

METER READERS STILL  
MAKE THE ROUNDS

CHET GETS CHARMED  
BY POLKA MUSIC

CUERO SHARES ITS TIES  
TO TURKEYS

# Texas Coop Power

FOR TRI-COUNTY EC MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2022

## Monarch Matriarch

One woman's quest to protect  
the butterfly's future



**TRI-COUNTY  
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18



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# October 2022



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How one woman is earnestly spreading the word about monarch migrations through Texas.

By *Laura Tolley*  
Photos by *Julia Robinson*

## Reading Between the Lines

Decades after new tech started taking over, meter readers are still a valued part of co-op connections.

By *Chris Burrows*  
Illustration by *Michael Koelsch*

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Monika Maeckle in her pollinator-friendly backyard in San Antonio.  
Photo by *Julia Robinson*

ABOVE  
Meter readers have ready friends in Co-op Country. Ready enemies, too.  
Illustration by *Michael Koelsch*

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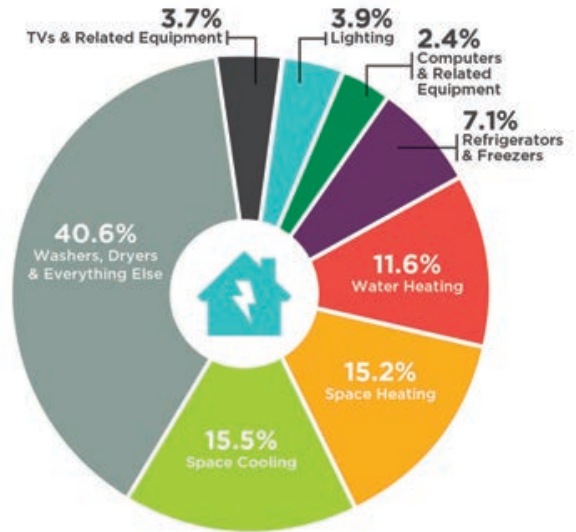
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**Observations**  
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By *Caytlyn Phillips*



# Extra Credit

**WILEY COLLEGE** graduates learned at commencement in May that their student debt was paid for. An anonymous donor bestowed the gift upon the 100-plus members of the class of 2022 at the historically Black college in Marshall, erasing some \$300,000 from the books.



## How We Use Electricity

This National Co-op Month, your electric cooperative and trusted energy adviser wants to show you where your money goes—and where you might focus on cutting back.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

### THE BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT I EVER GAVE WAS ...

**TCP** Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Here are some of the responses to our August prompt: **The song that takes me back to high school is ...**

1999 by Prince. I graduated high school in 1999, and we played the song all year.

JENNIFER MAYFIELD OKERE  
VIA FACEBOOK

*Before the Next Teardrop Falls* by Freddy Fender.

PEGGY DARSEY  
VIA FACEBOOK

*Bohemian Rhapsody* by Queen. Every time I hear the song, I have to sing along and let my mind wander back to those glorious high school days.

JACINDA MOORE  
TRI-COUNTY EC  
GRANBURY

*Don't Bring Me Down* by Electric Light Orchestra. It was playing every day at lunch on our cafeteria jukebox.

LESLIE CHATHAM JAMES  
WISE EC  
PARADISE

To see more responses, read Currents online.



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## Gourd as Gold

When Sherry Nelson attended a Texas Gourd Society show in 2017, she was stunned by the gourds she saw. "It's just amazing what people can do with them," she said. "But I thought I could never do that."

She was hooked. The Kerrville native and Central Texas Electric Cooperative member joined TGS and took classes. After a *Texas Co-op Power* illustration by David Danz in March 2021 caught her eye, she reached out to TCP for permission before spending three weeks burning it into a gourd for a Kerr Arts and Cultural Center contest in May.

It won—beating out 151 other gourds. "I'm going to enjoy this win for a while," she said.



# Rangers Flashback

**HALL OF FAME** outfielder Ted Williams was a phenomenal baseball player, but he met little success as a manager.

His four-year managerial career started with the Washington Senators in 1969 and ended 50 years ago this month, in 1972, when the Senators relocated to Arlington and became the Texas Rangers.

Williams went out with a whimper, losing the season finale 4-0 on October 4 and finishing with a 273-364 record as manager.

## Did You Know?

That Rangers team played in Arlington Stadium, a converted minor-league ballpark originally called Turnpike Stadium. Whatever the name, the summer heat plagued players and fans alike. One writer called the outfield stands "the world's largest open-air roaster."





WYATT MCSPADDEN

**Why'd the Chicken Cross the Pit?**

“I have tried barbecued chicken at Kreuz Market and around the state. Most (including Kreuz) do a great job, but the best is at Mumphord’s Place BBQ in Victoria.”

JOHN GEORGE  
VICTORIA EC  
VICTORIA

**Raving and Squawking**

If you haven't tried the Kreuz Market barbecued chicken, you need to [*Why'd the Chicken Cross the Pit?*, July 2022]. It's great.

Tom Faulkner  
Pedernales EC  
Leander

We were motivated to visit Kreuz after reading your glowing endorsement. What a disappointment. The chicken did not taste any better than a \$5 deli chicken from Sam's Club.

Gary and Gaye Kriegel  
Pedernales EC  
Williamson County

Walked a few yards onto it once and crawled back [*Colorado's Texas Bridge*, July 2022].

MARTHA BEIMER  
VIA FACEBOOK

**The Coach's Coach**

The story about Tom Landry and his senior football season at Mission High School does not identify who his coach was [*The Most Glorious Autumn*, August 2022]. I believe it was my uncle, Robert Martin, as he was a lifelong friend of Landry and took Landry's father to many Cowboys games.

Ralph E. Martin Jr.  
Medina EC  
New Braunfels

**EDITOR'S NOTE** Landry's coach at Mission was indeed Robert L. "Bob" Martin.

**The Cotton Patch**

My family farmed west of Krum [*Prized Fibers*, July 2022]. Many days I was in the cotton patch hoeing weeds. I "missed" out on the picking as Dad hired a crew of pickers.

Ken Fairman  
Wise EC  
Krum



FOCUS ON SPORT | GETTY IMAGES

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letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

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

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# Funnel Vision

How one woman is earnestly spreading the word about monarch migrations through Texas





**M**onika Maeckle found her passion in a dry streambed of the San Saba River.

It was October 2004 when she and her husband drove from their ranch, a Hill Country getaway on the Llano River, over to a friend’s place near tiny Hext for a “tagging event.” She didn’t know what that was really, but Maeckle likes an adventure and loves the outdoors.

At sunset, monarch butterflies started cascading from the sky. The group caught them in long nets, carefully plucking the bright orange marvels out to tag their wings with coded stickers. They tagged a couple hundred monarchs that evening, then set them free. Maeckle was completely smitten.

“It was a passion play from the beginning,” says Maeckle, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative. “It was this magical thing. I was entranced.”

The San Antonio-based communications and marketing pro spent the following months reading and researching everything she could find about the monarchs’ annual migration to Mexico. A year later, on a Saturday in October, Maeckle climbed into her kayak and ventured out on the clear-running Llano near Mason. She was equipped with tags, each about as big around as a pencil eraser.

“I figured they had to be at our place, too, because everything they needed was here: water, tall trees, nectar up against a limestone escarpment that shielded them from wind and held the heat during the cool nights,” she says.

She guided the kayak to a spot near three pecan trees, and as she stepped out, there they were.

“I started tagging and ripped through a sheet of 25 tags in about 15 minutes, went back and got another sheet and tagged 25 more,” she says. “They weren’t dropping from the sky that day; they were already fluttering around, finding a spot to spend the night.”

What captured Maeckle’s heart, and a lot of her time, is the splendid monarch butterfly and its remarkable migration—up to 3,000 miles—from the northeastern United

States and southeastern Canada to the mountain forests of central Mexico, where they hibernate during the winter. The Central and South Texas region, called the Texas funnel, is part of the path south for all monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains.

Adult monarchs are easily identifiable, with two pairs of deep orange wings that have black veins and white spots along the edges. On average they weigh about as much as half of a dollar bill, with a wingspan of about 4 inches. Tagging doesn’t harm the delicate creatures.

Maeckle is part of a groundswell of advocates who are tagging and tracking the monarchs’ migration as well as planting and sustaining habitat that will help attract and protect them and other important pollinators, including bees.

But she’s an overachiever when it comes to monarchs. The citizen scientist launched an educational website called the Texas Butterfly Ranch, writes and gives talks about monarchs, and is the founding director of the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Festival, the seventh of which will be held October 8 at San Antonio’s Brackenridge Park.

The free one-day festival offers children and adults opportunities to learn about the monarch migration and the importance of other wildlife pollinators to our own food sources. The festival also features arts and crafts activities and other entertainment, as well as monarch butterfly tagging demonstrations. An estimated 2,500 people attended last year’s festival, and more than 550 butterflies were tagged.

## Monarchs Matter

The monarch population has been in decline in recent years, but there is hope for this fall’s migration despite the continuing drought and its detrimental effect on native habitat.

The World Wildlife Fund announced in May that a survey found that the number of monarch butterflies in Mexico’s forests last winter actually increased 35% from the previous year. The rise “marks a sign of recovery—albeit a fragile one—and gives some reason for hope against a backdrop of several decades of decline for the iconic species,” the organization said in a release.

“The increase in monarch butterflies is good news and indicates that we should continue working to maintain and reinforce conservation measures by Mexico, the United States and Canada,” says Jorge Rickards, general manager of WWF’s Mexico office. “Monarchs are important pollinators, and their migratory journey helps promote greater diversity of flowering plants, which benefits other species

OPPOSITE Monika Maeckle launched the website Texas Butterfly Ranch and is the founding director of the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Festival in San Antonio. ABOVE A monarch feeds on a blue mistflower.

BUTTERFLY: COURTESY LEE MARLOWE



in natural ecosystems and contributes to the production of food for human consumption.”

Butterflies are pretty, fanciful things that don’t bite or sting, and that makes them interesting to humans, prompting a willingness to help them, which can help all pollinators, says Judit Green, urban wildlife biologist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. She calls the monarch an “ambassador for all pollinators.”

“Our beautiful rural Texas landscapes are in existence because pollinators helped pollinate it, producing the various native plants from wildflowers, bunchgrasses, vines, shrubs, small trees to canopy trees,” Green says. “These plants make up habitat for a host of wildlife. Therefore all wildlife benefit from actions we take to support our pollinators.”

These insects also support crop production, which the scientific world is quick to remind not to take for granted. “They say, ‘Thank a pollinator with every third bite you take,’ since about 33% of the food we eat is pollinated by pollinators,” Green says.

## How To Help

There are simple steps Texans can take to attract monarchs and other pollinators: Grow and cultivate native plants, and don’t use pesticides, Green says. In addition, you can plant native milkweed, the host plant for monarch caterpillars, which feed on the leaves. Migrating monarchs lay their eggs on these plants.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Monika Maeckle paddles the Llano River. Yellow cestrum planted beside the San Antonio River Walk. Queen butterflies fuel up on frostweed at the Llano River. Bees collect pollen from a coneflower plant. ABOVE A child holds a monarch at the San Antonio festival.

FESTIVAL: COURTESY DRAKE WHITE. BUTTERFLIES: COURTESY MONIKA MAECKLE





**M**aeckle is part of a groundswell of advocates who are tagging and tracking the monarchs' migration as well as planting and sustaining habitat that will help attract and protect them and other important pollinators, including bees.

There are larger endeavors underway as well. The city of San Antonio's advocacy for monarchs dates back to 2015, when then-Mayor Ivy Taylor signed the National Wildlife Federation's Mayors' Monarch Pledge, a commitment to creating better habitats for pollinators and educating the public about them. Today 42 Texas mayors have active pledges through NWF, including those from small towns like Cuero, Liberty and Nolanville.

NWF named San Antonio the first Monarch Champion City, and current Mayor Ron Nirenberg has continued those efforts. The city's pledge consisted of 24 specific actions, including holding or supporting a butterfly festival to raise awareness about pollinators. Not surprisingly, Maeckle took on that challenge.

"When I say I'm going to do something, I do it," says Maeckle, who, with her husband, Robert Rivard, founded a nonprofit digital news website now called the San Antonio Report.

Green says the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Festival has been important to raising awareness about the problems pollinators face and how the public can help.

"Getting the public to support our pollinators, like the monarch, is crucial," Green says.

Cheri Tondre, an instructional specialist for San Antonio Independent School District, participated in a 2017 festival workshop that led to the creation of a pollinator garden at Collins Garden Elementary. She says the festival offers children the chance to explore the natural world.

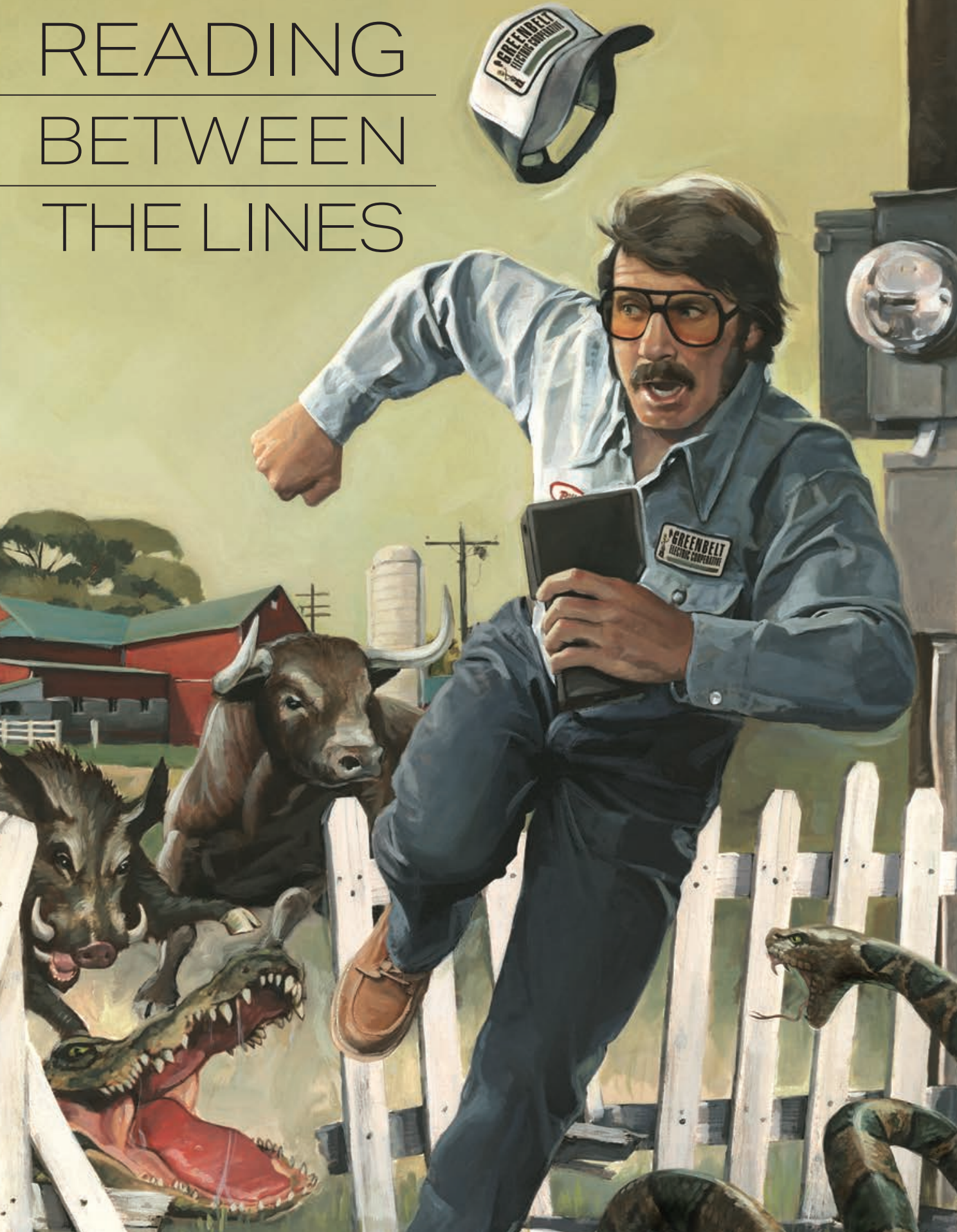
"Opportunities to engage with science, nature and community are important to engage students in the type of learning we need," Tondre says. "They need to know they are part of the problem and solution."

Maeckle sees the monarch as an access point for viewing a number of complex issues—migration, climate change, sustainability. And she still takes joy in recalling how that evening in Hext ignited a lasting passion.

"They had always been there; I just hadn't realized," Maeckle says. "And it underscores the connectedness of us all." ■



READING  
BETWEEN  
THE LINES





## Decades after new tech started taking over,

## METER READERS are still a valued part of co-op connections

BY CHRIS BURROWS • ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL KOELSCH

Connie Turner can tell you all about the time she cracked three ribs battling a gate over a cattle guard, slipping on ice in the process. Or about the time an electric meter exploded in her hands, knocking her unconscious. Or the time she injured her foot jumping from a fence.

“And since then, I’ve had shoulder surgery,” she says. “I really think that that injury came from the repetition of pushing on gates.”

But in the last week of her 40-year career at Coleman County Electric Cooperative, Turner can also tell you that she misses working as a country meter reader, despite the toll it took on her body. Seventeen years into that career, she was able to move into an office role, but her injuries weren’t the only factor in that move.

Another was the folks on her route. They were like family to her—and aging.

“I could hardly stand to go out there, and they wouldn’t be there anymore,” she says. “A lot of them kind of adopted me. I used to load furniture; I’d get the lawn mower started for them and help them pick their garden. I just did everything that you wouldn’t really think that a meter reader would be out there doing.”

Turner was part of a group like no other—one accustomed to outsmarting dogs, boars, snakes, and the odd alligator or goose; to knowing the roads, power grid and land better than anyone; and to dealing with the occasional unhappy member, flat tires and whatever else came their way as they scoured the countryside, read dials and displays, and relayed kilowatt-hour usage to co-op accounting departments for accurate billing.

But ever since co-ops started installing automated meter reading systems in the 1990s, these neighborly, workaday men and women seemed doomed to be replaced by the very devices they regularly visited.

However, many still haven’t been. Sure, there aren’t as many meter readers working today, but Texas co-ops still employ dozens. And now many of them are armed with more technical skills than ever.

### A GOOD READ

John Gross is one of them. For 19 years he’s been reading meters on his rural routes in Parker County, west of Fort Worth, for Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

“People didn’t know that we still walked around,” he says.

As others in his line of work do, he has plenty of stories. Like the time he tore his ACL climbing a fence to get to a meter—“I actually read about three more meters until I said I can’t keep doing this because I was hopping on the one good leg,” he says—or the time a bull chased him around a meter pole (he still got the reading).

“You don’t know what you’re going to walk into: coyotes, cows, deer, bulls,” he says. “A lot of times you have to run. Otherwise you’re going to have to tangle with some of the dogs.”

Gross says he drives hundreds of miles daily and gets plenty of walking in, but since TCEC started to deploy smart meters across its system in 2019, he’s part of a shrinking team.

Gross, co-worker Bobby Collins and a handful of others at TCEC no longer read all the co-op’s 125,000 meters. Collins has read meters for 23 years in an upscale area closer to Fort Worth, where he’s met celebrities Terry Bradshaw, Sandra Bullock and Josh Hamilton in the course of his work, but it’s the everyday folks who he especially appreciates.

“They’ll start a story, and you’ll end up leaving; and then next month, they’ll pick up right where they left off,” Collins says.

### THE FUTURE IS HERE

Economist David Autor famously pointed out that the invention of the ATM in the 1970s seemed sure to spell the end for bank tellers. But a funny thing happened: As ATMs quadrupled between 1995 and 2010, the number of tellers actually increased over that period.

“The last 200 years, we’ve had an incredible amount of automation,” Autor said in a 2017 interview with CBS News. “We have tractors that do the work that horses and people used to do on farms. We don’t do bookkeeping with books. But this has not, in net, reduced the amount of employment.”

# TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Since the 1990s, when electric utilities began to implement AMR systems, jobs for electric meter readers in the U.S. fell by more than half, from a peak of 55,000 in 1996 to 24,000 in 2021, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Today, nearly all co-ops in Texas have deployed some form of advanced metering infrastructure—a further revolution in metering technology that unleashed myriad benefits for co-ops and their members. But like any complex system, even AMI needs humans to watch over it and fix it when it falters.

When that happens, a worker still has to drive out, find the meter, get a reading and make a fix.

“We generally troubleshoot,” says Kevin Gray, one of two meter readers at Fort Belknap Electric Cooperative. “If we have a meter not sending a reading in, you go out to see: Is the transformer fuse blown? Is the AMR itself dead and not sending a reading? We check transformer connections, look for trees burning on the line.”

As meters have become more complex, so too have the jobs of meter readers like Gray, who has developed new skills to troubleshoot issues in the field.

“I can remember back when the technology began to get a good foothold in the market, obviously the meter readers got very nervous,” says Mike Cleveland, manager of meter products at Texas Electric Cooperatives, the statewide association for co-ops. He says a lot of co-op leaders initially used that as an excuse to delay upgrading to the new meters.

“It took a while for people to understand the benefits and understand that you can take meter readers and turn them into more advanced technicians for running the AMR system,” Cleveland says. “You’re implementing something that has to be babysat all the time. It’s a complex piece of technology that doesn’t just run on autopilot in the background. Somebody has to monitor and manage it.”

## MORE THAN METERS

In the 1970s and '80s, many electric cooperatives started meter reading departments, some citing frustrations with the self-reporting postcards that most utilities of the era relied on.

At Southwest Texas Electric Cooperative, that meant closing the office for about a week every month. Each of the co-op’s employees would grab a pickup, take a meter route and gather readings from rural West Texas. General Manager Buff Whitten did his part when he started at the co-op in 1977.

“You don’t get to see the system like we once did,” he says. “You’re looking at poles, you’re looking at crossarms, you’re able to see the system and recognize problems that you take back, keep track of and correct. And there’s always an opportunity, when you’re out there, to meet the members.”

AMI won’t spot a broken crossarm or start a lawn mower for a member, but these systems of smart meters, communications networks and data management systems can do so much more. The granular data they capture increases

**Binoculars for reading meters from the road.**

**Extra meters and meter seals for making repairs in the field.**

**Nontoxic dog repellent.**

**Sunglasses, hat and sunscreen.**

**Fiberglass hot stick for adjusting lines and transformers.**

**Four-wheel-drive pickup.**

**Keys for Co-op Country gates.**

**Car jack, for fixing flats.**

**Fence stretcher for slinking through barbed wire.**

reliability by enabling advanced outage management systems and troubleshooting and provides cost savings for co-ops and their members.

“The old mechanical meter, as good as it was, it was pretty dumb,” Cleveland says. “All it could sit there and do was just count revolutions, but these new meters, they just have so much horsepower under the hood. They’re very powerful instruments.”

Meter readers Mario Manriquez and Donald Priesmeyer keep Wharton County Electric Cooperative’s powerful instruments humming.

“My main thing right now is helping with the AMI system,” says Manriquez from the side of a South Texas road where he and Priesmeyer are installing a communications relay for WCEC’s AMI system.

Over 23 years at WCEC, Manriquez’s work has changed a lot, but the dangers of the job haven’t. “I almost stepped on a snake once,” he says. “They say good snake, bad snake. I say all bad snakes.”

But Scott Thomas, who was the last full-time meter reader at PenTex Energy in North Texas, will tell you that it’s still the folks at the end of the line who make his job so gratifying.

“The best part is going out into the community and visiting with the customers because every one of them liked to talk and visit,” he says, in between greeting folks by name at the co-op’s annual meeting in April. “You had a schedule, and you tried to stay on schedule, but you had to visit.” ■





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**YES.** Please reserve *“The Lone Star” Texas Tribute Ring* for me as described in this announcement. **Ring Size** \_\_\_\_\_ (if known)

**Limited-time Offer... Please Respond Promptly**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mrs. Mr. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Plus a total of \$16.00 shipping and service, plus sales tax (see [bradfordexchange.com](http://bradfordexchange.com)). All sales are subject to product availability and order acceptance.

**01-29311-001-E54801**





**DARRYL  
SCHRIVER**

PRESIDENT/  
CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER

## Brazos Bankruptcy Update

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE that over a year and a half later, we are still dealing with the aftermath of 2021's Winter Storm Uri and the havoc it wreaked on the Texas electric grid and Texas consumers. For those of you who have been reading this column for some time, you know that on March 1, 2021, Tri-County Electric Cooperative's wholesale power supplier, Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. ("Brazos") filed for bankruptcy as a result of the financial impacts of the storm. Since that time, I have provided periodic updates, but for the most part, because of certain legal restrictions, we have been unable to disclose many details. Additionally, progress has been slow because this Chapter 11 has been extremely complicated.

Last month, Brazos filed the highly anticipated proposed exit plan, which calls for paying ERCOT \$1.44 billion of the approximate \$1.9 billion ERCOT alleged Brazos owed. The plan also proposes to pay unsecured creditors a negotiated minimum of 89.5 cents on the dollar, and contemplates the payments to ERCOT and other creditors would be funded through a debt, remaining bankruptcy financing, cash on hand, and the sale of Brazos's natural gas-fired generation fleet.

As you may recall, Tri-County Electric Co-op has an All-Requirements Contract (ARC) with Brazos that requires the cooperative to purchase all its wholesale generation and transmission services from Brazos. If the proposed exit plan is approved, Tri-County Electric Co-op would be relieved of its obligations under the ARC to purchase wholesale power from Brazos effective March 1, 2023. This means the cooperative would be free to procure power from the competitive market without Brazos. We hope the transition translates into savings, which will help offset some of the anticipated costs that will be borne by the member-cooperatives of Brazos. 800875296

There are also other non-economic provisions included in the proposed exit plan that were a result of the negotiated settlement. ERCOT and the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) are requiring a few post-Effective Date changes to Brazos's management team and general counsel, which require the General Manager, the VP of Power Supply, the VP of Generation, and the General Counsel to cease employment at specific times and includes certain prohibitions of their future employment.

It is important to understand that as of the date of this writing, the exit plan Brazos filed with the court is a proposed plan, and for it to be confirmed Brazos still needs the supporting votes from its creditors and the approval of the bankruptcy court. While the current proposed plan is supported by many key stakeholders, including ERCOT and the general unsecured creditors committee, several parties have not yet indicated their support for the plan. Accordingly, there may be further revisions to gain their support.

Questions remain regarding the payment of certain other debts and associated transactions that are to-be-determined for Tri-County Electric Co-op to understand the full financial and operational impact Brazos's exit from bankruptcy will have on the cooperative and ultimately you, the member-owners. As has been the case throughout this debacle, Tri-County Electric Co-op's board and staff remain actively involved in the bankruptcy process and will continue to represent you and other Texas consumers affected by this bankruptcy to the best of our ability. From the beginning, I have stated that we will leave no stone unturned, and we will fight for the best interests of the members of Tri-County Electric Co-op. The battle is still ongoing, but there now appears to be an end in sight. 42942001

Once we have all the pieces of the Brazos Chapter 11 bankruptcy puzzle fully defined and the exit plan is confirmed, we will communicate the impacts of Brazos's exit. This has been an extraordinary period with the Brazos bankruptcy with enormous challenges that have been felt by cooperatives across the U.S. It has taken a vast number of resources to fight in this process for the cooperative member. I appreciate the Tri-County Electric Co-op Board of Directors' support for our members. We have faced a lot of challenges alone with your best interest at the forefront, because we still believe that we are in this together with you, our members. ■



**MAX  
WADDELL**  
CHAIRMAN  
DISTRICT 9

# A Seat at the Board Table

**OCTOBER IS NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH** and we take the time to celebrate every year. However, our dedication to the cooperative model extends well beyond one month a year. Every day, the Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors – your board of directors – thinks about our co-op and how our decisions impact the membership.

Just like you, I am a proud member of Tri-County Electric Co-op. When I step in the board room, I put my director hat on top of my member hat. I make decisions that are in the best interest of the cooperative and the membership as a whole. This is the same for every other member of the board. Collectively, we work for you and serve you.

I would be remiss not to mention the perks of the cooperative model in this issue and how we take care of you. This month is the perfect time to reflect on the model and the principles cooperatives across the world all follow.

## **Democratic Member Control – Cooperative Principle No. 2**

Last month, each of you received your September *Texas Co-op Power* with information on the Annual Meeting, the Annual Report, financials, and your election ballot. Each year, members have the opportunity to vote to elect fellow members to the board. Members who voted in the election by the September 28 deadline will receive a \$25 bill credit later this month.

This year, members voted to elect directors to districts 5, 7 and 9. Election results will be announced at the virtual Annual Meeting on Tuesday, October 4. We hope you took the opportunity to vote, and we hope you make plans to join us for the Annual Meeting.

## **Member's Economic Participation – Cooperative Principle No. 3**

As an electric provider, our mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity to our members' homes and businesses. As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we are also motivated to keep costs as low as possible for our members. Each of you contribute financially to the cooperative. When you signed up for service, you paid into membership and each month you pay your electric bill. Your return: A percentage of the "profit" or margins. 800883038

Margins, the money remaining after all expenses are paid, are not used to line the pockets of stockholders, investors, executives or the board. Instead, they are returned to you, the members through Capital Credits. Each year, the board allocates any margins to the members on a pro rata basis. Additionally, we review the financial health of the co-op and determine if a retirement is feasible. This year, we voted to retire \$4.996 million to members who received electric service in 2002 and/or 2003.

## **Concern for Community – Cooperative Principle No. 7**

Tri-County Electric Co-op is local. We were locally born back in 1939, and have been locally owned and run for the past 83 years. We are proud to be a part of our communities. We are community led – whether that be down in Granbury, over in Weatherford, Azle and Springtown, in my Keller area, or out west in Seymour.

As a nod to our mission of enhancing our communities, you will see our team at local community events supporting local organizations and community functions. We value community service and do what we can to better our communities. Make sure to say 'hello' next time you see the team out in your area. ■

# ANNUAL MEETING

**Join us for the 83rd Annual Meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, October 4.**

**Participate virtually**  
**[tcectexas.com/annual-meeting](https://tcectexas.com/annual-meeting)**

The Annual Report was mailed to members in the September *Texas Co-op Power* magazine. A copy can be found at [tcectexas.com/annual-meeting](https://tcectexas.com/annual-meeting).



# You Asked, We Listened

## Members now see line-itemed bills and rate stabilization starting in October

BY ANNIE WATSON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

HERE AT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, we understand the financial strain of today's economy and sympathize with you, our member-owners. Just like you, we are all dealing with the stresses coming from multiple fronts, and we are here to help.

Over the past few months, we have communicated rising power costs and how that impacts your bills. We are doing our best to keep you informed on the current situation from month to month. Additionally, our member service team fielded thousands of phone calls and online communications from members, and many expressed how the increases are adding financial stress.

As a member-owned electric cooperative we listened to our members and value your feedback. The team here at Tri-County Electric Co-op worked diligently to address two asks of the membership: line-itemed billing statements and rate stabilization.

Starting in October, members will see each bill component – the customer charge, kWh charge, Power Costs Recovery Factor (PCRF), outdoor lights, fees, and taxes – as separate line items. These components are not new, but have been displayed on the bill as one item labeled “Electric Charge” on previous bills. This transition allows members to better understand their bill and better plan for future billing.

Members have seen swings in the PCRF due to the volatility of power costs. This is especially true this summer as members have felt the impact of the increased cost of natural gas, the predominant source for electric power generation in Texas.

When the rate was established 20 years ago, power costs were less expensive and as market conditions increased throughout the years members would see the difference in PCRF. The cost of wholesale power is passed through to members without any mark up. Tri-County Electric Co-op passes the money collected for wholesale power directly to Brazos.

To help our members the kWh rate will reflect current market conditions rather than relying on PCRF to capture the difference. Beginning in October, the residential rate will be 14.425 cents per kWh, which accurately reflects current power costs. While PCRF will still be a line item on the bill it should no longer drastically impact members. As power costs increase and decrease PCRF will be adjusted accordingly. 8001812901

The employees here work for you, the member-owners. We do everything in our power to ensure you are taken care of and that includes listening. We care and we are in this together. ■



### ELECTRIC SERVICE

For: SAMPLE  
 Service Address: 1234 Coop Dr  
 Aledo TX 76008  
 Map Location: 01234567  
 Telephone Number: (817) 444-3201

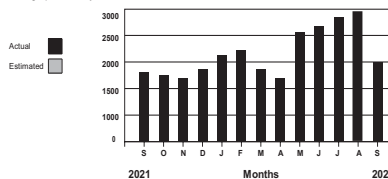
### ELECTRIC USE

#### Meter Reading Information

KWH	Service	Reading	Rate		Read
Meter No	From	To	Prev	Pres	Type
11111111	09-07	10-07	3000	5000	kWh

Comparisons	Days Service	Total KWH	Avg KWH/Day
Current Billing Period	30	2000	67
Previous Billing Period	31	3000	97
Same Period Last Year	30	1800	60

Average Monthly KWH: 2652  
 This graph shows your kWh billed over the last 13 months



Your Bill Account Number	
10000001	
Use when calling or writing	
Statement ID:	1234567
Board District:	District
Bill Date:	10/03/22

Total From Last Bill	\$464.56
09/16/2022 Payment - Thank You	\$464.56 CR
Current Charges	
Customer Charge	\$18.00
2000 KWH @ 0.14425	\$288.50
1 - 150 W EQ LED @ 10.45	\$10.45
PCRF 2022 KWH @ .000000	\$0.00
Franchise Fee @ 3.00%	\$9.19

Account Balance Due	Oct 17, 2022	\$326.14
Termination Date for Current Amount is	Nov 11, 2022	

To avoid a 5% late fee, please pay your bill prior to the due date. You can make payments and view account information 24/7 by accessing our web site at www.TCECTEXAS.com or our automated pay-by-phone service by calling 817-444-3201. Power outages can also be reported to this number.

Keller District Office: 4900 Keller Hicks Rd, Fort Worth, TX 76244 (817) 431-1541 (817) 379-4703  
 Seymour District Office: 419 N. Main, Seymour, TX 76380 (940) 888-3441  
 Granbury District Office: 1623 Weatherford Hwy, Granbury, TX 76048 (817) 279-7010

Please detach stub and return with payment. Make check payable to TRI-COUNTY Electric Cooperative, Inc.

TX06800F



Name  
 1234 Coop Dr  
 Aledo TX 76008-1234

Account Number	10000001
Current Amount Due	10/17/22 \$326.14

Please indicate change of address or phone number here  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.  
 PO BOX 961032  
 FORT WORTH TX 76161-0032

### Why is my bill different this month?

October billing statements now show each billing component as a different line item rather than one electric charge. This itemization is to show transparency in what is included in your energy charge.

### Why is Tri-County Electric Co-op doing this now?

As power costs rose steadily this summer, members were asking for billing cost explanations and rate stabilization. Members asked for bill components to be broken out to better understand the bill. Additionally, the drastic swing in PCRF led to members asking for stabilized bills to better budget and manage costs.

### What items will I see included in my bill?

Members may see the following items listed on their bill: customer charge, kWh charge, PCRF, outdoor lights, and applicable fees and taxes. 800791406

### Does Tri-County Electric Co-op provide bill assistance?

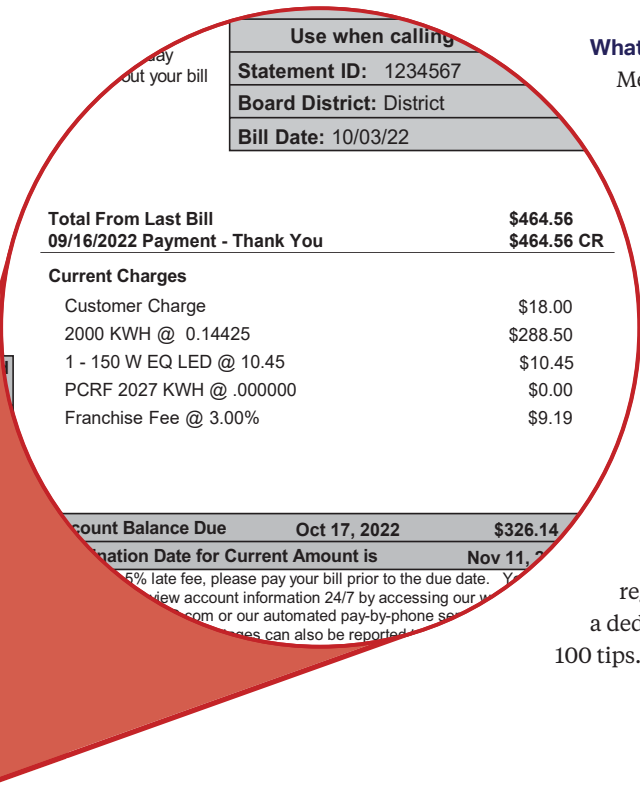
Our member service team is here to help. All we ask is that you contact your co-op. You can reach our team at [tcectexas.com/contact-us](http://tcectexas.com/contact-us). We are here to help.

### Where can I learn more about the billing changes?

Members can learn more about understanding their new bill at [tcectexas.com/my-bill](http://tcectexas.com/my-bill).

### How can I better manage my electric cost and use?

Tri-County Electric Co-op is dedicated to educating members on energy management and empowering smart energy use. We regularly provide energy-saving tips on our Facebook page and have a dedicated webpage ([tcectexas.com/energy-efficiency](http://tcectexas.com/energy-efficiency)) with more than 100 tips.



# Learn more about your new bill

We are here to help you understand your new bill and know the new layout may bring questions. Visit our website for the answers to all your questions.

**[tcectexas.com/my-bill](http://tcectexas.com/my-bill)**





# Commonalities in Co-ops

## Territories and values overlap for communications and electric co-ops

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

**MEMBER-DRIVEN. BOARD-GOVERNED.** Capital Credits.

Cooperative principles.

A telephone cooperative lives by the same terms an electric co-op does, building on the same foundation: bringing vital infrastructure to its members.

The similarities are comforting. The differences are intriguing.

“They all started the same way,” said Santa Rosa Communications CEO Kirk Petty. “A group of people getting together and saying these big companies wouldn’t come out into these rural areas and provide them service – and they needed it as bad as everybody else did.”

In 1951, a group of farmers in the Vernon area decided to look into the telephone loan program sponsored by the Rural Electrification Administration – the REA. Today, the co-op they started is a multi-faceted telecommunications company, with 95 employees and offices in Vernon, Seymour, Childress, Wichita Falls and Haskell. 10541001

Petty, who has been with Santa Rosa since 2007, is only the fourth CEO in its 71-year history. He started at Southwestern Bell, then worked for independent and family-owned phone companies before moving into the co-op world. He has never

looked back.

“The big guys look at it completely differently than we do,” he said. “We live in these towns. It makes a big difference.”

For decades, Santa Rosa made a living just providing reliable telephone service. In 1996, the Federal Communications Act opened up competition and the co-op kicked into growth mode.

Over the next few years, they built fiber-optic lines into new territory – Seymour, Holliday, Benjamin, Knox City and Aspermont. They took in 12 new exchanges, then overbuilt their original 14 exchanges with fiber. In the last 10 years, they have expanded up Highway 287 to cover Vernon, Chillicothe, Quanah and Childress.

Today, Santa Rosa Communications covers 4,500 square miles, with high-speed fiber internet, TV, cellular, cybersecurity and business services.

That area overlaps the area served by Tri-County Electric Co-op; the two co-ops serve and are members of each other.

### FIBER TO THE FARM

Petty recalls his introduction to fiber, the backbone of Santa Rosa’s system today.



LEFT: Among the people guiding Santa Rosa Communications are (l-r) Jason Tole, chief financial officer, Kirk Petty, chief executive officer, Seth Tabor, chief technology officer, and Joe Bercik, director of sales & marketing.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Petty shows off the co-op’s newest “plow” – a piece of equipment that can bury a cable five feet underground in one pass.

Petty points to Santa Rosa on a map of the Texas Lone Star Network, a consortium of 41 rural telecommunications carriers providing a member-owned statewide fiber optic network that is still growing.

Tabor shows off the tornado-shelter server room at Santa Rosa’s headquarters in Vernon, where it’s temperature-controlled and capable of running on backup battery power in an emergency.



**“These businesses need somebody local who can serve them, not somebody out of Abilene or Dallas”**

— JOE BERCIK

“I can remember them telling us that one fiber could carry as much traffic as a 1,200-pair copper cable,” he said. “So, you’re looking at a cable the size of your arm, and you could run the same amount of information over a piece of glass the size of your hair.”

Santa Rosa began bringing fiber to members’ homes as early as 2004. 800774337

For Metroplex-area residents just now getting access to fiber, it sounds crazy that people in rural areas have had it for nearly two decades. Petty said they still hear about that occasionally.

“Some of our customers have told us they’ll be talking to a family member in Ohio or somewhere, and they’ll say, ‘Yeah, we have fiber,’” he laughed. “‘You have what? You live out in the middle of nowhere!’ ‘I know, but we have fiber to the home out here.’”

Much of Santa Rosa’s expansion was simply a matter of responding to needs.

“Childress came to us,” Petty said. “The mayor said, ‘Is there anything y’all can do to help us? We don’t have any internet over here.’ And so we got to looking at all of them up 287 – because we surround every one of them.”

For Seth Tabor, chief technology officer, it was a matter of survival.

“The question was, ‘How do we stay around?’” Tabor said. “Our population centers are dwindling. How do we make sure that whoever’s left still has the best services they can have, 50

years from now?’ The answer was to expand.

“If we still want to serve our footprint, we have to serve outside of it.”

#### **KEEPING THE PERSONAL TOUCH**

Petty said Santa Rosa did not “re-invent the wheel” as they grew. They entered the cellular world by acquiring Pinnacle, and got into business services when they purchased PCNet. Not all of their customers are co-op members — but they all get the kind of personal service that sets a co-op apart.

“These businesses need somebody local who can serve them, not somebody out of Abilene or Dallas,” Joe Bercik, director of sales and marketing, said. “They can’t be down for two days.”

Tabor noted that before Santa Rosa went to his hometown of Chillicothe, the phones were down at the town’s fire department and the provider scheduled a service call — three weeks out.

“We don’t want them to have to accept that,” he said. “And we’re in a position to change that.”

Being a cooperative allows Santa Rosa to take a long-term view and do things the right way.

“We try to stay away from ‘good enough,’” Tabor said. “We want world-class service everywhere we go.”

That’s the co-op world. ■





JILL WELLINGTON | PIXABAY

# Have a Safe, Gourd Time this Halloween!

BY KENNEDY L. MOORE, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

IT'S OFFICIALLY SPOOKY SEASON, and that means one thing – scary good Halloween decorations. Whether you're aiming to have the best haunted house on the block or just want to win that costume contest, keep safety in mind for a truly happy Halloween. 8003987401

## LIGHTS

- ▶ Check each bulb or socket to ensure there isn't any exposed wiring
- ▶ Ensure your sidewalks are well lit for all trick-or-treaters
- ▶ Always read labels to see if lights are rated for indoor or outdoor use
- ▶ Only use lights that have been safety tested and approved by Underwriters Laboratory (UL)

## CORDS

- ▶ Keep cords out of main walking areas
- ▶ Check cords for any frayed ends
- ▶ Do not staple or nail through strings or cords
- ▶ Do not attach cords to metal objects
- ▶ Ensure the items you need to plug in are not more than an extension cord can handle

## PLUGS & OUTLETS

- ▶ Always unplug lights before leaving your home or going to bed
- ▶ Check to make sure plug ends are straightened
- ▶ Ensure you have ground fault circuit interrupters (GCFIs) to prevent electric shocks
- ▶ Ensure your outlets can handle the load of the object(s) you are plugging in

## SURGE PROTECTORS

- ▶ Do not plug in more than what a surge protector can hold

Stay safe, guys and ghouls! ■

## Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

### CONTACT US

200 Bailey Ranch Road

Aledo, TX 76008

Phone 817-444-3201

Email [customer\\_service@tcectexas.com](mailto:customer_service@tcectexas.com)

Web [tcectexas.com](http://tcectexas.com)

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**24/7**

## Outage Reporting

For information and to report outages, please contact us.

Online: [oms.tcectexas.com](https://oms.tcectexas.com)

App: TCEC Connect

Phone: 817-444-3201

Text: OUTAGE to 25069

### ABOUT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

Tri-County Electric Co-op owns and maintains more than 9,700 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 103,500 members in Archer, Baylor, Denton, Foard, Haskell, Hood, Jack, King, Knox, Palo Pinto, Parker, Stonewall, Tarrant, Throckmorton, Wilbarger, and Wise counties.

### OFFICE LOCATIONS

#### Aledo

200 Bailey Ranch Road, Aledo 76008

#### Azle

600 NW Parkway, Azle 76020

#### Granbury

1623 Weatherford Highway, Granbury 76048

#### Keller

4900 Keller-Hicks Road, Fort Worth 76244

#### Seymour

419 N. Main, Seymour 76380

### IT PAYS TO STAY INFORMED

Find your account number in pages 18-25 of *Texas Co-op Power*, and you will receive a \$20 credit on your electric bill. Simply contact one of the offices listed above and make them aware of your discovery!

### VISIT US ONLINE

[tcectexas.com](http://tcectexas.com)

[Facebook.com/TCECTexas](https://Facebook.com/TCECTexas)

# Apple Hill Cake

BY DEB KENDALL  
FORT WORTH

- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup oil
- 2 eggs
- 4 cups diced apples of your choice
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 2 tsp baking soda

1. Combine sugar, oil and eggs in a bowl. Add diced apples.
2. Sift flour, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and baking soda and add into apple mixture.
3. Pour into a 9x13-inch greased cake pan.
4. Bake at 350°F for one hour.
5. Enjoy!



## Did you know you can sign up for text and email notifications?

Members can sign up to receive text and emails to stay up-to-date on your account or to receive special alerts.

### Signing up is as easy as 1 - 2 - 3!

1. Log in to your online member portal or TCEC Connect
2. Go to "Notifications"
3. Set up your preferences for text and emails



#### Notification options:

- ▶ Daily Usage
- ▶ Bill Creation Notification
- ▶ Payment Receipt
- ▶ Due Date Reminder
- ▶ Special Alerts
- ▶ And More!

*Never miss an update on your account with this member benefit.*

### Tri-County Electric Co-op Member Recipe Submission Form

MEMBER

CITY

EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER

RECIPE NAME

#### SUBMITTING YOUR RECIPE:

**EMAIL:** Please include the above information with your recipe and send to [communications@tcectexas.com](mailto:communications@tcectexas.com)

**ONLINE:** [tcectexas.com/recipe-submission](https://tcectexas.com/recipe-submission)

**MAIL:** Please detach and submit this form with your recipe and mail to:

Tri-County Electric Cooperative  
Attn: Recipe Submission  
200 Bailey Ranch Road  
Aledo, Texas 76008





# For the Man Who Gives Everything and Expects Nothing

Stauer®  
Impossible Price  
ONLY  
**\$59**



If you're anything like my dad, you give your family everything. Your name, your time, your values — the people in your life know they can depend on you for practically anything. In exchange for imparting all of this energy and experience, you expect nothing in return.

The point? You deserve to treat yourself once in a while. You do so much for the people you care about. Now it's time to focus on you for just a few minutes. That's where the Men's Due Volta Watch comes in. This astonishing innovation provides a digital readout that's powered by a precise quartz engine, combining both analog and digital timekeeping.

Outfitted with a stopwatch, alarm, a.m./p.m. settings, and day, date and month complications, this timepiece stands out from the crowd. With its large face and handsome, masculine design, this watch is perfect for the back nine and the happy hour afterwards. Water-resistant up to 3 ATM, this timepiece won't wimp out if you have a run-in with a water hazard.

Other hybrid watches can sell for thousands of dollars, but because we've built more than 1 million watches, we know how to create real value. That's why we can offer this timepiece for just \$59! If you're not completely satisfied with this watch, return it for a full refund.

Act quickly! This one-of-a-kind watch has been one of our fastest sellers this year. Of our original run of 2,872, we only have 389 left for this ad! In the last couple of years there's been a watch shortage, but Stauer has got you covered. If you're the kind of man who gives everything and expects nothing in return, it's time to treat yourself.

#### Watch Specifications:

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

# Clogged, Backed—up Septic System... Can anything Restore It?

**DEAR DARRYL:** My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

*Clogged and Smelly – Austin, TX*

**DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY:** As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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Our Aussie friend would approve of our rendition of his "knife." Forged of high grade 420 surgical stainless steel, this knife is an impressive 16" from pommel to point. And, the blade is full tang, meaning it runs the entirety of the knife, even though part of it is under wraps in the natural bone and wood handle.

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This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

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# Bison at the Brink

When just 23 were left in Yellowstone National Park, a Texan revived the herd

BY W.F. STRONG • PHOTO BY JULIA ROBINSON

**IF IT WEREN'T FOR TEXAS**, there would likely be no bison in Yellowstone National Park. This is a large claim, but it's not without merit.

To be honest, Texas had considerable liability in driving the poor bison to near extinction in the first place. However, once people finally realized the range just wouldn't be as happy a home if the buffalo didn't roam, Texas took a leading role in saving these magnificent creatures. Here's how it came about.

In the early 1900s, the U.S. Army, which patrolled the park in those days, estimated that there were just 23 bison left in Yellowstone. They believed that

those might be all the bison that remained in the whole of the wild, wild West. Imagine—just 23 bison left when, 100 years before, there had been some 30 million of them on the American plains. At one time, there were 10 bison for every American, but by 1900, they were nearly gone.

Despite efforts to protect the Yellowstone herd, the poachers poached away. After all, one impressive bison head could fetch \$2,000 to forever gaze across a bar in someplace like Chicago. That's \$60,000 in today's money. Profit was high, and the risk was low. This was the reality that nearly doomed the creatures.

**TCP** Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



After the Army managed to intimidate and scare off most of the poachers, Yellowstone needed some good, purebred bulls to rebuild the meager herd. And it needed them fast.

The problem was that most of the bison then in captivity were cattalo—a mixture of bison, or buffalo, and cattle. But in Texas the famous Charles Goodnight—perhaps the most omnipresent figure in Texas history—had his own herd of bison. His herd had been gathered and nurtured by his wife, Mary Ann Goodnight, who personally saw to it that the orphans found wandering the ranch were saved and protected. And so Goodnight, at his own expense, sent three fine, purebred bulls up to Yellowstone to help rebuild that herd.

It worked. Today there are some 5,500 bison in Yellowstone, thanks in part to Goodnight. True, Congress created Yellowstone, and the U.S. Army did its part to help protect the herd from poachers in that enormous park. But it was Goodnight's gift that truly saved the majestic creatures.

In fact, Yellowstone now says it has too many bison, and the herd needs culling. If you add those to the herd that Goodnight donated to Caprock Canyons State Park in Texas, you can say that Texas is largely responsible for bringing bison back from the brink of absolute extinction. And that's no bull. ■



# Nuts About Nuts

These tasty treats draw unique flavors out of their shell

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

While walnuts are traditional in Greece, and Turkey uses pistachios, in Texas our thoughts naturally turn to pecans for baklava. This sticky, nutty dessert is easier than it seems—it's simply a matter of layering. Use a basting or pastry brush to lightly apply the butter to each layer, taking care to not rip the delicate phyllo dough.



## Pecan Baklava

**1 cup water**  
**1½ cups sugar, divided use**  
**½ cup honey**  
**1 tablespoon lemon juice**  
**4 cups pecan halves, finely chopped in a food processor**  
**1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**¼ teaspoon ground cloves**  
**1 pound (1 box) phyllo dough, thawed according to package instructions**  
**¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a small saucepan, combine water, 1 cup sugar and honey, and bring to a boil over medium heat, whisking to dissolve sugar. Once boiling, reduce heat to low and simmer 5–7 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in lemon juice and let syrup cool.
2. In a bowl, combine pecans, remaining ½ cup sugar, cinnamon and cloves.
3. Unroll phyllo dough and trim as necessary to fit a 9-by-13-inch pan. Brush a thin layer of melted butter on the bottom and sides of the pan, then begin building the baklava.
4. Lay down a sheet of phyllo and brush butter over it. Repeat until you have 15 layers. Spread 1 cup of pecan mixture on top. Add 5 layers of phyllo, brushing on butter between each layer, then add 1 cup of pecans. Repeat twice until all pecans are used, then place on remaining phyllo layers, buttering between each.
5. Using a very sharp knife, cut baklava into squares or diamonds, making sure to cut through each layer. Hold the phyllo in place as you cut. Pour over any remaining butter.
6. Bake 40–50 minutes, turning the pan halfway through. Remove from oven and immediately pour the cooled syrup over the top; you should hear it sizzle. Let cool completely before serving.

SERVES 24

**TCP** Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com), where she features a recipe for Honey Pistachio Shortbread.



## Bostock (Almond Toast)

MELISSA TIDWELL  
PEDERNALES EC

If you're a fan of bakery almond croissants, you'll love this easy bostock (BOH-stock) recipe. It's perfect for serving at brunch, and you can also freeze the unbaked slices and simply bake one or two as desired.

- 1 loaf challah or brioche**
- 1 cup sliced almonds, divided use**
- 6 tablespoons (¾ stick) butter**
- ⅓ cup sugar**
- 2 teaspoons flour**
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch**
- 1 egg**
- ½ teaspoon almond extract**
- Powdered sugar, for serving**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment. Slice the bread into ½-inch slices and arrange on the baking sheet.
2. In a food processor, pulse ¾ cup almonds until finely chopped. Add butter, sugar, flour, cornstarch, egg and almond extract. Purée until a smooth almond cream is formed.
3. Spread 2–3 tablespoons of the almond cream onto each slice of bread, leaving a small border around the edge to allow for spreading. Sprinkle each piece with a few of the reserved sliced almonds.
4. Bake 15–20 minutes, until almond cream is puffed and browned. Let cool 5–10 minutes, then serve with powdered sugar sprinkled on top.

**SERVES 6**

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

## Spaghetti Squash With Cashew Pesto

RHAE BROWN  
SAM HOUSTON EC



Fresh and flavorful, this dish uses cashews to create a dairy-free pesto you'll love. Depending on the size of the squash you use, you might have leftover sauce. Use it as a zesty vegetable dip or spread on crusty bread.

**SERVES 2–4**



- 1 spaghetti squash**
- ¼ cup plus 1–2 teaspoons olive oil, divided use**
- ¾ cup raw cashews, divided use**
- 2 lemons**
- 2 cups fresh basil**
- 1 avocado, pitted**
- 3 tablespoons water**
- 1 clove garlic**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment. Halve the spaghetti squash and scoop out the seeds. Rub the insides of the squash with 1–2 teaspoons olive oil, then place cut-side down on the baking sheet. Bake 40 minutes or until tender.
2. Meanwhile, chop ¼ cup cashews, then toast in a dry pan over medium heat until golden brown. Set aside for topping.
3. Zest 1 lemon for topping if desired, then juice both. Measure out ¼ cup juice and set aside the rest.
4. In a food processor, combine basil, remaining cashews, avocado, ¼ cup lemon juice, remaining olive oil, water, garlic, salt and pepper. Blend until a smooth pesto forms. Taste and add more lemon juice, salt or pepper if desired.
5. Once the squash is done, use a fork to shred the inside to make "noodles" and scoop into a bowl. Add pesto and mix well. Serve topped with toasted cashews and lemon zest.

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## Walnut Surprise

GALE HEEP  
TRI-COUNTY EC

This simple dessert is a cross between a cookie, a bar and a candy. Heep recommends it warm with ice cream, but it's just as good enjoyed simply with a cup of tea.

- ½ cup flour
- ⅞ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 egg

- 1 cup brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees and coat an 8-inch square pan with nonstick spray.
2. In a small bowl, combine flour, baking soda and salt. In another bowl, beat egg until foamy, then stir in brown sugar and vanilla. Add flour mixture and stir until completely incorporated. Stir in walnuts; the batter will be thick.
3. Spread the batter into the prepared pan, using a greased spatula or spoon to spread to the edges, if needed.
4. Bake 18–25 minutes, until golden brown.

SERVES 9

**TCP** Find more recipes on our website that make the most of nuts—as the featured or accompanying ingredient. They're perfect heading into the holidays, and most come from the kitchens of *Texas Co-op Power* readers.

## Tips for Toasting Nuts

BY MEGAN MYERS

**Many recipes call for toasting nuts, which enhances their flavor and makes them deliciously crunchy.**

**Stovetop method:** Set a dry skillet over medium heat and add nuts in a single layer. Cook 3–5 minutes, stirring, until fragrant and starting to darken.

**Oven method:** Place nuts in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees until fragrant and starting to darken, 5–8 minutes depending on the nut.

To prevent burning, remove nuts from heat as soon as they are toasted.



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Oodles of Oompahs

A Schulenburg museum preserves polka's enduring power

BY CHET GARNER

**IF YOU PASS THROUGH** the rolling prairies northeast of San Antonio and listen carefully to the wind, chances are you'll hear the faint sound of a tuba and an accordion floating along. Follow the sound to its source and you could end up in any of dozens of old German and Czech dance halls as polka bands play the music of their ancestors.

Since the late 1800s, polka has been the soundtrack of life for many residents of Fayette County. To learn more about how this unique musical style keeps the beat, I headed to the Texas Polka Music Museum in downtown Schulenburg.

I stepped into the small repository on Lyons Avenue and immediately felt my feet bouncing to the signature "oompah-oompah" playing on the speakers. I was helpless to repel the power of the polka. The walls are covered in pictures, records and stories of the numerous polka artists who have hailed from the Lone Star State—bands like Vrazel's Polka Band, which toured Texas for more than 50 years.

There are also dozens of cases and displays filled with instruments and mementos going back well over 100 years, including booths from local radio DJs that kept the polka power going around the clock. Of course, any proper polka band needs an accordion, tuba and saxophone. But just as important are the matching outfits. This museum has some that would give Elton John a run for his money.

Like most folks, I don't listen to a lot of polka music, but after visiting this museum, I discovered a newfound appreciation for the art and culture of polka. I even bought a CD so I could oom-pah-pah all the way home. ■

ABOVE Chet takes in the polka grooves that resonate in Fayette County.

**TCP** Toe-tap with Chet in 2/4 time to this nearly two-century-old music. Our website features his latest video, and watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



## Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

## OCTOBER

07

**Fredericksburg [7-9] Texas Mesquite Arts Festival**, (830) 997-8515, [texasmesquiteartfestivals.com](http://texasmesquiteartfestivals.com)

08

**Lexington Blue Volunteer Fire Department Fund-raiser**, (512) 229-8533, [facebook.com/bluevfd](https://facebook.com/bluevfd)

**Stonewall Fish Fry**, (830) 990-8793, [stonewallvfd.com](http://stonewallvfd.com)

**Tyler Rose City Music Festival**, (903) 593-6905, [therosecitymusicfestival.com](http://therosecitymusicfestival.com)

**Chappell Hill [8-9] Scarecrow Festival**, (979) 836-6033, [chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com](http://chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com)

**Edom [8-9] Art Festival**, (903) 258-5192, [edomarts.com](http://edomarts.com)

**Pearland [8-9] Art on the Pavilion**, (281) 997-5971, [visitpearland.com](http://visitpearland.com)

13

**Collinsville 42 Bed Bash**, (903) 465-6041, [texomafamilyshester.com](http://texomafamilyshester.com)

**Tyler [13-16] Texas Rose Festival**, (903) 593-6905, [texasrosefestival.com](http://texasrosefestival.com)

14

**Kyle Halloween Movie in the Park**, (512) 262-3939, [cityofkyle.com](http://cityofkyle.com)

**Canton [14-15] Texas Star Quilters Guild Quilt Show**, (903) 312-5252

**Henderson [14-15] Rusk County PRCA Rodeo**, (903) 657-3699, [visithendersontx.com](http://visithendersontx.com)

15

**Driftwood [14-16] Austin String Band Festival,**  
(512) 644-0212, aftm.us

**Canyon Lake BBQ Cook Off,** (830) 964-2223,  
canyonlakechamber.com

**Clifton FallFest,**  
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cityofclifton.org

**Conroe Fall Herb/Vegetable and Succulent Sale,**  
(936) 539-7824, mcmga.com

**Frisco The Boho Market at Frisco Square,**  
(214) 202-2668,  
thebohohomarket.co

**Plano International Festival,**  
planointernationalfestival.org

**Waco Oakwood Cemetery's Walking Tales,** (254) 717-1763

**Brenham [15-16] Texas Arts & Music Festival,**  
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texasartsandmusicfestival.com

21

**Cisco [21-22] Pie Fest,**  
(254) 334-9621,  
ciscotxpiefest.com

**Austin [21-23] Gem Capers,**  
(512) 458-9546,  
agms-tx.org

**Plano [21-23] Hollydays Market,** (972) 941-5840,  
visitplano.com

22

**Burnet Zombie Color Run,**  
(512) 756-6182,  
burnet.revtrak.net

**Fredericksburg Food & Wine Fest,** (830) 997-8515,  
fbgfoodandwinefest.com

MORE EVENTS >

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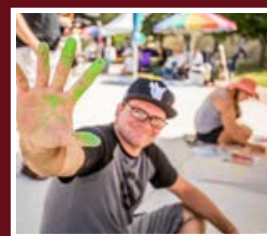


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### Pick of the Month

#### Festival of the Wolves

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Learn about wolves and wolf-dogs, browse booths, dine at food trucks, bid on items at a silent auction, and have a howling good time at the Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary.

### OCTOBER EVENTS CONTINUED

22

**Kyle Center Street Trick-or-Treat**, (512) 262-3939, [cityofkyle.com](http://cityofkyle.com)

**Palestine Hot Pepper Festival**, (903) 723-3014, [visitpalestine.com](http://visitpalestine.com)

**Plano Fall Harvest Festival and Outdoor Market**, (469) 467-9995, [visitplano.com](http://visitplano.com)

**Round Rock Diwali Festival**, [info@rrdiwalifest.com](mailto:info@rrdiwalifest.com), [rrdiwalifest.com](http://rrdiwalifest.com)

**Cottonwood Shores [22-23] Legends of the Falls**, (830) 693-3830, [cottonwoodshores.org](http://cottonwoodshores.org)

**Kerrville [22-23] Mountain Bike Festival**, (830) 896-6864, [kerrvillemountainbikefestival.com](http://kerrvillemountainbikefestival.com)

25

**Kenney [25-29] Hodges Farm Antique Show**, (979) 865-9077, [hodgesfarmtexas@gmail.com](mailto:hodgesfarmtexas@gmail.com)

28

**Imperial [28-29] Horsehead Crossing Trails of Time**, (432) 336-6316, [pecoscountyhistoricalcommission.org](http://pecoscountyhistoricalcommission.org)

**Kerrville [28-30] Texas Fleece and Fiber Festival**, (361) 537-0503, [texasfleeceandfiber.com](http://texasfleeceandfiber.com)

29

**Copperas Cove Fall-O-Ween Festival**, (254) 542-2719, [www.copperascovetx.gov](http://www.copperascovetx.gov)

**Llano Llano River Pumpkin Float**, (325) 247-5354, [llanochamber.org](http://llanochamber.org)

**Sanger Sellabration**, (940) 458-7702, [sangertexas.com](http://sangertexas.com)

**Salado [29-30] Table-rock's Fright Trail**, (254) 308-2200, [tablerock.org](http://tablerock.org)

31

**Kerrville Family Fright Night**, (830) 257-7300, [kerrvilletx.gov](http://kerrvilletx.gov)

## NOVEMBER

04

**New Braunfels [4-13] Wurstfest**, (830) 625-9167, [wurstfest.com](http://wurstfest.com)

05

**Brenham Radney Foster & Darden Smith**, (979) 337-7240, [thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Jefferson Fall History Haunts and Legends Event**, (903) 601-3375, [visitjeffersonstexas.com](http://visitjeffersonstexas.com)

07

**Georgetown Wurstbraten 50th Sausage Festival**, (512) 863-3065, [zionwalburg.org](http://zionwalburg.org)

# Hometown Pride

Sports, artwork, history and landmarks all make us proud as peacocks to call our town home, no matter the size. These reader offerings just make us beam with Texas pride. So pull up a lawn chair and gather the kids. Here comes the parade.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



**1** JOAN WILSON  
BLUEBONNET EC

Wilson's granddaughter, Maddie Wilson, gets an early start experiencing Friday night lights with the Hendrickson Hawks cheerleaders in Pflugerville.

**2** JONNIE ENGLAND  
NUECES EC

Pecos, in far west Reeves County, shows hometown pride with the Pecos Boot Trail, a public art project.

**3** JULIE TUPY  
HILCO EC

Willie Nelson, painted on a downtown garage in his hometown of Abbott.

**4** KATE MANRRIQUEZ  
WHARTON COUNTY EC

Taylor Manrriquez plays first base for the El Campo High School Ricebirds.



**2**



**3**



**4**

## Upcoming Contests

- DUE OCT 10** First Responders
- DUE NOV 10** Land, Sea or Sky
- DUE DEC 10** Riding the River



Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Hometown Pride photos from readers.





Quay Rathbone of Victoria was the first Turkey Trot sultana, in 1913.

**TCP** Go to our website to see Caytlyn Phillips' documentary, *Because Two Birds Raced*.



turkey capital of the world.

Thus began the Great Gobbler Gallop, with a Cuero turkey perpetually named Ruby Begonia facing Worthington's Paycheck ("nothing goes faster than a paycheck").

Ruby Begonia heads to downtown Worthington for the first leg every year at King Turkey Day, a month before Turkeyfest. Then the birds race again along Main Street in Cuero, a frenzy of feathers spurred on by crowds lining the way. The bird with the best cumulative time claims the Traveling Turkey Trophy of Tumultuous Triumph for its town.

It's no surprise that the gallop is one of my fondest childhood memories. Cuero's peculiar history with gobblers has long been my favorite aspect of my hometown and even became the focus of my master's thesis. It's not every day that you get to see flightless fowl excitedly plod down an ordinarily busy street. Our silly little tradition enthralled me and drew me in every October.

But the birds barely scrape the surface. It's the enriching union of the communities that brings the festival to life.

Turkeyfest organizers are still moved to tears recalling the generosity of their Worthington friends over the years. Five years ago, when Hurricane Harvey's winds whipped through Cuero, Worthington's residents sent a tractor trailer loaded with essentials, including bottled water and cleaning supplies, to our community.

So at Turkeyfest this year, October 7–9, we will again relish gathering with friends, family and visitors. We'll enjoy cool beverages, good food and all kinds of fun activities. And we'll treasure our bond with that faraway town up north.

It's true: Birds of a feather do flock together. ■

## Not for the Birds

Trotting turkeys—and so much more—unite towns separated by a thousand miles

BY CAYTLYN PHILLIPS

**AMID THE PASTURES** on the main road between San Antonio and the Gulf Coast sits the turkey-centric town of Cuero.

Its long history with the fowl dates back to 1908, when its first turkey processing plant opened. Crowds flocked to witness farmers parade their poultry down the streets, and the town seized the opportunity, dubbing it the Turkey Trot. The first one occurred in 1912, and they continued intermittently into the 1970s.

Fifty years ago this month, the Turkey Trot shifted to a four-day festival known as Turkeyfest. No longer did thousands of turkeys march down Main Street. Instead, Cuero partnered with rival turkey town Worthington, Minnesota, and they jointly decided an annual turkey race was the best way to determine the



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These 90% Silver Dollars were minted from 1878 to 1904, then again in 1921. They came to be known by the name of their designer, George T. Morgan, and they were also nicknamed "cartwheels" because of their large weight and size.

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Sadly, coin experts estimate that fewer than 15% of all Morgan Silver Dollars ever minted still exist today, due to the ravages of time and to U.S. government legislation that authorized the melting of hundreds of millions of Morgan Silver Dollars for their fine silver.

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Actual size  
is 38.1 mm

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