



MESSAGE  
FROM  
GENERAL  
MANAGER  
AND CEO

JERRY D.  
WILLIAMS

## What's in It for 'We'?

ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE traits of cooperatives is that we answer the popular question, "What's in it for me?" with "What's in it for we?" Generally speaking, Cooperatives are formed when the market fails to offer a needed good or service, with decent quality, at an affordable price. Lamar Electric Cooperative was formed in 1938 for that very reason, when investor-owned utilities claimed there was not enough profit to be made in our community and refused to offer electricity. Sitting here in your Cooperative new office building is a good time to reflect on our past and how Rural Electric Cooperatives helped make America Grow.

Rural Electric Co-ops like Lamar Electric powered the American dream for farmers and rural folk who received the tool of electricity which helped them achieve the kind of prosperity their city countrymen had enjoyed for years.

A quick review of the nation in the early part of the 20th century will help us understand exactly how vital the Rural Co-ops were. Tuesday October 29, 1929 became known as Black Tuesday, because the stock market crashed and became the official start of the Great Depression. As stock prices fell, panic struck as masses of people tried to sell their stock. Much of the stock had been purchased in the roaring 20's as people attempted to improve their financial standing by investing in stock. Instead of getting rich, they found a path to bankruptcy. You may ask; what does this have to do with rural folks. Many banks were forced to close because they had used their customers' savings to invest in the stock market. Often this customer savings came from the years' crops and was to be used for seed and planting of next years' crop. Proceeds from sale of calves taken to market were deposited and lost when the bank folded. In addition, many people lost their outside job as businesses cut back or closed the doors.

This depression turned out to be different than any prior depression to hit the United States. In previous depressions, farmers fared pretty well because they could at least feed themselves. In 1930, little rain fell and by 1931 a drought started across the Great Plains that lasted for 8 years. In addition to no rain, the temperatures were hotter than usual. Pastures soon dried up and cattle either starved or were sold. High winds soon caused the top soil to disappear and crops died.

By 1931 over 90% of the folks living in cities had access to electricity, but over 90% of the folks living in the rural areas had no electricity. In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) was elected as President (and

went on to be elected three more times). FDR realized the rural parts of America needed electricity if there were to ever pull out of the Great Depression. He went to the Investor Owned Power Companies and tried to convince them to extend electric lines into the rural areas.

The for profit power companies refused because they felt they could not recover their investment and rural people could not afford electric appliances anyway. The big power companies sent the message that rural folks should move to town if they wanted electricity. The federal government's offer of low interest loans and long repayment schedules was turned down by the big power companies.

Rural farmers petitioned the federal government for help providing electricity to their own communities. The rural farmers banded together and formed their own Cooperatives and asked the government for the low interest loans. FDR realized the farmers had no expertise with electricity and in 1935 the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) was formed within the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The REA helped the rural farmers as they formed non-profit Rural Electric Cooperatives across Texas and the Nation. The REA produced many brochures about how to form and operate a Cooperative, similar to those produced by the Agriculture Extension Service. In many cases the founders of the Cooperatives helped dig the holes for poles leading to their own farms.

The REA held demonstrations of electric appliances in large circus type tents. No one had ever run electric lines out through the country side and REA engineers had to develop specifications on the best way of constructing the structures to hold electric lines. To this very day, updated versions of those REA brochures are used by Rural Electric Cooperatives across the nation. This is why a Lamar Electric power line looks identical to other rural power lines across the nation. (This also helps when we send crews to help other Co-ops). The program was so successful that within a generation virtually all rural areas in the country had access to reliable electricity, provided by their own cooperative.

On June 15, 1938 Mark Kennedy from Sumner, M.E. Boaz from Route 2, Brookston, John R. Emmons from Route 5, Honey Grove, Harrison Wooldridge from Atlas and T.L. Hollingsworth from Route 1, Petty, signed the original articles of incorporation for Lamar County Electric Cooperative Association in front of local attorney and notary J.M. Braswell in Lamar

County Texas. The Board selected Mr. Kennedy as Chairman and Mr. Boaz as Secretary. At a Board Meeting held at Brookston on July 11, 1938 Ural L. Darling of Bonham was selected as Project Superintendent to “secure membership applications and easements from the residents of Lamar County and do any and all other things as from time to time the Board may direct.” He received \$100 per month for his services and 5 cents per mile for the use of his car, with “such mileage not to exceed \$50 per month.”

On July 30, 1938 Bedford Booth, Lloyd Steele, Mrs. Dunagan, Jack Wooldridge and T.L. Hollingsworth were appointed to secure applications and easements, receiving \$5 per day and 5 cents per mile. By August 12, about 800 applications had been received which was a sufficient number to begin the process of constructing about 250 miles of electric line in Lamar, Delta and Red River Counties. By October there were enough applications for a \$316,000 loan application to REA at 2.73% interest and a 29 year repayment schedule.

On August 27, 1938 the Board borrowed \$400 from Liberty National Bank to pay expenses. Miss Wilkerson, the County Home Demonstration agent came before the Board and suggested the following items be displayed in a booth at the County Fair and agreed to aid in putting it up: Electric Iron, Washing Machine, Water Pump, Refrigerator, Lights, Radio, Cook Stove, Churn and Electric Roaster.

On September 17, 1938 the Board met for the first time at the Co-op office located at 28 North Main Street in Paris. By the November Board meeting they were searching for a different office location. Apparently the office space was shared with others and made having private meetings with prospective members difficult. Finally, the Manager installed some walls and the Cooperative continued to rent 28 North Main Street from Mr. Frank J. Wood until a building owned by W.O. Richey, located at 50 Lamar Avenue in Paris, became available in June, 1942. The headquarters continued at Lamar Avenue until August 1948 when the land at 1485 North Main Street was purchased from the City of Paris. The headquarters office was moved to the newly constructed building on North Main Street in November 1949. 1485 North Main Street was the headquarters location for the next 71 one years. In January 2021 the headquarters was moved to the current location at 5225 Highway 82 near the West edge of Blossom. For the first time in the history of Lamar Electric, the headquarters office is in the rural area where Lamar Electric can provide the electric power.

In November 1938 Marjorie McDowell was appointed stenographer and bookkeeper at a salary of \$60 per month. In August, 1939 two maintenance Men were hired. They were H.W. Lowery and C.H. Jenkins. They were to take care of the first two sections of line constructed.

After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December of

1941, everyone got behind the war effort. That meant not much wire was available to string on electric poles, but the fledgling Co-op made progress when they could. By July 1942 linemen from Lamar Electric were leaving to fight the war. Charles Julian, a lineman’s helper got a pay raise to 46 cents per hour because he had to step up to fill in for those leaving. The War Production Board had tight regulations about extending new electric lines. On October 6, 1942, the Lamar Electric office was closed and the Cooperative trucks and employees were used to collect pooled scrap metal.

On August 22, 1942 the Annual Meeting of Members was held at the District Courtroom in Paris. During his address to the members, Board President Paul T. Hill stated “that he was grateful for the accomplishments of the Cooperative thus far and further that if and when this World War is over the Cooperative would be in a position to complete the job it had begun.” Manager V.A. Rogers pointed out he had been optimistic about the future of the Cooperative as members had increased to 1,200 but he “could not be as optimistic in the future with reference to new connections... due to War Production Board restrictions, but that was as it should be, but the Cooperative had a big job to do in the War Program.” He continued “the rural people now had the tool that was vital to the War effort.” He pointed out that the Cooperative was serving more than 100 dairies that were in turn supplying dairy products to our armed forces. He cautioned members who had appliances to “take the best of care of them in order that they might last for the duration and suggested that members take advantage of any opportunity to purchase motors and put them to work to help in the labor shortage on the farms.”

The demand for electric appliances created wealth with increased manufacturing and sales. Many homes started with naked light bulbs hanging in the center of each room with a pull string. The electric iron was one of the most sought after appliances. Cooperatives themselves provided good jobs in the office and in the field. Lamar Electric is still a major employer in our region.

We at Lamar Electric have not forgotten that our roots are planted in the perseverance of the rural people we serve. As technology changes Lamar Electric utilizes the new technology as it becomes available but we cannot forget that “It” is all about What’s In It for “We”. Cooperative ownership is in the hands of our Members. These are the people who use the Cooperative services and it has always been that way. Lamar Electric continues to be a critical part of what makes our community a community. We will continue to look for ways to improve the way of life in the rural areas where we serve. ■

# Lamar Electric To Award \$6,000 in Scholarships

LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE will award six \$1,000 scholarships to students who plan to pursue an academic degree or certification from an accredited university, college, junior college, technical school or other postsecondary educational institution. Scholarship payment will be made directly to the institution in one lump sum and must be used within two years of the award date. Funds may be used for tuition, books, and room and board.

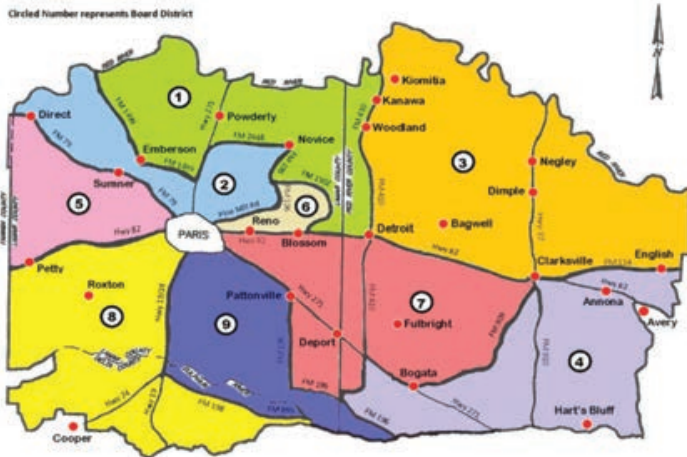
## Eligibility Requirements

To be considered for a Lamar Electric scholarship, a student must:

- ▶ Live full time in a residence served by Lamar Electric.
- ▶ Be a graduating senior attending a high school or an accredited home school program within the counties served by the cooperative.
- ▶ Apply by April 5.

Six scholarships will be given away at the Lamar Electric annual meeting April 17 in a random drawing of qualified students. The winners need not be present.

The application can be found on our website, [lamarelectric.coop](http://lamarelectric.coop) and submitted via email to [scholarship@lamarelectric.coop](mailto:scholarship@lamarelectric.coop). ■



## Save the Date

Director Elections, Scholarships  
at Lamar Electric Annual Meeting April 17

THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING of Lamar Electric Cooperative will be at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 17, at the cooperative's new headquarters, 5225 US Highway 82 E in Blossom. Registration opens at 9 a.m. The business session begins at 10 a.m. and includes any necessary reports of the officers, board members and committees as well as the election of directors in districts 1, 8 and 9, each for a three-year term.

Due to COVID-19, the 2020 annual membership meeting was canceled. The bylaws specify the board members or board seats that were up for election at that meeting shall stand for election at the next annual meeting (2021) and the board members who would normally be up for election at that meeting (2021) shall have their terms extended until the next (2022) annual meeting and shall remain on the board. The terms of the other members of the board shall be extended accordingly.

You do not have to be present at the meeting to vote in the director election. Before the meeting, ballots will be mailed to members who reside in those districts. If you reside in one of the districts holding an election, you may vote either by mail or in person at the meeting. Each member in attendance at the meeting will receive a registration gift, and drawings for other prizes will be held. You must be present at the time of the drawing to be eligible to win a prize.

Six \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded at the meeting. Applications must be received at the cooperative office by 5 p.m. April 5. To be eligible for a scholarship, a candidate must:

- e Live full time in a residence served by Lamar Electric.
- e Be a graduating senior attending a high school or home-schooling program within the counties served by Lamar Electric.

Questions about the meeting? Call (903) 784-4303 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. ■



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## Save Energy and \$\$\$ Today

**THE WEATHER OUTSIDE** can be as frightful in March as in January, but the early spring usually sneaks in a few warm-weather days here and there. Take advantage of them.

Turn off your furnace and treat your home—and its occupants—to a taste of the pleasant weather to come. Here's how to take advantage of those early glimpses of spring—and save some household energy while you're at it:

**Open the windows.** If it's warm enough to let some fresh air in during this in-between season of no heaters and no air conditioners, do it. Leave the windows open overnight to air out the house and stave off the need for the air conditioner. It's good for your health to bring in fresh air after a long winter of homes being mostly closed up.

**Let the sunshine in.** Open the drapes on sunny days and let nature keep your home warm. As it starts getting hot, though, cover windows up so incoming sunrays won't compete with the air conditioner.

**Cook outdoors.** Dust off the grill and start cookout season early this year.

**Switch the direction** of the blades on your ceiling fan. For warm weather, return the blades to a counterclockwise rotation. And be sure to turn off the fan when the room isn't occupied.

**Readjust your water heater's** temperature to 120 degrees if you cranked it up a few degrees for the winter.

**Give your clothes dryer** a rest and line dry clothes. When you need to run the dryer, run full loads only and make sure to clean the clothes dryer lint trap after each use.

**Use LED bulbs.** Replace all your old incandescent lightbulbs with LED bulbs. They use less energy and last longer. Remember to turn the lights out when you're done!

**Schedule your home's** air conditioner maintenance now, before you need to turn on the air conditioning for the summer. ■



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**Phone** (903) 784-4303  
**Web** lamarelectric.coop

**General Manager and CEO**  
 Jerry D. Williams

**Board of Directors**  
 George M. Wood, President, Blossom  
 Lyle Yoder, Vice President, Pattonville  
 Mike Williams, Secretary-Treasurer,  
 Detroit  
 Matthew Albus, Roxton  
 Allen Branch, Sumner  
 James D. Floyd, Annona  
 Jeremy D. Hamil, Sumner  
 Harry R. Moore, Clarksville  
 Ron E. Tippit, Clarksville

## Contact Us

For information and to report outages, please call us.

**(903) 784-4303**

### MEMBER BENEFITS

- Level billing
- Automated meter reading
- Free bank draft service
- E-Bill
- Visa and Mastercard accepted
- Prepaid metering

### TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Lamar Electric provides *Texas Co-op Power* and *TexasCoopPower.com* to give you information about events, safety, special programs and other activities of your cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the co-op office.

### VISIT US ONLINE

lamarelectric.coop

