

# Alabama CURRENTS

January/February 2015

A Publication of the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority



Come Rock and Roll at  
Fairhope Mardi Gras festivities in February  
See Page 8



### Application deadline for AMEA Scholarship Program fast approaching

**T**ick, tick, tick. That's the sound of the clock ticking down to Monday, Feb. 2, when applications for the 2015 Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) Scholarship Program are due. Don't miss out on this wonderful opportunity to apply for monies for that college-bound student in your family.



Since 1992, AMEA and its Members have demonstrated our commitment to education by providing scholarships to the graduating high school seniors who receive their electric service from AMEA Members, including Alexander City, Dothan, Fairhope, LaFayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Riviera Utilities (Foley), Sylacauga and Tuskegee. Granted only to graduating high school seniors, the student must attend a four-year college or community college within the state of Alabama.

Each year, AMEA and its 11 Member cities make available 33, \$2,500 scholarships, which include regular and technical school scholarships.

We encourage students who qualify to visit the AMEA web site, [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Scholarship Program, and download one of the scholarship applications. Applications are also available at all schools in AMEA Member cities and at Member city/utility offices.

We have found a little help can have a big impact over time. Through such initiatives as the AMEA Scholarship Program, AMEA and its Members are helping enrich the lives of students throughout the state, and the benefits of this program will have a long, lasting effect.

We take our role as a good corporate citizen seriously. That's why we, along with our Members, support education initiatives that contribute to making our state economically competitive. Together, we can all help the next generation of leaders by giving them the support and experiences they need today to make sound decisions in the future.

Don't let the scholarship application deadline pass you by this year.

Here's wishing you a wonderful 2015!

*Lisa Miller*

AMEA Manager of Communications and Marketing

## Apply for the 2015 Scholarship Program

Will you be graduating from high school in the spring of 2015? Do you receive your electricity from a public power utility in Alabama? Then if your answer to these questions is "yes," you could be eligible to receive a scholarship from the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) and its 11 Member cities/utilities.

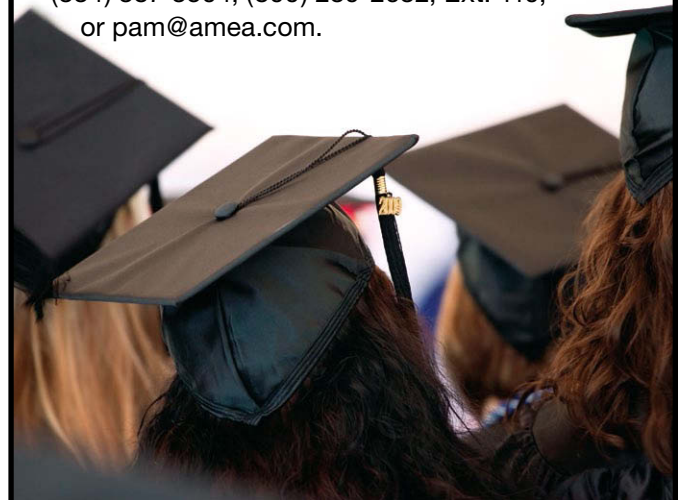
Since 1992, AMEA and its Members (Alexander City, Dothan, Fairhope, Foley-Riviera Utilities, LaFayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opelika, Piedmont, Sylacauga and Tuskegee) have provided scholarships to area high school seniors through the AMEA Scholarship Program. Scholarships, totaling approximately \$82,500, were awarded in the 2014 program.

Each year, AMEA and its Members make available 33, \$2,500 scholarships, which include regular and technical school scholarships. To be eligible for either of AMEA's scholarships, a student's family must receive electric service from a Member's electric utility and the student must attend an Alabama college or university.

Applications are currently available from school counselors in these Member cities, or you can go online to the AMEA web site, [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Scholarship Program.

Applications are reviewed and winners are selected by an independent panel of Montgomery area college guidance personnel. **Application deadline is Monday, Feb. 2, 2015.**

For more information on the program, contact your school counselor or Pamela Poole, AMEA's Scholarship Program Coordinator, (334) 387-3504, (800) 239-2632, Ext. 110, or [pam@amea.com](mailto:pam@amea.com).



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P.O. Box 5220  
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804 South Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

[www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com)

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## MISSION STATEMENT

AMEA's mission is to provide for our Member communities a reliable and economical source of electric power, enabling them to preserve and enhance the benefits of municipal utility ownership for their citizens and the electric customers they serve. We strive to offer services that our Members need and can adapt to provide the best value for their communities and customers.

# Alabama CURRENTS

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## On the Cover

*"Laissez les  
bon temps  
roullez."*



**Let the Good Times  
Roll, Fairhope style!**

The City of Fairhope is gearing up for the 2015 Mardi Gras season with numerous activities in the month of February. Come enjoy the beautiful colorful floats, manned by masked riders in costumes. Lady Marshals will be on horseback. Lots of "throws" and treats for everyone. Thousands of people will line the streets of downtown Fairhope for this year's festivities.

Be prepared to "Shake, Rattle & Roll" with the City of Fairhope's Mardi Gras season. See Page 8 for more information on this year's celebration.

# Prepare for a warm and energy-efficient winter

This time last year, Americans in two dozen states from the Midwest to the Southeast and Northeast experienced bone-chilling temperatures courtesy of a distorted polar vortex. Much of the United States plunged into a deep freeze from record low temperatures.

Like me, I'm sure you had to pay higher energy bills due to this unwelcome visitor. All of us felt the "sticker shock" with our January 2014 energy bills.

November 2014 also brought some unusual cold temperatures our way. We quickly went from summer to winter in a short time.

The choices we make about how we use energy — turning machines off when we're not using them or choosing to buy energy efficient appliances — impact our environment and our lives. There are many things we can do to use less energy and use it more wisely. These things involve energy conservation and energy efficiency.

What you do now can have a huge impact on your electricity bill and how well your home will be overall prepared to face the season challenges. The more you do about energy efficiency, the better.

The Alabama Municipal Electric Authority (AMEA) is not only committed to providing for our Member communities a reliable and economical source of electric power, we are also committed to helping our Members' customers with low-cost strategies that can reduce your home energy bill year round. In fact, we provide many energy-efficiency tips and resources for you on our web site, [www.amea.com](http://www.amea.com), Energy Efficiency.

Here are some general tips on how to make your home energy efficient for the cold months to come. Think about what your home can use and go for it.

- Reduce heating and cooling needs by investing in insulation and weatherization products. Warm air leaking into your home in summer and out of your home in winter can waste a lot of energy. Insulation wraps your house in a nice warm blanket, but air can still leak in or out through small cracks. Often the effect of small leaks is the same as keeping a door wide open. One of the easiest money-saving measures you can do is caulk, seal, and weather-strip all the cracks to the outside. You can save 10 percent or more on your energy bill by stopping the air leaks in your home.
- About one-third of a typical home's heat loss occurs through the doors and windows. Energy-efficient doors



are insulated and seal tightly to prevent air from leaking through or around them. If your doors are in good shape and you don't want to replace them, make sure they seal tightly and have door sweeps at the bottom to prevent air leaks. Installing insulated storm doors provides an additional barrier to leaking air. Most homes have many more windows than doors. Replacing older windows with new energy-efficient ones can reduce air leaks and utility bills. The best windows shut tightly and are constructed of two or more pieces of glass separated by a gas that does not conduct heat well. If you cannot replace older windows, there are several things you can do to make them more energy efficient. First, caulk any cracks around the windows and make sure they seal tightly. Add storm windows or sheets of clear plastic to the outside to create additional air barriers. You can also hang insulated drapes on the inside — during the winter, open them on sunny days and close them at night. During the summer, close them during the day to keep out the sun.

- Appliances account for about 20 percent of a typical household's energy use, with refrigerators, clothes washers and dryers at the top of the list. When shopping for new appliances, you should think of two price tags. The first one is the purchase price. The second price tag is the cost of operating the appliance during its lifetime. You'll be paying that second price tag on your utility bill every month for the next 10 to 20 years, depending on the appliance. Many energy-efficient appliances cost more to buy, but save money in lower energy costs. Over the life of an appliance, an energy-efficient model is always a better deal. When you shop for a new appliance, look for the ENERGY STAR label — your assurance that the product saves energy. ENERGY STAR appliances have been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy as the most energy-efficient products in their classes.
- Water heating is the third largest energy expense in your home. It typically accounts for about 14 percent of your utility bill. Heated water is used for showers, baths, laundry, dishwashing and general cleaning. There are four ways to cut your water heating bills—use less hot water, turn down the thermostat on your water heater, insulate your water heater and pipes, and buy a new, more efficient water heater.

You have the power to control your energy bill. By consuming electricity wisely in your home or business, you become part of the solution to cope with higher energy costs.

I wish you a very happy 2015!

*Fred Clark*

AMEA President & CEO



## Happy New Year and the winner is...

In the last issue, I challenged you to prepare a list of all the ways that you can use electricity in a house. Well, a lady named Jeannette, who is a customer of Riviera Utilities, won the contest by submitting a list that contained the most items. By doing so, Jeannette received a nice Christmas gift. Her list contained over 100 ways that we use that wonderful product called electricity. I started a similar list several years ago and my list now contains over 150 items, and every few weeks, I will find another item to add to the list.

Here is a portion of her list in no particular order: range exhaust fan, food mixer, hot plate, toaster, microwave, range/oven, crock pot, garage door opener, hand mixer, garbage disposal, refrigerator, dishwasher, freezer, coffee maker, ceiling lights x 20, vacuum cleaner, computer, printer, phones, chargers x 10, televisions and recorders, copy machine, bath light and exhaust, hair dryer, curling iron, water heater, clothes washer and dryer, iron, radio, clocks, alarm system, door bell, furnace, air conditioner, fans x 5, lawn sprinkler system, dehumidifier, saws, drills and other tools x 10.

You get the idea. You might enjoy seeing how many items that you can add to her list, but the exact number is not what's important. What is important, and amazing, is how many things we do with this product called electricity, and we pretty much just take it for granted. I think it is fair to say that it is a mostly all-electric world and it would be very difficult to live without it. Actually, about the only negative thing that we can say about electricity is that we have to pay to use it.

Electricity is such a good value. Think about it. We can keep our house comfortable, have hot water for our bathing, lighting as needed, a television to watch football, and many other conveniences every day for about the same price as a fast food lunch. What a bargain!

I, for one, appreciate those in the electric utility business who make it possible. But even I, as you, would like lower electric bills. I do not think that we should take it for granted that we will always have affordable electricity for our homes. In any event, it is beneficial for all of us to not waste our natural resources. That can be done by practicing conservation and energy efficiency and that is what this column has been about for the last six years. I know that many have been helped and we will continue to help in 2015.

As always, you can call me at my office, (501) 653-7931, if you have any questions about energy efficiency.

Thanks to all and to all a good night... Oops...I mean a Happy New Year to you all. See you in March.

P. S. A lady named Sue, who is a customer of Opelika Power Services, prepared a list that contained almost as many items as the first place winner. Since I was still in the Christmas spirit, Sue also received a nice gift.

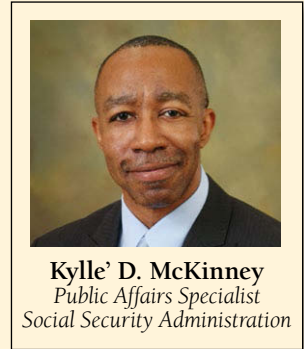
*Doug Rye, an Arkansas architect, is known as the 'King of Caulk and Talk' and 'America's Energy Expert.' Doug has helped thousands of homeowners save money on their power bills. He hosts the popular "Home Remedies" radio talk program, which has been on the air for 15 years in 14 states. Doug speaks annually at American Institute of Architects meetings to hundreds of other architects on energy efficiency. He conducts over 150 energy-saving seminars per year all across the U.S. Have a question for Doug? Contact him at (501) 653-7931 or [www.dougray.com](http://www.dougray.com).*



**Doug Rye**  
Host – "Home Remedies"  
Radio Talk Show

## Ring in the New Year with a COLA

Happy New Year from Social Security! Put down the champagne and ring in the New Year with a COLA. And we don't mean the soda.



**Kyle D. McKinney**  
Public Affairs Specialist  
Social Security Administration

In 2015, nearly 64 million Americans who receive Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) will receive a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase to their monthly benefit payments of 1.7 percent.

The average monthly Social Security benefit for a retired worker in 2015 is \$1,328 (up from \$1,306 in 2014). The average monthly Social Security benefit for a disabled worker in 2015 is \$1,165 (up from \$1,146 in 2014).

For people who receive SSI, the maximum federal payment amount increased to \$733 (up from \$721 in 2014).

Other Social Security changes in 2015 are also worth noting. For example, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security payroll tax will increase to \$118,500 (up from \$117,000 in 2014). A worker will earn one credit toward Social Security coverage after paying taxes on \$1,220 in earnings in 2015 (up from \$1,200 in 2014). As a reminder, eligibility for retirement benefits still requires 40 credits (usually about 10 years of work).

Information about Medicare changes for 2015 is available at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

The Social Security Act outlines how the COLA is calculated. To read more about the COLA, please visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/cola](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/cola).

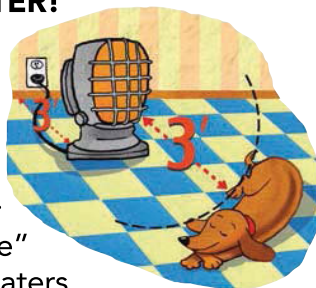
To learn more about other changes in 2015, read our fact sheet at [www.socialsecurity.gov/news/press/factsheets/cola-facts2015.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/news/press/factsheets/cola-facts2015.html).

# Heating Safety

There is something about the winter months and curling up with a good book by the fireplace. But did you know that heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fire deaths? With a few simple safety tips and precautions you can prevent most heating fires from happening.

## BE WARM AND SAFE THIS WINTER!

- »»» Keep anything that can burn at least three-feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- »»» Have a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.
- »»» Never use your oven to heat your home.
- »»» Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer’s instructions.
- »»» Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
- »»» Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- »»» Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.
- »»» Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.
- »»» Test smoke alarms monthly.



## Heating Equipment Smarts

**Install** wood burning stoves following manufacturer’s instructions or have a professional do the installation. All fuel-burning equipment should be vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

**Install** and maintain CO alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning. If you **smell** gas in your gas heater, do not light the appliance. Leave the home immediately and call your local fire department or gas company.



## FACT

Half of home heating fires are reported during the months of **December, January, and February.**



Your Source for **SAFETY** Information

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[www.nfpa.org/education](http://www.nfpa.org/education)



## WATTS NEW IN Alexander City

### City of Alexander City prepares for paving of streets

By Tracy Kendrick

**W**ith the help of the Alexander City Road Improvement Program (ACRIP), the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (ATRIP), and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants, paving will soon begin in Alexander City. All three programs will help provide the funding to pave our local city streets.

ACRIP is funded by the recently revised sales tax ordinance that increased the city sales tax by a half percent. ACRIP funds will be utilized for improvements on roads, culverts and bridges. ACRIP is a four-year program that will be re-evaluated by the City Council in 2018. According to Amanda Thomas, Public Works Administrative Assistant, paving will start as early as late spring or early summer of 2015.

ATRIP is a grant that is funded 80 percent by the state and 20 percent by the City. This program is responsible for repairing and restructuring roadway infrastructure. The first part of ATRIP is complete. Coley Creek, Sunnylevel Cutoff and Scott Road were all completed under the first portion of ATRIP. Washington Street, Lee Street, Comer Street, Coven Abbett Road, Hillabee Street, a Scott Road Bridge, Sportplex Bridge and Parrish Street Bridge (proposed for possible removal because of budget constraints) are all included in ATRIP 3. Combined with ATRIP funding, the City received approximately \$6.5 million.

The Broad Street parking lot will also be repaved by funding provided to the City through a TAP grant from the Alabama Department of Transportation.

*Tracy Kendrick is Administrative Assistant for the City of Alexander City Light and Power.*

**TO REPORT AN OUTAGE IN ALEXANDER CITY:**  
Day Time (256) 409-2080,  
After Hours/Holidays – Call Police Dept. (256) 234-3421  
Please do not call 911

## WATTS NEW IN Dothan

### City of Dothan takes a proactive approach to water well management

By Lindsay McDonald

**T**he City of Dothan continues to take a proactive approach to meeting the water supply needs through an on-going program developed to minimize emergency repairs to the potable water production wells. This program reviews the operational parameters of each well and sets a goal of inspecting the pumping equipment on a 10-year cycle.

The City of Dothan water system consists of 34 potable water production wells that withdraw water from three formations, 14 water storage tanks, and over 600 miles of water mains. The water mains range in size from two to 24 inches.

The City of Dothan Commission provides funding for this program within the Dothan Utilities budget, and just recently, approved the scheduled rehabilitation of five water production wells by a municipal well repair company.

“The Water Production Well Program, along with the funding provided by the City of Dothan Commission, has dramatically reduced water production well equipment failures thus providing better customer service,” according to Dothan Utilities Director Billy Mayes

Through this preventative maintenance program, Dothan Utilities can track operating characteristics such as production flows, static and pumping water levels, previous repairs and well failures. With this information, Dothan Utilities can better protect its infrastructure and the groundwater source and ensure a

dependable, affordable supply of groundwater for Dothan customers for many years to come.

*Lindsay McDonald is a civil engineer with the City of Dothan.*



## 2015 Fairhope Mardi Gras plans are well underway

By D. Fran Morley

Comic book fans of all ages will not want to miss this year's "Knight to Marvel" parade from KOER, the Knights of Ecor Rouge. Their parade takes to the streets of downtown on Saturday, Feb. 7, with five permanent floats, a dozen themed floats, and at least six bands. Themed floats this year include Spiderman, Captain America, Hulk, Ironman, Thor, Wolverine, and Ghost Rider. High school marching bands from Fairhope, Spanish Fort, Bay Minette, Robertsedale, and Atmore, plus the Olympia Brass Band, will have parade watchers clapping along with the music.

Next up is a "Sweet Treats" parade from the Maids of Jubilee (MOJ) on Friday, Feb. 13. Along with their parade marshals on horseback and three permanent floats, the ladies of MOJ present sweets-themed floats, including Pop Tarts and Pastries, Lollypops and Lemon Drops, Hershey's Kisses, Cake and Ice Cream, Tupelo Honey, Candy Canes and Peppermints, and Sugar Cookies & Lemonade. The Foley High School Steel Drum Band and marching bands from Fairhope and Robertsedale High Schools complete the night's lineup.

Fairhope's Mardi Gras season will "Shake, Rattle & Roll" as it comes to a close on Monday, Feb. 16 with the parade from the Order of Mystic Magnolias. According to a OOMM masker, the night will have a 50s theme — "and fun 50s outfits, like from the musical Grease" — with floats titled Jailhouse Rock, At the Hop, Tutti Frutti, Let's Bowl Tonight, Rydell High, Stranded at the Drive-In, and Rosie's Diner, plus the OOMM permanent floats. Bands will include the Fairhope favorite, Doc Rogers and the Rock Dodgers.



All three of the evening parades start at 6:45 p.m. and begin and end at the Fairhope Civic Center with a route throughout the downtown area.

Fairhope's only walking parade, the Mystic Mutts of Revelry, features "Superheroes to the Rescue" on Saturday, Feb. 7. Registration for walkers and their dogs starts at 10:30 a.m. at the Fairhoper's Community Park and the parade begins at 1 p.m. with a new route around the Faulkner State College campus and back to the park. Last year, the parade featured more than 550 walkers and dogs of every breed. It benefits The Haven, Fairhope's no-kill shelter.

For information on taking part or on being a parade sponsor, visit [www.havenforanimals.org](http://www.havenforanimals.org).

*D. Fran Morley is a contributing writer for the City of Fairhope.*



# WATTS NEW IN LaFayette

## City of LaFayette Electric Department makes improvements to substations

By Chris Busby

The City of LaFayette's power grid is a lot more reliable and efficient these days. The City normally employs two substations for distributing power, but for the past four years, only one of those stations has been online.

In 2010, Substation 1 suffered significant damage when a squirrel climbed up a structure and then onto the main substation circuit breaker. At this point, the squirrel made contact between the breaker's metal structure and an energized conductor. This "path to ground" is referred to as a "phase to ground fault." Due to the time required to clear this kind of fault that is typically seen when an animal makes contact with electrically energized equipment, it caused one of the switches to burn which, in turn, caused an outage. As a result, all power distribution had to be moved over to and handled by Substation 2.

Substation 2 is actually two substations in one, but handling the City's entire load put a strain on the system and LaFayette Electric Department employees.

"It limits you when you start having outages," said Electric Department Superintendent Randy Norred. "They are lengthy because we have to search so much area due to it all being on one substation."

Those problems may be a thing of the past now that, after four years, Substation 1 is back online. There were several factors involved in the delay, most notably personnel changes within the electric department. Norred has worked since his arrival in December 2011 to get the substation operational and he credits



Substation 1



Substation 2

members of his department, the LaFayette City Council's Utility Committee, and other department heads for helping to make it a reality.

The city contracted with Floyd Service Company of Auburn to repair Substation 1. The process included testing all transformers and breakers, reworking all settings, replacing damaged insulators, and adjusting switches. A crack in one of the regulator insulators was also repaired.

With the substation back online, the City has three more circuits to utilize in the power grid.

Norred outlined several benefits already manifesting because of the repairs.

"Outage times are reduced and they are less widespread," he said. "We also don't have to use as much personnel because it's easier to locate the cause of

the outage."

The use of two substations doesn't significantly reduce energy loading, but it does split up the load carried at each location, making it less likely for one of the substations to overload.

Another positive that arose out of this situation is that Substation 2 is now actually more reliable than it was when Substation 1 malfunctioned. This is because several new relays and other equipment were installed at Substation 2.

With Substation 1 now fully functional, Norred says that improvements still will be made to both substations to increase efficiency.

"The good thing now is that we can make these repairs without disrupting power," he said.

Chris Busby is a staff writer for *The LaFayette Sun*.

# WATTS NEW IN **Lanett**



## **City of Lanett plans numerous projects in 2015**

By Wayne Clark

**T**he City of Lanett will be taking on a number of tasks in 2015, some of them routine matters that can be done in the short term and some of them more of the big picture type that will take some time to complete.

“There are a lot of projects we plan to work on this year,” said Mayor Oscar Crawley. “We will be running a sewer line to some homes on Azalea Drive and we’ll be doing some paving at locations in the City that need it.”

Early in the year, the Lanett Police Department will be getting two new interceptor SUVs and 10 car camera systems to go inside patrol cars. According to Chief Angie Spates, the cost of these items will be covered by a matching grant. The federal government will be picking up 51 percent of the cost with the city being responsible for 49 percent.

Some major projects being addressed by the City this year involve a major upgrade at the wastewater treatment plant and land acquisitions involved in some major improvements at the Lanett Municipal Airport.

The upgrades at the sewage plant will likely cost in the \$500,000 range. The building is approximately 100 years old and was built by the West Point Manufacturing Company to treat runoffs into the Chattahoochee River from Lanett Mill, Lanett Bleachery & Dye Works and the nearby town.

The first phase of this project involves the installation of two clarifiers. This will cost approximately \$226,000 and should be completed by March 2015. A new office area and a new lab are being built. Dixie Painting and Sandblasting of Andalusia, AL is working on the project at the current time.

The most ambitious project being undertaken by the city involves plans to have a major expansion at the city airport. The principal goal is to build a new 4,400-foot runway. It will cross the existing 3,300-foot runway and should be long enough for corporate jets and express carriers such as UPS and Federal Express to land.

Most of the land needed for this project has been purchased. The final closings for a 294-acre site are expected to take place early in the year. What’s at stake is a \$13 million project with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) picking up the lion’s share of the cost.

Crawley credits U.S. Senator Richard Shelby for doing great work in Congress on behalf of the City in this project. “With Republicans now being in the majority in the Senate, that could help us even more with this,” he said.

Plans call for a new access road to be built to the airport. It would branch off of Phillips Road near Exit 77 off I-85 near the Boom City! fireworks building. This would provide much more rapid access from the interstate than the present entrance off Cusseta Road in the Huguley community.

At present, there are 10 t-hangars rented at the airport and a maintenance hangar that can be used to house more planes, if needed. The long-range plans call for more hangars to be built.

“We have a waiting list of people who want to rent space at the airport,” Building Inspector Jerry Thrower said. “The new runway will be long enough for small jets and commercial planes to land. Express carriers could land there as well.”

Thrower says that access to rapid transport is huge for today’s industry. “Today’s plants don’t keep supply rooms like we did with the mills,” he said. “They have parts they need flown in.”

When the 4,400-foot runway is built, the existing runway will remain for taxiing purposes. There will be ample property on the site to expand it up to 6,500 feet, if the FAA approves. They usually do this in 500-foot increments.

The present runways in LaGrange and Opelika are 5,500 feet.

“Sen. Shelby has helped us tremendously with this project,” Mayor Crawley said. “We hope to have more support from Congress on this now. Originally, we were looking at a \$25 million project with a new terminal. That’s still possible in the future. The more influence Sen. Shelby has in Congress, the better for us, and he’s been a big booster of this project from day one. He’s been very successful in expanding airports all over Alabama. Several years ago, he came up with a \$5 million earmark to help us get it kicked off.”

“I feel good about our airport project and its potential,” Mayor Crawley added.

He also credits a local attorney, Larry Nix, on having done great work in taking care of lots of tiny details in this very complicated procedure to make sure it’s within FAA rules.

Lanett operates on an annual budget of around \$15 million. Part of that helps support a city school system. The city government has approximately 100 employees and has such departments as a police department, a fire/EMS department, and recreation, street, water/gas and recreation departments.

In addition to the mayor, the city has a five-member council that includes Jamie Heard, Rebecca Looser, Kyle McCoy, Shirley Motley, and Stanley Roberts.

*Wayne Clark is the news editor of The Valley Times-News in Lanett.*



## Construction on Oak Bowery Road Bridge in Opelika underway

By Jan Gunter

**D**uring the second week of December, the City of Opelika and its contractor closed a portion of Oak Bowery Road to all through traffic for the removal and replacement of the bridge located between Blackhawk Drive and Cannon Gate Drive.

Detour routes begin at both Northgate Drive and Collinwood Street intersections for all through traffic with clearly marked signage at the first set of barricades. Motorists shouldn't have any problems following these routes, although the city would caution you that some of the detour routes are in residential areas, so please drive with caution. Local traffic (i.e. residents living along Oak Bowery Road beyond the Northgate Drive and Collinwood Streets, respectively), will be allowed through the first set of barricades. A second set of barricades have been established at the points right before the bridge area past Cannon Gate Drive and Blackhawk Drive where all traffic is prohibited. There will be no ability to cross this closed bridge area due to the construction process. Motorists are urged to use extreme caution while driving close to these areas of construction and detour; and parents, please alert your teen drivers to the dangers of driving in this area as well.

The City anticipates the Oak Bowery Bridge project to take between six and seven months to complete, with the re-opening of the entire roadway to happen sometime around the end of June. For more information regarding this road closure and the bridge construction, feel free to call the Opelika City Engineer's office at (334) 705-5450.

### Dates in February at the SportsPlex you will want to save

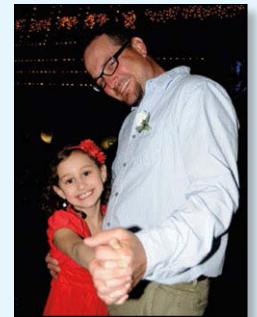
Even though the Christmas holidays and all of its festivities are over, you need not fret. Opelika's Parks and Recreation is still planning lots of fun for folks of all ages. Below are some upcoming dates you just might want to keep in mind:

- **Feb. 12, Young at Heart Valentine Dance** (ages 50+). The fun begins at 6 p.m. with dinner. The dance begins at 7 p.m. and goes until 8:30 p.m. Admission is \$15 for singles and \$25 for couples. Reservations are required by Feb. 1.



- **Feb. 13, Friday Night Drop-In Sweetheart Dance.** The fun begins at 7 p.m. and goes until 9:30 p.m. The Opelika SportsPlex and Aquatics Center is decorated and transformed into a balloon-filled wonderland so that sixth, seventh and eighth graders, dressed in their Sunday best, can come out for a night of music, dancing and fun. A king and his court will be selected by Friday Night Drop-In members and presented at the dance. Special musical entertainment is provided by OZZ. Girls invite that special guy. Open to Drop-In Members only. Admission is \$5 for singles and \$8 for couples. Optional picture packages, \$8.

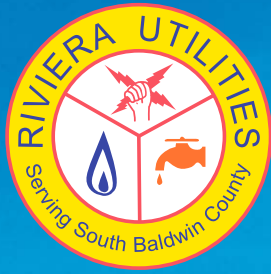
- **Feb. 14, Dandy Dads Dinner Dance.** The fun begins at 6 p.m. and goes until 8 p.m. It's a special night out for fathers and daughters of all ages and includes an evening of dining, dancing and fun. There is limited seating, so reservations are required. Opelika Parks and Recreation is pleased to offer this opportunity for fathers and daughters to spend time together in such a special way. It is heartwarming to watch girls of all ages creating treasured memories with their Dads. Many fathers escort two or three daughters and they all enjoy the moment. The musical entertainment for the evening is OZZ.



He makes Dads who think they can't dance into disco stars for the night with his creative instruction. Laughter abounds as they sing and dance to YMCA and Cha-Cha Slide. Yet the dancers grow quiet at the evening's end when Butterfly Kisses is played and each father realizes that in the blink of an eye his little girl will be grown. Admission is \$30 per couple with an extra \$5 for each additional daughter. The price includes a meal, a corsage and boutonniere, and all kinds of fun activities. There is an optional picture package for \$8. That package includes two, 5 x 7s and four wallet-size photos.

*Jan Gunter is Community Relations Specialist for the City of Opelika.*

# WATTS NEW AT Riviera Utilities



## **Riviera Utilities works hard to provide low-cost, reliable electricity**

By Miles McDaniel

The electric industry is facing a very challenging time. Our country's demand for electricity is at an all-time high and getting even higher with each passing day. Population growth and greater use of computers, electronic products, and home entertainment items have contributed to rising demand.

To deal with forecasted demand increases, many utilities are finding it necessary to increase investments in transmission and generating facilities to bring the power to customers. The cost of building generating facilities has increased substantially because of rising costs of raw materials and strong competition for engineering services, skilled labor, and key parts. The cost of fossil fuels (coal, natural gas and oil) used to generate electricity and the cost to take the by-products out of the air (carbon) has increased significantly and in turn has led to an increase in the cost of generating electricity.

The cost our customers pay for electricity reflects the price that Riviera Utilities pays for the electricity we provide. We are continuously working hard to keep prices down to help our customers save on their electricity bills.

Riviera Utilities also works closely with our national trade association, the American Public Power Association, to ensure we have policies that put customers first and ensure a stable supply of electricity while protecting the environment. Since two thirds of public power systems do not generate their own electricity, and instead buy it on the wholesale market for distribution to their customers, securing competitively priced and reliable wholesale power is a priority. We ask for your continued support as we work to keep prices as low as possible while providing you with reliable power.

As a customer, you can also help keep your bills as low as possible by conserving electricity and making your home more efficient. Some easy ways to save money on your bill include turning lights, appliances, and electronics off when not in use; replacing incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs; installing a programmable thermostat; and weatherizing your home.

Here are some energy-efficiency tips to help protect the environment and save on utility expenses:

- Set your thermostat at 68 degrees in the winter.
- Get a yearly checkup for your home heating system.
- Install low-flow showerheads and sink aerators to reduce hot water use.
- Look for the ENERGY STAR® label when buying new products such as televisions, refrigerators, dishwashers, washers and dryers, and even cell phones.
- Check your furnace or air filter each month, and clean or replace it as needed.
- Lower the temperature on your water heater to 130 degrees.

Check out our website, [www.rivierautilities.com](http://www.rivierautilities.com), to find additional energy-saving tips to help you maximize your energy dollars.

Riviera Utilities' mission is to continuously provide you with high quality, reliable service and value, while constantly striving to improve ourselves and the communities we serve.

*Miles McDaniel is Manager of Public Affairs for Riviera Utilities.*

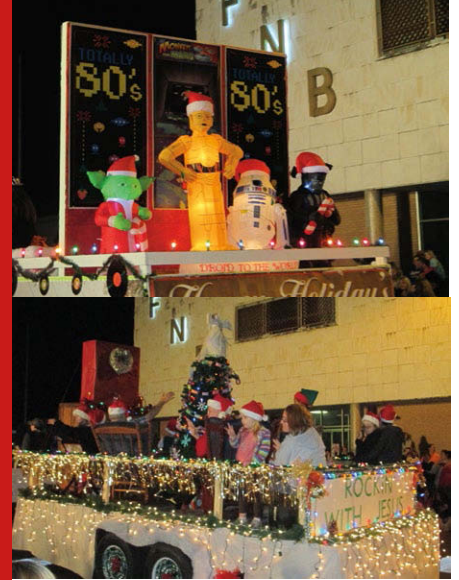




## WATTS NEW IN **Sylacauga**

### *Sylacauga goes retro for Christmas parade*

By Christa Jennings



**S**ylacauga residents and those from surrounding areas came out in droves to line the streets of downtown and enjoy the city's Christmas parade, with flashbacks to characters and toys from days past.

The theme for the 36th annual parade was "Retro Rockin' Christmas," with many participants stepping up to the plate to make it a true retro event.

From Sesame Street characters and Star Wars' favorites proclaiming "Droid to the World" to giant Rubik's cubes and disco, the crowd was able to enjoy sights from the past during the almost hour-long parade.

Four area high school marching bands from B.B. Comer, Fayetteville, Childersburg and Sylacauga performed holiday tunes intermittently. The city's two schools, Sylacauga and B.B. Comer, alternate placement each year, and this year, Comer performed at the front of the parade while Sylacauga marched in front of the jolly old elf himself, Santa Claus.

There were approximately 50 units in the parade this year, with each unit consisting of multiple individuals. In addition to the decorative and festive floats, parade participants also included approximately 25 horses and 40 motorcycles.

Coosa Valley Medical Center led the parade as the grand marshal this year, followed by Mayor Doug Murphree and the City Council showing their Christmas spirit on a float.

Five awards were given in recognition of various floats that exemplified this year's theme and showed true Christmas spirit.

The grand prize of Outstanding Theme Award was given to Omya for its Sesame Street float, featuring numerous decorations and popular characters such as Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Ernie, Oscar the Grouch and Count von Count.

Nemak won the President's Award, coming in first place with a disco-themed float featuring Elvis, dancers and disco balls.

Home Depot won the Grand Marshal's Award as second place for its 80s-themed float featuring Rubik's cubes, Star Wars characters, Pac-Man and more.

The Chairman's Award for third place was awarded to Sylacauga Karate School. Its float included a young Elvis impersonator complete with a band performing "Blue Christmas."

Fourth place, which is the Sylacauga Business Association Award, was awarded to the First Church of the Nazarene for its "Rockin' with Jesus" float which included participants relaxing in rocking chairs around a Christmas tree.

Coming in fifth place with the Bleacher and Shirley Johnston Spirit of Christmas Award was the Animal Rescue Foundation, or ARF, of Sylacauga.

Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Carol Bates said that the award was named in honor of a couple who truly embodied the Christmas spirit. She recalled that Bleacher Johnston was Santa Claus, telling how he would sit on his porch during the holiday season, and children would line up to see him.

The Sylacauga Christmas parade is a big event every year, with a large crowd gathering early and large groups of people crowding in to line the streets downtown to watch the parade. Additionally, the parade is televised statewide, being aired live, as well as being shown again during the holiday season.

"The parade went so well," Bates said. "The Rotary Club's project this year was to help with the parade, and they did. We had a lot of support and appreciate everyone."

The Sylacauga parade is held the first Tuesday of each December, meaning next year's parade will be held Dec. 1. Bates said the theme will be "Favorite Christmas Memories."

*Christa Jennings is the senior staff reporter at The Coosa County News in Rockford.*

# WATTS NEW AT Utilities Board of Tuskegee



*Carver's Coastal Kitchen at George Washington Carver Commemorative Festival in Tuskegee*

## *Carver's Coastal Kitchen helps promote food history*

By Deborah Gray

**C**arver's Coastal Kitchen is a dynamic legacy preservation initiative of the Tuskegee History Center. Developed to promote the food history of George Washington Carver, who well known for his association and work with peanuts. He spent considerable time working with a wide array of foods. As leader of the Tuskegee Agricultural Experiment Station, during his 40-year career at Tuskegee University, Carver generated 44 bulletins. Many of Carver's bulletins, designed to help poor farmers and their families improve their living conditions, included recipes.

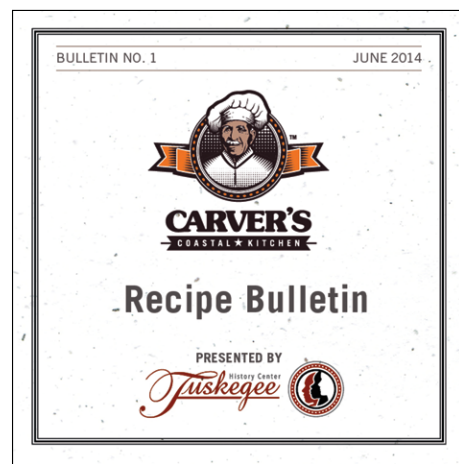
A creation of Carver's Coastal Kitchen is a new recipe bulletin which includes updated versions of Carver's previously published tomato and seafood dish recipes. This bulletin of old and new recipes features easily accessible Alabama Gulf Coast seafood as the main ingredient for brunch, lunch or dinner meals. Always cooking in Carver's Coastal Kitchen—a website, a pop-up outdoor festival and exhibit booth display, cook booklet, and a CD. The CD, produced by local musician Bill Perry, includes a unique, original musical rendition of a special Carver inspired seafood dish, along with 1940s and 1950s radio drama broadcasts on the life of George Washington Carver.

Carver's Coastal Kitchen, with its seafood variety of shrimp, crab, oyster, and fish, is quickly becoming the preferred catering menu choice for groups visiting the Tuskegee History Center. Recently, Carver's Coastal Kitchen dishes were presented at a reception of local community leaders welcoming Tuskegee University President Brian Johnson to his new, sweet home, Alabama.

For recipes and more information about Carver's Coastal Kitchen, visit [www.carverscoastalkitchen.org](http://www.carverscoastalkitchen.org)

For more information about the Tuskegee History Center, also known as the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center, a history museum designed to preserve, promote and protect the rich history of Tuskegee and Macon County, see [www.tuskegeecenter.org](http://www.tuskegeecenter.org), or call (334) 724-0800.

*Deborah Gray is the managing director of the Tuskegee History Center.*



*Cook Booklet and CD Cover*



# Places to Go & Things to Do

## Alexander City

**Adelia M. Russell Library and Mamie's Place Children's Library.** Library Wonderland the entire month of January celebrating Lewis Carroll's classic tale *Alice in Wonderland*.

**Register at the library** for a chance to win a pair of tickets for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's production of *Alice in Wonderland* on Saturday, Feb. 7 at 2 p.m. There will also be drawings to win a free copy of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. For more information, call (256) 329-6796.

**Senior Activity Center.** See all the senior activities planned for January and February at <http://www.acpr.me/senior-activity-center.php>.

**Jan. 8 and Feb. 12, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., RECYCLE Electronics.** Public Works Department behind Darwin Dobbs. CE&E Solutions will be accepting electronics for recycling and they are ADEM certified. Contact Sabrina Wood at (334) 429-8832 or Amanda Thomas at (256) 409-2020. Sponsored by the City of Alexander City and the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership.

## Fairhope

**Jan. 17, 7 p.m., 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Dogwood Trail Pageant and Scholarship Program.** Fairhope Civic Center. The 2015 Dogwood Trail Court will be officially introduced to the community at the Arts & Crafts Festival in March. For more information on tickets or the pageant, call (251) 990-8899.

**Jan. 20, 2:30-4:30 p.m., Senior Bowl Practice (South Squad).** The City of Fairhope will once again host Senior Bowl Practice for the South Squad at W.C. Majors Field when the annual Senior Bowl returns to the Eastern Shore. Autograph tents will be available after practice. For more information, call (251) 929-1466.

**Jan. 31, Annual Pirate Dash 5K and 1-Mile Fun Run.** The run will support the educational needs of Fairhope Elementary and Fairhope Intermediate schools through the Fairhope K-6 PTC. Registration packets will be sent home with all Fairhope students and will be available online at [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com). The 5K will begin at 8 a.m. near the Fairhope Library on Bancroft Street and will end on Magnolia Street at the bluff. The Fun Run will begin and end at the bluff around 9 a.m. For more information on volunteer opportunities or sponsorships, contact [hollyjohnson@bellsouth.net](mailto:hollyjohnson@bellsouth.net).

**Fairhope Single Tax Corporation presents Fairhope History Lectures.** Fairhope Single Tax Corporation will present an eight-part lecture series on Fairhope History beginning in January. The lectures will begin at 6 p.m. in the Giddens Auditorium at the Fairhope Public Library. The lectures are sponsored by the Education Committee of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation. Jan. 6, "Growing Up in Fairhope," presented by Anna and Reed Myers; Feb. 3, "History of Marietta Johnson School," presented by Maggie Mostellar-Timbes. For questions or additional information, call (251) 928-8162.

**Fairhope Mardi Gras.** The Knights of Ecor Rouge parade takes to the streets of downtown Fairhope on Saturday, Feb. 7 with five permanent floats, a dozen themed floats, and at least six bands. Next up is a "Sweet Treats" parade from the Maids of Jubilee (MOJ) on Friday, Feb. 13 at 6:45 p.m. Along with their parade marshals on horseback, the ladies of MOJ present sweets-themed floats, including Pop Tarts and Pastries, Lollypops and Lemon Drops, Hershey's Kisses, Cake and Ice Cream, Tupelo Honey, Candy Canes and Peppermints, and Sugar Cookies & Lemonade. Fairhope's Mardi Gras season will "Shake, Rattle & Roll" as it comes to a close on Monday, Feb. 16 with the parade from the Order of Mystic Magnolias. All three of the evening parades start at 6:45 p.m. and begin and end at the Fairhope Civic Center with a route throughout the downtown area. Fairhope's only walking parade, the Mystic Mutts of Revelry, features "Superheroes to the Rescue" on Saturday, Feb. 7. Registration for walkers and their dogs starts at 10:30 a.m. at the Fairhope's Community Park and the parade begins at 1 p.m. with a new route around the Faulkner State College campus and back to the park. It benefits The Haven, Fairhope's no-kill shelter. For information on taking part or on being a parade sponsor, visit [www.havenforanimals.org](http://www.havenforanimals.org).

**Feb. 21, 19th Annual Chinese New Year Parade.** Hosted by Children of the World. The parade will begin at 1 p.m. at the Fairhope United Methodist Church and parade through downtown Fairhope. For questions, call (251) 990-3550.

**Feb. 28, 10 a.m., Fairhope's Annual Arbor Day Celebration.** On the grounds of Faulkner State College. Weather permitting, the event takes place outdoors, under the big live oak tree between the Administration Building and the Borom Science Center. Coffee and light refreshments will be served to welcome guests along with music from the Fairhope High School Jazz Band. For the ceremony, City representatives will recognize the winners of the Arbor Day Poster Contest and the individuals and local businesses being honored for environmental stewardship efforts. Tree seedlings that the City will give away that day include Red Maple, Mockernut Hickory, Atlantic White Cedar, Big-Flowered Silverbell, Blackgum, Longleaf Pine, White Oak, and Pond Cypress. For more information on the Arbor Day festivities or to participate as a vendor, call (251) 990-0100.

**Feb. 28, 15<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Ministries (EMI) Chili for Charity.** The affordable and family-friendly annual fundraiser will be held at Oak Hollow Farm 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Last year, more than 2,000 attended the celebration. For more information about tickets or participation as a chili team or sponsor, call (251) 928-3430. All proceeds benefit the social service programs of EMI, a United Way agency.

## Opelika

**Feb. 18, Arbor Day Celebration.** Hosted by Keep Opelika Beautiful in conjunction with the community garden opening. The Opelika Tree Commission will be giving away tree seedlings and providing a tree planting demonstration with City Horticulturist, Justin Sutton. The winners of the Arbor Day poster contest will be announced and prizes given. Other activities throughout the morning include a seed workshop, lease information for the community garden, tours of the garden and children activities. The community garden is a partnership of Keep Opelika Beautiful, Opelika City Schools and Auburn University. For more information, contact Keep Opelika Beautiful at (334) 749-4970 or [kob@opelika.com](mailto:kob@opelika.com).

**March 7, Citywide Cleanup.** Volunteers of Keep Opelika Beautiful will be participating in the Citywide Cleanup. This local effort, an extension of the national program, Great American Cleanup, is an opportunity for citizens to join together in the fight against litter. Over 250 volunteers joined Keep Opelika Beautiful in 2014 to participate in the event. For more information contact Keep Opelika Beautiful at (334) 749-4970 or [kob@opelika.com](mailto:kob@opelika.com)

## Sylacauga

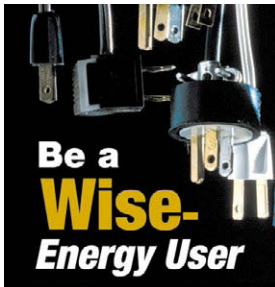
**Isabel Anderson Comer Museum.** January's featured artist is Onica Gaddis, an abstract artist originally from Sylacauga, who now resides in Florida. The Artist's Reception is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 15, beginning at 6:30 p.m. February artist will be Desmond Haynes of Sylacauga, associated with Broadway Cafe. He painted Marilyn Monroe on the back of the restaurant and paints many other movie stars, as well. The Artist's Reception is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 19, beginning at 6:30 p.m.

**B.B. Comer Library.** SouthFirst Brown Bag Winter Series, "Turn Back Time." Jan. 14, Buddy Simpkins and Friends, "Jazz at Its Best"; Jan. 21, Jeffrey C. Benton, "Life in Antebellum Alabama—1820-1861"; Jan. 28, Stephen P. Brown, "Landmark Federal Court Rulings on Religion in the Public Schools"; Feb. 4, Sarah Bliss Wright, "The Impact of the Feedsack: Alabama Cotton and Bemis Bags Pieced into History"; Feb. 11, Chris Haveman, "The Experience of Creek Indian Removal"; Feb. 18, John Ellisor, "The Second Creek War — Conflict on a Collapsing Frontier"; Feb. 25, Dan J. Puckett, "Alabama's Jewish Servicemen in World War II".

## Alabama Municipal Electric Authority

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## Get personalized answers to your energy questions with interactive web-based resources from Energy Depot®

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It may be a different world, but your local public power system is still your 'go-to' energy expert. On our web site, we provide customers with free access to one of the industry's most accurate, engaging, self-guided energy assessment resources, Energy Depot® for Homes.

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- Complete a do-it-yourself home assessment and receive a report online;
- Quickly estimate the annual energy use and cost of home energy systems and appliances;
- Receive a personalized Energy Snapshot report with an estimate of your energy costs for each home energy system/appliance;
- Learn specific things you can do in your home to reduce energy consumption and how much you can potentially save;
- Compare your existing heating and cooling system and/or water heating system to a range of new options;
- Discover how quickly a new, more efficient heating or cooling system or water heater can pay for itself through lower energy bills;
- Visit the Energy Library to gain a better understanding of the appliances, equipment and construction techniques used within your home;
- Receive expert answers to the most frequently asked questions regarding home energy use;
- And much more.

For more information, visit your electric utility's web site, or go to <http://www.amea.com/hometown-connections/energy-depot/>. Use the drop-down menu to select your utility and access your Energy Depot tools.