

Inside

Take control of your energy bill 2

Think "green" for Valentine's Day 3

Strategies to reduce heating costs 3

Application for the Driscoll Memorial Scholarship 4

FEBRUARY 2009

Hot Watts

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



SHORTS

Congratulations, *Livy Samuels* of Vian! *Samuels* is Cookson's January 2008 online survey winner.

GO TO WWW.COOKSONHILLS.COM AND COMPLETE THE ONLINE SURVEY FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO WIN A \$10 CREDIT ON YOUR ELECTRIC BILL.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that space heaters cause more than 25,000 house fires and 300 deaths every year.

- *Choose heaters that are rated as safe by Underwriters Laboratories.*
- *Keep all bedding, drapes, pets and people at least three feet away from a space heater.*
- *Buy a space heater with a thermostat to avoid overheating the room.*
- *Get a heater that's the right size for the room. Oversized heaters waste energy.*

February 6, 2009 is the deadline to have your essay for the Youth Tour Essay Contest in Cookson Hills Electric's office. If you are a high school junior and interested in an opportunity to win a week long, all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. in June 2009, you will want to write this 750 to 1,000 word essay.

Driscoll Scholarship helps make college a reality

The employees and directors of Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative offer four \$500 scholarships each year in memory of Herman Driscoll, longtime employee and general manager of the cooperative. Driscoll believed that education is essential for success.

Cookson's directors and employees award scholarships to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative.



The winners of Cooksons' Youth Tour essay contest will visit Washington, D.C., June 12 - 18, 2009.

Students must also meet the following criteria to be eligible for the Driscoll Scholarship:

- ❖ **good character**
- ❖ **grade point average of 2.0 or better**
- ❖ **good citizenship**
- ❖ **financial need**
- ❖ **an ambition to further education**

Additionally, the college or technical school of choice must be a state accredited school offering an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree.

Scholarship money will be awarded in two installments, to the school of choice, if the following criteria are met:

1. First semester grades will be a minimum of 2.0 average.
2. Student must have a minimum of 12 academic hours per semester.

Please return the application on page 4 of this issue of *Hot Watts* along with two letters of recommendation by April 10, 2009, to the following address:

Scholarship Committee
Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative,
Inc.

Attn: Teresa Shaw
P.O. Box 539
Stigler, OK 74462

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**Cookson Hills welcomes members to
submit photos, and articles which will
be subject to Cookson Hills editing.
Any submissions must be received
before the 12th of the month prior to
the publication date.**

**If You Find Your
Account Number Hidden
in This Issue of *Hot Watts*
You'll Receive a \$25 Credit on
Your Electric Bill**

Need to save on your electric bill?

You have the power to make a difference.

Start saving energy today.

1. **Fill up your refrigerator and freezer.**
Your refrigerator operates more efficiently when it's full because it can recover more quickly from the cold lost when the door is opened. Fill in empty spaces with water bottles or bags of ice. Leave just enough room between items for the air to circulate freely.
2. **Turn down the heat – on your water.**
Many water heaters are set to 140 degrees, which is hotter than necessary for showers and clothes washing. Water that hot also poses a scalding hazard for children. Reduce the temperature by 10 degrees and you'll save up to 5 percent on your energy costs.
3. **Vacuum your refrigerator coils twice a year.** If your refrigerator's coils are exposed (look on the back of the unit), they can get dirty or dusty and force your fridge to work inefficiently. If you have a newer model, remove the kick plate or grill to access the coils.
4. **Set your thermostat back when you leave for work.** For every degree you turn down the heat for at least eight hours, you can save as much as 1 percent a year on your heating bills.
5. **Shut down your computer if it won't be in use for more than two hours.** When you're finished using your computer, turn it off. Keeping it on is like leaving lights on in an empty room.

Are you using CFLs?

Homeowners are saving energy and money on their electric bills by replacing their old bulbs with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), which use about a third less energy and last up to 10 times longer.

Visit www.18seconds.org and type in your ZIP code. The site tracks CFL sales by state and city and tell where your area ranks in CFL use. It also will reveal how much money CFL users have saved and how many pounds of carbon dioxide they have kept out of the environment by choosing CFLs over fluorescents.

It takes only 18 seconds to change a light bulb, the site says. Take 18 seconds today and switch at least one of your lights to a CFL.

Blast winter energy hogs.

As harsh winter weather sets in, now is the time to send your home's energy hogs out the door. Rid your home of these common winter culprits:

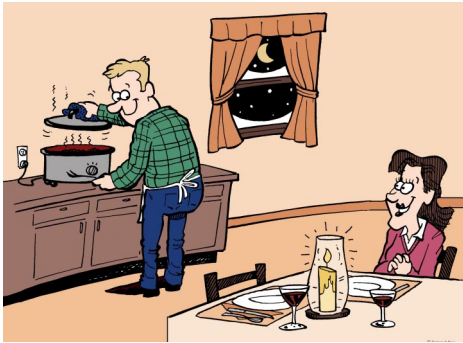
- ◆ **Drafty doors and windows.** Caulk and weatherstripping are easy to apply around windows and doors, especially those leading to a basement or attic. And you'll see a difference on your energy bill.
- ◆ **Dirty air filters.** They make your heating system work harder to keep the air comfortable. Change the filter every three to six months.
- ◆ **Leaky ducts.** A contractor can test your ducts for leakage and repair any problems.
- ◆ **Chilly water heater.** If your water heater is in the basement or garage, it's spending some of its energy trying to keep itself warm — instead of devoting all of its energy to heating water. Pick up an insulating jacket at a hardware or home store and wrap it up.
- ◆ **Wood fireplace.** Traditional fireplaces suck heated air into the chimney and release it outdoors. Retire yours, close off the damper and add an electric fireplace insert, which doesn't put much heat to a room but looks nice in the hearth.

Energy efficiency —

Tip of the Month

Keep your fireplace damper closed unless you built a fire. An open damper allows as much warm air to escape as a fully open window. If you never use your fireplace, plug and seal the chimney flue.

(Source: U.S. Department of Energy)



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Think about planning a **green** Valentine's Day.

Move over, red. Green is the new color of Valentine's Day.

Saving energy and the environment is newly romantic, and retailers are set to help you prove it this Feb. 14.

Stores are stocking up with earth-friendly gifts. Still, it's not about what you give, but how you celebrate that can make your Valentine's Day energy efficient.

Here are some tips for an energy-conscious love-fest:

- ♥ Save on gas and reduce emissions by staying home and cooking a meal for your sweetie on Valentine's Day.
- ♥ Buy local food for your home-cooked meal to support your neighbors and cut down on the energy-wasting miles your food has to travel to reach you.
- ♥ To save electricity and time, prepare your romantic dinner in a crock-pot. A slow-cooked meal makes a warm and delicious Valentine's treat, and the smaller appliance uses less energy than an oven.
- ♥ Or, experiment with dishes you can cook in the microwave or toaster oven.
- ♥ If you opt to use the stovetop, choose pans to fit the burners, keep the lids on and turn the burners off shortly before the food is finished cooking.
- ♥ Dim the lights and eat by candlelight. A light that's dimmed by 75 percent will use about 20 percent less energy than one burning at full brightness. And it will last about four times longer.
- ♥ Give sustainable gifts, like greeting cards printed on recycled paper or long-lasting potted plants rather than fresh-cut flowers.

High-tech thermostats offer potential savings

Keeping your home hot or cold — depending on the season — accounts for a big chunk of your annual budget. In fact, the average U.S. homeowner spends \$2,500 a year on home energy with 56 percent, or \$1,400, going toward heating and cooling costs.

Not surprisingly, savings can add up in a hurry when heating and cooling systems are tweaked for maximum efficiency. You can easily trim your energy bills in winter by setting the thermostat at 68°F while you're awake and back a few degrees when to go to sleep or are away from home.

Even better, turning your thermostat back 10° to 15° for eight hours can save about 5 percent to 15 percent a year on your heating bill — about 1 percent for each degree. Savings may be even greater for homes in milder climates.

The location of your thermostat can greatly affect its performance and efficiency. Place thermostats away from direct sunlight, drafts, doorways, skylights, and windows.

Read the manufacturer's instructions to prevent "ghost readings" or unnecessary furnace or air conditioner cycling.

Installing a programmable thermostat can take the thought out of saving energy. Your heating and cooling system will ramp up or switch off according to a preset time of day or even day of the week. Most models let you manually override the schedule without affecting the rest of the daily or weekly program.

Programmable thermostats are generally not recommended for heat pumps. In cooling mode, a heat pump operates like an air conditioner, so turning up the thermostat will save energy and money. But when a heat pump works in its heating mode, setting back the thermostat can cause the unit to operate inefficiently, thereby canceling out any savings achieved by lowering the temperature. Maintaining a moderate setting is the most cost-effective practice.

To automatically manage electric resistance systems, such as electric



Turning your thermostat back 10° to 15° for eight hours can save about 5 to 15 percent a year on your heating bill — about 1 percent for each degree.

baseboard heating, steam heating, or radiant floor heating, you will need to purchase a programmable thermostat specifically designed for the task. When shopping for a programmable thermostat, always look for the ENERGY STAR® label.

More information on what may be right for your home can be found at energystar.gov.

(Source: U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy)

Here are some strategies to save money on heating costs.

Heat only the parts of your home that you're using. Heating your whole house is more expensive than heating just part of it.

Don't close registers in unused rooms, though, because you can damage your ducts or even the furnace itself.

Instead, use space heaters or other forms of radiant heat in the rooms that you actually use.

Central systems are more expensive than space heaters or radiant heaters, which heat only specific rooms or areas.

Wear more clothes. This may be obvious, but many people heat their homes to summertime temperatures and walk around in short-sleeves and barefoot.

