

More Than Hearts and Flowers



MESSAGE FROM
**GENERAL MANAGER AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER DARRYL SCHRIVER**

FEBRUARY TENDS TO BE A VANILLA MONTH.

You've still got the Christmas afterglow, the gifts and all that, and now you're buying a Valentine's Day gift for your loved one.

But at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, there's a lot more going on in February than you may expect.

February is typically a cold month, and some of our largest peak loads occur during extreme weather, in that January-February window and then again in July and August. With the size of our co-op and unique structure of our consumer base, we actually have a peak in the winter that is nearly identical to the peak we experience in the summer.

February also marks the end of winter on our system. It's a time when we start to dust off and prepare for storm season, which begins in late March and continues all the way to about June 1. 8001572202

At Tri-County Electric Co-op, we deal not only with the extremes of weather but extremes of service needs across our system. Within our service area we have extremely rural areas, where we talk in terms of poles per mile. We also have rural areas, where we talk about meters per mile; suburban areas, which would be considered in terms of subdivisions per substation; and urban areas, where we talk about meters per foot.

All of those areas have different needs, and our employees work hard to maintain those lines and keep your service reliable. That's just who we are.

But another thing that makes Tri-County Electric Co-op unique is that we haven't forgotten who we were. We make full use of the latest technology to provide reliable service to our members, but we're reminded every day of the rich history of the cooperative movement and what it meant, and still means, to our members.

We're fortunate that our members can move from the city into the country and still be on the co-op's lines.

We're also very excited this February to be opening a new facility for the first time since 1962. Our Aledo office is located in one of the fastest-growing parts of our system, the Interstate 20 corridor, and gives us an opportunity to house a large proportion of our assets there to help address the growth and challenges of that area.

We also are beginning a multiyear project of refurbishing and renewing our facilities. Just as schools, cities and counties have had to update facilities in the past five to 10 years, so do we. It's no surprise that those 1960s buildings need an update.

We are very hopeful that this move will occur in late February. 84004012

We're also kicking off a major project to record our history—by revisiting and capturing the stories of our retirees and employees. The future is about remembering what we've learned from the past. Our history project will embody that spirit, and we're excited about it.

As for me, I'm approaching my third year as manager here with a keen awareness of our purpose, and a renewed appreciation of why the co-op model works so well. What we do is fairly simple: we distribute electricity, maintain our lines and keep your service reliable, read your meter and bill you. But being a cooperative means we are free to do so much more to enhance the quality of life in the communities we serve—to take care of our member-owners with integrity, respect and accountability.

Your cooperative is a daily tribute to each and every member who is a consumer of electricity, an owner of the co-op and a part of the consumer movement of controlling costs while being provided with a valued service.

February is actually a pretty exciting time—for a lot of reasons.





Many LEDs, like the Philips Hue line, can be controlled from a smartphone app, making lights more of a consumer electronic than simply a bulb.

Look Into Programmable Lighting Options at Home

IN THE PAST, HOME LIGHTING CONTROLS WERE FAIRLY RUDIMENTARY. YOU FLIPPED A switch on or off. Perhaps you had a dimmer switch. To turn lights on when you were on vacation, you plugged a lamp into a gadget with a dial, and it turned the lamp on and off. But today, consumers have more options than ever before.

The growing use of LED bulbs and the proliferation of smartphones and Wi-Fi have brought lighting options to a new level. In addition to using less energy, many LEDs can be controlled from a smartphone app.

When shopping for new LEDs, you essentially have two options.

A less expensive LED still offers longer life, lower energy use and will work for most fixtures. However, consumers with older dimmer switches often find that they must replace switches to work with newer LEDs.

The second and more expensive option is a “connected” LED. These devices offer features like remote control of lights from a smartphone app or via voice control through an in-home speaker. They can also be connected to a home security system or dimmed to enhance entertaining.

Connected LEDs require a central controller or hub, like Amazon’s Echo or Apple’s HomeKit products. The hub can control other smart devices and become the center of a smart home system.

Consumers can choose from a variety of manufacturers of connected LEDs. Some bulbs are compatible with different hubs or systems, but if you’re planning a major overhaul to your home lighting, it’s best to buy one brand and stick with it.

Smart lighting options aren’t necessarily about saving energy, but if they can help you remember to turn the lights off when you are not in a room, then energy savings can be achieved. 800861065

As technology continues to advance, more smart home products will become available with features that focus on home security and quality of life. If you’re interested in smart technologies for your home, research your options and understand how the system works with the other devices within your home.



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Happy Valentine's Day

February 14

HAPPY PRESIDENTS' DAY

Tri-County Electric Cooperative offices will be closed Monday, January 17.





A Long Road to Valentine's Day

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

JERRY AND LULA TIDWELL BOTH GRADUATED FROM ANDREWS High School with the class of 1963. But let the record show they were *not* high school sweethearts.

"We were in a school play together in the third grade," Lula says. "I was Mary and he was a wise man. That's really the only connection we ever had."

In fact, they each married their high school sweethearts and went in different directions. To quote the Beatles, it was a "long and winding road" that brought them together, made them a couple and led them to a lunch date last Valentine's Day at a restaurant on the square in Granbury.

That's when Jerry took a knee and asked Lula to marry him.

She said yes, and on November 1, 2019—more than 56 years after graduation—they tied the knot.

Jerry and Lula grew up in an oil camp called Frankel City, just outside of Andrews, where their fathers worked for the same oil company. In high school, Jerry played second base and Lula was a majorette. Lula earned her diploma and left

school a semester early. Jerry headed for Texas Christian University. 800836076

Lula's road took her to Houston and Louisiana, where she worked for oil and petrochemical companies. After a divorce, she and her daughter, Trina, moved back in with her parents. Jerry married Vanna and went into the newspaper business, working in Andrews, Seminole and Littlefield before taking a job in 1979 as publisher of the *Hood County News*—where he still goes to work every morning.

Jerry and Vanna were married 49 years before she passed away in 2015. They worked side by side, raised two children and had a couple of grandkids. Along the way, they built their dream home, moved to the country and joined Tri-County Electric Cooperative in 2001.

Lula's parents moved to the Granbury area when her father retired, drawn by golf courses and the beautiful countryside. In 2006, after her mother's death, Lula left her job and moved to Granbury to take care of her dad. Knowing Jerry was the news-

1. Jerry and Lula Tidwell celebrate their wedding with a twirl at 1890 Restaurant, on the square in Granbury—the scene of Jerry’s proposal on Valentine’s Day 2019.

2. A 1939 Cadillac carries the happy couple away after their wedding on November 1.

3. At their wedding, Lula carried a bouquet of red roses and Jerry wore one on his lapel.



paper guy, she stopped by one day just to say hello.

“She was dressed to kill,” Jerry says, laughing. “She had on black leather gloves that came up past her elbows. It was a winter day, and it was cold, cold, cold. Lula walks in, and we’re old friends, so we hug, and we sit and visit, and she gets up to leave, and we hug again.

“She hadn’t got out the door till the ladies up front—who are my keepers—were all ‘Who was that?’ and ‘What was she doing here?’ ” 800835330

He chuckles at the memory, eyes dancing as he looks at Lula, who is still known for her stylish wardrobe.

Lula became events director for Pecan Plantation. Some months later, at a chamber of commerce luncheon, she saw Jerry again. Ever the good saleswoman, she encouraged him to hold his company’s Christmas party at the club, and he agreed.

“Vanna and I would run into Lula once a year, at Pecan,” Jerry says.

When Vanna died, Lula sent Jerry a condolence card, but he

doesn’t remember. “It was all a blur,” he says.

Almost a year later, he called Lula to set up an editorial staff meeting at the club. As they were making the arrangements, he asked if she was going to be there.

“I thought that was strange,” she says. “I’d never had anyone ask me that.”

The day of the meeting, Lula walked through the dining room and found Jerry out front, paying the bill.

“I wanted to ask her out,” Jerry says. “I knew I wouldn’t see her in person for a year, so I asked her then.

“Oh, and I did it so cool,” he says, laughing. “I practiced and practiced, and I ended up saying, ‘If I asked you to go out with me, would you go?’ ”

“Just like a little boy,” Lula says, grinning. “He thought I would probably say I was involved with somebody. But I told him I would be honored, and I gave him my business card.”

It was about a month before she heard from him.

“He called and said, ‘Hey, I just want you to know I’m still



Lula and Jerry Tidwell feel right at home in Granbury.

A HALL OF FAMER

Jerry Tidwell became publisher of the twice-weekly *Hood County News* in Granbury in 1979. Under his leadership, it became one of Texas' best community newspapers, a consistent award winner at the regional, state and national levels. Along the way, Tidwell became one of the industry's leaders, serving as president of the Texas Press Association in 1996 and the National Newspaper Association in 2006—one of only three Texans to ever hold that position. He was inducted into the Texas Newspaper Hall of Fame in 2009.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

Lula didn't have any grandkids, but she acquired two when she married Jerry. "I'm so thrilled," she says. She recently got to put her wedding planner skills to work helping granddaughter Kelsey look for a wedding venue. "Lula's all in with the family," Jerry says. "They like her lots more than they like me." "Oh, they do not!" she says. "As they should," he adds. The couple's dogs, Emma the Maltese, Pepper the poodle and Lucky the Yorkie—all adopted from the shelter—get along great. "They're the perfect herd," Jerry says.

thinking about us going out, but I have some milestones to deal with right now," Lula recalls. "He had promised to wait a full year before asking anyone out."

After another month, he called again. Lula thought they would probably meet for lunch at Chili's, but Jerry had different plans.

"My mama taught me to go pick up the lady," he says. He asked her to go with him to his favorite Italian restaurant in Sundance Square.

"We got to Taverna at 6, and they kicked us out at 10 when they closed the restaurant," he says. "The first date, I knew she was it. It took her over three years to come to the same conclusion."

Lula had always sworn she would never marry again. But Jerry's persistence and his old-school romanticism simply wore her down.

"Even that first date, he showed up at the door with, like, two dozen roses," she says.

"Well, I hadn't dated in over 50 years," he says. "I didn't know."

"My front door was all glass," Lula says. "All I could see was roses, and I thought, 'Oh, my gosh! First date?' But it was very sweet. He still brings me flowers."

"I'm still trying to impress her," he says.

"He's old-school," she says. "He opens the door, holds your arm when you walk. Sometimes I have to do this!" She flings

her elbow up, as if to break free. Lula is an independent woman, accustomed to taking care of herself. But they're delighted to have found each other.

"You know, we're both 74, and I think actually we've been an inspiration to others our age," Lula says. "I've had single women tell me, 'That gives me hope, to think that I could start another life.'"

"I wasn't looking to get married," she continues. "But I think it has shown other women this age that you can find someone and have life again. It feels great. I love it—the idea that we have each other's back. And we go to parties, and you're not by yourself. You've got your partner."

The still-newlyweds are on opposite sides of his desk, at the *Hood County News* office, but they can't take their eyes off each other.

"Look at him," she says with a smile. "He's a good man. I go to the women's club, and all my women friends tell me I need to clone him."

"She's just perfect," he says, smiling back. "She's sweet and beautiful, dresses to kill."

And, she notes, they signed a prenuptial agreement.

"At this age, you do a prenup," she says, then looks lovingly at Jerry. "You're not responsible for any of my Neiman Marcus stuff!" 800659937

But he is for that big smile she's wearing—which goes well with everything.

Steer Clear of Driving in Bad Weather

THOUGH THEY MAY MAKE FOR A PRETTY SEASONAL BACKDROP, SNOW AND ICE CAN complicate even modest travel plans. It's unsafe to drive when visibility is vastly reduced or when you can't fully control your car. According to AAA, wintry weather and its byproduct—hazardous road conditions—are a factor in nearly a half-million crashes and more than 2,000 road deaths each year. With those figures in mind, here are some tips to minimize the risk to yourself and other motorists during winter weather.

Don't drive unless you must. It really isn't worth the risk to your safety and that of others to venture out onto potentially unsafe roads for any circumstance that isn't urgent. Pay attention to weather reports so you can run any time-sensitive errands and stock up on supplies before adverse conditions arrive. If you must drive to work, that's one thing. But don't tempt fate if you can help it.

If you have to drive, eliminate distractions. Keep your phone out of reach or set it to airplane mode—a good practice year-round but especially important when roads are dicey.

Keep a bundle of cold-weather gear in your car, including water, nonperishable food, warm clothing, a flashlight, glass scraper, blankets and medications.



Before you set out, alert others to your route, destination and estimated time of arrival.

Make sure your tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread.

Keep your car's gas tank at least half full to prevent a frozen fuel line, which could leave you stranded.

Don't use cruise control when driving on any slippery surface.

Drive slowly. Reduce your speed to counteract the lower traction that accompanies snow and ice.

Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Applying the gas slowly can help maintain

traction and avoid skids. Since it takes longer to slow down on icy roads, take your time to slow down for a stop sign or light.

Increase your following distance to five to six seconds to act as a buffer against the longer distance you'll need to stop.

If possible, don't stop when going uphill.

A final note for winter driving: Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area such as a garage.

Exercise a little caution and good judgment to stay safe as you negotiate whatever conditions the last snap of winter brings this year. 800804691

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Three DIY Efficiency Projects To Tackle Today



YOU MAY THINK ENERGY EFFICIENCY UPGRADES REQUIRE A great deal of time and expense, but that's not always the case. If you're interested in making your home more efficient but don't want to break the bank, there are several do-it-yourself projects you can tackle to increase energy savings. Let's take a look at three inexpensive upgrades that can save energy throughout the year.

Trim Dryer Vent Hose

Level of difficulty: easy.

Supplies needed: tin snips, gloves, measuring tape and masking tape.

Estimated cost: about \$25 depending on the supplies you already have.

If your dryer vent hose is too long, your dryer is working harder than it has to and using more energy than necessary. The vent hose should be long enough for you to pull the dryer out a couple feet from the wall and should form a line—it should not have a lot of slack, twists or curves. A shorter, unobstructed vent hose increases the efficiency of your dryer, allows for faster drying and reduces the buildup of lint, which is a potential fire hazard.

Simply measure, mark and trim the hose to the desired length, then reattach the hose to your dryer and exterior vent.

you're unsure about the supplies you need. For more information, the U.S. Department of Energy provides step-by-step instructions for caulking and weatherstripping online at bit.ly/howtoseal.

Insulate Attic Stairs Opening

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed: rigid foam board, faced blanket insulation, tape for foam board, measuring tape, utility knife, caulk and caulk gun, and plywood.

Estimated cost: \$50–\$100.

A properly insulated attic is one of the best ways to optimize energy savings and comfort in your home, but many homeowners don't consider insulating the attic stairs or the opening to their attic space. Even a well-insulated attic can leak air through the stairs opening. Luckily, there's an easy fix.

An insulated cover box can seal and insulate the attic stairs opening. You can build your own insulated cover box or purchase a prebuilt box or kit from a local home improvement store for about \$60. If you decide to build your own, check out step-by-step instructions from the Department of Energy online at bit.ly/atticstairscover. If your attic opening is located in a garage that you do not heat and cool, this upgrade will not be as effective. 93200108

Seal Air Leaks

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed: caulk and caulk gun, weatherstripping, gloves, putty knife, and paper towels.

Estimated cost: \$25–\$50 depending on the materials you purchase.

Sealing air leaks in your home can help you save 10%–20% on heating and cooling bills. Apply caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing to seal in conditioned air. You should also add weatherstripping around exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help you control energy costs. Types of caulking and weatherstripping materials vary; ask your local hardware or home store for assistance if



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Scalloped Potatoes With Pork Chops

SHARON DALTON | WEATHERFORD

Flour

6-8 pork chops

1 can cream of mushroom soup

½ cup milk

Dash of pepper

4 cups thinly sliced potatoes

½ cup thinly sliced onions

1 cup cheddar cheese

1 tablespoon butter or margarine

Paprika

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Flour and brown pork chops. Set aside.
3. Blend soup, milk and pepper in a buttered 1½-quart casserole dish.
4. Place alternating layers of potatoes, onions, soup mixture and cheese in dish. Dot top with butter and sprinkle with paprika.
5. Arrange pork chops on top.
6. Cover and bake 1 hour. Uncover and bake an additional 15-20 minutes. Enjoy!

Tri-County EC Member Recipe Submission Form

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Please return to:

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