

By Lisa Ogle

**A**s the sun rose on the 19th annual Texas Lineman's Rodeo, Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative employees gathered to dedicate their day to a comrade. Bluebonnet's Kenny Roland, who died at home on Jan. 21, 2015, at age 52, was a beloved lineman and avid rodeo competitor who helped Bluebonnet win a prestigious top trophy last year.

The Lineman's Rodeo opening ceremony on July 18 paid tribute to Roland as teams from co-ops and municipal utilities across the state stood around flagpoles in Nolte Island Park in Seguin. Roland's rodeo teammate Jeff Hohlt — a member of the 2014 team that



**Kenny Roland**

won first place in the senior team division and went on to compete at the International Lineman's Rodeo in Kansas — raised American flags during the ceremony to honor Roland. Hearts were heavy, particularly among the Bluebonnet crowd, as they remembered how much Roland loved being part of the rodeo weekend.

Then the competition began. The Lineman's Rodeo mimics real-life lineman duties, but on this day the judges' clocks were ticking. The Bluebonnet team worked hard, but competition was stiff. The linemen battled heat while weighed down with utility gear. Racing against time, they carried out the duties of their trade in an open field dotted with neat rows of wood poles erected just for the competition.

Events included a pole climb requiring linemen to keep an egg intact while holding it gently in their mouths as they descend, specific types of repairs and a daring pole-top rescue of a 180-pound mannequin the size of an injured lineman.

The day included a barbecue cook-off — Bluebonnet's Red Rock Service Center team walked off with the grand prize for best overall barbecue — and an awards ceremony in the early evening.

Although it was a tough year, the Bluebonnet team is already getting fired up for 2016. Bluebonnet's rodeo coordinator Randall Bownds praised the team for its strong effort and thanked volunteers and other supporters who attended this year.

"We'll come back strong next year," he said. ■

A tribute,  
then tough competition  
at the annual  
**Lineman's Rodeo**  
in Seguin

# ON THE WOOD



Member service representative Cindy Shafer, above top, keeps time during the Hurtman Rescue competition.

Lineman Jeffrey Bolding, above, waits for his teammate to descend the pole while competing in the Journeyman Downed Primary event.

At right, linemen and colleagues John Riley, on left, and Tim Fritsche support each other after a demanding day.





Lineman's lingo:

# Time to learn your lines

Bluebonnet



Apprentice Andrew Kessler, above left, competes in the Bell Change event. This year marked the 19th anniversary of the Texas Lineman's Rodeo, held at Nolte Island Park in Seguin.

By Chelsea Beauchamp

**O**ur crews speak a language all their own. Eavesdrop on a bunch of linemen getting ready to restore someone's power, replace downed power lines or upgrade a transformer high atop a pole and you'll quickly take note of a lot of lingo.

Let's demystify the discourse. Here are a few terms and their meanings, in case you overhear some linemen on the job:

**On the wood:** Climbing a pole.

**Tooled up:** Wearing all the necessary equipment for a task, including safety gloves, safety goggles, hard hat, gear, tool pouch and ditty bag.

**Ditty bag:** A small canvas bag on a lineman's tool belt where he keeps miscellaneous supplies, such as tape, bolts and other specialized items. It's worn in addition to a leather tool pouch, where he keeps tools such as Kleins lineman's pliers/cutters, a speed ratchet, hammer, knife and screwdriver.

**Guts:** Yes, that's what it takes for our guys to safely, quickly climb poles and work on dangerous equipment. But in Bluebonnet linemen's lingo, guts are 6-foot-long, 8- to 10-pound rubber tubes (some utilities use plastic) that cover exposed power lines to keep the crew safe from accidental contact with energized lines.

**Headache:** What a lineman on a pole yells before he drops something from above. In other words, "Get out of the way!"

**Sagging wire/up to sag:**

Sagging a wire is the action of pulling wire from the ground "up to sag," which makes the wire of uniform height as it stretches to the next pole.

If wires are not pulled up to sag, the top (energized) wire can come into contact with a lower wire, which can result in big, dangerous problems, including outages.

Go online and let Bluebonnet lineman Kenneth 'Carrot' Roush, left, tell you all about the lineman's lingo.

Find the video on Bluebonnet's

YouTube channel by searching for

'Bluebonnet Coop'.



During the opening ceremony, Bluebonnet lineman Jeff Hohlt, at right, prepares to hang the American flag in honor of his friend and fellow lineman Kenny Roland, who died earlier this year.



Sarah Beal photos

Danny Bolding, left, collects his equipment after the Journeyman Downed Primary event.

Find more photos online with this story at [bluebonnet.coop](http://bluebonnet.coop) and find our video on Bluebonnet's YouTube channel by searching for 'Bluebonnet Coop'.



Bluebonnet's Red Rock Service Center barbecue team — Heath Walden, Jeremy Lynch, Brian Peters and Michael Jeffrey — took home the grand prize for best overall barbecue. If you want to sample some of their smokin' good barbecue, head to Brady Sept. 4-5 for the World Championship BBQ Goat Cook-Off.

