

A Labor of Love



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY

Each September, we celebrate Labor Day, a national tribute to the contributions American workers make to the strength and prosperity of our country.

The word *labor* is defined as an expenditure of physical or mental effort, especially when difficult or compulsory. That definition is not lost on employees of CECA. When the lights go off—whether due to tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes or ice storms—our linemen leave their families to work tirelessly in harsh and dangerous conditions—to restore your power. Other employees field your phone calls and dispatch crews to get electricity flowing to your home as quickly and safely as possible.

But that doesn't mean the job is a laborious punishment. It is a labor of love.

When the weather goes awry and the calls begin to come in, not all calls are from members. Often on those days, employees who were safe at home call in to see if there's anything they can do to help. We've had customer service representatives simply show up to help answer members' calls during a crisis. This is because they care about what they do. They care about the membership. And nothing is more important than making sure that every member is safe and sound—with the power humming—even during inclement weather.

And it's not just when the lights are off that our employees are working. It is an everyday occurrence, and not just during the 9-to-5 workday.

Our linemen go through extensive training to ensure their safety and the safety of their fellow crew members. Our office staff is also trained to stay safe around electricity, and this, in turn, helps to ensure your safety. CECA is always here to educate you about the dangers of electricity, and through Texas Co-op Power and other avenues, we are able to pass along tips to help keep you safe and save money by making energy-conscious decisions. We don't do this because it's our job. We do this because we care about you, the member.

Today, I want to ask you, our member-owners, to thank a co-op employee if you see one. Thank them for their commitment, their talent, their hard work and their service to the membership of this cooperative. After all, even though our offices will be closed September 2, if your power goes out, we'll be on our way to fix it, holiday or no holiday.



Happy Labor Day!

The offices of CECA will be closed Monday, September 2, for the Labor Day holiday.

We wish you a safe and happy holiday.



Encourage children to use crosswalks.

New School Year: Time for Safety

With school bells ringing once again, Safe Kids USA reminds parents and drivers to do their part to keep students safe as they walk to school.

Reminders for parents

- ▶ Be proactive and talk about safety with your children before they head back to school.
- ▶ Assess hazards on your child's route to school and select the way with the least number of traffic crossings.

Reminders for drivers

- ▶ Slow down and be especially alert in neighborhoods and school zones.
- ▶ Enter and exit driveways and alleys slowly and carefully.
- ▶ Watch for children on and near the road in the morning and after school.
- ▶ Reduce distractions while driving and focus on the road and your surroundings. Put down your phone and don't talk or text while driving.

Reminders for students

- ▶ Cross the street with an adult until you are at least 10 years old.
- ▶ Always cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks.
- ▶ Never run out into streets or cross between parked cars.
- ▶ Make sure you always walk in front of the school bus where the driver can see you.

Gardeners Fight Against Hunger

Community gardens help feed those in need

BY SHIRLEY DUKES

Hunger: It's a common problem in every country, and our great nation is certainly not exempt from this powerful epidemic. In 2011, 14.9 percent of American households were food insecure, according to the Department of Agriculture. But while our nation may have its share of hunger, we also have a large population that sincerely cares about the plight of those suffering from the effects of these troubling times.

Throughout the U.S., including Texas, groups of people dedicate portions of their time to improve the quality of their own

lives and the well-being of their communities, while providing a much-needed commodity. These people are members of a growing population of caring individuals called community gardeners.

In Comanche Electric Cooperative's service territory, I was able to locate three such groups. After meeting with each, I had a desire to be a part of something bigger than myself—part of a group of people who are taking something they enjoy doing and turning it into a community-service strategy that benefits themselves, their families and those in the community who have come upon hard times in this trying economic era.

Brownwood Community Garden

Mission: The garden is established primarily for the purpose of providing fresh, naturally grown produce to area food pantries to feed the hungry.

The garden also provides space for residents who wish to garden using natural methods; a venue for education on sustainable gardening practices; and employment and on-the-job training opportunities for low-income workers.

Motto: Plant Seed. Feed People

Nestled in a hidden tree-shaded spot behind the Central Texas Opportunities building on the northwest edge of town grows the 22,000-square-foot Brownwood Area Community

Garden. Founded in 2009, this garden is the oldest of the three I visited. Daniel Graham, my tour guide and the garden coordinator, said much of the credit for the formation and success of the garden is due to the generosity and assistance of CTO, the community action agency that originally came up with the idea. Hanna Adams with CTO was responsible for writing the first stimulus grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This grant provided the primary funding to launch the project. The organization is now an independent nonprofit but is considered a community partnership because the housing authority actually owns the land while CTO



The garden features a companion growing strategy, a theory that suggests different types of plants exude different types of natural chemicals. Certain combinations of garden plants thrive on a mix of these natural chemicals. These companion plants, when planted together, produce higher yields of crops, and are better able to defend themselves against disease and insects.

provides a restroom, meeting room, water and power.

The community garden’s mission is three-fold. Foremost is to grow food to donate. This is done primarily in 37 raised beds dedicated to producing food for donation to area food pantries. Another portion comes from leased beds. While the leased beds and all their produce belong to the individual leasing them, the lease requires that produce be harvested when it ripens. “Produce not harvested in a timely manner will be picked and donated to area food pantries,” the lease states.

The total amount donated from the 2012 growing season was about 3,000 pounds—1,720 pounds from the dedicated beds and the rest from donations from the leased beds. Most of the donated produce is given to the Salvation Army, and some goes to Good Samaritan Ministries.

The second mission is to lease remaining beds to individuals with a desire to learn about and grow their own food. The garden hosts 30 available beds. Gardeners are given all the tools needed for a successful crop. The organization provides the tools, soil, water and many of the seeds necessary to start and maintain their garden. In addition, the garden shed is stocked with a large library of garden reference books for research.

The final mission is education. The garden contains a beautiful, shady arbor that serves as a meeting place for classes held during the growing season. These classes cover composting, design, sprouting, saving seeds, beekeeping, and fall and winter gardening.

The gardens rely on good irrigation and water retention—a three-level process:

First comes soil-building. Each bed starts as pure sand. Sand, however, is not a good medium to hold water. Therefore, the soil is amended with compost with each new planting. Compost has a sponge-like quality that holds water.

The second level is the water itself. Each of the beds is equipped with an irrigation drip-line consisting of two pipes about 20 feet long and 3 1/2 inches wide. Each pipe is rated to dispense approximately a half-gallon of water per hour. Graham waters for 45 minutes per day.

The third level is the mulch that is placed on top of the beds and around the plants. This product acts like a blanket, keeping evaporation to a minimum.

The garden is open to the public most weekdays and Saturday mornings. Guided tours are available, and Vacation Garden School is held each summer for children ages 8 to 12.

Brownwood Area Community Garden

1514 Dublin St., Brownwood, TX 76801
(325) 641-9029 • bac_garden@yahoo.com



LEFT: Insects are an integral part of gardening, so Garden Coordinator Daniel Graham encourages them, including flowering plants to attract them. ‘I tell people we are gardening insects as well as the garden,’ he says. Ladybugs prey on aphids, spiders and other soft-bodied pests, protecting plants. They are also appealing to look at, adding an element of enjoyment to the garden. **CENTER:** This ox beetle was found in the compost bin. **RIGHT:** City water is still the primary water source for the Brownwood Area Community Garden, with rainwater collection as a supplemental source. Gutters and drainpipes are installed on the Central Texas Opportunities office building, allowing rainwater from the roof to drain into the storage tanks for use in the drip irrigation system that waters the beds. With the Brownwood area under Stage 3 watering restrictions, using the best water conservation methods possible is important.



CECA

P.O. Box 729
Comanche, TX 76442

Operating in Brown, Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Mills, Shackelford and Stephens counties

HEADQUARTERS

201 W. Wrights Ave.
Comanche, TX 76442

EASTLAND OFFICE

1311 W. Main St.
Eastland, TX 76448

EARLY OFFICE

1801 CR 338
Early, TX 76801

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Eastland closed from noon to 1:15 p.m.
Early closed from 1 to 2 p.m.

YOUR LOCAL PAGES

This section of Texas Co-op Power is produced by CECA each month to provide you with information about current events, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact Shirley at the Comanche office or at sdukes@ceca.coop.



CONTACT US

CALL US

(325) 356-2533 local or
1-800-915-2533 toll-free

FIND US ON THE WEB

ceca.coop



Volunteers and gardeners at the Comanche Community Garden include, from left: Jeff Lambert, Bill Works, Joe Robison, Dakota Johnson, Kristina Johnson, Jonathan Lawrence, Nadine and Gabriel Hambridge, Kaimen Walters, Delma Walters, Karen Williams and Jerry Sears.



Comanche Community Garden

Mission:

- ▶ To use our God-given talents.
- ▶ To provide fresh, organically grown produce to area food pantries to feed the hungry.
- ▶ To provide space for residents who wish to garden using natural, chemical-free methods.
- ▶ To provide a venue for education on sustainable gardening practices.
- ▶ To provide employment and on-the-job training opportunities for low-income workers.

Motto: If you give a man a vegetable, he'll eat for a day. If you teach him how to grow it, he'll eat for a lifetime. If you teach him how to grow a garden, he can feed the entire village.

Of the three gardens I visited, the Comanche Community Garden certainly had the most activity. Perhaps this is because it is the newest, and there is still much to be done. Of the many people there, no one wanted to take credit for the work being accomplished.

Kristina Johnson was my contact person, but she told me to speak to Bill Works, the instigator of the operation. When I spoke to Works, he assured me that he did not deserve any credit, and that it was actually Kenneth Hagood who came up with the idea. When I spoke with Hagood, he gave the credit to Johnson and Karen Williams. When it came to the watering system, I was told that Jerry Sears was the go-to person. When I spoke with Sears he said, no, Joe Robison was the mastermind. But when I spoke to Robison he said Sears should receive all the praise for the hard work. This pattern continued.

What it amounted to was that everyone in this group of volunteers had all worked extremely hard to ensure that the gar-

den would be successful. Because they all worked equally hard, no one wanted to be in the limelight.

Their story began on a day when Works and Hagood were returning home from a trip to the Abilene Food Pantry. With their vehicle laden with food, Hagood (who is on the Central Texas Opportunities board) said, "You know, Brownwood has a community garden, and it would sure be nice if we could find a place to put one, too."

Works, the former Comanche County sheriff, quickly replied, "We do! We have a place to put it, and a water well, also." Behind the Comanche County Jail is a small piece of land that, while Works was in office, was an inmate garden. "All we have to do," Works said, "is contact [current sheriff] Jeff [Lambert] and get permission. It shouldn't be hard to do."

Thus was born the Comanche Community Garden.

With the use of the donated land and water, the 15-member board and volunteers began the process of organizing the garden. Johnson, Williams and Lambert applied for grants through Central Texas Opportunities, and the organization received enough funding to get the program under way.

The group toured the Brownwood Area Community Garden with Daniel Graham, got advice and came up with a plan inspired by the Brownwood garden.

The cost of materials to build each 16-by-4-foot bed was approximately \$200. The organization has completed 20 beds paid for with funds donated by area businesses and individuals. Donations have been received to construct an additional seven beds, but the layout of the irrigation system requires a minimum of 10 beds before construction can begin. All completed beds are rented, and there is a waiting list for future beds.

The garden also hosts five in-ground beds dedicated to providing the Salvation Army with fresh vegetables.

In a beautiful, shaded corner of the property, volunteers

have developed a children’s area with beds made of discarded pallets. This area will provide a learning venue for young visitors and be available for children’s seminars or field trips to teach gardening basics.

The long-term goal of the community garden is to have 80 beds, a fruit orchard, additional in-ground gardening and a greenhouse. Comanche ISD FFA plans to construct an arbor that will be used as a teaching center for seminars to be held on gardening basics, including xeriscaping—high-heat and low-water planting methods for the area. A fall pumpkin patch is also in the works.

Outside the fenced area, the community garden will eventually have rental spaces for a farmers market, where garden and community members can set up tents to sell excess produce.

Two of the garden’s raised beds and the in-ground beds are dedicated to producing food for the Salvation Army. Each member who rents a bed is required to donate 10 percent of his or her harvest.

Nadine Hambidge best described the garden’s worth.

“One of the nicest things about the garden for me is that you don’t have to know anything about gardening to be able to take advantage of the opportunity to grow,” she said. “There are so many people here with so many different [areas of] expertise, and it’s so easy and so simple. You already have everything you need in one place, including your tools, your soil, your plants and your water. All you need to do is come and learn. It reduces the fear of failure because people aren’t afraid to get started so they can learn. And they know they’ve got a support system.”

Comanche Community Garden

P.O. Box 614, Comanche, TX 76442
comanchecommunitygarden@yahoo.com



‘The Brownwood Area Community Gardens were so gracious in their advice and assistance,’ said Kristina Johnson, who helped organize the Comanche Community Garden. ‘They told us what to do and what not to do. By learning from their experiences, we have been able to build our beds in such a way that they should hold up for many years to come.’



One of the goals of the Comanche Community Garden is to have a learning center for children and adults. The children’s garden is available as both a learning tool and a place for young visitors to the garden to work and learn.

At CECA, ‘We Promise’

CECA HAS A PURPOSE: To power communities and empower members to improve the quality of their lives. We do this by providing you with quality electric service and exceptional commitment to our members through the service we provide. In an effort to prove to you our dedication to this purpose, our employees make a promise to you to always be there for you.



“It takes a lot to run a business and keep up with a family of eight. CECA understands that and provides us excellent customer service.”

THE MOREMAN FAMILY owns and operates MX7 and Triple X Dairies in Comanche County. Pictured are: Jacob, Mary, Frank, Amy, Brian, Wayne, John and Maggie Moerman.



“We promise to be accountable to our members.”

DOUG ERWIN AND SHIRLEY DUKES are your member service team at CECA. Consider them important resources and go-to sources for all your member needs.

First Fruits Community Garden

Mission: To make garden plots available to grow food for families in Eastland County and help provide fresh vegetables for the Eastland County Food Pantry.

What do you do with an empty lot when you are fresh out of ideas? You plant a garden! After the First United Methodist Church of Eastland bought the site of an old sheet-metal business and removed the building, only a vacant lot with very hard ground was left. The big question was what to do. The answer was to start the First Fruits Community Garden, the brain-child of Pastor Bob Rainey.

Church and community members formed a committee and developed an action plan. Thirty raised beds were constructed just in time for spring planting.

“The community has really responded,” says Master Gardener Mary Jo Smith, who oversees the project. “We have six boxes that are maintained by the members of the church, and all produce from these boxes goes directly to the food pantry.”

The church builds and provides the beds, soil and water, and compost is available to members who want to improve their soil. The members supply seeds or plants, tools, and fruitful labor. Members also have access to information about what and when to plant.

Members are encouraged to grow what they need and donate any excess to the food pantry. The project was not intended to serve as a vegetable market, so selling produce grown in the garden is strongly discouraged. The elementary school, Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts tend beds and donate the food they grow.

The garden is now in its second successful year. This spring, gardeners doubled the depth of garden boxes to provide more workable soil, and six garden boxes were added. All boxes were



Master Gardener Mary Jo Smith has been in charge of the First Fruits Community Garden since its inception and takes care of the food pantry beds. Smith started all the tomato plants for the beds because ‘it’s just sort of a hobby of mine,’ she said. Betty Pryor is a member who reports to the garden almost every day and helps with the food pantry beds. She donates a large portion of her harvest to the food pantry. Rod Straw tends the rose garden and was instrumental in the acquisition and construction of the beds.

leased out before planting time.

“I think it has exceeded everybody’s expectations,” Smith said. “A lot of people have yards that are just too shady or too small, so they come here. Almost everyone asked for additional boxes after the first year. I don’t think any of us thought it would take off this fast!”

**First Fruits Community Garden
First United Methodist Church**
215 S. Mulberry, Eastland, TX 76448
(254) 629-1289 • fumceastland.org



A member of the community donated good topsoil for garden beds, and compost was added to give the soil nutrients. The church provides boxes, soil and water, and members supply plants or seeds and tender loving care.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON COMMUNITY GARDENS,
CONTACT:**

**American Community
Gardening Association**

1777 East Broad St.
Columbus, OH 73203-2040
info@communitygarden.org
communitygarden.org



Conservation MATTERS

Coffee Makers: Energy Drain?

It might surprise you to learn that the coffee maker in your kitchen uses more electricity than your refrigerator or washing machine. If you're one of the millions of Americans who relies on a cup of hot java to jump-start each day, consider these energy-saving tips:

- ▶ Don't just turn your coffee maker off when you're finished with it; unplug it. Coffee makers continue to use electricity as long as they are plugged in, even if the power is off.
- ▶ Even the most basic drip coffee makers usually are equipped with an automatic function to shut the machine off between 20 minutes and four hours after the last batch is brewed. To save energy, invest in a maker that allows you to manually program the auto shut-down and set it for the shortest time.
- ▶ Most coffee makers consume more electricity while they're keeping the pot warm than they do to brew the beverage. Even if your machine automatically powers down, turn it off once you've had your fill of coffee. Why use electricity to warm coffee that you're going to pour down the drain later?



- ▶ It takes less energy to reheat a cup of coffee in a microwave than to leave the warming tray turned on or to brew a new batch.
- ▶ Single-serving "pod" coffee makers have no warming tray and brew coffee quickly, reducing energy costs. The technology, however, creates extra waste because most of the pods—small, plastic containers—are disposable rather than reusable.

Power Down

Turn off your computer when not using it



It takes less energy to switch your home computer on and off, even several times a day, than it does to let it run unused.

To save energy—and money—make use of your computer's sleep mode and other power management features.

Here are some tips for energy-efficient computer use:

- ▶ Turn off the monitor if the computer will sit unused for more than 20 minutes.
- ▶ Switch the whole thing off if you'll be away from it for more than two hours.
- ▶ Plug all monitors, printers, scanners, routers and other accessories into a good-quality surge protector to turn them all off by flipping a single switch.
- ▶ If your computer has a sleep mode, you'll have to adjust the sleep settings in the computer's system preferences. The feature will power down your computer once it senses no activity for an extended time. Energy Star estimates that sleep mode can save you up to \$30 a year on your electric bill.
- ▶ Consider trading in your desktop unit for a laptop that consumes less energy.
- ▶ Run the laptop off the battery as much as possible and unplug the charger when it is fully charged.



CECA Lineman Wins Rodeo Event

Texas and rodeos go hand-in-hand, but not all rodeo contestants participate from the back of a horse.

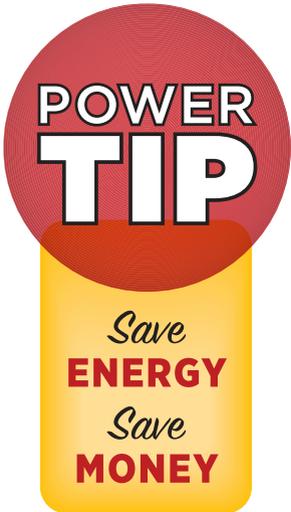
Robert Atchley, an apprentice lineman and one of the newest members of Comanche Electric Cooperative's team, participated in the 17th Annual Texas Lineman's Rodeo held July 19 in Seguin.

Robert participated in all eight of the events he could, winning the Knot Tie competition and placing high enough in the others for an overall placing of 32nd out of 65 participants.

The Texas Lineman's Rodeo is a highly competitive event created to offer Texas lineworkers a way to showcase their pride in their profession.

Congratulations, Robert, on a job well done.

COFFEE MAKER AND LAPTOP: ISTOCKPHOTO

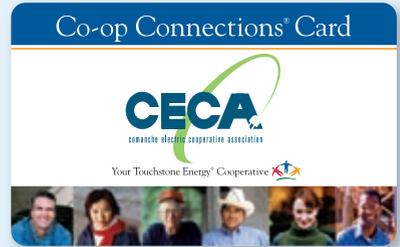


Like homes and other businesses, farms of all types can lower their electricity bills by turning off or reducing use of lights and equipment in outbuildings.

Timers and sensors to automatically turn items off and on can help reduce energy consumption without interfering with safety or productivity.

Regular cleaning, maintenance and seasonal tuneups help keep larger equipment running at top efficiency.

Source: E Source



Featured Businesses

Eastland County Newspaper

Eastland County Newspapers is the central hub of operations for five local newspapers within Eastland County: Eastland Telegram, Cisco Press, Ranger Times, The Rising Star and the Star Farm and Ranch. Serving this area since 1925, these papers strive to emphasize local news and advertising in the towns they serve. For more information on a particular paper, or for publication and advertising deadlines, give them a call at (254) 629-1707, or visit the website at eastlandcountytoday.com.

- LOCATED:** 215 S. Seaman St., Eastland
- PHONE:** (254) 629-1707 or 1-888-227-1708
- HOURS:** 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday
- EMAIL:** ecn@att.net
- WEBSITE:** eastlandcountytoday.com
- OFFER:** Half-price on new local (in-county) subscriptions to any Eastland County Newspaper publication.

Lemons' Bar-B-Q

If you are looking for old-time charm and great food, join us at Lemons' Bar-B-Q, where we serve the best barbecue and fish in Brown County. Our restaurant offers a comfortable atmosphere specializing in barbecue, steaks and catfish. We also offer a reunion hall and catering.

- LOCATED:** 3202 Coggin Ave., Brownwood
- PHONE:** (325) 646-9655
- HOURS:** 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday; Catering available any day.
- OFFER:** 10 percent discount on any dine-in ticket. Not valid with any other discount offer.

DRIVING HUNGER OUT OF RURAL TEXAS.

CECA is a proud sponsor of the 2013 AgTexas Tractor Drive. The Drive is supporting our local FFA Chapters as they raise funds for the Texas Food Bank Network, and for our local food banks. Contact your local CECA office about how you can help Drive Hunger Out of Rural Texas.

