Trees are vital to our ecosystem and to our energy future. In addition to their natural beauty, trees reduce energy bills by providing summer shade, winter warmth and winter windbreaks. That’s why we’re committed to increasing the population of healthy trees in our community.

Our Plant for the Planet program — modeled after the United Nations Environment Program’s (UNEP) Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign — is a matching-grant tree-planting program designed to encourage nonprofit organizations and local government agencies to continue their successful tree-planting efforts. We’ve designated up to $75,000 each year toward this initiative.

We offer one-year grants of $500 to $5,000 for urban, suburban or rural projects that meet program objectives. Tree planting can take place in forests and parks or along parkways and roadways.

For more information on the Plant for the Planet Grant Program, and to apply for a grant (deadline to apply is December 1), visit lge-ku.com/environment/plant-planet-contact-form.

It happens every year. You find yourself stumped over what to get that one person on your holiday list who’s impossible to buy for.

The solution: A Home Utility Gift (HUG) certificate.

A HUG credits the utility account of any ODP customer in the amount you choose (minimum $25). When you purchase a HUG, we’ll automatically deduct the amount of your purchase from the recipient’s next bill. We’ll even mail you a gift certificate you can present to the recipient.

HUGs are especially ideal for families in need, senior citizens, newlyweds and college students who live off-campus, as well as for churches, non-profits and social service organizations.

For more information about the HUG program, visit our website at lge-ku.com and enter the word HUG in the search field or call 1-800-981-0600 to speak with a representative.

For most of us, the holidays are a joyous time of gift-giving and being with family. But for the less fortunate, it can be a time of great need.

That’s why ODP is a proud long-time sponsor of the Norton Lions Club’s annual “BIG HEART” project, now in its 66th year. And this year, we’re also proud to sponsor the first FPS (Family Preservation Services) 5K Santa Run/Walk and Kids 1-Mile Reindeer Run on December 6 at J.I. Burton High School in Norton.

The goal of “BIG HEART” is to provide needy families in our community with a two-week supply of food for the holidays, along with toys for the children and clothing for the whole family. The purpose of the FPS Santa Run/Walk is to raise money to purchase toys for needy children in Norton and Wise County.

Want to make someone’s holiday a little brighter? Get involved in the Lions Club “BIG HEART” project or the FPS 5K Santa Run/Walk. You’ll find there’s no better way to get in the holiday spirit.
It’s the holiday season, and for many of us, that involves preparing mass quantities of food. But before you tie on the apron to put together your holiday feast, be sure to take these simple precautions to avoid accidents and foodborne illnesses, better known as food poisoning:

• Wash hands, utensils, sinks and anything else that has come into contact with raw poultry.
• Don’t defrost food at room temperature. Thaw in the refrigerator or cold water, or defrost in the microwave.
• Keep your knives sharp.
• Avoid cleaning countertops with sponges or wet dishcloths, which harbor bacteria. Use paper towels instead.
• When reheating leftovers, bring the temperature up to at least 165°F.
• Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers within two hours after cooking. Likewise, don’t leave cooked food out more than two hours.

Here’s to the safe enjoyment of your holiday fare. Even Aunt Jean’s fruitcake.

As temperatures outside turn colder, many of us are starting to turn to the fireplace for warmth. But before you gather ‘round the hearth, make sure you follow a few simple steps to ensure the highest level of fire safety.

• Hire a certified chimney sweep to inspect and clean your chimney at least once a year.
• Prevent embers from shooting out of the fireplace with a mesh metal screen or glass fireplace doors.
• Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.
• Choose dense wood, such as oak, that has been split and stored in a high and dry place for at least six months.
• Stack firewood outdoors at least 30 feet away from your home.
• Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
• Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris in your fireplace or wood stove.
• Build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke.
• When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate.
• Have smoke alarms on every level of your home and inside and outside of sleeping areas. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

During the holidays, we’ll have a number of employees who will work round-the-clock to ensure you continue to receive safe and reliable service. However, our walk-in customer service centers and call centers will be closed on Wednesday and Thursday, December 24 and 25, as well as on Thursday, January 1.

Your bill will not be due on any of these days, but you can view your bill on our secure website or use our automated telephone system to learn your due date or amount due. And if you wish to make a payment, sign in to your online account at lge-ku.com or call 1-800-981-0600 and press 1-2-3. For a complete list of bill pay options, visit lge-ku/ways_to_pay.asp.

Have a warm and wonderful holiday season!

Like us on Facebook (facebook.com/lgeku) and follow us on Twitter (@lgeku).