

# The Gift of Giving



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

'TIS THE SEASON, AND MOST OF US WILL SPEND this month shopping for, buying, wrapping and giving gifts. If you value our community, please remember to give back to the community that supports you.

Here at Houston County Electric Cooperative, we give back to our members in various ways. We make an annual donation

each to children at Christmastime. With the exception of donated items, every single item purchased is from a local retailer in Houston County.

It gives us pride knowing the products, labor and profit involved make a positive impact on our community by supporting local businesses. This pride is passed on to the eligible

families who shop at the SHARE Christmas Store. Families participate in giving without having to choose a gift over basic needs, or facing the disappointment of a child with nothing new for Christmas.

HCEC employees give back to their communities in many other ways, serving on school boards, coaching youth sport teams, supporting the Boy Scouts and participating in economic development boards.

Electric co-ops care for their communities. Founded to bring electricity to communities that didn't interest the big, investor-owned utilities, electric cooperatives have been a cornerstone of community and economic development in rural America for decades.

HCEC is a nonprofit organization. We use funds entrusted to us wisely to keep the lights on and to support our communities. Any excess margins are returned to our members in the form of capital credits, by which money goes back into our community instead of a shareholder's pocket. The HCEC Board of Directors retired \$900,000 in Capital Credits this year. Watch for a credit on your December bill. I am proud to be a part of an organization that serves the community in which we live instead of a group of shareholders who might never set foot here.

I hope you view HCEC not just as your electric utility provider but also as a local business that brings pride and prosperity to our community. The spirit of Christmas is truly more enjoyable for those who give of themselves, whether by supporting local businesses, donating to a favorite charity or simply helping a friend or neighbor in the time of need.

We believe that being a part of this community is a valuable gift, and we hope you feel the same way. Merry Christmas and happy holidays to everyone in your family, from everyone at your co-op family.



The Board of Directors retired \$900,000 in Capital Credits. Watch for a credit on your December bill!

to the 24 fire departments in which many brave and selfless co-op members volunteer to protect our communities. HCEC supports our youth by participating in county fairs, providing scholarships to graduating seniors, and awarding students all-expense-paid leadership experiences locally with the East Texas Rural Electric Youth Seminar and nationally with Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

HCEC has been fortunate to have an outstanding cooperative business partner in CoBank. CoBank offers a matching donation program that allows funds to go further in our communities. This year we are supporting Anderson County Relay For Life and Houston County SHARE with CoBank's matching donations. In the past, we have been able to support Houston, Leon and Trinity County Relay For Life as well as Greater East Texas and Brazos Valley Community Action programs.

Additionally, my husband and I personally support Houston County SHARE by coordinating the SHARE Christmas Store. This is a program assisting those in need by giving one new gift

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# HCEC To Sponsor Students on Trip to Washington DC

**TWO DESERVING STUDENTS WILL HEAD TO WASHINGTON, D.C., NEXT JUNE ON AN** all-expense-paid trip, courtesy of Houston County Electric Cooperative. Your cooperative once again will participate in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour to provide this life-changing adventure for local students.

Youth Tour is a youth leadership program sponsored by HCEC and organized by Texas Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. For more than 50 years, electric cooperatives across the state and nation have been sending young adults to the nation's capital for an action-packed tour. The chaperoned trip, which in 2018 takes place June 6-15, includes tours of D.C.'s most popular museums, monuments and memorials. Students visit Washington National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Smithsonian Institution and more. Activities include learning about rural electrification, seeing a performance at the Kennedy Center, dining and dancing on a boat cruise, and meeting elected officials.

HCEC's 2018 Youth Tour participants will be selected through an essay contest. To enter, high school juniors and seniors must submit a 500-word essay outlining a program that would persuade more people to participate in the political process and to vote in elections.

The two students who write **the best essays** will win spots on the all-expense-paid trip to the nation's capital. These students will have the opportunity to connect and explore with more than 1,500 teens from across the country.

## What are the requirements?

- ▶ Entrant must be a high school junior or senior in HCEC's service area.
- ▶ Entrant's parent or legal guardian must be a member of the cooperative.
- ▶ Entrant must be in good standing with his/her school.
- ▶ Submit an essay and application by 5 p.m., January 19, 2018.

## How do I apply?

Download the Youth Tour application at [houstoncountyelec.com/content/youth-tour](http://houstoncountyelec.com/content/youth-tour). In the General Information pull-down menu, select Community Involvement, then Youth Tour.

Write a 500-word original essay on the topic: "Outline a program that would persuade more people to participate in the political process and vote in elections."

Turn your application and essay in to our office no later than 5 p.m., January 19, 2018. Documents may be hand-delivered to our office or mailed to P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835.



TAYLOR MONTGOMERY | TEC

**Seniors: Take your SAT now! Dorothy H. Goodrum Scholarship application**



## Houston County Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835

### GENERAL MANAGER

Kathi Calvert

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Dan Courmier, President
- Kennon Kellum, Vice President
- Mitchell Huff, Secretary-Treasurer
- Mary L. Pearl Adams
- William Emmons
- Kay Reed
- Charles "Chuck" Siems
- Grady Wakefield
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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 or other problem with electrical service, press 1.

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

For electrical connects, transfers and disconnects, press 5.

For directions to our office, mailing address or fax number, press 6.

For satellite internet services, press 7.

For staking and construction, press 8.

### FIND US ON THE WEB

[houstoncountyelec.com](http://houstoncountyelec.com)



FIND US ON FACEBOOK

# A Safe Member is an Informed Member

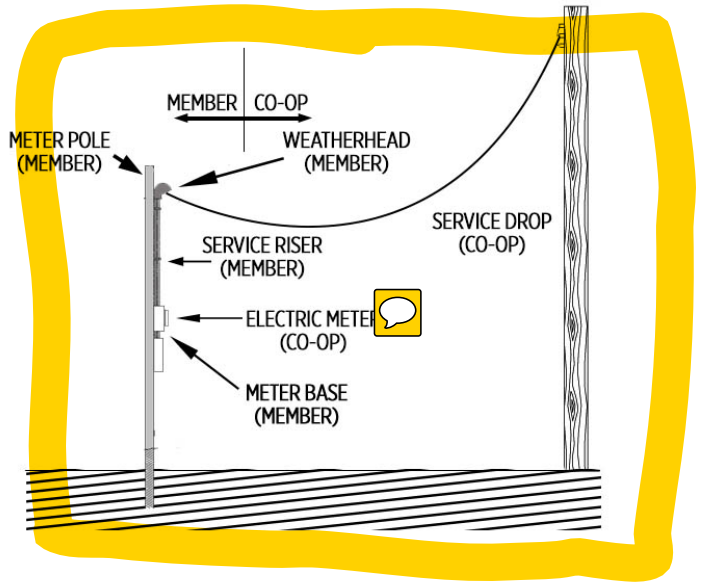
## Meter Responsibilities

**Help us ensure your safety and the reliability of your service.** The Meter base is the responsibility of the member. If it's damaged by weather or any kind of accident, repair is the member-owner's responsibility. Houston County Electric Cooperative cannot, by regulation, connect power to a damaged **meter base or meter pole** or make repairs to a member-owner's property.

**Examples of member-owner's responsibility:**

- ▶ Tripped breaker or blown fuses below the meter or in any building
- ▶ Wrapped or broken wires on the member-owner's side of the meter pole
- ▶ Tree or tree branches in wires on member-owner's side of the meter pole

For questions or concerns, contact the HCEC office at (936) 544-5641.



## Don't End Up on Santa's Naughty List!

Meter tampering will get you there.

**If your neighbors are stealing electricity from us, they are stealing from you, too. We're nonprofit and owned by YOU, the members. That's why we need your help.**

Notify us if you suspect someone is tampering with electric service. Stealing electricity is illegal, dangerous and strictly prohibited. Everyone is affected by power theft. **Detecting** and reporting illegal activity can help reduce the price that honest members pay for electricity.

### Call us at (936) 544-5641.



# Wrapped in Value

**ALTHOUGH THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS FULL** of excitement, we sometimes can miss the magic as we juggle hefty shopping lists and parties with wrapping up work projects before the end of the year. These tasks add stress, not joy, to the season. However, we want you to think of your electric cooperative as an early holiday gift wrapped with several layers of value.

As a member and owner of the co-op, you receive several money-saving perks that come in handy at this time of year. Did you know you can save at local and national businesses with your Co-op Connections card, simply for being a member? You might even find coupons at connections.coop for the top-secret ingredients of your famous green bean casserole. So before you do your holiday shopping or baking, see what kinds of deals are waiting for you.

Expecting a lot of family visits over the holidays? Every kilowatt-hour saved counts! Your co-op's energy-efficiency experts offer tips and advice on how to manage your electricity use. We also can suggest efficient holiday lighting options.



## CO-OP CONNECTIONS PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

### Beer, Bait and Beyond

*10 percent off any purchase (excluding perishables)*

You've gotta see the Beyond to understand: It's a little piece of heaven on earth that is quaint, country, retro, friendly, fun and part of our co-op family. It's not just a business—it's a lifestyle! Beer, Bait and Beyond thrives on making your world a little easier, a little happier and a little closer to the old-time values that once defined small business!

**Address:** 13030 Texas State Hwy. 21 W., Crockett, TX 75835

**Phone:** (940) 937-6619 or 1-800-769-6619

**Hours:** Tuesday–Friday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

**Owner:** Sherri Crofford

### Coastal Creative

*Use code "cc25" to receive \$25 off your order!*

At Coastal Creative, we have your printing needs covered, from conception to installation. Our employees strive to provide an unparalleled level of quality and service on every job we complete.

**Address:** 9715 Carroll Centre Road, Ste. 103, San Diego, CA 92126

**Phone:** (858) 880-7771

**Website:** coastalcreative.com

**Contact:** Mark Krenn

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH



BHOFACK2 | ISTOCK.COM

## Banana Crunch Muffins

- 3 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, melted
- 2 eggs
- ¾ cup whole milk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup mashed bananas
- 1 cup diced bananas
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup granola
- 1 cup sweetened, flaked coconut

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Apply nonstick cooking spray to muffin tins.
- 2.** In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and soda, and salt. Add butter and mix thoroughly.
- 3.** In a medium bowl, combine eggs, milk, vanilla and mashed bananas, stirring until combined. Add to dry ingredients and mix until smooth. Fold in diced bananas, pecans, granola and coconut.
- 4.** Spoon into muffin tins. Sprinkle tops with extra granola or flaked coconut, if desired. Bake 25–30 minutes.

Makes 18 muffins.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at  
**TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM**



# MERRY CHRISTMAS

Houston County EC wishes you and yours a blessed and joyful Christmas season.

Our offices will be closed Monday, December 25, for Christmas, and Monday, January 1, for New Year's Day, to allow our employees to celebrate the holidays with their families.



# Prevent Carbon Monoxide Perils

**CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING KILLS MORE** than 200 people in the United States every year. Several thousand more are treated for CO poisoning.

Fuel-burning heating and cooking appliances, portable generators, water heaters, clothes dryers and cars can emit carbon monoxide—which can be deadly in enclosed areas. The odorless, colorless, tasteless gas is often called the “silent killer” because it is virtually undetectable without the use of technology like a CO alarm.

Even though CO alarms are simple to install and provide an early warning of the dangerous presence of the gas, an estimated 70 percent of U.S. homes are not protected by a working CO detector.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning may include fatigue, shortness of breath, drowsiness, headache and nausea.

A person can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer time or by a large amount in a shorter period. Extremely high levels of the gas can be fatal within minutes. Lower concentrations of carbon monoxide may more severely affect infants, pregnant women and people with conditions that limit their body’s ability to use oxygen such as emphysema, asthma and heart disease.

Install CO alarms on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area. Inter-connected alarms provide the best protection. That way, when one sounds, they all sound. CO alarms are not a substitute for smoke alarms. Install both types of alarms in your home.

Purchase CO alarms from a reputable retailer that you trust, and choose alarms that bear the label of a nationally recognized testing laboratory. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions regarding proper placement and installation height.

Test CO detectors at least once a month by pressing the TEST button. Alarm batteries should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions, at least once a year. If an alarm “chirps” or “beeps” to indicate low batteries, they should be replaced immediately. The life span of CO alarms varies and should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.



A CO detector can help keep you safe when using kitchen appliances.

SIR TRAVEL ALOT | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## **FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING IN YOUR HOME:**

- ▶ Make sure appliances are installed and operated according to the manufacturer’s instructions and applicable local codes.
- ▶ Fuel-burning heating appliances should be inspected and serviced by a certified, licensed professional every year.
- ▶ Never use your oven, range, stovetop or clothes dryer to provide heat for your home.
- ▶ Never use gas or charcoal grills inside your home or garage.
- ▶ Only use portable generators outside in well-ventilated areas away from windows and doors. Never use a portable generator inside your home.
- ▶ If you will be using a portable generator outside your home, be sure to install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with a battery backup inside the home.
- ▶ Only use battery-powered devices for lighting in tents and recreational vehicles such as trailers, motor homes and boats.
- ▶ Never use fuel-burning camping equipment inside an enclosed space.
- ▶ Keep dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace vents clear.
- ▶ Never run a vehicle inside a garage, even if the garage doors are open. Remove the vehicle immediately after starting it.

Make sure that everyone in your family knows the difference between the sound of the CO and smoke detectors, and what number to call for a CO emergency.

If your CO alarm sounds, immediately move to fresh air outside. Alert others in the home to the danger and make sure everyone gets to fresh air safely. Never ignore a sounding CO alarm.