



POWER TALK

Powerful Education Resource

United Cooperative Services to Award \$50,000 in Scholarships in 2013



Demonstrating its commitment to the communities it serves, United Cooperative Services will this summer award \$50,000 in Energy Scholarship Awards to 14 students who are members of the cooperative. United's scholarship

award program was created to encourage and assist in the educational pursuits of the co-op's members and their families.

"As a member-owned electric cooperative, United is committed to informing members that getting power from a not-for-profit cooperative has its privileges," said United CEO Ray Beavers. "Our scholarship award program is one of the most telling ways we demonstrate to the members and communities we serve that we look out for their best interests," he added.

United will award 10 scholarships valued at \$2,500 each. Three additional scholarships will be awarded at \$5,000 each and one lucky student will win a scholarship valued at \$10,000.

The scholarship application process runs May 1 through June 1, 2013. Applications will not be accepted after June 1. Applications must be filled out online at United's Web site: www.united-cs.com. Graduating high school seniors must meet a number of criteria, which includes

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Washington Bound!

Area Students Earn Opportunity to Represent United at Youth Tour

United Cooperative Services will send two deserving high school students this June on a weeklong trip to the nation's capital, a privilege that previous delegates have called the experience of a lifetime.

This year's winners, 16-year-old Jennifer Roca, a junior student of Venus High School, and Madison Davis, 17, a senior at Cleburne High School, won United's Electric Cooperative Youth Tour competition, earning a valuable opportunity to get a firsthand look at the political process, as well as a chance to interact with lawmakers and more than 1,000 fellow students sponsored by electric cooperatives across the nation.

The Youth Tour also gives the students a glimpse at how United demonstrates its commitment to the com-



JENNIFER ROCA



MADISON DAVIS

munities it serves, a distinguishing characteristic of nonprofit electric cooperative utilities.

"Awesome! It's truly an honor to have been selected to represent United Cooperative Services and to be a part of the Texas Electric Cooperatives delegation at the 2013 Youth Tour," said Roca.

Following the advice given in 1957 by Lyndon B. Johnson, who said co-ops should send young people to Washington, D.C., to see what the flag stands for, Texas electric cooperatives joined other co-ops from across the country in sponsoring trips to the nation's capital for young students eager to witness government in action.

For decades, United Cooperative Services has played a pivotal role in pro-

viding dozens of young people such an outstanding opportunity.

"It's always gratifying to be able to provide some of our area youth with such an exceptional and meaningful educational experience," said United CEO Ray Beavers. "I would dare to say there aren't many adults who have ever had a chance to visit our nation's Capitol, or to see with their own eyes this nation's democracy unfold. So, the trip is an especially rare treat for students.

And judging by comments we've received from past trip recipients, they will remember the trip for the rest of their lives, and they will remember that their electric cooperative was there to support them as they take in all of the events, sites and speakers," said Beavers.



Promoting Higher Education Among Area United Students

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being an active member of United or a dependent of parents or legal guardians who are active United members at their principle residence.

Additional criteria can be obtained online at the United Web site. More than 20 years ago, United Cooperative Services awarded its first scholarships to local high school students and returning college students. United made the funds available with the aim to reinvest into the communities it serves. In those first years, United awarded one scholarship to one student at each high school in its service area.

In 1997, new funds were made available by House Bill 3203, which allows nonprofit electric cooperatives like United to put unclaimed member dividends to



United Board of Directors are pictured with last year's crop of scholarship award winners during a special banquet that annually honors the scholastic achievement of area cooperative students.

use for student scholarships. This change in the law allowed United to reclaim funds previously lost to the state's general

revenue fund and reinvest it locally, where it would have a greater impact on the people United serves.

co-oppeople



Honoring a Lasting Service Commitment to Co-op Member-Owners

United Board of Directors President Clifford Deal, right, congratulated Board Vice President Larry Bays for 30 years of leadership and dedication to the cooperative's governance during the board's regular monthly board meeting, held recently in Stephenville. In addition to representing co-op members in District 7 (Northwest Erath County-Lingleville), Bays has served as a United representative on the Brazos Electric Cooperative board since 2005.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

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The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Patty S. Holleman, Human Resources Director or Ray H. Beavers, General Manager/CEO. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination, may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

STORM

Spring signals the return of both good and bad weather. Are you ready for the stuff that isn't so nice?

- Staying prepared is key in weathering the worst!

WATCH

North Texans have been conditioned to prepare for the worst when springtime makes its appearance across the state. The volatile clash between moist and dry air (a dry line) that occurs regionally in spring and early summer across the Great Plains states often creates ugly weather that has included Texas' address among others in an ill-fated corridor commonly referred to as Tornado Alley.

As a result, Texans just know that spring brings weather, some of it dangerous, and that much of it generally creates havoc—including power outages. So, spring's return to North Texas is the perfect time for a review of the separate roles members and the cooperative play during any outage event.

Power outages occur for various reasons across United's service territory. In most cases, power is restored in a short amount of time. But sometimes, more prolonged outages are possible due to extreme weather conditions such as tornadoes, thunderstorms, high winds, extreme heat and even extensive drought.

Most members are aware that trees, branches or high winds can snap and damage primary distribution lines and poles, or damage secondary service lines that provide power to a member's residence. Lightning frequently causes faults in substations and transmission lines feeding them. Birds, snakes and other animals cause outages. In more urban areas, where heavy traffic follows dense commercial and residential growth, outages are frequently caused by heavy equipment or vehicle contact with power lines and poles.

As employees of a member-focused electric cooperative, United's operations crews fully appreciate members' concerns over power outages, and they also understand how frustrating it can be to be without power for very long. Coupled with redundancies built into United's distribution system that allow United to circumvent

affected circuits and restore power quickly and safely to as many areas and members as possible, United crews are committed to their mission to work as long and hard as necessary to systematically and safely repair any damaged sections of United's distribution system.

In addition to responding operations crews, member service representatives bolster United's dispatch department, and United has recently deployed a new telephone system that has expanded the cooperative's capacity to receive a greater number of incoming calls during high call volume periods. United also utilizes every available medium to communicate power restoration efforts including; Facebook, website postings and an outage dashboard members can access through United's website at www.united-cs.com to receive real-time data on any outage within United's service territory.



But there are also steps United members can take to help the cooperative restore power quickly and safely in its response to outages.

Take a look around

Check to see if your neighbors are without power. If so, please call your nearest local office to report an outage. But also be cognizant of the fact that even close neighbors may be served from a different circuit or transformer. For that same reason, remember that a neighbor's power may be restored sooner or later than your service. When outage reports are made, members may have an option to

UNITED OFFICE NUMBERS:

- CLEBURNE: 817-556-4000
- STEPHENVILLE: 254-965-3153
- GLEN ROSE: 254-897-9439
- GRANBURY: 817-326-5232
- MERIDIAN: 254-435-2832
- BURLESON: 817-447-9292
- PK LAKE: 940-779-2985

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Weathering Storm

STORM READINESS
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visit with a member service representative. Or when call volumes are at a peak, members may instead be prompted to leave a voice recording of important contact information such as the member's phone number, address, account number and the meter numbers affected by the power outage. Some other helpful tips are as follows:

Turn Off All Major Appliances

This includes electric ranges, washers and dryers. Unplug sensitive electronic equipment such as television sets, VCRs and computers. This reduces the electrical demand when power is

restored and significantly reduces the chance of damage caused by electrical surges.

Keep Refrigerator and Freezer Doors Closed

Keeping the doors of these appliances closed will help conserve the cold inside, and maintain the perishable food they contain. In emergencies, members may want to move any refrigerated medicine to a cooler with an ice pack.

Remember Safety

Stay away from all fallen wires and anything, such as a tree limb, that may be in contact with downed lines. Keep others away, too. Always assume any downed wire is an energized power line and call United immediately. Camp stoves and outdoor grills should never be



United members who have Internet access can visit United's website located at www.united-cs.com to find the status of any outage the cooperative is working to restore, and at any time.

"While electric outages in United's service territory are infrequent, and generally of short duration, weather-related events and natural disasters can cause widespread power interruptions," said United Engineering Services Manager Cory Menzel. "This member service feature enhances our overall outage management system to keep members informed, in real time, about all United restoration efforts that may be under way at any given time."

The convenient Outage Dashboard service, which members can find located under the Outage Management tab at the



top right portion of the co-op's home page, provides a map of United's service area and where outages have occurred within it.

The consumer tool not only shows the location of outages, but also includes the total number of outages that have been reported, total members affected, total members restored, total members without power and the number of member outages by county.

In addition, members can move the computer cursor over a specific outage and see the overall restoration status of the event, and which streets are affected by it.

The Dashboard map viewer can also be adjusted by members to provide either a road map view, or a satellite view of the outage area, similar to other map viewers on the Web today.

"Even though this new feature will help members monitor restoration efforts during outages, it is not being offered as a substitute for outage reports from our membership," Menzel said. "We still want our members to contact the cooperative when they have a power interruption, so we can ensure operations crews have been dispatched to that location."

Power-Related Outages

used indoors because of the deadly fumes they produce.

Electric Generators

Most electric power outages are temporary and do not require backup power resources. However, some members may have special medical needs and should make emergency provisions for backup power in the event of an emergency situation. If you own a portable generator, it is extremely important that you operate it safely. Improper installation or use can cause house fires or feed electricity back to United's distribution system, creating a hazard for line crews working to restore power. And before buying a generator, make sure it's the right size for your needs. United advises members to consult with a qualified, licensed electrician before installing the generator to ensure the device is properly installed and the home's wiring

system is isolated (using a special transfer switch) from United's distribution system. When using portable generators, always follow the manufacturer's instructions and operate the generator in a well-ventilated area.

Gather and Store a "Storm Kit"

Each kit should, at the very least, include the following items, and should be stored in an accessible and convenient location—ready to retrieve at a moment's notice. Also be sure everyone in the family knows where the storm kit is located.

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Bottled water
- First-aid kit
- Manual can opener
- Portable, battery-operated radio
- Stores of non-perishable food

DON'T BECOME A VICTIM!

Scam artists in the U.S. and around the world defraud millions of people each year. Thieves use the phone, email, postal mail, and the Internet to trick you into sending money or giving out personal information.

Utility scams thrive today because unwary consumers still fall for schemes that rob them of money, personal identification information and even personal safety. Sometimes the scammers play on victims' fears; other times they target their ignorance. Sometimes they're after money; other times they want personal financial details they can use elsewhere.

For example, one United member was recently contacted by a scammer who claimed the member's account was past due and that electric service would be disconnected immediately unless payment information was provided over the phone. Thankfully, the member was dubious and he called a local United office to verify his account's status. United service disconnections are made only as a last resort, and after an eight-day grace period has elapsed since the member has been notified by mail that an electric service is subject to disconnection.

Service disconnections are performed only during regular weekday business hours, and payment for past due accounts can be made in-person, over the phone and online.

The following are some things members should remember to avoid being victimized by utility scams.

KNOW WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH

Don't divulge any personal information or give money to any person or company you aren't familiar with until you can verify they truly exist—a tough task if they don't have a local presence. If in doubt, verify the company's number independently and phone the company to check.

IF YOU AREN'T SURE, CALL A COMPANY AT A LISTED NUMBER

United members can always verify their account status at any time by contacting a member service representative at their nearest local United Cooperative Services office. Such information will not be released to a member until a member's identity and account information can be verified.

ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION

United service personnel wear clearly identified uniforms and drive clearly identified vehicles. The name of any United representative can be verified by calling the nearest local office.

Sporting the Bright Blue Ba

ENERGY INNOVATION

By JEFF PANNELL

Many North Texans were reminded again this past winter that a few months of cooler temperatures often result in utility bills that are typically higher than those experienced during seasonally milder months.

During colder weather extremes, the main culprit in higher residential energy usage is typically the heating system in a home, especially if it is electric resistance heating. Yet, while heating and cooling can account for nearly 60 percent of a home's total energy consumption, it is equally important to note that appliances and lighting can account for up to 25 percent of residential electric usage. In that regard, members might want to take another look at Energy Star appliances. In fact, United members have a good reason to mark Memorial Day down for such home improvements.

The state of Texas is once again promoting its Energy Star sales tax holiday from May 25-27. The holiday, which is designed to encourage consumers to become more energy efficient, allows Texas shoppers to avoid state and local sales and use taxes on purchases of certain energy efficient products. Coupled with pre-existing in-store sales, the tax holiday can be a significant cost justification for replacing an old, inefficient, energy-hogging appliance that wastes valuable dollars every day.

In 1992, the Energy Star program was established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The purpose of this government-sponsored program was to assist consumers in saving money while protecting the environment through energy efficient products and practices.

Energy Star appliances continue to gain in popularity and



notoriety among new homeowners, as well as builders. Energy Star appliances are not rated for their design or their specific features, but rather the product's ability to perform under strict energy-savings criteria—all of which are independently certified through a third party assessment. As such, Energy Star-rated appliances are required to meet certain energy efficiency levels

and carry a label certifying the degree of energy usage that can be expected from the product.

Since rising energy costs are becoming a more critical concern for many of the nation's consumers, Energy Star certification provides guidance for homeowners wishing to make an educated decision when purchasing appliances such as; refrigerators, dishwashers and water heaters. Energy Star-rated appliances are considered a better value than those that don't carry such certification because they help homeowners waste less energy.

Badges of Energy Efficiency

MAXIMIZING THE EFFICIENCY INHERENT IN ENERGY STAR-CERTIFIED APPLIANCES

Consider these benefits and energy-saving tips when replacing old appliances with ENERGY STAR-certified models:

EFFICIENT REFRIGERATORS

- **Set the appropriate temperature.** Keep your refrigerator at 35 to 38 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Place your fridge in a cool place.** Position your refrigerator away from a heat source such as an oven, a dishwasher, or direct sunlight from a window.
- **Allow air circulation behind the fridge.** Leave a few inches between the wall and the refrigerator, and keep the condenser coils clean if you have an older model.
- **Read the user's manual** to learn how to safely

clean coils. Coil cleaning brushes can be purchased at most hardware stores.

- **Check the door seals.** Make sure the refrigerator seals around the door are airtight. If not, replace them.
- **Keep the door closed.** Minimize the amount of time the refrigerator door is open.

By some estimates, about a quarter of the nation's households have a second refrigerator. The use of a second, older refrigerator that may be operating in a garage could be costing more than \$300 each year in energy costs. Many appliance retailers will pick up and recycle old refrigerators or freezers with the purchase of a newer model. It is also advisable to ask a retailer for assurance that the old unit will be properly recycled and not resold as an inefficient, second-hand unit.

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Energy Star

SALES TAX HOLIDAY



Save on Appliances
Memorial Day Weekend!

Visit www.texaspowerfulsmart.org

Texas' sixth annual Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday during this year's Memorial Day weekend is a great time to purchase new energy efficient appliances without paying state or local sales taxes on qualifying items.

By purchasing an Energy Star rated appliance during the tax holiday, you will not only save the sales tax, you will also save on your monthly utility bills by reducing your water and energy use.

The Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday begins Saturday, May 25, and runs through Memorial Day, Monday, May 27. The tax savings apply to the following appliances and household equipment bearing the Energy Star label:

- **Central or room air conditioners priced at \$6,000 or less**
- **Refrigerators priced at \$2,000 or less**
- **Ceiling fans**
- **Incandescent and fluorescent light bulbs**
- **Clothes washers**
- **Dishwashers**
- **Dehumidifiers**
- **Programmable thermostats**

Energy Efficient Appliances Help F

ENERGY SAVERS
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SMART DISHWASHERS

ENERGY STAR-certified dishwashers have “smart” features that minimize water use and demand on the water heater, and allow for quieter operation and less pre-rinsing. Construction includes more effective washing action, energy-efficient motors, and other advanced technology, such as sensors that determine the length of the wash cycle and the temperature of the water necessary to clean the dishes. When shopping for a new dishwasher, consider how much water the dishwasher uses per cycle—less water usage

equates to a reduction in operating cost. To save even more energy, avoid using the heated dry cycle. Instead, let your dishes air dry.

ADVANCED CLOTHES WASHER TECHNOLOGY

ENERGY STAR certified clothes washers incorporate high-quality features for improved performance. Gentler operation, more thorough rinsing, and the removal of more water in the spin cycle make washing clothes more convenient and help protect your clothing investment.

Front-loading machines feature washtubs that move clothes horizontally, similar to clothes dryers. Top-loading ENERGY STAR



—POWER TALK RAY BEAVERS

JUST KEEP IN MIND

If something in the supply chain goes awry when you have all the generators working at full capacity in very hot conditions, and there are few if any reserves to pick up the losses, an imbalance between demand and supply can occur easily.

Ray Beavers is the CEO of United Cooperative Services

I had an uncle who was what some would call, “a little strange.” Nevertheless, I admired him because he was largely self-educated, a person who read everything he got his hands on, and more importantly, he was a man of God who knew the Bible from cover to cover and lived his life practicing his beliefs. That wasn’t why he was strange. What made him stand out was that he believed with all his heart and soul the world was coming to an end sometime in 1966. As my Dad would say, “I don’t know how he is so convinced when God himself says only He knows when that time will be.”

At the time, I couldn’t help but wonder if my uncle was on to something. Then, I was only eleven years old and there were so many things I still wanted to find out about life. And if the world came to an end before I got any older, that wouldn’t happen. Every time I was

around my uncle, I could feel the anxiety build in me. Well, 1966 came and went and nothing happened—much to my relief. Now, I am getting into my more senior years and I look back and believe my uncle was right about a couple of things. I do believe the Lord will return again, and I do believe Judgment Day will come. But it really doesn’t matter when; what matters is whether I will be prepared and ready.

I’m relating those thoughts to lead into a discussion about what is going on now in our great state with our electric utility sector.

I recently learned ERCOT is predicting that the reserves of electric generating capacity could be no greater than 8.5 percent this summer. What that means is this: According to ERCOT’s projected peak demand for electricity during our hottest times this summer, there will only be an 8.5 percent surplus available in

Reduce the Load for Homeowners

certified clothes washers use sensor technology to control water temperature and volume, and then use high-pressure spray rinses to remove soap from clothes.

Water heating consumes about 90 percent of the energy used to operate a clothes washer. Unless you're dealing with oily stains, washing in cold water will generally do an effective job of cleaning. Switching the temperature setting from hot to warm can cut energy use in half. Using the cold cycle reduces energy use even more.

United's Energy Innovation experts are committed to helping members understand how to save money by



making informed decisions when it comes to energy consumption.

"As our members begin to fully understand the key factors that influence their utility bills, they begin to develop a sense of ownership in their energy management," said Key Accounts/ Business Development Coordinator Seth Rosser. "That ownership makes them better consumers because it empowers them to make better decisions in managing their energy use and its relative costs," he added.

To find out more ways to save energy, schedule a free home energy audit by contacting your local United office, or visiting www.united-cs.com.

generating capacity, which will have to carry us through peak conditions without something occurring out of the ordinary. And what, might you ask, falls under the category of "out of the ordinary?"

One very bothersome concern is a prediction by many meteorologists that our drought will continue, and that coupled with an extended drought we are likely to receive some more record heat this year.

When you don't have enough additional generating capacity on hand to circumvent unexpected losses in generation, no matter the cause, then a thirsty man may likely be heading to a dry well to get a drink. If something in the supply chain goes awry when you have all the generators working at full capacity in very hot conditions, and there are few if any reserves to pick up the losses, an imbalance between demand and supply can occur easily. It puts a lot of strain on the mechanical operation of these large boilers and generators. It also puts strain on the transmission lines that carry the high volumes of electrons throughout the state.

Such a scenario is troubling to me because we could be facing rotating outages during the hottest time of the year. Rotating outages are controlled outages that are designed to protect the electric grid from having a full-fledged blackout—a catastrophic event that could result in days, even weeks of bringing the grid back on line again. If rotating outages are called for, it would mean that United and all other electric system operators would be mandated to systematically turn off segments

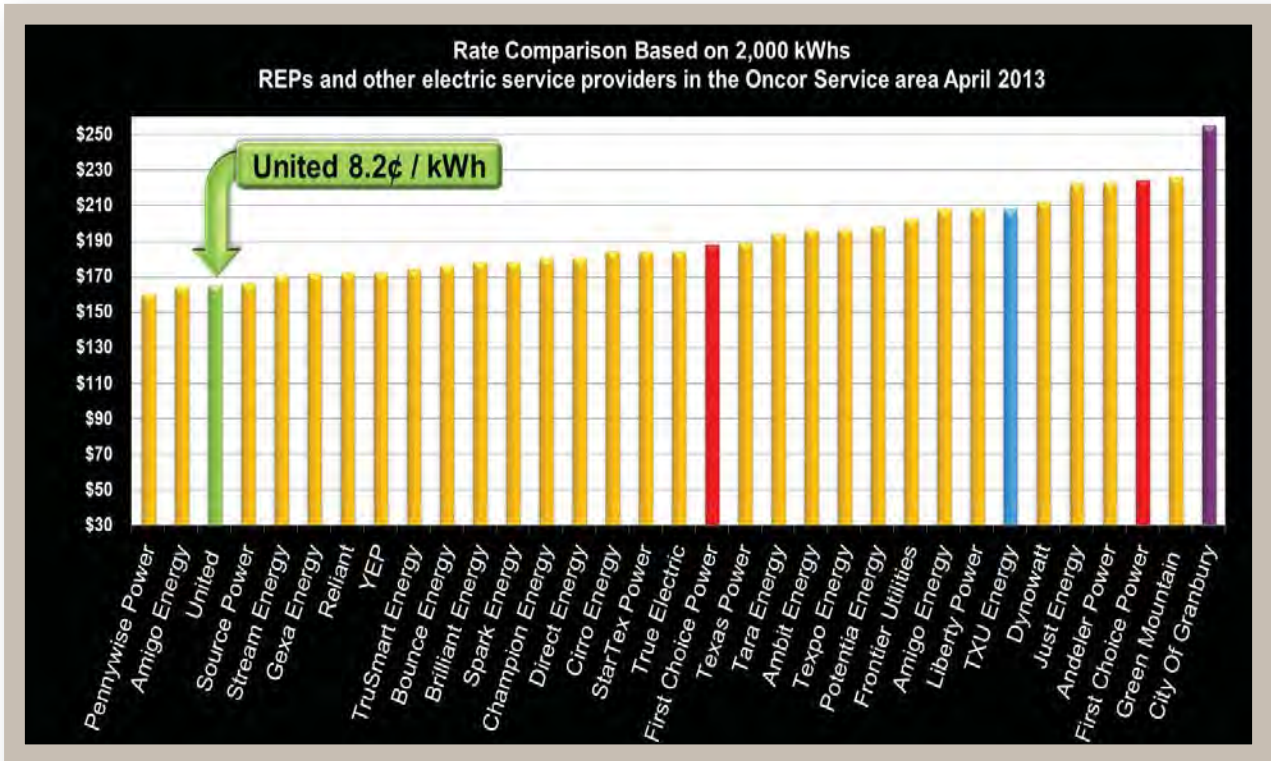
of their systems to help prevent an uncontrolled blackout. At United, such a directive would require turning off portions of our distribution system for a period of time, rotating that segment back on to the system and then turning off others in staggered succession until the emergency period is over. When this happened in 2011, no member's power was off for more than 26 minutes, while other North Texas utilities had consumers off for up to two hours. Another concern deals with the impact such events can have on the electric markets. When electric demand begins to outpace supply, the price will rise. There is a ceiling that is set by law for the price of electricity during these times and that is \$4,500 per megawatt hour. To put that in perspective, we pay Brazos around six cents per kWh on average. If we have to go out and buy additional power during this period of high demand and high prices, we could potentially pay \$4.50 per kWh. If and when that happens, we would hope it would be of short duration.

What are the chances of all these scenarios happening? No one can know for sure that we'll experience them, but I do know that the possibility is real and that the state's need for more generating capacity is becoming dire. Another thing I know for sure is that the great people in our great state need to be aware that that rotating outages may become less rare, so that they can be prepared when and if they happen. We will continue to do everything in our power to keep you posted with

the facts and not alarm you unnecessarily. But we feel it's not only our moral obligation to inform you when conditions warrant action, but to communicate with you on a continual basis. Simply put, we will look out for your best interest and keep you apprised of industry issues. We are prepared as an organization to do what needs to be done to ensure our members' lives are not impacted any more than necessary, and to execute a strategic plan to protect your cooperative.

My uncle was a good man. His thoughts always represented what, in his heart, he felt was true. He spoke the truth, just as he felt it was written in the Bible. Where he was slightly off was in his conviction that he could predict God's timing. If he would have instead just cited scripture and verse, I think he would have conveyed that it isn't important for us to know when the end of the world was coming, but whether we would be prepared when that day came. That message is something we all should keep in mind. It's a good thing to be prepared in everything we do. That way, no matter what the timing may be, we will be doing the right things for the right reasons.

RATE WATCH



The rate comparison shown above represents a portion of all rates offered for 2,000 kWh of use in the North Texas utility market for the month of April 2013. It does not include new participants that have posted only temporary or introductory rates. This comparison illustrates one of the two options

Texas consumers can select at www.powertochoose.org to compare retail rates at different usage levels.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Looking out for you!