

Striking a Balance Between Beautiful Trees and Reliable Service



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER RONNIE ROBINSON

Sometimes it takes a crisis to remind us about priorities. People who receive an unexpected diagnosis of a serious illness, for example, might have a renewed appreciation for their family and friends. The loss of a job could be a catalyst for pursuing a life-long dream and finding success in unexpected places.

Today's faltering economy is prompting a lot of belt-tightening and refocusing of personal goals, something that could be viewed as an opportunity for positive change. How many of you are more aware than ever of turning out the lights when you leave a room? Do you think twice before you turn on the television? Are you taking advantage of the Texas sunshine to dry clothes outdoors instead of using a clothes dryer?

It's likely the economy has affected your personal habits in some way.

Similarly, we at Comanche Electric Cooperative have been affected, and we're looking for efficiencies in every area of our operation. We look inside at our office policies and procedures, we look outside at our field crews and equipment, and we take a close look at our infrastructure.

Believe it or not, you as a member can make a significant contribution to efficiencies in Comanche EC's infra-

structure. We're not asking you to replace poles or refurbish transformers or string new wire. But we're asking you to do something just as important.

Your cooperation with right-of-way crews responsible for clearing tree limbs and brush around electrical lines can have a big impact on reducing storm-related outages and the subsequent infrastructure damage. That could translate into millions of dollars of savings for your co-op.

Clearly, all of us value trees. Trees create shade in the summer, help keep the air clean, provide homes for birds and other wildlife, and, of course, beautify our environment. But trees are also a constant threat to the delivery of reliable electric service. When a tree's branches get too close to power lines, a potentially hazardous situation is created.

The Public Utility Commission of Texas recently released a report stating that 96 percent of the damage to a certain investor-owned utility's infrastructure during Hurricane Ike was the result of high winds and broken trees. The report concluded that better vegetation management before the storm would have eliminated much of the flying debris that took down poles and wires. The resulting outages were well publicized and affected hundreds of thousands of people for several weeks.

Keeping Comanche Electric Cooperative's rights-of-way clear not only saves money, it's also one of the best ways to keep the electricity flowing without interruption.

So, now that you're in the habit of turning off the lights when you leave a room, remember what it takes to turn them back on.

NEW TAX CREDITS FOR ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Even though money is tight, this might be a good time to make some home improvements.

You could qualify for up to \$1,500 in federal tax credits if you trade your old windows, furnace, roof or water heater for an energy-efficient model.

The tax credits are part of President Obama's economic stimulus bill and are good for energy-efficient improvements you make in 2009 and 2010.

You could get a tax credit for 30 percent of the cost of the improvement, up to \$1,500, on windows and doors, insulation, metal and asphalt roofs, heating and air-conditioning systems, nonsolar water heaters (but not tankless or electric storage water heaters) and biomass stoves. For these items, the credit does not include installation.

Another 30 percent is available—with no upper limit through 2016—for geothermal heat pumps, solar panels, solar water heaters, small wind energy systems and fuel cells. For these items, the credit includes installation. But make sure you talk with your cooperative before having any supplemental energy devices installed.

Do some research before you buy any of these products to ensure they qualify for the tax credit. To claim your credit, you will need a manufacturer's certification that the product qualifies. You usually can find that on the manufacturer's website.

You can claim the tax credit by filling out IRS Tax Form 5695 (2009 version) when you file your 2009 taxes next year.

For more information about the energy-efficiency tax credit, visit www.energystar.gov. Click on "tax credits for energy efficiency."

LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE AT WWW.CECA.COOP

AT COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Conservation Matters

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 



KEEP ELECTRICITY FROM GOING DOWN THE DRAIN

Water use and electricity go hand in hand. Heating water can account for 14 to 25 percent of the total energy consumed in a typical home. What's more, systems used to clean public water supplies and deliver it to homes require large amounts of electricity. If your home receives water from a well or spring, the pump also draws power. So when we use water, hot or cold, we're also using energy.

Techniques for reducing water use in your home are surprisingly simple. For one, you can significantly reduce hot water consumption by simply repairing leaks in pipes or fixtures, such as faucets and showerheads. A leak of one drip per second can cost \$1 per month.

You can also reduce water heating costs in a matter of seconds by lower-

ing the thermostat setting on your water heater. For each 10 degrees of reduction in temperature, you can save between 3 and 5 percent in energy costs. Reducing the setting also slows mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.

Although some manufacturers set water heater thermostats at 140 degrees, most households usually only require them to be set at 120. However, if you have a dishwasher without a booster heater, you may require a water temperature within a range of 130 to 140 degrees for optimum cleaning.

Adding insulation to your water heater can save 4 to 9 percent in costs. To determine whether you need to insulate your water heater, touch it. A tank that's warm to the touch needs

additional insulation.

Insulating your water heater tank is fairly simple and inexpensive and will pay for itself in about a year. You can find precut jackets or blankets available from around \$10 to \$20. Choose one with an insulating value of at least R-8. In addition, don't set the thermostat above 130 degrees on an electric water heater with an insulating jacket or blanket—the wiring may overheat.

Installing insulation on gas- and oil-fired water heaters is more difficult. For these appliances, it's best to have a qualified plumbing and heating contractor perform the work.

For more tips on trimming water use in your home, including pipe and water heater insulation techniques, visit www.energysavers.gov.

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The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is the assistant manager. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the

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'It has been said that every great journey, no matter how long or hard, always starts with the first step and then accomplishes more than you ever thought possible.'

UNKNOWN

'In this case, the journey will start with the push of a pedal.'

LANCE PYBURN

PEDALING *for a* CURE

BY SHIRLEY DUKES

"I can remember, as a child in church, listening to the congregation when the preacher would ask if there were any prayer requests. Many requests were routine and didn't receive too much attention, like the ones for more rain or those for minor aches and pains, but then a request would be made for a father that had been in the hospital for a while now; 'The doctors think that it might be cancer,' the woman said. Another request would be made for someone

that this issue deserves, we can greatly improve our stakes in the fight against this disease."

These words come from cyclist Lance Pyburn's personal statement posted at www.texas4000.org, the website of the Sense Corp Texas 4000 For Cancer. The event is described as the world's longest annual charity bicycle ride—a 4,500-mile-plus trek from Austin to Anchorage, Alaska, scheduled for June 6 through August 15. Pyburn, a senior at the Uni-

versity of Texas who was born and raised in Comanche, was selected to ride in the event.

When you live in a small town, you hear many of these stories and many times they become very personal, just as they have for Lance. It became personal for me when my father was diagnosed with leukemia. It became even more personal when I was diagnosed with breast cancer with three children to take care of, the youngest only 3 years old. And the dreaded word made me

downright angry when my sweet little neighbor Megan, who was like one of my own children, was diagnosed with cancer at the tender age of 13. You would probably be hard-pressed to find anyone who has not been touched in some way by this horrible disease. We all want the disease to be cured. We all would like to help out in some way. But sometimes we just don't know what to do or where to start. That is how Lance felt before being introduced to the Texas 4000, a nonprofit organization at the University of Texas dedicated to the fight against cancer.

This summer, two groups of 25 UT students will embark on the ride from Austin to Anchorage. Their goal is to raise money for cancer research—they hope to make a \$250,000 donation to the American Cancer Society and M.D. Ander-



LEFT: Fifty cyclists were chosen to ride in the 2009 Texas 4000. RIGHT: Lance Pyburn.

recently diagnosed with leukemia, and another for a sister who would be starting chemotherapy shortly. Request after request would always be made as person after person spoke of a loved one affected by this deadly disease. I never could get over that feeling as the mood in the entire sanctuary would suddenly fall when cancer was mentioned. It was like a collective feeling of hurt, sadness, and defeat would overtake everyone present. It was a general understanding that cancer was bad, we didn't really know much about it, and that there were no guarantees that it could be cured.

"The truth is that we're living in a world where one out of every three people develops cancer in their lifetime. As a result, many people share this defeated view regarding cancer, but I don't think we should. With the proper attention

son Cancer Center in Houston—while spreading the message that cancer can be defeated. They'll make presentations in each community they cycle through, educating people about cancer prevention and early detection.

Lance says, "We hope our efforts will help to ease the anguish that cancer inflicts upon our families, our friends and our loved ones, while inspiring others to join in our mission. The ride itself serves as a metaphor for the difficult battle cancer patients wage each day—a long and difficult road, with hard days and easier ones, good days and not so good days."

Lance first learned about the Texas 4000 when he was a freshman at UT. He thought it sounded amazing but just couldn't see himself being chosen as one of the 50 riders. As a sophomore, he saw a flier about the ride posted on campus. Once again, he let his doubts and insecurities talk him out of applying. But then in the spring of his sophomore year, his curiosity got the best of him and he applied for the program. Much to his surprise, he was chosen for the 2009 ride, and he has not regretted his decision for a moment.

Lance and I met recently and discussed his experience with the organization:

How is the experience of Texas 4000 affecting you as you prepare for your journey?

Being a part of Texas 4000 has already made a huge impact on me. I really like the organization because it allows the students to decide what we want to accomplish and relies on us to make sure that we achieve these goals. We have already worked so hard to reach fundraising deadlines and train for the ride. I was chosen to be the financial coordinator of the Sierra's route, which means that I'm in charge of making sure all the money that comes into the organization is correctly allocated to each rider, in addition to making sure that we all meet our fundraising quotas. I can honestly say that I have worked harder for this organization than I have for any other one in the past, but I've loved every second of it. The more work I have to do only means that we're making a bigger impact than we already were. My co-chair and I have spent a lot of time keeping Texas 4000's finances up to date, and we're both happy to do it. To date, the 2009 riders have raised over \$192,000 for cancer research and we're not done yet.

What are your personal thoughts and feelings as you prepare for your journey?

It hasn't really set in that I'll be riding a bike up to Alaska. I mean, we can talk about it all we want, but I don't think it'll really hit any of us until we make that first ride from Austin to Lampasas, wake up the next day, and realize we have to keep riding. I wonder if I'll be able to meet the physical demands of the journey. The funny thing is, I'm not really that worried about it. Five teams have made these rides before us without significant problems, and there's no doubt in my mind that we'll be able to do it as well, even if



it does kick our butts.

What I'm really asking myself when preparing for this ride is: "How can we get more people involved?" It's important to remember that the ride is more of a publicity stunt than anything else to draw people's attention to our cause. We all live busy lives, and sometimes it takes a bunch of kids riding to Alaska to get us to stop and realize that we can make a difference, we can bring change. I hope that we'll be able to provide hope to those battling this disease in addition to spreading the knowledge of cancer prevention strategies everywhere we go.

Do you feel that this experience will change the direction of your life in any way, such as career goals?

Yes, without a doubt. I've always known that I work harder when I truly believe in what I'm doing as opposed to being motivated by external factors like money, and this is why I was originally pursuing a career in the corporate wellness field where I would be involved in helping others live healthier lives. However, working with Texas 4000 has caused me to want to work to bring change on a broader level. I believe that there are a lot of problems with our current health-care system in America, and I want to work to make it better. Did you know that about 25 percent of Americans making \$40,000 or less opt out of cancer treatment because they can't afford it? No matter how many advancements we make in cancer treatment, they're really of no use if no one can afford to pay for them. In addition to not being able to pay for cancer treatment, many Americans cannot afford health-care insurance. The last census report showed that nearly 47 million Americans are not covered. I have always thought that health is a right that we should all have as people, regardless of our income and socioeconomic status. I also believe that it would be beneficial to our government to have a better, reformed health-care system. The United States pays around \$100 billion a year to provide health services to the uninsured, often for

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PEDALING FOR A CURE

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preventable diseases that could have been treated more efficiently with earlier diagnosis.

As a result of what I've learned both in my classes and working with Texas 4000, I've decided to pursue a career as a public health advocate. There are many levels in which I could work to bring change to the public health-care system from nonprofits to government agencies, and I'm open to whatever opportunities I'll be afforded.

How have people reacted to your quest for support?

People have been wildly supportive of the cause, even more so than I had imagined. Within a few short months, I raised over \$4,600 for cancer research. My original goal was to raise \$5,000 by the time we left for the trip in June, but I think it's safe to say that I'll break that goal easily. Everyone's generosity and selflessness has been an awesome thing to witness. It is inspiring to see others take on a cause that is bigger than all of us because it's something that they believe in. It really says something about the human spirit and what we're capable of. I want to thank everyone who has donated to Texas 4000's cause and made it their own. I cannot begin to tell you how much your love and support means to those battling this disease.

What are you doing to prepare for the ride?

In order to prepare physically for the ride, we've been holding running and core workouts for all the riders to attend. We got our bicycles in January, and that is when we started training heavily. Our goal will be to get to the point where we are easily riding 100 miles a week before the ride. We also have different committees working on booking housing arrangements and securing food donations for every night of our trip. We also have a committee working on the program that we will be giving at hospitals and cancer centers along the route.

Have you met new friends from this venture?

I love my fellow T4K riders. We're a unique bunch because we're so diverse. Texas 4000 isn't like most other student organizations that are centered on noticeable similarities of their members. We all have different backgrounds, majors, ethnicities, religions, opinions and political beliefs, but our common ground is that we all want to bring change on the cancer front. We're a fun group of people, and I'm learning a lot from these guys.

Has this in any way put you in contact with cancer victims?

I have been privileged to be able to hear the stories of many who have fought or are currently fighting cancer, and I want to thank everyone who has shared them. Each

meeting we have and each day before we ride, we always mention someone who has been affected by cancer. We call it the "why I ride" devotion, and it's one of my favorite things we do because it keeps us grounded and focused on why we're doing this. If anyone would like to have a friend or loved one's name mentioned and honored during one of our meetings or on our trip this summer, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. Everyone deserves to have their story heard, and Texas 4000 wants to share your stories to provide hope and encouragement to the rest of the world.

What are the dates for the tour, and where will you eat and sleep?

The tour is set for June 6 through August 15. Arrangements have been made for us to spend time in homes along the way as much as possible. But there will be times when we are scheduled to stop where there are no homes to stay in. On those evenings, we will be camping under the stars. The Mountain Group will be camping out more than the Coastal Group due to the distances between towns.

How can individuals become involved?

Naturally, we will take any and all donations, no matter how large or small. Even dollar donations add up. But if you want hands-on involvement, Texas 4000 offers an Austin-to-Lampasas ride on Saturday, June 6. There are two courses offered: a 50-mile course and a 70-mile course. The fee for this ride is \$70 and includes a T-shirt, meals and other perks, the best of which is your ability to make a difference in this fight against cancer.

I must say that I found Lance to be an amazing young man with a huge heart and a driving desire to make a difference—which I'm sure could be said about the other 49 young people participating in Texas 4000. Having battled and survived cancer myself, I tend to take causes such as this rather personally, just as I'm sure many other cancer victims do. Comanche Electric Cooperative also takes it personally, as evidenced by its generous donation to the cause through the Operation Round-Up® program. It is our hope that through Lance, the Texas 4000 and the other young people who will forfeit an entire summer to the cause, breakthroughs in cancer awareness and cancer research will be made, helping to bring an end to this devastating disease.

If you would like to make a donation to the cause, or have Lance tell your story at one of the stops along the way, he can be reached at (512) 239-8980 or lance.pyburn@bba06.mcombs.utexas.edu. For more information on the Texas 4000 and to read the riders' personal statements and blogs, go to www.texas4000.org. Reading what these kids have to say will probably change your perspective on today's youth and may even affect you in ways you could never anticipate.

Looking out for you.



That's the cooperative difference.

Providing reliable and affordable electricity is our first priority, but not our only priority. We also look out for our community. We do this by educating our members on electrical safety and helping both businesses and individuals become more energy efficient. Plus, through innovative solutions and state-of-the-art technologies, we never stop looking for ways to strengthen our community so that we can all wake up to a brighter tomorrow.

Comanche Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



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YOUR "LOCAL PAGES"

This section of *Texas Co-op Power* is produced by Comanche EC each month to provide you with information about current events, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact Shirley at the Comanche office or at sdukes@ceca.coop.

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