

# CEC inside your co-op

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## CEC Asks Teens What Matters Most To Them

Their inspiration could win them a Youth Tour trip to Washington, DC

Choctaw Electric wants to push teens to ponder issues that mean something to them — and put those thoughts into action. Teens who follow will find the reward is well worth their time: A free trip to Washington, DC as a participant in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and a lifetime of fond memories.

CEC will sponsor three students on Youth Tour. The trip will be held June 9-15, 2017. Teens must be high school juniors attending school in Choctaw, McCurtain, or Pushmataha counties. To be considered for the trip, interested teens must submit a three to four minute multimedia presentation on an issue that matters to them.

CEC finalists will be selected based on the creativity and knowledge conveyed in their presentations. A brief personal interview with judges will determine CEC's three Youth Tour winners.

"The whole experience of being in Washington, DC on Youth Tour always inspires teens to get more involved in the democratic process."

— JIA JOHNSON, CEC DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS



Jia Johnson, CEC director of public relations, said the competition aims to make students think about issues that affect them and why they feel strongly about these topics.

"The whole experience of being in Washington, DC on Youth Tour always inspires teens to get more involved in the democratic process," she said. "We want our contest to jump-start this process at the local level."

Teens interested in applying for Youth Tour will find contest guidelines and other details under the Member Services tab at [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop). The deadline to apply is February 10, 2017.

## cut *the* clutter.

CEC's paperless billing saves your co-op save thousands of dollars in expenses associated with printing and mailing your electric bill. It can help you save a buck, too. Sign up for CEC's paperless billing option by February 28 and receive a \$10 credit on your next electric bill!

When you choose paperless billing, your statement is delivered electronically for quick, easy viewing. To sign up, please visit [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop) and click on Smarthub. New users will be asked to provide an email address and CEC account number and choose a password. If you're already registered on Smarthub, simply log in and click "Go Paperless."

Choose paperless billing and earn a **\$10 credit** on your electric bill!



A monthly newsletter of  
Choctaw Electric Cooperative.

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24 Hour Outage Hotline

**800-780-6486**

## MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

# Exceeding Expectations Every Day

My kids always combed their grade-school report cards for EEs, which signified they had attained the coveted “exceeds expectations” rating in aspects of school life that couldn’t be assigned a letter grade.

As they grew, EEs turned into As and Bs. Yet I don’t think any of them ever lost the desire to exceed expectations.

At Choctaw Electric Cooperative, we also strive for EEs every single day. We don’t want to do what you only expect us to do—provide you with affordable, safe, and reliable electric service. We want to go farther and do better, from providing superior member services to offering programs that help you save time and money.

Choctaw Electric lineworkers provide the public face of our mission to exceed expectations. They routinely work in terrible weather and put in long hours, but they do it because they truly care about doing an exceptional job for you.

We have other people behind the scenes who make our co-op the best it can be. Our co-op engineers continually explore new technologies to improve service reliability. Our finance department works to make bill pay easier and more convenient with



**BY KENNETH J. GATES**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

programs like auto-draft, average monthly payments, paperless and prepaid billing. CEC customer service representatives want to make sure you have a positive and satisfying experience when you call our office for help or use our drive-through window.

Because we’re a cooperative, we also have a special responsibility to support the communities we serve and we try to exceed expectations there, too. That means we aim to improve the quality

of life by supporting local youth groups, participating in community events, and staying active in civic organizations.

Whether it’s a power outage or an energy audit, a billing question or a county fair, we’re working hard to achieve those EEs from you every day.

If you hear from us, asking you to participate in a Choctaw Electric member satisfaction survey, please do so. This way, we’ll know if we’re meeting your expectations, exceeding them, or need to improve in a specific area. Your opinion matters to us.



FIND IT ONLINE

■ *Applying For Service.* Individuals who wish to sign up for electric service from Choctaw Electric will find member application forms online at [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop). From our homepage, click on Forms and Information. The link will carry you to a page where you will find application forms for commercial and residential service, as well as enrollment forms for CEC bill payment plans such as prepaid billing, automatic bank draft, average monthly payments, and more.

## Prepaid Members Appreciate PaySite Kiosk Convenience



With 24-hour access and five locations, Choctaw Electric's new PaySite kiosks are convenient for all co-op members. For members enrolled in our prepaid program, the payment locations are particularly useful.

Prepaid participants pay ahead for their electricity consumption so billing dates don't apply to them. They also avoid fees associated with late payments and disconnection. Instead, prepaid members apply money to their account as it nears the low mark or risk losing service until a payment is made.

PaySite kiosks make it easy for prepaid consumers to make a quick payment of a few dollars, or whatever they feel they can afford.

Kiosks accept payments via cash, check or credit card. Because payments are accepted around the clock and are posted immediately, prepaid members can rest easy knowing their account remains "in the green."

### FIND PAYSITE LOCATIONS

To find the PaySite kiosk nearest you, use the kiosk locator available at [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop) or <http://paysitekiosklocator.com/>.

PaySite kiosks are available at the following locations:

- Save A Lot Grocery, Hugo (Sunday, 9 am - 8 pm; Monday - Saturday, 7:30 am - 9 pm)
- Choctaw Nation Travel Plaza—Atoka, Antlers Broken Bow, Idabel

OFFICIAL



MINUTES

Scan this code with your smartphone or tablet to read the monthly minutes of your co-op board meeting. Minutes are also available at any CEC location.

To scan the code, install a Bar Code Scanner app, available at the App Store.



## WINTER ENERGY TIP:

Electric bills increase during the winter for a variety of reasons—holiday gatherings, houseguests, and shorter days and longer nights. Small measures, like turning down your thermostat, replacing incandescent bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water can help control energy costs.

Source: TogetherWeSave.com

## CEC's Online Outage Map Shows Restoration Progress

*It's a great way to stay informed!*

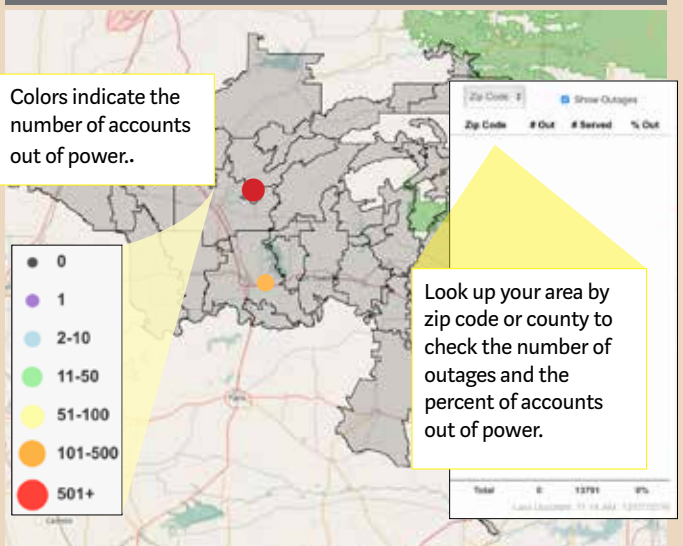
During a power outage, members want to know first and foremost when their power will be restored. While that question is impossible for any electric utility to answer, Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) is making it easier for members to track the restoration process using the co-op's new online outage map.

The map of CEC's service area allows members to view regions by zip code or county, see the number of outages in an area, and the percentage of members affected.

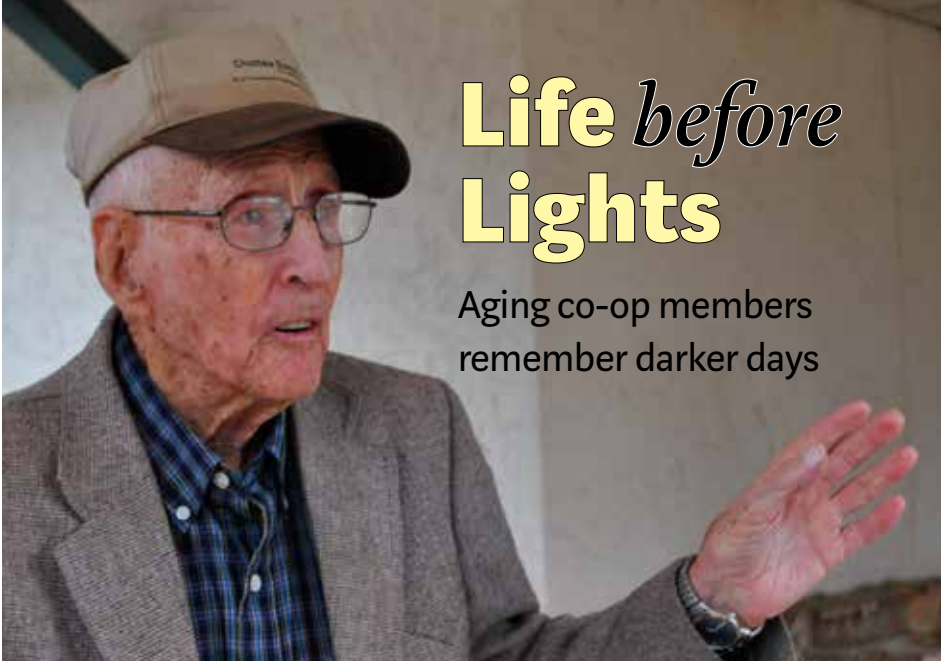
Color-coded icons help members to determine the severity of an outage. For example, a red circle indicates a major outage affecting more than 500 members. As outages are restored, the colored icons change, indicating that progress is being made.

To view the map, please visit [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop) and click Outage Map at the upper right of the homepage.

### Choctaw Electric's Online Outage Map







## Life *before* Lights

Aging co-op members remember darker days

Herschel Pence of Hugo witnessed the advent of electricity in southeast Oklahoma. Pence, age 105, is a lifelong member of Choctaw Electric Cooperative. PHOTO/JENNIFER BOLING, CEC.

Like old trees, their roots run deep in Choctaw County. Their lives bear witness to astounding changes that transformed the nation and sometimes the world.

The automobile. Electric lights. Television. The Internet. With almost two hundred years of history between the pair, Choctaw County residents Herschel Pence and Arnold Crain watched horse and wagon give way to Ford pickup trucks. They remember 15 cent movie tickets and understand the joy of hot running water, indoor plumbing, and refrigerated food.

Both men are longtime members of Choctaw Electric Cooperative. Crain, age 86, lives four miles south of Hugo. Pence, age 105, lives with his son and daughter-in-law in Hugo. Until 2013, he lived by himself in his childhood home, just a mile or so down the road from Crain.

The men are neighbors and friends. "Herschel has known me all of my life," said Crain. Like many of Pence's acquaintances, Crain finds his elder neighbor's longevity remarkable.

Pence can out-walk many folks half his age. Until August, he still drove. According to daughter-in-law, Carolyn Pence, his medication regimen consists of one multivitamin per day. While his hearing is poor, that doesn't stop Pence from keeping an active social calendar—weekly domino games, frequent meals at local senior citizen's centers, and daily visits to his old home place where he checks his mail and sits awhile.



Arnold Crain, age 86, remains an active member of his electric co-op. PHOTO/JENNIFER BOLING, CEC.

Neither Pence nor Crain is a stranger to tough times, but you'll never hear them whining. When asked what life was like before electricity, both gentlemen offered the same straightforward response: "Well, it was dark."

Crain keeps an old kerosene lantern above his fireplace as a souvenir of darker days. "Those lamps barely lit up the kitchen table, but after we got electricity, you could see all the way around the room," he marveled.

Choctaw Electric organized in 1940, but World War II halted line construction. It was 1949 before electricity reached the Crain and Pence homesteads. "We had no running water," Pence recalled. "We had to haul it in, but we made it. Got a lot easier after electric, though."

Crain recalls the amazement of seeing light spilling from every window in his home. "It was a proud time for everyone out here when we got electricity," he said. "If it weren't for Choctaw Electric, we'd still be sitting in the dark."

He remembers cold food storage as one of the biggest benefits of electricity. Before refrigerators, families relied on a wooden ice box to keep food and milk cool. "The ice man would come twice a week, and we'd hang a sign on the house telling him how much ice we needed," Crain recalled. "If we were making homemade ice cream, we'd have to order a bit more."

Most country folks used a smokehouse to cure meats generously coated with salt and sugar. A good milk cow provided milk and butter; chickens offered eggs and a vegetable garden produced potatoes, peas, corn and other staples.

"We didn't know we were poor because we always had plenty to eat," Crain said.

Pence agreed. Times were tough, but they got by. Growing up, he recalls eating a lot of beans and potatoes. "If you didn't eat beans and taters, you didn't eat," he said.

Today, Arnold Crain and Herschel Pence remain active members of Choctaw Electric Cooperative, always attending meetings and participating in elections. Like their co-op, they've come a long way and show little sign of slowing down.

# CEC Offers Free Energy Curriculum

Classes help students understand the basics of electrical energy

Raising children to be smart energy consumers is key to reducing energy waste, keeping rates affordable, and protecting the environment. Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) is committed to building energy awareness among elementary, middle school, and high school students by offering free energy education classes for interested schools.

Four different courses are available. From basic electrical safety to understanding alternative energy, each class is designed to make learning about energy fun. CEC energy experts provide hands-on instruction and guidance and all course materials. Each course may be customized to fit your classroom, with study units, field trips, and more.

### ■ CEC DANGER RANGER

A good choice for elementary school students, Danger Ranger teaches kids why electrical safety is important and how they can stay safe in their home and neighborhood. Video games and other tools keep students entertained and interested.

### ■ GET POWERED!

Where does electricity come from? How is it transmitted and delivered to our homes and businesses? Get Powered helps students understand the complex process of power generation and delivery and distribution.

### ■ WHAT'S UP WITH GREEN?

This course for middle school students uses experiments and activities to teach teens about different forms of



CEC's Brad Kendrick explains renewable resources to students from Haworth School.

energy, how to use it energy efficiently and why wise energy use is important to protecting our environment.

### ■ GO ECO!

For middle school or high school students, Go Eco reveals the difference between kinetic and mechanical energy and how alternative energy resources utilize both to create electricity. The course includes a variety of hands-on tools to help students understand how electricity is generated, transmitted and delivered. Students also learn about nuclear and bio-mass power.

**For more information on CEC's free energy courses for schools, please call 800-780-6486, ext. 209.**



## Win A \$50 Bill Credit!

To be eligible, simply fill out a CEC customer service survey, available at any CEC office location. Once you've completed the survey and returned it to CEC, you will be automatically entered in our drawing for a \$50 electric bill credit. Drawings will take place every three months.



## Community Events

Help us promote your event by sending event details in advance. Please send event information to Jennifer Boling/Inside Your Co-op/ PO Box 758, Hugo, OK 74743; or e-mail info to [jboling@choctawelectric.coop](mailto:jboling@choctawelectric.coop). Events and dates are subject to change.

### JANUARY

- 1 New Year
- 2 CEC Closed for the holiday. To report an outage, please call 800-780-6486.
- 14 Tanya Tucker in Concert Choctaw Casino, Grant
- 28 Hinder in Concert Choctaw Casino, Grant

### FEBRUARY

- TBA Broken Bow Chamber of Commerce Banquet

### MARCH

- TBA Spring Livestock Show & McCurtain County Fairgrounds, Idabel
- TBA Broken Bow Chamber of Commerce Bass Fishing Tournament, Broken Bow
- TBA Spring Wood Art Exhibit, Forest Heritage Center, Broken Bow

**💰 Lucky Account #29824002** (\$25 Bill Credit). If the account number above belongs to you, contact your co-op by the 10th of the month to claim your \$25 bill credit. Call Jennifer Boling at **800-780-6486**, ext. 207, or contact CEC via email or in person.

# How To Use Space Heaters Efficiently

They make sense for some homeowners, but be mindful of operating costs and safety

When it's cold out some co-op members prefer to flip on a space heater instead of turning up the central heat. This can be a cost effective strategy, but if you're not careful you could increase your electric bill, instead.

Generally, it is best to run a space heater when you need to heat just one or two rooms, or if you need temporary heat in an unheated area like a garage or shed. If you have a particularly cold-sensitive person in the home, it can be more efficient to use a space heater in the room they most often occupy rather than overheating the whole house.

However, be mindful of the costs these little heaters can add to your electric bill. Choctaw Electric Energy Use Specialist Brad Kendrick said he often finds 1,500-watt space heaters in the homes of members with high bill complaints. "When I do a cost analysis for them they are always surprised," he said.

Do your own calculations for how much running one, two or three space heaters in your home would cost. And beware

the efficiency hype around space heaters: electric space heaters are all 100 percent efficient at turning electricity into heat, but an ENERGY STAR air-source heat pump can be 300 percent efficient.

If a space heater is right for you, remember a few things to save energy and money:

- If you're using a space heater to heat the one or two rooms you use most, turn down your central heating so you don't heat rooms you aren't using.
- Close doors to rooms that are being heated to avoid heat loss.
- Turn off the heater when not in use or get a space heater with a timer feature.
- Purchase a heater with thermostat settings and use the lowest setting that you are comfortable with.
- Select a space heater that is the right size for the space you need to heat; most will have a sizing table on the box.

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## SPACE HEATER SAFETY TIPS

Regardless of the kind of space heater you purchase, practice safety: Space heaters are involved in more than 80 percent of fatal home heating fires. When you purchase your heater, check that it has the following:

- Tip-over safety switch, which automatically shuts the heater off if it tips over.
- Temperature sensor to detect when any internal components become too hot.
- Guard around heating element to protect curious hands or paws.
- UL-listing or other certification to show that it meets voluntary safety standards.

Practice safety, and teach your family what to do around space heaters:

- Use the heater only on a flat surface.
- Plug the heater directly into the wall instead of an extension cord, and avoid plugging anything else into the same outlet. If you must use an extension cord, use the shortest possible heavy-duty cord.
- Keep the heater away from pets, children and flammable items like bedding, furniture and curtains.
- Don't use in the bathroom unless it is designed for bathroom use; moisture can damage the heater.
- Never leave a heater unattended – turn it off for safety and to save money!

## Calculate Your Space Heater Cost



Most space heaters are 1500 watts. If you're operating a space heater 8 hours a day and your rate is **\$0.12 per kWh** = (1500 watts X 240 hours/month X \$0.12/kWh) / 1000 = **\$43.20/month**



## Space Heaters

Cont'd

Due to safety and air-quality concerns, portable propane and kerosene space heaters are not safe for use in a home or other unventilated area. Even when installed properly, they can emit low levels of carbon monoxide. Instead, look for an electric space heater. The two main types are infrared or convection heaters. Both have advantages and disadvantages so be sure to read the small type so you'll purchase the best type for you.



Remember, if you need a space heater to keep your home comfortable, your home will likely benefit from additional insulation or air sealing. Both are great investments that can significantly reduce your energy bills. You should also consider simple short-term measures, such as weather stripping around drafty doors and windows, hanging thermal curtains or installing window film, and using rugs to cover uncarpeted floors.

Choctaw Electric can help you figure out the best measures to take to keep your home comfortable. Schedule a free energy audit for real answers about your home's efficiency. Your co-op also offers low interest loans to help you pay for a long list of energy efficiency improvements.

To schedule a free energy audit or get more details on CEC's energy efficiency loans, please call **800-780-6486** or visit [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop).



## Riding the Storm Out

Tips for surviving the worst of winter weather

**W**hen an ice or snow storm causes a power outage, preparation is key to staying safe and comfortable. Below are some tips to keep in mind before, during and after a storm:

- *Begin storm preparations as soon as possible.* Stock up on flashlight batteries, bottled water, snacks and other foods that don't require cooking. Keep a battery-operated radio handy for news. If you take prescription medications, make sure you have an ample supply. Remember, even if you're unsure of the storm's path, prepare for it anyway. At worst, you'll be stocked and ready for the next big weather event.
- *Leave your phone plugged into the wall,* especially if there's a chance of power outages. If the power goes out, you're guaranteed to have maximum battery power. To further preserve battery life, put your phone on Airplane Mode.
- *Don't bring grills or generators inside.* Both emit carbon monoxide that could poison you in a confined space.
- *If you're using a backup generator, please let your co-op know.* Generators can back-feed electricity onto power lines if they aren't connected properly. It helps CEC linemen stay safe if they know in advance where a generator is being used.
- *Avoid opening your refrigerator or freezer.* During an outage, opening them less often will help food stay cold longer.
- *Don't go near downed power lines or attempt to drive around them.* Report the situation to your co-op immediately at **800-780-6486** or call 911.

### REPORT OUTAGES FAST!

Use Smarthub to report an outage and you'll never get a frustrating busy signal! Two ways to access Smarthub:

1. Download the app from the App Store or at [www.smarthubapp.com](http://www.smarthubapp.com). You will be asked to register by providing an email address, password, and CEC account number. Once registered, use Smarthub to report an outage via smartphone, tablet or computer.
2. Visit [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop) and click Report An Outage at the upper right of the homepage.

# January

Best days according to Moon phases.



## Best planting days

Above ground crops ...	2-3, 6-7, 10-11, 29-30
Root crops .....	17-21, 24-26
Seed beds .....	10-11, 19-21
Kill plant pests .....	1, 4-5, 8-9, 12-16, 22-23, 27-28, 31

## Best fishing days

👉 Best .....	2-3, 10-11, 30
☺ Good .....	1, 14-15, 19-21, 29
☹ Fair .....	6-7, 9, 12-13, 16, 24, 27-28
☹ Poor .....	4-5, 8, 17-18, 22-23, 25-26, 31

## Best days to do other stuff

Begin diet to gain weight .....	3, 7, 30
Begin diet to lose weight .....	16-21
Begin logging .....	25-26
Breed animals .....	20-21
Make sauerkraut, can, or pickle .....	20-21
Cut hair to discourage growth .....	17, 19
Cut hair to encourage growth .....	2-3, 30-31
Cut hay .....	4-6
Destroy pests and weeds .....	4-6
End projects .....	27
Go camping .....	22-24
Graft or pollinate .....	11-12
Harvest above ground vegetables ....	7-8
Harvest below ground vegetables ....	15-16
Go to the dentist .....	15-16
Plant above ground vegetables .....	2-3, 30-31
Plant below ground vegetables .....	20-21
Prune to discourage growth .....	22-24
Prune to encourage growth .....	4-6
Quit smoking .....	16, 21
Set posts or pour concrete .....	25-26
Set chicken eggs .....	NA
Start projects .....	29
Wean animals and children .....	16, 21

—from the *Old Farmer's Almanac*

# Good Eats

IN SOUTHEAST OKLAHOMA

## Homemade Macaroni and Cheese

### INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz uncooked elbow macaroni
- 2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 cups milk
- ¼ cup butter
- 2½ tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup bread crumbs
- 1 pinch paprika



### DIRECTIONS

Cook macaroni according to the package directions. Drain.

In a saucepan, melt butter or margarine over medium heat. Stir in enough flour to make a roux. Add milk to roux slowly, stirring constantly. Stir in cheeses, and cook over low heat until cheese is melted and the sauce is a little thick. Put macaroni in large casserole dish, and pour sauce over macaroni. Stir well.

Melt butter or margarine in a skillet over medium heat. Add breadcrumbs and brown. Spread over the macaroni and cheese to cover. Sprinkle with a little paprika.

Bake at 350° F. for 30 minutes. Serve.

SOURCE: ALLRECIPES.COM

## ■ swap shop

### FREE CLASSIFIED ADS FOR CEC MEMBERS

#### ■ RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

Side-by-Side ATV, 2009 Arctic Cat Prowler 650 w/winch. \$3,500. 580-236-3046.

Motor homes for sale: Both parked in the garage and in excellent condition. 1997 Fore Travel Motorhome, 36 ft. diesel pusher and a 2005 Fleetwood American Eagle Motorhome, 40 ft. diesel pusher. 580-481-4814.

#### ■ LIVESTOCK & PETS

Miniature donkey business for sale. 580-326-7672 or 580-326-1438.

Ark of McCurtain County offers discount spay/neuter services +mobile spay/neuter services. Please help us stop unwanted litters by spaying and neutering your pet. We also have dogs and cats ready for adoption. 580-236-2275.

HAVN low cost spay and neuter clinic in Fort Towson. To schedule an appointment, call Yvonne at 580-873-2771. If no answer, please leave a message. Your call will be returned.

SWAP SHOP ads are free for CEC members. Submit ads online at [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop), email to [jboling@choctawelectric.coop](mailto:jboling@choctawelectric.coop), or mail ads to CEC *Inside Your Co-op*, PO Box 758, Hugo, OK 74743. Ads must include a telephone number or email address. Please provide your name, mailing address and CEC account number when submitting an ad.