

# Serving Extraordinary Communities



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

### GROWING UP IN THE FLATLAND OF THE TEXAS

Panhandle, I was accustomed to wide open spaces where you could see for miles and miles. Mesquite trees were considered tall, and it was not windy until the air currents reached at least 35mph. I never would have guessed that the rolling hills and piney woods of East Texas would become my home. I am grateful for the opportunity to live in an area so rich in culture and beauty. As Houston County

Electric Cooperative enters our 80th year of operation, I would like for us to explore together the diverse communities in our service district.

Our territory spans from the Brazos Valley to the Piney Woods, bisected by the El Camino Real. Scattered throughout are the small towns which initially formed our cooperative. Each town has its own unique stories and legends that shaped their history. We hope to inspire you to learn more about your neighboring towns, visit local landmarks and museums, and discover new adventures by spotlighting as many of these communities as possible.

It is said that “people make the place.” You are our history. You are the heart and soul of our cooperative, so we are asking you to contribute your stories and photos to be included in upcoming editions of Texas Co-op Power Magazine. You can either mail information to Houston County Electric Cooperative at P.O. Box 52, Crockett, Texas 75835, drop by our office at 1701 Southeast Loop 304 in Crockett or send an email to [kkoehler@houstoncountyelec.com](mailto:kkoehler@houstoncountyelec.com).

We love our members and the communities we serve. Thank you for being the reason we are proud to call East Texas our home.



BLUEBONNETS: GUYOT / PIXABAY; PINEY WOODS: SCRUBHAKER / USCOVER

# Electricity Theft: Unsafe, Costly for Co-op Members

**THEFT OF ELECTRICITY AND RELATED MATERIALS IS A PROBLEM ALL ELECTRIC UTILITIES** face—and it's a problem for electricity customers, too. Because Houston County Electric Cooperative is member-owned, electricity theft can drive up prices for everyone.

Theft of electricity also puts your personal safety at risk. Tampering with an electric meter can make it unsafe and unstable. When people steal electricity, they put themselves, their family, neighbors and pets at risk for electric shocks, power surges, sparks and fire from exposed voltage. Stealing electricity-related materials also can pose a significant threat to the culprit, resulting in injury or even death from exposure to live electricity.

Electricity theft isn't isolated to rural areas or big cities. It's a problem utilities encounter from agricultural operations to housing complexes to business offices and from coast to coast.

Although electricity can be easily acquired through a utility, some people still are willing to risk physical injury or death just for the sake of a few free kilowatt-hours. Others may not realize the potentially serious legal implications. Stealing electricity is illegal under Texas law and violates electrical codes.

Keeping power safe and affordable is a priority for Houston County EC. That's why we routinely inspect cooperative meters and equipment—to ensure we're doing our best to protect you from the risks of electricity theft. We take a proactive approach to this serious problem, reducing theft and its related costs.

You also can play a role in this process by immediately notifying us if you suspect someone is accessing our power without paying their fair share or is tampering with equipment. If you have information related to electricity or materials theft, please call us at 1-800-657-2445. Rest assured, we'll preserve your anonymity. Because you share in the ownership of Houston County EC, we rely on your vigilance and willingness to alert us when people steal from the cooperative.



## Happy Valentine's Day | February 14

## Houston County Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835

### GENERAL MANAGER

Kathi Calvert

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## Contact Us

**TO REPORT A POWER OUTAGE,  
CALL OUR 24-HOUR HOTLINE**

**1-800-970-4232** toll-free

### BUSINESS HOURS

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

*For general information  
during business hours*

**(936) 544-5641** local

**1-800-657-2445** toll-free

To report an outage, press 1.

To make a payment over the phone  
or speak with a member services  
representative, press 2.

For electrical connects, transfers and  
disconnects or any other problem with  
your electrical service, press 3.

Para hablar con un representante de  
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### FIND US ON THE WEB

**houstoncountyelec.com**



**TEXAS CO-OP POWER**   
CELEBRATING 75 YEARS



# What's To Love About Lovelady?

LOVELADY

**A very special thank-you to Debbie Wells and the Lovelady City Hall for providing the pictures and information to create this story! If you're interested in Lovelady's history, visit City Hall and browse through their collection!**

**“WATER TOWER, POWER LINES, SWIMMING HOLES, RUSTY OLD RC Cola sign and county fairs—raise your hands up if you’ve been there.”**

Country singer Craig Morgan must have been thinking of a town such as Lovelady when he wrote those lyrics because this small Texas town has all that and more.

Lovelady is located in the southern portion of Houston County along state Highway 19. Founded in 1872, the town was named after Cyrus Lovelady, an early settler who granted land to the Houston and Great Northern Railroad to build a railway line. Shortly after the U.S. Postal Service established an office there November 8, 1872, Lovelady began to grow and prosper both as a marketplace and a shipping point, and in 1927 incorporated as a town. Over the years, periodic fires destroyed several major businesses, leaving the community without a central business district, and the school suffered from fires in 1901 and 1903. Undaunted by these setbacks, Lovelady not only survived but established itself as a town known for its local history and its annual Lovefest celebration.

The city gained some notoriety because of its proximity to Eastham, a medium-security prison that sits along the banks of the Trinity River. The prison is most notable for housing Clyde Barrow, of the infamous Bonnie and Clyde duo. In 1930, Barrow escaped Eastham Prison Farm using a weapon Bonnie Parker had smuggled to him. Shortly after the escape, he was captured and returned to Eastham—only to emerge two years later a hardened inmate. Stories about Barrow are part of the local lore and still garner the interest of tourists who visit the area.

Back some 27 years ago, when community members wanted to bulldoze the Lovelady Old Gym, Norma Dell Jones rallied to save the historic building. Valedictorian of the Lovelady High School Class of 1956, Jones engineered an effort to restore the gym. In an open letter about the project, Jones thanked numerous people for helping with the preservation. In the letter, she quotes a gentleman from Spring, who refers to an old depot that they turned into a restaurant, writing, “Someone had a vision that saw the depot as something that could be special with a little work and renovation. Perhaps Lovelady could use a few people with that vision.”

Jones and the others who spearheaded the renovation had the idea to create a space where community members could come together and celebrate. Today, 84 years after it was built, the Lovelady Old Gym has become a favorite setting for weddings, birthday parties, family reunions, fundraisers and the annual Lovelady Lovefest dance.

On weekend nights, it’s not unusual to hear music coming from the Lovelady Gym, which has gained fame as a popular country music venue. Many notables have played there, including Noel Lee Haggard, Casey Rivers, Carl Acuff Jr., Hank Thompson, Tommy Horton, Johnny Rodriguez, Mickey Gilley and Moe Bandy. Bandy was quoted as saying, “It’s a wonderful place to play. The folks are enthusiastic, and you always leave with a wonderful feeling in your heart.”

That enthusiasm for the community spawned another

Lovelady tradition—the Lovelady Lovefest, an annual festival held in February. The Lovelady Garden Club first created the event in 1983. They hoped to schedule it as close to Valentine’s Day as possible as a way of “getting the community involved in



The train depot was built in the 1870s.



The Mainer & Monday Store opened in 1892.

an annual event which would entertain ages ranging from a little baby to a grandmother and grandfather’s age.”

In the beginning, entertainment included a mechanical bull donated by Gilley’s Club in Pasadena, a dominoes 42 tournament, kissing booth, rabbit-catching contest, greased pig competition, tobacco spitting contest and log-sawing event. Although the greased pig contest and a few others have been discontinued over the years, there is something for everyone to enjoy at Lovefest. Today, vendors set up in the Lovelady Old Gym and underneath an awning to sell crafts, canned goods, metal art and much more to entertain both young and old.

This year marks the festival’s 37th anniversary. The theme





Stacy Freeman, Houston County EC director of transmission operations, escorts Shannon Campbell, mother of Right-of-Way Arborist Hayden Campbell, during the first Lovelady Lovefest in 1983.



Casey Corry, HCEC first-class lineman, second from left, was an escort during the 1990 Lovefest.



Cody Currie, HCEC GIS/mapping technician, and Ashley Shoemake during the 1994 Lovefest Parade. Their float, the Pony Express, won the award for Most Comical.



A winner of the greased pig contest at an early Lovelady Lovefest.

is “100% Chance of Lovefest.” Crowning of the 37th Lovelady Lovefest Queen will take place Thursday evening, February 7, at the Lovelady High School gymnasium. Reigning queen Hannah Burleson, daughter of Houston County Electric Cooperative members Darrell and Cindi Burleson, will crown

the new queen. On Saturday, February 9, a parade will kick off the day’s festivities at 10 a.m.

Everyone is encouraged to take part in this year’s Lovefest activities and celebrate the history of this small but distinguished Texas town.



Second Street, Lovelady. Notice the horse-drawn buggies and power lines running through town.



The Pe Hotel, originally named the Tremont Hotel, sat behind the Lovelady Food Center on present-day FM 1280 E.



A marching band during a Halloween carnival. La King's candy store, the same one that is on the Strand in Galveston, started in Lovelady.



Workers pose in front of the Houston-Leon County Coal Company, which was located just 3 miles north of Lovelady along Highway 19. A historical marker indicates where the facilities once stood.



In the early 1950s, the town had a monthly auction.



The paving of Highway 19.





Looking south down Highway 19, you can see where the old water tower stood. It was built in 1932 and taken down in 2005.



A view of Main Street. The C.R. Rich Building, on the far left, is still standing today at the corner of FM 1280 E. and Highway 19.



Ladies working in La King's candy store.



Workers at the State National Bank, where the present-day Lovelady City Hall stands.



Participants are all dressed up for the Halloween carnival parade traveling down Highway 19.

# Win Five Season Passes to Schlitterbahn

*One lucky Houston County EC member will win!*

AS PART OF TEXAS CO-OP POWER'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, WE'RE GIVING away season passes for a family of five to Schlitterbahn—and we'll choose a winner from Houston County Electric Cooperative.

The passes can be used at any Schlitterbahn in Texas. This great prize package is perfect for a summer getaway with family and friends.

Thanks for your help in making our 75th anniversary special!

## 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](mailto:kkoehler@houstoncountyelec.com).



**One lucky Houston County EC member will win!**

Get details and enter online at **[TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests)**.

Find Schlitterbahn info at [schlitterbahn.com](https://schlitterbahn.com).