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NOVEMBER 2020

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November 2020



08

Bat Lodging

A conservationist creates a unique oasis for roving insect hunters in Central Texas.

*By Pam LeBlanc
Photos by Eric W. Pohl*

ON THE COVER AND ABOVE
Dusk sends bats rushing out of a cave at Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve to feast on insects.
Photos by Eric W. Pohl

14 Out of This World

The International Space Station, controlled entirely in Houston and home to groundbreaking research, turns 20.

By Melissa Gaskill

04

Currents

The latest buzz

06

TCP Talk

Readers respond

18

Co-op News

Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative

29

Footnotes in Texas History

Toeing the New Mexico Line
By W.F. Strong

30

TCP Kitchen

Cookie Swap
By Megan Myers

34

Hit the Road

Road Trip Relics in Shamrock
By Chet Garner

37

Focus on Texas

Photo Contest: Extremes

38

Observations

Fresh Perspective
By Dan Oko



Tuning Up a BMW

BY LAW, ELECTRIC CARS must emit artificial sounds to alert pedestrians, bicyclists and people with visual impairment. When BMW debuts its i4 sedan for 2021, its sonic signature will be the creation of film composer Hans Zimmer, who won an Oscar in 1995 for his score of *The Lion King* and has been nominated for 10 others.



Not Giving an Inch

The U.S. remains one of three countries that does not use the metric system.

The others are Myanmar, in Southeast Asia, and Liberia, on the West African coast.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I'M MOST THANKFUL FOR ...

TOP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and city. Here are some of the responses to our September prompt: **I can't believe I bought ...**

A 2020 planner.
JANICE SCHWAB
VIA FACEBOOK

My daughter's story about the dent in the car.
JANET MOSLEY
VIA FACEBOOK

Toilet paper for Christmas presents.
DONALIE BELTRAN
CECA
MAY

A Super Bowl XII Cowboys-Broncos ticket for \$32.
CRAIG MASSOUH
PEDERNALES EC
SATTLER

To see more responses, read Currents online.

“When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around.”

—WILLIE NELSON

Texas has 247 freshwater fish species.

SOUND FISHY? OR ALLURING?



PRIZED SCRIBES

November 1 is National Authors Day. *Texas Co-op Power* writers and editors tell of the authors who have been captivating them lately:

Chris Burrows: **Carlos Ruiz Zafón** crafted enchanting tales about enchanting tales.

Travis Hill: **Claudia Rankine** writes cross-genre poetry that lyrically weaves public engagement and private emotion around today's most relevant themes.

Charles Lohrmann: **John le Carré's** international intrigue has been replaced by **Attica Locke's** fast-moving crime fiction.

Jessica Ridge: **Toni Tipton-Martin** cracks open the culinary canon.

Tom Widlowski: **Elmer Kelton** takes me by horseback to pioneer Texas.



Howard Daniel Jr. and wife Clara with an award presented by Burke.

TCP WEB EXTRA

Read about other co-op members who are making a difference in their communities in TCP's Power of Our People program.

Real Passion, Real People

HOWARD DANIEL JR. of Livingston says everyone is important and that belief would be universal if people knew each other as individuals.

Daniel, a retired Army colonel and longtime member of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, serves on the board for Burke, an organization that assists more than 10,000 people with mental health needs and developmental disabilities in 12 East Texas counties.

Daniel learned about Burke after his daughter, Marie, was born with a developmental disability. He joined the board in 1999 and has been its chair since 2011.

Under Daniel's leadership Burke has doubled its mental health services capacity, expanded developmental disability services, engaged law enforcement in mental health emergency management, and expanded Burke's reach to provide specialty services for children and veterans.

"I want the best for the people we serve," says Daniel, pastor of Chesswood Baptist Church, "because the people we serve, like my daughter and others, are real people, with real feelings—and they are special."

Daniel believes everybody should help people born with intellectual and developmental challenges. "We need to make them feel good," he says. "The best way to make them feel good is to put the best facilities out there that we can."

Learn more about Burke and Daniel at myburke.org.

To nominate a person who is making a difference in your community, email details to people@texascooppower.com.



TCP Contests and More

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ANDREA COBB

Meadow Oasis

“Thank you, Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, for your Observations, which calmed my pandemic soul. It felt like I was there at the meadow with you.”

CATHERINE NELSON
PEDERNALES EC
SAN MARCOS

Freaks of Nature

I and many other native plant “freaks” have enjoyed our own little refuges of native habitat, experiencing the flora and fauna that used to be so common here—a true reflection of Texas—before the manicured lawn with its plants from Asia, Africa and Europe came to be the standard [Meadow Oasis, September 2020].

Regina Levoy
MidSouth EC
Shiro



Thank you for highlighting the story of Jessie Daniel Ames, a compassionate, strong, confident woman who fought for our right to vote in addition to protesting against lynchings of people of color [Empowering Every Vote, August 2020].

MARTA LOPEZ
VIA FACEBOOK



WARNER BROTHERS | GETTY IMAGES

Giant Fan

The first time I saw *Giant*, I was very young [Reel Moments, September 2020]. It made such an impression on me. I am 63 and have seen it more times than I can count. Thank you for the wonderfully written story.

Daniella Spann
Medina EC
Medina

Movie Critics

It is amazing that so many good movies have been made in Texas. One that was left out, *Secondhand Lions*, was filmed around Austin in 2002 and was, hands down, one of the best movies ever made.

Norris and Pat Croom
Hamilton County EC
Copperas Cove

How can you do a story on films in Texas and not mention *Hud*?

Dan Golden
Houston County EC
Lovelady

TCP WRITE TO US

letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

Please include your electric co-op and town. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest Texas Co-op Power

How could you not include *The Last Picture Show*, filmed in Archer City, written by Larry McMurtry and nominated for eight Academy Awards?

Mark Spurlock
Taylor EC
Abilene

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holiday



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BAT LODGING



A CONSERVATIONIST creates a unique oasis for roving insect hunters in Central Texas

BY PAM LEBLANC • PHOTOS BY ERIC W. POHL

AS DUSK FALLS ON A WARM SUMMER EVENING, I've joined J. David Bamberger and a few close friends at a table about 50 yards from a gaping hole on a hillside at his ranch near Johnson City.

As we nibble chips and salsa, a single bat emerges from the opening. In a flash a hawk swoops down, snatching the fluttering scout in midflight. A few minutes later, with sunlight quickly fading, a few more bats appear. Soon a narrow stream of flapping shapes forms, like a horizontal plume of campfire smoke.

Bamberger, a former door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman who co-founded the Church's Chicken chain, used his fortune to buy this once-overgrazed property in 1969, paying just \$124 an acre. He named it Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve and began nurturing it, removing nonnative species and planting indigenous grasses. The dry, eroded Central Texas landscape sputtered back to life. Today the 5,500-acre oasis features flowing creeks, fields of waving grass and towering trees and serves as a laboratory for land conservation.

It's also got a bat cave, or "chiroptorium," as Bamberger, 92 and still hiking or exploring his property nearly every day, calls it. (The word hasn't made it into dictionaries, but it's a standard at Selah, which itself is a biblical word whose definition is debated but to Bamberger means "to stop, pause, look around and reflect.")

While volunteering as a trustee with Bat Conservation International's Bracken Cave in the 1990s, Bamberger met BCI founder and bat expert Merlin Tuttle, who taught him the environmental benefits the furry, sometimes pecan-sized mammals provide. Bats gobble up tons of insects across the country each night, Bamberger learned, saving farmers more than \$3.7 billion a year in crop damage and pesticide use. Bamberger, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, got the wild idea to lure a bat population to his own ranch by building a bat cave. Constructing a bat habitat, he figured, meshed with his mission to restore rangeland and protect wildlife.

Mexican free-tailed bats emerge from the chiroptorium—the bat cave constructed at Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE J. David Bamberger shows an indigenous grass that thrives at the preserve. Bamberger walks with author Pam LeBlanc. Sunset at the preserve.

TOP WEB EXTRA

Enter online to win Pam LeBlanc's recent book, *My Stories, All True: J. David Bamberger on Life as an Entrepreneur and Conservationist*.

"People laughed at the idea," Bamberger tells me. We met and became friends more than a decade ago, when I first wrote about his work. "When people laugh at you, sometimes you back away," he says. "Most successful people continue on."

After consulting with bat experts, architect Jim Smith designed a 30-by-100-foot, three-domed habitat with a special observation room where scientists and visitors could watch the bats through a plate glass window. They picked an easily accessible spot near water with a clear flight path. Then they went to work building the structure of concrete and gunite, backfilled it with dirt and covered it with native vegetation.

Newspaper reporters flocked to the ranch in 1998 to report the story. Now all he needed was a resident population.

Bamberger hauled in a load of bat guano to make the cave more appealing, but the bats turned up their noses. He brought in a small occupied bat box to lure a population, but the bats didn't stick around. Still, Bamberger persisted.

"If it doesn't work, it'll hold a hell of a lot of wine," he rationalized.

Every once in a while, a few bats would show up. "I'd be about to rapture," Bamberger says. But the stream of bats he dreamed about didn't move in until four years later, after biologists realized that the few bats that discovered the cave were smashing into the observation window. After they boarded up the window, the bats moved in.

"Unbelievable," Bamberger says, telling the story of driving up to the site and discovering the new residents. "Tears are running down my face. I can't believe what I'm seeing. The bats are pouring out."





“PEOPLE LAUGHED AT THE IDEA,”

Bamberger tells me. We met and became friends more than a decade ago, when I first wrote about his work. “When people laugh at you, sometimes you back away,” he says. “Most successful people continue on.”

He felt vindicated, especially since the *San Antonio Express-News* was printing a story that very week, dubbing the cave “Bamberger’s Folly” and noting that he’d spent more to build a house for bats than most people spend building a home for their family.

When he phoned biologist Tom Kunz, though, the bat expert warned that the emergence was likely a fluke and that a migrating group had probably just stopped over temporarily.

But the bats came back. And since they arrived in big numbers in 2002, they have never left. Today the ranch is

home to year-round populations of Mexican free-tailed bats and cave myotis, another type of bat. Thermal imaging scans show that as many as 400,000 individuals pack shoulder to shoulder along the chiropterium walls during the summer and fly out nightly to forage for insects. In the winter the population dwindles to 3,000–15,000.

“Our bats are very strange,” says Jared Holmes, staff biologist at Selah, equating the population to the bat version of a wild college fraternity house. While a large maternal population inhabits the space during summer months, it



changes when temperatures drop. “We don’t know if the winter colony is just a bunch of lazy males [from northern populations] that don’t want to fly all the way south or something else,” Holmes says.

The maternal population generally shows up in April or May and remains until the heat eases in September or October. Bamberger built the chiroptorium to hold a million individuals, but biologists today believe the cave’s current population represents full capacity. “If you go in there, it’s wall-to-wall bats, and as [evolutionary biologist] Gary McCracken put it, they are a possum’s crawl off the floor,” Holmes says.

Bamberger likes to say you could run around naked all day and never get bitten by a mosquito at his ranch. And while that’s not quite true, the bats do keep down the insect population at Selah.

“It’s David’s bat cave of dreams,” Holmes says. “We’re lucky David tried it.”

But testing also has shown the cave carries a high load of the fungus that causes white nose syndrome, the disease that has killed millions of bats across the country, mostly in the Northeast. When conditions are right, the fungus blooms, creating an itchy, white, mushroomlike growth on the bats’ faces that wakes them from hibernation. That’s less of a problem in warmer places like Central Texas, where they can still find water and insects year-round, but devastating in colder climates. So far the Selah bats have not shown signs of the disease, but as a precaution, Holmes hopes to pressure-wash the chiroptorium this winter, at

Bamberger overlooks a pond from one of his favorite spots on the preserve.

night while the population is out foraging.

“If we lose bats, we lose ecosystem services—all that free pest control and food for other animals,” Holmes says.

“Bats are in trouble, and we have a very unique opportunity to study how these man-made bat caves can function with fungus and virus and how we can disinfect their habitats. It’s an opportunity to see how we can help bats, and it’s great to have a proven design that we may be able to scale down for smaller colonies.”

Besides, bats don’t deserve their negative reputation, Holmes and Bamberger say. The mammals have long been maligned, equated with evil in old films and described as blood-sucking vermin.

“But everything in the natural world, even things we despise, plays a role in the conservation of planet Earth,” Bamberger says. “From the very beginning of my time here, I knew I wanted to make the ranch something special with Mother Nature. I realized the potential of bats—they would be another thing I could brag about, teach from and demonstrate.

“This is small potatoes, but I think my small potatoes are terribly important.” ■

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

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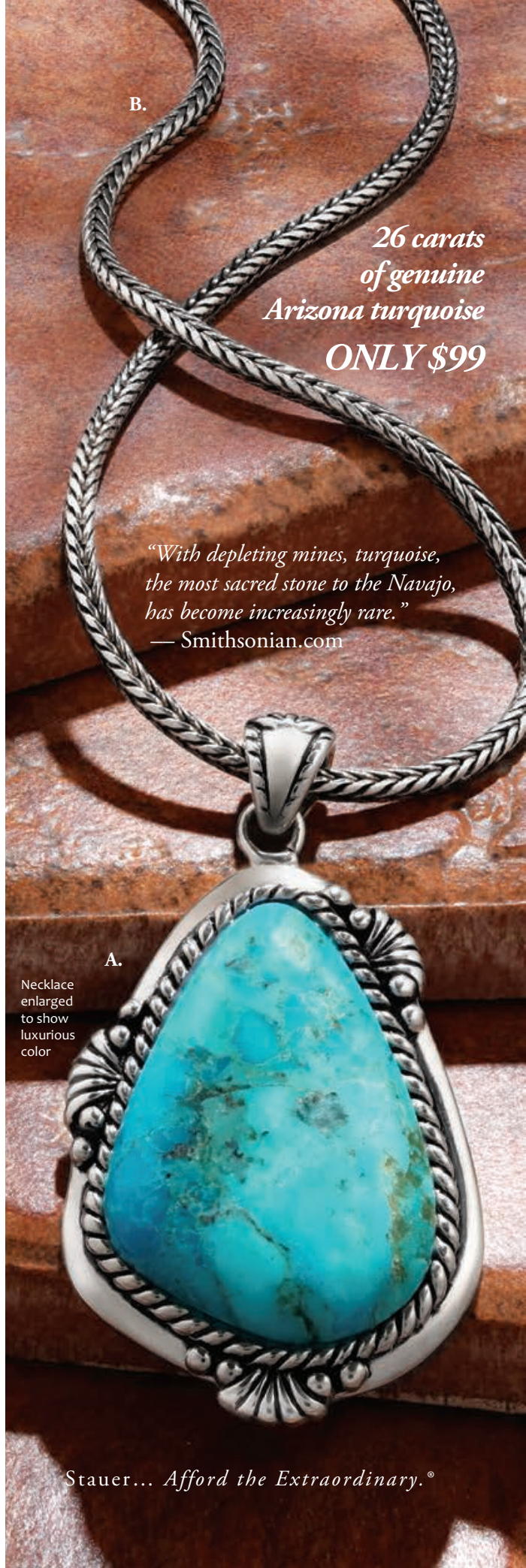
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BY MELISSA GASKILL

OUT OF THIS WORLD

The International Space Station, controlled entirely in Houston and responsible for groundbreaking research, turns 20

IF YOU OR SOMEONE you know recently underwent laser eye surgery, the surgeon likely used technology developed on the International Space Station to track eye movements of astronauts. Surgeons needed a way to follow eye position that doesn't interfere with the procedure, and the space technology proved ideal. The equipment is now used in corrective eye surgeries worldwide.

The space station, the only microgravity laboratory in our known universe, enables research that cannot be conducted anywhere else. As of November 2, scientists have used the orbiting lab continuously for 20 years, conducting more than 2,700 experiments.

All of this science—and in fact every aspect of the space station—is managed at Johnson Space Center, established in 1961 in southeast Houston. Flight control teams of engineers, medical officers and technicians remain on duty there 24/7/365 for the space station.

"I'm not sure people understand what goes on in Mission Control," says John-David Bartoe, who flew on the space shuttle for the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory in 1985 before spending 20 years, starting in 1993, as the space station's research manager. "No astronaut on the station is sitting at a console with a stick flying the space station. That all happens in Mission Control. They are



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE Astronaut Nick Hague shows materials that were part of an experiment for middle and high school students. James H. Newman works outside the space station. Christina H. Koch conducts a capillary structures experiment.

TCP WEB EXTRA

Learn more about the space station—and watch it pass over your town.



Scientists study colloids, which are mixtures of various particles in a liquid, to create more effective and longer-lasting products. Shampoo, laundry detergent and salad dressing are examples of colloids. On Earth, colloids are hard to study because gravity causes heavy particles to sink and lighter ones to float, but in microgravity, that problem goes away, leading to advances we see on store shelves.

Anheuser-Busch has tested germination and malting of barley on the space station to learn how the grain can be altered to improve its use in brewing, distilling and food production. Goodyear Tire has conducted studies to help produce more fuel-efficient tires, and Adidas uses the space station to research improvements in the process of making insoles.

Agriculture and land management benefit from space station research, too. Farmers can monitor water use with thermal infrared measurements taken of Earth's surface from the space station, and another instrument indicates how much carbon is stored in forest canopies.

Equipment on the space station also supports disaster monitoring and responses on Earth. Crew members on the space station can adjust sensors in real time in response to natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, flooding and tsunamis—something satellites cannot do—and relay valuable information to scientists on Earth. Night images taken from the space station help responders check the restoration of electric power after a disaster. Images also help monitor the spread of wildfires and the path of storms so earthbound experts can guide evacuations and rescue operations or the deployment of firefighters.

Researchers in Texas take advantage of the space station for their own work. Larry Kramer, an academic radiologist at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston, is working on a study with the Cardiovascular and Vision Laboratory at Johnson Space Center that looks into how space travel affects vision and the brain.

"Vision problems are a major problem for NASA to solve, something they have to worry about as flight duration becomes longer and they contemplate travel to Mars," Kramer says. "I had experience and was in the right place at the right time."

The team at Johnson Space Center continually plans experiments, and NASA is flooded with proposals from people wanting to conduct research on the space station, Bartoe says. "A long time ago, the executive director of a national science organization said that research in microgravity is of micro-importance. I think we have clearly proven him wrong." ■

actually controlling the mission.

"People in the space station program office make decisions every day on how to make this thing work," Bartoe says. "No one had ever done this before, and the brains behind making this thing happen are right there at JSC."

Bartoe says that when he arrived at Johnson Space Center, his goal was to interest the scientific community in using the space station, which was difficult because it did not yet exist. "We took the philosophy of 'build it and they will come,'" he says, "and turned out it worked."

Every single astronaut who has flown to the space station—more than 240 people so far—trained at the Houston facility.

Research on the space station has contributed to a variety of medical advances in addition to the eye-tracking technology. People soon may be able to receive treatments for some types of cancers via a simple injection rather than intravenous infusion, and studies in space contribute to development of medicines targeting specific cancers, muscular dystrophy, Alzheimer's and other diseases. Advances that help with osteoporosis, stiffening of the arteries and other symptoms of aging spring from research to help protect astronauts from bone loss and cardiovascular problems they can experience in space.

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Happy Thanksgiving

May the good things of life be yours
in abundance not only at Thanksgiving
but throughout the coming year.

WHARTON COUNTY
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



MESSAGE FROM YOUR GENERAL MANAGER/CEO
GARY RAYBON

GIVING THANKS FOR ELECTRIC CO-OPS

THIS THANKSGIVING, as I reflect on the many reasons for gratitude in my life, I want to share why I am thankful for electric cooperatives.

First, I am thankful for Wharton County Electric Cooperative because it provides safe, reliable and affordable electricity to our community. Electricity is a vital part of our modern lives, providing heating and cooling, lighting, convenience in cooking, instantaneous communications, and more.

I'm grateful to be part of an organization that endeavors to make a difference in people's lives because it is the right thing to do. We empower our consumer-members to improve the quality of their lives. We have served residents of our rural area since before investor-owned utilities would even consider stringing immense quantities of line over many miles to provide electricity to a few, spread-out connections.

I'm proud that WCEC, as a nonprofit organization, makes it routine to return capital credits to our members. Capital credits are any margins returned to you, the consumer-members, after all operating expenses are paid and investments are made and the board votes to issue retirements.

I'm glad that WCEC is part of a network of electric cooperatives across the United States that supports hundreds of thousands of jobs. Here at home we employ members of the community, providing careers with good wages and meaning.

I'm grateful for a job where I have co-workers who are focused on providing excellent service to members. That service includes providing energy conservation tips so your electricity stays affordable and safety tips so you and your family can stay safe around electricity. After all, we are serving our friends and neighbors.

I'm pleased, too, that we support the community in other economic and charitable ways. Our payment of state and local taxes benefits all local residents, as tax money goes toward shared services. Additionally, we support those in need through programs such as Operation Round Up, through which co-op members can round up their electric bills to the next whole dollar to contribute to a fund that helps their neighbors pay their electric bills. The co-op also makes donations to various charities.

It gives me a sense of purpose to know that electric cooperatives are broadening their use of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind and hydropower, and that we are contributing to cleaner air. Collectively, across the U.S., co-ops have reduced carbon dioxide emissions by more than 18%.

I'm grateful we are not alone in this business. Across the nation electric cooperatives power 56% of the landmass and own 42%—or 2.6 million miles—of electrical distribution lines. Together we serve more than 20 million businesses, homes, schools and farms in 48 states. We join forces through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and Texas Electric Cooperatives for political strength, buying power, mutual aid and other shared resources.

Most of all, I'm thankful for each and every co-op member who makes possible the continuation of WCEC—this important business and community supporter. I wish you and yours a happy Thanksgiving. ■

HOME TEAM SPOTLIGHT

Meet WCEC's Daniel Gutierrez

AT WCEC, WE PRIDE ourselves on outstanding member service and make every effort to play a key role in our community.

As our employees interact with you, our members, we want you to get to know them beyond their job title. Each month, we feature a TEAM member here.

This month's HOME TEAM SPOTLIGHT features Daniel Gutierrez.

Daniel has been a member of the WCEC HOME TEAM since 2016. He is an Apprentice Lineman in the final phase of WCEC's Apprentice Lineman Training Program.

WCEC's lineman training is a four-year program designed to teach the skills needed to safely and efficiently perform all type of electrical overhead and underground line work. It includes on-the-job training as well as off-premise classroom and hands-on training through Texas Electric Cooperatives.

If all goes according to plan, Daniel will be promoted to Journeyman Lineman later this year.

Daniel was born and raised in El Campo and later Danevang. From a very young age, he was taught valuable work ethic and skills by his father.

"Dad always had us outside working and learning. We tended our garden, took care of animals and helped with repairs around the house." Daniel recalls. "To this day, I still enjoy time with him in the garden."

Family life is important to Daniel. He and his wife, Taelor, have four kids - two daughters and two sons. They enjoy small town living where everyone knows each other and people come together to help in times of need.

"My family is my life," he says. "One of the reasons being a lineman is important to me is to show my family that hard work does pay off. You can accomplish any goal you set for yourself."



Daniel learned about WCEC through a friend whose sister works at the co-op.

"I knew that through the training program, I'd have the opportunity to grow into a career. The benefits are

really good, but the best part is how well the co-op treats

the employees. We are a family here," Daniel says.

The best advice he's ever received comes from his family, "Never give up. Always be the best that you can be, and live life to the fullest."

In his spare time, he enjoys spending time with his family and his children, gardening with his father, fishing and being outdoors.

When asked who he would have lunch with out of anyone, alive or dead, he says, "My grandpa, 'Popo Babe.' He was the best man ever. He taught us so much and his love was beyond words."

In ten years, Daniel sees himself continuing to work towards the goals he has set for himself - financial stability, healthy living and enjoying his family.

Daniel describes himself as hardworking, family-oriented and dependable. We couldn't agree more.

He is a part of the WCEC line crew's future and we are proud to have Daniel on your HOME TEAM ■



Whole-House Electrical Safety Checklist

A **WHOLE-HOUSE ELECTRICAL** safety check can help prevent injuries, deaths and fires caused by faulty products and wiring. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that homeowners conduct an inspection every six months and provides a checklist to help with the task.

First, check out lights.

▶ Are the lightbulbs the appropriate wattage for each fixture? If not, replace bulbs with the correct wattage. While you're at it, consider energy-efficient alternatives such as LED.

Check portable electrical heating equipment.

▶ Does the heater have a mark—such as UL, ETL or CSA—of a nationally recognized testing laboratory? If not, replace the heater because it may not have adequate safety features.

▶ Is the heater placed at least 3 feet away from flammable materials? If not, move it that far or farther from combustibles and ensure that nothing could fall onto the heater. Some heaters produce enough heat to ignite even nearby combustible materials.

▶ Is the heater stable? If not, place the heater on a flat, level surface. Fires can start if a heater falls over. Some heaters turn off automatically if tipped, but it is best to make sure it doesn't tip over in the first place.

▶ Is the heater in good condition, without strange smells, sparks or smoke when in use? If not, repair or replace the

heater. Odd smells, sparks or smoke could indicate an electrical problem that could result in fire or electric shock.

Check electrical outlets and switches.

▶ Are all outlets and switches working properly? If not, have an electrician check them and correct any unsafe wiring conditions.

▶ Are all outlets and switches cool to the touch? If not, stop using them and make sure the outlet is not overloaded with appliances. Unusually warm outlets and switches could indicate an unsafe wiring condition.

▶ Do all electrical plugs fit into all outlets? If not, have the outlet replaced, as loose-fitting plugs can cause overheating and fires.

▶ Do all electrical outlets have faceplates covering wiring? If not, install faceplates. Exposed wiring is a shock hazard.

▶ In homes with children, do all unused outlets have safety covers? If not, insert safety covers over outlets to prevent children from experiencing serious shock if any object is inserted.

Inspect outlets with ground-fault circuit interrupters.

▶ Do you test all GFCI outlets regularly? If not, test them once a month. GFCIs can prevent electrocution and should be used in kitchens, bathrooms and other areas of the home where risk of shock is higher.

Follow this procedure to test GFCIs:

▶ Plug a light into the outlet and turn it on.

▶ Press the test button. Did the light go out? If not, replace the GFCI.

▶ Press the reset button. Did the light come back on? If not, replace the GFCI.

Check countertop appliances.

▶ Are all countertop appliances unplugged when not in use? If not, unplug them, as unattended appliances that remain plugged in may create a fire risk.

▶ Are all appliance cords positioned so that they will not contact a hot surface such as an oven or toaster in the kitchen? If not, relocate cords away from heat sources. Melted or burned cords with exposed wires could lead to electric shock or fire.

▶ Are all appliances located away from sinks? If not, move appliances away from sinks. If it is not possible to move appliances away from sinks, ensure they are plugged into an outlet protected by GFCI. Electricity and water mixing can cause electric shock and fire. ■

SAVE WITH CO-OP CONNECTIONS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Wharton County Electric Cooperative members can save big this holiday season by using the Co-op Connections Card savings program.

Not only can you save locally at the partner businesses listed at right, but the Connections.coop website has a wealth of discounts on travel including roadside assistance, health care savings and a cash back mall.

The program offers online-exclusive deals through partner such as Pro Flowers, Sprint, 1-800-PetMeds and 100 other companies. These offers change regularly so check in often for seasonal promotions and limited time offers

If you are visiting neighboring towns, remember that our card is good wherever Co-op Connections discounts have been established. There is a network of more than 23,500 discounts throughout the country. Just look for a corresponding window sticker, show your card and save on a bite to eat or supplies for the road. You can also find local deals using the Co-op Connections app's location services.

Our Co-op Connections deals will work for you right here at home or wherever you may be headed this holiday season. It's just another member benefit brought to you by WCEC



WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CO-OP CONNECTIONS LOCAL DEALS

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Elite Automotive
709 South Mechanic St.
Executive Stitches
106 N. Washington
Floral Gardens
802 W. Jackson
Flowers Etc. & Gifts Inc.
1513 N. Mechanic
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2507 West Loop
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112 N. Mechanic
Hair Enterprises
1406 N. Mechanic
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1603 N. Mechanic St.
Jack's Drive In & Catering
1225 N. Mechanic
Janak's Welding Supplies
1204 E. Jackson St.
Great Clips
3604 West Loop Unit #F
McCoy's Building Supply
1920 S. Mechanic St.
Professional Pharmacy
1264 N. Mechanic
Tough Country Outfitter
112 E. Jackson St.
Vonderau Ford
1912 North Mechanic

Mr. Tire

06 Market Street
Comet Cleaners & Dry Cleaning
1703 N. Mechanic St.
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Bay City Floral
2133 Ave. G
Bert's RV Park & Propane
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The Mustard Seed
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EAST BERNARD
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407 N. Main Street
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Mattress Discounters of Texas
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Shop local and save big. Your local electric cooperative's Co-op Connections Program helps you get discounts all over town!

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Search "Co-op Connections" in the iTunes store or on Google Play, and download the app today.





BAZA178 | ISTOCK.COM

What About the Windows?

WINDOWS CAN MAKE or break the energy efficiency of a home. Heat gain and loss through the glass is responsible for 25%–30% of residential heating and cooling energy consumption, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

When selecting windows for new construction or replacing a home’s existing windows, choose the most efficient option you can afford.

If that’s not an option for you, your windows could benefit from some simple fixes to increase the efficiency and comfort of your home. **Here are some suggestions from the DOE:**

- ▶ Check windows for air leaks. Then add caulk and weatherstripping to seal any leaks.
- ▶ Add window treatments and coverings to further seal out the elements.
- ▶ Add solar film to the interior side of windows
- ▶ Add shading on the exterior, such as awnings, outside blinds or overhangs.

If windows need to be replaced, there are many options to consider, and some are more energy efficient than others. The Efficient Windows Collaborative offers up tips for picking panes in Texas.

- ▶ Make sure windows meet your local energy code, and look for the Energy Star label.
- ▶ Look for energy-efficient properties on the National Fenestration Rating Council, or NFRC, label.
- ▶ Compare annual energy costs for a typical house by using a computer simulation on the EWC website, efficientwindows.org

- ▶ Ensure proper installation for optimal performance and to avoid air and water leaks.

Here’s a guide to some of the window jargon you may come across.

- ▶ **U-factor:** the rate of heat loss. The lower the U-factor, the better a window resists heat flow

- ▶ **Solar heat gain coefficient:** the fraction of incident solar radiation. A low SHGC means a window transmits less solar heat.

- ▶ **Visible transmittance:** the amount of visible light transmitted. The higher the VT, the more light is transmitted.

- ▶ **Air leakage:** The lower the AL, the less air will pass through cracks.

- ▶ **Condensation resistance:** how well a window resists condensation inside. The higher the rating, the more resistant to condensation a window is.

Having an understanding of energy-efficient properties helps make choosing new windows easier. **The DOE recommends the following when selecting new windows based on the climate:**

- ▶ In colder climates, consider gas-filled windows with low-e coatings to reduce heat loss. In warmer climates, select windows with coatings to reduce heat gain.

- ▶ Choose a low U-factor for better thermal resistance in colder climates.

- ▶ Look for a low SHGC. Low SHGCs reduce heat gain in warm climates.

- ▶ Select windows with both low U-factors and low SHGCs to maximize energy savings in temperate climates with both cold and hot seasons.

- ▶ Look for whole-unit U-factors and SHGCs, rather than center-of-glass U-factors and SHGCs. Whole-unit numbers more accurately reflect the performance of the entire product

The benefits of high-performance windows can go beyond heating and cooling savings. **High-quality windows can:**

- ▶ Improve visibility and the infiltration of daylight
- ▶ Enhance comfort by controlling drafts and reducing direct sunlight with proper coatings.
- ▶ Reduce condensation with warm interior surfaces and insulating frames.
- ▶ Reduce the fading of fabrics and furnishings by blocking ultraviolet radiation with coatings.
- ▶ Reduce peak heating and cooling loads, which may allow for the downsizing of heating and cooling equipment or a reduction in overall energy costs.
- ▶ Make the home quieter by preventing noise from penetrating. ■

DIY Energy Efficiency

Change Air Filters All Winter Long



© THE TOIDI | ADOBE STOCK

YOU DUTIFULLY CHANGED your air conditioning system's filter ever month or two over the summer—right? And now that the weather is cooling off, you might think that job is finished until next summer.

It's not.

Your central heating system also relies on a filter to catch dust, dirt, pet hair and other airborne particles that can clog the system, slow it down and even make it blow that stuff back into your rooms.

A clogged filter restricts airflow, and that can force the system's blower work harder. This can shorten the life of the equipment, causing it to overheat, break down or unnecessarily increase your heating bill.

That's why it's important to change the filter regularly during cooling and heating seasons. In fact, most heating, ventilating and air conditioning system manufacturers recommend monthly changes all year long.

Especially if you have pets, if you live in a dusty climate, or if someone in your home smokes or suffers from allergies, regular filter changes are critical to keeping your HVAC system in good shape and your family comfortable. ■



WCEC Member Calendars Available

Every two years, Wharton County Electric Cooperative publishes a calendar for our members. The WCEC Member Calendar for 2021-2022 is now available at our office!

**Pick up your calendar today at
1815 E. Jackson Street in El Campo
during normal business hours.**



APAKSOY | ISTOCK.COM

Creamy Creole Turkey Bake

- 2/3 cup chopped onion**
- 2/3 cup chopped celery**
- 1/3 cup chopped green pepper**
- 1 clove garlic, minced**
- 1 tablespoon butter**
- 1/4 pound mushrooms, sliced**
- 4 ounces light cream cheese, softened**
- 1 can (8 ounces) stewed tomatoes, drained**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Creole seasoning**
- 4 ounces fettuccine, cooked**
- 2 cups cooked, cubed turkey**
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese**

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Sauté vegetables and garlic in butter until crisp-tender. Add mushrooms and sauté 2 minutes more. Remove from heat.
3. Blend cream cheese, tomatoes and Creole seasoning. Fold in vegetable mixture, cooked fettuccine and turkey.
4. Pour mixture into a 9-inch-square baking dish and sprinkle with Parmesan. Bake 30 minutes or until bubbly.

SERVES 6

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at TexasCoopPower.com.

Portable Generator Safety: A Matter of Life or Death



AFTER HURRICANE LAURA'S WRATH left many without power, the majority of the deaths attributed to the storm are linked to improper use of generators.

During long-term power outages, many rely on portable generators for emergency power. Their growing popularity has resulted in millions of them being placed in homes and small businesses across the nation. But it's estimated only a small percentage are hooked up correctly.

Without taking the proper precautions, using a portable generator could endanger you and others; in fact, it could cost you your life or the lives of others, including your family, friends, neighbors and electric utility crews trying to restore service.

Never try to power the house by plugging a portable generator into a wall outlet. A permanent standby generator is required to power your home during an outage. All standby generators require a permanently (and professionally) installed transfer switch.

The transfer switch has an important job, and that is to break the path of electricity between the power lines and your main electrical panel. This is the best way to protect you, your neighbors and electric utility repair crews from 'backfeed,' which occurs when an improperly connected generator begins feeding electricity "back" through the power lines. This can seriously injure anyone near lines, especially crews working to restore power.

Portable generators should be used to power essential electrical equipment only. Plug appliances directly into the generator or use an extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of damage and that the plug has all its prongs.

Keep the generator dry and do not use it indoors, in a garage, near open doors or windows, or in rainy or wet conditions. Generators emit carbon monoxide which is deadly.

Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions to properly ground the generator. Be sure you understand them before hooking up the generator.

Wharton County Electric Cooperative suggests that these safety guidelines and basic operating instructions be posted with the generator. ■

NOVEMBER HOLIDAYS

Veterans Day | Wednesday, November 11
Thanksgiving | Thursday, November 26

Our offices will be closed Thursday-Friday,
Nov. 26-27, in observance of Thanksgiving.

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Wharton County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Gary Raybon

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Whole-House Electrical Safety Checklist

A **WHOLE-HOUSE ELECTRICAL** safety check can help prevent injuries, deaths and fires caused by faulty products and wiring. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that homeowners conduct an inspection every six months and provides a checklist to help with the task.

First, check out lights.

- ▶ Are the lightbulbs the appropriate wattage for each fixture? If not, replace bulbs with the correct wattage. While you're at it, consider energy-efficient alternatives such as LEDs.

Check portable electrical heating equipment.

- ▶ Does the heater have a mark—such as UL, ETL or CSA—of a nationally recognized testing laboratory? If not, replace the heater because it may not have adequate safety features.

- ▶ Is the heater placed at least 3 feet away from flammable materials? If not, move it that far or farther from combustibles and ensure that nothing could fall onto the heater. Some heaters produce enough heat to ignite even nearby combustible materials.

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- ▶ Is the heater in good condition, without strange smells, sparks or smoke when in use? If not, repair or replace the

heater. Odd smells, sparks or smoke could indicate an electrical problem that could result in fire or electric shock.

Check electrical outlets and switches.

- ▶ Are all outlets and switches working properly? If not, have an electrician check them and correct any unsafe wiring.

- ▶ Are all outlets and switches cool to the touch? If not, stop using them and make sure the outlet is not overloaded with appliances. Unusually warm outlets and switches could indicate an unsafe wiring condition.

- ▶ Do all electrical plugs fit into all outlets? If not, have the outlet replaced, as loosefitting plugs can cause overheating and fires.

- ▶ Do all electrical outlets have faceplates covering wiring? If not, install faceplates. Exposed wiring is a shock hazard.

- ▶ In homes with children, do all unused outlets have safety covers? If not, insert safety covers over outlets to prevent children from experiencing serious shock if any object is inserted.

Inspect outlets with ground-fault circuit interrupters.

- ▶ Do you test all GFCI outlets regularly? If not, test them once a month. GFCIs can prevent electrocution and should be used in kitchens, bathrooms and other areas of the home where risk of shock is higher.

Follow this procedure to test GFCIs:

- ▶ Plug a light into the outlet and turn it on.
- ▶ Press the test button. Did the light go out? If not, replace the GFCI.
- ▶ Press the reset button. Did the light come back on? If not, replace the GFCI.

Check countertop appliances.

- ▶ Are all countertop appliances unplugged when not in use? If not, unplug them, as unattended appliances that remain plugged in may create a fire risk.

- ▶ Are all appliance cords positioned so that they will not contact a hot surface such as an oven or toaster in the kitchen? If not, relocate cords away from heat sources. Melted or burned cords with exposed wires could lead to electric shock or fire.

- ▶ Are all appliances located away from sinks? If not, move appliances away from sinks. If it is not possible to move appliances away from sinks, ensure they are plugged into an outlet protected by GFCI. Electricity and water mixing can cause electric shock and fire. ■



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Efficient Holiday Cooking

COOKING ACCOUNTS FOR 4% of total home energy use, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates, and this figure doesn't include the energy costs associated with refrigeration, water heating and dishwashing.

As households gear up for the holiday season, keep these tips in mind to control energy costs.

Smart Oven Use

Before the baking begins, clean the inside of your range, wiping accumulated grease and grime out of the oven and making sure the window is clean and clear so you can see what's cooking.

Don't open the oven door to check on the progress of cooking food. Every time the door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, forcing it to use more energy to return to the proper cooking temperature. Use the oven light and the window to keep an eye on those cookies.

For recipes that need to bake longer than an hour, preheating isn't necessary.

If you use a ceramic or glass dish for baking, you can typically set your oven to 25 degrees lower than the recipe directs. Because ceramic and glass hold heat better than metal pans, your dish will cook just as well at a lower temperature.

Stovetop Sense

For your stovetop to function effectively, it's important that the metal reflectors under your electric stove burners stay free of dirt and grime. Electric stovetops transmit heat to pans only by direct contact with burners. The less contact your pan has with the burner, the more energy the stovetop has to expend to heat the pan.

If your pans have warped over time and don't sit flat on the burner, it may be time to upgrade to a new set of cookware. To keep pans from warping, don't clean them while they are still hot. The temperature difference between the pan and wash water can deform the metal.

Think Small Appliances

A slow cooker, microwave, toaster oven or warming plate can do the same job of cooking some dishes with less electricity. For example, the average toaster oven can use about half the energy of the average electric stove over the same cooking time. ■

Change Air Filters All Winter Long

YOU DUTIFULLY CHANGED your air conditioning system's filter every month or two over the summer—right? And now that the weather is cooling off, you might think that job is finished until next summer.

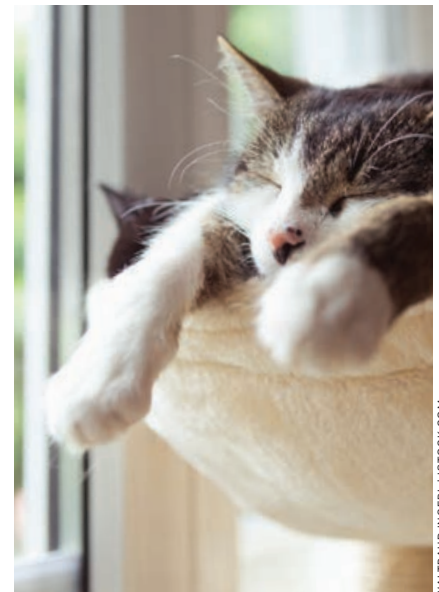
It's not.

Your central heating system also relies on a filter to catch dust, dirt, pet hair and other airborne particles that can clog the system, slow it down and even make it blow that stuff back into your rooms.

A clogged filter restricts airflow, and that can force the system's blower to work harder. This can shorten the life of the equipment, causing it to overheat, break down or unnecessarily increase your heating bill.

That's why it's important to change the filter regularly during cooling and heating seasons. In fact, most heating, ventilating and air conditioning system manufacturers recommend monthly changes all year long.

Especially if you have pets, if you live in a dusty climate, or if someone in your home smokes or suffers from allergies, regular filter changes are critical to keeping your HVAC system in good shape and your family comfortable. ■



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Whole-House Electrical Safety Checklist

A **WHOLE-HOUSE ELECTRICAL** safety check can help prevent injuries, deaths and fires caused by faulty products and wiring. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that homeowners conduct an inspection every six months and provides a checklist to help with the task.

First, check out lights.

- ▶ Are the lightbulbs the appropriate wattage for each fixture? If not, replace bulbs with the correct wattage. While you're at it, consider energy-efficient alternatives such as LEDs.

Check portable electrical heating equipment.

- ▶ Does the heater have a mark—such as UL, ETL or CSA—of a nationally recognized testing laboratory? If not, replace the heater because it may not have adequate safety features.

- ▶ Is the heater placed at least 3 feet away from flammable materials? If not, move it that far or farther from combustibles and ensure that nothing could fall onto the heater. Some heaters produce enough heat to ignite even nearby combustible materials.

- ▶ Is the heater stable? If not, place the heater on a flat, level surface. Fires can start if a heater falls over. Some heaters turn off automatically if tipped, but it is best to make sure it doesn't tip over in the first place.

- ▶ Is the heater in good condition, without strange smells, sparks or smoke when in use? If not, repair or replace the

heater. Odd smells, sparks or smoke could indicate an electrical problem that could result in fire or electric shock.

Check electrical outlets and switches.

- ▶ Are all outlets and switches working properly? If not, have an electrician check them and correct any unsafe wiring.

- ▶ Are all outlets and switches cool to the touch? If not, stop using them and make sure the outlet is not overloaded with appliances. Unusually warm outlets and switches could indicate an unsafe wiring condition.

- ▶ Do all electrical plugs fit into all outlets? If not, have the outlet replaced, as loosefitting plugs can cause overheating and fires.

- ▶ Do all electrical outlets have faceplates covering wiring? If not, install faceplates. Exposed wiring is a shock hazard.

- ▶ In homes with children, do all unused outlets have safety covers? If not, insert safety covers over outlets to prevent children from experiencing serious shock if any object is inserted.

Inspect outlets with ground-fault circuit interrupters.

- ▶ Do you test all GFCI outlets regularly? If not, test them once a month. GFCIs can prevent electrocution and should be used in kitchens, bathrooms and other areas of the home where risk of shock is higher.

Follow this procedure to test GFCIs:

- ▶ Plug a light into the outlet and turn it on.
- ▶ Press the test button. Did the light go out? If not, replace the GFCI.
- ▶ Press the reset button. Did the light come back on? If not, replace the GFCI.

Check countertop appliances.

- ▶ Are all countertop appliances unplugged when not in use? If not, unplug them, as unattended appliances that remain plugged in may create a fire risk.

- ▶ Are all appliance cords positioned so that they will not contact a hot surface such as an oven or toaster in the kitchen? If not, relocate cords away from heat sources. Melted or burned cords with exposed wires could lead to electric shock or fire.

- ▶ Are all appliances located away from sinks? If not, move appliances away from sinks. If it is not possible to move appliances away from sinks, ensure they are plugged into an outlet protected by GFCI. Electricity and water mixing can cause electric shock and fire. ■



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Efficient Holiday Cooking

COOKING ACCOUNTS FOR 4% of total home energy use, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates, and this figure doesn't include the energy costs associated with refrigeration, water heating and dishwashing.

As households gear up for the holiday season, keep these tips in mind to control energy costs.

Smart Oven Use

Before the baking begins, clean the inside of your range, wiping accumulated grease and grime out of the oven and making sure the window is clean and clear so you can see what's cooking.

Don't open the oven door to check on the progress of cooking food. Every time the door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, forcing it to use more energy to return to the proper cooking temperature. Use the oven light and the window to keep an eye on those cookies.

For recipes that need to bake longer than an hour, preheating isn't necessary.

If you use a ceramic or glass dish for baking, you can typically set your oven to 25 degrees lower than the recipe directs. Because ceramic and glass hold heat better than metal pans, your dish will cook just as well at a lower temperature.

Stovetop Sense

For your stovetop to function effectively, it's important that the metal reflectors under your electric stove burners stay free of dirt and grime. Electric stovetops transmit heat to pans only by direct contact with burners. The less contact your pan has with the burner, the more energy the stovetop has to expend to heat the pan.

If your pans have warped over time and don't sit flat on the burner, it may be time to upgrade to a new set of cookware. To keep pans from warping, don't clean them while they are still hot. The temperature difference between the pan and wash water can deform the metal.

Think Small Appliances

A slow cooker, microwave, toaster oven or warming plate can do the same job of cooking some dishes with less electricity. For example, the average toaster oven can use about half the energy of the average electric stove over the same cooking time. ■

Change Air Filters All Winter Long

YOU DUTIFULLY CHANGED your air conditioning system's filter every month or two over the summer—right? And now that the weather is cooling off, you might think that job is finished until next summer.

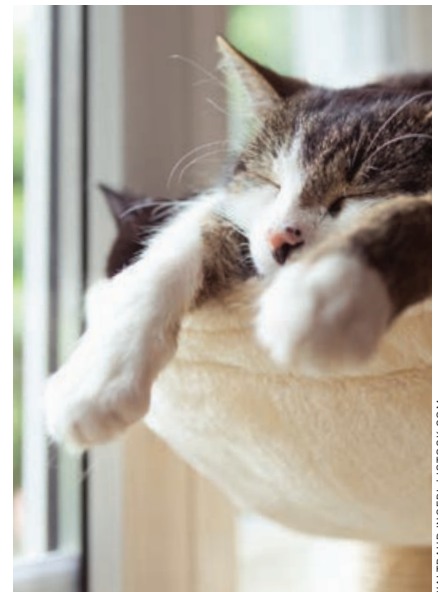
It's not.

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Years of work by innovative engineers have resulted in a personal electric vehicle that's truly unique. They created a battery that provides powerful energy at a fraction of the weight of most batteries. The **Zinger** features two steering levers, one on either side of the seat. The user pushes both levers down to go forward, pulls them both up to brake, and pushes one while pulling the other to turn to either side. This enables great mobility, the ability to turn on a dime and to pull right up

to tables or desks. The controls are right on the steering lever so it's simple to operate, and its exclusive footrest swings out of the way when you stand up or sit down. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the **Zinger** is sturdy and durable yet convenient and comfortable! What's more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat or trunk. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. It holds up to 275 pounds, and it goes up to 6 mph and operates for up to 8 miles on a single charge.

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Sweet on Crab Apples

Tart fruit from the uncommon native trees makes for enduring memories

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

JEFFERY SWIERC thinks of his late mother whenever he's tending her 1940s pressure cooker filled with cherry-sized Texas crab apples. Growing up, he'd watch her turn the mouth-puckering fruit into tasty jelly every fall. Years later he still follows the same recipe passed down to his mother, Lorraine Swierc, by his grandmother and great-grandmother.

"We used to help Mother pick crab apples from two big trees on our ranch, but they rotted and died more than 15 years ago," recalls Jeffery Swierc, who lives with his brother, Zachary, on property they inherited in northeastern Kendall County, which is served by Pedernales Electric Cooperative.

When their great-grandfather Emil Kuebel bought the original 1,280-acre ranch in 1883, Texas crab apples—also called Blanco crab apples—thrived in Kendall, Kerr, Blanco and Gillespie counties. Their abundance inspired such local names in southwestern Blanco County as Crabapple Road, Crabapple Creek and Crabapple School. In Gillespie County, German settlers established the community of Crabapple along a different Crabapple Creek and built their own Crabapple School, which still stands on Lower Crabapple Road north of Fredericksburg.

Native only to the Edwards Plateau, the thorny and thickly branched Texas crab apple forms dense thickets from underground roots and can reach a height of 15 feet. In April they bear fragrant pink or white flowers that produce hard, yellow-green fruit.

For 20 years David Winningham, a Bandera Electric Cooperative member, has germinated and sold Texas crab apples at his Natives of Texas nursery midway between Medina and Kerrville. "Crab apples make a great accent tree because of their thick foliage," he says. "In the spring they're covered with flowers and in the fall with fruit."

Wilson Blackburn, a Pedernales EC member who lives on the Kendall County family farm where he grew up, remembers when Texas crab apples were common. "Then screwworms were eradicated in the 1960s," he says, referring to the parasite that decimated cattle and reduced deer populations from the 1930s into the 1950s. "So as white-tailed deer increased, crab apples began to die out."

Deer still get blamed for the shrinking number of crab apples in the Hill Country. "Seedlings don't have a chance because deer come along and browse

them," says Robert Edmonson, a biologist with the Texas A&M Forest Service in Johnson City.

Both wild and cultivated crab apples stand little chance of surviving without protection. "I recommend placing cages at least 4 feet tall around trees to keep them from being browsed and deer rubbing the trunks," says Edmonson, a Pedernales EC member. "These cages can serve a dual purpose in that any seed that falls inside the area will be protected from browsing."

Years ago on the Swierc ranch, an uncle fenced off the family's last crab apple motte. The enclosure, constructed of steel wire mesh and T-bar stakes, guards more than 20 shrubby trees. A few put on fruit but not enough to make jelly. So Jeffery Swierc replenishes his crab apple supply from trees on a neighbor's ranch.

"When the apples are ripe, we put tarps under the branches and shake the trees," he explains. "That's the easiest way to collect the crab apples. You can't climb the trees because they're too thorny."

Swierc boils the apples for half an hour on the stove. Using a wooden pestle, he presses the juice from the soft fruit through a vintage metal ricer, a cone-shaped sieve designed for mashing potatoes. "A gallon of fruit, which makes four dozen half-pint jars, calls for 7 cups of juice and 9 cups of sugar. I also add a little red food coloring, like Mother always did."

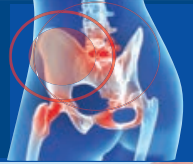
Starting in the late '70s, Lorraine Swierc faithfully made and donated crab apple jelly to her church's fall bazaar in Blanco. The jars, labeled with her name and "Wild Crabapple Jelly," never failed to sell out. "I helped Mother make it for the last time in October 2005," Jeffery Swierc says. "She was 86 years old. The following January, she passed."

In her honor he continued the tradition of donating crab apple jelly to the church's annual fundraisers. Sadly, the bazaars were canceled for good in 2019. Though he misses the event, Swierc plans to continue jarring his jelly, labeled under his name, to give to family and friends.

"Whenever I drive by our Blanco crab apples, I always think how lucky I am to have a part of my family's legacy," he says. "We're going to continue to preserve and take care of the trees for the next generation." ■



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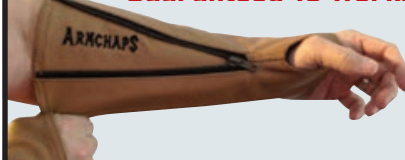
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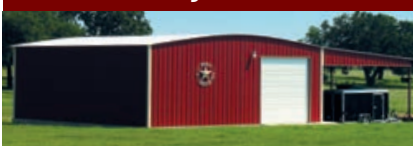


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Toeing the Line

How a Washington connection helped Texas keep a 900-square-mile slice of New Mexico

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY TRACI DABERKO

YOU CAN NEVER underestimate the value of a good friendship forged early in life. If not for one such friendship, Texas would be more than 900 square miles smaller.

Before I get to the friendship, come with me up to the northwest corner of the Panhandle, where Texas meets Oklahoma and New Mexico. If you look closely at a map, you see that the border between Oklahoma and New Mexico doesn't meet up exactly with the border between Texas and New Mexico. The northern Texas border continues 2.3 miles west before heading straight south, essentially notching into New

Mexico. That jog is the result of a mistake some have called the worst survey error in U.S. history.

In truth, that land should have gone to New Mexico. The border between Texas and the New Mexico Territory was to be exactly along the 103rd meridian, same as the border between Oklahoma and New Mexico.

John H. Clark was hired to do the Texas survey in 1859. He started from the south and surveyed northward until he ran out of access to water. He figured: No problem, I'll just go up to the north end of Texas and work my way down and connect to this spot.

Clark started again northwest of present-day Dalhart, at a spot that was a couple of miles to the west of where he should have been. He headed south, marking his way, until Native Americans ran him off. He was just 70 miles from connecting the line to where he left off in the south, so he connected the dots on the map and turned in his work. Sadly, he never would have connected with his earlier starting point. He would have missed it by more than a mile to the west. His northern starting point was 2.3 miles west of where it should have been, and his southern corner was nearly 3.8 miles west of the correct point. The error amounted to an extra 603,348 acres, or 942 square miles, for Texas.

By the time New Mexico was set to achieve statehood, state leaders knew about the error and slipped a clause into the statehood legislation that said that the eastern boundary would be the true 103rd meridian. Thus, New Mexico would get its land back. Nobody seemed to be paying attention to the state's intentions except John Farwell, an original investor in the XIT Ranch in Texas. He realized that the XIT would lose hundreds of thousands of acres—and mineral rights—if the New Mexico plan went through.

Farwell had been good friends with President William Howard Taft during college at Yale University. He went to see his old buddy and explained the predicament. Taft summoned powerful men to his office and told them the Clark border would be the legal border when New Mexico became a state, or it would remain a territory.

And that is how a survey error, along with an old friendship, made Texas almost a thousand square miles bigger than it was supposed to be. Once again, it's about who you know. ■

Cookie Swap

Get to know people and recipes with a sweet exchange

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Cookie swaps are a wonderful way to get your sugary holiday fix while learning a bit about the other swappers. I feel like you can tell a lot about people from what kinds of cookies end up on the table, whether there are classic thumbprints or delicate macarons. Because bourbon balls don't require baking, they are a perfect treat to make while your other holiday cookies have their stint in the oven. While I use graham crackers here, vanilla wafers or gingersnaps are also options. Go with your favorite—or whatever you already have on hand.

Bourbon Balls

2 cups crushed graham crackers
1¼ cups powdered sugar, divided use
1 cup finely chopped pecans
2 tablespoons cocoa powder
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ cup bourbon
2 tablespoons pure maple syrup

COOK'S TIP To make these nonalcoholic, use apple juice in place of the bourbon.

1. In a large bowl, mix together graham cracker crumbs, 1 cup powdered sugar, pecans, cocoa and cinnamon.
2. Whisk together bourbon and maple syrup, then add to dry ingredients. Stir together until everything is evenly moistened. If the mixture looks too dry, add more bourbon and syrup, a small amount at a time. The mixture should clump easily when squeezed.
3. Form mixture into small balls by hand. On a flat surface, roll balls in remaining ¼ cup of powdered sugar and then place them on a waxed paper-lined plate or tray. Chill to let the flavors meld before serving.

MAKES 2 DOZEN COOKIES

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Raspberry Jam Cookies.





Chocolate Chip Ginger Wheels

NANCY FILER
COSERV

These big cookies are a great option for mailing to friends and family thanks to molasses, which keeps the treats soft and tender. For the ones you keep for yourself, Filer recommends wrapping each baked cookie individually in plastic wrap to freeze and enjoy as desired.

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened**
- 3 teaspoons baking soda**
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger**
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon**
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard**
- 1 teaspoon instant coffee**
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 1¼ cups sugar, divided use**
- 1 cup molasses**
- 1 egg**
- 4¾ cups flour**
- ¾ cup milk**
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips**
- 1 cup chopped nuts**

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees and line two cookie sheets with parchment.
2. In a large bowl, cream butter, baking soda, ginger, cinnamon, mustard, coffee, cloves and salt. Blend in 1 cup sugar, then molasses and egg.
3. Mix in the flour, alternating with the milk. Stir in chocolate chips and chopped nuts. The dough will be somewhat sticky.
4. Measure a scant ¼ cup of dough and place on parchment-lined baking sheet, spacing cookies 2 inches apart.

CONTINUED >

\$500 WINNER

Mocha Wedge Cookies

MELISSA SEXSON
PANOLA-HARRISON EC



This recipe was inspired by Sexson's grandmother, who baked butter cookies with a light raspberry glaze. "I love the combination of chocolate and coffee flavors, so I came up with these cookies, which my family and friends all love," Sexson says. If you can't find espresso powder, use ground espresso.

MAKES 16 COOKIES



COOKIES

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened**
- ¼ cup sugar**
- ½ cup packed dark brown sugar**
- ⅛ teaspoon salt**
- 2½ cups flour**
- ⅓ cup mini semisweet chocolate chips**

TOPPING

- ½ teaspoon espresso powder**
- ⅛ teaspoon cinnamon**
- 1½ tablespoons hot water**
- 3 tablespoons light corn syrup**
- Sparkling or sanding sugar**

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Coat two 8-inch round cake pans with nonstick spray and set aside
2. **COOKIES** In a large mixing bowl, cream butter, sugar, brown sugar and salt. Incorporate flour in thirds, using a sturdy spoon to mix. The dough will be crumbly.
3. Once the flour is mixed in, use your hands to continue mixing dough together and forming clumps with your hands. Mix in chocolate chips by hand.
4. Remove dough to a clean surface and knead for a few minutes until dough is evenly moistened and holds together well. If needed, sprinkle on 1 teaspoon of water to moisten.
5. Divide dough into halves and press each into a prepared cake pan, making sure to create an even layer all the way to the edges. Use a fork to prick holes over the surface of the dough.
6. Bake 25–30 minutes, until golden brown on top, rotating pans halfway through. Remove pans and immediately invert onto a clean cutting board. As soon as rounds are turned out, cut each into 8 wedges.
7. **TOPPING** In a small bowl, combine espresso powder and cinnamon. Whisk in hot water, then corn syrup. Using a pastry brush, brush each cookie wedge lightly with syrup mixture. Sprinkle each with sparkling or sanding sugar, then cool completely.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

HERBS DUE NOV 10

Fresh herbs can elevate almost any dish. From basil to rosemary and dill to mint, we're looking for your best recipes using herbs. Enter at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests by November 10.

RECIPES CONTINUED

5. Pour remaining 1/4 cup sugar into a shallow bowl or onto a rimmed plate. Wet the bottom of a glass with water, then dip glass into sugar. Press the glass onto each cookie to flatten slightly, leaving sugar on the cookies. Bake 12–15 minutes.

MAKES 2 DOZEN LARGE COOKIES



- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter
- 1 teaspoon almond extract

FROSTING

- 1 tablespoon butter, softened
- 2 cups powdered sugar, divided use
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1–2 teaspoons heavy cream

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. COOKIES In a large bowl, mix together flour, cornstarch and powdered sugar. Cut in butter using a pastry blender or two butter knives, much like mixing a pie crust. Once mixture resembles coarse

sand, sprinkle in almond extract, then continue mixing until dough forms large clumps.

3. Scoop dough into small balls and place on cookie sheets. Bake 10–12 minutes, until edges just begin to brown. Let cookies cool on cookie sheets for 5 minutes before removing to a wire rack to cool completely.

4. FROSTING Mix softened butter with 1/4 cup powdered sugar, then blend in lemon juice. Add remaining sugar a little bit at a time, then blend in cream. For a thinner glaze, add more cream until frosting reaches desired consistency. Frost cooled cookies, then let frosting set before serving.

MAKES 2 DOZEN COOKIES

TCP WEB EXTRA Don't stop swapping. We have nearly 900 recipes in our archive, including dozens for cookies. Help yourselves.

Lemon Bonbons

LONNA RANADA
COSERV

These tender cookies, first made by Ranada's mother, have a burst of lemon flavor thanks to the easy frosting. Be sure to sift the powdered sugar before measuring to remove any large lumps, which can make the cookies and frosting thicker than desired.

COOKIES

- 1 1/4 cups flour
- 3/4 cup cornstarch

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Road Trip Relics

The U-Drop Inn still entices travelers to pull off Route 66 in Shamrock

BY CHET GARNER

TEXANS LOVE a good road trip.

With the advent of the automobile in the early 20th century, road-tripping became a pastime as important as baseball and barbecue. With the completion of Route 66, the Mother Road of America, road trippers needed rest stops to refuel gas tanks and stomachs. The U-Drop Inn Café in Shamrock stood ready to serve.

The first time I saw the U-Drop Inn, I was traveling the Texas stretch of Route 66 that slices across the Panhandle. Fifteen miles west of Oklahoma, I found the High Plains town of Shamrock, known for the tallest water tower in Texas. But another tower, a cream-colored column with glowing green neon atop an art deco gas station, caught my attention. It was the U-Drop Inn and Tower Station, one of the iconic stops along historic Route 66. The distinctive architecture even inspired a building in *Cars*, the Pixar animated feature about a forgotten highway town.

Built in 1936, the Tower Station was open 24 hours a day and connected with U-Drop Inn Café, which also kept long hours to serve weary travelers. The U-Drop became famous as the best stop between Oklahoma City and Amarillo. Even Elvis Presley dropped in on occasion. The diner no longer offers food but now serves visitors a glimpse into the past. I roamed through, wishing I could park at a booth and order a blue-plate special.

The rest of the building is now a visitors center catering to folks from all over the world who travel the Mother Road. The world map was cluttered with pushpins noting visitors from more than 100 countries. To them, Route 66 and classic stops like the U-Drop Inn signify freedom—the sort of freedom that can only be found on the open road. ■

ABOVE The Tower Station and U-Drop Inn as it looks today.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Chet's video from the U-Drop Inn Café in Shamrock and check out his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

Some events may have been affected by COVID-19. Call or check an event's website for scheduling details.

NOVEMBER

07

Corpus Christi Harbor Half Marathon, (361) 884-6561, harborhalf.com

Kerrville Kerr County Market Days and Hill Country Swap Meet, (830) 459-6198, kerrmarketdays.org

New Braunfels Fall Walk, (830) 660-4935, my.ava.org/find-an-event.php

Tyler [7-8] Texas Rose Fall Horse Trials, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

Georgetown [7-15] Field of Honor, (951) 834-3301, georgetowntxfieldofhonor.org

10

Bryan Messina Hof U.S. Marine Corps Ball, (979) 778-9463, messinahof.com/events

11

Grapevine Paint Your Pet, (817) 442-8463, messinahof.com/events

Ozona Veterans Day Appreciation Banquet, (325) 392-2827, ozona.com/eventscalendar

12

New Braunfels [12-14] Shop, Crop & Craft, (830) 221-4011, heirloompro.com

13

Palestine [13-Dec. 27] The Polar Express, (855) 632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net

14

Denison Holiday at the Market, (469) 712-9122, downtowndenisonfarmersmarket.com

20

Kingsbury Pioneer Flight Museum Wings and Wheels Fly-In, (830) 639-4162, pioneerflightmuseum.org

Santa Fe Heritage Festival, (409) 925-8558, santafetexaschamber.com

Tyler [14-15] North Texas Hunter Jumper Club Year-End Show, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

Corsicana Christmas Tree Lighting and Fireworks Display, (903) 654-4850, visitcorsicana.com

Alpine [20-21] Artwalk, (432) 294-1071, artwalkalpine.com

Giddings [20-21] Texas Word Wrangler Book Festival, (979) 542-2716, texaswordwrangler.com

Fredericksburg [20-22] Fredericksburg Trade Days, (210) 846-4094, fbgtradedays.com

Ingram [20-21, 27-28, Dec. 4-5, 11-12] Inspecting Carol, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

21

Jacksonville Cherokee Craft & Trade Fair, (903) 268-1598, jacksonvilletexas.com

Seguin Texas Hold 'em Poker Tournament, (830) 379-0933, texagedu.org/texasholdem tournament

Tyler [21-22] Dallas Hunter Jumper Scholarship Circuit Year-End Show, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

26

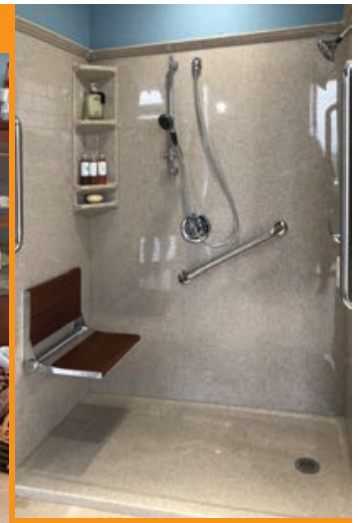
Lake Jackson [26-27] Turkey Trot 5K, (979) 285-2501, lakejacksonturkeytrot.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP *Submit Your Event*

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event online for January by November 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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TRISH RAWLS

Fredericksburg

Getaway Contest

Enter online for a chance to win a two-night getaway in picturesque Fredericksburg, including a half-day wine tour, museum passes and gift certificates for great local restaurants.

TCP Enter Today

TexasCoopPower.com/Contests



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| f. Total Distribution | 1,705,163 | 1,732,613 |
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Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner *Karen Nejttek* Managing Editor Date **October 1, 2020**



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Pick of the Month

American Legion Anvil Shoot

Hamilton, November 11
 (254) 386-3992
facebook.com/cunningham222

American Legion Cunningham Post 222 has held this event every November 11 since 1918, when World War I ended. It involves exploding gunpowder that has been placed between two stacked heavy anvils, which sends the anvil on top flying. Anvil shoots were once a common way for pioneers to commemorate holidays, elections and other special occasions.

NOVEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

27

Granbury Night of Lights Christmas Parade, (817) 573-5548, visitgranbury.com

Abilene [27-28] Thanksgiving Throwdown, (325) 673-4233, abilenevisitors.com/calendar

Fredericksburg [27-29] Peddler Show, (512) 358-1000, peddlershow.com

Fredericksburg [27-29] Trade Days Thanksgiving Show, (210) 846-4094, fbtradedays.com

Jefferson [27-28, Dec. 5, 12, 19, 26] Christmas Express, 1-866-398-2038, jeffersonrailway.com

Llano [27-Dec. 31] Starry Starry Nights Lighted Christmas Park, (325) 247-5354, llanostarrystarrynights.com

28

Comfort Christmas in Comfort, (830) 995-3131, comfortchamber.com

DECEMBER

01

Amarillo [1-3] Farm and Ranch Show, 1-800-827-8007, ideagroup.com/amarillo

02

Alpine Christmas in Alpine, (432) 837-2326, vitalpinetx.com/christmas

03

Cameron Christmas Drive-Thru Parade, (254) 697-4979, cameron-tx.com

Columbus Ladies Night Out, (979) 732-8385, columbus-texas.org

Jacksonville Christmas Parade, (903) 586-2217, jacksonvilletexas.com

La Grange Schmeckenfest, (979) 968-3017, visitlagrangetx.com

New Braunfels Wassailfest, (830) 221-4000, since1845.com

04

Fredericksburg First Friday Art Walk Fredericksburg, (830) 997-6523, visitfredericksburgtx.com

La Grange [4-6, 10-13, 17-23] Trail of Lights, (979) 968-5658, friendsofkreischebrewery.org

05

Fredericksburg Holiday Home Tour, (830) 990-8441, pioneer-museum.net

Fredericksburg Kinderfest, (830) 990-8441, pioneer-museum.net

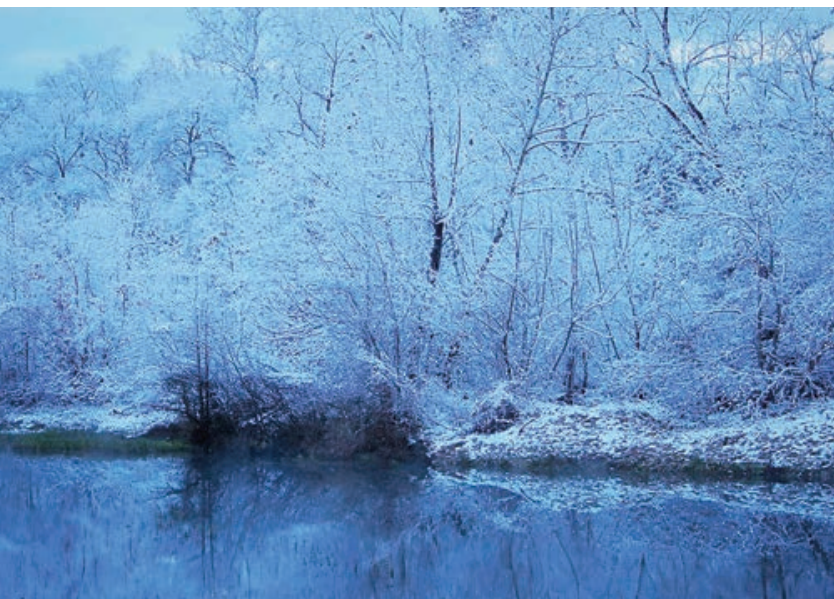
Grand Saline Salt City Christmas, (903) 962-5631, grandsalinemainstreet.com

Kerrville Kerr County Market Days and Hill Country Swap Meet, (830) 459-6198, kerrmarket.days.org

Extremes

Extreme environments, animal behaviors and weather are to be expected, and Texans rise to meet any challenge.

GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

TOMMIE CALFEE
PEDERNALES EC

A winter scene on Onion Creek.

AMBER LADYMON
FARMERS EC

"Our neighbor was burning his field. This is one of my favorites that I got."

JENNIFER CARMACK
HEART OF TEXAS EC

Carmack's son Cyress took this photo of a large thunderhead on the horizon.

JESSICA RAMOS
SOUTH PLAINS EC

"A sunny, warm day takes an extreme turn filled with hail and rain."



Upcoming Contests

DUE NOV 10 **Diners**

DUE DEC 10 **Storms**

DUE JAN 10 **Historic Texas**

Enter online and review submission rules at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



Fresh Perspective

An ardent conservationist resurfaces as a 'meat angler'

BY DAN OKO
ILLUSTRATION BY NIC JONES

ALONG THE BRACKISH shallow lakes off Matagorda Island in the Gulf of Mexico, I'm scanning for redfish fins. Restless mullet keep distracting me, their schools pulsing in the shallows, when all I want is a keeper red.

I'm armed with light spinning tackle, and my friends are spread across the flats. It is an undeniably beautiful day. I spotted herons, egrets, flamingo-pink spoonbills and surfacing dolphins as we crossed the salt. Adding a stout redfish for dinner would make the day even better.

I have not always been what's sometimes referred to as a "meat fisherman," but 20 years in Texas have taught me that redfish on the half shell, prepared over coals and sprinkled with Cajun spice mix and drizzled with oil and lemon, is a treat every angler should enjoy. Before I moved south,

I could be found stalking trout in the riffle lines of Rocky Mountain streams, fly rod in hand, either standing astern in a drift boat or moving like a slow-motion hunter along the bank.

As an ardent conservationist, I don't know what to say about my trajectory from catch and release to deadly hunter except that I believe in abiding the law of the land, and ultimately, fishing purely for sport lacks a certain zest. Rather than debating whether fish feel pain, let's just say my thinking has evolved.

I know plenty of saltwater anglers who prefer fishing with flies, and I have watched redfish hit crab patterns, clouser minnows and popping foam shrimp. But in the name of efficiency and simple camaraderie, I fish conventional tackle when I'm on the Gulf Coast. Whether I am pursuing assorted stream fish or ocean species, the joy I experience remains rooted in the same nitty-gritty details: the attention paid to subtle signs and structure where fish might lurk, the anticipation when a well-placed cast brings the bite, the pulse-pounding joy of the hookup and the epic relief of bringing a fish to hand.

Which returns us to this patch of Matagorda Bay, where I attempt to wade with the stealth of a prowling cat. Through polarized lenses, I glimpse the prize—a bronze bruiser suspended in a few inches of water. I've got a speckled soft-plastic bait, which lands a few feet from my target. I reel slowly, then rest a beat. The movement puts the red on high alert.

He chases down the lure, and I raise my rod to set the hook. A fight ensues that lasts minutes but feels like hours. With a 20-inch red in my net, I look around and spot my friends on the boat. The sun is setting. Dinner will be fresh fish after all. ■



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