

Drawing From the Heart

Young Artist Wins First Electric's Inaugural Apparel-Design Contest

At just 13 years old, Rowan Alberson never expected a simple suggestion from his mom to lead to thousands of people seeing his artwork.

But that's exactly what happened when the homeschooled young artist earned first place in First Electric Cooperative's inaugural apparel-design contest — beating out more than 20 contestants, many several years older than him.

"I was surprised, honestly," Rowan said with a laugh. "I was mainly just surprised and honored."

For Rowan, art has always been more than a hobby. It is something deeply personal — a way to tell stories, create characters and express ideas that exist only in his imagination.

"I like to draw characters and outfits and the backstory to those characters," he explained. "I wanted to incorporate what I knew about First Electric and fuse it with what I like to draw."

That creative approach is exactly what made his design stand out.

According to contest organizers, Rowan's artwork captured not only creativity and originality, but also heart — something judges immediately noticed during the selection process.

"We could tell he poured himself into the design," said Austin Martin of First Electric, who organized the contest. "It wasn't just artwork. It told a story."

Rowan spent days refining his entry, revisiting and reworking the concept repeatedly until it felt complete. What began as a simple character sketch evolved over time into the final design featuring a larger heart element and visual details inspired by First Electric's service and community presence.

"I just kept making it better and better," Rowan said. "That's basically all I drew during that time."

Despite his talent, Rowan remains humble about his artistic journey. Entirely self-taught, he credits years of watching videos, studying other artists and constant practice for helping him improve.

"I didn't really go to art classes," he said. "I just watched a lot of videos and practiced a lot."

That dedication became even stronger a few years ago after watching a video by an animator discussing her own artistic journey.

"I related to that," Rowan said. "That's when I really kicked it into overdrive and started learning as much as I possibly could."

Today, Rowan continues exploring new mediums, recently experimenting with charcoal while continuing to develop his traditional drawing style using pencil, pen and alcohol markers.

Outside of art, Rowan enjoys reading, gaming, dancing and spending time with family — especially competing against them in Mario Kart, where he confidently admits he usually wins.

But even among his hobbies, art remains at the center of who he is.

"It gives me hope, honestly," Rowan said about winning the contest. "It inspires me to try harder and branch out and look for more opportunities."

The future may one day include illustration work or even creating a graphic novel — something Rowan describes as his "dream challenge."

"I'd love to make a graphic novel someday," he said. "It would be a lot of work, but it would be really exciting."

For First Electric Cooperative, the contest represented more than simply designing a T-shirt. It was an

opportunity to encourage creativity, provide a platform for young people, and celebrate the unique talents found throughout the cooperative's communities.

And for Rowan, it became something even more meaningful: proof that hard work, imagination, and passion can take you farther than you ever expected.

Soon, First Electric employees and community members alike will proudly wear Rowan's winning design across the cooperative's service area — a moment the young artist says would be surreal to witness in person.

"If I walked by someone wearing that shirt," Rowan joked, "I'd probably say, 'Hey, you like that shirt? I drew it.'"

And thanks to one unforgettable design, plenty of people soon will.



First Electric apparel-design contest winner Rowan Alberson, 13, models the T-shirt featuring his winning design.

Landscape Today, Save Tomorrow

Fall is one of the best times to plant trees in Arkansas. Cooler temperatures and seasonal rainfall help young trees establish strong root systems, setting them up to thrive for years to come.

Thoughtful landscaping does more than beautify your property; it can also help reduce energy costs. Strategically placed shade trees can keep your home cooler during Arkansas' hot summers, while thoughtfully planned landscaping can improve comfort, increase property value, and enhance your outdoor spaces.

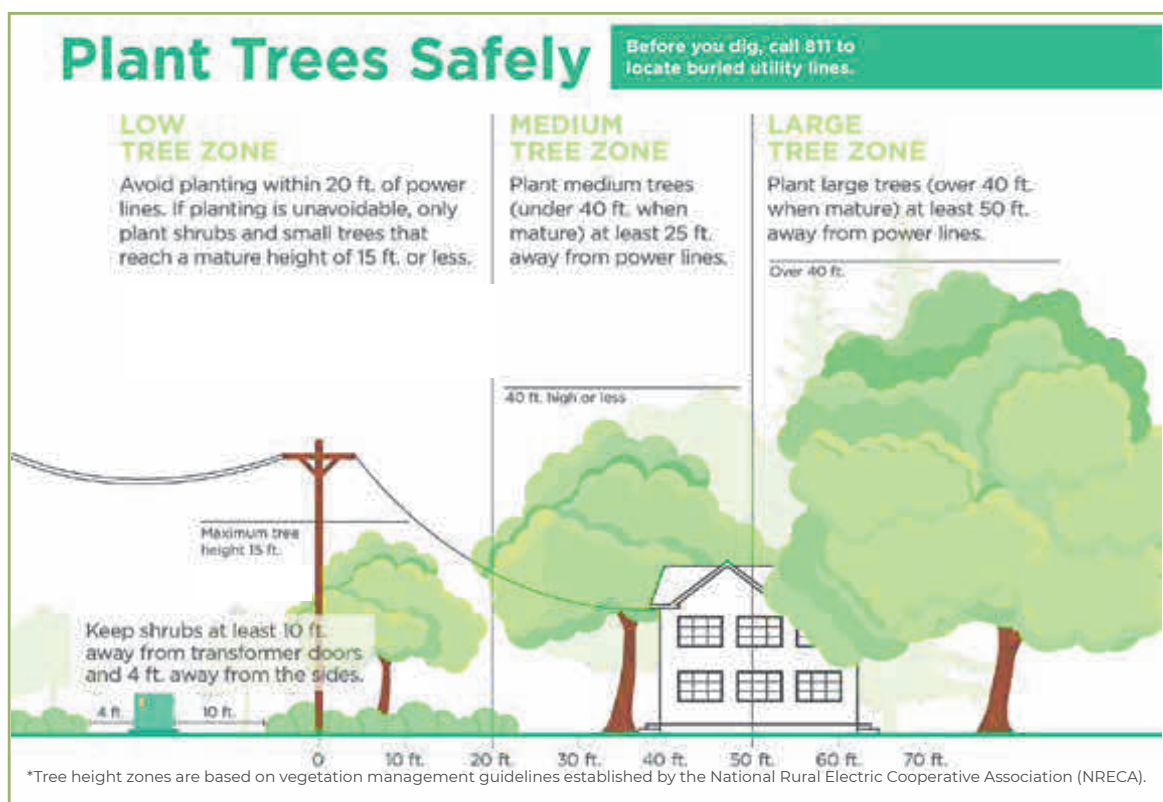
Before you plant, take a few moments to plan. Choosing the right tree and placing it in the right location will help prevent future conflicts with power lines, underground utilities, and nearby structures. A little planning today can save time, money and headaches tomorrow.

Plan Before You Plant

Before purchasing a tree, think beyond what it looks like today. Consider its mature height, canopy spread and root system.

Ask yourself:

- How tall and wide will this tree grow?
- Will it be near overhead or underground utilities?
- Could the roots eventually affect sidewalks, driveways or water lines?



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TO SERVE YOU.**

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firstelectric.coop
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(Option 2 for outage reporting)

Connect2First
connect2first.net
833-411-2234
(Option 2 for outage reporting)

Stay Connected: Update Your Member Information

Life changes — and your contact information may have changed, too. Whether you've moved, changed phone numbers, updated your email address or added a new mailing address, keeping your information current helps First Electric serve you better.

Having accurate member information allows us to:

- Notify you about planned outages and restoration updates.
 - Contact you if there's an issue with your account.
 - Ensure you receive important cooperative news, capital credit information and billing reminders.
 - Provide faster, more efficient service when you need us most.
- Even if nothing has changed recently, it's a good idea to

review your account information periodically to make sure everything is accurate.

Updating your information is quick and easy through the First Electric website at firstelectric.coop, by calling 800-489-7405 or by stopping by any First Electric location.

As your member-owned cooperative, we're committed to providing reliable service and keeping you informed. A few minutes today can help ensure you never miss important information tomorrow.

Stay connected. Stay informed. Update your member information today.



CONNECT2First
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REFERRAL PROGRAM

NO COST TO JOIN
The Connect2First Referral Program is free for residential and business members.

BILL CREDIT REWARDS
Refer a residential member, and you'll both receive a \$20 bill credit. When a business refers another business, both receive one month of free internet service, up to a \$500 credit.

UNLIMITED REFERRALS. UNLIMITED SAVINGS.
There's no limit to how many people or businesses you can refer.

**CHECK OUT OUR
REFERRAL PROGRAM**





First Electric Cooperative



**WE WILL BE CLOSED MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7,
IN OBSERVANCE OF LABOR DAY.**

We wish all our members a safe and restful holiday!

Crews will be available in the event of an outage.
To report an electrical outage, call 800-489-7405 and select option 2;
to report a fiber outage, call 833-411-2234 and select option 2.



BRAD HARRISON
PRESIDENT/CEO

Harvest Ready

Look up, look around and stay safe

As the days grow shorter and combines begin rolling into the fields, we are reminded of the vital role agriculture plays in our communities. Sept. 21-25 is National Farm Safety & Health Week, and it is an opportunity to recognize the hard work of our farmers and ranchers while emphasizing an important message: A good harvest begins and ends with safety.

Farming is one of the most demanding and hazardous professions. Long hours, tight schedules and changing weather conditions can create pressure during harvest season. In the rush to get crops out of the field, it's easy to overlook potential dangers. That's why taking a few extra moments to stay aware of your surroundings can make all the difference.

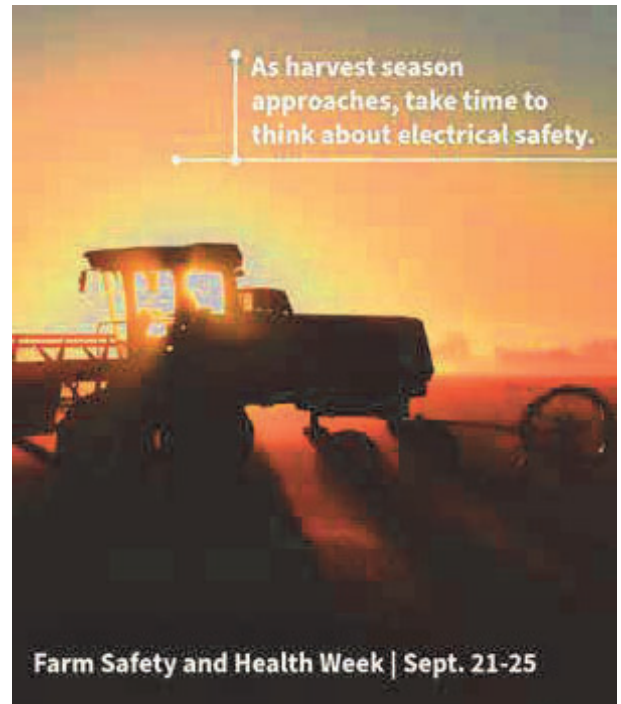
One of the most serious hazards on the farm is contact with power lines. Modern agricultural equipment is larger than ever, with combines, grain carts, sprayers and other machinery often extending high into the air. When moving equipment from field to field or operating near utility infrastructure, always look up and around before proceeding.

As harvest season approaches, here are a few important electrical safety reminders:

- **Watch for overhead power lines** when operating combines, tractors, grain augers and other tall equipment.
- **Look up before moving machinery** from one field to another or when entering storage buildings and work areas.
- **Keep all equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines.**
- **Be aware of your surroundings** and know where power lines are located before beginning work.
- **Never approach a downed power line.** Always assume the line is energized and dangerous.
- **Call 911 immediately** if equipment or a tractor contacts a power line, and stay inside the tractor until help arrives.
- **Use caution with stubble burns after harvest.** Keep fires well away from utility poles, guy wires and electrical equipment, and never burn when winds could carry flames toward utility infrastructure.

At Mississippi County Electric, safety is our top priority. We work year-round to provide reliable electricity to homes, businesses and farms, and we also believe education and awareness are critical tools in preventing accidents. By staying alert and following basic safety precautions, we can help ensure everyone returns home safely at the end of the day.

We're proud to power the farms that power our communities. Most importantly, we want every member of our farm families to stay safe this harvest season.



NRECA



Weather Wise

Prepare now for severe weather and power outages

From tornadoes and floods to lightning, high winds, extreme heat and cold, severe weather can cause destruction and power outages. Many people end up in dangerous situations because they think they can outrun or outsmart a storm, extreme temperatures or other hazardous conditions. Being prepared with supplies, a plan and safety knowledge can help protect you and your family.

Watch vs. warning

A **watch** means conditions are favorable for severe weather, such as a severe thunderstorm or tornado. Stay alert, monitor conditions and take precautionary steps, such as unplugging electronics and checking your emergency kit.

A **warning** means severe weather is occurring, is imminent or is indicated by radar. Take shelter immediately in the safest part of the building, such as a basement or an interior room on the lowest floor, away from windows.

Follow these tips to stay safe:

- If severe weather is approaching, fully charge your phone so you can track alerts and call for help if needed. Keep a charger in your vehicle, but only charge devices while the engine is running to avoid draining the car battery.
- Install a weather app and enable severe weather alerts.
- When the power is out, conserve your phone battery. Use airplane mode when you do not need service, turn off Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and GPS, dim your screen, use low-power mode or turn your phone off until needed.
- Have an evacuation plan for hazards such as floods or tornadoes.
- Establish a family communication plan, including each person's responsibilities and a meeting place in case you are separated.
- Keep emergency kits stocked and up to date. Include a first-aid kit, portable phone charger, flashlights, batteries, food, water and enough supplies to last at least three days.
- Use a generator only outdoors in an open area, never in a garage, carport or other enclosed space.
- Keep portable generators at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents.

Keep others safe

Everyone should do their part to help keep lineworkers and utility crews safe:

- Slow down and move over in work zones.
- Do not distract crews while they work.
- Direct service questions to your cooperative.
- Check your electric cooperative's social media channels or text alerts for outage updates, if available.
- Never plug a generator into a wall outlet. Doing so can cause backfeed, which sends electricity from your home back onto power lines.

Power outages, downed lines and generator misuse can create serious risks during and after severe weather. To learn more about keeping loved ones safe, visit SafeElectricity.org.



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Mississippi
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**Our office will
be closed for
Labor Day on
Monday, Sept. 7.**