



Talk Power

VISION AND LEADERSHIP

The Passing of a Co-op Leader, Friend

■ United Cooperative Services mourns the loss of Board President Jack McCaslin

United Cooperative Services employees, members and directors were saddened by the sudden loss on March 18 of Board of Directors President Jack McCaslin, who unexpectedly passed away following complications stemming from recent cardiovascular surgery.

Throughout his many years of service as a director, Mr. McCaslin was a tireless champion of member-owned electric cooperatives. Working with fellow board members, he helped to establish policies for the former Johnson County Electric Cooperative. Seeing many potential member benefits by combining forces with Erath County Electric Cooperative, Mr. McCaslin—along with the directors on each cooperative’s board—spearheaded a consolidation of Johnson County and Erath County electric cooperatives in 2000, cre-



Widely respected United Board President Jack McCaslin addresses his fellow members from the podium during opening business meeting remarks at one of United’s more recent annual meetings in Glen Rose.

ating what is today known as one of the most successful electric cooperatives in the nation—United Cooperative Services.

“Passion is an honorable captor and Jack McCaslin had a passion for many things; his country, his family, his business and for this electric cooperative,” said United CEO Ray Beavers. “His contributions and his leadership at the helm of our Board of Directors were indicative of a man who understood both the value of compromise and the strength of stubborn resolve. Those attributes not only served the cooperative and its members well, but they helped shape and position United Cooperative Services as one of the

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Sen. Birdwell Provides Keynote Address at United Employee Luncheon

■ Texas Senator vows to protect citizen rights

Sen. Brian Birdwell addressed United Cooperative Services in Cleburne this month as the cooperative's employees gathered for a celebration of Rural Friends/ACRE, a political action committee (PAC) that supports legislators who protect the interests of electric co-ops and their members. United's board of directors, employees, their spouses and co-op members have pledged over \$7,500 of their hard-earned dollars to demonstrate how important the political process is in protecting the electric cooperatives and the services they provide their members.

"Investing their own money into Rural Friends/ACRE, United employees are making sure that legislators at both the state and federal

levels hear about what's important to co-ops and the members they serve," said United CEO Ray Beavers.

The PAC is open to all people with an interest in preserving their local electric cooperative and promoting the progress and growth of co-ops and the communities they serve.

"At United, we're focused on serving our members at the highest level and we do that by adhering to a simple principle: Do the right thing," said United CEO Ray Beavers. "Sen. Birdwell is so well respected because it's obvious he lives and serves by that same principle and we're honored that he took time to discuss important issues being addressed in Austin," Beavers added.

In introducing Birdwell to the employees, Beavers explained a number of accomplishments by the senator, but focused appropriately on Birdwell's desire to serve and protect the rights of his constituents.

"My duty as I stand here before you



TEXAS SENATOR BRIAN BIRDWELL

isn't to pass out benefits, it's to protect your rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," he said. "My duty is to protect you from government because I am subordinate to your authority. I go to represent you and I

Continued Next Page

borrow your authority collectively to represent you on a state level and make decisions on your behalf,” said Birdwell.

As the Texas Legislature convened in January with the promise of addressing a multitude of issues, some of which that will focus on the energy industry, the employees of United Cooperative Services stepped up to ensure that legislative and regulatory initiatives continue to protect the cooperative way of doing business and the members who benefit from co op services. As of January 2011, United Cooperative Services has 240 employees, board members, spouses and friends enrolled in the PAC.

“My responsibility to you as state senator is to make sure I’m not taking the

easy way out today that leads to harder decisions tomorrow for you. That’s my most important duty,” said Birdwell.

One of those decisions is his pledge to hold the line on taxes.

“Ultimately, we have to get out of the mindset in governance that tells us to take the easy way out simply by raising taxes,” Birdwell told United’s employees. “That assumption means that government can never do without and the inverse of that assumption is that the citizen must. We’ve got to turn that around. That means government must start doing without so that citizens do not, because when you raise taxes all you’re doing is depressing the incentive you have to economic activity and you begin the death spiral until you

finally crash,” he added.

In an era when interest in the political process has been supplanted by reality television, politicians might think people simply must not care about issues that affect them, Beavers said. That’s not the case at United, however.

“Electric cooperatives and their members need representatives in the Legislature who understand the important issues affecting rural electric co-ops, and who will fight for electric co-op consumers. Rural Friends/ACRE gives us such a platform and lawmakers like Sen. Birdwell are the audience we’re trying to reach,” Beavers said.

United Names 2011 Youth Tour Delegates



KATIE BRYAN



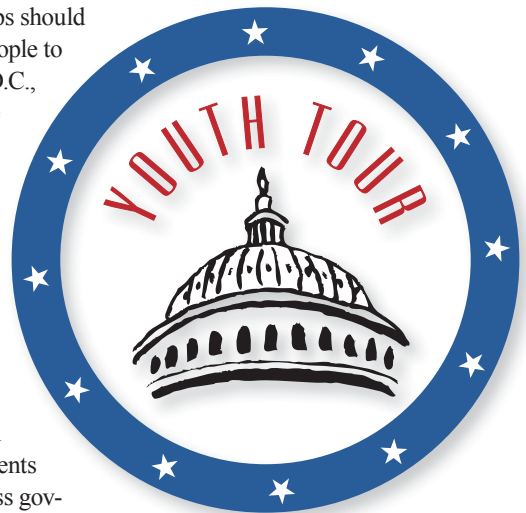
DOUG SECHRIST

United Cooperative Services will send two very active and deserving students this June on an action-filled trip to our nation’s capital—an expense-free chance to learn firsthand what it is like to be involved in politics and community service, as well as to discover more about today’s pressing issues. The trip also provides a rare opportunity to walk among and touch fixtures that paint a tribute to our nation’s enduring struggle to remain a land of the free.

This year’s winners, Katie Bryan of Huckabay High School and Burleson High School’s Doug Sechrist, earned a valuable opportunity to witness the political process, as well as a chance to interact with lawmakers and fellow students. They will also develop a greater understanding about how co-ops like United are different from other utilities when it comes to showing commitment to community.

Following the advice given in 1957 by Lyndon B. Johnson,

who said co-ops should send young people to Washington, D.C., to see what the flag stands for, Texas electric cooperatives joined other co-ops from across the country in sponsoring trips to the nation’s capital for young students eager to witness government in action.

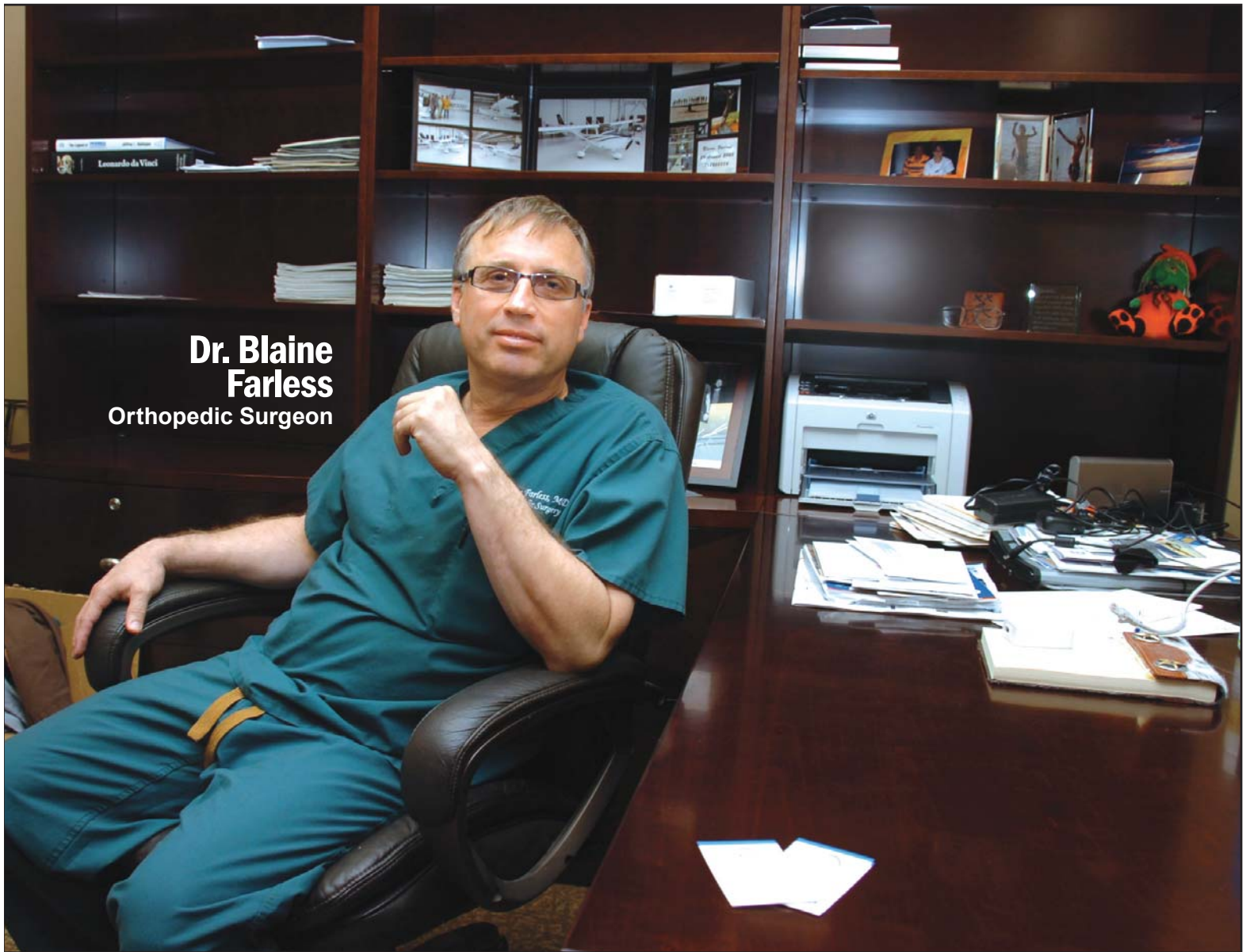


For decades, United Cooperative Services has played a pivotal role in providing young students from across United’s 14-county service area such an outstanding opportunity.

Featured speakers during National Youth Day provide insight to the important roles electric cooperatives play in their community, and students gain a personal understanding of American history and their civic responsibility as citizens by meeting their representatives and senators. Those learning experiences for the students are heightened by having the chance to explore historical sites around the nation’s capital.

The Youth Tour program is one of the many ways United

Please see **YOUTH TOUR, PAGE 9**



Dr. Blaine Farless
Orthopedic Surgeon

UNITED SPOTLIGHT

A Purely Regional Focus On Quality Surgical Care

IT TAKES A VILLAGE ► Cleburne Surgery Center’s Dr. Blaine Farless bucked the odds for success when he and a colleague formed a partnership to build a one-stop outpatient surgical complex on the outskirts of Cleburne—now a bustling Shangrila to area patients who have found the center’s caliber of medical disciplines on par with those generally found only in larger metropolitan areas / **BY MAURI MONTGOMERY**

Dr. Blaine Farless has devoted a great many hours to whacking away at the weeds. Not so much the garden variety that regularly blight manicured lawns, but rather those that challenged his perspective for achieving professional and personal accomplishment.

He seems to have enjoyed the work. And if his past success suggests anything at all about achievement, it’s an underlying belief that behind every weed lies another worthy milestone.

He spent two years working for Dow Chemical as a chemical engineer before he decided to apply the weed eater on that

career path and instead pursue a medical degree as an orthopedic surgeon. The same abounding restlessness that compelled him to become a doctor also wrestled with his down time. He felt that watching TV was a waste of precious hours and minutes, so he invested his free time into his determination and desire to earn a pilot's license. Never a man without purpose, the methodical young surgeon later petitioned for the community's need to build more and better operating room facilities. And when few within the local medical fraternity seemed to endorse his views, he ignored the impasse and redirected his energy and his money into planning for just such an asset—now a thriving surgical center that is helping to fulfill the surgical needs of Cleburne and the surrounding area, even Fort Worth.

THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

Perched at the corner where U.S. 67 and FM 4 intersect, the 8,000-square-foot Cleburne Surgical Center neatly straddles the narrowing divide between Cleburne proper and the North Texas countryside that still endures despite mercurial growth into Johnson County from the Dallas, Fort Worth Metroplex.

Patches of wild cactus finger their way across the sprawling grassland of a farm and ranch homestead on the opposite side of the intersection, and a Johnson Co. Precinct barn occupies a neighboring property, a stone's throw north of the center. Even so, the modern outpatient surgical facility proudly stands in stark contrast to the surrounding landscape.

The center, which made its debut in 2007 and is served by United, sports two operating rooms, a procedure room, four preoperative bays, six postoperative bays, plus family conference and waiting rooms; and it is staffed today by 15 fellowship-trained physicians who practice specialized medicine in gastroenterology, general surgery, gynecology, laparoscopic gastric banding (weight loss surgery), orthopedic surgery, ophthalmology, otolaryngology (ENT), pain

management, periodontal plastic surgery, pediatric surgery, podiatry, spine and urology. The center also anchors a medical complex that includes physical therapy and radiological services. Since its opening, the \$12 million project has created 34 jobs and the center has performed more than 7,000 procedures.

"We were asked more than once why we chose to build the center our here in the boondocks," Farless notes with a smile. "We believed the location ideally suited our plans to make the center accessible from Johnson, Hill, Somervell and Hood counties, as a regional surgical facility—which, as it has turned out, is just that. So, while it seemed we were locating out in the sticks, we actually felt like our building location was going to wind up being centrally located, and ideal for growing the business," he said.

"From a personal and perhaps selfish perspective as a pilot, I liked our site's proximity to the Cleburne airport," he added. "We're located on the approach to the airport. But in all seriousness, being located adjacent to the airport has been practical because there have been many times I was somewhere else when I needed to get to the center quickly to see an incoming patient."

While the surgical center owns the distinction of being the only outpatient surgical center in Johnson County, Farless said he believes the center's success is derived from the cooperative spirit that resides in its ownership—between the center's staff and Candor Surgical Development, a medical management company headquartered in Nashville, Tenn. that Farless and his co-partner, Dr. Brad Harman, became associated with early in the center's planning and development.

"Our business concept here is that ownership is shared by six partner physicians and the management company, and that relationship allows us to be more cost-effective and cost-efficient. We don't have a bureaucracy to deal with here," he said. "We have a small staff and we can make decisions about the center's course, and that means we can offer more reasonable rates to the many patients we serve who are self-insured—a consideration that traditionally isn't given by larger medical institutions."

"Another important aspect that sepa-

rates us from a lot of other places is that we have a very strong pain management program here," Farless said. "Our anesthesia professionals have perfected their specialty in managing pain. We are better at reducing the amount pain experienced during surgery, and controlling pain after surgery. And because we're so in tune with pain management, our control over perioperative pain has enabled us to perform more procedures on an outpatient basis than has been historically feasible at other surgery facilities."

The allure of the surgical center's rapid success prompted Candor Surgical Development to use it as a model for several surgery center expansions it has started since the Cleburne center's opening (a fact made more notable since the Cleburne Surgical Center was the management company's first foray into the development of smaller outpatient facilities), and its pricing flexibility and cost efficiencies has drawn the keen interest of one of the biggest medical care insurers, Blue Cross Blue Shield.

"We developed a pilot program that we're now testing with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas that can reduce implant costs, which are very expensive in orthopedic surgery," Farless said. "Essentially, Blue Cross Blue Shield is using the pilot to determine how they will reimburse equipment charges in the near future."

Farless said he really isn't surprised that his vision for the center has materialized, nor does he doubt the facility will continue to be successful. He and his partners have such confidence in the center's business model that the group is already planning an expansion to the facility in 2013 that will allow substantial enlargement of the center's operating room capacity.

And while he admits a little good luck along the way has helped the center become a reality, he emphasizes that a lot of leg work, strategizing and putting all its key pieces together were the ingredients that helped get the venture off the ground.

The doctor also points to the fact that the surgical center's success validated his initial belief that Cleburne and the sur-

Please see **SURGICAL CARE, PAGE 10**

ENERGY
INNOVATION

Smart Meter Technology Advances



—By ED NUNEZ—

Smart meters were then only an emerging technology when United Cooperative Services initially implemented its first generation smart meter technology more than a decade ago. Known at that time within the industry as TS1 “turtle” meters, the advanced metering technology allowed one-way communication between the member’s meter and the cooperative’s data-capturing systems for the very first time—in essence, giving United and other electric utilities the ability to detect and pinpoint system outages more readily and with greater accuracy, in addition to traditional meter reading.

The TS1 meters and the digital technology infrastructure that complimented them were an exhilarating boon to United’s service delivery, and they served reliably until an even smarter meter was developed and phased into United’s distribution system—this time capable of two-way communication between United and the member’s meter.

The Landis & Gyr TS2 AMI (auto-mated meter infrastructure) generation of meters, which have been gradually phased into United’s distribution system since 2006, not only allow the cooperative to see every meter in its distribution system, but TS2 metering provides United the means to query the meters for usage data.

But from an operational efficiency standpoint, two of the greatest attributes of the new electronic smart meters are that (1) they have been proven to be more accurate than older gear-driven/dial meters, and (2) they allow the cooperative to read most of its 74,000-plus meters remotely through secure electric distribution lines, rather than through monthly on-site inspection by a fleet of field service representatives, as had been the previous industry convention.

The new meter technology freed a portion of the manpower conventionally allotted for reading meters and permitted the co-op to redirect that labor into the co-op’s vast Energy Innovation program—training field service representatives with the expertise needed to perform free residential energy audits of member homes and provide a springboard for United’s increasing emphasis on residential energy efficiency.

The advent of TS2 meters also opened

the door for many future consumer energy management tools that may one day empower “smart” members with the ability to control HVAC thermostat settings, or the



United Co-op's Energy Innovation



consumption cycles. Coupled with United's free energy audit program, the updated TS2 technology could provide a new tool to pinpoint areas of significant residential and commercial energy waste, too.

When a member requests an energy audit, United's energy auditors collect data obtained from the co-op's database prior to auditing the member's home or business.

The TS2 data shows the member's daily or hourly load consumption which can help reveal patterns of increased consumption, and potential energy loss. This extra data gives the energy auditor a good picture of a member's overall energy usage prior to the audit, and helps the United energy expert provide a more accurate

and thorough audit for the member while performing an onsite energy analysis.

United has professional energy experts that conduct energy audits as members request them, and the free service is one of the cooperative's most tangible assets in educating members about ways to waste less energy. Each audit is a scientific evaluation of a home's overall energy efficiency that helps members understand where their problem areas exist and what recommended improvements offer the greatest return on investment.

"Since 2007, United has performed

more than 4,800 energy audits and smart meter technology has been a key component in retrieving the necessary data to make the audit even more meaningful for the member," said United Energy Conservation Coordinator Seth Rosser. "We're not only able to measure a member's usage, but we can often detect failing appliances or equipment, such as heating elements that can add tremendous load usage to a monthly electric bill," added Rosser.

The new smart meters also gave United further license to explore the potential of in-home energy usage display monitors. United has been beta testing the usage monitors for the past year, but has not yet determined a clear winner in both reliability and affordability. Nevertheless, such energy display monitors could one day provide United members the convenience of monitoring their home's energy usage throughout the month and from within the home—providing a real-time snap-shot of energy usage.

"The deployment of the TS2 smart meter technology at United has enhanced the performance of our AMI (Automated Metering Infrastructure) system, while also laying the foundation for our members to obtain more information to control their energy usage in the future. TS2 technology brings state-of-the-art functionality to the home, and that could help United and its members reach higher levels of energy efficiency," said United's Technical Services/Planning Manager Jared Wennermark. "This new generation of meters is already proving to be a successful tool in United's continuing effort to surpass member expectations for electric service reliability at the lowest possible cost."

activation of "smart" appliances remotely via computer or smart phones—conveniences that will help homeowners become more self-sufficient in managing household energy

Longtime Director Remembered Fondly

CO-OP LEADER

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most efficient and proactive cooperatives in the nation,” added Beavers.

Mr. McCaslin began serving as a director in March 1993. He was raised in Wolfe City, Texas, and attended Southern Methodist University on a track scholarship. He graduated from SMU in 1961 with a Bachelor’s of Business degree in accounting and obtained his CPA (Certified Public Accountant) designation in 1966. Mr. McCaslin served on active duty in the U. S. Marine Corps from 1962 through 1965. He was a practicing CPA for over 45 years, first with the international accounting firm of Deloitte Haskins & Sells (now Deloitte) and later in his own firm, McCaslin & Company. Working up until his final days, Mr. McCaslin was a principal with Whitley Penn, LLP, an accounting and professional consulting firm with offices in Fort Worth and Dallas.

“We are deeply saddened by our sudden loss of Mr. McCaslin. He was a friend and a devoted advocate of cooperative ideals, and no one was more committed to ensuring that every United member’s interests were considered in this cooperative’s business course,” Beavers said. “His leadership and his friendship will be sorely missed, but we know he shared our belief that death and love are two wings that bear us from earth to heaven. To live in the heart and minds of those he left behind is not to die; it is to live forever.”



JACK McCASLIN (1939-2011)

United Plans New Round of Community Meetings



EXCHANGING VIEWS

United CEO Ray Beavers enjoys visiting with co-op members during one of many community meetings the cooperative has hosted since 2009 as a means to hear and discuss member concerns and industry issues in person.

Meeting members face-to-face, and hearing their opinions and concerns about the direction their cooperative is heading, will always be the most rewarding classroom for United’s study, planning and development of future cooperative endeavors.

And following the success of some widely-attended community meetings hosted previously by the cooperative, United is already rolling out another series of meetings for 2011. United members are invited to attend the meetings; which include food, and prize drawings, informative overviews of today’s electric industry

and present United initiatives, and an open question and answer period.

ENJOY A COMPLIMENTARY BBQ DINNER AT THIS MEETING

by emailing us at

RSVP@united-cs.com

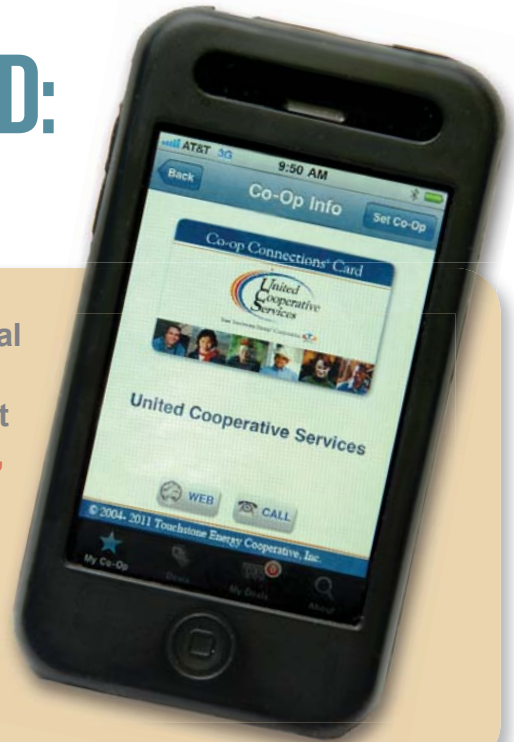
**TUESDAY, JUNE 7, 2011
Burleson High School**

BBQ MEAL 6 P.M.

MEETING 7 P.M.

CO-OP CONNECTIONS CARD: Yep, There's an App for That

So, there you are. You're standing in the store of a local merchant who participates in the United Co-op Connections Card discount program. You're ready to present that card and **get a great price** on lunch or a new product, **but, woops, you've left your card on the kitchen counter at home.** Gee, guess you'll pay full price this time! Or possibly you're picking up a prescription, one that you'll get with a 10-60 percent discount using the Co-op Connections Card, but you can't seem to find it in your wallet. **Hey, no worries, there's now a app for that!**



A new, free, Co-op Connections app is available for the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. Once downloaded, the program prompts members to select their co-op—United Cooperative Services (TX). Once the selection is saved, members will not have to select their co-op again for future use.

“Once the free app has been downloaded, members are prompted to an opening screen where they can select

their cooperative,” said United Business Development Coordinator Kevin Keese. “Once that has been accomplished, they can access national deals by tapping on the ‘deals’ option or use it for the pharmacy discount,” he said.

To obtain the pharmacy discount, members will simply tap on United’s card image and it will flip the image to the back of the card. That’s the information that pharmacists use to provide a discount of between 10-60

percent on certain prescriptions.

The current version will be upgraded in the coming months so that members can access an alphabetized list of local merchants. This will eliminate one step of accessing them via the Web. The next phase will also expand the app to other smart phone options, including the Droid.

To download the app, go to the iTunes App Store and in the search box type “Co-op Connections.”

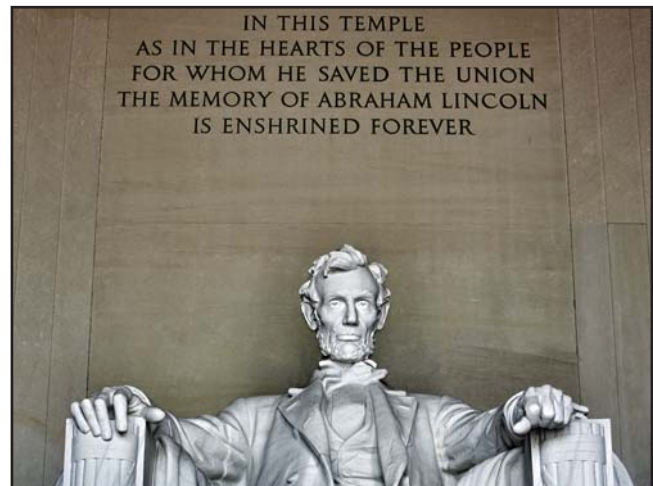
Annual Government In Action Youth Tour

YOUTH TOUR continued from PAGE 3

observes and practices the Fifth Cooperative Principle, which obligates co-ops to educate the public, the membership and elected leaders about the distinct characteristics of the electric cooperative way of doing business.

“The Youth Tour truly serves as one of the most unique and tangible examples of how electric cooperatives like United are different from other utilities,” said United CEO Ray Beavers. “Sending these two outstanding young people—and giving them front-row seats to witness democracy in action—demonstrates our longstanding commitment to our communities,” he said.

More than 40,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in the national cooperative Youth Tour program since its inception.





The Cleburne Surgical Center offers area residents a wide array of medical services at one location.

A Catalyst for Change

► Model facility raises some eyebrows

SURGICAL CARE continued from PAGE 5

rounding area not only needed more operating room facilities, but that the region could legitimately support and benefit from a more competitive surgical environment.

“At first, the hospital here wasn’t too receptive to the idea for expanding its very limited operating room capacity. Nor did the hospital welcome the prospect of having the extra competition,” Farless said.

“However, they just built a five-room surgery operation suite that is state-of-the-art, and I think we were the catalyst for that.”

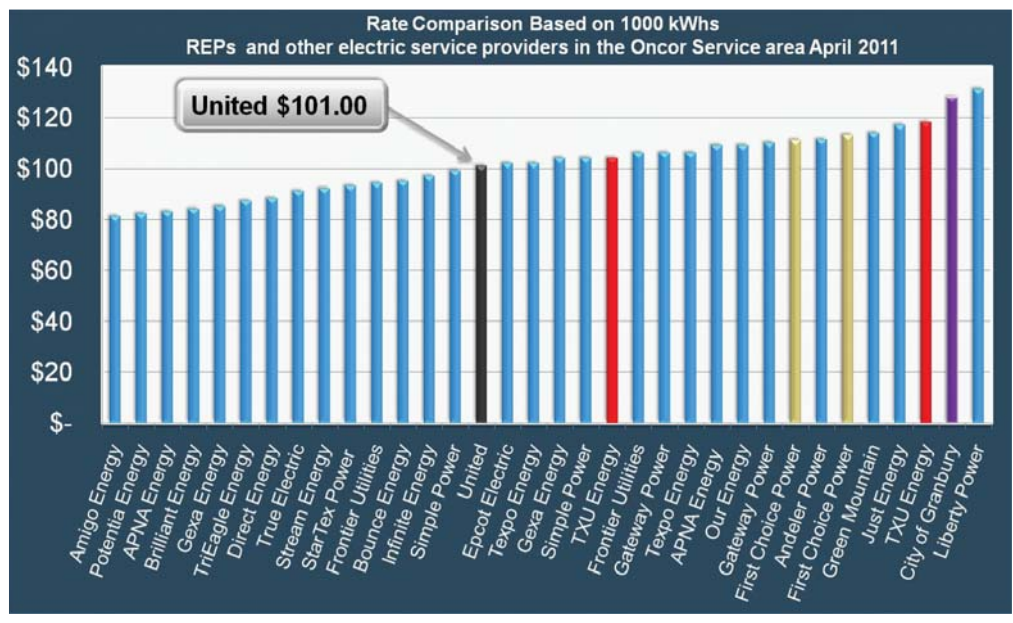
“Actually, if I’ve been surprised about anything, it has been with the personal friendship I’ve developed with my original



partner Dr. Brad Harmon,” Farless said. “The relationship we have here between staff members is more like a close family.” That is a rarity in this profession I think, and it has helped us collectively focus on

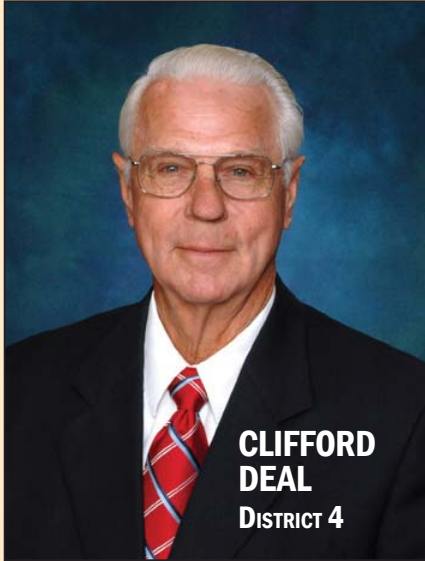
providing quality care,” he said.

And with that, he answered a call to mend two broken arms and ended the interview. The next patch of weeds would have to wait.



The rate comparisons shown at left represent a portion of all rates offered in the North Texas utility market for the month of APRIL 2011 and do not include new participants that have posted only temporary or introductory rates. Even though they are often lower than the average among all deregulated retail providers, those introductory rates are often short-lived retail enticements. A complete comparison of rates offered in Texas' electric retail market may be found at www.powertochoose.org.

RATE WATCH COMPARISON



**CLIFFORD
DEAL
DISTRICT 4**

Deal Elected President of United Board of Directors

At the March 2011 meeting of United's Board of Directors, Clifford Deal, representing United Cooperative Services' District 4 region in eastern Johnson County (Alvarado and Grandview), was elected Board President, succeeding late Board President Jack McCaslin. Other officers of the board include Vice President Larry Bays, District 7; and Secretary Patsy Dumas, District 2.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

POWER TALK

Ray Beavers, CEO

As the story goes, a small-town football coach back in the early 1950s was astounded by the speed of this lanky-looking country boy. While watching this young boy run, all the coach could say was, “Watch him run!”

That was a beginning of great things for that country boy who found himself many years later still impressing people with his abilities. The small-town boy won many races and became well known throughout the state of Texas as a pure talent. His talent took him to Southern Methodist University on a track scholarship where he won many Southwest Conference awards and accolades. He even came close to qualifying for the Olympics, only to be beat out by future medalists. This young man never stopped running in the direction of service and accomplishment. This young man later became my dear friend, whom I respected and admired

wavered from his allegiance and commitment to our great nation. Just last May, Jack went back to his old military base near Washington, D.C., to pay tribute to the service and to the soldiers who counted themselves among its ranks.

Watch him run! Jack started his career in the accounting field after serving his nation. He worked for a large accounting firm and then started his own successful accounting firm in Fort Worth, Texas. There, he worked hard to make sure his clients received the quality of service they deserved. Jack worked tirelessly and diligently to represent his clients, sometimes for as long as three days straight with hardly any sleep.

As attentive as he was to his business, he never let his work keep him from watching his beautiful daughters grow up, though. He would run to all of the events his daughters were involved in and then run back to his office to work through the night. He loved his family and was extremely proud of them.

Eventually, Jack McCaslin took on another role as a



Watch Him Run!

immensely. He also was your founding president of United Cooperative Services, Jack McCaslin.

Watch him run! Jack was a one-of-a-kind man. He was incredibly intelligent, but had a great sense for how to use his intelligence to get results without ever offending anyone. To him, God put him on earth to be of service to others—always putting everyone else’s needs above his wants and desires.

One very important part of Jack’s life was something we both had in common. We both were raised on the farm and we never really got that part of our lives out of our systems. He loved his hometown of Wolfe City, Texas. He married his high school sweetheart, June, who also was from the same area, just right down the country road from where Jack was raised. They both enjoyed going back home as much as possible. That rural setting gave Jack such a unique understanding of life and life’s challenges.

Watch him run! Jack served our country as a Marine. He so impressed the Marines with his running abilities that soon he represented the Marines in track and field competitions throughout the country. Not only were the Marines impressed with watching Jack run, he also impressed them with leadership abilities that led him to be promoted to the rank of captain at an early age. Jack’s country was in his heart and soul; he never

director on your board of directors. There he brought leadership and vision to the table. Top that with his courage to do the right thing, no matter how difficult or large a challenge it may have been. With those qualities, Jack guided the board forward and through the consolidation of two good cooperatives—doing something few electric co-ops have had the courage to do. Jack knew the consolidation, if done right, would ultimately save the members of the cooperative millions of dollars. To his credit, he was absolutely right.

Watch him run! I can hear those words so clearly as the Lord saw that smiling face of our friend and loved one, Jack. You see, Jack left nothing undone; he knew the day would come when his running venue might change from this earth to his eternity. There’s no doubt God made a place for this special man, where Jack can now run without becoming tired, and where he can totally enjoy the fruits of his labor. We will miss this great man as we continue the business of this cooperative. To June, Jackie and Whitney, our hearts go out to you as you deal with losing your husband and father. But while I think of the loss of my friend Jack, I can’t help but smile just hearing that coach from Wolfe City, Texas, as he watched that lanky country boy, exuberantly shouting, “Watch him run!”

God bless the life and legacy of Jack Weldon McCaslin!