

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: *Holland Bottom Farm in Cabot*

Since its establishment in 1982, Holland Bottom Farm, a family-owned farm in Cabot, has steadily expanded. What began as a 10-acre strawberry row-crop operation in 1982 has now grown to an impressive 30 acres.

Owners Tim and Leslie Odom — who took over the farm from Tim’s father, Larry, in 2016 — are dedicated to maintaining the farm’s legacy. They have transitioned from a you-pick operation to using cutting-edge technology, such as growing strawberries under black plastic, to ensure the highest quality strawberries for their customers.

Tim states that his biggest challenges are the weather and customer “lines” during the season. This speaks volumes since their clientele is not just local but ranges from Alaska to Louisiana. In Cabot, they are known for their strawberries, which they donate to Junior Auxiliary of Cabot who sponsors the Strawberry Festival. They also provide many other items that they grow or make themselves, such as fruits, vegetables, jams, local honey, homemade fudge, bread and much more.

You can even swing by in the summer and get their famous strawberry shortcake with homemade strawberry ice cream, which will have your taste buds screaming to return for seconds. They are open April to July 4 to allow employees time to rest during the hottest months and concentrate on what they do best — getting the ground ready to grow more strawberries! Depending on how well the production comes out, they start planting in late October and start picking their strawberries from mid-March to mid-April.

Managing 30 acres is a full-time job for the Odoms. From fertilization to watering, they work tirelessly to ensure the health and growth of their fruits. Their ultimate goal is to keep their customers happy, and they take pride in their ability to tend to them quickly and efficiently. The joy they derive from seeing their customers smile with their strawberries is their greatest reward.

“These strawberries are so famous that Dolly Parton had to try them for herself,” Tim said. “So, swing by and taste these delicious strawberries for yourself.”



Youth Tour: A Charged-Up Adventure!

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First Electric Cooperative is excited to select outstanding high school juniors for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Youth Tour. This all-expenses-paid educational trip will take place from June 14-20. Selected students will also have the chance to earn a \$5,000 scholarship.

What to expect:

- Tour the U.S. Capitol and meet your Congress members.
- Explore world-renowned museums like the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.
- Discover historic sites, monuments and memorials, including Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial.
- Build lifelong friendships with delegates from across the state and country.
- NEW this year: Visit the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall and more in Philadelphia!

For more information or to apply, visit firstelectric.coop/youth-tour. The deadline is March 7.



Outside factors that impact energy bills

February often brings some of the coldest weather of the year, leading to increased energy bills as heating systems work harder.

Several factors affect electricity usage and understanding them can help you save money. The First Electric app includes a summary of your electricity usage, showing spikes during colder days or when guests are over.

Fuel Prices

First Electric purchases electricity from Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC). The cost of generating and transmitting electricity varies due to fluctuations in fuel prices, such as natural gas. We collaborate with AECC to stabilize these costs for our members.

Extreme Weather

While we cannot control the weather, we analyze forecasts to prepare for increased electricity demand. Extreme temperatures can drive up prices due to higher energy consumption.

Infrastructure and Equipment

Members pay a monthly service availability charge to cover the costs of

equipment, materials, labor and daily operations. Maintaining the local grid, including power lines and substations, is essential for reliable service.

Energy Policies

Federal policies significantly impact electricity costs. As we move towards more intermittent energy sources and face stricter regulations, additional expenses can arise, which may be passed on to consumers.

You Have Control

Although many cost-influencing factors are out of our control, you can manage your energy use at home.

Set your thermostat to the lowest comfortable level, service your heating and cooling systems annually, and replace dirty filters as needed.

To reduce energy consumption, utilize off-peak periods for energy-intensive tasks, and seal air leaks around your home.

We remain dedicated to providing reliable power at an affordable cost. For more energy-saving tips, visit firstelectric.coop/energy-saving-tips.



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Energy bills ‘boil’ down to one thing – heat

BY MITCH ROSS

This pie chart can help people understand their energy bill and how different equipment contributes to the overall energy use in their home. It is very helpful for people to see what the big energy users are so that they can focus their efforts on reducing energy consumption in these categories.

Heating, cooling and water heaters are always top of the list for me when I’m helping someone lower their bill. Although 46% of the bill may be heating and cooling, 14% water heating, 13% appliances, and so on, if you add it up, nearly 100% of energy use “boils” down to one concept: heat.

The energy required to create or move heat directly impacts your energy bill!

How heat moves

Heating: Heat is either moved via a heat pump refrigeration cycle or created via a type of friction in electric resistance heat.

Cooling: Your air conditioner is also simply moving heat. Via a refrigerant cycle, heat is “picked up” from inside the home and transferred to the outside.

Water Heating: Heat is created via resistance or transferred via heat pump, typically to a tank of water.

Refrigerators: Heat is gathered from inside and moved out through a refrigeration cycle.

Appliances: From washing and drying clothes, washing dishes, cooking and so on, most of the energy consumed deals with creating or moving heat.

Other: Electronics such as lights, fans and plug-in devices typically consume more energy via heat as a byproduct than their actual intended uses.

Why dwell on this? Understanding this concept can help you adopt practices and solve problems that even an energy auditor might not pick up on in a visit to your home. For example, if you put hot food in a refrigerator, you are using energy to transfer that heat to the outside of the fridge. By simply waiting until it cools off, you would use less energy.

Also, if you use a lot of candles or candle warmers in the summer, you are paying extra on your bill to remove that created heat out of the home by way of the air conditioner. Doing these and other heat-creating activities, such as baking heavier dishes in the cooler months, will help reduce your annual energy use.

By focusing on the concept of heat, I’ve been able to find other creative ways to further lower my energy use, and my hope is that this focus can help you as well!

Mitch Ross is the energy efficiency manager for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas.

Energy Use Breakdown
(Based on average use per household)

