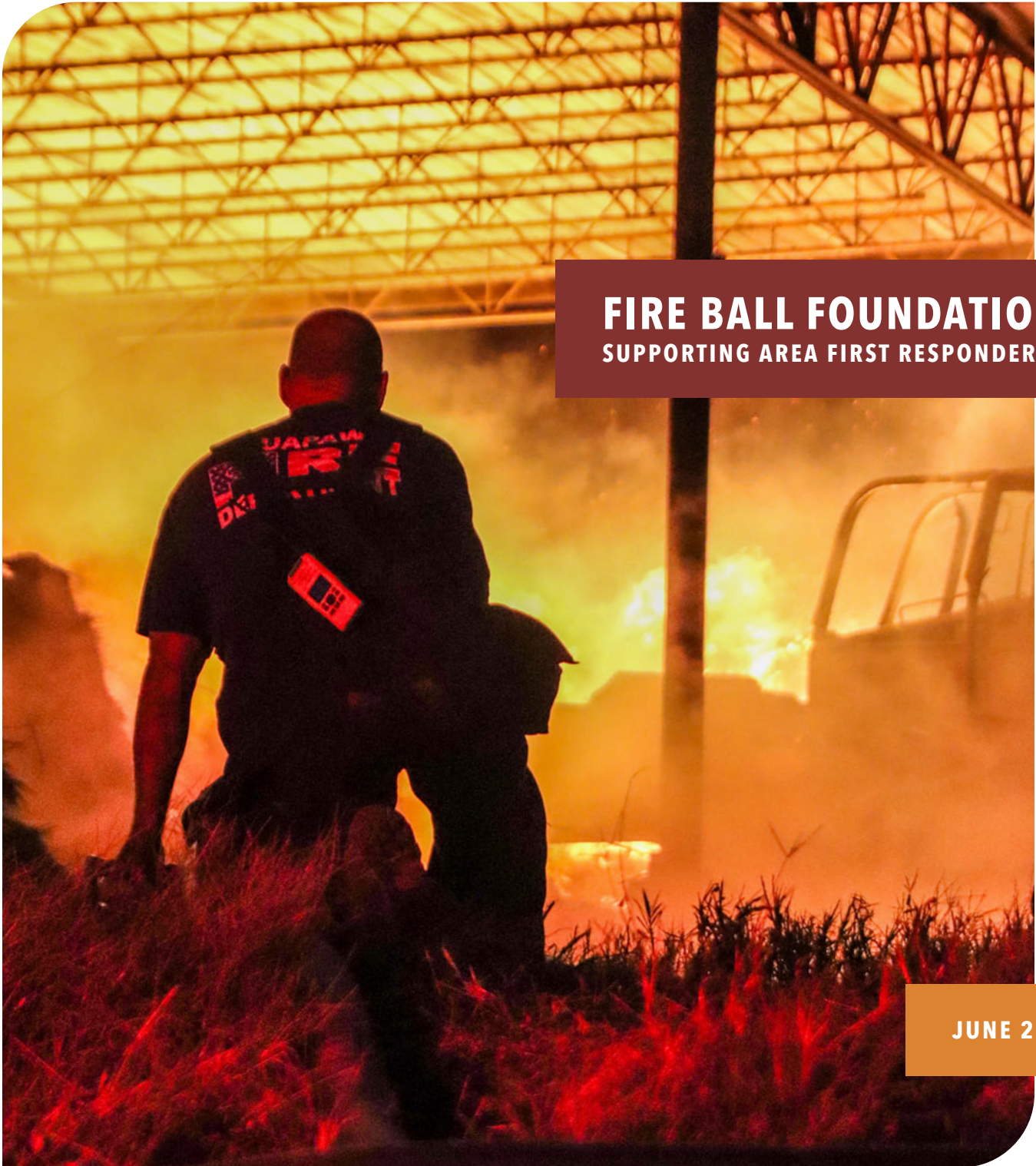


# NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



**FIRE BALL FOUNDATION**  
SUPPORTING AREA FIRST RESPONDERS

JUNE 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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**Sami Jo Frisby** - Administrative Services  
**Kristen Sturgess** - Human Resources  
**Ricky Hignite** - Information Technology  
**Nick Sutton** - Operations

## VINITA HEADQUARTERS

27039 South 4440 Road, Vinita, OK 74301

## GROVE OFFICE

600 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

**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)*

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## THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

**Jason Gibe**  
**Grove Operations**  
**Superintendent**

As I look around our system, I am amazed at how much has changed here at NOEC. For instance, we really have come a long way in our maintenance program since the mid-1990s when I started as an apprentice lineman.

A jump start to our rights-of-way program and the addition of BOLT Fiber have enabled us to clear our lines and replace numerous poles. These system enhancements have been a game-changer for our membership and employees. It has made our infrastructure much stronger while significantly decreasing storm-related outages.

Of course, Mother Nature has a way of messing up a good thing. The right storm—or the wrong storm, depending on your perspective—can always come along and take down in no time flat what we have spent countless hours building.

I know all of us at one time or another have found ourselves without power during one of these storms. When it does happen again—and it will—know that we will work around-the clock to remedy that problem.

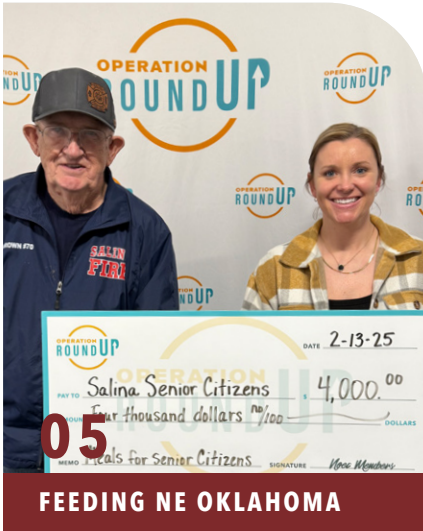
I would also ask this small favor from you: If you happen to see a line down or a tree lying on the line, first and foremost, stay clear of it. Second, call our dispatch office and let us know. Your call may prevent a contact and keep our lineman from going miles out of the way to look for the problem. Help us help you.

**That is one thing that has not changed: the relationship between our members and our employees.** Most of you probably know someone who works for the cooperative. That is one of the best benefits of living in a small community.

*Continued on page 4.*

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**FEEDING NE OKLAHOMA**



**HOT TICKET: FIRE BALL**



**DISTRICT MEETINGS**



**OTTAWA 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 July 1, 2025, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

Cover photography by:  
**Midwest Emergency Photography**

## **JUNE EVENTS**

### **American Heritage Music Festival**

**June 5-7 | Grove**  
Har-Ber Village Museum

### **Outlaw Nationals Monster Trucks**

**June 6 | Miami**  
Miami Fairgrounds

### **Ottawa Co. Farmers Market**

**June 5 | Miami**  
1129 E St W

### **energyKIDS Day**

**June 7 | Vinita**  
Craig County Fairgrounds

### **Krawling for Kids**

**June 7 | Disney**  
446 Disney Dr

### **MarineMax Grand Lake's All-American Boat Showcase**

**June 7 | Afton**  
MarineMax

**\*987435\***

### **Camp Bandage**

**June 7 | Afton**  
31527 S 4510 Rd

### **Big Bass Bash at Grand Lake**

**June 7-8 | Grove**  
Wolf Creek Park

### **Toes in the Grand Festival**

**June 12-15 | Grove**  
Wolf Creek Park

### **Father's Day Run**

**June 13-15 | Disney**  
Disney Oklahoma 4x4

### **2nd Annual Grand Lake Triathlon**

**June 14 | Grove**  
Wolf Creek Park

### **Happy Father's Day!**

**Sunday, June 15**

### **Grand Jam On the Water**

**June 28 | Afton**  
Safe Harbor Harbors View



# THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

Continued from Inside Cover

► **It isn't uncommon** for me to get a phone call, or someone will catch me at a ballgame, and they will have a question. They may need a light fixed or a tree needing trimmed, or they'll want to know: "When are we going to get BOLT?" I always try and give them as much help as I can, whether it is getting a service order made for them or giving them a phone number and directing them to the right person at the cooperative.

I promise you everyone who works for NOEC will do the same thing. That is just what we do. Do we mind? Of course not. We may need your help one day when we need to drive across your field to get to a bad a transformer or whatever the case might be. I know you will do what you can to help as well.

**I don't know about you, but I'm glad some things stay the same.**





## DOWNLOAD!

OUR NEW APP  
EXPERIENCE

Search **NOEC** in the  
**Apple App Store** or on **Google Play**.

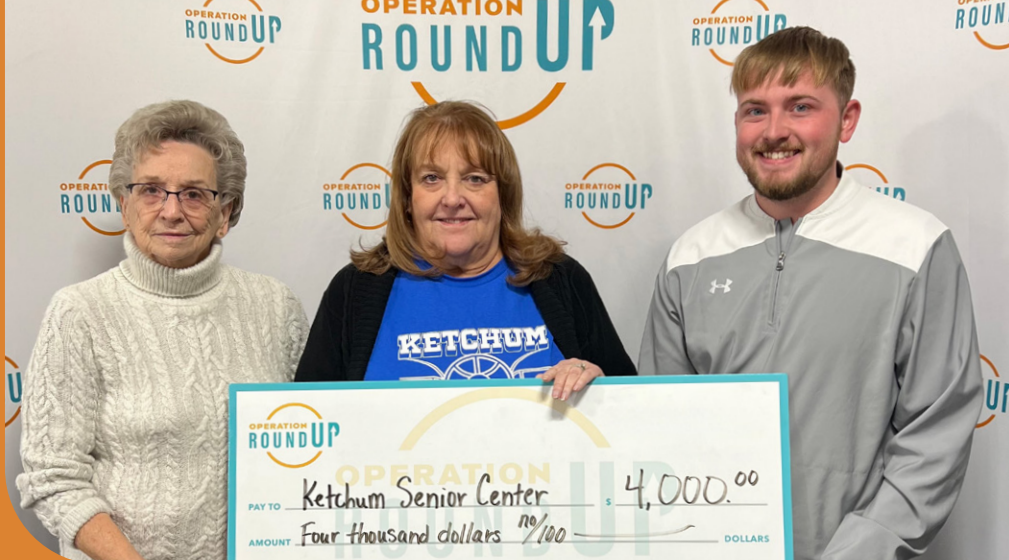



*Celebrating*

2015 **10** 2025  
YEARS

Thank you to our loyal and  
supportive customers.





## HELPING FEED NE OK

### HUNGER.

**What comes to mind when you hear that word? It certainly means different things to different people.**

**Hunger isn't something some of us worry about or have even experienced. The closest we will ever get to experiencing hunger is missing breakfast or having a late lunch.**

It may be difficult to fathom, but many among us don't know where their next meal is coming from.

The prevalence of **food insecurity** in the U.S. is such that one in seven households lack access to an affordable, nutritious diet. An estimated 47 million Americans live in these households, including **1 in 5 children**.

### GIVE BACK, TODAY!

Electric bills of participating members are **rounded up** to the next highest dollar. For example, a bill of \$52.73 would be rounded up to \$53. Average contributions total \$6 per year. To participate contact us at **918.256.6405** or visit **[noec.coop/community-services/operation-round-up/](https://noec.coop/community-services/operation-round-up/)**.

As one of seven states ranked **above-average** for food insecurity, Oklahoma is the fifth hungriest state in the country, with 13.8 percent of Oklahoma households experiencing uncertainty about whether they will have enough food to meet the needs of all of their members. Thirty-three percent of Oklahomans live in low-income, low-access communities, meaning they lack adequate access to nutritious food.

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative members who contribute to **Operation Round-Up** are taking **action** against food insecurity. In 2024 alone, a total of \$61,500 program dollars were earmarked to address hunger in northeast Oklahoma communities. This money was divided among several area food pantries and student backpack programs to maximize impact and distribution potential.

"Operation Round-Up does so many good things here in northeast Oklahoma, but one of the things of which the Trust Foundation is most proud is the impact the program has on addressing food insecurity in our local communities," said Bob Eubanks, president of the foundation's board of directors.

**"Helping subsidize local food banks and backpack programs ensures countless individuals have access to nutritional resources they might not otherwise have."**



Generous donor shows his daughter a fire truck at Fire Ball 2024

Photography by **Midwest Emergency Photography**

# HOT Ticket

LOCAL FUNDRAISING EVENT **TURNING HEADS**

**A well-kept secret until just recently, the Fire Ball Foundation is beginning to turn heads, thanks to the generous financial support it has provided area first responders over the past several years.**

Even though it has been around since 2020, most folks outside of Ottawa County likely haven't even heard of the **Fire Ball Foundation**—or its popular yearly fundraising event **Fire Ball**. A statewide publication changed all of that, however, when it spilled the beans following a reader's choice feature back in January of 2024.



Oklahoma Living magazine asked readers to select their **favorites** in several categories and **Fire Ball Foundation** was awarded top honors in the Best Charity category. The public recognition was much-deserved since **Fire Ball Foundation** provides desperately-needed financial support for volunteer fire departments across Ottawa County.

► **READ the article by visiting the following link: [bit.ly/2025-best-of-okl](https://bit.ly/2025-best-of-okl)**

*Scan me!*



The concept of a benevolent foundation benefitting rural volunteer fire departments originated four years ago with Suzi Burleson. Burleson, now **Fire Ball Foundation**'s vice-president, knows all too well the needs of first responders since husband Tyler spent many years fighting fires for the Bureau of Indian Affairs Forestry Division. Familiarity with Tyler's work helped Suzi recognize the various financial challenges faced by rural communities and prompted her to act.

While they are originally from rural Ottawa County, the Burlesons relocated for the better part of two decades while Tyler pursued his career with BIA Wildfire Management. His work took him all over the country to fight fires on tribal lands.

"Tyler began his fire career in 2008 on a wildfire hand crew," said Suzi. "He has traveled all over the United States fighting fire—from the east coast to the west coast and many places in between."

Suzi explained that Tyler's fire details typically last 14-21 days at a time, not counting travel.

Once the Burlesons returned home to Ottawa County, Tyler felt the call to join the Wyandotte Volunteer Fire Department and help fight fires locally as well.

## **GREAT BALL OF** *Fire*

The original plan was for **Fire Ball** to be held on New Year's Eve. After all, what better time to celebrate with a ball than NYE? Due to scheduling conflicts, however, the event settled comfortably into an early fall time. It is now held annually on the third Saturday of September.

"It has really worked out well for all involved to have it that time of year," said Burleson. "We have found that we aren't competing with other commitments at that time."

## **POP QUIZ**

### **QUESTION:**

**What is a Fire Ball?**

### **ANSWER:**

- a.** A rare yet dramatic astronomical occurrence
- b.** A beverage often consumed by high-handicap golfers
- c.** A painful medical condition
- d.** An award-winning event in Northeast Oklahoma
- e.** Most of the above

If you answered **(e) Most of the above**, you are correct! Congratulations!

► As with any successful endeavor, organizing the event required time and talent from several key individuals to make the foundation the success it is today. This convergence of human resources happened quickly.

Among those individuals who jumped at the opportunity to help **Fire Ball Foundation** was Trinda Crow, the current foundation president and wife of longtime firefighter and EMS worker Leon Crow. Local marketing professional Kelsie Wilson was also a key addition to the planning committee. Wilson is the acting foundation treasurer.

Wilson actually helped Suzi connect with Trinda, which in turn set off a chain reaction of collaboration that sparked further growth for the foundation.

"Getting these individuals together brought about a spider-webbing of connections, and at our first meeting in 2021—after the original event had transpired—we hit the ground running planning for the following year," said Wilson.

**Participation was strong** among the rural fire departments early on. By the second year, the foundation had five of the county's seven fire chiefs on board.

Next on the agenda for the committee was clearing the necessary hurdles to become a legitimate 501(c)(3) charitable organization. That status was achieved in the year 2021.

*Yellow Line awardee receives a gift at Fire Ball 2024*



# Get Tickets!



**SCAN TO PURCHASE**

**Fire Ball | Sept 20, 2025**  
**Shawnee Skies Event Center**  
**11245 S 705 Rd, Wyandotte, OK**

"We are embarking on our fifth **Fire Ball** this year and every year features more growth than the last," said Wilson. She added that monthly organizational meetings now consistently draw representation from all seven volunteer fire departments.

The real impact of **Fire Ball** is in the money it raises for participating VFDs. The foundation has generated more than \$30,000 each year over past two years through its yearly gala.

**"This money is allocated directly to our volunteer fire departments here in Ottawa County through donations and scholarships," Wilson said.**

The yearly gathering also affords the foundation an opportunity to recognize individual excellence among its member departments. This is accomplished with the presentation of Red Line and Gold Line awards.

"The recipient of these awards would otherwise go unrecognized for all of the hard work and dedication, and the impact that they have on their communities," said Wilson. "I think the entire board can agree that this is one of the best parts of **Fire Ball**."

"When I first joined the **Fire Ball Foundation**, I honestly didn't grasp the full weight of what a volunteer fire department did. But as I got to know the men and women—the hours they put in and the sacrifices they make without asking for anything in return—it completely changed my perspective. These volunteers aren't just responders, they're lifelines for their communities. Supporting them has become one of the most meaningful parts of my life."

And now, thanks to the **Fire Ball Foundation**, many people outside of Ottawa County know about the organization and the meaningful work it does for the rural fire departments it proudly supports.



# 2025 DISTRICT MEETINGS

## DISTRICTS 2, 7, AND 9 TO SELECT BOARD TRUSTEE CANDIDATES

### Meeting Dates

#### JULY 7: DISTRICT 7

Jim Wade, Incumbent Trustee

#### JULY 8: DISTRICT 9

Jimmy Caudill, Incumbent Trustee

#### JULY 10: DISTRICT 2

Mike Detherage, Incumbent Trustee

*Meeting locations and driving directions will be announced in the July Northeast Connection.*

### Requirement to Register

#### At District Meetings

Only eligible members may register and cast a vote at any member meeting. To register and vote you **MUST** be one of the following:

- **Primary on an individual account**
- **Primary or secondary on a joint account (only one joint member may vote)**
- **Named representative of a business or organization (present a letter from the governing body of the entity stating you are the representative for that entity per bylaw SECTION 2.06.)**

If you are not listed on the account, as primary on a single account or primary or secondary on a joint member account, you will not be able to register to vote. We strongly encourage you to check your account. Call member services at 800.256.6405.

Members may register to vote/participate at their District Meetings from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. District meeting starts at 7 p.m., but those in line prior to 7 p.m. will be given a card ensuring their opportunity to register. All district meetings start at 7 p.m., or as soon as is practical thereafter.

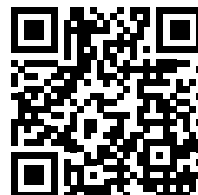


Members win a \$250 electric credit at district meeting

### Attend for a Chance to Win!

The Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees is extending invitations to Cooperative members in Districts 2, 7, and 9 to attend their respective 2025 District Meetings this summer. **The invitation includes freebies like a \$10 electric credit, meal for registered member and one guest, along with the chance to win a \$250, \$100, and \$50 electric credit.**

**Scan this code to locate your district:**



**SCAN ME!**

[noec.coop/about/governance/](https://noec.coop/about/governance/)



# 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](http://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





# SUMMER SAFETY

## NEAR BOATS & DOCKS



Unknowingly, many place themselves in harm's way by swimming near boats and docks. This innocent act can turn tragic when faulty wiring, damaged cords, and other devices cause the surrounding water to become energized. Awareness among boat owners and marina operators can help prevent electric shock drowning and other electrical injuries.

- Have your dockside electrical system (pedestal) **inspected** and updated yearly by a **qualified electrician**. If you have a new installation, hire a qualified electrician to ensure it meets all safety and code standards.
- Have **Marine Listed** Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) installed on the dock and test them monthly.
- Require boat owners to use only **Marine Listed** shore or marine power cords, plugs, receptacles, and extension cords that have been tested by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). They are specifically designed for use near water.
- **Never use** cords that are frayed or damaged or that have had the prongs removed or altered.

## NEED A VACATION?

### GIVE YOUR ENERGY BILL A BREAK AS WELL

#### FOLLOW US!

Follow Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative on Facebook for more **safety and efficiency tips**.



While you are **away**, will anyone be watching television, playing video games, connecting to the internet, or making coffee? Let's hope not! **Unplug those devices** and appliances and save your money from the phantom power draw that keeps them warmed up and ready to turn on at the click of a remote. About 10% of the utility bill for a typical home can be attributed to the electronic devices that are eager to serve you and are always at the ready. **Give them a rest and vacation as well.**

# RECIPES

## FROM OTTAWA CO.



### MISSISSIPPI POT ROAST | NICOLE HART, QUAPAW

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 sticks salted butter
- 2 packs au jus seasoning
- 1/2 jar pepperoncini peppers
- 1/2 jar pepperoncini juice
- 2 packs ranch dressing seasoning
- 1 cup water
- 2-3lb roast

**Step 1:** Add ingredients to slow cooker and cook on low for 8 to 10 hours.

**Step 2:** Serve with cornbread or over mashed potatoes.

**My Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

### SWEET CREAM CORNBREAD | GHONAN CARR, FAIRLAND

#### INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 1/4 cups sifted flour
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup cream or evaporated milk

**Step 1:** Combine eggs and cream in a bowl. Mix dry ingredients separately then add to egg mixture and beat vigorously.

**Step 2:** Bake in a 9-inch square pan at 400°F for 30 minutes.

**My Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

