

Making 2019 Better Together



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

A BRAND-NEW YEAR IS UPON US AND, LIKE you, we at Houston County Electric Cooperative have made some resolutions. At the 79th annual meeting, I spoke to our members about these goals, but for those of you who were unable to attend, I'd like to take the opportunity to share with you our plans for 2019.

In an ongoing quest to provide affordable electric service, we are working to transfer a portion of our system power supply to a different market. It is a challenging process, but we remain optimistic about completing the transfer in 2019 for the benefit of our consumer-owners.

Energy efficiency is the key to a sustainable energy future. One of our constant challenges is to secure sustainable power agreements at low-cost rates for long-term value. Through collective efforts with neighboring cooperatives, we have entered a competitively priced solar power purchase agreement. A 1-megawatt solar array will be installed on HCEC's distribution system and offers another means of preserving affordable rates. By monitoring the market's horizon and emerging sources, such as renewables, we can negotiate the best rates and ensure that our consumer-owners have access to cost-effective power.

Safety and reliability are always our top priorities. In addition to trimming and removing hazardous trees in our easements, we have redoubled our efforts to prevent outages and ensure the safe operation of our system. We remain proactive by dedicating manpower and resources to a complete system patrol and maintenance program.

Our employees are truly the greatest asset of HCEC and, as

such, deserve a safe, secure workplace. Unfortunately, severe foundation problems and the structural failure of sections of the interior walls and the outer brick facade have rendered our current facility costly to maintain. Because of this, we are in the early planning stages of constructing a new building. As our vision for this facility unfolds, we look forward to sharing information at open house events and through our other media outlets. We are building for our future, and your feedback is welcomed.

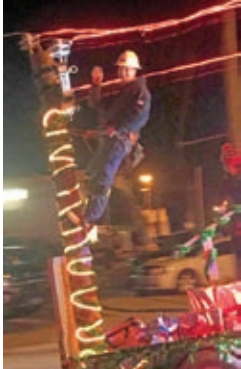
Community outreach requires commitment. At HCEC, caring for the community is one of our core values. This is why we continue to dedicate our time and resources to various programs, such as county fairs, local fire departments, our annual Government-in-Action Youth Tour and the Dorothy Goodrum Scholarship program. In addition, we actively support charitable organizations such as Relay For Life, Houston County S.H.A.R.E. and Madison County House of Hope. It is our firm resolution to give back to the communities in our service area.

As a complement to our resolutions, we encourage you to renew your commitment to serve our community. Whether by volunteering to work with your favorite charity or donating to a cause that speaks to you, please help us as we work together for the prosperity of our community. Not only will others benefit from your act of kindness, but so will you. The poet John Albert Holmes Jr. said it best: "There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up."

We wish health, prosperity and success to all of you during the coming year.



Santa and HCEC Elves Attend Christmas in Crockett Parade



Two Houston County Electric Cooperative bucket trucks entered the 2018 Christmas in Crockett Parade with special appearances from Santa Claus, HCEC elves and a lineman! HCEC trucks were decorated with a miniature version of our electric system, including poles and rope-light wires.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

Houston County Electric Cooperative is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Kathi Calvert, general manager. Any individual or specific class of individuals who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or the administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Stop 1510, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC, 20250-1510; or the director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC, 20250-9410; or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). The USDA is an equal-opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

Houston County Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835

GENERAL MANAGER

Kathi Calvert

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Kennon Kellum, Vice President
Mitchell Huff, Secretary-Treasurer
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79 and Holding

IN NOVEMBER, MORE THAN 400 MEMBERS AND THEIR GUESTS attended Houston County Electric Cooperative's 79th annual meeting—the "fish fry," as it's more commonly known. HCEC employees, directors and vendors were on hand to pass out goody bags, staff information tables and answer member questions. A photo booth that took on the look of a lineman's bucket next to an electric pole gave guests an opportunity to have their pictures taken imitating line work.

As HCEC looks forward to our milestone 80th year, take a look back at the fun we had at our 79th annual meeting of members

The meeting itself opened with a welcome from Dan Courmier, Houston County EC board president and director-at-large, followed by an invocation given by Mary Pearl Adams, Madison County director. Three board positions were open for election: Houston County districts 2 and 4 and the Trinity County District. Gary Ford, a managing partner at the accounting firm of Axley & Rode, announced that because the races were uncontested, directors Mitchell Huff, Kennon Kellum



and David Whittlesey each would continue their duties for additional three-year terms.

Ken Gajdos, vice president of CoBank Electric Distribution Division, spoke on the bank's Sharing Success Program. Through its program, CoBank matches donations to charitable organizations made by clients of the bank. Because of the co-op's ongoing commitment to support the communities it serves, HCEC partnered with CoBank to donate money to the House of Hope in Madisonville and to Houston County S.H.A.R.E. in Crockett. Accepting on behalf of Madison County House of Hope were Brad Brock, president, CEO and pastor, and James Toney, program director. Program Director Cliff Coldiron accepted on behalf of Houston County S.H.A.R.E.

Kathi Calvert, HCEC general manager, gave a heartfelt speech. Her 94-year-old grandmother, Georgia Elizabeth, and her 7-year-old daughter, Georgia Cate, helped her to illustrate the challenges faced by past generations and those of today. While briefly discussing the evolution of electrical power and its future, Calvert emphasized HCEC's ongoing commitment to provide the most affordable and reliable service possible.

Calvert ended her speech by thanking all HCEC employees and presented a short video featuring each employee's picture. The tribute, accompanied by Lee Greenwood's patriotic anthem *Proud To Be an American*, brought the room to its feet.

Following the business portion of the meeting, the evening concluded with the much-anticipated door prize drawings.



Giving Back Is the Co-op Way

COOPERATIVES ACROSS THE GLOBE ADHERE TO THE SAME SEVEN Cooperative Principles, which guide all of our decisions—from how we run the co-op to how we engage with our local communities. The seventh principle, Concern for Community, is one that employees of Houston County Electric Cooperative hold especially dear. During the holiday season, however, Concern for Community takes on even greater importance.

Electric cooperatives have a proud history of giving back. We participate in Relay For Life and local career fairs, enter floats in Christmas parades in the towns we serve and donate to various organizations that benefit the communities with which we are involved. Each year, we donate to our area volunteer fire departments to help with their innumerable costs. We have wonderful relationships with local volunteer fire departments because we know how important it is to maintain positive connections with the men and women who risk their lives every day to keep our members and our employees safe.

We are proud to be a part of CoBank's Sharing Success Program. In 2018, CoBank established a \$3 million fund to match charitable contributions made by its cooperative members. The matching grant program is designed to celebrate the vital role that cooperatives play in communities across the country. Collaborating with customers to support worthy causes is a great way for CoBank to make a positive difference and fulfill

its mission of service to rural America.

This year, HCEC and CoBank partnered to donate money to House of Hope in Madisonville and Houston County S.H.A.R.E. House of Hope is a nonprofit organization that operates through volunteers and donations. They offer a 12-month discipleship program that provides housing, recreation, spiritual teaching and life recovery classes—helping men to become productive members of their churches and communities.

Houston County S.H.A.R.E. is a nonprofit organization in Crockett that provides necessities such as clothing, housewares, hygiene products and food. During the Christmas season, it opens a portion of its building as the “Christmas store.” Qualified families are able to choose toys for their children who otherwise might not receive Christmas gifts.

As a co-op member, you can find ways of giving back that go beyond monetary donations. Go through your closets and find clothes that no longer fit or that you no longer wear. Bag those items up and take them to your local donation site or church clothing drive. Volunteer for a local food or toy drive, deliver meals to the sick and elderly, or simply make a meal for a neighbor in need. No matter how great or small the act, every time we give back, we strengthen our community. So take the time to give back.

It's the co-op way.

Dailey Retires After 15 Years

FROM THE BIRTH OF FACEBOOK AND THROUGH THE IPOD'S DOMINATION to the rise of Bluetooth and the future of embedded connectivity, Mitch Dailey has seen quite a few advancements in technology since beginning his career at Houston County Electric Cooperative.

"Mitch has seen more changes than anyone at HCEC in the last 15 years," said Kathi Calvert, HCEC general manager. "The technology that we work with has evolved so much, and he did such a wonderful job adapting to the changes."

That ability to adapt helped Dailey transition from a contract meter reader position into his role as the company's technical support operations manager, working to implement advances to the metering system, software systems and work processes.

Dailey was a member of one of the co-op's contract crews before joining the HCEC team in 2003. At the beginning of his career, he was involved in the sale and installation of satellite television service and the introduction of WildBlue satellite internet. As technology advanced, Dailey's position expanded and became more complex, requiring him to acquire new skills. While his work was sometimes challenging, he says the hurdles didn't daunt his enthusiasm for his job or the co-op.

On November 16, HCEC held a retirement party for Dailey. After a delicious meal prepared by a fellow employee, several co-workers shared their memories of Dailey's time at the co-op. His wife, Karen, jokingly referred to HCEC as Dailey's "second love," only because she declared herself in first position. Karen Dailey went on to thank all of the employees for being so kind to Mitch throughout his years of service and for being a wonderful second family to them.

When it was his turn to speak, Dailey echoed his wife's thanks and let it be known that being away from his job and his HCEC family was going to be a hard adjustment.

HCEC employees will miss seeing Dailey around the office and wish him the very best as he begins this new chapter.



Smoothing Out Winter Bills

AS WE TRUDGE THROUGH WHAT CAN BE THE COLDEST AND DREARIEST PART OF winter, we at Houston County Electric Cooperative wish to remind our members that the season's chilly temperatures and shortened days frequently lead to increased electricity usage at home, which can cause uncomfortable spikes in electric bills. You can soften the blow by expecting at least a modest increase in power bills compared to bills from the fall, of course, and adjusting your household's monthly budget to make up the difference. But you also can employ a few strategies to smooth out those upcoming bills.

Now that the holiday blitz of parties and gatherings is mostly behind us, elaborate dinners and dishes can take a back seat. Pull out your slow cooker from the back of your pantry and put it to work. Meals made in a slow cooker or pressure

cooker typically use less energy than those cooked in a conventional oven. Plus, hearty stews and braised dishes make the perfect comforting accompaniments to a cold winter's night.

Unplugging chargers that aren't charging anything is another opportunity for significant savings. Once your cell-phone, tablet or other device is fully charged, unplug the charger. Otherwise, it still draws a small but measurable amount of power that adds to your bill at no benefit to you or your electronics.

A final quick tip for hedging against billing peaks: If you don't use a smart thermostat to control your home's heating and air conditioning system, install one. If that's not practical at the moment, make a habit of

decreasing the temperature in your home by around 10 degrees before leaving for work in the morning and before turning in for the night. When the decrease in energy used for heating your home is sustained for eight hours, the savings really can add up.

As always, Houston County EC wants to partner with you in minimizing your energy spending while maximizing the value you derive from it.



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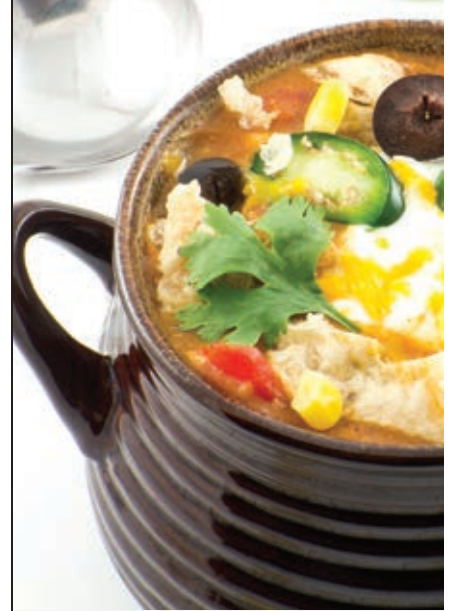
Apply for a \$1,000 scholarship toward your college or trade school expenses.

The deadline for applications is **January 15.**

Visit **houstoncountyelec.com** for eligibility information and submission guidelines.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH



MACKOFLOWER | ISTOCK.COM

Creamy Chicken Tortilla Soup

3 pounds chicken breast, cubed
½ cup chopped cilantro
1 tablespoon minced garlic
6 medium tomatoes, chopped
48 ounces mild picante sauce
26 ounces cream of chicken soup
26 ounces cream of mushroom soup
Pepper, to taste
Tortilla chips
Mild cheddar cheese, finely shredded

1. In a large pot, boil chicken in 8 cups of water with cilantro and garlic. Once chicken is fully cooked, add tomatoes and picante sauce and cook 15 minutes.
2. Add soups and pepper to taste. Let simmer an additional 30 minutes.
3. Serve over crushed tortilla chips and top with cheese. Add avocado slices, jalapeños, black olives and sour cream, as desired. ▶ Makes 7 quarts.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

HCEC NEEDS YOU!

For our 80th anniversary, we would love to hear
about the people that make us so special—

YOU!

Do you or someone you know remember when your home first received electric service, or do you have a story to share about someone or something unique in our service territory?

We would love to hear from you!

Call Kelby at (936) 544-5641 or email
kkoehler@houstoncountyelec.com.

