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Win an All-Expenses-Paid Trip of a Lifetime to DC

ONE DESERVING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT FROM WOOD COUNTY

Electric Cooperative's nine-county service territory will win an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., this June. And now is the time to apply!

The trip, June 17–26, is part of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, a youth leadership program sponsored by WCEC and organized by Texas Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. To be eligible, applicants must be a current high school junior or senior and a dependent of a cooperative member whose permanent residence is in WCEC's service territory.

More than 150 high school students and chaperones from across Texas will spend more than a week immersed in this memorable and life-changing experience. Texas delegates begin the trip with a full day in Austin, which includes a guided tour of the Texas Capitol, a picnic on the Capitol grounds and a visit to the Bullock Texas State History Museum.

Then the group jets off to Washington to meet with more than 1,800 fellow delegates from other states for a jam-packed adventure!

Highlights of the D.C. visit include meeting congressional leaders and visiting numerous national monuments and historic sites, such as the Supreme Court and Library of Congress; Washington National Cathedral; Arlington National Cemetery; George Washington's home at Mount Vernon; the Smithsonian

Institution; Holocaust Memorial Museum; Museum of the Bible; Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt memorials; World War II, Korean Veterans and Vietnam Veterans memorials; and the Washington Monument.

To apply, candidates should download the official application at wcec.org under the Community tab. Complete the application and follow the submission instructions.

Applicants also must submit a one- to three-minute video on the topic, "My Cooperative and What It Brings to the Region."

Wood County EC powers members' lives. In 1938, the founders of WCEC could not have dreamed of the possibilities. Just look at all the things electricity powers: It brings convenience, fulfills necessities, and provides fun and just plain comfort. Be creative and have fun as you think about and describe how WCEC powers the lives around you.

Qualified entries must arrive at Wood County EC by **11:59 p.m. February 14.**

Eligibility

To be eligible, an applicant must:

- ▶ Be a current junior or senior at an area high school.
- ▶ Be a dependent of a WCEC member.
- ▶ Have permanent resident status in WCEC's service territory.

WCEC Awards \$3,000 in Scholarships to Nontraditional Adult Students



Christi Hartsell



Mollie Jackson



Amanda McKinney

WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE CO-OP'S 2019 Power Upward Scholarship contest winners: Christi Hartsell, Mollie Jackson and Amanda McKinney.

The Power Upward Scholarship program is for nontraditional adult students pursuing postsecondary education. Each of the three winners submitted an essay describing their field of study and goals.

Hartsell is currently a third grade mathematics teacher at Quitman Independent School District and has taught locally for eight years. She resides in the Mineola area with her two children and is pursuing a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. Upon graduation, she hopes to continue in the education field as an instructional coach.

Jackson is a third grade reading teacher at Quitman Elementary. She and her husband, John David, reside in Quitman and are the parents of a son and daughter. Jackson holds a Bachelor of Arts in child psychology and is currently enrolled in the iTeach Texas alternate certification program, which is designed for those with a bachelor's degree who are pursuing a teaching certification.

McKinney is a human services technician with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. She and her husband, Patrick, reside in Quitman and have one son. McKinney is pursuing a psychology degree and is currently attending Tyler Junior College. Her goal upon graduation is to serve children in foster care as a child protective services caseworker.

"Each of these ladies should be admired for their strong desire and determination to help others," said Debbie Robinson, WCEC CEO and general manager. "They have already demonstrated this in their careers, and these scholarships will help them achieve their goals to serve others at the next level."



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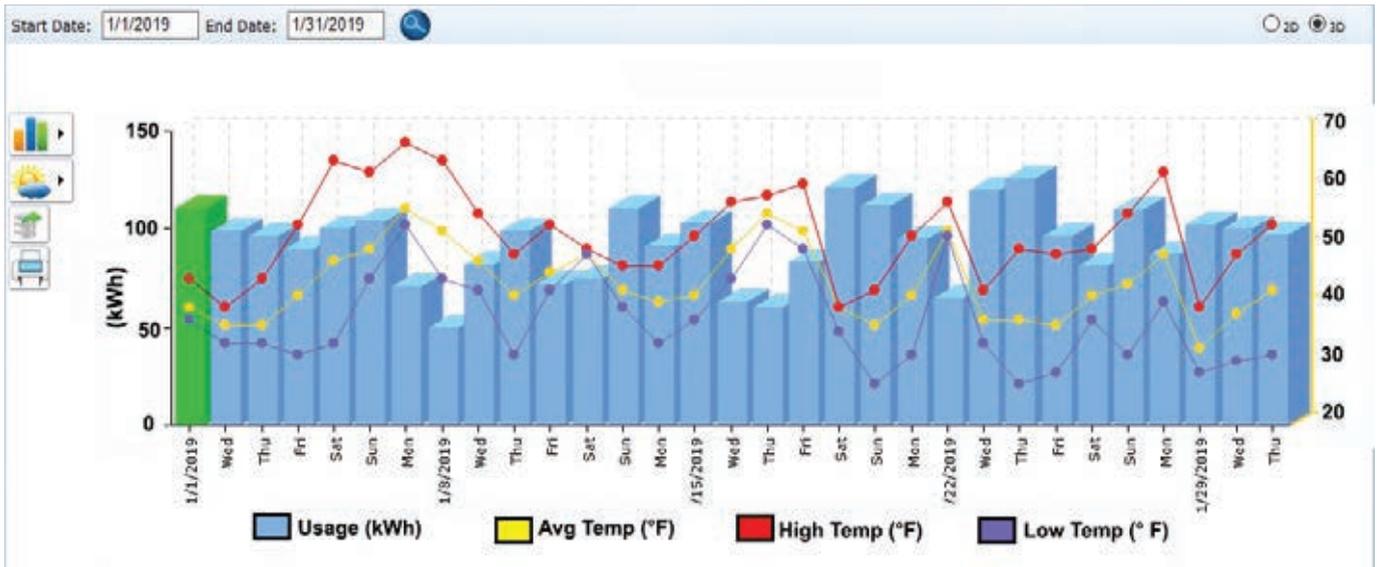
Never forget that you are a member-owner of this cooperative.

Happy New Year from the directors and employees of Wood County Electric Cooperative.



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Keep Big Bill at Bay



Members can view information about their own usage at wcec.org. This illustration shows how members can choose a window of time, up to 186 days, and view their usage in kilowatts overlaid with the weather. This information helps members predict the size of upcoming bills.

REMEMBER WHEN BIG BILL VISITED LAST FEBRUARY AND MARCH?

Big Bill is rude. He’s ugly. And nobody likes him. He’s worse than a very bad houseguest because he visits unexpectedly, costs us money and can make us angry.

As you may have guessed, Big Bill is a big electricity bill, one that is larger than expected and comes as an unwelcome surprise.

It doesn’t have to be that way. Read on for tools and tactics to slam the door in Big Bill’s face.

Every February and March, Wood County Electric Cooperative receives panicked calls from members wondering why their electric bill has doubled. They think we’ve raised rates, somehow there was a mistake or their meter is broken. But in almost every single case, it’s increased kilowatt usage because of the cold weather.

Heating and cooling costs generally account for the largest percentage of East Texas residential electricity bills. While you can adjust the thermostat some to ease the burden on your heating, ventilating and air conditioning system, it’s still going to be set to a level that keeps you comfortable—and that can be a 30–40 degree difference from the outside temperature. That difference is always greatest in the colder months. The greater the temperature difference between the inside and the outside, the longer and harder an HVAC unit must work to maintain indoor temperatures, and it takes kilowatts to do that.

Let’s take a look at some of the ways you can banish Big Bill forever.

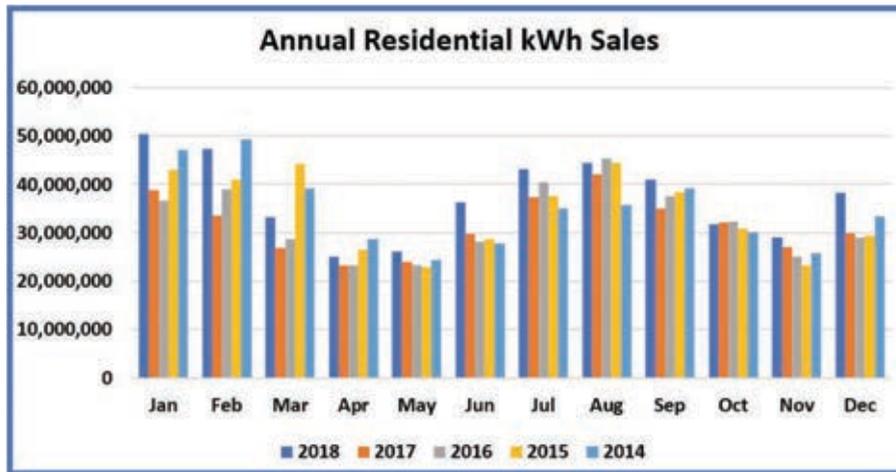
Change Your Payment Method Now

Levelized billing: With this plan, Wood County EC members can even out payments to avoid billing spikes during the coldest and hottest seasons. When you sign up for levelized billing, you’ll be billed the average amount over your previous 12-month history. Payments are made automatically from your bank account and will be close to the same amount each month—so it’s easier to budget. Anyone who has been a co-op member for at least a year and has a current balance of zero is eligible for the plan. To learn more about levelized billing and to make bill payment easier and more convenient, call our member services department at (903) 763-2203 to get signed up.

SmartPower: When a member elects this prepayment method, large bills are transferred and paid down over time. With prepayment, there are no deposits, no big monthly bills ever and no late fees. Members simply add credit to their account when it’s convenient for them and their budgets: daily, weekly, biweekly or monthly—whatever fits their lifestyle and usage patterns. And they can do it 24/7 via the co-op’s website or bill payment app, by phone, or in person at our office or mobile unit.

Study Your Usage Habits

Whether you pay your bill online or not, you can log in to your account to see your usage patterns, overlaid with weather charts. This information can help you understand when inefficiencies are most likely and thus take steps to combat them.



High kilowatt-hour usage and high bills track with extreme weather—the proof is in the usage data shown here. This chart depicts the average residential member usage over a five-year span. It’s easy to see that, by far, kWh usage is highest in the typically coldest months, January and February. It also spikes in what are often the hottest months, August and September. In the months with milder temperatures, usage decreases. It’s important to note that members pay for their electricity a month after it has been used.

Take Steps To Be Energy Efficient

If your electricity bill tracks up and down with weather extremes, as it does for most people, an investment in insulation may offer long-term payback on winter and summer bills.

Another way to keep HVAC-generated air inside is to invest in a little caulking and sealing of leaks around windows and doors. A well-maintained HVAC system also saves money because it works more efficiently, so annual inspections and tune-ups are always recommended. Taking these energy efficiency steps now can help you start saving immediately, and over time, they can pay for themselves many times over.

Another simple way to conserve kilowatt-hours is to keep your thermostat set to 68 degrees when you are at home and active, but when sleeping or away, consider lowering the thermostat a few degrees. Typically, the coldest hours are after midnight, so lowering the temperature even just a few degrees while you are tucked under the covers and sleeping can cut usage quite a bit.

What To Do If You Receive a Higher-Than-Normal Bill

At WCEC, we understand that receiving an unexpectedly large bill is never welcome. If you ever have questions about your bill or have difficulty paying it, reach out to our member services department by calling (903) 763-2203.

We can help you weigh payment options like SmartPower or leveled billing to see if they would be right for you. We can also schedule a home energy audit to help you better understand your usage. Sometimes, an energy professional can spot a cause of high kWh usage that homeowners were not even aware of.

And Remember—We Work for You

WCEC purchases only the amount of electricity we sell, and we sell the amount we purchase. Most importantly, there is no incentive to raise rates because the cooperative is not-for-profit, and any revenue we earn above operating costs is returned to our members. What we charge members is based on the cost of service. Therefore, we truly want to help our members control their usage and their bills. As a cooperative, we’re in this with our members.



Wood County Electric Cooperative

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Debbie Robinson

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