

Tennessee CONNECTIONS

WINTER 2024 | CUSTOMER FOCUSED ⚡ COMMUNITY DRIVEN



INSIDE Closed Circuit:
Empowering the
Next Generation

Journeyman Lineman Dennis Womack takes young visitors for a bucket truck ride during TUA's annual Public Power Week celebration.
PHOTO BY KELLY LAPCZYNSKI

Built for Safety:
Tulahoma's
Water System



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Help Us Help Your Neighbors

#SleevesUp to donate blood for your community



At Pioneer Utility Resources, the publisher of Tennessee Connections magazine, we are always working to put the right letters together to tell a story. The American Red Cross story can't be told without three letters: A, B and O, which represent the main blood types. When those important letters are missing from blood bank shelves, lives are at stake.

With the recent impact from hurricanes adding to the need for blood nationwide, we encourage

each of you to consider donating blood by rolling up your sleeves and visiting a local Red Cross donation center between now and Dec. 25. Your gift of blood can save more than one life.

Visit this link—rcblood.org/3zJ1rxU—or scan the QR code above. Sign up to help us reach our goal and fill in the missing blood types so patients can receive the lifesaving care they need. Make and keep an appointment to give blood to the American Red Cross. ■

Facts About Blood Needs in the United States

- ▶ Every 2 seconds, someone needs blood or platelets.
- ▶ Approximately 29,000 units of red blood cells are needed every day.
- ▶ Nearly 5,000 units of platelets and 6,500 units of plasma are needed daily.
- ▶ The blood type most often requested by hospitals is type O.
- ▶ One donation can help save more than one life.
- ▶ According to the American Cancer Society, more than 1.9 million people are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in 2025. Many of them will need blood, sometimes daily, during their chemotherapy treatments.
- ▶ The average red blood cell transfusion is approximately 3 units.
- ▶ A single-car accident victim can require as many as 100 units of blood.
- ▶ Sickle cell disease affects 90,000 to 100,000 people in the United States. Sickle cell patients may require blood transfusions throughout their lives.
- ▶ Blood and platelets cannot be manufactured; they can only come from volunteer donors.
- ▶ Nearly 16 million blood components are transfused each year.



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A Bright Future Awaits



In today's world, electricity powers our homes, businesses and daily lives. In Tullahoma, our electricity source is unique because Tullahoma Utilities Authority is a public power utility owned by the people it serves—our community. This not-for-profit model brings numerous benefits beyond just keeping the lights on.

Unlike investor-owned utilities, which focus on profits, TUA

operates to serve the public. Our mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity while reinvesting in the community. One key benefit of public power is affordability. Because profits don't drive TUA, we set fair rates for everyone. Our goal is to provide reliable power at the lowest cost without compromising quality.

All revenue generated is reinvested to improve infrastructure, enhance reliability and keep rates low, creating a cycle where the community benefits from TUA's success. Another advantage of public power is local control. Decisions about rates and infrastructure are made by people who live and work in Tullahoma, ensuring they are in the community's best interest.

This local governance provides accountability, giving peace of mind that decisions are made with the community's well-being at heart. Reliability is also central to TUA's mission. Serving more than 11,000 electric customers, we respond quickly to local needs, with our crews restoring service efficiently after storms or outages.

TUA is proud to hold the Reliable Public Power Provider—RP3—designation, awarded by American Public Power Association. This honor recognizes excellence in reliability, safety, workforce development and system improvement. Achieving RP3 status shows our commitment to providing dependable, high-quality electric service while ensuring employee and customer safety.

Public power utilities like TUA also participate in mutual aid, where utilities support each other in emergencies. Recently, TUA sent a line crew to help restore power in East Tennessee after Hurricane Helene. This spirit of collaboration ensures swift recovery when disasters strike and reinforces the values of public power—neighbors helping neighbors.

A unique aspect of public power is Payments in Lieu of Taxes. Because TUA is community-owned, traditional taxes are not paid. Instead, TUA contributes to local governments through PILOT payments. In 2023, TUA contributed more than \$720,000, directly funding schools, police, fire departments and public infrastructure. Every dollar stays in the community, helping keep property taxes lower and strengthening local services.

Public power is about more than just electricity. It's about investing in our community's future. TUA proudly gives back, supporting local schools, offering internships and contributing to community initiatives. Just this year, TUA partnered with Tullahoma City Schools to provide \$25,000 in scholarships to Tullahoma High School seniors, helping students pursue careers in technical fields, engineering and more. This reflects our commitment to supporting the next generation of leaders.

We also want to thank our generous customers for participating in TUA's Round Up program. In FY24, we donated more than \$55,000 to local nonprofits, such as Attic Outlet and Partners for Healing. Since the program began, the program has raised more than \$240,000, demonstrating how small acts of kindness can have a big impact on our community.

Public power allows TUA to prioritize sustainability and reliability by upgrading infrastructure and planning for future growth. Our mission is to ensure Tullahoma has reliable utility services while enhancing quality of life and maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Public power is about community ownership and local accountability. TUA is committed to delivering reliable, affordable electricity to Tullahoma. Unlike investor-owned utilities, we are not driven by profits but by a desire to serve and improve the community.

Through our public power model, TUA remains focused on keeping rates affordable, maintaining reliable service and contributing to our town's well-being. Together, we can ensure Tullahoma thrives with a utility that always puts the needs of its residents first.

At TUA, our core values—safety, customer focus, integrity, dedication and innovation—guide everything we do. Whether it's maintaining a safe work environment, responding to customer needs or continuously improving services, TUA is dedicated to making Tullahoma a better place to live.

As we continue on this journey of providing power to our community, we invite everyone to join us in shaping a stronger Tullahoma. At TUA, power means more than electricity. It's about empowering neighbors, supporting the local economy and investing in the future. Together, we can build a brighter Tullahoma for generations to come. ■

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Potter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Allen Potter

President, Tullahoma Utilities Authority

Closed Circuit: Empowering the Next Generation



Kevin Sweeten, Electric Intern

For many high school students, the thought of spending another four to eight years on continued education is daunting. Why wouldn't it be? The average student graduates with roughly \$35,000 in student loan debt, but the average entry-level salary for a college graduate is just \$50,000. It's little wonder that some rising graduates are looking for a career path that doesn't require college.

"I knew college was not for me," says high school senior Kevin Sweeten.

The son of Jeremy and Michelle McCormick, Kevin says he was looking for an opportunity to go to school for a couple of months to earn whatever certificate he would need to get right to work as a lineworker.

Even entry-level lineworkers take home a salary that's roughly the same as that of a recent four-year college graduate. While linework requires another four years of education, on average, the education is provided on the job while collecting a paycheck.

Fortunately for Kevin, Tullahoma Utilities Authority announced a program earlier this year that helps students like him bridge the gap between high school and high-demand careers: a work-based learning partnership with Tullahoma City Schools. Students accepted into the program build on their classroom-based instruction to develop the skills they need for their future careers. Through the program's internships, students earn high school credit while doing it.

As part of that program, Kevin joined TUA this semester as an intern in the electric department.

However, it's not only the students who benefit from programs like these. Intern programs help utilities develop a talent pipeline by giving industry leaders a chance to identify and cultivate young talent. By engaging with interns, managers can assess their skills, work ethic and cultural fit within the organization. It's an approach that could, ideally, reduce recruitment costs and shorten the hiring timeline. As interns become full-time employees, TUA benefits from hiring workers who are already familiar with the company's processes and core values.

Linework isn't for everyone, but jobs in the utilities sector are as diverse as they are reliable. Utility workers keep



Cambree Moyers, Marketing Intern

power and clean water flowing through every city in the United States. It takes a wide array of talents to keep these essential services running—from the engineers who design complex infrastructure for electric and water systems to the workers who build, install and maintain those systems.

As crucial as electric, water and wastewater workers are to the utility industry, career path opportunities at TUA don't end there. TUA also has a vibrant fiber optics department that delivers LightTube internet, telephone and television services.

Enter junior Cambree Moyers.

"I really want to direct movies," Cambree says. "That's my dream job. In the video production club at school, we were allowed to interview people and make short films. I really enjoyed that."

The daughter of Corynn and Ed Moyers, Cambree knows people in her chosen field typically need a bachelor's degree in film or cinema studies. She has her eye on film schools in Los Angeles and New York, but while she's still in high school, she sees the benefit of getting real-world experience from the producers of LightTube television.

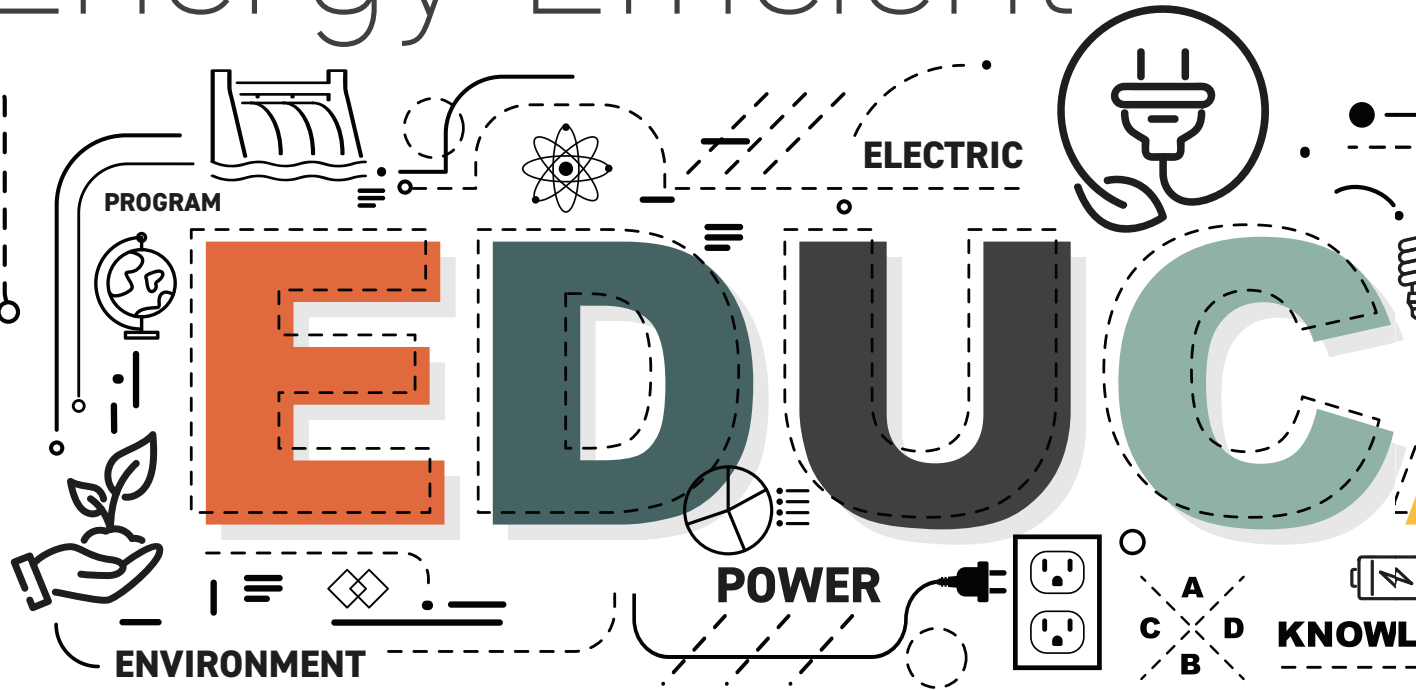
As an intern, Cambree operates a camera for LightTube's coverage of Tullahoma High School football games. She also employs her editing skills to curate weekly segments for the Tullahoma 6 News program. Cambree has no aspirations to host television programs, though.

"I don't want to be in front of the camera," she says. "I want to make creative decisions."

From building interest in skilled trades to finding a way to match student interests to its organizational needs, TUA is taking a creative approach to training and recruiting workforce newcomers. Partnerships like the one between TUA and Tullahoma City Schools show both groups are committed to doing what's best for local students.

Though some students, like Cambree, will likely seek their fortunes elsewhere, equipped with on-the-job experience, others—like Kevin Sweeten—may stay. And when students take an interest and put down roots in the city, it benefits everyone. ■

Energy-Efficient



TVA EnergyRight School Uplift Program helps schools shift funds from energy bills to the classroom

By Trish Milburn

It is no secret public schools need more funding, so ways to save on operational costs—freeing up money to be used for educational purposes—are always welcome. It's a bonus when those money-saving methods also help an organization fulfill its purpose. Such is the case with Tennessee Valley Authority's EnergyRight School Uplift Program.

During the more than 90 years since its creation, TVA's mission has been to help make life better for the people living in the Tennessee Valley. That comes in the form of providing low-cost electricity, controlling floods, facilitating economic development and protecting the environment.

Based on that mission, TVA is dedicated to supporting underserved communities by providing a free program to reduce energy costs in participating schools. The School Uplift Program provides a combination of energy-efficiency training and grants to help schools lower their energy bills while also improving the learning environment for their students.



Humboldt's Stigall Primary School students cast ballots to determine which of three projects will be funded by their \$10,000 Learning Environment Grant. PHOTO COURTESY OF TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY



ABOVE: Students in Shelbyville hold posters that are now displayed throughout the school. **BELOW:** A kickoff assembly at Eakin Elementary taught students about the program. PHOTOS COURTESY OF EAKIN ELEMENTARY

The top 12 qualifying schools receive a free industrial-grade energy audit to determine the six grant-winning schools.

These grants fund invaluable upgrades such as enhanced lighting and ventilation, which improves the learning environment for students, teachers and staff.

Learning Environment Grants

This year's recipient schools in areas served by Tennessee Connections were White County Middle School in Sparta and the Deery Eakin and Learning Way elementary schools in Shelbyville.

In the 2023-2024 program, several Humboldt schools, including Humboldt Junior/Senior High School, Stigall Elementary and East Elementary, were selected. Each school was awarded a \$10,000 Learning Environment Grant, which can be used for nonenergy improvements.

Students have the opportunity to vote on how the Learning Environment Grants will be allocated in their schools. Stigall Elementary chose to install fun playground equipment including Lola the snail bouncer and Calvin the caterpillar climber.

According to Laticia Hicks, who was the school's librarian and head of the reading interview program at the time the grant was

received, it will also be more accessible to the school's approximately 240 students.

East Elementary School's grant will pay for an outdoor learning lab, picnic tables, benches, a canopy and associated costs.

Humboldt Junior/Senior High chose to use its grant funds to build a covered patio area where the school community can enjoy lunch outdoors. The new covered patio will be between the cafeteria and the main office, according to Energy Coach Sarah Cline.

"To build this covered patio, we are going to use a sunshade that can be attached to the walls and will cover an area of roughly 20-by-40 feet," Sarah says. "This sunshade is designed to last five to seven years and costs about \$350, so replacing the sunshade is not too expensive."

The patio will feature plastic or metal picnic tables with learning boards containing educational content that can be updated as needed.

Sparta's White County Middle School students voted to use their \$10,000 Learning Environment Grant to buy a makerspace cart and a 3D printer. A makerspace is a collaborative learning environment where students can use a

variety of tools and technologies to design, experiment and create. The makerspace fosters hands-on learning, critical thinking, a growth mindset, communication and collaboration and real-world application.

The program is off to a great start in Shelbyville.

"The school system's experience with the School Uplift Program so far has been absolutely amazing," says Megan Moreland, energy manager for Bedford County Schools.

"I am starting to see utility bills drop. The SUP has helped our schools lower energy costs by allowing us to give more awareness on how to save energy and the extra steps that everyone can take to help conserve energy. Since starting the program back in June, I have seen a drop in kilowatt-hours by an average of 10,000 a month, with a cost savings average of \$1,000 a month per school in the SUP."

On top of the \$10,000 grant, the top-performing schools receive an additional \$25,000 Learning Environment grant.

Deery Eakin Elementary was chosen to move on to the next round of the selection process for Building Energy Upgrade grants. They are among six Tennessee



schools in the running for three \$200,000 grants, the winners of which are announced in May 2025.

In addition to the SUP grants making energy-efficiency improvements and the purchase of learning equipment possible, Megan's calculations illustrate how participating schools also benefit from the small behavioral changes that lead to big savings—and these changes don't stay within the confines of the schools.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: White County Middle School students in Sparta voted for a makerspace cart and 3D printer. PHOTOS COURTESY OF WHITE COUNTY SCHOOLS

TVA Energy Coaches work with school-level Energy Champions, who then transfer the knowledge and plan to their teacher teams and students.

“We have materials for the students called ‘taking the habits home,’” Lori says. “Then the energy-efficiency training goes home with the students to educate their parents and community.”

School faculty and staff also take home lessons learned and can apply these to their home energy use. It's a cost- and energy-saving ripple effect.

“I think the program allowed our faculty, staff and students to really think about the impact they have on our energy consumption as a school,” says Sara Halliburton, a seventh grade science teacher at White County Middle School.

“When I shared the figures with our faculty and staff, I think most were surprised by the cost of our energy bills, and this allowed us to start to change behaviors in our school that led to overall energy awareness,” she says. “Our hope is that this will also bleed over into our community and that students can take these ideas to save energy in their homes as well.

“At WCMS, we put together an energy team of faculty, staff and students. It was, without a doubt, a collaborative effort. We are so thankful for TVA and the School Uplift Program.”

Building Energy Upgrade Grants

Humboldt Junior/Senior High was awarded a Building Energy Upgrade Grant of \$200,000 from TVA, with an additional \$200,000 in matching funds from the Tennessee Department of Energy's Energy-Efficient Schools Initiative. The total funding of \$400,000 will be used for a variety of energy upgrades: installation of LED light fixtures, occupancy sensor lighting controls, high-efficiency air-conditioning units and programmable thermostats;

retrofitting fluorescent fixtures with LED lamps and drivers; and retrofitting other fixtures with LED lamps.

“Implementing behavior-based energy-efficiency training in schools not only reduces utility cost but also improves the classroom learning environment and sets students up for success,” says Scott Slusher, executive director of the Energy-Efficient Schools Initiative. “The School Uplift Program provides the catalyst and springboard to help get more schools—students, teachers, staff—engaged on the energy conservation train.”

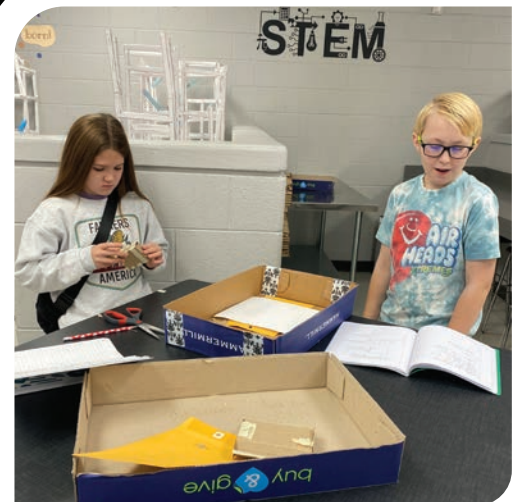
EESI was established in 2008 by the Tennessee General Assembly to offer financial solutions, including loans and grants, and educational programs to

support school districts in lowering utility costs, enhancing indoor environmental quality and improving the classroom learning experience.

Since 2019, EESI has partnered with TVA's School Uplift Program to cofund nine building energy upgrade grants for a total of \$2.5 million, provided programmatic design and development assistance, and helped with program recruitment.

The \$10,000 Learning Environment Grants must be completed within 11 months, while the \$200,000 Building Energy Upgrade Grants have 15 months to be completed.

The School Uplift Program was recognized for its accomplishments when TVA received one of the Energy Star Partner of the Year Awards given by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency earlier this year. Key accomplishments noted were completing activities at 64 schools across the TVA service area, resulting in more than \$1 million in energy savings, and encouraging school-wide participation in new energy-saving behaviors by gamifying engagement in those energy-efficiency behaviors. ■



Enrollment for the 2025–2026 School Uplift Program is now open for both public and private schools. School staff can visit energyright.com/business-industry/school-uplift to apply to bring this no-cost program to their campus.

New Year's Energy Resolutions

Resolve to take on a major household efficiency project this year and save big on your energy bills

By David Herder

We can all think of improvements we would like to make in the new year, whether it is eating healthier, volunteering more or lowering our expenses. One way to spend less in the new year and for many more to come is to make household energy efficiency a goal.

Making small changes to your routine can add up to significant savings. But do you know what adds up faster than small things?

Big things.

If you're willing to make the initial investment, resolve to go big by taking on one of these projects.

Insulate and Air Seal

For most houses, heating and cooling air makes up the largest chunk of energy use. If you're paying to heat or cool the air, you want to keep it inside your house.

Common spots to insulate are attics, walls, floors and anywhere your house contacts the outside. Just like you want a jacket between you and a snowstorm, you want insulation between your home and the outdoors.

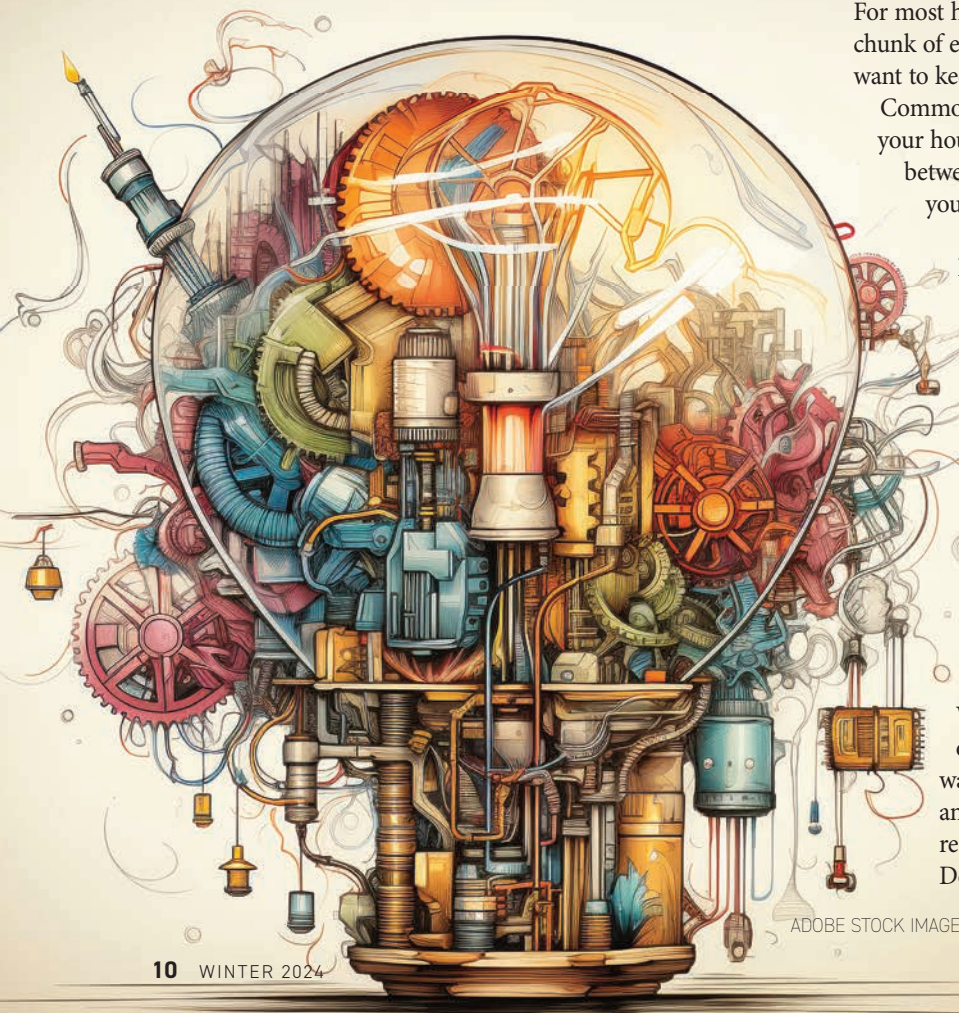
Insulation is rated in R-values. Suggested insulation R-values are between R-30 and R-60, depending on your region and climate. In many cases, it is a good idea to get professional insulation help.

Air sealing is another step to prevent drafts by physically closing gaps and cracks. In some cases, this can be as simple as adding caulking or weatherstripping to places where you notice drafts. Contractors and some utilities can do a home blower test to find and seal leaks.

If you're considering doing some air sealing on your own, the Department of Energy offers tips at www.energy.gov/energysaver/air-sealing-your-home.

Windows

What are windows but walls you can see through? Like outer walls, they touch the outdoors, and unlike many walls, they aren't filled with thick insulation. Heat gain and loss through windows account for 25% to 30% of residential heating and cooling costs, according to the Department of Energy.



ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY BERIT KESSLER

ions

Energy Star windows typically have high U-factors, a measurement of how well they insulate. Get multiple quotes for any home improvement project, including windows, and be on the lookout for rebates from utilities, state programs and the federal government.

If you aren't buying new windows right away, consider steppingstones such as adding weatherstripping, caulking gaps and using thermal drapes.

Seal Ducts

Just like you don't want your heated and cooled air to leak outdoors, you don't want your air leaking into parts of the house where you never go.

If you have ductwork in an attic, crawlspace or other unairconditioned or heated area, the ducts could have leaks that increase your energy bill. According to the Department of Energy, 20% to 30% of the air moved through ducts is lost to leakage.

Hire a professional to seal your ducts, or seal them yourself with metal tape or duct mastic specifically designed for the job. Do not use duct tape, which will dry out and lose adhesion.

Heat Pump

So far, we've covered three ways to keep your heated and cooled air where you want it. It turns out, how you heat or cool the air is also important.

If you're willing to replace your furnace, or the unit is 10-plus years old, a heat pump is an efficient home heating and cooling upgrade. It can reduce heating costs by as much as 50% compared to electric resistance heating, according to the Department of Energy.

A heat pump works similarly to an air conditioner in reverse. It uses a refrigerant to pull heat energy out of the air outdoors, then moves it indoors and blows the heat into your living areas.

Also consider a heat pump water heater, which has all the same advantages but heats water rather than air.

Programmable Thermostat

If a heater turns on, but nobody is there to hear it, does it make a noise? One thing we know is that it would impact your energy bill.



Not sure where to start?

Schedule a home energy assessment

Before starting a project, it is important to take a step back and consider, "What will make the biggest impact?" This means knowing how efficient your house is and where the energy use is going.

A home energy assessment looks for air leaks, insufficient insulation, energy-hog appliances or other issues, and evaluates your total energy use. Conducting a home energy assessment lets you know where any inefficiencies in your house are, giving you a blueprint for fixing them.

Many utilities offer assessment programs, and the Department of Energy offers guides on assessments—including tips for a do-it-yourself assessment—at www.energy.gov/energysaver/home-energy-assessments.

You can also find more information at Tennessee Valley Authority's energyright.com.

Both programmable and smart thermostats help people save energy by changing the temperature throughout the day. You can save 10% on energy bills by turning back the thermostat 10% to 15% for eight hours a day, according to the Department of Energy.

Whether that means heating or cooling less during the day while you're at work or turning things down while you're sleeping, a programmable thermostat ensures you're only heating and cooling the air you feel. ■

Make Your Holiday Brunch *Spa*

By Anne Braly

All kinds of memorable events center around the holidays—cocktail parties sparkling with sequins and accented by the tinkle of ice cubes; cinnamon-scented cookie exchanges where friends share their baking skills and trade treasured recipes; family turkey dinners with little cousins falling asleep by the fire while the grownups reminisce about days gone by. And don't forget about a favorite event: the holiday brunch. What do they all have in common? They start with good ingredients and end up creating treasured moments.

Brunches are incredibly versatile. You can plan a casual gathering for a handful of people or host a grand, show-stopping spectacular filled with mouthwatering treats for your closest friends. Whichever crowd you brunch with, here are some recipes to create one more holiday memory.

ASIAGO HAM BISCUITS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2½ cups flour, spooned and leveled | 3 ounces Asiago cheese, grated (about ¾ cup) |
| 1½ tablespoons baking powder | 1 cup buttermilk |
| 1 teaspoon kosher salt | Flaky sea salt, for garnish |
| ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper | Thinly sliced honey ham or prosciutto, for serving |
| 1 stick cold butter, cut into pieces, plus 1 tablespoon melted butter, divided | Butter, for serving |

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Whisk together flour, baking powder, kosher salt and pepper in a bowl. Cut in cold butter with a pastry blender or two forks until mixture resembles small pebbles. Add Asiago and toss to coat. Add buttermilk and stir just until dough comes together.

Transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface. Gather into a ball, then pat to ¾-inch-thick. Cut biscuits with a 2-inch round cutter. Repeat procedure with remaining scraps. Place on prepared baking sheet, arranging in the shape of a Christmas tree and allowing edges of biscuits to touch. Brush tops with melted butter and sprinkle with flaky sea salt. Bake until golden brown, 14 to 16 minutes. Serve with butter and ham on the side, or go ahead and add a thin slice of butter and ham to the biscuits before putting them on the platter.



Crinkle

EGGS BENEDICT BAKE

EGG BAKE:

- 6 English muffins, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 6 ounces Canadian-style bacon, chopped
- 1½ cups milk
- 12 eggs
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE:

- ¼ cup water
- 3 egg yolks
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 to 3 drops hot pepper sauce

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray a 13-by-9-inch baking dish with no-stick cooking spray. Place half the English muffin cubes into a prepared baking dish and sprinkle with half of the Canadian bacon. Top with remaining English muffin cubes and Canadian bacon.

Whisk milk and eggs together in bowl. Season with onion powder, salt and pepper. Pour egg mixture evenly over ingredients in baking dish, gently pressing down to soak English muffin cubes. Cover; refrigerate 4 hours or overnight.

Bake, uncovered, 45-55 minutes or until puffed and golden brown and knife inserted in center comes out clean.

FOR HOLLANDAISE:

Place water and egg yolks into 1-quart saucepan and whisk until well-mixed. Cook over low heat, whisking constantly, 2-3 minutes or until egg mixture begins to thicken. Add butter, 1 tablespoon at a time. Whisk constantly and make sure butter melts slowly and sauce begins to thicken without scrambling the eggs. Slowly whisk in lemon juice, Dijon mustard and hot sauce.

Serve egg bake warm topped with hollandaise sauce. Sprinkle with paprika, if desired.



BLUEBERRY PANCAKE BREAD PUDDING

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1½ cups all-purpose flour,
spooned and leveled | 2 cups half-and-half |
| ½ cup chopped toasted pecans | ½ cup sugar |
| 1½ teaspoons sugar | 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract |
| 1½ teaspoons baking powder | ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon |
| ½ teaspoon baking soda | Unsalted butter, for griddle |
| 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided | HONEY SOUR CREAM: |
| 1 cup evaporated milk | ½ cup sour cream |
| ½ cup sour cream | 2 tablespoons half-and-half |
| 5 large eggs, divided | 2 tablespoons honey |
| 1 cup fresh blueberries, divided | 2 teaspoons lemon zest |
| | Kosher salt |

Combine flour, pecans, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and ½ teaspoon salt in a bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together milk, sour cream and 1 egg. Stir milk mixture into flour mixture until just blended and smooth.

Heat a griddle or large nonstick skillet over medium heat, then add butter. Pour about ¼ cup batter for each pancake onto griddle. Cook until tops are covered with bubbles and edges look dry, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn and cook until plump and cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes. Repeat with remaining batter.

Slice each pancake in half and arrange, flat side down, in two snug rows in an 8-by-8-inch baking dish. Scatter half the blueberries over pancakes, tucking a few between pancakes. Whisk together half-and-half, sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, remaining 4 eggs, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt in a bowl. Pour egg mixture over pancakes. Chill at least 4 hours and up to overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Bake until puffed and set, 35 to 40 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes.

Sprinkle with remaining blueberries and drizzle with honey sour cream. Serve warm.

HONEY SOUR CREAM:

Whisk together sour cream, half-and-half, honey, lemon zest and a pinch of salt until smooth. Makes ½ cup.

Powering Through

Utilities use mutual aid to repair storm-damaged electric systems

Each year, communities throughout Tennessee weather powerful storms, and damage is inevitable. Tornadoes, flooding and, as shown by Helene, even hurricanes can bring destruction and turmoil to the state.

As water and fallen trees cause damage to critical infrastructure, the loss of electrical power is unavoidable. No single electricity provider can cope alone, but fortunately, the mutual-aid system creates a framework utilities can use to support one another.

The concept of mutual aid is straightforward—agreements among utilities to offer aid during emergencies. When one

utility is hit hard by a storm, others send expert crews and vital equipment to restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

Mutual aid, however, is more than a formal process. It's based on a powerful, long-standing culture devoted to restoring vital electrical service.

Visiting crews might spend days or weeks away from loved ones to help hard-hit communities, knowing theirs might be in need of a helping hand next. They work long hours in often dangerous and unpredictable conditions, and these professionals do it all with the same goal in mind: helping communities like ours recover.



When a tornado struck Clarksville last year, 40 additional line crews—more than 300 workers—joined the tireless effort to rebuild the electric infrastructure and restore power. PHOTO COURTESY OF CDE LIGHTBAND



Shelbyville Power System lineworkers restore power in Newport following Hurricane Helene. PHOTO COURTESY OF SPS

Faster Restoration

One of the key benefits of mutual aid is increasing recovery speed. Damage from a significant storm might overwhelm a utility working alone.

“Mutual aid is a powerful reminder of the true meaning of Public Power, where we are all in this together,” says CDE Lightband General Manager Brian Taylor. “When we help each other, we build a stronger, more resilient community.”

Mutual aid enables a quick response. You might even see utility crews on the interstate heading toward impending storms on their way to areas where outages are expected. Often, they travel hundreds of miles to be in position and then to respond where they are most needed.

Shared Expertise and Resources

The nation’s electric grid is built to federally determined standards, so repair crews understand the system from one community to the next. This knowledge and related experience are vital given the potential scope of the necessary repairs. Recovery from storm damage can touch every part of a utility’s system.

In addition to specialized vehicles like bucket trucks, recovery may require utility poles, electrical cables and almost every other item stored in utility warehouses. The skills of the line crews span tree trimming and removal to pole and cable restoration.

A Culture of Support

The mutual-aid system is ingrained in the community of electric utilities, part of the culture since the 1930s, when the nation’s rural areas were first electrified. It’s a system based on cooperation and a commitment to serve—no electric utility must face disaster alone.



Sevier County Electric System assists with restoration following a 2021 tornado in Mayfield, Kentucky. PHOTO COURTESY OF SCES

Mutual aid means power is restored quickly and more efficiently, returning power to everyone at a time when that resource is especially important. ■



Tullahoma Utilities Authority lineworkers help restore power in Elizabethton after Hurricane Helene. PHOTO COURTESY OF TUA

TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS PLANNER

Holiday lights twinkle, and caroling and visits with Santa, abound. Grab a cup of hot cocoa and be inspired to celebrate the warmth of the season in Tennessee.



CLARKSVILLE

Dec. 14

A 19th Century Christmas

Celebrate Christmas as soldiers did in the 1860s in Clarksville. Join the Friends of Fort Defiance and park staff from 3–4:30 p.m. Enjoy period refreshments, parlor games and reenactors. Step back in time and create period decorations, decorate the tree, and enjoy eggnog, cakes, caroling and more. There are goodie bags to take home. Preregistration and a fee of \$5 per person are required to participate.

visitclarksvilletn.com

BROWNSVILLE

Through Dec. 30

Markowski Lights

Immerse yourself in a dazzling display of more than a million Christmas lights as you drive through the Markowski Lights. This spectacular display, in its 20th year, is a beloved holiday tradition and the anchor site for Brownsville's Holiday Trail of Lights. Follow Markowski Lights on Facebook to learn when Santa, the Grinch and other beloved characters are making a special appearance.

visitbrownsvilletn.com/calendar

NASHVILLE

Through Dec. 26

Nashville's Nutcracker

See the Nashville Ballet perform at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. The unique rendition of the classic features characters from the city's history, stunning costumes, live music from the Nashville Symphony and original choreography by Artistic Director Emeritus Paul Vasterling.

www.tpac.org

MORRISTOWN

Dec. 14

Jingle Run for Hope

The 10th annual Jingle Run for Hope 5K Run/Walk takes place in beautiful historic downtown Morristown. Proceeds from this event benefit

cancer care at Morristown Regional Cancer Center within Morristown-Hamblen Healthcare System. These funds provide cancer patients and their families with financial assistance when they need it most. The course features mild elevation changes and a scenic route starting and ending on West Main Street near East Tennessee Diamond Co. Participants are supported by the well-marked course, chip timing, energetic course volunteers and post-race refreshments. Give hope this holiday season by running or walking in the annual Jingle Run for Hope.

jingleunforhope.com

GATLINBURG, PIGEON FORGE AND SEVIERVILLE

Through Feb. 17

Smoky Mountain Winterfest

More than 15 million lights line the parkway in Sevierville, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg. In Sevierville, Shadrack's Christmas Wonderland illuminates the drive with new, custom-built LED lights dancing in perfect rhythm to Christmas music played over the radio. In Pigeon Forge, attractions at The Old Mill include tours of the 186-year-old working mill, its two award-winning restaurants and shops filled with gifts. Gatlinburg offers the Trolley Ride of Lights to see the town's holiday magic. Check the website for dates of specific events.

visitsevierville.com/Winterfest.aspx

DICKSON

Dec. 14

Christmas in Downtown Dickson

Carriage rides, live music, carolers and much more make the evening fun. Events are planned from 5-9 p.m.

dicksoncountychamber.com

JONESBOROUGH

Dec. 14

Lighted Christmas Parade

Folks of all ages gather along Boone and Main streets downtown in anticipation of the arrival of floats, bands, classic cars, dancers and, of course, Santa Claus as they make their way downtown. This year's theme is "A Nutcracker Christmas." As one of the only nighttime parades in the area, Jonesborough takes advantage of the beautiful small-town setting in the downtown area as the backdrop for the event. The parade begins at 6 p.m.

jonesborough.com

PIGEON FORGE

Jan. 28-Feb. 1

Wilderness Wildlife Week

Celebrate the natural features, creatures and cultures of the Great Smoky Mountains. This year, leading wildlife experts are invited to lead informative discussions—a great opportunity to learn and ask questions about nature. Showcasing what makes the Smokies so special, Wilderness Wildlife Week celebrates the abundance of wildlife, variety of plants, trees and wildflowers, and rich history of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee through a series of classes, seminars, demonstrations, guided hikes, panel discussions and workshops. The event is at Ramsey Hotel and Convention Center.
mypigeonforge.com

TIPTONVILLE

Jan. 31-Feb. 2

Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival

Every winter, hundreds of eagles call the lake home in a sight not to be missed. This family-friendly festival features eagle tours and interpretive programs. Join experienced park naturalists daily for two-hour bald eagle and waterfowl bus or van tours. Watch eagles perching, flying, soaring and snatching fish from the lake. Telescopes are provided for viewing and information about the natural and cultural

history of the wildlife and area. Reservations are required for the tours.

tnstateparks.com/parks/activity-detail/reelfoot-lake-birding

MEMPHIS

Feb. 8

Lunar New Year Fair

A vibrant celebration of Asian culture that brings the spirit of Lunar New Year to the Mid-South, the event showcases traditional Lion and Dragon dances, live performances, Asian arts and crafts, and a variety of delicious foods at Agricenter International. The event serves as a platform to promote and share the rich heritage of Asian cultures with the broader Memphis community. Tickets are \$15. Children ages 10 and younger attend for free.

memphislunarnewyear.com

KINGSPORT

Feb. 11

Moonrise and Moon Pies

Watch the full moon rise above the high forested ridges of Warriors' Path State Park. February's full moon is called the Full Snow Moon. Whether or not it snows, participants enjoy a fine 2-mile hike through the gathering dusk and then salute the rising moon with a Moon Pie. Dress for the weather and wear good hiking boots. It's a mostly uphill hike to the view, with a few steep

and rocky places. Also, bring a flashlight for the walk back down. Meet at the former stables parking area at 5:30 p.m. Sign up soon, as space is limited.

tnstateparks.com

RIPLEY

Feb. 22

6th Annual Yard and Garden Expo

The Master Gardeners of Lauderdale County invite everyone to Ripley High School for this annual event. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. with speaker Jim Crowder at 9 a.m. and a horticulture expert panel at 10:30 a.m. Tickets are \$10.

facebook.com/lauderdalelnextension

MANCHESTER

March 8

Guided Tour of the Ancient Enclosure

Join Ranger Indiana and explore the prehistoric Native American walls at Old Stone Fort. Along this hike, learn about those who built the walls, why they are important and the history of Old Stone Fort. Enjoy the sights and sounds of nature, passing three waterfalls along the way. This hike is approximately 1.25 miles long, takes around 1.5 hours to complete and is considered easy-moderate. Sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots are suggested, as this is a natural dirt trail. Meet at the museum roof at 11 a.m.

tnstateparks.com/events



PIGEON FORGE

Feb. 28-March 2

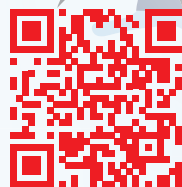
Chuckwagon Cookoff

Pigeon Forge invites Western lifestyle enthusiasts, foodies and those in search of a hearty meal to this three-day event that includes a dinner concert, cowboy church and the annual cook-off competition. Chuck wagons gather at Clabough's Campground for this one-of-a-kind outdoor cooking event. Long before today's food truck craze, early American chuck wagons fed hungry cowboys on the open prairies during cattle drives. Chuck wagon cooks, or cookies as they are known, rely on simple ingredients to guide their menus and fire to power their ovens.
mypigeonforge.com

Include Your Upcoming Event

Want to share an event with the readers of Tennessee Connections? Visit tinyurl.com/TennesseeEvents, or scan the QR Code, to submit the details.

For a complete list of what's happening in Tennessee, visit tnvacation.com/calendar.



Take part in a grand parade of ducks at The

Peabody Memphis



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PEABODY MEMPHIS

What Is It?

Located in the heart of downtown Memphis, The Peabody Memphis is a grand, historic hotel known for its daily Duck March. Each morning, guests gather in the lobby to watch as the ducks parade into the lobby fountain.

History

The original Peabody Hotel opened in 1869. It relocated a few blocks from its initial spot in 1925. Its connection with ducks came in the '30s, when then-General Manager Frank Schutt and a friend returned from a hunting trip. On a whim, they placed some of the live duck decoys they used while hunting into the hotel's lobby fountain, and a tradition began.

In the Site

There are five Peabody Ducks—all North American mallards. Every day, a Peabody Duckmaster guides the Peabody Ducks across a red carpet and into the lobby fountain at 11 a.m. They stay until 5 p.m. When not in the fountain, the ducks live in a Royal Duck Palace on the hotel's roof—a \$200,000 marble and glass home with its own fountain.

Outside the Hotel

Whether staying at the Peabody or just passing through, the hotel's central location in Memphis puts you close to many other things to do. Visit the National Civil Rights Museum or Graceland, or just walk down Beale Street. If you're looking for more ideas, consider asking the hotel's concierge for other activities.

More Info

The hotel advises guests to arrive 30 minutes before the Duck March to find a good viewing spot. For information on room reservations and to start planning your trip, visit www.peabodymemphis.com or call 901-529-4000.



The Nature of Soils

Have you ever been outside on a beautiful day, in complete awe over the wonders of nature? Whether you are in a mature forest in the Smoky Mountains, a pollinator garden in Nashville, a cornfield along the Mississippi River or sitting on a blanket in your backyard, each location shares something in common: soil.

Soil can be easily overlooked as we appreciate the vegetation around us, as well as the fruits of our gardening labor. It plays a critical role in producing healthy plants and a healthy ecosystem, and it should be understood and properly cared for. As the winter sets in and you begin planning your spring garden, be sure to consider the following information to help you better understand and manage your soil.

What is soil?

Before we talk about basic soil care and health, it is important to explain what soil is. At a basic level, soil is a mix of solids, liquids and gases. The solids consist primarily of minerals and organic matter.

Soil is ultimately formed by five factors: parent material, biological activity, climate, topography and time. The different variables make soils unique to their locations. While all of these factors are important, time is worth a special note. Soil requires a long time to develop. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1 inch of soil can take up to 1,000 years to form. Contrast that with the work of a bulldozer blade, which can remove several feet of soil with only one pass across the land.

Soil Care and Health

If you are just getting started on a plan to better manage your soil health, consider submitting your soil to the UT Soil, Plant and Pest

Center for testing. A basic test can tell you the soil pH and nutrient levels, which helps identify which amendments you can add to improve it. That test is normally sufficient for most people, but you can also have the lab evaluate the organic matter content, soluble salts, texture and heavy metals for an additional cost.

Two easy ways to better care for your soil include reducing compaction and regularly adding organic matter. Compaction is a common problem in areas with recent construction or equipment activity. When soil is compressed, air and water leave the pore space. Compacted soils make it difficult for plants to send out roots and inhibit water movement, among other problems. To reduce compaction and improve your soil quality, consider aeration or tillage and adding around a half-inch layer of quality compost. Aeration and tillage mechanically break up the compaction, while the compost adds organic matter to the soil, improving the overall soil structure as it breaks down.

This is just a small snapshot of the wonderful world of soils. If you would like to learn more, check out your local UT-TSU Extension office for more resources. ■

This article was written with information from "North Carolina Extension Master Gardener Handbook Chapter 1. Soils & Plant Nutrients." Read more at tinyurl.com/gardenerhandbook.



Rylan Thompson is a Tennessee State University Agriculture and Natural Resources/4-H Extension agent in Knox County. He specializes in residential/consumer horticulture and 4-H and is the Knox County Master Gardener coordinator.



Watt's Happening?

- More than 100 visitors joined Tullahoma Utilities Authority in Jefferson Street Park in September for the utility's annual customer appreciation movie night. On the morning of the event, each of Tullahoma's four elementary schools received a visit from one of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, who invited them to the park to watch their movie "Mutant Mayhem." That evening, all four turtles welcomed visitors to the park—and made sure everyone knew there was plenty of their favorite food—pizza—for everyone.
- Also in September, TUA welcomed a new director after newly elected Mayor Lynn Sebourn appointed Busch Thoma to serve as the mayor's liaison to the utility's governing board. All municipal board members are required to obtain 12 hours of certified utility education within one year of their initial election and another 12 hours within the first three years of their term. Busch fills a seat that was left vacant by former Mayor Ray Knowis. We extend our deepest gratitude for Ray's years of dedication and service.
- Mike Stanton was appointed to retain his citizen-participation seat and will serve another full term on the board of directors. At the September meeting, Mike was elected to serve as vice chair to Jimmy Blanks, who was elected to serve as chair.
- In October, the board, management and staff welcomed more than 350 visitors to celebrate the power of reliable, low-cost electricity, which is a hallmark of community-owned, not-for-profit utilities like TUA. Despite the October pass-through rate increase from the Tennessee Valley Authority, TVA customers enjoy electric rates lower than 70% of the country. Tullahoma's residential electric rates are ranked in the lowest 10 among the 153 utilities that purchase power from TVA.



Built for Safety: Tullahoma's Water System

By Kelly Lapczynski

One decade ago, the world turned its attention to an unfolding water crisis in the city of Flint, Michigan. To save money, the nearly bankrupt city switched its municipal water source from the properly treated Detroit water system to the untreated waters of the Flint River. To save even more, the city opted—in violation of several laws—not to treat its new water source with anti-corrosion chemicals. As a result, the lead in Flint's water pipes began to leach into the water supply, affecting tens of thousands of residents.

The Flint water crisis was a criminal administrative failure that still makes headlines nationwide—but not one that could happen here in Tullahoma.

Unchanging Water Source

Since 1981, TUA has purchased its potable water from the Duck River Utility Commission, which withdraws water from Normandy Reservoir. For more than 40 years, Normandy has been the city's sole source of water. This is unlikely to change in any foreseeable future.

Corrosion Treatment

Because it is a soft-water source, water from Normandy Reservoir is not particularly corrosive. Still, DRUC employs a corrosion inhibitor—which it tests daily—to protect not only customers but its own infrastructure.

"We want it to last for hundreds of years," says DRUC General Manager Randal Braker. "We're trying to protect our own cast-iron mains, ductile iron and copper pipes from long-term corrosion. Though the water from Normandy is not particularly aggressive, it's still water; it still rusts."

That corrosion spurred a federal treatment regulation, the 1991 Lead and Copper Rule, requiring public water systems to limit pipe corrosion that occurs due to the water itself.

Officials in Flint chose to ignore the rule, but DRUC has always met these regulations.

"It's just ridiculous they weren't doing it," Braker said when news of the Flint crisis first broke. "It's something that, regardless of the lead and copper situation, they should have been doing anyway."

No Lead Pipes

In Flint, where leaders failed to use the required anti-corrosion agent, roughly half of the city's water service lines contained lead. In Tullahoma, none of them do.

"We've never had any lead pipes," Braker says.

According to TUA Vice President of Water and Wastewater Scott Young, roughly a quarter of the Tullahoma service lines are copper, while the rest are plastic.

The copper and plastic service lines that lead from the Tullahoma main to customers' meters belong to the utility, but the pipes that carry water from a meter to a home or business belong to the customer. Vintage homes built before the 1950s have the potential to have been built with lead pipe, but Braker says that in all his years of testing local water samples, he's never found evidence of such a home in Tullahoma.

And it's not for lack of trying.

Routine Testing

The Environmental Protection Agency requires public water systems to regularly provide water quality data and data on corrosion-control practices to the state, but Braker says there's almost nothing in the system to test.

With no lead in the lake water and none in the pipe system, Braker says DRUC has had a challenge finding enough homes or apartments that even meet the criteria for testing.

According to Young, about 10% of Tullahoma homes have copper

pipes, but Braker says only those pipes installed with lead solder after 1983 necessitate corrosion testing. Because lead solder was banned in household plumbing by 1991, it's a pretty narrow search.

"We went through the entire system using building records and surveys to figure out who had copper pipes with lead solder made after 1983," says Braker. They found fewer than 100 homes, which are routinely tested. "We couldn't even find the required number of copper-plumbed houses."

It Can't Happen Here

According to Braker, there is no possibility that Tullahoma could have a situation like the one in Flint.

"This is not only impossible because of the absence of lead pipe in our water system, but also not possible due to the fact that the DRUC and TUA staff are dedicated professionals who care about our customers and the public health." ■



GET OUTSIDE

Some monster catfish in the Tennessee River can weigh up to 100 pounds. PHOTO BY JOHN N. FELSHER

River Monsters

Anglers might battle giants on Tennessee River lakes

By John N. Felsler

Legendary for its monster catfish, the Tennessee River can produce blue cats topping 100 pounds, as well as some huge flatheads. Some of the best catfish action in the Volunteer State occurs in Lake Chickamauga and Watts Bar Lake.

Named for the Chickamauga Cherokees of the area, Lake Chickamauga snakes for about 59 miles along the Tennessee River between Watts Bar Dam, north of Decatur, and Chickamauga Dam in Chattanooga. The serpentine impoundment covers about 36,240 acres and offers anglers 810 shoreline miles. Chickamauga Creek, the Hiwassee River and several other tributaries flow into the system.

On the other side of Watts Bar Dam, Watts Bar Lake continues for 72 miles to Fort Loudoun Dam at Lenoir City and covers 39,000 acres. It derives its name from Watts Island, once a river landmark, now just a submerged sandbar near Watts Bar Dam. The lake offers anglers 722 shoreline miles and drops to more than 100 feet deep in places. The Clinch and Emory rivers feed into it.

Anglers might catch big cats practically anywhere in the Tennessee River, but the best whiskerfish action usually comes in the tailraces below the dams. Water passing through the dams stirs up baitfish and incites fish-feeding frenzies. When the water doesn't run, try fishing the deep holes near the dams.

Catfish eat almost anything, but the biggest blues prefer fish. With thousands of taste buds per square inch in its skin, a catfish swims through the water like a giant tongue, tasting everything. It can detect minute food particles or scents over long distances. Catfish can even detect live prey with tiny natural "scanners" in their heads. Every living cell emits a minuscule electrical field.

Catfish use their electrosensors to detect prey at night or in muddy water.

Skipjack, a type of large river herring, makes an outstanding catfish bait. Toss the tail into the water for chum, and use the head and gut section so the juices ooze out. Catfish follow those juices. Live, whole or chunked, shad also make great catfish bait.

When the current runs too strong, head downstream to look for flathead catfish. Flatheads can exceed 80 pounds. Several creeks flow into the lakes. Big catfish often gather near creek mouths and points on the main channel. Ravenous predators, flatheads normally eat shad, bluegills, skipjack, bullheads and other catfish. Flatheads hunker down in woody cover and ambush any fish that swim too close. They prefer live fish but also eat fish chunks.

For some delicious fillets, try for channel cats. Widespread and abundant, channel catfish look similar to blue cats but don't reach such gigantic sizes. Most run in the 1- to 5-pound range, but channel cats can exceed 50 pounds.

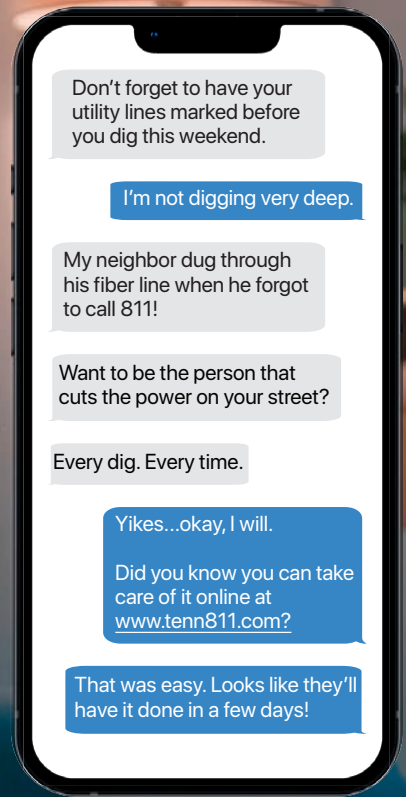
Channel catfish eat just about anything. Some excellent baits include crickets, shrimp, nightcrawlers, minnows, fish pieces, clams, dough balls, crawfish, cheese, livers, commercial stink or blood baits. For channel catfish, place fish baits on the bottom or under a float. ■



John N. Felsler is a professional freelance writer, broadcaster, photographer, editor and consultant. An avid sportsman, he's written more than 3,600 articles for more than 170 different magazines on a wide variety of outdoors topics. He also hosts an outdoors tips show for WAVH-FM Talk 106.5 radio station in Mobile, Alabama. Contact him at jfelsler@hotmail.com or through Facebook.



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