

Passing the Torch of Cooperative Values



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

IT HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT TO bring young people into the electric cooperative program—to educate the adults of tomorrow in the cooperative principles that have made, and will continue to make, a difference in this world.

The young people graduating from high school today weren't around when the lights came on in rural America. But through Youth Tour and co-op scholarship programs, we are reaching them, showing them the electric cooperative

an education, then maybe come back and work for their co-op, work in the communities we love and work to preserve the very life of those communities—the life we work to preserve every day. 8001572202

Kade McAdams, the son of Clint and Sunday McAdams, is a senior at Seymour High School and currently the valedictorian of the class of 2020.

He was one of six selected by Tri-County EC for the 2019 Youth Tour. He made the trip to Washington, D.C., last June along with 156 other teens from Texas and about 2,000 more from all over the U.S., visiting historic sites and meeting with our elected representatives.

On that trip, Kade applied for a spot on the Youth Leadership Council and was chosen as Texas' representative for that 43-member group. Those young people went back to Washington in July for a week of leadership training sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

At the end of that week, each student wrote a speech and delivered it to the NRECA staff, and as a result of his speech, Kade was chosen as the YLC's national spokesperson. He'll be a featured speaker at NRECA's annual meeting in New Orleans on March 2, when some 7,000 co-op directors, managers, employees and spouses gather in what will look a lot like one of our annual meetings, only bigger.

It's such an honor that a young man from Seymour High School is going to represent us there. It'll be a memory he'll never forget—and as bright as he is, it might be the stepping-stone to a role he might play for the co-ops of the future. Who knows? Kade might be a U.S. congressman, a governor or a co-op manager, or he might be mayor of Seymour. But in his heart and soul, he's always going to have a little bit of Tri-County EC in him.

We have three employees—Annie McGinnis, Cole Shirley and Lauren Baccus—whose lives were deeply affected by the Youth Tour program. There are probably not three better employees that I, as CEO, can gravitate toward who have that rich co-op culture in their blood. They, and employees like them, are the heart and soul of Tri-County EC.

It's an honor for me, personally, and for our co-op to be a part of this program. Bringing back the scholarship and Youth Tour programs to Tri-County EC has enabled us to put our very soul back together as a cooperative organization.

The dividends for our members are huge, now and in the future.



model. We're educating our members, directors and employees of the future in how cooperatives care for their members and employees, treat their consumers fairly, and provide quality service—and do so with integrity.

Integrity is a word that's used a lot but rarely defined. It's the way you conduct yourself—the way you “carry yourself,” as our grandparents used to say. It's reflected in the way you deal with people honestly and speak the plain, simple truth. Electric cooperatives, in the way we deal with our members, are the boots on the ground when it comes to integrity.

Tri-County Electric Cooperative's Youth Tour and scholarship programs reach kids in high schools across our service territory. They give us a chance to encourage them to go get



Green Isn't Just for St. Patrick's Day

YOU CAN DO MORE THAN WEAR GREEN TO CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY THIS YEAR.

You can “go green”—throughout your home. 800861065

The best way to start is simply to waste less. Here are four ways to do that:

Save energy. Use the energy you need—wisely, so you don't waste any. It's simple to conserve energy at home. Some examples: Turn off lights and electronics when they're not in use. Use a smart power strip to help you turn off multiple electronic devices at once. Lower the heat at night during the winter and raise it during the summer. When the weather is mild, turn your air conditioning system off completely. Replace old, incandescent lightbulbs with high-efficiency LEDs. Use cold water—instead of hot—whenever possible to save the energy used to heat water.

Conserve water. A few conservation strategies: Take shorter showers. Run the dishwasher and washing machine only when they are full. Invest in water-efficient toilets and low-flow faucets and showerheads. Fix leaks immediately.

Recycle electronics. When you replace your computer, printer or other electronics, don't throw the old ones in the trash; they'll wind up in a landfill. Instead, donate or recycle them. Manufacturers and retailers often have recycling programs, and some charities accept used electronics. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that recycling 1 million laptops saves enough energy to power 3,500 homes for a year.

Shop locally. Like your electric cooperative, many nearby markets and shops are locally owned and operated. These small, independent businesses often rely on local farmers, craftspeople and labor to supply them with what they sell and the services they provide to you. That means their goods require less long-distance transportation, which has a positive impact on the environment.

You already buy your electricity from your local electric cooperative; look for a neighborhood food cooperative, credit union and other kinds of cooperatives to do business with as well.

DEAGREEZ | ISTOCK.COM

Time To Spring Forward

Remember to set your clock forward one hour March 8 for daylight saving time.

CATHERINE LANE | ISTOCK.COM

Power Tip

Spring is nearly here! Now is the perfect time to test your AC and check its evaporator coil, which should be cleaned annually for optimal efficiency.



Hope Springs Eternal

Keller entrepreneur finds history and builds water business in daughter's memory

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

IT'S ONE THING TO SIT IN A LIBRARY AND READ ABOUT HISTORY. It's another thing to hit it with your hoe.

But to take that hoe (eventually a backhoe) and work your way down to bedrock, following a spring silted up for decades, open it up and let it flow—that's life-changing.

Joe McCombs of Keller, a longtime member of Tri-County Electric Cooperative, turned what looked like a bad real estate investment into a thriving business and one of his community's greatest assets. In the process, he created a place of peace and beauty that honors the memory of his precious 3-year-old daughter Samantha, who died in 1993 while awaiting a heart transplant.

Samantha Springs Water is her legacy and a testament to her family's love.

McCombs, who owned a child care business, was living in Irving with his family in 1982 when he drove west to Keller to talk to a real estate agent. While looking for a property that would give his kids and horses room to run, he spotted a piece of land that seemed promising. There were houses all around, but this place was still wild, covered with big oak trees, willows, blackberries and brush.

"It reminded me of Pennsylvania, with the hills and the winding roads and trees," he says. There was no "for sale" sign, but he called the tax office, found the owner, called and asked if

he would be interested in selling a few acres. They met, visited and made a deal. 800836076

"He didn't tell me much, other than he used to raise tomatoes on it," McCombs recalls. He put a little trailer on the place, and he and the kids began going there on weekends, playing and riding horses.

Then he decided to put in a fence.

"I'd punch a hole in the ground and water would come into the hole," he says. "I thought that was cool. I'd just pour Sakrete in there and didn't have to mix it."

It was cool—until he wanted to build a house. He couldn't. The ground was too wet.

McCombs went back to the man who sold him the property, who had become a good friend. All he got was an apology. It was a nice place to play but not a suitable homesite.

A Man With a Hoe

Fast forward to February 1986. McCombs was walking the property, pondering his options, when he noticed a patch of green. It started him thinking.

"Everything was brown except for this one area," he recalls. "I went down there with a garden hoe and started digging around. It was wet. I had to lay boards down to stand on it."

He buried his hoe in the peatlike soil, digging until he hit

3



4



1. Joe McCombs of Keller built a thriving business after discovering water on his land in the mid-1980s.

2. Water still flows into the silo in front of the McCombs house in a beautiful neighborhood in Keller.

3. The picturesque springhouse and water wheel are a fixture in McCombs' front yard. Spring water is piped more than 3 miles down to a bulk loading station on North Main Street in Keller.

4. A trunk inside the springhouse holds a few pieces of the original barrels and the sand-bearing rock formations McCombs unearthed on the property.

something. He worked a piece of wood out of the ground, and more water flowed. He unearthed several more pieces and discerned that they had, at one time, been part of a barrel. He hoed out a trench, and it quickly filled.

"Once I pulled that barrel out, weekend after weekend we'd go back out, and the ditch would be a little deeper," he said. "The water started to run, and the more it ran, the faster it ran."

Just that little bit of digging lowered the water table on the property several feet—enough that by the end of 1986, McCombs was able to start work on his family's house. By July 1987, they moved in.

In 1988, his daughter Chelsea came along, and in 1990, Samantha was born. She had a congenital heart defect, and doctors told them any illness could be disastrous. To get her in a healthier climate, McCombs moved the family to Naples, Florida.

Commuting between Florida and Keller, McCombs began to sell off assets, raising funds to get Samantha on the heart transplant list. Sadly, she did get sick, and on November 29, 1993, she slipped away.

With the other kids in school, the rest of the family stayed in Florida. McCombs continued to commute.

"It was a tough time," he says. "I just didn't want to be in the

child care business anymore. I mean, I officed in schools. I wanted to do something else."

He applied his obsessive work ethic to finding that spring.

"I had too much time on my hands," he recalls. "I was thinking, if that barrel was full of sand, maybe the cave, or however that water comes through the ground, maybe that's plugged up, too."

He rented an excavator and uncovered another barrel below the first one. It was made of hand-hewn logs about 6 feet long and 6–8 feet in diameter. With every piece he removed, more water flowed. After digging down 8–10 feet, he eventually reached sandstone.

"That would have been the natural bed," he said. "But when they built the road out front, that created a slowdown, and then it just kept backing up. I kept thinking, maybe all I'm doing is just what they did, and it will eventually plug up again."

McCombs formulated a plan as he went along, learning geology, hydrology, construction, landscape architecture and a little history, too. Driven by grief as much as by curiosity, he kept digging.

"When Samantha passed away, that was just ... I was on a mission," he says. 800835330

He uncovered a honeycomblike rock formation 3–4 feet in diameter. Each cell was full of white sand, and water was seep-

BURIED HISTORY

In the mid-1800s, the area north of what is now Keller became known as Double Springs for the two large springs in the rolling, wooded countryside. European settlers of the area had placed barrels, open at both ends, over the springs to ensure the availability of fresh spring water. By the early 1870s, Double Springs was a thriving community with a post office, cotton gin, gristmill, blacksmith shop and several stores. Then, in the late 1870s, a railroad boss named John C. Keller told residents of the small community named Athol, a few miles to the south, that if they would rename their town after him, he would make sure the railroad came through there. When the decision was announced, the residents of Double Springs abandoned their property and moved south, dragging their one-room log houses and businesses with teams of horses. Left behind, the springs eventually silted up and were lost.

1. McCombs built the trusses for the springhouse in his garage and had a craftsman copy the water wheel from a pioneer cabin in Fort Worth.

2. McCombs is proud of the logo of Samantha Springs Water Co., which shows two springs merging and joining an infinite flow.



ing out around the sand.

“There was this vein, and the water was coming down through that,” he says. “I was working my way to the source—yeah, it’s wet here, but it’s wetter here, so I’ll go that direction.”

Meanwhile, he kept digging up the front yard. People were starting to worry.

“My mother-in-law came out around that time and said, ‘Joe, I know you know what you’re doing, but do you know what you’re doing?’” he says, laughing. “I found out later the neighbor kids called me ‘the man in the woods’ because I was always out there cutting and digging.”

Reaching the Source

Finally, McCombs hit bedrock. He sat a concrete silo on the gray shale, but water was still seeping out of the bank. He dug some more.

“I followed these veins until, once I got to the end of the plug, water came out like I had hit a water main, just blowing out,” he says. He built French drains to capture it and pipe it into the silo.

He read up on the legal definition of natural spring water, had the water tested and began to think about bottling it.

“It was good water,” he said. “It’s got a unique flavor. But it can’t come out of a rusty pipe in the side of a hill—all this has to look pure, too.”

With that in mind, he set about creating a place of beauty that would become the iconic image of Samantha Springs. He poured a concrete slab around the silo and built a little stone gristmill over it, using roof trusses he built in his garage.

Stone surrounds the top of the silo, and when he lifts a big steel lid, visitors can gaze down and see the crystal-clear water

pouring in. A switch diverts water to turn the authentic wheel on the outside of the building, then it runs down into a picture-perfect pond.

Inside the gristmill, a vintage trunk holds pieces of the barrels McCombs pulled out of the ground, along with a rusted, ancient wrench and sections of that honeycomb of rock, some still with sand inside. There’s also a plaque honoring Samantha’s memory and noting the company’s charity work, which focuses on raising awareness of the need for organ donations for children.

Water has been flowing into the silo—about 200,000 gallons a day—for more than 20 years, and shows no sign of slowing down. Pumps push it through a pipe more than 3 miles down to North Main Street, where four big silos rise at the bulk-loading plant. 800659937

Samantha Springs has been shipping water to other bottlers since late 1996. It goes all over the country and bears a variety of labels, including custom labels for specific events. It also goes to a local craft brewery and even to municipalities when special needs arise.

McCombs is a big fan of Tri-County EC, which got him the power he needed when he needed it and continues to be his first choice as he develops properties in the busy Keller area. Just like the flow of water changed his life, the flow of electricity transformed and enriched life in rural areas and continues to power the future, rooted in a rich history.

Samantha Springs’ logo depicts two springs rising, entwining and joining a current. The company’s slogan, “Passing the taste of time,” honors the history McCombs unearthed when he dug down and released a pure, unending stream: a source of water and a source of comfort.

Tri-County Electric Co-op 2020 Scholarship

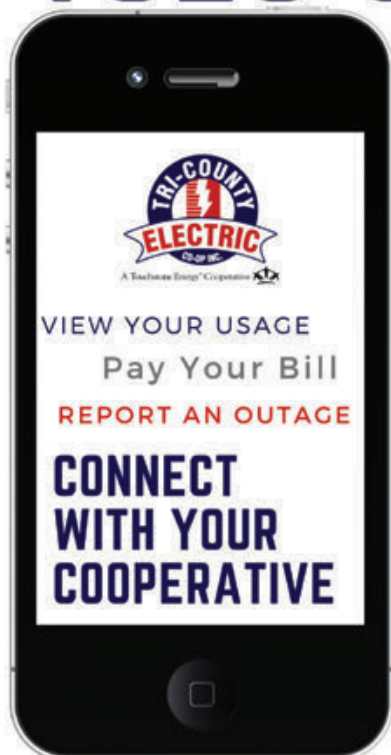
Applications due March 6

Find the application at
tcectexas.com/scholarship

Questions? Contact Annie McGinnis
at 817-752-8116 or
amcginnis@tcectexas.com



TCEC CONNECT



Get connected
with Tri-County
Electric Co-op's
member app!



scan to download

Tri-County Electric Cooperative

600 NW Parkway, Azle 76020

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jorden Wood, President
Todd Smith, Vice President
John Killough, Secretary-Treasurer
Jerry A. Walden
Steve V. Harris
Dr. Jarrett Armstrong
Max Waddell
Larry Miller

GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Darryl Schriver

Contact Us

CALL US

(817) 444-3201

FIND US ON THE WEB

tcectexas.com

EMAIL US

pr@tcectexas.com

COOPERATIVE OFFICES

Azle—Headquarters

600 NW Parkway, Azle, TX 76020
(817) 444-3201

Granbury Office

1623 Weatherford Highway, Granbury 76048
(817) 279-7010

Keller Office

4900 Keller Hicks Road, Fort Worth 76244
(817) 431-1541

Seymour Office

419 N. Main, Seymour 76380
(940) 888-3441

IT PAYS TO STAY INFORMED!

Find your account number in pages 18–25 of *Texas Co-op Power*, and you will receive a \$20 credit on your TCEC electric bill. Simply contact one of the offices listed above and make them aware of your discovery!



Find us on
Facebook

We're Shocked!

5 common electrical dangers in your home

OF ALL THE HAZARDS THAT EXIST IN AND AROUND YOUR HOME, GETTING SHOCKED BY electricity is one that should definitely not be taken lightly.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, depending on the level of electrical current, contact with electricity can result in something as innocuous (but still painful) as a mild shock to more severe injuries like nerve damage and burns. In some circumstances, it can even cause cardiac arrest and death.

And for the record, if you live to tell the tale, you've been shocked but not electrocuted. Someone who is electrocuted doesn't survive the contact.

Here's a list of some of the most common shock risks inside a home.

1. Appliances. Most shocks from household appliances occur when people are trying to repair them. It's not enough to just turn off an appliance before attempting to work on it—you also need to unplug it to reduce risk.

Large appliances are responsible for 18% of consumer product-related electrical accidents; small appliances account for 12%, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

There's also danger if your appliance comes into contact with water. Many of these hazards can be avoided by using a ground-fault circuit interrupter. A GFCI is a protective device installed on electrical outlets, primarily used where water is present. When the device detects an imbalance in the electric current, it turns off the power to minimize the potential for an electric shock.

The National Electrical Code requires GFCI protection for areas of the home where water is present. These areas include the kitchen and bathrooms as well as exterior and garage outlets. GFCI outlets are also a good idea for laundry areas, sump pumps, disposals and dishwashers. 800804691

2. Ladders. Typically, ladders present a falling hazard, but according to the CPSC, 8% of consumer product-related electrical shocks were also related to ladders.

Electrocution typically happens when the ladder makes contact with electrical wires. Before you use a ladder, make sure that you can clearly see all power lines in the area. Ensure that the ladder is at least 10 feet away from them and won't contact a power line if the ladder happens to fall over in any direction.

3. Power tools. Power tools account for 9% of consumer product-related shocks. When you use power tools that are not double-insulated, are damaged or have damaged cords, you increase your chances of being injured.

The chance of danger also increases when you use incompatible cords with power tools, use power tools incorrectly or use them in wet conditions. This is another situation in which GFCIs can help.

4. Electrical outlets and extension cords. Inserting anything that doesn't belong—screwdrivers, knives, fingers or toy cars, to name a few—into an electrical outlet can result in a dangerous electrical contact.

Use cover plates that fit properly and safety covers on all outlets. By installing tamper-resistant receptacles, outlets will have permanent security against foreign objects being inserted into the slots.

Any broken, loose or worn-out plugs, switches and light fixtures should be replaced immediately.

5. Extension cords. Faulty extension cords are another big safety concern.

Extension cords are intended for temporary use and should never be used in lieu of permanent wiring. If an extension cord—or any cord, for that matter—is cracked, split or damaged in any way, discard it and get a new one.



Memories and Memorabilia Wanted

TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

is documenting our 81-year history. Do you have any stories from over the years about Tri-County EC? If so, let us know! We would love to hear from you. 93200108

If you or your family have any historical photos, newspaper articles, member bulletins or other memorabilia associated with Tri-County EC that you would like to share, please contact Bob Buckel at (817) 752-8319 or bbuckel@tcectexas.com.



Make-Ahead Mexican Layered Casserole

DEE BARKER | WEATHERFORD

1 pound ground meat
1 onion, chopped
2 tablespoons chili powder
Dash of cumin
Dash of garlic powder
Salt and pepper, to taste
6 corn tortillas
1 medium can ranch-style beans
1 pound grated Monterey Jack cheese
1 can Ro-Tel diced tomatoes and green chiles
1 cup grated cheddar cheese
1 can cream of chicken soup or cream of mushroom soup

1. Brown the meat with onion, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, and salt and pepper. Drain.
2. Layer half of the meat mixture in the bottom of a baking dish. Cover with the tortillas. Mix the remaining meat mixture with beans and place in a layer on top of the tortillas. Then layer Monterey Jack cheese. Next, spread diced tomatoes and chiles. Sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Top with soup. 84004012
3. Cover and refrigerate 24 hours.
4. Uncover and bake 1 hour at 350 degrees. Enjoy!

Tri-County EC Member Recipe Submission Form

NAME

CITY

EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER

RECIPE NAME

Please return to:

Email: Please include the above information with your recipe and send to pr@tcectexas.com.

Mail: Please detach and submit this form with your recipe and mail to:

Tri-County Electric Cooperative
Attn: Recipe Submission
600 NW Parkway
Azle, TX 76020

