



inside your co-op

For members of Choctaw Electric Cooperative | MARCH 2025



A Glimpse into the History of Old Hochatown

For John Punneo, old Hochatown isn't a page from history books—it was a place filled with memories of a life built on hard work, resilience and change. Born and raised in the original town of Hochatown—now submerged beneath Broken Bow Lake—John's family lived there until 1963, when the government bought their land.

"People see new Hochatown and think it was always like that," John says, "but what you see now is nothing like the old days." He describes the Hochatown where he grew up as a small, close-knit community. The town had a two-room school, a post office with a store and a church. Flooding was a constant challenge. Every spring, floodwaters washed away crops and cut off access to town.

Life in Hochatown revolved around farming. John's family farmed 40 acres—which his father purchased for \$500—and they raised cattle, hogs, horses and goats. As a child, he had to milk cows before school. Rather than modern farm equipment, his family used a team of horses as they farmed corn and hay, baling it by hand. His father also worked at a sawmill, making about \$40 a week.

John recalls when electricity first came to his

family's farm in the mid-1950s. He was a boy when the poles were set, first by machine and then by hand when the equipment broke. Though their setup was basic—a single pull-string light and a fuse box—he says it was a vast improvement over kerosene lamps. The family's electricity bill was never over \$4.

John remembers nights spent on horseback, protecting their crops from raccoons—which became food for the family. Hunting was a necessity, but deer were scarce in those days. His family also made bootleg "wildcat whiskey," which sold for \$4 per half gallon.

In 1969, the lake filled, permanently changing the landscape. The church, store and cemetery were relocated.

Now 74, John reflects on the demanding life of old Hochatown. "Most people can't imagine what it was really like," he says. "It was pretty hard at times—all work and no play."

Today, Hochatown is a fast-growing tourist destination, a contrast to the quiet farming town John once knew. Since 2010, Choctaw Electric Cooperative has installed 2,600 meters and 198 miles of line in the Hochatown area, serving approximately 3,000 cabins.

EXPLORING HOCHATOWN'S HISTORY

1930s car on the road from Hochatown to Eagletown in Five Mile Hollow. Bridge built by the Eagletown CCC Camp.

Boys standing outside the Hochatown School in 1930.



Postmaster A.C. Kincaid, standing outside his store, which housed the Hochatown Post Office.

Mrs. J.W. Burke washing clothes as her grandchildren, Wilda Kincaide and Preston Fish, play by the first well in Hochatown.



Congressman Carl Albert gives the keynote address at the dedication of the Broken Bow Lake Dam on June 6, 1970.

Top left: The student body of the Hochatown School, circa 1930. Photos courtesy of the Kenny Sivard Collection of the Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division.

Choctaw Electric Cooperative

Serving members in Choctaw, Pushmataha, Atoka, McCurtain, Bryan and LeFlore counties.

CONNECT WITH US

Monday-Friday | 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

24 Hour Outage Line

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Powering Ahead

CEC Invests in a Strong Team for a Strong Future

At Choctaw Electric Cooperative, we take pride in building a strong, dedicated team to serve our members. With several retirements in early 2025, we have been focused on bringing in new talent and strengthening our workforce. By leveraging key partnerships, promoting internal growth, and prioritizing local hiring, we are ensuring a smooth transition while maintaining the expertise and commitment that define our co-op.

With the retirement of several seasoned staff members, succession planning has been a key focus in our hiring efforts. In some cases, we've hired early to allow for a smooth transition, particularly in roles where institutional knowledge transfer is critical.

We've been fortunate to attract great candidates and have utilized partnerships, including the lineman programs at OSU Okmulgee and the Kiamichi Tech Center in Hugo. These programs have helped us identify skilled individuals who are ready to step into critical roles. Additionally, we have provided opportunities for internal candidates to advance in their careers, ensuring a strong foundation of experience and knowledge within our co-op.

Hiring local talent is a priority. We are committed to making job opportunities accessible. We post all job openings on Facebook and in local newspapers to reach as many qualified candidates as possible. If you have questions about an opening, we encourage you to reach out.



CEO Kooney Duncan

Offering internship programs is another way we invest in the future. Our board has been highly supportive of these initiatives, recognizing the importance of helping students progress in their career paths. While our primary focus has been on lineman programs, we are excited to welcome an engineering intern soon. We remain open to any internship opportunities that align with our needs, providing valuable hands-on experience for students while benefiting from fresh perspectives.

At CEC, we don't just offer jobs—we offer careers. Some of our employees have been with us for 35 years or more, a testament to the family environment we foster. Our goal is to not only provide employment but also to serve our members with dedication and expertise. We look forward to continuing to build a strong team for the future.

Last Chance: Apply Now for Energy Camp 2025!

Eighth-graders, don't miss out! Submit your Energy Camp application by **Friday, March 7**. Visit our website to get started: choctawelectric.net/energy-camp



Registration open for Kilowatt Kids Camp

Join Willie Wiredhand this summer for Kilowatt Kids Camp! Expect a morning of interactive learning about electricity, a field trip and lunch. Camp is for students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade and runs from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The Idabel camp is scheduled for Tuesday, June 3; the Hugo camp will be Thursday, June 5. Register FREE by submitting the form below by June 1. Contact Jia Johnson or Brad Kendrick at 800-786-6486 ext. 241, with questions.



Student Name (Print) _____ Age _____ Grade _____

Parent Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone (____) ____ - _____ Work Phone (____) ____ - _____

Cell Phone (____) ____ - _____

Allergies: _____ Medications: _____

T-Shirt Size (Circle): Youth XS (4-6) Youth S (6-8) Youth M (8-10) Youth L (10-12) Adult S Adult M Adult L

Contact information in case of emergency: Name _____

Home phone (____) ____ - _____ Cell phone (____) ____ - _____

Idabel Camp: June 3 (Tuesday) _____ Hugo Camp: June 5 (Thursday) _____

RELEASE FOR MINOR CHILDREN (Under 18)

I, (print name) _____, parent or official guardian of (child's name) _____ hereby grant permission to Choctaw Electric Cooperative to take and use photographs and/or digital images of my child for use in news releases and/or educational materials as follows: printed publications or materials, electronic publications or websites. I agree that my child's name and identity may be revealed in descriptive text or commentary in connection with the image(s). I authorize the use of these images without compensation to me. All negatives, prints and digital reproductions shall be the property of Choctaw Electric Cooperative.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Do you rely on life support?

If you rely on electricity to power life support equipment, it's time to update your records with Choctaw Electric Cooperative. CEC maintains a record of our life-support-dependent members so the co-op can notify you of scheduled outages in your area. To protect your health and safety, we ask members to submit a life support member form by March 31 each year.

Forms are available on our website: <https://choctawelectric.net/applications-and-forms> or by calling 800-780-6486. Life-support-dependent members should be prepared with battery backup or another source of alternate power during a power outage. Your safety is our priority. Thank you for your cooperation!

Go paperless!

Sign up for paperless billing via the SmartHub app or call Choctaw Electric Cooperative at 800-780-6486. One lucky member will win two CEC t-shirts and two CEC caps.

Annual Meeting Announced

Save the date! CEC's 85th Annual Meeting is set for Sept. 27, 2025 at the Pushmataha County Fairgrounds in Antlers. More information to follow.

Energy Saving Tip

March is an ideal time to service your home cooling system, ensuring it runs efficiently when the heat of summer arrives. Routine maintenance, like cleaning or replacing filters, checking refrigerant levels and inspecting parts, can improve your system's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills. A well-maintained cooling system can save energy, help you avoid costly emergency repairs, and keep your home comfortable all summer long.

Beware of Utility Scams

Be cautious of fraudulent websites pretending to be Choctaw Electric Cooperative. Scammers can create look-alike sites to steal your information. Always type our official web address directly into your browser instead of clicking email or text links. Watch for signs of a secure website, such as "https://" in the address bar and a padlock icon. If you're ever unsure, call CEC using our official phone number, listed on your bill, to verify payment or account details. Stay vigilant to protect yourself from utility fraud.

Lucky Acct #38845916

If this is your account number, please contact CEC at 800-780-6486, ext. 241 by the 5th of the month to claim your \$25 bill credit. Unclaimed bill credits roll over each month by \$25 for a maximum credit of \$100.



Left: Norvin Graham and his stallion, Two Eyed Duo Glo. Top right and bottom right: 2014 photos of Norvin with his wife, Ashlee, and kids, Kasen, Kyleigh and Kynzleigh, that appeared in Oklahoma Living Magazine. Photos by James Pratt.

Remembering Norvin Roy Graham III: A Life of Dedication and Brotherhood

The Choctaw Electric Cooperative family is mourning the loss of Norvin Roy Graham III, who died on Dec. 29, 2024, at the age of 42.

Born on November 9, 1982, in Idabel, Oklahoma, to Norvin Roy Graham Jr. and Teresa Ann (Presley) Graham, Norvin grew up in Garvin, where he attended school through eighth grade. He graduated from Valliant High School in 2001. It was there that he met Ashlee Stuart, whom he married on December 3, 2005.

Norvin and Ashlee had three children, Kasen, Kyleigh and Kynzleigh. Together, they built a home and family, rooted in faith. “He loved spending time with his family and aggravating them every chance he got,” his obituary reads. “Above all else, Norvin was a child of God.”

For the past 15 years, Norvin worked as a lineman at Choctaw Electric Cooperative. His colleagues remember him as someone they could always count on, whether it was during routine tasks or storm restoration efforts.

Ryan Bryant, a longtime friend and co-

worker, describes Norvin as more than a colleague. “He was someone I could always rely on, no matter the job or the time of day. Norvin was reserved, yet always seemed to bring the crew together through his humor and camaraderie. Looking back, I consider him to be more than a friend and coworker, but think of him as a brother.”

Dale Pettyjohn recalls how Norvin never hesitated to answer the call when the cooperative needed him. “No matter the time of night, Norvin always said, ‘No problem, I am on the way.’ Norvin was very quiet, didn’t say a lot but was very dedicated to his job. I will certainly miss his positive attitude and willingness to assist when needed.”

Chandy Abney, a dispatcher at CEC, comments on his unwavering work ethic and respect for those around him. “For 15 years, he never complained, always gave 100% and treated everyone with kindness.”

Beyond his work, Norvin had a passion for roping and, according to his obituary, he was very proud of his stallion, Two Eyed Duo Glo.

“I not only worked weekend outages with Norvin but also traveled many hours with Norvin’s family across the states competing in rodeos,” fellow lineman and rodeo companion Kyle Beck says. “He was a very established, competitive horseman but chose to always have his kids be the performers. I will miss the rodeo road trips and his involvement with our rodeo family.”

Norvin’s presence will be missed at Choctaw Electric Cooperative. “You have your family, and then you have your cooperative family,” CEO Kooney Duncan says. “We are a close-knit group, and Norvin’s loss will be continually felt. He will always be in our thoughts.”

