

Powerline Press

NEWSLETTER



A Supplement of Oklahoma Living Published by Lake Region Electric Cooperative for its members. **January 2023**

Closing the Digital Divide

The Need For Reliable, Fast Internet is Both an Urban and Rural Issue.

Infrastructure investments in broadband growth are critical to the local economy that relies on the internet to access information, customers, and services to support operations.

Broadband access is critical to supporting small businesses, particularly in rural and underserved communities. This is why Lake Region Electric Cooperative (LREC) has stepped up to the plate to build fiber optic broadband where no one else was willing to build, similar to rural electrification 80 years ago.

Rachel Dallis, Attorney at Law, started her law office in 2018 in downtown Tahlequah before moving to her current location near the Cherokee County Courthouse in 2020.

"I knew how great Lake Region fiber internet was because I had it at home for several years outside of Hulbert. When I first opened my business in Tahlequah, I had AT&T, and it was very unreliable; it would go out on rainy days, and the speeds were nowhere comparable to Lake Region," said Rachel.

Lake Region is gaining popularity as a fast, reliable internet provider in many rural areas and towns inside of their electricity grid, and we are witnessing daily requests for internet service in larger communities. A faster, more reliable technology internet provider is still needed in many communities with other subpar internet service providers (ISPs). Lake Region is weighing the cost of building mainline infrastructure into Tahlequah's dense population to pick up many customers per mile of line to help offset the cost of continuing to build fiber optic lines into the rural, less populated territory.



"I wasn't expecting Tahlequah not to have fast, reliable internet for my business when I first opened. Our VoIP phone system, calendars, emails, e-filing software, (and the list goes on), needed a reliable, fast internet connection for my new business to be successful," stated Rachel.

Tahlequah is no small town. It is home to a regional public university, two large hospitals, and home of the Cherokee Nation headquarters. Many residents and businesses that call Tahlequah home still lack access to fast, reliable, fiber optic internet technology. The broadband infrastructure movement across the nation and all the funding coming from the government must also consider towns like Tahlequah, lacking this critical infrastructure for the future.

"We couldn't do anything when the internet was down with our previous provider, and during the COVID years, we did many of our

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Digital Divide

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court hearings via Zoom calls. So, the internet was crucial for my business operations,” added Rachel.

The fiber network Lake Region installs today will be able to handle the increased demand for more bandwidth in the future. As that demand grows, only the network equipment would need to be upgraded over time, not the actual fiber cables.

Fiber optic internet brings opportunities to communities. Not just the opportunity for buffer-free video streaming but opportunities for businesses to expand and for our communities to attract new businesses. Our communities can also attract new residents, who may telecommute, and can only live here because of the power of fast internet.

If your business or home is interested in connecting to Lake Region Fiber, please visit our website and enter your address to check availability:

www.LakeRegionFiber.com. | 918-772-2526

Gaining POWERFUL Experience

Lake Region Internship

Lake Region is in a good location in northeastern Oklahoma with Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, OSUIT in Okmulgee, several Career Tech Schools and the Cherokee Nation in the region educating and training the next generation of workforce.

LREC offers internships throughout the year, from our high-voltage lineworker program to Tech Support and GIS Mapping. The LREC internship programs allow men and women from all walks of life to partner with LREC and provide valuable on-the-job training and a paid internship.

Amaiya Bearpaw is currently working on her college degree and needed a local internship for college credit to complete her degree. Her teacher Dr. Hallman mentioned many good things about LREC and Tiffany Copeland, a former GIS student at NSU.



Amaiya Bearpaw, LREC Intern

“I was told about LREC by a college professor and I applied. I am working on completing a two-semester internship; between my classes, I come in and help the mapping department with service location comparison from SIS into the fiber mapping software. Another job duty is making sure latitude and longitude and address data are all correct and entered into the maps.” I have some experience with ArcGIS software, used by LREC. The mapping department also has me putting in old fiber service order data,” said Amaiya.

“I enjoy the mapping department at LREC. Before coming to work here, I had heard a little about LREC providing electricity and internet. Since working here, I have gotten some field experience with gathering GPS points and ride-alongs with staking techs as they draw up new jobs, and I have learned a lot about how LREC utilizes mapping data for their everyday operations,” added Amaiya.

Internships are typically not posted on our website; however, if you are interested in seeing if we have any available, it is always good to call 918-772-2526 and speak with the human resources department.

LREC Rings in the Christmas Spirit



Lake Region is deeply involved in our communities we serve. This spirit was seen with all our hard working employees who helped during the Hulbert Christmas Parade. We also had a very special guest, Willie Wiredhand, who joined LREC for the Hulbert parade.

Willie Wiredhand is the cartoon mascot of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), created in 1950 and still in use by co-op electricity companies. His head is a lightbulb socket, his body is a wire, and his hips and legs are a two-pronged power plug.



Our main purpose is to connect our communities with reliable affordable electric and internet and improve the quality of our members lives. One of our co-op's guiding principles is Concern for Communities. Genuine concern for our community and the commitment to make it thrive is second nature as a cooperative business. 2656202

GET MORE OUT OF CAMP THAN A SUNBURN

2023

YOUTH LEADERSHIP CO-OP PROGRAMS

Leadership Summit

March 13

Youth Power Energy Camp May 30 - June 2

Washington D.C. Youth Tour June 16 - 22

Contact: **Juanita Keener** 918-772-2526

LREC has three great youth programs coming up in 2023. LREC is calling for 8th-grade students to apply for Energy Camp and 11th-grade students for LREC's Youth Tour contest. Youth Tour is an all-expense paid trip for Washington, D.C. These trips are opportunities for local students to spend an educational and fun week learning about electric cooperatives, electricity, and government history.

Everyone Who Switches to Paperless Will Receive a \$5 Credit on Your Next Bill

Lake Region has offered paperless billing for many years. However, the technology for electronically viewing your bill is better today than it has ever been with the SmartHub App.

Go paperless during the month of **January**, and Lake Region will credit your electric or fiber account **\$5**. You can go paperless on each service you receive a bill for electric or fiber. Credits will be applied to members who switch to paperless billing during the month of January and who were not previously on paperless billing.

Save Your Co-op Money

Every month, LREC sends thousands of paper statements (multiple sheets each) to electric and fiber members. That is a lot of paper sent for monthly billing. Sending out paper bills each month is a significant part of Lake Region's operating costs. Traditional paper bills require postage and time to sort through the mail. Postal rates keep increasing and will only continue to do so. Not only are you saving yourself time and money, but you're also saving the cooperative money when you switch to paperless, which translates to keeping your rates affordable.

Reduce Clutter

Every house has that one spot where mail, bills included, just stack up. Maybe that is the corner of your desk or right next to your phone on the kitchen counter. Either way, your bill doesn't have to be part of that clutter. Instead, get your monthly bill delivered straight to your email inbox or SmartHub App.

How to opt-out of your paper bill statement



SmartHub App: Log into the SmartHub app on your smartphone, click on Settings, then click **Go Paperless**. Click **Yes** to confirm.



Phone: Give us a call at **918-772-2526** and let a customer service representative know you would no longer like to receive a paper bill, and we will help get your account.



Email: Send a "contact us" submission on our website <https://www.lrecok.coop/paperless-billing> with a note informing us you would like to go paperless.

Remember, you will need a valid email address to go paperless, because we'll send your bill straight to your inbox each month.

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Office Hours

Monday-Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Telephone

**800-364-LREC or
918-772-2526**

Website:

www.lrecok.coop
www.lakeregionfiber.com

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Hidden Account Number

Look for your account number hidden in this issue of the *Powerline Press*. If you find your number, Lake Region Electric will credit your next bill. To claim your credit, notify LREC's Hulbert office by phone during the month of publication.

The amount increases by \$10 with each issue your prize goes unclaimed to a maximum of \$50.

Cooperative bylaws are available upon request at Lake Region Electric Cooperative's office in Hulbert.