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country living

APRIL 2016

PUBLISHED FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Solar Panels Coming Soon

Several trees just south of East Central Electric headquarters will be removed for the ECE community solar project. Construction on the project will begin soon. Interested members should call **918-756-0833** to enroll.



Interest In Community Solar Heats Up

Co-op members show support by signing up for solar panels.

As steady as the sun rises, interest in East Central Electric (ECE) Community Solar is climbing. The co-op began signing up members on March 4. Within the first week, 18 members subscribed to a total of 40 solar panels.

Billy Moore, director of ECE member services, says the interest in the new venture is encouraging. As calls continue to come in, co-op employees are noticing a common question. "Most people are curious if this will result in a big reduction in their monthly bill," Moore says.

He explains the payback for solar subscribers isn't huge, maybe a couple of dollars a month. What the project can do is help ECE spread out wholesale power cost risk by increasing diversity in sources of power.

By providing a low-cost source of electricity during peak usage periods, the solar project will help ECE curb its use of more expensive electricity generated by power plants. Wholesale electricity costs amount to roughly 68 percent of an average member's monthly electric bill.

As more members subscribe to solar panels, the potential to reduce ECE's system reliance on wholesale power is improved.

ECE Community Solar is one of the first projects of its kind in Oklahoma and reflects the co-op's commitment to affordable rates.

Find more details on ECE Community Solar on page 3 of this issue. To sign up for solar power or visit with a co-op representative about the project, please call **918-756-0833**.

operation roundup update

Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families and individuals. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit www.ecoec.com.

Figures to date:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Applications reviewed..... | 764 |
| Applications granted..... | 540 |
| Applications denied..... | 214 |
| Applications tabled..... | 14 |
| Scholarships awarded..... | \$149,000 |
| Total Disbursements..... | \$1,269,921.46 |
| Average member contribution..... | 44¢ |



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Oops, We Goofed!

In the March issue of *Country Living*, the story on ECE Community Solar listed a wrong number. Members should call ECE at **918-756-0833**. We are sorry for the confusion.

Are You Qualified To Be A Co-op Trustee?

To serve as an East Central Electric (ECE) trustee, you must be a member of the coop for at least one year prior to the nomination. You must continue to be a member after the election with your primary residence located in the district you represent.

You cannot have been an ECE employee or employed by an ECE subsidiary or labor union, or anyone who has represented the co-op within five years of the filing period. Also, you cannot currently be employed by, or have financial interests in, any ECE competitor, supplier or subsidiary.

Elected public official or candidates who are paid more than \$1,000 per year for their work are not eligible to serve as trustee.

You must not have been convicted, pled guilty or no contest to a felony. Co-op trustees cannot be a close relative of an incumbent trustee, current ECE employees, or individual who has been an ECE employee within the last five years.

For full details on trustee qualifications, please call **918-756-0833**.

Please Save These Dates!

June 20, 2016

ECE District 7 Meeting
6:30 pm, Bristow Housing Authority

June 23, 2016

ECE District 4 Meeting
6:30 pm, Muskogee Armed Forces Reserve Center



Interested in going solar? Below are more details on East Central Electric's Community Solar project.

What is ECE Community Solar?

The East Central Electric (ECE) Community Solar project allows members to purchase a subscription to one or more solar panels and receive a credit for a portion of the output of the kilowatt-hours generated from the project site.

How does it work?

Solar panels are installed south of ECE Headquarters in Okmulgee, along Highway 75. Members subscribe to a per-panel share or multiple shares of the system production. Members receive a credit on their monthly bill based on their portion of the system production. Participants do not own any of the panels or infrastructure.

What are the benefits?

- Members enjoy the benefits of solar power without worries of maintaining solar panels or finding an appropriate location for panels on their property.
- Members have the opportunity to directly invest in a renewable energy project and receive a credit from it on their monthly bill.

What does it cost?

To participate, each member pays a one-time subscription fee of \$350 per panel. A member may subscribe to up to 25 panels. The number of subscriptions for panels is limited to the amount needed to serve their primary residence only. There are 950 panels available and the subscriptions will be sold on a first come, first serve basis.

What do I get for my participation?

- Participating members receive a percentage of the total solar array production each month based on their contribution to the project.
- Each month, the total kilowatt-hour (kwh) output of the solar system is divided by the number of panels.
- A credit amount per kwh is determined each year and applied to each participant's monthly kwh output. The first year credit is \$.034 per kwh.
- A separate line on the participant's electric bill will reflect the credit multiplied by the member's share of the total solar system production for that month.

Support ECE Community Solar!

Subscribe to a solar panel by calling **918-756-0833**.



Connect with East Central Electric Cooperative on Facebook for updates on power outages and information on member benefits and services, energy saving tips and more. If you like what you see, we'd appreciate your "thumbs up." *Thank you for your support!*



Co-op Trustee Earns Certification

Vernnon completes 44-hour course in his first year as ECE trustee.

Last year East Central Electric (ECE) asked Michael Vernnon to serve his co-op by filling an open seat on the ECE board of trustees. With a 24-year history of service to the Army National Guard, it's no surprise Vernnon accepted the responsibility without hesitation.

Seven months— and many training hours later — Vernnon remains happy with his decision. “I retired from the Oklahoma Army National Guard after 24 years and multiple deployments, and I love being able to give something back to my community,” he says. “I also love that I am part of an organization that has such a wonderful set of core values.”

Electric cooperative trustees often find their first year on the board is an exercise in mental cramming as they educate themselves about the electric utility industry. As a newcomer to the board, Vernnon says he is focused on “listening and soaking in the knowledge.”

He recently completed the Certified Cooperative Director (CCD) program hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The 44-hour certification process includes courses on cooperative financing, director duties and liabilities, board operations and processes, understanding electric co-ops, and strategic planning. Trustees are encouraged to earn further accreditation with NRECA's Board Leadership Certificate, which provides courses with greater depth in industry, governance, risk management, rate making and policy development.

Because the energy industry is changing rapidly, electric co-op trustees must stay aware and informed of numerous complex issues and their broad-reaching implications for ratepayers.

At the forefront of concern is the unstable regulatory environment created by the federal Clean Power Plan. The regulations threaten to increase costs for electric co-



Michael Vernnon, ECE District 4 trustee, and his wife, Erin. The couple live on East Central Electric lines near Muskogee with their son, Justin.

ops and their members, and are already having an impact on ECE, says Vernnon.

One of the board's many responsibilities is making sure ECE is prepared to meet these uncertainties head-on; Vernnon confirms they are. “ECE remains committed to operating in a manner that encourages long-term success,” he says.

An equally important responsibility, he adds, is to serve as a voice for co-op members by keeping them informed of issues such as regulations, fuel prices and other factors that affect their rates. “Frustration comes from not knowing,” he adds.

Trustees also owe a responsibility to ECE employees. “We must set policy that takes

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—MICHAEL VERNNON, TRUSTEE
EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC DISTRICT # 4

care of our team physically, spiritually and financially, so they will continue to show the same enthusiasm when greeting members in the lobby or linemen out in the field,” Vernnon points out.

While the responsibilities are hefty and the hours are long, the work is ultimately rewarding. For Vernnon, that makes all the difference.

Note: When he isn't busy with co-op related work, Michael Vernnon serves as manager of environmental safety and health at Dal-Tile in Muskogee. The company encourages community leadership and participation. Their support of Vernnon's work on the ECE board is deeply appreciated.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Earth Day is April 22. Give back to the environment by planting a deciduous tree near your home. Deciduous trees lose their leaves during the fall, allowing sunlight to warm your home. The extra shade during summer months will keep your home cooler and give your AC a much needed break.



Don't Toy With Your Safety!

Flying remote controlled toys and high flying kites is an excellent way to have fun, but accidentally making contact with a power line or other energized equipment can be dangerous and in some cases, even deadly.

When you are playing outdoors this spring, be sure to keep a safe distance from power lines, substations and other electrical equipment.

To report an unsafe electrical situation, or for information on East Central Electric safety programs, please call **918-756-0833** or visit www.ecoec.com.

- Never fly kites, or remote controlled toys near power lines.
- Stay away from power lines, meters, transformers and electrical boxes.
- Never climb trees near power lines.
- If you get something stuck in a power line, call your electric co-op.

Recipes

Great tastes for members of East Central Electric Cooperative

Rosemary Ranch Chicken Kabobs

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ cup ranch dressing
- 3 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 T. minced fresh rosemary
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon white sugar, or to taste (optional)
- 5 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves - cut into 1 inch cubes



DIRECTIONS

In a medium bowl, stir together the olive oil, ranch dressing, Worcestershire sauce, rosemary, salt, lemon juice, white vinegar, pepper, and sugar. Let stand for 5 minutes. Place chicken in the bowl, and stir to coat with the marinade. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Preheat the grill for medium-high heat. Thread chicken onto skewers and discard marinade.

Lightly oil the grill grate. Grill skewers for 8 to 12 minutes, or until the chicken is no longer pink in the center, and the juices run clear. *Yield: 6 servings. 378 calories.*

SOURCE: ALLRECIPES.COM



"We plan together. We stay safe together."

APRIL 11 is NATIONAL LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY. #thankalineman