

Striving To Exceed Expectations



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

HERE AT HOUSTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, we keep our members at the focal point by centering our attention on three primary areas—safety, reliability, and service. As we wrap up our 2018 year-end reports and review results, I have some great news to share with you!

Safety

For two consecutive years, HCEC has achieved the milestone of “No Lost Time” from workplace injury. Our employees have worked 280,271 hours and driven 1,729,042 miles without an incident causing “lost” or “down” time. While a monetary value cannot be placed on the worth of an employee’s health and well-being, our safety successes help benefit our members financially due to higher productivity by the linemen, and by lowering insurance premiums for our co-op.

Reliability

Because of heavy timber and long distribution lines, reliability is challenging when you live in rural East Texas. In an ideal situation, we would have lines with the ability to serve consumers from alternate sources. This would allow us to restore power when an outage occurs by isolating the location of the fault to make repairs while keeping your lights on. This process called ‘switching’ is widely used in more urban settings with greater electric distribution infrastructure and alternate power sources nearby. Automatic switching capabilities can significantly minimize outage time.

Larger electric companies work off of complex grids and have access to broader sources for substitute power. Here, however, we do not have that kind of infrastructure and options for an alternative power supply are limited. That means our responses require linemen on the ground, patrolling our system, finding the cause of the outage, and performing the repair. We accomplish this with twenty-six linemen who service an area containing over 5,000 miles of line. These linemen make personal sacrifices to ensure that you have electricity. When they receive a call day or night, they drop everything to get your power back on as fast as possible. They take great pride in their work and in their dedication to serve our members, and it shows in their performance. As represented in the chart below, the average duration of outage

time for our members in 2014 was 4.9 hours. In 2018, our average interruption lowered to 2.2 hours. This is why I am extremely proud of our Customer Average Interruption Duration Index. It is a tangible illustration of the commitment of our HCEC linemen to provide reliable electric service to our members.



Service

Last fall we performed a Customer Survey through an independent party. The response rate was excellent. If you were selected as part of the sample population and completed the survey, thank you for your time and feedback.

On the survey, we included standard questions to measure our performance with the American Customer Satisfaction Index, “ACSI.” The ACSI is a standard to measure customer satisfaction on the quality of products and services for any industry. The Energy Utility sector is broken down into categories: investor-owned utilities, municipals, and cooperatives. The average score for 2018 across the United States was 75 for investor-owned utilities, 75 for municipals, and 77 for cooperatives. The score for Houston County Electric Co-op was 84 which is significantly better than our peers in the industry.

As General Manager and on behalf of the employees of HCEC, I want to thank you for recognizing our efforts to provide high-quality service to each of our members. We continue to dedicate ourselves to the goal of working safely, supplying reliable power, and delivering superior service.

REMEMBER WHEN?

“REMEMBERING THE PAST”

My name is Earl Porter Gregg. Born October 1, 1926.

I grew up in Weches, Texas. I went to school at the school in Glover approximately 3 miles west of Weches. Something I will always remember—December 7, 1941—the Bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. We didn’t have electricity at Weches, so we didn’t have a radio. My uncle Loyd Lovell came by our house and told us of the bombing. Monday morning (Dec. 9) when we got to school—at Glover, we were told to report to the study hall. The Glover school had electricity provided by a generator (no co-op at that time). Our superintendent, E.M. Smith, brought his battery-operated radio and we listened to President Franklin D. Roosevelt as he declared war for what took place in the bombing. I remember his voice as he said, “I hate war, Eleanor [his wife] hates war, but we are declaring war on Japan.” Little did I realize that when I graduated from school in 1944 and went to work at B.F. Goodrich Rubber Plant in June 1944, that on October 1, 1944, I would have to register at the Draft Board in Crockett. On December 24, 1944, I received notice to report to the Draft Board in Crockett on Jan. 6, 1945. I was sent to Houston for a physical and was told I would be leaving that evening to join the U.S. Navy in San Diego, California. I finished Hospital Corp. School and was sent to Norman, Oklahoma, to the Naval Hospital where, for about 4 years, I cared for patients who had been in Japanese prison camps. I heard many “Horror Stories” from them. Luckily the war ended soon after, and I was discharged and went back to B.F. Goodrich where I worked until I retired. I presently live at CR 1560 in the Grapeland area and have electricity supplied by the co-op.



Earl P. Gregg (92 years old)

Houston County Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835

GENERAL MANAGER

Kathi Calvert

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Contact Us

TO REPORT A POWER OUTAGE, CALL OUR 24-HOUR HOTLINE

1-800-970-4232 toll-free

BUSINESS HOURS

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

For general information during business hours

(936) 544-5641 local

1-800-657-2445 toll-free

To report an outage, press 1.

To make a payment over the phone or speak with a member services representative, press 2.

For electrical connects, transfers and disconnects or any other problem with your electrical service, press 3.

Para hablar con un representante de habla hispana, presione 4.

FIND US ON THE WEB

houstoncountyelec.com



TEXAS CO-OP POWER 
CELEBRATING 75 YEARS

If you have a story you’d like to share, please contact Kelby at (936) 852-7240 or email kkoehler@houstoncountyelec.com.

We would love to hear from you!

March Madness

Bright hued highways are settling in throughout East Texas. Whether it's a trip for the day or a weekend get-a-way, these locations will have your jaw dropping in awe of their beauty.

SPRING BRINGS CRISP, COOL AIR TO TEXAS—WITH RISING TEMPERATURES just within our grasp. It also brings a remarkable demonstration of nature's beauty, and we in East Texas have a front-row seat to two of the best shows that nature has to offer—dogwood trees and azaleas.

For eight decades, nature lovers have converged during March and April on our little slice of heaven to view beautiful blossoming dogwoods and azaleas. The blossoms are so plentiful that there are highways and parks named after them. Both Tyler and Nacogdoches have azalea trails, and Palestine boasts dogwood trails at Davey Dogwood Park.

According to a 1976 edition of the *Palestine Herald-Press*, two prominent townspeople, Charles W. Wooldridge and Eugene Fish, met for coffee in spring 1938. Discussions led to an idea for capitalizing on the natural beauty of the abundant dogwood trees in the area around Palestine. If marketed correctly, they believed, they could draw crowds of tourists to the area. The two agreed that Palestine should have a dogwood trail and that they should invite people to visit.

That same day, Wooldridge convinced a local newspaper to invite people to visit Palestine and enjoy the beauty of the trees. The story ran in several newspapers and more than 20,000 visitors came that first year. The next year, attendance doubled, but sightseers were forced to travel down rough country roads to view the beautiful white blooms. It was apparent to organizers that if they wanted to continue the tradition, they would have to improve road conditions.

A solution came in the form of E.W. and H.R. Link, landowners of an extraordinary plot of dogwoods on rolling hills just outside of Palestine, who gave the group permission to develop the land so that proper trails could be laid out. The first trails were rough, however. Volunteers worked the land, cutting through the underbrush with cars, then clearing the route by hand. The trail was completed in 1941 and allowed visitors to travel through the woods and see dogwoods in their natural setting.

For a time during World War II, the trails closed due to gas rationing and because the government urged less travel. Fortunately, nature lover and local oil tycoon M.A. Davey purchased the land and donated it to Anderson County explicitly to be preserved as a public park.

Today, thanks to a simple idea, some dedicated volunteers and a generous benefactor, visitors get to enjoy events that highlight the unaltered, natural beauty of Davey Dogwood Park and the dogwood trails for a few weeks each year. This year marks the 81st anniversary of the efforts to spotlight the beautiful dogwood trees. Festivals and celebrations include the Piney Woods excursion train at the Texas State Railroad, Dogwood Jamboree, Old Time Music and Dulcimer Festival, Main Street Farm and Flower Market, a play at the historic Texas Theatre and much more. More information on these events can be found at visitpalestine.com/events.

Azalea lovers are encouraged to visit Nacogdoches or Tyler, just a short daytrip away, where trails showcase an abundance of azaleas. Nacogdoches is the home of one of the most beautiful and largest azalea gardens in the state, the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.

The garden is the result of a joint effort between the Stephen F. Austin State University horticulture department and several community leaders who felt that beautiful gardens were as crucial to the community as education. Stephen F. Austin State University also was the recipient of botanical philanthropy when Mr. and Mrs. A.T. Mast initiated a project to improve the university's east entrance. With an endowment from longtime resident Dottie Wisely, construction began in winter 1997. By April 2000, most of the plantings were complete. Covering 8 acres, it is the largest azalea garden in Texas and bursts with a kaleidoscope of colors each spring. The garden contains more than 46 flower beds, 1.25 miles of trails and more than 50 park benches that allow visitors to take a break while enjoying the beauty. Other features include 550-plus varieties of rhododendron, 100 varieties of camellia, more

than 200 hydrangea varieties and an abundance of other striking collections. During azalea season, guided tours are available. Go to visitnacogdoches.org for dates and event information.

This year marks Tyler's 60th year hosting the Azalea and Spring Flower Trail. The event runs March 22–April 7. The trail winds through 10 miles of residential gardens and historic homesites.

The history of the Tyler trails is much like those in Palestine and Nacogdoches. In 1929, one of Tyler's early nurserymen, Maurice Shamburger, was so impressed with his test run of azalea plantings that he had them shipped from Georgia by boxcar loads. After seeing the success of his azalea garden, Shamburger had a discussion with Sara Butler of the *Tyler Courier-Times Telegraph* about a potential beautification program. Not only did Butler encourage him to promote the idea, but she planted azalea bushes at her home. Soon neighbors followed suit, and the abundant, colorful blooms turned the area into a springtime showplace. The rest of the community was so impressed they too began planting bushes by the thousands.

By 1960, the flowers had gained so much attention that the chamber of commerce decided to create a marked route. The first azalea trail, which featured about 60 homes on a 5-mile route, was an instant hit. That success was and continues to be based exclusively on the efforts of homeowners, who frequently increase their plantings and spend hours on end making sure their yards provide beautiful blooms for locals and tourists alike. Through the years, the trails have attracted thousands of visitors, and by 2004, the Azalea Trail brought over 100,000 visitors to Tyler.

The Azalea Trail festivities include the 38th annual Tyler Quilt Show, Azalea Arts and Crafts Fair, Tyler Azalea 10K, Azalea Trail Junior Golf Classic, Rambling Roses Anniversary Dance and tours of historic homes. Go to visitt Tyler.com for more details on the Azalea and Spring Flower Trail.

This spring, take the time to visit these trails. Perhaps they will be an inspiration and even spark an interest to plant your own dogwoods and azaleas.



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1. A view from Manley Mountain in Davey Dogwood Park in Palestine.



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2. The Piney Woods excursion at the Texas State Railroad winds deep through the forest, providing passengers with breathtaking springtime views.

3. The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches produces a multitude of colors each spring, creating an oasis for flower lovers.

4. Each year, Tylerites create perfectly manicured azalea gardens to attract locals and out-of-towners to the Tyler Azalea and Spring Flower Trail. An array of colors can be seen while walking the trails.



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31ST ANNUAL

ETREYS.

EAST TEXAS RURAL ELECTRIC YOUTH SEMINAR
June 24 - 28, 2019 | East Texas Baptist University Campus, Marshall, TX

RISE UP

and fulfill your leadership potential
on your teams, at your school,
and in your community!

Since 1988 we have been hosting ETREYS, an all-expenses paid trip for high school students to get together to enhance their leadership capabilities, meet other students from across East Texas, and strengthen their overall self-perception.

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE APRIL 12, 2019



Call Kelby at 936-544-5641 or go online to www.houstoncountyelec.com for more information!

Don't Poke the Bear—Chase It

WE'RE PRETTY SURE YOU WON'T ENCOUNTER ANY BEARS AT THE DAVY CROCKETT

Bear Chase. What you will experience, however, is the chance to join runners from across the United States in a Boston-qualifier marathon as well as a half-marathon and 5K that begin in the heart of Groveton and take you through the rolling hills, woodlands, streams and grasslands of the Davy Crockett National Forest.

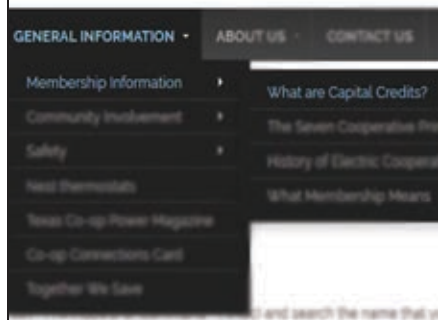
The coordinators of the event, Steve and Paula Boone, wanted to create an experience for participants of all ages and skill levels. With its laid-back atmosphere, the Davy Crockett Bear Chase is ideal for a first-timer or a seasoned runner.

To commemorate the event, each participant receives a T-shirt and a medal, and all finishers get a stuffed bear with their ending rank. There's also a 1-mile Li'l Critter Possum Walk designed for families in which kids can choose to either walk or run a half-mile course to Possum Walk and back. And just to make sure no one is left out, there's the "Bear Chase," a spectator event that the Boones describe as the ultimate armchair activity, complete with a T-shirt, snack and a spot to park your favorite chair with the best view to cheer on runners.

Groveton is the perfect setting for the Davy Crockett Bear Chase. Instead of fighting the crowds and traffic of larger marathons, participants get to experience a unique, small-town setting and friendly hospitality. The festivities begin the night before the race with a free spaghetti supper provided to the runners and their families by local churches. The next day, events begin at 7 a.m. for the half and full marathons, 7:30 a.m. for the 5K and 8 a.m. for the Possum Walk. The route starts at the Groveton High School track and winds along Cemetery and Dial roads and then onto Highway 3158 for the long stretch northward into the Davy Crockett National Forest.

One participant described the run as "a little bit country road, some trail, some blacktop—a perfect mix." Others voiced appreciation for the scenic surroundings and the kindness and enthusiasm of the organizers and volunteers. Everyone had something positive to say about their experience.

If you are looking for serious competition or just a fun day with the family, please consider joining the Davy Crockett Bear Chase or the Possum Walk, March 30 this year. For more information, contact event coordinators Steve or Paula Boone by email at steveboone@aol.com, call (713) 826-5833 or visit 50statesmarathonclub.com/bear.html.



Don't Let Your HCEC Funds Go Unclaimed

HOUSTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE is attempting to issue unclaimed capital credits checks to current and former Houston County EC members. Please visit the capital credits page on our website, under the Membership Information tab that can be found beneath the General Information tab on our main menu. This page has an updated list of funds from current and previous members that have not been claimed.

I found my name, what do I do next?

Contact us as soon as possible so that we can update your information.

My deceased family member is on the list. What do I do? Unclaimed credits may be claimed by the estate. Please contact us and provide us with proper documentation.

Even if you move and no longer are a member of Houston County EC, capital credits remain in your name. Update your mailing address with us if you move so we can send any future capital credits checks to the correct address. For information about capital credits or to update your contact information, contact the member services department Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. at (936) 544-5641 or 1-800-657-2445.

Get To Know Groveton



TRINITY COUNTRY MUSEUM



PATRICK FELLER | FLICKER



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GROVETON IS THE COUNTY SEAT OF TRINITY COUNTY, BUT THAT wasn't always the case. In fact, several towns have held that title.

Sumpter, near present-day Jossierand and Woodlake, was the original county seat. Named after Sumpter, Alabama, where Texas settler Solomon Adams hailed from, the town was incorporated in 1862. When its courthouse burned down in 1872, most of the population moved to Trinity, which became the county seat in 1873. The next year, after another election, Pennington was voted county seat, but its courthouse also burned—in 1876. It wasn't until 1882 that voters selected Groveton as their new county seat.

Named after a grove of blackjack trees that separated the town from Trinity Lumber Company's mill, Groveton was ideal for a county seat—not only because of its easier access to the rail system but also because the Trinity Lumber Company donated the site for the town square along with materials for a

new courthouse, which was built in 1884.

The local economy changed after the construction of the International-Great Northern Railroad in the early 1880s. Along with the Trinity Lumber Company, a number of other lumber operations moved into the area and opened sawmills. Lumbering intensified during the early 1900s.

Production was remarkable; one mill alone turned out 100,000 board feet of lumber daily in 1909. By that time, however, the county's old forests were depleted, and as the mills died, the towns died with them: first Jossierand in 1909, followed by Willard in 1911, Saron in 1919 and Westville in 1921. By 1928, only the lumber companies in Groveton and Trinity were still operating. The sites of those once-thriving mills were reduced to stumps and brambles. Trinity Lumber Mill, once regarded as one of the largest in the South, managed to survive until closing its doors at midnight December 31, 1930.

Over the next three years, the mill was dismantled, local rail lines were abandoned, and inevitably, the town's population dropped, bringing an end to the county's prosperity.

But in the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps gave new hope to Groveton. It began reforestation, and the Works Progress Administration constructed a new county jail, Groveton High School and a gymnasium. In 1933, the Texas Legislature purchased over 160,000 acres of dense woodlands centrally located within the Neches and Trinity river basins. On October 15, 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed the region a national forest. Today, Groveton is a gateway to the Davy Crockett National Forest, one of East Texas' most popular hiking and biking destinations.

Groveton isn't just known just for its scenic forest and small-town charm. It also boasts a roster of athletes, outlaws and musicians who have helped put the town on the map.

Emory Elmo "Topper" Rigney was born in Groveton in 1897. He attended Texas A&M University, playing shortstop for the baseball team from 1915 to 1918. After serving in the U.S. Navy, Rigney was farmed out to the Texas League and began his baseball career with the Dallas Submarines followed by a stint with the Fort Worth Panthers. In 1920, at the age of 25, Rigney joined the Detroit Tigers, where he played shortstop for hit-and-run Detroit manager Ty Cobb. In 1926, Rigney was sold to the Boston Red Sox after a reported argument with Cobb. In 1927, he was traded to the Washington Senators, appearing in his final major-league game on August 26 of that year. Rigney concluded his career with the Kansas City Blues of the American Association.

In the days when outlaws brandished six-shooters and rode their ponies through town, Sumpter, the original county seat, housed one of the most notorious outlaws of the 1800s. John Wesley Hardin fled to Sumpter after killing a man at the age of 15 in Polk County. He killed three Union soldiers in Trinity County who were attempting to arrest him. After that, he knew he needed to get far away, so he cowboied his way up the Chisholm Trail, claiming he murdered 10 more people during that trip. He returned to Texas and continued his wicked ways, killing at least a half-dozen more people. His lifestyle finally caught up with him in El Paso, where he was killed by John Selman. He had more than 30 notches in his gun, making it likely that there has never been a more lethal gunman in Texas.

Groveton also produced two well-known football players, Rodney Dejuane Thomas and David Lane Johnson. Thomas was a record-setting player at Groveton High School who went on to become a professional football player. After high school, the much-sought-after Thomas attended Texas A&M, where he continued to break records. His teammates honored him in 1994 with the Aggie Heart Award, the highest honor for an A&M senior football player. Thomas played seven seasons in the NFL as a running back, first with the Houston Oilers (which later became the Tennessee Titans) and ultimately with the Atlanta Falcons.

Johnson was born in Groveton and attended high school there, where he played football and competed in track. After

1. An early view of the Trinity County Courthouse, built in 1914 by C.H. Page and Brother Architects, which featured modern heating, plumbing and wiring.

2. Today's view of the Trinity County Courthouse. It was designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 2004 and a state Antiquities Landmark in 2006. Planning and construction grants enabled the courthouse's restoration.

3. Notorious Texas outlaw John Wesley Hardin.

4. A view from Main Street looking toward the Trinity County Courthouse. The left image was taken in 1904.

graduating, Lane attended Kilgore College, playing quarterback and tight end for the Rangers. After his freshman year, he transferred to the University of Oklahoma, where he played for the Sooners from 2009 to 2012. In 2012, he played left tackle and started in 11 of 13 games and was named a third-team All-American by CBSSports.com. Subsequently, he was selected in the first round (fourth overall) of the 2013 NFL draft as an offensive tackle for the Philadelphia Eagles, the position he currently holds.

Small towns are frequently associated with producing country music singers, and Groveton is no exception. Jacky Ward, born in Groveton on November 18, 1946, gained popularity in the late 1970s in Nashville. For a time, he teamed with another newcomer, Reba McEntire, appearing on some of her early hits. Ward recorded several notable songs for the Mercury Records label. His highest-peaking single, *A Lover's Question*, reached No. 3 on the charts in 1978. In the early 1980s, Ward signed with Asylum Records but left the country music business by the end of the decade.

The latest resident to bring fame to Groveton is country singer Cody Johnson. He began singing and playing guitar when he was 12 years old and, like many country singers, he got his start playing in small-town venues. Following in the footsteps of one of his heroes, the late Chris LeDoux, Johnson hit the rodeo circuit while producing and selling his self-financed first CD from his pickup. But eventually broken bones and the cost of competition took their toll, and he gave up his life as a rodeo pro and became a prison guard in Huntsville, playing clubs on the weekends.

Propelled by his ability to put his heart into his songs, Johnson's music gained in popularity as he garnered a string of hits on the Texas music charts, becoming a two-time winner of the Texas Regional Radio Music Award for Male Vocalist of the Year along the way. His sixth album, *Gotta Be Me*, was released August 5, 2016, and debuted at No. 11 on the Billboard 200 and No. 2 on the Top Country Albums chart. Currently, he is signed with Warner Music Nashville.

Every town is different. Each one has its heroes and legends, its unique architecture and local attractions. We invite you to take the time to visit Groveton and explore new adventures or revisit fond memories with a new appreciation.