

Virtual Meeting Yields \$73K in Grants



Bill Bonnette, a volunteer at CS Food Pantry, stocks the shelves amid the increased need created by the coronavirus pandemic.

FOR SOME, A CRISIS MEANS DANGER—SOMETHING TO HIDE FROM.

For others, however, a crisis can represent opportunity. In our current circumstance of weathering the COVID-19 pandemic, the board of directors of the Wood County Electric Charitable Foundation saw an opportunity to award grants to worthy local charitable causes through Wood County Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up program.

The board typically meets twice a year to review grant requests and make monetary awards. The first meeting of the year was scheduled for March, but as we all know, the pandemic got in the way of many scheduled events. In accordance with the co-op's social distancing measures, that March board meeting was delayed.

During that time, some of the grant requests became obsolete, as they were for nonprofit events and needs that were also delayed or canceled. In the meantime, other needs rapidly emerged as the effects of the financial crisis attached to the pandemic hit. Food pantries across the nation began to see double the number of clients, and shelves were rapidly emptied.

The board decided to do something about the expanding crisis. Once able, they held a meeting via teleconference to discuss the grant requests that were still viable and to consider directing help where it would be most beneficial during this time of need.

After vetting 14 nonprofit food pantries across WCEC's service territory, the foundation's board members unanimously and proactively voted to grant \$2,000 to each. The recipients are God's Closet, the Food Pantry of Franklin County, Rains County Good Samaritan, Titus County Cares Food Pantry, Upshur County Shares, Hawkins Helping Hands,

Kindness Kottage, Bread of Life Ministries, CS Food Pantry, Van Community Ministries, Manna Inc., David Powell Food Pantry, the Hopkins County Community Chest and regional East Texas Food Bank.

"Due to the COVID-19 crisis, needs have greatly increased. We are so grateful for the people in our community who have stepped forward to help us supply food for those who need it," said Rita Johns, director of the CS Food Pantry, upon receiving her group's grant check. "We're funded strictly by donations, and we don't receive anything from the local or federal governments. We are so humbled and thankful to receive the funds without even asking. What a blessing!"

Along with the \$28,000 worth of donations to food pantries, the board also reviewed and awarded \$45,816 in grants to projects and organizations whose requests were not on hold. Those grants included \$2,266 to the Mineola League of the Arts for a sound system; \$2,500 to Children's Miracle Network to help fund medical care for children; \$2,500 to the Texas Ramp Project to build wheelchair ramps for those in need; \$5,550 to Fouke Community Center to assist with repairs; \$12,000 to Winnsboro Community Resource Center and Pantry to support its mission of community assistance; \$6,000 to Quitman Lake Charitable Foundation to help fund a basketball court at the public park; and \$15,000 to Communities in Schools of Northeast Texas, which supports children in the foster care system.

Altogether, the grand total for this round of giving was \$73,000.

The Operation Round Up program at WCEC has been in place since 2017. Since then, including this recent round of grants, the foundation has awarded \$304,706 to community nonprofits. These grants have funded lifesaving equipment, community and senior centers, artistic and social programs, educational pursuits, and many other programs and projects that are the lifeblood and that extra sparkle that make up our East Texas home.

"The members of Wood County Electric Cooperative voluntarily donate funds through Operation Round Up to support these community-centered grants," said Trey Teaff, WCEC general manager and CEO. "Every time funds go out, this program is a celebration of those members. The program allows each participant to give a very little. In turn, coupled with all donors, Operation Round Up becomes an extremely significant contributor to our region and the quality of life we have here. I'm proud of this program, every single member-contributor and the recipient organizations that are doing such good work."

More opportunity awaits! Applications are now being accepted for the fall grant review cycle. To learn more about the program and how nonprofits can apply, visit wcec.org/operation-roundup.

Have a Safe Fourth of July

FIREWORKS ARE A MUCH-ANTICIPATED HIGHLIGHT OF THE FOURTH OF JULY BUT CAN also present a significant danger. If your holiday isn't complete without setting off a few of your own, please take these precautions:

Follow all local laws, and read and follow product directions.

Do not allow children to handle fireworks.

Make sure fireworks are used on a hard, stable surface in an open, clear area, and never attempt to relight a "dud."

Make sure there is water nearby in case of an emergency.

Wear ear protection.

Never light fireworks in a container.

If swimming is part of your plan, make sure children are always supervised in or around the water. Take responsibility for your children even in the company of other adults. Consider hiring or nominating a lifeguard.

Many people travel over the holiday, and congestion, accidents, road rage and impaired driving can quickly turn the holiday into a tragedy. Make sure your car is in excellent condition and that you are rested, alert and sober if you are driving. Plan ahead for a designated driver if appropriate.

If barbecue is on the menu, be careful when lighting the grill, and make sure an adult is always present around a heated grill. Be sure to put away perishables to avoid eating spoiled food. Make sure to cook meats thoroughly on the grill.

Watch out for signs of heatstroke, such as hot, red skin; changes in consciousness; a rapid or weak pulse; and rapid or shallow breathing. If you suspect someone is suffering from heatstroke, call 911.

And don't forget to take special precautions with your pets. Fireworks can be terrifying for them, so keep them indoors or in another safe place.

Drink plenty of water, wear sunscreen and have a wonderful Independence Day.

JULY HOLIDAYS

Independence Day

Saturday, July 4

Our offices will be closed Friday, July 3, in observance of the holiday.

Pecan Pie Day

Sunday, July 12

Ice Cream Day

Sunday, July 19



Wood County Electric Cooperative

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Trey Teaff

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MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

Monday, First Methodist Church, *Van*
Tuesday, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*
Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
Thursday, Brookshire's, *Winnboro*
Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*

