

GOPIIONEER

March 2023

Are you a **Cooperative Member?**

Learn why being a Member is important
and check your status!

PG. 11

EDITOR MUST READ:

The Threat to Creativity

PG. 05

FOCUS ON.

*Modern
Appliance*

Be on the look out for

AI ART

Are you confident in what
you share online?

Test your skill on PG. 07

Letters from **LEADERS**

Brenda Walta - VP Finance & Administration



In today's environment, where multiple vendors compete to serve customers, it is important to understand the benefits of a cooperative. Pioneer Telephone is a cooperative, which simply means the company is owned by those we serve. Being a cooperative allows Pioneer to have a vested interest in helping our rural communities grow and thrive, because our employees live and work in the same communities we serve. Fundamentally, a cooperative is typically structured to be a not-for-profit entity. In Pioneer's case, the success we have had throughout the years has allowed us to continue the investment in fulfilling the needs of our communities, and when Pioneer is successful, it benefits our communities as well. Personally, it gives me a great sense of pride being an employee of a cooperative, where we can share success each year with our Members. Giving back to the ones we serve is certainly the primary benefit of a cooperative.

As a cooperative, Pioneer's mission is to return patronage capital to our Members. As a Member, your subscription for telephone and internet spent with Pioneer throughout the year helps you earn capital credits. At the end of each year, excess revenues or margins are reviewed and allocated to Members as capital credits based on the Members' use of telephone and internet during the year. The Board of Trustees may decide to retire a portion of the capital credits and return retirements back to Members in the form of a bill credit or check. Since 1953, Pioneer Telephone has retired approximately \$148 million to Members in the form of capital credits. That is something to be proud of!

For 2023, the Board of Trustees approved a general membership payment in the amount of \$3,160,567 to our Members for capital credit retirement for 2003 and a portion of outstanding balances. Most Members will receive their return of capital in the form of a bill credit on the March bill.

In light of the most recent news, I want to reassure you that your Cooperative continues to be strong and successful. Broadband connectivity over a fiber network remains our core business priority. Pioneer will continue to extend fiber throughout our serving areas and look forward to connecting what matters for all of our Members. Thank you for being a loyal Member of the Cooperative!

Welcome to GoPioneer!

Our mission is to help the communities of Pioneer learn, evolve and move forward in the ever-changing world of technology.

We welcome feedback, story ideas, or any questions relating to this magazine, previous articles, or even your personal inquiries.

Baffled by your teen's obsession with emojis? Confused about why you get WiFi in the garage but not in your bedroom? Let us know! This magazine is just as much yours as ours, and we are excited to help you become more adept in the tech world.

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Topic of March 2023:

AI Art

We've expected the rise in Artificial Intelligence (AI) for decades. However, the most recent break in AI has nothing to do with robots.

2023 was a BIG year for AI art. Social media was flooded with AI generated images of our profile pictures in different eras and art styles and some of our friends were producing art they could never do with their own hands. It was cool, but is everything about AI art that innocent?

Explore the complicated issues behind AI art in this issue of GoPioneer!

P.S. Keep an eye out for this year's Color of the Year, Viva Magenta! It's hard to miss. ;)

CONTENTS

Features

Are the Robots Taking Over?01
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is vital for the day-to-day operations of modern society.

The Rise of AI Art 03
Explore why 2022 was a big year for AI Art.

The Threat to Creativity 05
AI Art isn't as innocent as it seems, learn why many artists are speaking out.

Test Your Skill 07
Learn some of AI's shortcomings when it comes to producing art before testing your skill on a piece of AI art.

Inside Pioneer

FOCUS ON Modern Appliances. 09
Meet the people supplying Northwest Oklahomans with some of life's essentials.

Why a Cooperative Matters11
Learn why a cooperative matters and, if you're a member, mark your calendars to attend this year's Annual Meeting!

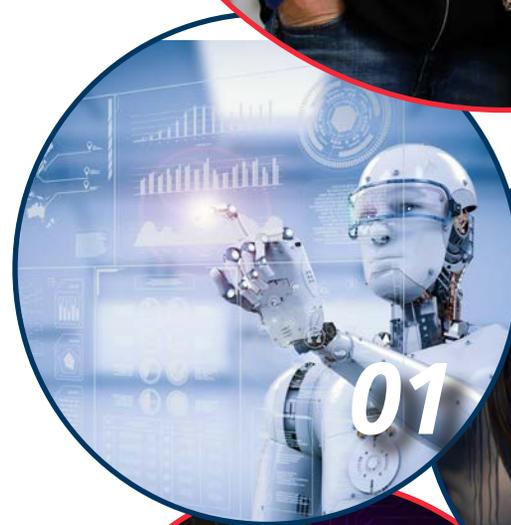
Community

Meet our Pioneer Scholar Lavender13
Learn more about Lavender, a nursing student with big goals.

Family Recipe15
Quick, easy, and delicious. Check out this Oatmeal Cherry Crunch recipe.

Community Events16
Be safe and practice social distancing at these Community Events.

Anniversaries..... Back
Help us celebrate the 25+ year anniversaries in our communities.



ARE THE ROBOTS TAKING OVER?

When we think of Artificial Intelligence (AI) we think of films like *Megan* where machines have taken on a consciousness of their own. Some for good, like finding love and making friends in *Wall-E* or *Chappie*; and others for evil, where machines use humans to keep them running. However, AI isn't some not-too-distant future away. In fact, it's likely that you use it every day without knowing.

AI has boomed during the last decade. The options are limitless, and the gains are huge, making AI competition fierce. From an outside perspective, AI is still in its beginning stages. It's unlikely we'll have Megan-esque robots any time soon, but applied AI has become a major part of modern life. Companies across the globe like Amazon, Facebook, Google, NASA, and even Netflix use AI to stay on top of their competition.

AI is the science of training machines to imitate or reproduce human tasks. AI can be programmed to have human-like cognitive functions like learning, reasoning, and self-correction to handle complex data. This is great for companies who have redundant jobs like data-entry or assembly line work, leading to cost reduction and revenue increases, but the rise of AI has, and will continue to, strike fear in the working class.

Kai-Fu Lee, AI expert and CEO of Sinovation Ventures, wrote that "accountants, factory workers, truckers, paralegals, and radiologists— just to name a few— will be confronted by a disruption akin to that faced by farmers during the Industrial Revolution" in a 2018 essay. So, what does that mean for us? Are we doomed to be slaves to AI in our lifetime? Not necessarily.

According to the World Economic Forum's "The Future of Jobs Report 2020," AI is expected to replace 85 million jobs worldwide by 2025. Though that sounds scary, the report goes on to say that it will also create 97 million new jobs in that same time frame. Most of these jobs will develop around AI, such as AI trainers, computational intelligence, robotics engineers, and data scientists. However, we're told there's hope for jobs that require a human touch... but how true is that?

A simple Google search of 'jobs AI can't replace' will bring up several lists of creative or empathetic roles that we're told AI won't be able to replicate. Some of the most prominent roles marked 'safe' are writers, human resource managers, lawyers, teachers, singers, and artists. While some of these roles require emotional intelligence or knowing how to bend the law to your will, others rely on creativity and human emotion, like artists and writers. Unless you're in these creative spaces, it's unlikely you even noticed that AI generators began creeping in on these two artistic roles in 2022.

There are several AI generators that claim to write marketing copy or generate articles based on a headline alone. There are several dangers to this, including misinformation, possible plagiarism, or even risk their reputation, but that doesn't stop businesses from trying. In January, tech site CNET made headlines after internet sleuths discovered they had published dozens of feature articles generated by AI. You wouldn't know it was written by AI unless you dug deep— the byline attributed the machine-written stories to "CNET Money Staff" and only after clicking the byline would you learn it was produced by "automation technology".

CNET would make a statement almost two weeks later via a tech story "CNET Is Testing an AI Engine. Here's What We've Learned, Mistakes and All" that would explain their experiment. However, the damage has been done and people are beginning to look closer at what they're reading...as they should be.

While we have looked at AI-stories with contempt and skepticism, most people have accepted the sudden appearance and development of AI produced art. The worst part? **You might not even know it.**

Last year we saw a flood of AI art on social media. Most of us don't think twice about seeing a trend, so when we saw our friends sharing portraits of themselves in a variety of styles, we quickly ran to use the Lensa app. However, this app, much like the services Midjourney and DALL-E 2, deserve their fair amount of scrutiny about what they produce or, rather, how they produce it.

Explore the complicated issues behind AI art on the next three spreads!

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

EVERYDAY AI



Could you go a day without AI?

WHY DOES AI MATTER?

In the current world, it's unlikely any of us could really go without AI. Even if you think you could step away from the internet and technology for the day, the fact is that most of the world revolves around AI working. The stores you shop at use AI to keep inventory, AI helps run firewalls and protect your computers, and much more. If it suddenly stopped, who knows what chaos might reign in its place.

THE RISE OF AI ART IN 2022

Out of all the creative fields AI has begun to infest the art world has borne the brunt of the AI wave. Welcome to the dark side of AI art.

How does AI art work?

AI art uses generators use algorithms to analyze and learn from the work of human artists. Generators then use this information to create pieces that often resemble the work of humans. It's awesome, incredible even— especially for people like me who don't have any art skills. But note that their skill comes from human artists, most of which haven't even received compensation for their work.

Wait, so how did AI get so good?

AI models like DALL-E, Midjourney, Lensa, and Stable Diffusion, just like any human wanting to learn "how to art" looked to artists new and old. Unlike budding artists looking to their favorite pieces for inspiration, however, these generators were trained by billions and billions of images that they scraped from the internet.

AI Art tools rely on human-made images for training data and in all the cases I've seen, the work used to train these AI models were all taken illegally or without permission.

How do you know they didn't ask for permission?

Besides the thousands of vocal artists speaking on public forums and social media sites like Twitter? Well, there have been cases where generated art had very clear watermarks from scraped stock images. Getty Images recently launched a complaint against Stability AI after finding several generated images had a recreation of their watermark. In some generated artwork, you can sometimes find the mangled mashup of several artists' signatures as AI tries to replicate the 'random squiggle' found in almost every art piece.

Artists replicate style all the time, why is this different?

It's a fair question! We all learn from art and some prominent artists will happily name who inspired their style. However, it's rare that someone will perfectly replicate an artist's style and, even if they did, it would take years, if not decades, to master it.

AI art scrapes the styles and names of thousands of artists without permission or sourcing. There's no homage or respect in how AI art produces a product. It's just a bunch of pixels broken down and built back up to answer a query.

I just want a new profile picture, it's not that big of a deal.

We all have our own opinions! But be careful and make sure you read the fine print of whatever app you're trying out.

Uploading your photos to Lensa gives the company access to your face data.

That's right. Whether you use the free trial or subscribe, accepting the terms and agreements could mean you're signing away the rights to your face.

When agreeing to Prisma's terms and conditions, the company retains "all rights in and to your user content." Using the app grants the company "perpetual, revocable, nonexclusive, royalty-free, worldwide, fully-paid, transferable, sub-licensable license to use, reproduce, modify, adapt, translate, create derivative works" with your photos. To put it simply: what you produce is theirs and they can use it as they see fit.

Maybe you don't care if it's art training AI, but what about training AI with your image? Using your image to market and make money, while paying you nothing? Sometimes, you're even paying them for your likeness.

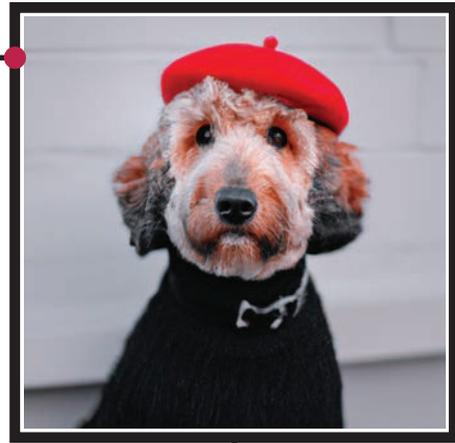
Should I be terrified of AI art?

Not really. This isn't meant to spark fear or even outrage but keep an eye on what exactly you're granting apps and technology access to when you jump on trends. Marking a check box is just as binding as a signature.

APRIL

DALL-E Launches

DALL-E 2 is a deep-learning image-synthesis model that blew minds when it hit the public. DALL-E 2 maps text (the prompts given) to images that are high quality. While there have been AI art programs before, DALL-E 2 was known for the accuracy of the text-to-image translation.



Generated using DALL-E

JULY

Midjourney opens beta

Midjourney is similar to DALL-E 2, but user prompts are generated via Discord, a social networking/chat app. While DALL-E 2 is known for producing realistic images, such as the streets of London, Midjourney became popular for its ability to accurately translate text-to-images that were more ethereal or based on a specific style.



Generated using Midjourney

AUGUST

AI-Generated Art Won a Prize at the Colorado state fair

On August 26, artwork made by AI won first place at the Colorado State Fair. Jason Allen used Midjourney in combination with Gigapixel AI, a program that enhances detail and resolution, to produce the piece. After posting about his win on the Midjourney Discord, Twitter user @GenelJumalon posted a screenshot to Twitter. The win sparked outrage in communities across the internet.



Théâtre D'opéra Spatial - Jason Allen via Midjourney

JANUARY 2023

Artists File Lawsuit

Illustrators Sarah Andersen, Kelly McKernan, and Karla Ortiz filed a class action lawsuit in California against Midjourney Inc, DeviantArt Inc, and Stability AI Ltd on January 13. The artists state that these generators used their artwork without consent or compensation to train the programs that the platform algorithms use to make art. Their lawsuit will focus on the occupational harm caused by the use of their style and art.

Later in the month, Getty Images launched a complaint against Stability AI in the U.K. citing the use of copyrighted images that trained their programs. They also filed a complaint in the District Court in Delaware. Their lawsuit will focus on the use of copyrighted content without payment.



THE Threat To



WHAT PEOPLE ARE USING AI FOR ART:

Generating 'magic avatars'

- Thanks to apps like Lensa, users can upload selfies and have avatars generated in various artistic styles in seconds. Most of the time, this service is free, but users can pay for more portraits.

Art competitions

- AI is being entered into art competitions across the globe. In February, the Mauritshuis hung artwork generated by AI in place of the famous "Girl with a Pearl Earring" painting. This was one of five pieces out of over 3,000 entries chosen to replace the painting while it's on loan to the Rijksmuseum.

Creating books

- Ammaar Reshi who had little experience with illustration or creative writing, wrote and illustrated a children's book called "Alice and Sparkle." Using ChatGPT and Midjourney, Ammaar self-published his book on Amazon's digital bookstore 72 hours later. The following day, he had a paperback in his hands.

There are many people that claim artists are over reacting, that this is just a fun tool... but are they?

When you think of artists, what's the first thing to come to mind? Is it a name, a family member, or perhaps, a figure that embodies the starving artist trope? When many people think of artists, we don't even consider thinking of someone having a full-time gig. It's a hobby, something they do on the side for fun, not something to make money. You wouldn't be the first to think this.

There's a severe lack of respect in the artist industry. Studies have shown that artists are some of the most underpaid in the U.S., especially since many companies and organizations freelance their work, meaning there are no benefits given. According to '*The Artfinder Independent Art Market Report: 2017*', "A full three quarters of artists [in the U.S.] made \$10,000 or less per year from their art. Close to half (48.7 percent) made no more than \$5,000." Ouch.

Artists put a lot of work into their art. Whether they're producing fanart for their favorite book series (hello, BookTok), painting for a gallery, or producing concept art for films like Marvel's *Avengers*, artists are masters of their craft. They've put countless hours not just in that piece they produced, but into being able to produce that piece at all.

According to the Art Students League of New York, with "good instruction, three to ten hours of practice a day for four to twelve years" you could become an "adept artist". That's a lot of time for a skill that many people don't have and aren't willing to pay for. Many artists have found their talent and effort devalued when trying to make it as an artist. We consume so much art for free that when we ask for a customized piece or even look at a price tag at a craft booth we balk at the price, however, this is their livelihood, their craft. You wouldn't pay someone that was unlicensed and uncertified building your home, would you? If someone offered to pay \$2,000 for a \$20,000 job you'd probably think twice. It's the same concept with artists. It's also why artists are upset with AI art.

If your boss told you today was your last day, that they found a program that could do your job better and quicker for free, wouldn't you be upset? Then you find out they're not just replacing you but had trained your replacement with your past work. To top it all off- your friends, family, and peers swear the robot is better than you could ever be.

It's all about perspective. For artists, AI is using their work to make a profit and, in some cases, taking away possible commissions and threatening their livelihood.

WHO'S SPEAKING UP?

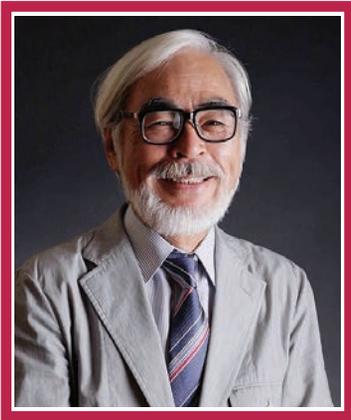


Photo Credit: imdb.com

"Whoever creates this stuff has no idea what pain is whatsoever. I am utterly disgusted. I would never wish to incorporate this technology into my work at all. **I strongly feel that this is an insult to life itself.**"

"10 Years with Hayao Miyazaki" Documentary

Hayao Miyazaki

Japanese Animator

Known for: Studio Ghibli films like "Spirited Away", "Howl's Moving Castle", and "Ponyo."

Simon Stålenhag

Swedish Artist

Known for: retro-futuristic digital images and "Tales from the Loop", a book that takes viewers on a sci-fi journey through various country and city landscapes.

"AI is the latest and most vicious of these technologies. It basically takes lifetimes of work by artists, without consent, and uses that data as the core ingredient in a new type of pastry that it can sell at a profit with the sole aim of enriching a bunch of yacht owners."

via Wired.com



Photo Credit: Simon Stålenhag via Facebook



Photo Credit: Karla Ortiz via Facebook

"The promise of technology was always that we're going to automate menial things so you have more time to be creative, but what does this mean when you automate creativity itself? What does that do for the humans who live out of being creative?"

via ARTnews.com

Karla Ortiz

Illustrator/Artist

Known for: concept art for films like black Panther, Jurassic World, Thor 3, and much more!

So, AI art is **EVIL?**

Not necessarily. At the end of the day, you'll think what you want to think. There is value in AI Art, just as there is value in anything. However, like many ideas, operations, or new technologies, AI art is being built on the back of someone. While I, in particular, won't tell you to avoid AI Art generators or AI art, I will say that I don't support it after learning more about it.

Access to art is a right, but that doesn't mean everyone in the world should have the ability to make it. Artists spend years perfecting their craft and most are expected to work 9-5 jobs to be able to make art on the side. Unfortunately, artists have to make many sacrifices to do what they love. When we consider the effort, stress, and work that goes into producing art, does it really seem fair to call a generated piece art just because someone spent a few hours online perfecting their prompt? I'll leave that up to you.

For me, art is more than recognized patterns, which means I won't be using AI generators any time soon.

12%

of artists do not consider themselves financially stable.

"A study on the financial state of visual artists today"
The Creative Independent

42%

of artists hold jobs that don't relate to their art practice.

Test Your Skill.

Is it real, or AI?

AI generators are already getting smarter. The more they're used and the more feedback they get, the better results they're going to dish out. While this might seem great to some people, it can actually be very dangerous.

With AI, people will have the opportunity to create hyper-realistic "photos" that could result in the spread of misinformation. Research from Columbia University and the French National Institute found that 59% of links shared on social media are shared without ever reading the content. Now, imagine that applied to photos. We say "seeing is believing," but what if we can't guarantee that everything we see is real? Crazy, huh?

This is your chance to practice media literacy. Take a look at the photo. Just do a quick glance. Looks like three friends posing for a photo, right? Nothing too malicious. Now, look closer. Explore some of the characteristics of the subjects using the list to the right to guide your eye. What did you find to convince yourself this was an AI photo?

What to look for:

- ◆ Text is indecipherable
- ◆ Background inconsistencies
 - › Check to see if the background is texture-like or blurred in places
- ◆ Asymmetry in the face
 - › Teeth may be off center or subjects may have different sized eyes
- ◆ Extra body parts
 - › AI generators are getting better each day, but the most common 'extra' parts found on AI subjects are fingers and teeth
- ◆ Lighting Inconsistencies
- ◆ Anomalies
 - › Look close for missing parts like eyes, ears, or jewelry. Some faces may be more blurred than others.



What's wrong with this photo?

- ◆ There are too many teeth
 - › All three subjects have waaayyy too many teeth.
- ◆ Sausage fingers
 - › Check out the girl on the left... her fingers are weirdly shaped and even facing the wrong direction.
- ◆ A weird collarbone
 - › The subject to the right seems to have multiple, stacking collarbones.
- ◆ Necklace to nowhere?
 - › The subject to the right has a necklace that seems to loop off into nowhere...or that stack of bones .
- ◆ The hair's a little wrong...
 - › Our center subject's hair looks fine at first, but if you look closely there's a weird gap of nothing. It's almost like she was cut out in Photoshop and we left a piece of her behind.
- ◆ Lighting
 - › At first it looks normal. Flash from a camera would definitely light up the closest subject, but why does the light distribute well onto the girl on the right but not the left? Why does the girl on the left have a gleam on her jewelry when there's no medallion to reflect?

Spotting AI art is harder than it looks. In October last year, OpenAI said DALL-E2 was generating over two million images a day. There's no doubt that number has increased as AI generators become more popular and accessible. By the time this magazine is printed, AI will have had almost a month to get even **better**. That's terrifying. Unfortunately, it's up to us to be mindful when looking at photos online. If something is politically driven or seems off, maybe take a second look at the photo.

Keeping Life "Normal"

Appliance Store provides NW Oklahoma with Convenience and Great Service

Who We Are

Modern Appliances has been providing convenience to the Woodward community for over 50 years.

Jennifer Thompson is a third-generation owner of Modern Appliances. She shares ownership with her husband, Matt Thompson.

"My grandfather [William Warren] bought Harris Refrigeration in 1970 and renamed it Modern Appliance. Then my parents [Tom and Mary Hunter] took it over in 1980, and we became full owners in 2020. We all transitioned on nice, round numbers, haha," Jennifer said. "It's been in the family this whole time."

Jennifer was born and raised in Woodward, OK, but her husband Matt was a "Yankee" raised outside of Buffalo, New York.

"I was doing my Masters at K-State when I met him. He was a military man and when he got out of the army we were like 'what are we going to do?'," Jennifer said. "My dad offered him a job here, so we moved back here and decided this was a good thing that we wouldn't mind continuing, but we both needed to be a part of it. It would be another person you could trust."

The duo has continued leading Modern Appliance with the values instilled by William.

"We want to take care of people

with honest and integrity and professionalism," Jennifer said. "The knowledge that we have, especially with our service techs and our sales team, is something we're proud of. We know what's out there, what's available, and how to fix things. We do all of that with honesty and integrity."

How We Serve

Modern Appliance offers more than home appliances.

"We offer parts for the do-it-yourselfers, new products, custom high-end installs on both TVs and appliances," Matt said. "Really, there's not much we



can't take care of for our customers."

Aside from their standard offerings, they also want to make sure all their customers are taken care of.

"We understand how important beef and meat is out here. If your fridge or freezer goes down we want to take care of that right away. For our customers we're usually out the same day or, worst case scenario, we're out the next morning," Matt said.



at a glance

Q+A

Why do you do what you do?

You have to do something, that's part of life. You have to feed your family. For me, there are always puzzles to solve and issues that come up. There's always a good challenge to figure out and a catastrophe to avoid, and I like reducing chaos for people. - Jennifer

Transitioning out of the Army I had a lot of job offers, but I was going to be gone all the time and just coming off the heels of five to six years... I wanted to do something so that I could raise my kids and be able to see them in the evenings.

- Matt

If you could speak to your younger self just starting out, what advice would you give them?

Don't do it— run! Haha. No, I've enjoyed it, but I would have thought about it more. It's tough because you're not just worried about where your dinner is coming from, you have people that depend on you. - Matt

Don't cut bangs. They don't look good on everybody. - Jennifer



FOCUS ON.

Modern Appliance

Modern Appliance in Woodward, Ok.



Courtesy Photo: The Modern Appliance team.

with Matt and Jennifer

What is something you think everyone should experience at least once in their life?

Customer service. – **Jennifer**

Yeah. A customer service-related job. I'm not saying I'm good at it by any means, but knowing how to deal with upset customers or just dealing with the public in general is important. You learn a lot from customer service, even if it's the drive thru at McDonalds. – **Matt**

I'd also like everyone to experience real love. – **Jennifer**

What sport would you compete in if you were in the Olympics?

Running, because that's what I did before. – **Matt**

Matt was very into distance running and swimming in school. My son's cross country team did a 5K and, with zero training, he just shows up and runs a 5K. It would take me two months to get ready to roll up if it was a 1k, much less a five. – **Jennifer**

I'm not super sporty, so I don't really know. – **Jennifer**

Their team doesn't just focus on current customers, either. They want to help as many people as they can and will get a tech out in 24-48 hours.

"When your refrigerator dies life is kind of chaotic for a while. We're all very dependent on dishwashers, washing machines, and those sorts of things," Jennifer said. "We're either sending out a service tech or delivering a new product, whatever they decide, as soon as we can. We're here to help get life back to normal."

Getting back to normal can be hard in a world post-COVID, where supply chains are still backed up. Modern Appliances is prepared to provide for their customers when there's a delay.

"For our customers we have loaners free of charge and we will get one out there as fast as we can. For non-customers we have offered very inexpensive loaners that we carry at any given time," Matt said.

Modern Appliances serves all of Northwestern Oklahoma and, sometimes, Texas. Sometimes the logistics of time, staff, and distance can be a problem, but the Modern Appliance team is always looking ahead.

"I just ordered a bunch of five cubic foot fridges, like an oversized dorm fridge, with the thought that we could turn them into loaners," Jennifer said. "With our full-sized loaners, like an 18 cubic foot freezer, I have to have someone that can get it there and a truck that's open. So the thought is that most people could load this up in their car, take it home, and you've got something to take care of the important stuff while we're waiting on parts."

Preparing for Challenges Ahead

Looking forward, the Thompsons believe they're prepared to weather any issues.

"We had a couple of years of sort of sailing by when we took over and then

COVID hit, and then we had supply shortages, and now we have inflation to worry about. There have been all kinds of challenges," Jennifer said.

Between concerns for their employees' health and supply shortages, COVID was an "interesting time" for the Thompsons.

"One thing we really experienced during COVID, because everyone was so freaked out, was that everyone wanted more freezer space. Maybe they were going to butcher their own cow for the first time and this would be their first freezer in their garage," Jennifer said. "We had a list of people waiting for freezers and we had to create a hierarchy. We had who came in first, but we also had to consider who had a butcher date to hit."

While they wanted to help everyone, the Thompsons had to prioritize.

"We made sure to stay local first," Jennifer said. "When we had plenty of stock and cleared our list, we would have people drive from Oklahoma City to get a freezer, but when everything was really tight we made sure to take care of our community first."

Jennifer and Matt are "very embedded in their community". Jennifer serves as Chairman of the Woodward Main Street Board and is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Matt is a volunteer firefighter. They value serving their customers wherever they can.

"There's challenges, but there's rewards too. I like that we provide something that's, well, a bit of a luxury, but also a necessity," Jennifer said. "What we sell has become a staple in how our households run and we get to help supply them with what they need."

To learn more about Modern Appliance visit: modernappliancewoodward.com.

Who should we

FOCUS ON

next?

Visit GoPioneer.com/FocusOn and fill out a nomination form!

70TH

Annual Meeting

Why a Cooperative Matters

There are many benefits to having a cooperative in your community, but the main goal of a cooperative is to provide and distribute benefits to members.

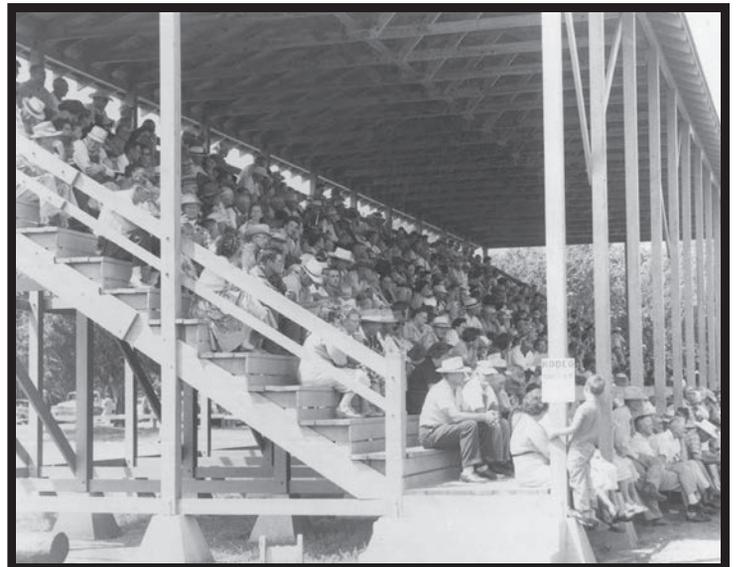
A cooperative is a member-controlled form of business. This means that YOU have the power to make a difference in your cooperative and communities. Members exercise control over a cooperative directly by voting at membership meetings, such as Pioneer's Annual Meeting that will be held on May 2, or indirectly through the election of a board of trustees.

The board of trustees manages the cooperative within the restrictions set by state statutes, articles of incorporation, and bylaws. The bylaws are particularly important because they are directly set and voted on by the membership and restrict what a board of trustees can and cannot do. Bylaw changes must be made at a membership meeting where a quorum must be met for any changes to be made.

This year, Pioneer will be holding its 70th Annual Meeting. There will be many bylaw changes that will be up for vote, which makes your attendance all the more necessary! Keep an eye out for Tele-Topics volume 2, which will be arriving next month, to read the proposed bylaw changes before joining us at the Annual Meeting!

Pictured: Pioneer Telephone Cooperative's first Annual Meeting.

Pioneer was ran by Cimarron Electric's board of Trustees until 1959, when Pioneer separated its meeting from Cimarron and held its own. The first meeting was held at Homier Field in Oklahoma Park in Kingfisher. A lot has changed since then, including our switch to an air-conditioned space ;). Pioneer will host their 2023 meeting at the Kingfisher fairgrounds.



2023 Annual Meeting Schedule

TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2023

Kingfisher Fairgrounds - 300 S 13th St, Kingfisher, OK 73750

We're switching it up this year! This year's meeting will be shorter than ever to allow for people to take only a half a day away from work. However, we're keeping everyone's favorites on the schedule! Stop by to enjoy breakfast and bingo or just show up for business at 10:30 a.m.! We hope to see you there.

7:30 a.m.

Coffee, Donuts, and Bingo

10:30 a.m.

Meeting begins

11:30 a.m.

Lunch will be served following the conclusion of the meeting

How do I know if I'm a Member?

If you:

Have a landline OR have Pioneer Internet

Then you are a Member!

Join us on May 2 to vote on important By-Law changes



MEET OUR PIONEER SCHOLAR
Lavender Cisneros

District 11: Watonga University of Central Oklahoma Major: Nursing

Junior Lavender Cisneros was inspired to take on nursing by an important person in her life.

“I had a nurse practitioner who was my care provider for my whole childhood. Okay. She also used to be an educator here and everyone still talks about how good of a teacher she was and says she was such a great nurse when she worked in the field,” Lavender said.

Nursing is a career that requires constant education and dedicated time. It wasn’t something Lavender considered until high school.

“I never wanted to do nursing before, but when she passed away from breast cancer there was something that clicked and I knew that’s what I wanted to do,” Lavender said. “She was such a charismatic provider and I wanted to be that for other people.”

“ I want to help make sure there's safe patient ratios and decrease the turnover rate for nurses. ”

Lavender started her clinicals in January. However, she spends more time than most of her peers at Mercy Hospital.

“I’m a med tech at Mercy, too. You don’t need a license to work as a tech, so if you’re in nursing school you can get a nursing student position. It means you work in the flow pool and gain experience. Then, once you graduate, you have a job right off the bat because of your experience at Mercy.”

Lavender will graduate in Spring 2024, but she doesn’t plan to stop there.

“I want to be a Nurse Practitioner (NP). To get into NP school, I have to get at least a year of experience in critical care, so I’ll have to apply for ICU or ER

position,” Lavender said. “I actually have an interview in March for an externship at Mercy where they’ll decide where to go to shadow, but I’m going to try to get to the ICU.”

Lavender spends a lot of time working and studying, which makes her grateful for the Pioneer Scholarship.

“I don’t have to work as much because it’s allowed me to cover my housing costs,” Lavender said. “With this and my leadership scholarship, I actually don’t have to worry about any bills right now and can focus on academics and all my extracurriculars to make a good resume for when I graduate.”

Lavender hopes to one day have her own practice, but she also hopes to help make an impact on the nursing industry.

“I plan to go into nursing, then finish my doctorate, and then I want to actually get involved in helping make Oklahoma a unionized state. Oklahoma has a bad nursing shortage and I want to help make sure there are safe patient ratios and decrease the turnover rate for nurses,” Lavender said.

When Lavender isn’t studying, working in the hospital, or being an active member of clubs on campus, she takes some time for herself.

“If I have free time, I’m usually playing video games. It gives me a break from the world and then I get to play with my boyfriend who lives an hour and a half away,” Lavender said. “We play a game called Apex Legends and like to play with our friends.”

Lavender will graduate next year and she’s looking forward to what the nursing world will offer.

“I feel like nursing has a lot of rewards, just because you’re caring for people. You get to see their health improve because of what you’re doing for them,” Lavender said. “As hard as it is, it is rewarding. You get that instant gratification because your patients are getting better.”

Q&A

What is your favorite board game?

Monopoly. I get so competitive with Monopoly. Even though it takes like three hours to get through a game I just love being with a bunch of people and going through and absolutely obliterating everybody. I’m really good at Monopoly.

What is the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

I went to Wyoming last year and we went to eat at a Western restaurant. They had something called Rocky Mountain Oysters. I thought they were real oysters, right? So, they came out fried and I was eating them. Well, it turns out that those were cow fries. If I had known that, I wouldn’t have ate them. I mean, they were good, but I feel like I was tricked into it.

Out of the four seasons, what is your favorite?

The fall. Not necessarily the fall in Oklahoma because there’s not much of a Fall here and it’s usually hot, then it gets really cold. But that period of 60 degrees where you can just go outside in a sweatshirt. My serotonin levels peak during that time because I can just sit outside and do homework or like absorb all the vitamin D without toasting in the sun.

Where would you relocate if you had to leave the country?

Japan. I watch anime so I’m enticed by all their food and culture and everything, so I would love to live there. My stepbrother just got back from being stationed in Japan. He was there for four years and he loved it. I just want to experience it.

What are your pet peeves?

Oh, what’s the word for like... being flaky. You plan something and then people just flake off. ‘This came up blah blah blah,’ or they don’t prioritize a meeting. That’s my biggest pet peeve.

"It's been a real special recipe for me."

Oatmeal Cherry Crunch

ingredients

1 box	white cake mix
3/4 c.	oats
1/2 c.+ 4 tsp.	butter, melted
1/4 c.	brown sugar
1	egg
1 can	cherry pie filling



Preheat oven to 350°. Mix together cake mix and 1/2 cup of oats, reserving 1 cup for topping. Melt 1/2 cup butter; beat 1 egg, add to the melted butter & pour into cake mixture. This will be thick. Grease hands and pat into a pizza size pan or cake pan.

Bake for 12 minutes. Once removed from oven, spread 1 can cherry pie filling over the top.

TOPPING: mix together 4 teaspoons melted butter, 1/4 cup brown sugar and 1/4 cup oats. Once mixed, add to your 1 cup reserved mixture and mix well. Crumble this over the top of the cherry pie filling and bake for 18 minutes.

For Switching Technician, Staci Francis, this Oatmeal Cherry Crunch has been a family favorite for decades.

"My mom got it from my great-grandma, Verona Leisher, who passed away when I was really young," Staci said. "But I was very close with her, so it's been a real special recipe for me."

Staci may have an emotional connection to this recipe, but her children can speak to just how good it is.

"My kids are 17 and 12 and they **love** this recipe," Staci said.

Though it's traditionally a dessert, Staci's household fits it into several meals when they have it on the counter.

"My kids have eaten it for breakfast, you just throw it into the microwave and it's warm again," Staci said, "My husband prefers to have his with ice cream, which is really good, especially when it comes out of the oven."

Staci doesn't think there's one particular even this recipe would be best for.

"It would be good for just about anything. If you can serve it fresh out of the oven when it's warm then it's perfect for cold days," Staci said.

When it comes to preparing Oatmeal Cherry Crunch, Staci doesn't have a plethora of tips. She says this recipe is pretty simple.

"I will warn you not to over cook the crust. It's the base layer and we prefer ours soft and chewy," Staci said.

Staci encourages you to experiment with your favorite pie fillings.

"This is a very versatile recipe. You could substitute any fruit in it," Staci said. "If you don't like or want cherries, they do blueberry or apple pie filling. You can really do just about anything."

Staci's family likes to swap in apple or peach filling.



Pioneer's Family Recipes

COMMUNITY EVENTS

MARCH - APRIL

March 25

Runnin' on a Prayer 5K Run/Walk
P-Bar Farms
1002 Old 66 Rd, Hydro, OK

Runnin' On a Prayer 5K will benefit Western Oklahoma Christian School. WOCS is a non-profit school that operates solely on fundraisers, donations, and tuition. The school has campuses in Weatherford, Clinton, and Elk City. Sign up online at: okc.enmotive.com/events/2023-runnin-on-a-prayer. There is a virtual race available.

Event Hours:

Saturday, March 25

One Mile Fun Run 8:30 a.m.

5K Walk/Run 9:00 a.m.

April 29

Bark in the Park
Lions Park
Blanchard, OK

All dogs are invited to Lions Park for a day of pampering and fun. There will be activities and booths for pooches and human's alike. There will be discounted rabies vaccines, pet vendors, food trucks, bounce houses and more!

Event Hours:

Saturday, April 29

7 p.m. - 9 p.m.



Pictured left to right: Chris St. John, Robin Fielder, Madison McCollum, Josh Gore, Blake Callaham, Kyle Reherman, Shilah Jerkins, Mark Sneed, Jeremy Romine, Brad Pierce, and Sierra Johnson.-

PIC OF THE MONTH

Tech Talk

Members of the Pioneer family gathered at the Pioneer Library in Newcastle to give a "Tech Talk" as hosts of the Chamber's Luncheon. Pioneer had several booths to educate attendees about various different services before Josh Gore, Department Manager of the Broadband Resolution Center, gave a presentation on common technology issues that could be affecting Customers' home internet connection.

HAVE A LOCAL EVENT COMING UP?

Reach out to GoPioneer
Magazine to have your event
featured.

Email us at:
GoPioneerOK@ptci.com

