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Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2020

Sweet Life

Panaderías serve up
pan dulce and traditions
held dear in Mexican
American culture





LET YOUR DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT

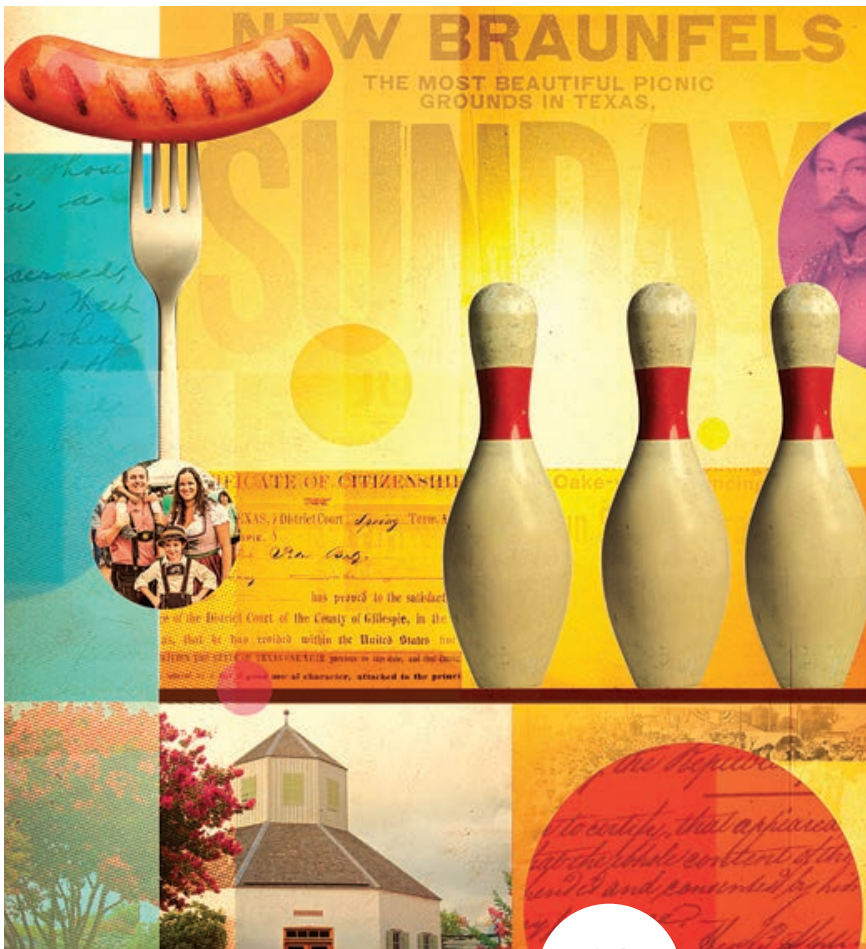
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December 2020



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08 Sweet Memories

Visits to panaderías for pan dulce create cherished family bonds for Mexican Americans.

By Vianney Rodriguez
Photos by Eric W. Pohl
Illustration by Tim Carroll

Burgs in a New Land

A wave of German immigrants 175 years ago transformed the Texas Hill Country.

By Dan Oko
Illustration by David Vogin

ON THE COVER

Vianney Rodriguez with her favorite pan dulce selections.
Photo by Jason David Page

ABOVE

Traces of German culture in the Hill Country.
Illustration by David Vogin

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By Tom Widlowski



“Christmas is doing a little something extra for someone.”

—CHARLES M. SCHULZ

Park Pride

Texas has two of the best state parks in the country. Palo Duro Canyon State Park, in the Panhandle, and Brazos Bend State Park, about 45 miles southwest of downtown Houston, rank second and third according to a national rating by HomeToGo.

Looking Brighter

SURE, NIGHTS ARE GETTING LONGER as the Northern Hemisphere approaches the winter solstice, December 21—but there’s a bright side.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year’s, holiday lighting makes American suburbs up to 50% brighter than usual, even after midnight, *The New York Times* reports. Those strings of lights and blinking reindeer, which use enough electricity to power 800,000 homes for a year, can be observed from space.

Start Counting

You’d need 2,683 LED lights on your roof for them to be seen from space, say researchers at England’s University of Leicester.



PALO DURO CANYON STATE PARK

The vacation rental website ranked parks based on solitude, activities, wildlife and nearby accommodations.

Letchworth State Park in New York took the top spot.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I WISH
I COULD ...

TCP 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 town. Here are some of the responses to our October prompt: **The best Christmas gift I ever got was ...**

A Majorette record player that my dad bought for me three days before he died.

BECKY HOLZHAUS
MEDINA EC
CASTROVILLE

When the neurologist removed a tumor from my son's pituitary gland in his brain and found no cancer.

FRAN BACA
COSERV
CROSS ROADS

My brothers coming home from World War II and the Korean War.

DON MASON
HEART OF TEXAS EC
GATESVILLE

My adopted son, born Dec. 22 and received in our arms Dec. 26.

DEE SUSAN MAGELLA AZEREDO
VIA FACEBOOK

My brother, who was born on Christmas Eve 1957.

W. GRANT BRALY
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC
CUERO

A Texas-shaped waffle maker. I was so happy I cried.

SUSAN PROKOSCH
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents online.



That Frozen Concoction

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1977, Jimmy Buffett's *Margaritaville* peaked at No. 8 on the music charts. The defining song of his career has a place in the Grammy Hall of Fame for its cultural and historic significance. It tells of the first huge wave of tourists to hit Key West, Florida, decades earlier and the laid-back lifestyle they discovered.

And it was written in Austin. Buffett enjoyed the titular refreshing beverage in 1976 at Lung's Cocina del Sur on Anderson Lane, which inspired him to wax lyrical at a friend's house about "that frozen concoction that helps me hang on."



Did You Know?

Oh, and Buffett turns 74 on Christmas Day. Let's all send him shakers of salt.

TCP Contests and More

[ON TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM](http://ONTEXASCOOPPOWER.COM)

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST

Potluck Dishes

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Storms

WEB EXTRA

How UT's McDonald Observatory grants visitors access to the cosmos.



KRISTIN TYLER

Why Horses Wear Shoes

“I was reminded of my great-grandfather Smith. He was the town’s blacksmith and farrier back in Pennsylvania. His forge was fired with Pennsylvania coal.”

FRANK OTT
CONCHO VALLEY EC
EOLA

Co-ops Count

Who knew our electric employees “are so much more than power providers”? How can so few get so much done in all types of weather year after year, often under treacherous conditions [By the Numbers, October 2020]?

Jane Patterson
Bowie-Cass EC
Texarkana



They wear shoes so they don't hurt their feet when kicking their owners [Why Horses Wear Shoes, October 2020].

BOBBY BARRON
VIA FACEBOOK

Encountering SRV

I was a limo driver in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. One of the approximately 100 celebrities I met was Stevie Ray Vaughan [Letters, October 2020]. I picked him and his mother up in Oak Cliff. This was the same month that he died in the helicopter crash.

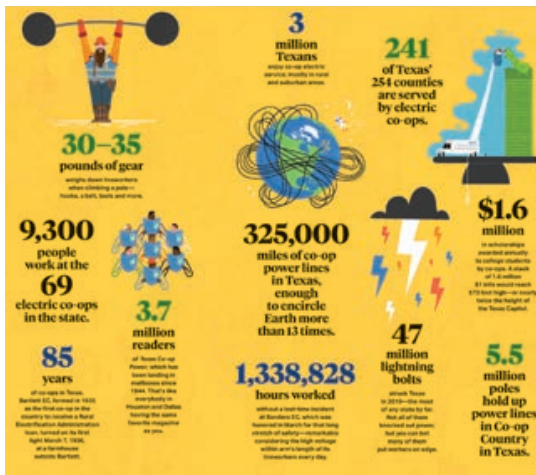
Vance K. Apple
CoServ
Frisco

Bittersweet Keepsake

The best Christmas gift I ever got was a cassette player with a cassette still in it, which my parents had used Christmas Eve while setting out presents [Finish This Sentence, October 2020]. On the cassette they were laughing, joking and talking about us three girls. I never told them about the cassette, nor did I tell my younger sisters. I am the oldest of three girls and was 10 then.

The reason this is so very special is that on March 30, 1975, just three months later, Daddy was murdered, and those were the only words I could hold and continue to have of him. My youngest sister was only 2, and for her these were the only words she would ever hear from her father.

Dedria Tanton
Sam Houston EC
Rye



SHAWN NIELSEN

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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* Sweet *
Memories





BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ • PHOTOS BY ERIC W. POHL
ILLUSTRATION BY TIM CARROLL

Visits to panaderías for pan dulce create cherished family bonds in Mexican American culture

Growing up I spent summers with my *abuelitos* in Brownsville, and our Sunday morning visits to the *panadería* are a cherished memory. My sisters and I would quickly put on our shoes, tighten our ponytails and run to Abuelito Angel's car. At the end of the five-minute drive, my grandfather would park and walk us into the bakery. The aroma was intoxicating.

Like most panaderías, this one was self-serve, so my abuelo would grab a pair of tongs and a silver *charola* (tray) before he set us free. My sister would slowly pace the aisle, studying the colorful displays on each shelf. I, on the other hand, knew exactly what I wanted: two cereal-crust *galletas* with the jelly center. They were my favorite then, and they still are. I would point to the *galletas*, and my abuelito would smile because he knew they were my favorite. To this day visiting a panadería reminds me of my late grandfather.

Visiting a local panadería to buy *pan dulce* is a tradition we deeply love in our Mexican American culture. We enjoy pan dulce throughout the week with our morning *café* or for *merienda* (afternoon snack), and these special pastries are a major part of our holiday celebrations. Because panaderías are part of our daily lives, the folks at our local bakeries are part of our *familia*. We know them all, and when we stop in, we chat about our day, our children and life in general. Because we are a family, the pan dulce tastes that much sweeter.

Every panadería has its regulars who want to keep the tradition of enjoying pan dulce alive for their children and grandchildren. They have their favorite pan dulce selections and arrive early to fill their bags.

Pan dulce translates literally as sweet bread and includes a vast array of pastries that vary dramatically in size, shape, texture and flavor. My experience suggests there are several hundred varieties.

Canda LePage of Brownsville says pan dulce conjures up fond memories about family time and being a carefree kid for her, too. "It's also a very intergenerational thing," she says, describing her grandmother, who was born in Mexico

and does not speak English. “I have very few things in common with her,” LePage says, “but when I bring out the pan dulce and coffee, she’ll start sharing stories of her youth. It’s my favorite time with her.”

Pan dulce was originally heavily influenced by French baking techniques that Mexican bakers began to experiment with after May 1862, when the French were defeated at the Battle of Puebla. Bakers began incorporating indigenous ingredients such as *canela* (cinnamon), fresh-ground corn flour, Mexican vanilla, *piloncillo* (unrefined brown sugar), chocolate, nuts and native fruits. With shapes like *marranitos* (piggies), *bigotes* (mustaches) and *ojo de buey* (ox eyes), each baker gives a nod to his or her culture. These shapes became the beloved names of the pan dulce we love today.

And while that traditional character will always remain, the bakers of today are continuing to put their own mark on pan dulce culture.

Amanda Nolan, owner of Sweet Craft Vegan in Brownsville, scheduled the opening of her new storefront in early 2020. Though she, too, describes childhood visits to the panadería as an awesome experience and a special memory, her mother was very health-conscious, so she decided to learn how to make a healthier version of her favorite pastries. Vegan pan dulce was not readily available in South Texas, so she decided to teach herself.

Baking became an obsession for Nolan. She honed her baking skills at Linda’s Cakes & Desserts, a Brownsville bakery, and pitched owner Andrea Bernes on the idea of selling vegan pan dulce at the shop. The owner gave her the OK. So Nolan began sharing her creations on social media, and soon her vegan *conchas* (seashells) were scooped up by the dozen. Because they do not use any preservatives, her pastries must be sold each day, so calculating exact ingredients is essential to meeting demand.

Just as enjoying pan dulce is multigenerational, baking the special pastries also is often shared among family. I interviewed one Brownsville baker who worked in his family’s panadería for more than 25 years, learning the skill from his father and uncle.

Another Brownsville baker whose entire family works in the panadería tells me that one of his primary goals for this year has been not just to stay in business but to protect his family and employees during the COVID-19 pandemic—and to protect his customers, too. “We want them to bring their grandchildren into the panadería,” he says.

Throughout my travels in South Texas, I have visited many panaderías that have become near and dear to my heart and have helped me keep my abuelito’s memory alive. I encourage everyone to visit a neighborhood panadería and meet the talented bakers carrying on this beloved tradition. Visit, enjoy the aromas and fill up your tray with these irresistible special pastries. I promise you will not be disappointed.

Les mando amor y pan dulce. (I send them love and pan dulce.) ■



Vianney’s Pan Dulce Favorites

Bisquette This savory and sweet treat is more dense than the typical biscuit—often enjoyed with butter or jam.

Churros Dough squeezed into star-shaped sticks and fried; crisp *churros* are rolled in sugar. Some are filled with *dulce de leche* or *cajeta* (caramelized sugar) and are best dipped in steaming mugs of Mexican hot chocolate.

Concha This sweet bread, named for seashells, is a sugar crust pastry that varies in color and flavor at each panadería.

Cortadillo Also known as *pastel de niños*, this popular yellow cake is topped with pink icing and sprinkles, then sliced into triangles.

Cuernito The flaky “little horn” is brushed with egg and dusted with sugar and sometimes filled with chocolate.

Elote Anise- or cinnamon-scented dough filled with orange cinnamon cream, baked, then rolled in sugar while warm from the oven.

Empanada Always quick to sell out, an *empanada* is a crescent-shaped turnover of flaky dough filled with pineapple, pumpkin, cajeta or apples.

Mantecado This is the muffin version of a pound cake and most often found in red wrappers.

Maranito A pig-shaped cookie made from a cakelike dough similar to gingerbread



Churros

Maranito

Polvorone

Cortadillo

Concha

Oreja

Empanada

Cuernito

but actually flavored with *piloncillo* (unrefined brown sugar).

Niño Envuelto This “wrapped child” is similar to a jelly roll made from cake topped with a layer of strawberry jelly, rolled and then topped with more jelly and shredded coconut.

Oreja An “ear” made from flaky dough that is brushed with butter and sprinkled with sugar to look like a French *palmier*. Most often enjoyed with afternoon *café*.

Polvorone or Galleta

This firm, crumbly cookie can be found in an assortment of

colors and flavors. Variations include *tricolores* (three colors), *sandía* (watermelon), *grageas* (with sprinkles), *rosas* (pink) and—my favorite—cereal-crusted *galleta* with jelly.

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Einwanderungs

BURGS IN

A NEW LAND

175 years ago, a wave of GERMAN IMMIGRANTS transformed the Texas Hill Country

Each fall Wurstfest in New Braunfels and Oktoberfest in Fredericksburg celebrate German culture with festive costumes, blaring polka music, and plenty of sausage and beer. With creative exploring, you can find a quieter, family-oriented expression of German culture that endures in out-of-the-way corners of the Hill Country.

The Blanco Bowling Club, just east of the town's courthouse square, is one of fewer than a dozen nine-pin bowling clubs in the German communities of Comal, Gillespie, Bexar and Guadalupe counties. Nine-pin bowling harks back to the game played by German immigrants in the mid-19th century and bears little resemblance to the 10-pin version played in most bowling alleys.

Nine-pin bowling is just one lasting cultural import that German immigrants brought with them when they settled in Central Texas towns and villages 175 years ago.

"Think of it as a team sport," says Julie West, who has lived in Blanco all her life and bowls at the Blanco Bowling Club with friends and family. Her roots in the community are deep. "My grandma managed the cafe," she says, "and my aunts all worked there." West, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, was a pinsetter at the bowling club when she was a teenager.

The pinsetters are one reason this game is so distinctive. "As a pinsetter you're on your hands and knees, and you have to be athletic," West explains. That athleticism helps each pinsetter replace the pins bowlers knock down. "You have to pay attention," she says, "because the pins are flying around."

Nine-pin team bowling requires each bowler in a team of six to bowl in succession. "Knocking down nine pins means nine points," West says. "And the score is calculated cumulatively, not individually. A 12-ringer is when you leave the center pin."

Nine-pin bowling has remained popular over generations in Central Texas—for more than 150 years—because of the area's deep German roots. West explains that the emphasis

on family and the team makes the game uniquely German and attracts children to the game.

The locals know that youth involvement is essential to keeping cultural traditions alive. That's why New Braunfels traditions, such as the annual Kindermasken parade, a costume ball for children usually held in May, have survived since 1856. New Braunfels and Fredericksburg are this year and next marking 175 years of keeping alive the German culture brought here by immigrants, with various celebrations planned for the coming months.

New Braunfels was founded in 1845 by Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels, who purchased land on the banks of the Comal River to establish a German colony. A year later a group of settlers from New Braunfels headed 60 miles northwest and established Fredericksburg. The earliest Texas settlement formed by Germans was Industry, founded in 1831, and a glance at a Texas atlas shows many other communities that can trace their origins to Germany: Weimar, Boerne, Schulenburg, Luckenbach and Muenster.

Ernie Loeffler was raised in New Braunfels and is now the president of the Fredericksburg Convention & Visitor Bureau. "The original Germans wanted to create a cultural enclave in Texas," says Loeffler. "They wrote many letters home describing it as a land of milk and honey."

Evelyn Weinheimer, an archivist at Fredericksburg's Pioneer Museum, which documents the German roots of Gillespie County, says that as early as 1842, the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, also known as *Adelsverein*, advertised to attract settlers to establish enclaves across the Hill Country and the south-central plains. New Braunfels and Fredericksburg were the first two settlements of the *Adelsverein*.

"Land was the biggest draw," says Weinheimer, whose ancestors arrived in that first wave. "Coming from those little German kingdoms, those settlers surely thought they would find a better way of life to raise their families."

“THE ORIGINAL GERMANS wanted to create a cultural enclave in Texas. They wrote many letters home describing it as a land of milk and honey.”



Those day-to-day concerns about family life determined the enduring aspects of culture. Among the visible reminders of German culture in Fredericksburg are the Sunday houses and their distinctive architecture.

“Coming to church on Sunday wasn’t going to happen in the days of wagons and old dirt roads,” Weinheimer says. Families loaded up the wagon on Saturday morning and made the trip into town, where they would barter at the general store and enjoy a social activity or family gathering on Saturday night. Sunday morning they went to one of the five churches in Fredericksburg.

Weinheimer says the typical weekend house was a one-bedroom frame building with a kitchen and living room and a sleeping loft. One of these “tiny houses,” the Fassel-Roeder House, awaits visitors on the grounds of the Pioneer Museum. William Roeder, a former Gillespie County commissioner, told Weinheimer stories of his family’s trips from the White Oak community, 22 miles west, to stay in the house.

Even though the 20 or so Sunday houses that remain in Fredericksburg are similar, Weinheimer says they do not follow an architectural style but reflect the pragmatism of German farmers and how they organized their lives.

Other enduring German influences, such as education, are more civic-minded. “You had this 3,000-year-old society that came and formed a community on the frontier,” says Judy Young of the New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce. “But they were not your average frontiersmen.” The settlers laid out the New Braunfels street grid their first month on the ground, she says, and the town created a tax in 1847 to fund the community’s first public schools.

The German culture in Texas that’s still thriving today is more clearly expressed in nine-pin bowling than in jubilant beer festivals.

New Braunfels is home to the oldest bakery in Texas, Naegelin’s Bakery, which opened its doors in 1868. The Naegelin family sold the business, but new owners kept the name and the Old World recipes. Manager Frankie Alvarado explains, “It’s these traditions that have allowed us to stay in business this long.” ■

TCP WEB EXTRA

Read about how John O. Meusebach, founder of Fredericksburg, signed what is believed to be the only unbroken peace treaty between Native Americans and U.S. settlers.

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Helenite Teardrop Necklace (4 1/4 ctw) ~~\$299~~* Only \$129 +S&P
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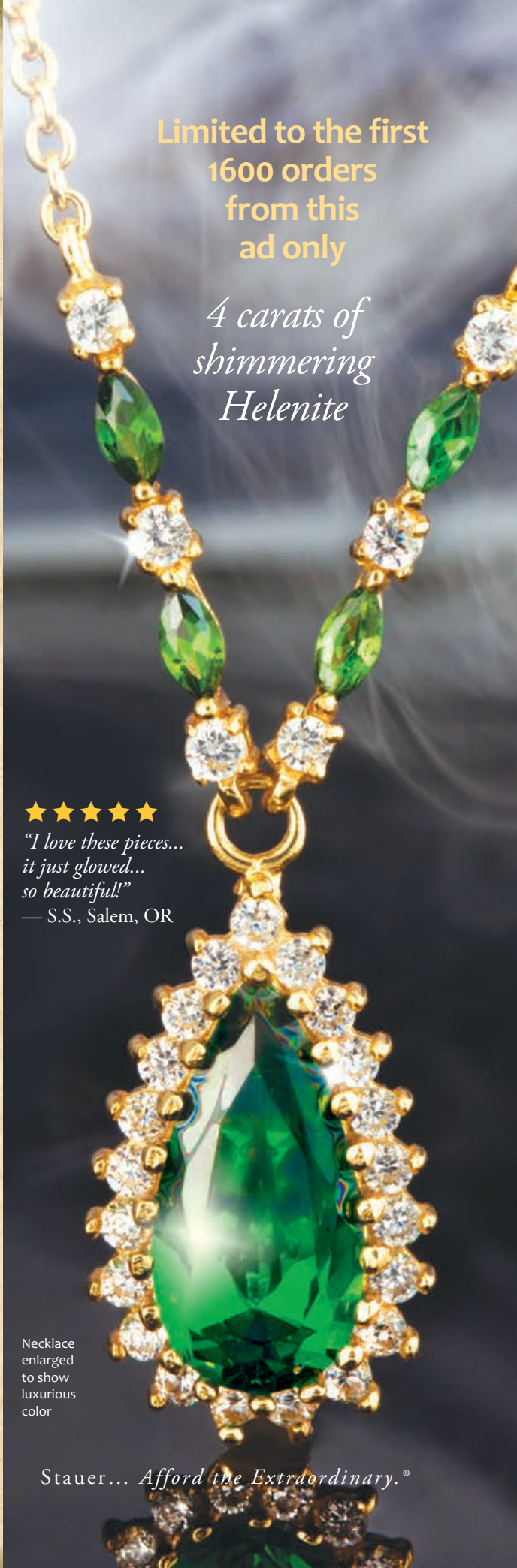


*"I love these pieces...
it just glowed...
so beautiful!"*

— S.S., Salem, OR

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Merry Christmas

Luke 2:14

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, goodwill
toward men."

WCEC will be closed
Thursday–Friday,
December 24–25,
and Friday,
January 1,
for the holidays.

**WHARTON
COUNTY**
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



MESSAGE FROM YOUR GENERAL MANAGER/CEO
GARY RAYBON

SHINE ON: Adapting to keep power flowing



© STEPHEN | ADOBE STOCK

THE HOLIDAYS MIGHT look a little different in Co-op Country this year, and gatherings may be smaller because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we at Wharton County Electric Cooperative will be here to help your holidays shine bright, however you may celebrate. Most December traditions will endure thanks to your co-op’s hardworking employees and reliable power.

If your outdoor light display is your way of showing the community that you still have love and hope in your heart, co-op power will ensure it shines bright along with your Christmas tree. The glow of those twinkling tree lights may seem extra reassuring this year.

If you’d like to get into the competitive spirit with your display, we encourage you to enter the Town & Country Christmas Lighting contest! (See details on Page 25.)

You can rely on us to provide the electricity you need to prepare your Christmas dinner, even if it’s for a smaller group than you’re used to hosting. During these times, an intimate family meal can mean a lot to the whole household.

And co-op power will keep your house warm all winter so you’re comfortable if you’re celebrating the holidays at home. Of course—since it’s Texas—if you need your air conditioner during the holiday season instead, you can rest assured you’ll have electricity for that, too.

If you’re catching up on Christmas movies, WCEC will power your TV and DVD player or streaming device and your Internet equipment, too. You might be able to use this time at home to introduce your children to your family’s favorite flicks.

If your church plans to stream its Christmas service instead of congregating in person, WCEC will keep your screens, tablets and viewing devices bright. Attending a religious service virtually might not be quite the same as being there in person, but it can still lift the spirits and remind us of the reason for the season.

You’ll be able to charge your phone, too, with power from your co-op, so you can keep up those conversations, video chats and connections with all those who cannot be home for Christmas.

Yes, the holidays will look a little different this year, but that doesn’t mean they won’t shine bright. ■

Space Heaters Need Attention

HERE ARE A FEW precautions to take to keep your home and family safe during space heater season.

- ▶ Space heaters are not designed to be your home's main heat source. They're best used as supplemental heat when you want to warm up a room while you're in it.
- ▶ Choose a space heater with a safety label from UL and insist on one with a feature that automatically turns the device off if it tips over or overheats.
- ▶ Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from drapes and furniture that could catch fire. Keep them far away from your Christmas tree.
- ▶ Don't use extension cords with space heaters. Move the heater closer to the outlet so you don't need one.
- ▶ Inspect the heater's cord periodically for frayed wire or damaged insulation. Don't use a space heater with a damaged cord.
- ▶ Place your heater on a flat, level surface, never on upholstered furniture or bedding. The heater shouldn't wobble, which can cause it to tip over and start a fire.
- ▶ Unless the heater is designed for use outdoors or in bathrooms, don't use it in wet areas. ■



FILADENDRON | ISTOCK.COM

Keep Holiday Decor Safe for Children

THE HOLIDAY SEASON is a sensory treat for children and adults alike, with tempting sights, smells, tastes and textures. We decorate our homes with lights, glass, garlands, candles and more—many of which pose potential risks for youngsters.

Electrical Safety Foundation International recommends taking the following safety precautions to ensure that this special time of year does not result in a decoration-related tragedy.

- ▶ Read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels for any decoration that will be used around young children, such as electronic trains and animatronic dolls. Note if it is appropriate for their age group and determine whether adult supervision is required; plan accordingly.
- ▶ Instead of traditional candles, try using battery-operated candles so you can avoid the hazards associated with open flames.
- ▶ Keep candles, matches and lighters out of reach in a locked cabinet.
- ▶ Never leave children unsupervised when candles are lit.
- ▶ Strings of lights and garland are staples of holiday decorating, but they can also pose a strangulation hazard. They should never be used as toys.
- ▶ In homes with small children, try to avoid using decorations that are sharp or breakable. Otherwise, remember to place glass and breakable ornaments out of the reach of young children.
- ▶ Avoid putting Christmas tree lights, ornaments, metal hooks and other small, mouth-size decorations near the ground or on lower limbs, where they may be easily reached by young children.
- ▶ Holly berries, wax fruits and other decorations can present choking hazards.
- ▶ Keep this in mind when arranging your decorations: Cover any unused outlets on extension cords with plastic caps to prevent children from coming in contact with the live circuit.
- ▶ Place electrical cords out of the reach of small children.
- ▶ Never allow children to play with holiday lights, electrical decorations or cords. ■



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GOING GREEN: WCEC Making the Switch to LED Security Lights

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE of Wharton County Electric Cooperative, our communities and the environment while continuing to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity, is a balancing act between cost effectiveness and energy efficiency. This is especially true with WCEC's security light program.

Making a slow switch to high efficiency light emitting diode, or LED, security lights offers that balance for the co-op and our members.

"While LED lights have higher up-front costs over the high-pressure sodium and mercury-vapor lights we offer now, they are far more efficient, last longer and have lower longterm maintenance costs," says WCEC GM/CEO Gary Raybon.

"Additionally, it is becoming harder to find non-LED light fixtures and replacement parts. It only makes sense to begin a gradual switch to LED options for our security light program."

With over 1,500 active security lights across the WCEC territory, it would be cost-prohibitive to attempt a system-wide change. Instead, moving forward, all new security light installations will include LED fixtures.

Additionally, if an older security light cannot be repaired, it will now be replaced with an equivalent LED fixture at no extra cost to the member.

The new LED fixtures come with 10-15 year warranties and boast up to 10 "maintenance-free" years. This will save time and money by reducing the number of service calls for security light repairs.

"Over time, we expect to see significant savings in energy use and maintenance costs with the new LED lighting," Raybon says. "This benefits our members with longterm savings and the environment by reducing load on the grid. It's a win-win."

Below are answers to commonly asked questions about the LED switch over.

Why are we switching to LED?

Switching to LED will allow WCEC to save both money and energy while increasing safety and visibility for our members. While initial costs for LED fixtures are higher, LED lights consume less energy than the older fixtures and have lower maintenance costs longterm.

How much will this cost me?

Members will not see a price increase in either the installation of new lights or in the monthly cost of existing lights that may need to be replaced in the future.

Are LED lights brighter?

LED lights are not technically brighter. They do emit a cleaner, white-colored light that is perceived as brighter by the eye.

When will I get an LED light?

Existing lights will only be replaced if they are not able to be repaired. If a member requests to switch out a functioning light fixture, they will be responsible for the cost of the fixture as well as installation/labor charges.

Who can I contact about LED lights?

Please call our office at 979-543-6271 during normal business hours to discuss LED lighting and the security light program. WCEC is open Monday - Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. ■

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 partners 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.



The One Card That Does It All.™

Co-op Connections App

Shop local and save big. Your local electric cooperative's Co-op Connections Program helps you get discounts all over town!

Try out our free **Mobile App**, and you'll have GPS, "call the store" ability, and a digital card at your fingertips. Find all the ways to save at www.connections.coop.

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



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1009 N. Mechanic

Elite Automotive
709 South Mechanic St.

Executive Stitches
106 N. Washington

Floral Gardens

802 W. Jackson
Flowers Etc. & Gifts Inc.

1513 N. Mechanic
Gene's Wrecker

2507 West Loop
Gerberman Jewelers Inc.

112 N. Mechanic
Hair Enterprises

1406 N. Mechanic
Heavenly Helpers

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Jack's Drive In & Catering

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Don Elliott Ford

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HUNGERFORD

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WHARTON

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212 N. Richmond Rd.

Junior's Smokehouse & Bakery
164 County Rd. 467

Mattress Discounters of Texas
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Roades Law Offices
1201 N. Alabama Rd.

Selections on the Square
104 S. Houston St.

A & A Automotive & Tire
2203 Avenue E



WCEC GM/CEO Gary Raybon presents Chris Cavness with his Certified Loss Control Professional certificate.

WCEC Line Superintendent Prepares for the Future

Chris Cavness becomes a Certified Loss Control Professional

WCEC LINE SUPERINTENDENT and Safety Coordinator Chris Cavness has completed an intensive program in electric utility safety and loss control. The Certified Loss Control Program is a series of workshops offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) in conjunction with the National Utility Training & Safety Education Association. The program is designed to instruct participants in many areas related to electric utility industry safety.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), nearly 4 million injuries occur annually in the workplace. One of the goals of a Certified Loss Control Professional is to help ensure a safe work environment for utility workers and the public in general. Preventing workplace accidents avoids down time and can ultimately lead to lower utility rates.

Chris is one of only a few electric utility professionals in the country that will receive this certification this year. The program requires participants to complete a rigorous series of seminars and tests, a 30-hour OSHA course, and a detailed final course project.

Loss Control participants go through four, week-long sessions that are designed to challenge and educate participants in new, innovative safety techniques. Participants must also maintain their certificate by attending courses every year in order to stay on top of changes in the industry.

Chris has been with WCEC for 12 years. ■



Concern For Community: WCEC's Charitable Fund

A founding principle in the cooperative world, Concern for Community, particularly resonates with many of us during the holidays. It's in this spirit and with an unwavering goal of serving our community that WCEC Members contribute to many charitable and civic organizations throughout the year.

Through **Operation Round Up**, our members can choose to make small, monthly contributions by rounding up their electric bill. The extra change then goes into the **WCEC Charitable Fund** and those funds are distributed to local non-profit organizations throughout the year.

Since 2003, through Operation Round Up, our members have given over \$300,000 back to local organizations.

Non-profit organizations must apply for funding each year. The application process includes proof of 501(c)3 status and an explanation of how the requested funds serve our communities.

Now is the time for non-profits to apply for 2021 funding. Applications are being taken through December 31, 2020 and are available online at:

[MyWCEC.coop/RoundUp](https://mywcec.coop/RoundUp)

DIY Energy Efficiency: Close the Refrigerator!

MORSA IMAGES | ISTOCK.COM



IN THE BUSTLE of Christmas dinner, cooks often make a mistake that can spoil the food and raise the energy bill: They leave the refrigerator door open.

Sure, it's convenient to let it sit open if you're going to get back to it in a minute. But it's one of the least energy-efficient things you can do in the kitchen.

Here are energy-saving tips that will keep your food fresh, your family healthier and your energy use under control as you overuse your kitchen this holiday season.

- ▶ Before you place leftovers in the fridge, wrap them up. Raw meat and poultry leak, and those juices can contaminate other food on lower shelves.
- ▶ Cool food on the counter before sticking it in the fridge. Hot food will raise the temperature inside the refrigerator.
- ▶ Fill your fridge so cold items can help keep other items cool. But an overflowing refrigerator doesn't allow air to circulate between items, which fools the unit into working harder and wasting energy. ■



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.**




FUNWITHFOOD | ISTOCK.COM

Cranberry Delight

- 1 bag (12 ounces) raw cranberries**
- 1½ cups sugar**
- 1¼ cups Big Red soda**
- 1 package (3 ounces) raspberry gelatin**
- 1 small can (8 ounces) crushed pineapple, undrained**
- 1 cup mini marshmallows**
- 1 cup chopped nuts (pecans, walnuts or almonds)**
- ½ cup flaked coconut**

1. Grind cranberries with a food processor, then combine with sugar and refrigerate overnight.
2. The next day, heat the Big Red (on a stovetop or in a microwave) until hot, then dissolve gelatin into soda.
3. Stir in the cranberries and fold in the pineapple, marshmallows and nuts.
4. Pour the mixture into a serving dish or mold, sprinkle with coconut and chill until set.

SERVES 10-12

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



Town & Country Christmas Lighting Contest

IT'S TIME TO REGISTER for WCEC's Town & Country Christmas Lighting Contest.

The contest is open to everyone with one category for residences in the co-op service area and another for residences in the city of El Campo and surrounding communities. The rules

are simple—there are no special themes, and it doesn't matter how many lights you use. The judges will be observing the overall design and appeal of your total Christmas lighting decorations.

WCEC directors will judge all entries from December 7-8, between the hours of 6 and 10 p.m., weather permitting.

In the country, each of the nine director districts will have two semi-finalists who each will receive a cash prize of \$50. Then, the judges will choose first-, second- and third-place winners from among those 18 semi-finalists. These winners will receive an additional cash prize of \$150, \$100 and \$50, respectively.

In town, there will be three winners who will receive cash prizes of \$100 for third place, \$150 for second place and \$200 for first place.

A Best of Show for the overall best decorations will be chosen from the finalists, and will receive \$200. Entries are eligible to win top prizes only once every three years.

All entry forms must be received in the WCEC office no later than 4 p.m. Friday, December 4, 2020. Completed forms can be mailed to P.O. Box 31, El Campo, TX 77437, dropped off in person at our office, or submitted online at MyWCEC.coop/ChristmasLights. ■



Wharton County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Gary Raybon

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- DISTRICT 2: Patrick Kubala
- DISTRICT 3: Frankie Peter, President
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- DISTRICT 7: John Roach
- DISTRICT 8: Jim W. Harton, Asst. Sec.-Treas.
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WCEC Town & Country Christmas Lighting Contest

DEADLINE TO ENTER: 4 P.M. FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2020

NAME _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

LOCATION OF DISPLAY _____

(Street/County Road/FM Road) Must be visible from all-weather public road.

CHOOSE ONE: COUNTRY CATEGORY (WCEC MEMBER) TOWN CATEGORY

I authorize the use and publication of any images of my residence by WCEC for a local newspaper, Texas Co-op Power magazine or WCEC Social Media sites as photographed for the above contest for public use and image campaigns. **Entries are eligible to win top prize(s) - First Place-Town, First Place-Country, Best of Show - only once every THREE years.**

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Actual size is 38.1 mm

Why Are Dealers Hoarding These 100-Year-Old U.S. Silver Dollars?

When it comes to collecting, few coins are as coveted as the first and last of a series. And when big anniversaries for those “firsts” and “lasts” come around, these coins become even more coveted.

Take, for example, the 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars. These 90% pure silver coins were the last of their kind, a special one-year-only resurrection of the classic Wild West Silver Dollar. Three years prior, the Pittman Act authorized the melting of more than 270 million Morgan Silver Dollars so their silver could be sold to our allies in the United Kingdom. Facing our own Silver Dollar shortage, the world’s favorite vintage U.S. Silver Dollar was brought back for one year only while the U.S. Mint worked on its successor, the Peace Silver Dollar.

Dealers Begin Stockpiling Last-Year Morgans

Knowing what we’ve told you about special anniversaries, dealers around the country are preparing for a surge in demand. 2021 will mark the 100th anniversary of the 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar—the last-year-of-issue for the most popular vintage U.S. Silver Dollar ever minted. But slow-moving collectors may be disappointed in what they find when they seek out these coins.

Since the days of the Pittman Act, millions more U.S. Silver Dollars have been melted or worn down in commerce. It’s been estimated that as few as 15% of all the Morgan Dollars ever minted have survived to the present day. That number grows smaller each year, with private hoards now accounting for virtually all the surviving Morgan Silver Dollars. And that was before silver values started to rise...

Don’t Wait—Secure Your 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars NOW!

With this special offer, you can secure a last-year 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar ahead of the rush in About Uncirculated (AU) condition for just \$39.95! Mint marks vary.

These vintage U.S. Silver Dollars allow you to hold 100 years of American history in the palm of your hand. But only if you secure yours before our limited supply of 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars lasts in our vault.

Don’t wait—call 1-800-973-9208 and use the offer code below to secure your 100-year-old Morgan Silver Dollars NOW!

Weight:	26.73 grams
Purity:	90% silver
Diameter:	38.1 mm
Condition:	AU
Mint Mark:	varies

1921 Morgan Silver Dollar AU - \$39.95 ea. + s/h

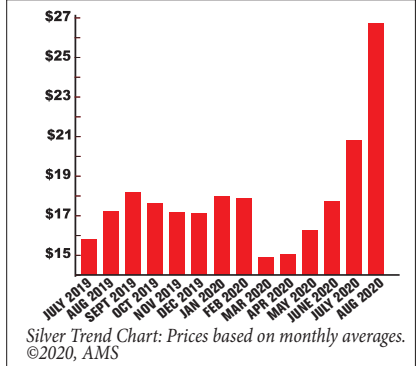
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Interest in Silver Is on the Rise

As you can see from the chart on the left, in 2020, we’ve seen daily silver prices close as low as \$12.01 per ounce and as high as \$28.33 per ounce. That rise in value has led to a sharp increase in buyers’ interest in silver. We’re already seeing a surge of interest from collectors wanting to add vintage Morgan Silver Dollars to their collections. But at what price?

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 WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story, then watch our video about the McDonald Observatory.

had to go shopping for a mountain on which to build an observatory. That must have been fun. Mountain shopping has got to be something you get to do only once or twice in a lifetime. Luckily the university's representatives were able to shop in the Davis Mountains, which harbored some of the finest stargazing potential in North America.

After driving several thousand miles around the region, inspecting numerous sites for altitude, dark skies, cloudless nights and poor prospects for rain, they found what they were looking for. It had no official name, but the locals called it Flat Top Mountain. It was part of a ranch perfectly named for West Texas: The U Up and U Down Ranch.

University of Texas President Harry Benedict wrote a letter to Violet Locke McIvor, owner of that mountain. He told her of McDonald's gift and of the university's great need for a mountain to put an observatory on. Benedict informed McIvor that her mountain was ideally suited for such a facility and that "optical tests already made showed that the Davis Mountains region was the best in Texas, perhaps the best in the United States, for astronomical purposes." He asked her if she might consider giving her mountain to science.

McIvor might have surprised Benedict when she agreed. She wrote back almost immediately and gave UT 200 acres, the entire top of the mountain, which was renamed Mount Locke in honor of McIvor's grandfather, G.S. Locke, who founded the ranch. She also gave the university enough land to build a road to the summit. The resulting highway, Spur 78, is still the highest highway in Texas.

Today UT's McDonald Observatory sits majestically atop Mount Locke. It is one of the world's leading centers for astronomical research. As William McDonald predicted, his gift has given us the heavens themselves. ■

He Gave Us the Stars

An eccentric banker funded the McDonald Observatory against family wishes

BY W.F. STRONG

IN 1926 A BACHELOR banker died in Paris, Texas—a rich bachelor banker, that is. His estate was worth \$1.2 million. Today that would be about \$17.6 million. In his will the banker left 90% of his money to the University of Texas to buy a telescope and build an observatory.

The banker's name was William Johnson McDonald (no connection to the famous hamburger chain).

McDonald's relatives didn't like him leaving all that money for a telescope. They believed that anyone who would do such a thing must not have all the pickets in his fence, so they sued to keep the money in the family.

Fortunately for UT, McDonald had shared his telescope dream with his barber, telling him that astronomy was a young science. He told the barber he hoped that "one day a telescope would be built that would allow astronomers to see the gold-plated streets of heaven."

McDonald was also known to be an amateur scientist. Consequently, a jury had little trouble believing that his bequest was the product of a sane mind. Upon appeal, his relatives received more than they were given originally, but UT still ended up with about \$800,000—\$11.8 million today.

Once the university had the money, it

The Main Event

Special touches and flavors make for exceptional holiday meals

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Because my family lives so far away, we're not always able to get together at the holidays. Even though we might not be gathering around a table laden with turkey and plenty of potatoes, our smaller family holiday meal is no less festive. One dish I love to make that feels fancy but is mostly hands-off is short ribs. They only need a few minutes of browning time before braising in the oven. We like ours with mashed potatoes, but you can also serve them with cheesy polenta, risotto or even pasta.

Red Wine-Braised Short Ribs

3 pounds short ribs
1½ teaspoons salt
1½ teaspoons pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1 cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped carrot
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 bottle (750 milliliters) cabernet sauvignon
1 cup beef stock
2 bay leaves
4 3-inch sprigs fresh thyme or
1 teaspoon dried thyme

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Season short ribs with salt and pepper and heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Working in batches, sear short ribs on all sides and remove to a plate.
2. Reduce heat to medium and stir in garlic and onion, scraping the bottom of the pot. Cook 2 minutes, then add carrot and continue to cook 5 minutes, until carrot is softened. Stir in tomato paste until well mixed.
3. Add wine, beef stock, bay leaves and thyme and stir well. Arrange short ribs in the pot, making sure as much of the meat is submerged as possible. Cover, place in the oven and cook 3 hours.
4. Carefully remove short ribs from the pot (if you want to serve with the bone intact), place them on a platter and tent with foil.
5. Strain the liquid in the pot to remove solids and simmer until reduced by half, adding salt or pepper if needed. Serve short ribs over mashed potatoes with sauce spooned on top.

SERVES 4

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at setted.com, where she features a recipe for Easy Steak Roulade.





Prime Rib Au Jus With Yorkshire Pudding

JACQUELINE BOYD
NUECES EC

A meat thermometer is essential when roasting large cuts like this garlicky prime rib. "My family loves this prime rib for Christmas or New Year's," Boyd says. The accompanying Yorkshire pudding is perfect for soaking up the delicious au jus. If you can't find a bone-in cut, boneless will work just as well.

PRIME RIB

- 5-pound bone-in beef rib roast**
- 5 large cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme**

YORKSHIRE PUDDING (optional)

- 6 eggs**
- 2 cups milk**
- Pinch salt**
- 2 cups flour**
- ½ cup pan drippings from roast**

AU JUS

- ½ cup white wine**
- 2 cups beef stock**

- 1. PRIME RIB** The night before cooking, unwrap the roast and set it in a casserole dish to dry in a refrigerator. This helps to brown the roast.
- 2.** An hour before cooking, set the roast on a rack, fat side up. In a small bowl, combine garlic, olive oil, salt, pepper and thyme, then apply rub to roast, making sure to cover all sides. Insert meat thermometer and pre-heat oven to 450 degrees.

CONTINUED >

\$500 WINNER

Citrus-Brined Smoked Turkey With Brown Sugar Rub

JILEEN PLATT
BOWIE-CASS EC



Is there anything more Texan than smoking a turkey during the holidays? Platt's recipe features a fruity brine that ensures the bird stays moist and tender during the smoking process. If you don't have a smoker, you can roast the turkey in the oven at 350 degrees for about 3 hours.

SERVES 8



BRINE

- 1 gallon water**
- 1 cup salt**
- 1¾ cups orange juice**
- 1¾ cups cranberry juice**
- ½ cup brown sugar**
- 2 cinnamon sticks**
- 1 lemon, sliced**
- 1 orange, sliced**
- 2 tablespoons dried minced onion**
- 4 bay leaves**
- 1 tablespoon pepper**

TURKEY

- 12- to 13-pound turkey, neck and giblets removed**
- Apple or pecan wood chips, for smoking**

RUB

- ½ cup brown sugar**
- ¼ cup smoked paprika**
- 2 tablespoons onion powder**
- 1 tablespoon pepper**
- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 1 tablespoon chili powder**
- 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper**

- 1. BRINE AND TURKEY** In a pot large enough to fit the turkey, mix together the brine ingredients, stirring well. Place whole turkey into the brine, breast-side down. Cover and refrigerate overnight, 12–18 hours.
- 2. RUB** Mix together all ingredients in a medium-sized bowl. Transfer the rub to an airtight container until ready to cook the turkey.
- 3.** The next morning, set smoker to 250 degrees and soak apple or pecan wood chips.
- 4.** Pour ¼ cup of rub into a small bowl. The rest can be stored in a cool, dry place to be used later. Remove turkey from brine, drain excess liquid from cavity, and set on a shallow pan or cookie sheet. Discard the remaining brine. Massage the rub all over the outside of the turkey.
- 5.** When the smoker temperature has reached 250 degrees, place turkey directly on rack with breast side up. Add wood chips to smoker, replacing again after 1 hour. Let turkey cook until internal temperature reaches 165 degrees, maintaining a smoker temperature of 225–250. A 12-pound turkey will take approximately 6 hours. Remove turkey from smoker and let rest 30 minutes before carving.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

POTLUCK DISHES DUE DEC 10

Share your favorite dish to grace the buffet or pass around at family gatherings. Enter at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests by December 10.

Happy Holidays

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RECIPES CONTINUED

3. Roast 20 minutes at 450, then lower temperature to 325 and cook until roast is 120 degrees (130 degrees for medium doneness).

4. YORKSHIRE PUDDING Beat the eggs, milk and salt, then stir in the flour until smooth. Cover and place in the refrigerator while the roast cooks.

5. When the roast is done, remove from pan, cover with foil and let rest while you finish the Yorkshire pudding. Measure ½ cup of drippings from the roast and divide among a 12-cup muffin tin. Pour off the rest of the fat, but keep the roasting pan for the au jus.

6. Place the muffin tin in the oven and turn up the heat to 450 degrees. Let the muffin tin preheat for 10 minutes, then remove and quickly fill each cup ¾ full with the refrigerated batter. Bake 20–25 minutes until golden brown and very puffy.

7. AU JUS Place the roasting pan on the stove over medium-high heat. Stir in wine and bring to a simmer while scraping pan to dissolve drippings. Pour in beef stock, return to a simmer and cook 10 minutes. Carve prime rib and serve with au jus and Yorkshire pudding.

SERVES 6



**Grilled Pork Chops With
Chai Spice Apple Compote**

MARIAN EVONIUK
PEDERNALES EC

Pork and apples are a perfect pairing, and the spices in Evoniuk's compote make this a cozy, comforting dish that's ideal in winter, even while we fire up the grill. Any extra compote is delicious served warm with whipped cream.

CHAI SPICE APPLE COMPOTE

- 1** tablespoon butter
- 1** shallot, peeled and chopped
- ½** teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼** teaspoon ground allspice
- ⅛** teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛** teaspoon ground cloves
- ⅛** teaspoon ground cardamom
- ⅛** teaspoon ground ginger
- ⅛** teaspoon salt
- 2** large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and coarsely chopped
- 2** tablespoons light brown sugar
- Zest and juice of 1** large lemon

PORK CHOPS

- 1½** teaspoons salt
- ¼** teaspoon pepper
- ¼** teaspoon sugar
- ¼** teaspoon celery seed
- 1** teaspoon onion powder
- 1** teaspoon dried parsley
- 3** pounds (about 4) pork center rib chops, bone in, 1¼–1½ inches thick
- 2** teaspoons garlic powder, divided use

1. COMPOTE Combine butter and shallot in a 10-inch skillet and cook, covered, over medium-low heat until shallot is tender. Add the spices and salt and stir about 30 seconds. Add the apples, brown sugar, lemon zest and juice, and cover, cooking over medium heat until apples are crisp-tender, about 7–10 minutes. Remove skillet from heat, transfer compote to a medium glass serving bowl and set aside.

2. PORK CHOPS Prepare outdoor grill for indirect heat. In a small bowl, mix together the salt, pepper, sugar, celery seed, onion powder and parsley. Place pork chops onto a large platter. Sprinkle each side of the chops with ½ teaspoon of the seasoning and ¼ teaspoon of the garlic powder.

3. Place a 12-by-24-inch sheet of non-stick foil onto the grill grate, nonstick side up. Arrange pork chops on top. Grill pork chops 10 minutes on one side, then flip and grill 10 minutes on the other side. Flip pork chops again, grill 5 minutes, then flip and grill 5 minutes on the other side. Cook pork chops to 160 degrees, continuing to flip every 5 minutes as needed. Remove chops onto a clean platter, tent with foil and let rest 5 minutes. Serve with chai spice apple compote.

SERVES 4



holiday



GIFT GUIDE

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Ghost Town Hangout

Terlingua's Starlight Theatre draws a crowd

BY CHET GARNER

I'M SITTING IN the desert at the edge of Texas, enjoying grilled quail amid an assembly that includes artists, dropouts, backpackers and notable ranchers. Over my right shoulder I can see a stuffed goat that once served as the mayor of nearby Lajitas, and in front of me a troubadour sings a lament to the moon. It's Friday night at the Starlight Theatre in the Terlingua ghost town.

This rocky village sits about 10 miles from the Mexico border, but it seems more like another universe, one defined by incongruous elements such as a pirate ship and rough metal folk art. When it was founded more than a century ago, Terlingua was defined by a quicksilver mine, but the village faded after the mine went bust. By the 1960s artists and freethinkers found they could thrive there without society's constraints.

Like many of those gathered here, I'm fresh off the trails of Big Bend National Park. In pursuit of a good meal, I stop at the Starlight for dinner before heading home. The building served as the town's theater into the 1930s but was abandoned. After 30 years its four walls remained, but the roof was gone. The adobe shell became an open-air music venue. With the West Texas stars for a ceiling, the Starlight earned its new name.

After a few more decades, the owner decided to add a roof and create a proper restaurant. Now the Starlight is possibly the best place west of the Pecos for distinctive dining, boasting creative dishes like chicken-fried wild boar, axis burgers and bowls of classic Texas chili.

After dinner I grab a cold beer from the Terlingua Trading Company next door and join the characters on the expansive porch to enjoy the West Texas breeze and listen to yarns that stretch across the Rio Grande. ■

ABOVE Starlight signage on the facade above the front entry.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Chet's video from Terlingua's Starlight Theatre 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.

DECEMBER

04

Granbury [4-13] Away in a Manger Nativity Display, (817) 360-6228, visitgranbury.com/away-in-a-manger-nativity-display

La Grange [4-6, 10-13, 17-23] Trail of Lights at Kreishe Brewery and Monument Hill State Historic Site, (979) 968-5658, friendsofkreishebrewery.org/trailoflights

08

Nederland Lighted Christmas Parade, (409) 985-7822, visitportarthurtx.com

11

Clute Christmas in the Park, (979) 265-8392

Fredericksburg [11-12] The Christmas Journey, (830) 997-2069, bethanyfredericksburg.com

Levelland [11-12] South Plains Showdown Jackpot Pig Show, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

Fredericksburg [11-20] Nuncrackers, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

12

Hondo Tour of Vacant Buildings, (830) 426-3037, hondochamber.org/tour-of-vacant-buildings

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

Palestine Old Town Vintage Christmas Open House, (903) 221-6233, otvandmore.com

Palestine Wine Swirl, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

Port Arthur Drive Thru Christmas, (409) 983-8105, visitportarthurtx.com

Reno Christmas in the Park, (903) 785-6581, renotexas.us

17

Palestine Christmas Carol Sing Along, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com/christmas

18

Fredericksburg [18-20] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094, fbgtradedays.com

Levelland [18-20] Christmas Cash Classic Show Pig Jackpot, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

19

Fort McKavett Victorian Christmas Fair, (325) 396-2358, facebook.com/visitfortmckavett



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Pick of the Month

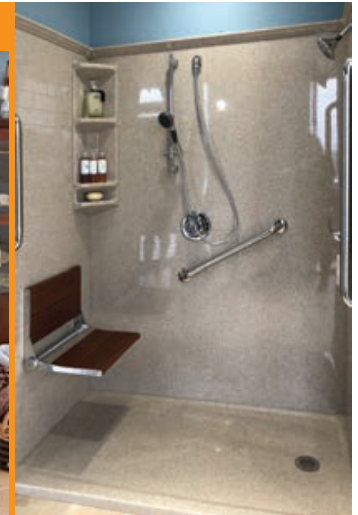
Main Street Christmas
Darrouzett, December 12
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This town of 300 mostly farmers and ranchers about as close as you can get to the North Pole and still be in Texas promises two blocks packed with a variety of activities. Children can decorate T-shirts and cookies. Adults can enjoy bingo. All can partake in chili and soup and a Christmas dance. A parade of hay-hauler trucks decorated with antlers is followed by a special guest who rides in a firetruck.

TCP Submit Your Event

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

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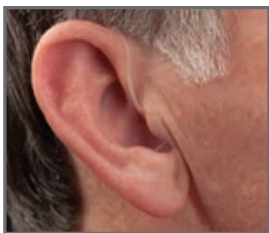


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On Wheels

"There are many spokes on the wheel of life. First, we're here to explore new possibilities." —Ray Charles

GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

RICK KIEFFER
BLUEBONNET EC

"My friend Bill Stephens showing his skills at Palo Duro Canyon State Park."

PHOEBE LAKE
BLUEBONNET EC

"We moved a 100-year-old farmhouse from Somerville to Brenham. This is half of it on its way."

GARY CARPENTER
FAYETTE EC

"This bus was used by the Texas swing band that represented Lone Star Beer in the 1950s and 1960s."

NANCY BURRER
SAN BERNARD EC

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Upcoming Contests

- DUE DEC 10** Storms
- DUE JAN 10** Historic Texas
- DUE FEB 10** Manmade vs. Nature

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.



Hooked on Worms

Growing up with an unabated work ethic while stooping low in the rain

BY TOM WIDLOWSKI
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

I USED TO have worms.

Even at 13 I knew that wasn't very funny, but it seems to be a crack common to the night crawler business, and I used to be in the night crawler business.

It was 1974 in Joliet, Illinois, and I wanted cash.

We stuck a shingle on the utility pole—shame on us—at the end of our block, where it crossed a busier street. “Worms & Nite-Crawlers, 917.” Our address on Sheila Drive.

It worked. Folks heading out to fish stopped by and rapped on our door to buy their bait. Today it would probably be mistaken for drug deals. Strange cars pulling into the driveway, a dollar handed over in exchange for the goods.

It's not a job for the squeamish. First you must collect the worms. That means

going someplace with lots of grass—a park or a schoolyard. The worms come out of the ground after a good rain, especially at night.

My dad, God bless him, and I and sometimes my younger brother and sister would traipse through the grass in the dark, bent at the waist with a flashlight and old milk jug in one hand. We'd pluck the worms off the ground and drop them into our gallons, which had been cut open at the top to create a larger opening.

We'd be out there for an hour, maybe more—how does a kid measure time hunched over in the total darkness, sometimes in the rain? When we thought we had enough, either worms or of the experience, we'd head home.

There, we dumped them onto newspapers on our basement floor—a writhing mound of slimy, yucky... things. Earthworms produce mucus that keeps their bodies moist to help breathe in oxygen through their skin. In those milk jugs, they seemed to need a lot of mucus. On good nights there'd be more than a thousand of them squirming on the sports section. My bread and butter.

I counted them out by the dozen and put them, with a bit of peat moss, into old oleo, sour cream and similar containers that friends and relatives saved for me. Then into our basement fridge. Chilled, they went dormant but stayed alive.

And so the anglers came to our door, sometimes in the middle of the night, and bought my worms. Fifty cents a dozen. We'd open the container and stir the peat moss a bit with a finger to show the customer they were getting lively bait that couldn't fail. Then we'd wish them luck.

Barely more than a decade later, I was a newspaper designer and editor—still working at night, hovering over sports pages, but no longer knuckle-deep in slime. ■

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\$2.99 ~~\$3.99~~

Save 66%

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

Non-medical.
Black Blue
ITEM 58065 ITEM 57593

Compare to
Fecdy
8017112X14
\$8.99

Use Online & In-Store

38086937 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

McGRAW ★★★★★ (673)

8 Gallon, 150 PSI Oil-Free Air Compressor

\$119.99 ~~\$139.99~~

Save \$39

Compare to
Titan
11194
\$5.99

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 62535
9056 shown

37948400 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

SAVE 89%

4" Magnetic Parts Holder

\$2.99 ~~\$6.39~~

WOW! 63¢

LIMIT 3

Hardware sold separately.

Compare to
Titan
11194
\$5.99

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 62535
9056 shown

37949520 Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

20% OFF

ANY SINGLE ITEM*

Use Online & In-Store

37943598

LIMIT 1 coupon per customer per day. Save 20% on any 1 item purchased. *Cannot be used with other discount, coupon or any of the following items or brands: Inside Track Club membership, Extended Service Plan, gift card, open box item, 3 day Parking Lot Sale item, compressors, floor jacks, power stations, sales, storage cabinets, chests or bins, trailers, welders, Admiral, Ames, Atlas, Avoca, Bauer, Central Machinery, Cobalt, CoverPro, DeVault, Diamondback, Drummond, Fatigueless, Fischer, Hercules, Iron, Jupiter, Lynx, Poisan, Predator, Tailgator, Viking, Vulcan, Zurich. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 1/15/21.

PITTSBURGH ★★★★★ (1365)

301 Piece Master Mechanic's Tool Kit

\$169.99 ~~\$199.99~~

Save \$170

LIFETIME WARRANTY

Compare to
Klutch 43994
\$339.99

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 63457/63464 shown

37951240 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

5000 Lumen 4 ft. LED Hanging Shop Light

\$19.99 ~~\$29.99~~

Save 33%

Compare to
Titan
11194
\$5.99

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 64410

37951918 LIMIT 3 - Exp. 1/15/21*

HaulMaster ★★★★★ (6430)

40" x 72" Moving Blanket

\$3.99 ~~\$7.70~~

Save 60%

Compare to
Pratt Retail Specialties
HOMOVBLAN
\$9.98

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 69504/62336
4782 shown

37953246 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

PITTSBURGH SERIES 2 ★★★★★ (923)

1 SELLING JACKS IN AMERICA

Rapid Run® 3 Ton Steel Heavy Duty Floor Jack

\$89.99 ~~\$104.99~~

Save \$45

Compare to
Powerbuilt 647593
\$135.27

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 56621/56622
56623/56624 shown

37953589 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

US GENERAL ★★★★★ (808)

44" x 22" Double Bank Extra Deep Cabinet

\$449.99 ~~\$499.99~~

Save \$2,285

FOUR CHOICE OF 6 COLORS

Compare to
Snap-on KRA4813FPB0
\$2,735

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 64446, 64955,
64462, 64954, 64281,
64956

37953887 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 1/15/21*

HaulMaster ★★★★★ (7028)

18" x 12", 1000 lb. Capacity Hardwood Mover's Dolly

\$7.99 ~~\$10.99~~

Save 62%

Compare to
Buffalo Tools
HDFDOLLY
\$21.29

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 93888/61899/63095/63096/63097/63098 shown

37956600 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

CENTECH ★★★★★ (3978)

2/10/50 AMP, 12v Battery Charger and Engine Starter

\$34.99 ~~\$54.99~~

Save 38%

Compare to
Schumacher Electric
SE-1250
\$56.93

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 60581/60653 shown

37957605 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 1/15/21*

HaulMaster ★★★★★ (5248)

18" Working Platform Step Stool

\$19.99 ~~\$29.99~~

Save 50%

Compare to
Neocraft
60635
\$39.99

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 62515/66911 shown

37958291 LIMIT 3 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

WARRIOR ★★★★★ (5303)

29 Piece Titanium Drill Bit Set

\$10.99 ~~\$18.99~~

Save 81%

Compare to
Dewalt
DW1369
\$60.09

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 5889/62281
61637 shown

37959251 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

COVERPRO ★★★★★ (2041)

10 ft. x 17 ft. Portable Garage

\$169.99 ~~\$199.99~~

Save \$135

Compare to
Shelter Logic 76377
\$305.29

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 62859/63055
62860 shown

37959402 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

drillmaster ★★★★★ (6777)

4-1/2" Angle Grinder

\$9.99 ~~\$14.99~~

Save 56%

Compare to
Ironton 61451
\$22.99

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 69645/60625 shown

37959492 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

PREDATOR ★★★★★ (3949)

3500w Super Quiet Inverter Generator

\$769.99 ~~\$1,329.99~~

Save \$1,329

Compare to
Honda EU3000iSA
\$2,099

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 56720/63584 shown

37960396 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

PREDATOR ★★★★★ (3849)

6.5 HP (212 cc) OHV Horizontal Shaft Gas Engine

\$99.99 ~~\$124.99~~

Save \$230

Compare to
Honda
GX200UT0X2
\$329.99

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 60363/69730 shown

37961438 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

THUNDERBOLT ★★★★★ (3990)

Alkaline Batteries AA, AAA - 24 PACK

\$4.99 ~~\$6.99~~

Save 69%

Also available in C - 6 pack, D - 6 pack, and 9v - 4 pack sizes

Compare to
Energiner
551413526
\$16.24

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 62404 shown

38087653 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC ★★★★★ (1767)

3/8" x 50 ft. Retractable Air Hose Reel

\$59.99 ~~\$79.99~~

Save \$46

Compare to
Kuhbit
SEY-AIR184
\$106

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 44685/93897 shown

37963205 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 1/15/21*

WOW! SUPER COUPON

PITTSBURGH ★★★★★ (2062)

4" Ratcheting Bar Clamp/Spreader

99¢ ~~\$1.99~~

Save 84%

LIFETIME WARRANTY

Compare to
Irwin
1964747
\$6.49

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 44805/62242
6074 shown

37963224 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

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