

Cooperative Principles 4 & 5

Discover the seven principles that guide the way we do business.

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Wired Up for Safety

Choctaw to host innovative safety training for first responders.

■ PAGE 3

Summer Camp for Kids

Register by June 1 for Kilowatt Kids Camp.

■ PAGE 4

For members of **Choctaw Electric Cooperative**

MAY 2024

CE inside *your* co-op

Agritourism in southeast Oklahoma

Experience diverse wildlife at Red Slough

What was once a commercial rice farm is now one of the largest wetland reserve projects in the nation.

The Red Slough (pronounced “slew”) Wildlife Management Area, located on 5,814 acres in McCurtain County, is cooperatively managed by the USDA, Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. The reserve stands out not only for its size but also for its biodiversity. It’s a popular destination for birdwatchers, hunters, wildlife enthusiasts and researchers alike.

Robert Bastarache, district wildlife biologist, says visitors from 48 states and 13 foreign countries have traveled to Red Slough. “It’s a prime place for bird watching. We’ve identified 323 bird species, which is incredible for the size of the land.”

Bastarache says springtime is best for birding Red Slough, especially the end of

April through mid-May, during the songbird migration. Visitors can see as many as 100 species in a single day including the king rail, white ibis, black-bellied whistling duck, purple gallinule, wood stork, roseate spoonbill, painted bunting and 34 species of warblers.

A system of levees, including the 2.6-mile Otter Lake Route and the 2.3-mile Bitten Lake Loop Route, provide access to the reserve. Bicycling and horseback riding are allowed; motor vehicles are not permitted.

Another unique aspect of the reserve is its heronry, where 25,000-30,000 birds are in residence at its height. Among them are anhinga, neotropic cormorants, little blue herons, cattle egrets, snowy egrets and white ibis.

“If you get there first thing in the morning, it’s a neat sight to see the birds flying to where they’re going to forage for the day.” With little shade at the reserve, Bastarache recommends bird watching

during the morning hours, especially in the summer.

Other popular species to look for at Red Slough include dragonflies, snakes and alligators.

“We have 6 to 10 alligator nests per year, and probably 20-30 adults in any given year,” he says, adding that the best time of year to spot a gator is in February and March, when the vegetation in the reservoirs isn’t as dense.

Waterfowl hunting is a popular activity at the reserve from November to January. Fishing in the wetland’s 414 acres of unstocked reservoirs is allowed, though fishing is mostly limited to winter and early spring due to vegetation cover during the summer. Anglers can expect bass, bluegill, catfish and crappie.

Tours of the Red Slough Wildlife Management Area are available. Please contact Robert Bastarache at robert.bastarache@usda.gov or 580-494-6402 ext. 107. ☎



MANAGER'S REPORT



Cooperative Principles 4 & 5 Autonomy & Independence and Education, Training & Information

BY KOONEY DUNCAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

We continue our series focusing on the principles that guide us at Choctaw Electric. This month, I will highlight the fourth and fifth cooperative principles.

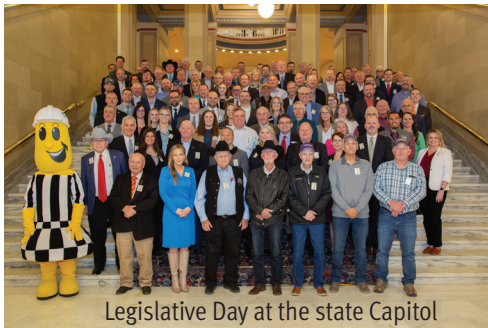
Principle 4 underscores our autonomy and self-reliance. We stand firm in our commitment to democratic control, ensuring that agreements with external entities align with our members' best interests and uphold our unique identity. Through this principle, we maintain the integrity of our cooperative while fostering collaboration for mutual benefit.

Principle 5 embodies our dedication to education and training. By investing in the development of our members, board directors and employees, we empower them to actively contribute to our cooperative's growth.

These principles influence Choctaw Electric's daily operations, as they impact the way we collaborate with other community organizations and fellow cooperatives. For example, on Page 3, you'll read about our upcoming Wired Up for Safety event. Embracing both Principles 4 and 5, the innovative safety training for first responders incorporates training and information as well as community collaboration.

At Choctaw Electric, we provide regular training for our employees. Our line-workers participate in monthly safety trainings, provided by the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives where they practice skills like live line safety, pole-top rescue, phasing, grounding and more. Choctaw Electric also provides other OSHA-required hands-on and online trainings.

Finally, Choctaw Electric works to educate legislators about issues that matter to the co-op and our members. In March, we hosted a legislative brunch, inviting local lawmakers to visit the co-op. Later in the month, I participated in Co-op Legislative Day, where more than 100 representatives from Oklahoma electric cooperatives met at the state Capitol to advocate for our cooperatives.



Legislative Day at the state Capitol

Choctaw Electric remains steadfast in our devotion to our guiding principles. Together, we will continue to build a resilient and thriving cooperative that serves the needs of our members and our local communities. 🌱

Lucky Acct #7938400 If this is your account number, please contact CEC 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. To claim your credit, please call 800-780-6486, ext. 241.

Choctaw Electric Cooperative

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

Monday-Friday • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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800-780-6486

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Jia Johnson, *Director of Public Relations*



Choctaw Electric gets ‘Wired Up for Safety’

At Choctaw Electric Cooperative May isn’t just another month; it’s Electrical Safety Month. This year we’re marking the occasion with a community safety event unlike any other: Wired Up for Safety.

Imagine this: a simulated accident scenario involving a vehicle entangled with a downed power line. Emergency crews—including paramedics, fire rescue, and the sheriff’s department—will respond to the mock incident, while a co-op evaluation team makes notes on areas for improvement.

Guy Dale, director of safety at Choctaw Electric, is leading the charge for the initiative, aimed at enhancing awareness and pre-

paredness. Scheduled for May 9, Wired Up for Safety will be the culmination of Dale’s vision to engage the community in a practical safety exercise.

“It will be a learning experience, but we’re making it fun,” Dale says.

The impact will be long-lasting. Choctaw Electric plans to capture the training on video in order to utilize it as an educational tool during future safety outreach programs. This footage will also benefit first responders, offering valuable training material for their teams.

“We will be able to use it as we visit with kids in schools. We’re excited to have this

tool for future use. I think it will be beneficial to many,” says Jia Johnson, CEC director of public relations.

Wired Up for Safety exemplifies CEC’s commitment to safety, our concern for community, as well as our commitment to education, training and information—for co-op employees and the communities we serve. ⚡



Energy Camp winners selected

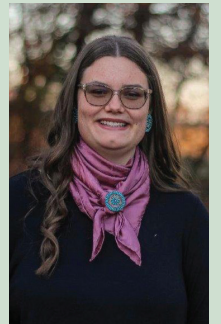
Congratulations to Choctaw Electric 2024 Energy Camp Winners (above, from left): Kylie Butler of Idabel, Jacob Brunette of Lukfata, and Aiden Pound of Rattan! These eighth-graders will represent Choctaw Electric at Energy Camp, held at Canyon Camp in Hinton, May 28-31. Students will learn about electric cooperatives while enjoying summer camp activities. Learn more about Energy Camp: <https://choctawelectric.net/energy-camp>. ⚡

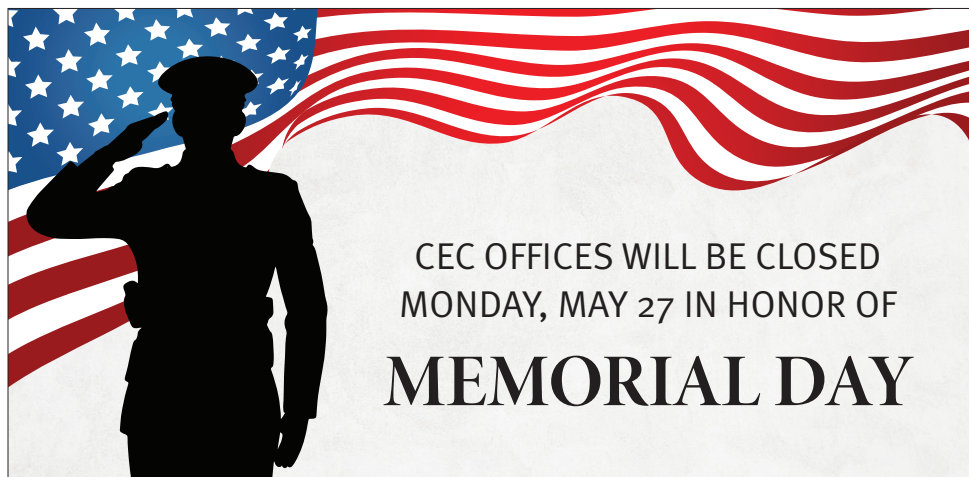
Local student leader completes Youth Ambassador Program

Congratulations to Kate Clifton (right), 2023 Youth Tour delegate, upon completion of the Youth Ambassador program! As part of the eight-month program, Clifton created the Choctaw Electric Fair Booth, attended CEC’s Legislative Brunch and Annual Meeting, spoke at community events, and more.

“Kate has represented Choctaw Electric very well. We are so proud of her and wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors,” Jia Johnson, CEC director of public relations, says.

Learn more about Youth Tour: <https://choctawelectric.net/youth-tour>. ⚡





Registration open for Kilowatt Kids Camp

Join Willie Wiredhand this summer for Kilowatt Kids Camp! Expect a morning of interactive learning about electricity, crafts and snacks. Camp is for students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade and runs from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The Hugo camp is scheduled for Wednesday, June 5; the Idabel camp will be Thursday, June 6. Register FREE by submitting the form below by June 1. Contact Jia Johnson or Brad Kendrick 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 (____) ____ - _____

Hugo Camp: June 5 (Wednesday) _____ Idabel Camp: June 6 (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: _____

Please join us for the
Choctaw Electric Cooperative
Spring Blood Drive

Thursday, May 9
10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

To make an appointment visit
obi.org or contact Brad
at 800-780-6486 ext 209.

*Donors will receive a t-shirt and one free
ticket to Frontier City or Hurricane Harbor.*



Efficiency Tip of the Month

Looking for an easy way to manage home energy use? Smart plugs are inexpensive and offer convenient solutions for scheduling and controlling your favorite electronic devices. With smart plugs, you can easily manage your coffee maker, lighting, home office equipment, video game consoles and more. Smart plugs can help you manage devices through a smart phone app, your home assistant or voice control. By conveniently powering off or scheduling devices, you can save energy and money!

Source: energystar.gov