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2023 DIRECTOR ELECTION: CANDIDATES



DISTRICT 4

JERRY
WALDEN

INCUMBENT

I am proud and grateful to be a 5th generation farmer and rancher of Parker County. I was raised in the small community of Authon on my family's farm where we produced peanuts, hay, and ran a cow-calf operation. Growing up on the farm taught me early on the values of hard work, problem solving, and conservation, just to name a few. Professionally, I have owned several construction-related businesses ranging from property improvement to custom home building.

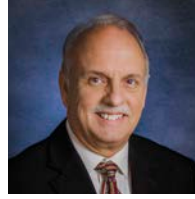
I have been a TCEC member since 1974 and began serving as a director on the board in September of 1999. At that time our co-op had approximately 30,000 meters and today we have over 131,000. One of my goals as director has been to preserve the small business charm of TCEC, while providing the guidance necessary to allow it to grow to our ever-increasing needs. I obtained my Credential Cooperative Director certification through our national association, NRECA, and served in leadership positions within our broader cooperative network. Throughout my time as a director, I have served as the vice president and secretary/treasurer, as well as chair of board committees.

With the continuing growth of TCEC, as well as the state of Texas, we must make strategic decisions today to ensure sustainable and reliable electricity for the future. During my years as a director, many challenges and opportunities have faced TCEC. I addressed each with honesty and integrity, striving to make the best decisions for the benefit of the member-owners. I possess the years of knowledge that only experience can provide and, equally important, the ability to adapt to present and future needs.

In the community, I served on the Garner ISD school board for 10 years, including three as board president. Additionally, I have served on local advisory committees and community boards.

My wife Ronda and I have 3 children, 6 grandchildren, and 1 great-grandson. With our future generations in mind, I have a strong desire to be a good steward of our natural resources and environment. Natural gas is currently the most economical and reliable source of electricity generation, yet I am committed to the continued exploration, development, and use of alternative natural sources of energy production, like wind, solar, and other technologies yet to be discovered. In my opinion, whatever the future holds for electricity generation, it must be reliable, sustainable, and economical.

I have a broad knowledge of the electricity industry, from generation through transmission to your home. As your director I will continue to use common sense in providing leadership to TCEC. I am confident I am the best candidate to serve you as District 4 director. Thank you for bestowing your trust in me to represent you in the past. It would be an honor and privilege to serve you for the next three years.



DISTRICT 4

DAVID
MILLER

NOMINATION
CANDIDATE

David Miller is a lifelong resident of North Texas who carries tenured experience in municipal government and with non-profit organizations.

David started his career in law enforcement in the mid-1980s as a patrol officer for the Keller Police Department. Since that time, he has held the positions of Chief of Police, Director of Public Safety, Deputy City Manager, and City Administrator for the cities of Trophy Club, Kennedale, Forest Hill, Bedford, and Springtown. David is currently the City Administrator and Director of Public Safety for the City of Springtown where he has served since November 2017. In addition to his work in municipal government, David serves on the board of the United Way of Parker County, serves on the Equine Advisory Board for Weatherford College, and is the Chair of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement's advisory board for Parker County. These posts are in addition to numerous other leadership roles for a myriad of local, state, and national professional organizations related to city management and law enforcement. David has done extensive work with state legislators throughout his tenure through the Texas Municipal League and other professional organizations. He is well versed in the legislative processes including but not limited to testifying in front of state subcommittees.

Outside of these efforts, David, along with his wife, Teresa, operates a therapeutic equine facility for children and adults with physical, intellectual, education and emotional disabilities, as well as for veterans, and those recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. Stars and Strides Stables is located in Peaster and utilizes therapeutic riding to aid in physical therapy, emotional growth and learning. Many riders experience a connection to the horse that few sports can create. Not only does this help raise their self-esteem but it also teaches them essential skills. It improves balance, creates trust and creates a friendship between rider and horse. The Millers established Stars and Strides in 2012 after being inspired by their daughter, Courtney, who experienced immense growth using equine-assisted therapy to overcome the challenges of her disability, Kabuki syndrome.

David is a longtime member of Northside Baptist Church where he continues to serve as a Bible teacher. David has been a resident of Parker County for more than 18 years and resides with his wife Teresa and their youngest daughter Courtney in Peaster.

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**TRI-COUNTY
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16

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December 2023



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Strings Attached

A Houston woodworker turns rich woods into custom banjos with a lot of dedication and sandpaper.

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Photos by Nathan Lindstrom

10 Counting on Christmas

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Photo by Jason David Page

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David Getman.
Photo by Nathan Lindstrom

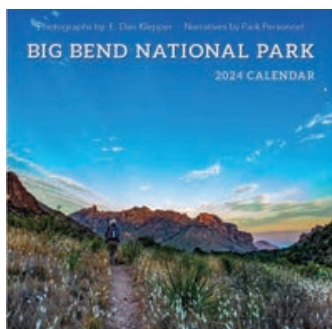


Make Your Tree a Cut Above

CUTTING DOWN your own Christmas tree can be a fun family outing that gets everyone in the holiday spirit.

The Texas Christmas Tree Growers Association website lists dozens of Christmas tree farms in the state. You might find one near you.

Did you know that most trees grown in Texas are between 3 and 6 years old when they're sold as Christmas trees?



A Year in Big Bend

Photographer and writer E. Dan Klepper, an occasional contributor to *TCP*, was selected to provide the photos for the Big Bend National Park 2024 Calendar. Order your copy and support the Big Bend Natural History Association at bbnha.org.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Can't I have just one more ...

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: **I collect ...**

Memories of people who extend small acts of kindness.

LORETTA BEDFORD
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC
SAN AUGUSTINE

Vintage clothing. I enjoy designing unique outfits. It's like a snapshot of history that lives on.

HEATHER MCMEANS MCCARROLL
VIA FACEBOOK

Nothing. But cats seem to collect me.

VALLEE GREEN
BLUEBONNET EC
ELGIN

Sand from every beach I visit in hopes of retiring to a beach someday.

SHIRLEY WETSEL
SOUTH PLAINS EC
WOLFFORTH

Things my children will throw away someday.

LISA STAPLETON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC
FREDERICKSBURG

Visit our website to see more responses.

TCP Contests and More

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FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS
Pollinators

RECOMMENDED RECIPES

Don't let National Cookie Day, December 4, pass without trying—and sharing—some of the cookie recipes on our website. We have dozens. Just search "cookies."



Our Cup of Tea

“I so enjoy your publication. It’s like sitting down with a friend and a cup of tea.”

MAX BERNREUTER
PEDERNALES EC
CEDAR PARK



JULIA ROBINSON

Root of All Evil?

That’s cute—so which one is picking on my fiddle leaf and plumeria [Currents, *Planter Banter*, September 2023]?

Rachelle Shockey
Via Facebook

Three Cheers For ...

I would like to thank Vianney Rodriguez for the spectacularly delicious Three-Bean Salad recipe [October 2023]. This is a keeper!

Laura Fortenberry
Panola-Harrison EC
Carthage

Uplifting Story

It was so much fun to see my hometown high school, McGregor High School (class of 1958), featured for its rocket science project [*It’s Rocket Science (And so Much More)*, October 2023].

McGregor has quite the history in that arena. My great-grandparents had land

that was used during World War II for a bomb plant. Later it was used by Rocket-dyne to produce solid jet fuel. Now SpaceX is close by.

Kudos to the teachers who are teaching them to think for themselves and be challenged.

Joan Roberts
CoServ
Denton

These students embody all that makes America the best in the world.

Whenever I encounter a young person who is courteous and has a goal, be it college or a trade school or just a job, I take the time to thank them and let them know that I am proud of them, for they are the future of our country.

Ted Pasche
CoServ
Argyle



SCOTT VAN OSDOL

TCP WRITE TO US
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Austin, TX 78701

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

Texas Co-op Power

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A Houston woodworker turns
rich woods into custom banjos
with a lot of time and sandpaper

Strings Attached





DAVID GETMAN was working in a music store in Brooklyn, New York, in 1997 when a friend gave him a box of banjo parts. The friend suggested that he see what he could make with the pieces.

Getman was intrigued. “I was 22. I had no tools. I wasn’t a woodworker,” he says. “But I liked to tinker.”

After fashioning a banjo from the parts, Getman became more interested in the instrument that has deep roots in North America. “I wasn’t a big fan of bluegrass, but I liked syncopated picking.”

Experimenting with playing and composing his own banjo music led Getman to develop a deep appreciation for the Appalachian style of banjo playing known as frailing or clawhammer. Unlike the three-finger bluegrass style, which typically consists of an up-picking motion by the fingers and down-picking of the thumb, clawhammer is all down-picking with a clawlike hand.

Clawhammer is typically done on an open-back banjo that produces a more mellow sound. Getman likes “the rich, deep notes, like rolling thunder” that these banjos produce.

Seventeen years after that first banjo, Getman discovered rotted floor joists in his Houston home. He bought tools to

do the repair work. Then he wondered what else he could do with his expensive new tools. That led to a new avocation.

Today, as a banjo-maker, restorer and player, Getman, 49, runs Lindale Banjos out of his home in Houston’s Lindale Park neighborhood while working full time as a social science researcher and raising a son and daughter with his wife. He’s proud that the renowned Fiddler’s Green Music Shop in Lockhart accepted one of his banjos in 2021—the first he made that he thought was good enough to sell. The store has been selling his instruments ever since.

“Fiddler’s Green is known to musicians beyond Texas. They have customers from as far away as Japan,” says Getman, who plans to make banjos full time when he retires.

Banjos come in two distinct styles. Bluegrass musicians prefer banjos that have wooden, bowl-shaped attachments called resonators on their backs. A resonator projects the sound outward toward the audience. Getman makes clawhammer banjos with open backs, a style used by musicians who play old-time or Appalachian music.

Making a banjo of either style is a long, complicated process.

“A guitar is made entirely of wood, but a banjo has both metal and wooden parts,” says Jim Penson, another Texas banjo-maker. “Quality bonding of those two different materials requires quality workmanship.”

Penson, who also restores, plays and teaches the instrument, makes resonator banjos at his shop in Arlington. He works in intervals of 15–20 minutes that total 80–100 hours for each banjo he produces. Between work sessions, he must

OPPOSITE David Getman plays an all-walnut banjo with a calfskin hide head that he custom-made for a client. ABOVE Getman sands a banjo rim in his Houston workshop.



LEFT Detail of a custom-inlaid headstock on a Getman banjo.
BELOW Forming a perfectly round rim is part of the time-consuming process of constructing a banjo.



appearance and tone. He prefers “the darker woods, walnut and cherry, for both the aesthetics and the tones they give the banjos.”

The most challenging aspect of making a banjo is “the tedium of sanding,” Getman says. “You want the finished wood to look like glass. You sand parts five, six, seven times with different grades of sandpaper until it feels as smooth as it can be.”

And the most difficult part?

“From a technical point, it’s making the part at the end of the neck where it meets the pot,” Getman says. “Cutting that exactly right is next to impossible without the right tool.”

An experienced banjo player looks for an instrument that feels good in their hands, Getman says. The tone and volume should be consistent up and down the range of notes.

Custom banjos can cost \$1,200 or more, and musicians often request custom inlays of ivory, mother of pearl and other expensive materials for the headstock and fretboard.

One of Getman’s customers requested a headstock inlay depicting the night sky. Getman had saved a burl of wood—what looks like a knot when it’s attached to the tree trunk—because he liked its wavy grain. He added black ebony for the sky and cut the burl open to represent ocean waves below.

It’s challenging work but the rewards are plenty.

“Hearing the finished product is the best part,” says Getman, who makes four or five banjos a year. “You take the different pieces and your ideas, and then when it’s finished, you get to hear that banjo’s tone.” ■

TCP Find this story on our website to hear David Getman play one of his banjos.



allow time for lacquer or glue to dry completely before undertaking the next step.

“The most difficult part is also the least important. It’s finishing the instrument, making it look glossy,” says Penson, 69. “People who spend a lot of money for a custom-made banjo want it to look perfect.”

The Penson family lived in a 120-year-old farmhouse in Illinois, and his father was always restoring something in the house. Watching and helping his dad got him interested in woodworking. He moved to Texas in his 20s and got much more involved with banjos. He played in various bluegrass bands, including one with the late Earl Scruggs, considered the most influential banjo player in the world.

About 25 years ago, he opened Penson String Works, where, amid demand for his custom guitars, he turns out three banjos every year.

“You can use good components and not make a good banjo,” Penson says. “You can have not so good components and good workmanship and get a good banjo. It’s kind of the luck of the draw.”

Long soaks are required to make the wood pliable enough to be formed into the banjo’s round rim. Getman gains back a bit of that time with efficiency: He cuts four of each part before resetting his lathe. Still, it takes several weeks to finish a banjo.

Getman likes to use walnut because it’s sustainable and easy to get, but he also uses cherry. Maple is a popular choice for banjos, but it’s lighter—almost bright, he says, in

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Counting on Christmas

I'M sloshing through a marshy field in Matagorda County, along the Texas coast, a pair of binoculars dangling around my neck and cold raindrops pelting my bright blue jacket.

A hundred yards away, ornithologist Rich Kostecke points toward a cluster of what looks to me like a group of white footballs on stilts. I slap a mosquito off my arm and take a closer look: egrets.

We've just ticked off another species in the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, which takes place across the country between December 14 and January 5. The event got its start on Christmas Day in 1900. Instead of holding a hunting competition, as was popular at the time, an ornithologist and Audubon Society officer named Frank Chapman came up with a less destructive alternative: Count—but don't shoot—the birds.

The idea caught on. Today, tens of thousands of birders participate in counts in all 50 states and in 20 countries.

During the 2021–22 count, they logged almost 43 million birds at more than 2,000 sites.

I'm new to birding, but I love tromping around outdoors, and I could spend all day watching wildlife. Besides, it feels good to contribute to science, and this annual count provides data that sheds light on long-term avian trends.

But joining the Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh Preserve count is especially exciting. The plot where I'm birding—a circular area with a 15-mile diameter—almost always records more species than any other area in the country.

The Matagorda County count began 30 years ago when Brent Ortego, then a biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Jim Bergan, formerly of the Nature Conservancy, realized they could position a count circle that would incorporate a bit of the Gulf of Mexico, a stretch of coastline and some land along the Colorado River. Much of the 176-square-mile plot is on private land, but it also includes the Nature Conservancy's Clive Runnells Family Mad Island Marsh Preserve and the neighboring



BY PAM LEBLANC • PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL



In an annual nation-wide bird count, **Matagorda County** has led the US for 15 years in a row

Mad Island Marsh Wildlife Management Area.

It's fertile territory for birding.

"A lot of habitats come together here—coastal prairie, marshes, bay and forest," says Kostecke, who heads the small team to which I've been assigned for the count.

Under the bird count guidelines, teams tally all the species they see during a single calendar day. You don't need any special training or certification to participate, but only birds spotted by knowledgeable birders figure into the official total. Still, newbies like me typically can participate if there's room.

"It's a repeated count at the same time, year after year, so we're getting a snapshot across the nation over that time period," Kostecke says.

In a typical year, birders here log about 230 species during the count. But today's stormy weather doesn't bode well.

About 100 birders are participating in the count this year. Last night we lined up for bowls of chili and hot cornbread and talked strategy.

One group would watch for yellow-headed blackbirds.

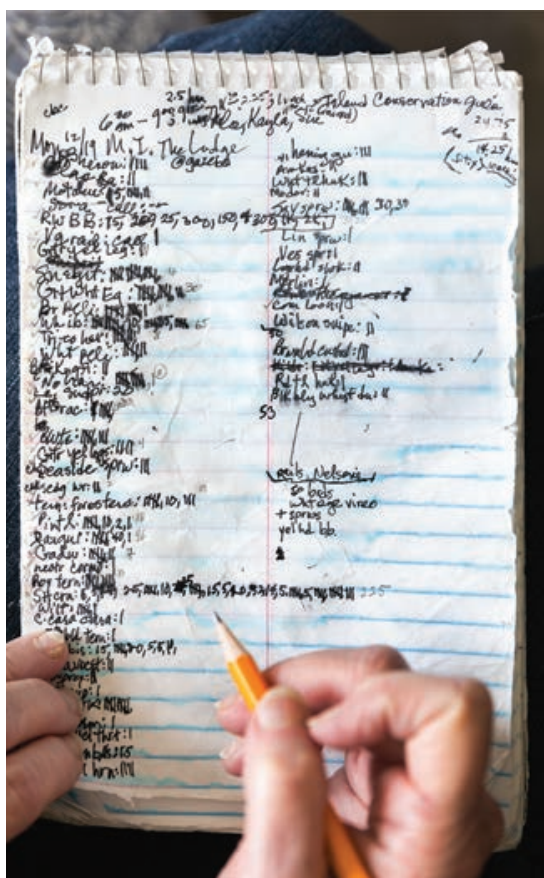
Another would head out at night, hoping to flush out tiny yellow rails and black rails in the darkness. The circle was divided into 16 sectors, with groups assigned to each one. We knew the weather would be a challenge because, like humans, birds hunker down in the rain.

"We may have to work harder to get them out," says Ortego, the official compiler for the event.

The count officially begins at midnight. I'm tucked inside my camper van then, but a hardy group of birders heads into the night to look for owls and other nocturnal birds.

I meet my team—Kostecke, along with ecologist Charlotte Reemts, her husband and their two daughters—early the next morning, which dawns gloomy and damp.

OPPOSITE From left, Rich Kostecke, Charlotte Reemts and author Pam LeBlanc are among about 100 birders who spent a rainy day participating in the Mad Island Marsh Preserve count. ABOVE A painted bunting's breeding grounds include much of Texas.



Since 1970, the **population of birds** in North America has dropped by 3 billion birds, or **nearly 30%.**

We pile into two cars then head down a gravel road, stopping periodically to scan the surroundings.

Within 20 minutes, Kostecke has already logged 10 species. He doubles that when we reach a lake, and his list grows further when we hike into the brush and eventually reach the marsh. I love birding but definitely do not know my birds, so I leave the identification to the experts.

We spend all morning admiring turkey vultures perched in trees and great blue herons wading in the water. At noon, we head back to headquarters. Raindrops plunk on the roof; it's foggy outside. Birders peel off soggy rain jackets as they come in for a break.

"What did you get?" someone asks a dripping man who walks in.

"Wet," he responds with a chuckle.

The birders munch leftover chili and discuss what they've spotted. So far, no one has recorded anything that's never been seen here before. But they have logged lots of birds, from Pepto Bismol-colored roseate spoonbills to pelicans, crested caracaras, white ibises and plenty of noisy sandhill cranes.

"There's still quite a few rocks to turn over," preserve manager Steven Goertz says as the birders head out for the rest of the day.

In the end, the Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh Preserve circle reports 218 species, enough to retain the crown for the most species in the country. A count in San Diego comes in a close second with 213. It marks the 24th time this corner of Texas has come in first or tied for first—and the 15th straight year it has topped the list outright.

But the rain took a toll. A dozen species usually recorded here weren't seen. Still, they got some good ones—the scaly-breasted munia, with its checkerboard chest; a squat-looking bird with an impressively long bill called a green kingfisher; the rose-breasted grosbeak, the male of which

LEFT Unforgiving December weather leaves Sue McBeth Welfel's notebook a bit soggy.

ABOVE Sandhill cranes were quite plentiful during the count.



looks like it's wearing a red bandana around its neck; the Western kingbird, with its lemon-colored belly; and the tall, spindly wood stork.

They also found one that I've long wanted to see—the tallest bird in North America, the whooping crane, which stands nearly 5 feet tall and has a wingspan of 7½ feet. Whooping crane numbers dropped to about 20 individuals in the 1940s but, thanks to conservation efforts, a population of about 600 now exists in the wild. They winter near here.

"It's an adrenaline rush," Ortego says of the count he helped start. "It's pride that you had the skills to locate an unusual bird when people are counting on you."

The count has scientific value as well. Biologists have seen a reduction in the raw number of birds in the past 50 years, and the counts provide evidence.

"For us, these data sets are important because the populations of birds that they monitor are not the subject of any formal monitoring program," says Lisa Gonzalez, executive director and vice president of Audubon Texas.

Since 1970, the population of birds in North America has dropped by 3 billion birds, or nearly 30%, she says.

The decline has hit nearly all species. Wetland birds like geese and swans are the exception; their numbers have stayed mostly stable, Gonzalez says.

Much of the loss is due to human activity. "Collisions and impacts are one of the major causes of bird loss, along with overall declines in habitat and a change in environmental conditions driven by climate change," Gonzalez says.

The public can help.

"Share the shore," Gonzalez says. "If you live or recreate along the coast, understand that it doesn't take a lot to disturb birds, especially nesting birds. When you're boating or fishing, steer clear of islands where birds nest—and keep dogs on a leash."

Watch for birds that nest on the ground when you drive on beaches, and turn off unnecessary outdoor lights during spring and fall migrations. And, if you're willing to spend a day outside looking for a flash of feathers, consider joining a bird count in your area.

"It's a fun thing to say we have the No. 1 count, but the count would be fun even if we weren't No. 1," Reemts says. "It's just all about the experience of being out here and seeing stuff." ■

TCP See this story on our website to learn if there is a Christmas Bird Count near you.

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If you do not have an extra lane to move into, the law requires you to slow down 20 mph below the posted speed limit. A slower-moving vehicle is a safer vehicle.

And keep in mind, significant fines give this law teeth.

Your electric cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.



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Regularly sold for \$99, we're offering this collection of survival essentials to you for **A FIFTH OF THE NORMAL PRICE!** Why? Because we've had an incredible year and we feel like giving back to our valued customers. But we can only extend this offer while supplies last. Of our initial run, **more than half have already sold.**

Includes flashlight, watch and multitool with wire cutters, knife, bottle opener, file, screwdrivers, pliers and more!

Survival Box Specifications:

- Multitool: 3 1/4" x 1" folded
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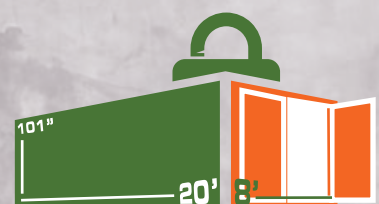
TCP Gift Shop

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Texas food, music, housewares, gifts and more—find it all on our website, along with great deals for TCP readers. Just pick and click—it's easy to shop for friends and family without leaving home.

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District 4 Run-Off Election

Tri-County Electric Cooperative's 2023 Election results were announced at the 84th Annual Meeting of the Members on Monday, October 16. The Annual Meeting recap, including election results, can be found on pages 18-19. Since none of the district 4 candidates received the majority of the votes, a run-off election between Jerry Walden, incumbent, and David Miller, nomination candidate, was called and will be conducted in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order.

The District 4 Run-Off Election will be conducted in a similar matter as the 2023 Official Election held in September. Your member-specific official 2023 District 4 Run-Off Election Ballot is located on the back of this December *Texas Co-op Power* magazine. Additionally, members with active emails on file will receive an email on December 1 with their member-specific link to vote online. Voting will close at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, December 20. Members who vote in the run-off election by the deadline will receive a \$10 bill credit. Credits will be applied in January and will appear on January or February billing statements depending on billing cycle. 149100001

Join us at 6:30 p.m. on January 3 for a virtual member meeting to announce the results of the District 4 Run-Off Election.

Stream Online: tcectexas.com/live

Listen by phone: 855.710.6229

WHY VOTE?

The board members represent the entire membership. Participating in the election gives you a voice on who represents you in the board room. Additionally, members who vote by the deadline will receive a \$10 bill credit.

WHO CAN VOTE?

All Tri-County Electric Co-op members – not just district 4 members – are able to vote in this run-off election.

The District 4 Run-Off Election opens at 8 a.m. on Friday, December 1 and closes at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, December 20.

WHEN TO VOTE

HOW TO VOTE

Please see voting instruction below. All votes must be received by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, December 20. Ballots will not be accepted at our offices.

ONLINE



Go to directvote.net/TCECTX and enter your ballot ID and election passcode printed on the back of the December *Texas Co-op Power* magazine.

EMAIL




Members with valid email addresses will receive an email on December 1 with member-specific voting credentials and a link to vote online.

MAIL-IN



Complete the ballot on your December *Texas Co-op Power* magazine and mail to Survey and Ballot Systems.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Check below for our last event of the year or visit tcectexas.com/MEE for more information!

In October, Tri-County Electric Co-op's Member Engagement Team visited local community events in Southlake and Seymour. We appreciate the 307 members who stopped by our tent at Southlake's Oktoberfest and the 50 members who registered at Seymour's Cruisin' the Brazos. Congratulations to the bill credit winners!

Southlake Oktoberfest

- \$250 – Jennifer Barnard of Fort Worth
- \$100 – Lawrence Badih of Fort Worth
- \$100 – Trent Brockman of Fort Worth
- \$100 – Anna Lutterback of Southlake
- \$100 – Andy Sandusky of Fort Worth
- \$100 – Renea Stasaski of Keller
- \$100 – David Vo of Keller
- \$50 – Sali Bekir of Fort Worth
- \$50 – Kerry Henry of Southlake
- \$50 – Renit Lambert of Roanoke
- \$50 – Melissa Little of Fort Worth
- \$50 – Shiva Peddireddy of Southlake
- \$50 – Valerie Thompson of Haslet
- \$50 – Payton Vinet of Fort Worth
- \$50 – John Zarosky of Westlake

Seymour Cruisin' the Brazos

- \$100 – Rick Moorhouse of Seymour
- \$50 – Phillip Campbell of Seymour
- \$50 – Jessica Wright of Seymour

UPCOMING EVENT



Hometown Christmas



Dec. 3

Brock, Texas

Tri-County Electric Co-op holds 84th Annual Meeting of the Members

Tri-County Electric Cooperative held its 84th Annual Meeting Monday evening, October 16 – online for the fourth straight year. The virtual event platform allowed members to stream the meeting or join by phone.

Janet Rehberg, the co-op's chief strategy officer and vice president of engineering, welcomed members before turning it over to Wesley Scheets, chief operations officer and vice president of operations, who delivered the invocation. Melissa Watts, chief financial officer and vice president of finance, led the pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag. 800840511

Rehberg introduced board chairman Max Waddell, who called the meeting to order and appointed Don Richards, the cooperative's attorney, to chair the meeting.

Richards introduced the proof-of-mailing statement, certifying that 105,990 notices of the meeting had been mailed on August 31. Under the bylaws, at least 3-percent of those members, for a total of 3,179 members must participate in order for the co-op to conduct business. Quorum is determined by the number of members who participate in the board election. A quorum was declared.

Survey and Ballot Systems, the election service provider that conducts the election on the co-op's behalf, provided the

voting report certifying that 19,064 ballots were cast online and 2,917 ballots were returned by mail. With a total of 21,981 ballots cast, 20.7-percent of the members voted.

Richards called for approval of minutes from last year's meeting published in the September *Texas Co-op Power* magazine and called for confirmation of nominees to the committee on nominations and qualifications: Ramey Keeth of District 5, Ranell Scott of District 7, and Wayne Parkman of District 9. They will serve three-year terms ending December 31, 2025.

J. Steven Bartley, Committee on Nominations and Qualifications Chairman, came to the podium to deliver the Committee's Nomination Report. Bartley reported the Committee accepted and reviewed four applications from members of districts 1, 2 and 4, and deemed all candidates met application requirements and director qualifications to be placed on the ballot. 800637235

Richards stated he reviewed applications from two candidates and deemed they met application requirements and director qualifications to be placed on the ballot. All six candidates appeared on the ballot mailed to members on the September *Texas Co-op Power* magazine.

ANNUAL MEETING RECORDING

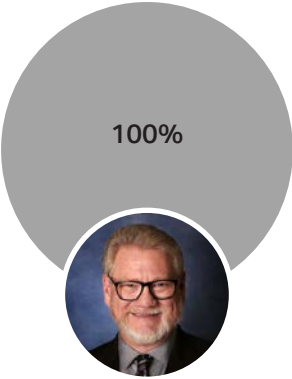
Couldn't watch live? No problem!
Watch at tcectexas.com/annual-meeting

Thank you

TO OUR DOOR PRIZE SPONSORS

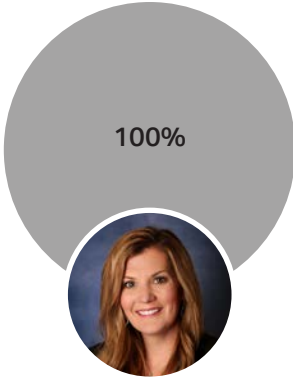
McCord Engineering, Inc.
Able 2 Products Company
M&S Engineering
Altitude Energy
Amber Electric
NISC
Texas Electric Cooperatives
Brazos Electric Power Co-op
Techline
Tarrant Construction
REI
FX5
Higgs Electric
Empact Engineering
Hardin Tree Service
Turn Key Utilities
CoBank

District 1



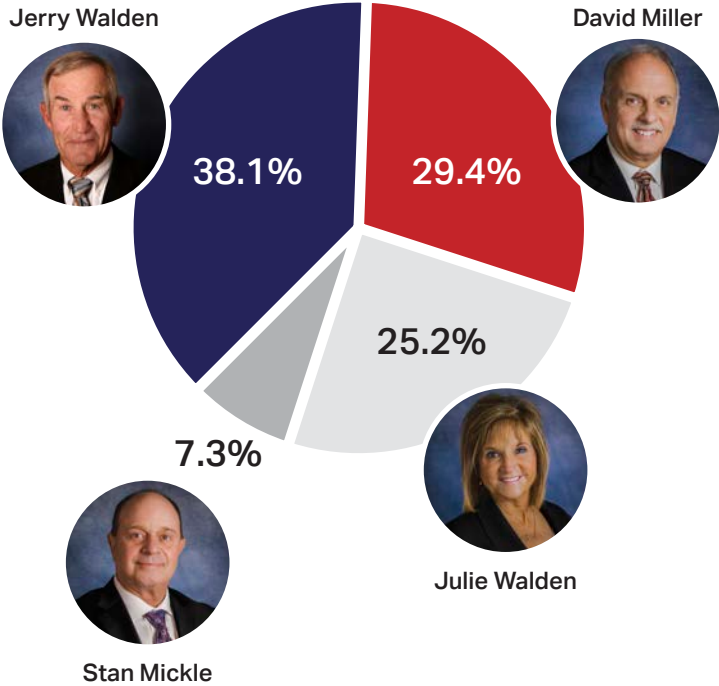
Kevin Ingle

District 2



Margaret Koprek

District 4



According to Survey and Ballot Systems, the election results were:

- District 1: incumbent Kevin Ingle ran unopposed and therefore received 100% of the votes.
- District 2: incumbent Margaret Koprek ran unopposed and therefore received 100% of the votes.
- District 4
 - Incumbent Jerry Walden received 38.1% of the votes.
 - Nomination candidate David Miller received 29.4% of the votes.
 - Petitioning candidate Julie Walden received 25.2% of the votes.
 - Petitioning candidate Stan Mickle received 7.3% of the votes.

Since bylaws require a candidate to receive a majority of the votes, a run-off election will be held in December between Jerry Walden and David Miller, with results to be announced in January.

Koprek, the Board’s Secretary/Treasurer, delivered the treasurer’s report. Net revenue for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, was almost \$445 million, with \$7,167,835 in net operating margins. At fiscal year-end, the co-op had \$1.37 billion in total assets after returning nearly \$5 million in capital credits to members of record in 2003.

Concluding the business portion of the meeting, Richards asked Rehberg to announce door prize winners. More than 160 gifts donated by co-op partners, as well as bill credits, were awarded to members drawn at random from among those who voted in the election. James Shaunfield of Weatherford won the grand prize – free electricity for the remainder of 2023, up to \$300 per month. 196600202

The meeting ended with a question-and-answer session. Richards fielded questions about electric vehicle charging stations, solar program updates, status of the Brazos Electric bankruptcy, electricity rates and other issues.

A recording of the meeting and a full list of door prize winners can be found at tcectexas.com/annual-meeting.

THE CALL OF CHRISTMAS

Grapevine's Main Street beckons everyone to total holiday immersion

BY BOB BUCKEL,
COMMUNICATIONS CONTENT
SPECIALIST



Photos provided by Granbury Convention & Visitors Bureau

Not many people have a job description that includes making a million people feel warm, happy and, well... Christmassy.

Elizabeth Schrack does.

She is Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau's Communication Director, so there are a few other duties sprinkled in there. But for a former TV news anchor, the current job – helping stage Grapevine's "Christmas Capital of Texas" – involves a lot more smiles than late-breaking bulletins. For the record, she's okay with that. 800878570

"I think we're busier than a newsroom," she said, "but it's fun and it's all happy. It's all about that Christmas feeling."

Grapevine has been throwing a Christmas-themed party along its mile-long Main Street for more than 25 years. In 2009, the Texas Senate approved a declaration, sponsored by then-Senator Jane Nelson, that recognized the city's extraordinary efforts.



The title "Christmas Capital of Texas" popped up and things just went on from there.

For 40 days beginning November 10, more than a million visitors will stroll, shop, dine, and be entertained as they experience the kind of Christmas only a storybook village could provide. There are more than 1,400 events during that time, as well as venues off Main Street like "Ice!" at the Gaylord Texan, "Snowbound" at Great Wolf Lodge, "Scuba Santa" at the Sea Life Aquarium in Grapevine Mills Mall, and crafts, cookies and games at historic Nash Farm – all accessible from Main Street via a free shuttle.

"We want everyone to have that magical experience," Schrack said. "Maybe you're just working, shopping, getting ready – but this is a place where you can slow down, enjoy the season, and still get your shopping done on Main Street."

“Let somebody else make all the arrangements, and just lose yourself in the magic.”

Tickets went on sale in July for one of the key attractions, the Grapevine Vintage Railroad’s North Pole Express, so if you’re just learning about it, it’s not likely you’ll get a ride this year. There are plenty of other attractions that are available that do not require advanced ticket purchase: the “*Elf Adventure*,” the Peace Plaza ice rink, the Carol of Lights, a Drone Show, nightly fireworks over City Hall, and giant gingerbread houses you can step inside. 800635167

Add to that the vintage Palace Theater, with live shows and Christmas-themed classic movies like “*Elf*,” “*Home Alone*,” “*It’s a Wonderful Life*” and “*A Christmas Story*” – and a dazzling array of shops along the street with gifts, crafts and goodies. There’s chocolate everywhere, in every form, and restaurants for those looking for more than sweets.

Sprinkle in a million lights, lots of music, and it’s a Christmas adventure like you’ll find nowhere else outside the North Pole.

“It’s like being in a Hallmark movie,” Elizabeth said. “

The Convention & Visitors Bureau staff goes all-out, with help from City Hall and literally hundreds of volunteers to help people find just the magical experience they’re looking for.

“There’s kindness everywhere,” Elizabeth said. “It’s just a really special time. You don’t find this in a lot of places.”

For more details, visit the Convention & Visitors Bureau’s website, grapevinetexasusa.com/christmas-capital-of-texas. There you can learn about shuttle routes, parades, celebrations, the movie schedule, live ice dancing shows on the rink in front of Market Hall, and every unique boutique up and down the street. If you’re not excited about driving, think about taking TexRail, which delivers passengers directly to Harvest Hall from stops all over Tarrant County.

Just one visit, and you’ll want to come back every year – and like millions, you will walk away convinced that nobody does Christmas like Grapevine.





Chris Jacks I work for you

Lots of Tri-County Electric Co-op employees grew up in small towns - but not many can out-small Christopher Jacks. He graduated from Comstock High School, in a school district near the Rio Grande that counts 240 students in grades K-12.

Those roots help explain why Chris is a friendly guy who likes to explore, learn new things and help people – all good qualities for a “staker.”

“This is my favorite job I’ve had in my entire life,” he said. “I feel personal with the members. It feels good to actually help someone figure something out.”

After high school, Jacks went to Houston and earned a degree in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). He worked at Davey Resource Group, a contractor, and Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative before finding the Tri-County Electric Co-op job online. He started March 2, 2022, and quickly felt at home.

“Everyone I’ve worked with here is amazing,” he said. “I think we have a really good thing going on here at this co-op.”

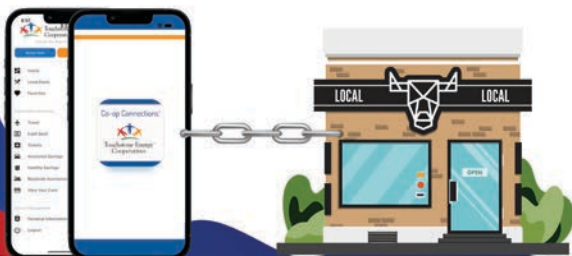
Stakers, he noted, are often the face of the co-op for new members and always available to help. 800848543

He loves to travel, visiting Pennsylvania and Seattle in recent years, and he is starting to get into target shooting. He thought about entering an event the co-op held for employees this year, but decided he wasn't ready.

Sure, he's a small-town, easygoing guy -- but he still likes to win.

CO-OP CONNECTIONS

mobile app



Learn more at tcectexas.com/connections

Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

CONTACT US

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Aledo, TX 76008
Phone 817-444-3201
Web tcectexas.com

Board of Directors

Max Waddell, District 9 - Chairman
John Killough, District 6 - Vice Chairman
Margaret Koprek, District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer
Kevin Ingle, District 1
Jorden Wood, District 3
Jerry A. Walden, District 4
Steve V. Harris, District 5
Sommer Portwood, District 7
Michael Sivertsen, District 8

24/7

Outage Reporting

For information and to report outages, please contact us.

Online: 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 10,000 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 106,000 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 16-23 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
Facebook.com/TCECTexas



BE PREPARED FOR WINTER STORMS

When temperatures drop and storms hit, it can be challenging to stay safe and warm. Winter storm severity varies depending on where you live, but nearly all Texans are affected by extreme winter weather at some point. Tri-County Electric Cooperative is prepared for whatever Mother Nature may throw our way. We care about your safety and we want you to be prepared, too.

Heavy snow and ice can lead to downed power lines, leaving co-op members without power. During extremely low temperatures, this can be dangerous. During a power outage, our crews will continue to work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power, but there are a few things you can do to prepare yourself.

Stay warm. Plan to use a safe alternate heating source, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove during a power outage. These are great options to keep you and your loved ones warm, but exercise caution when using them, and never leave the heating source unattended. If you are using gasoline-, propane- or natural gas-burning devices to stay warm, never use them indoors. Remember that fuel- and wood-burning sources of heat should always be properly ventilated. Always read the manufacturer's directions before using.

Stay fed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends having handy several days' supply of food that does not need to be cooked. Crackers, cereal, canned goods, and bread are good options. Five gallons of water per person should also be available in the event of an extended power outage. 8001107101

Stay safe. When an outage occurs, it may mean power lines are down. It's best not to travel during winter storms, but if you must, bring a survival kit along, and don't travel alone. If you encounter downed lines, always assume they are live. Stay as far away from the downed lines as possible, and report the situation to our dispatchers by calling 817-444-3201. You should also call 911.

Winter weather can be unpredictable and dangerous, and planning ahead makes a difference. For more winter safety tips, visit ready.gov/winter-weather. Our team is ready here at the co-op, are you?

Decorate with safety in mind

Don't let the rush and excitement of holiday decorating distract you from taking important safety precautions. Tri-County Electric Co-op offers these tips for safe holiday decorating.

- Never place your Christmas tree—artificial or real—near heat-emitting devices, such as space heaters, which can create a fire hazard.
- Lights that are hung inside or outside should be certified by an accredited independent testing laboratory. Check for a seal that confirms its certification.
- Make sure holiday lights and extension cords are made for the location in which they will be used—whether indoors or outside.
- When decorating outside, always look up and double-check that you and any equipment, such as a ladder, are at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines.
- Outdoor lights and decorations should be plugged into an outlet with ground-fault circuit interrupter protection.
- Be sure to turn off all lights before leaving your home or going to sleep. A timer can help you do this.

A Time of Porpoise

A memorable beach moment: You're basking in the warm sun, toes in the sand, letting the gentle turn of the foam-capped waves lull you into a state of complete relaxation. As your eyes scan the endless horizon of blue on blue, you're rewarded with a pod of dolphins making their way across the sea.

There's no denying their signature shape as they leap from the water. If you don't see anything else extraordinary the rest of day, you can take solace knowing you've witnessed one of nature's most playful and human-like creatures in their natural habitat.

Why not re-create that special moment with our **Balinese Dolphin Pendant**? We've captured two dolphins mid-jump in sterling silver crafted in the Balinese style. Tucked between these beloved sea mammals is a full carat of shimmering blue topaz. Made by some of Indonesia's finest artisans, this pendant is an absolute steal at **JUST \$29!** That's what we call our Stauer **IMPOSSIBLE PRICE!**

Nothing captures the shimmering color of the ocean in the midday sun like blue topaz. With its sparkling, clear blue color and high reflective index, blue topaz is one of the world's top-selling gemstones. The Gemological Institute of America lauds topaz for its hardness, noting that blue topaz is known for its intense color that's better than aquamarine. With this special price, you can score quite the catch.

Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. Enjoy the Balinese Dolphin Pendant for 30 days. If it doesn't pass the test swimmingly, send it back for a full refund of the item price.

Limited reserves. This pendant is already one of our best sellers this year. A full carat of genuine blue topaz set in .925 sterling silver for this price is as rare as a dolphin sighting. We cannot guarantee availability for long. Call today! This offer is limited to the first 1,900 responders to this ad!

Jewelry Specifications:

- Made in Indonesia
- Blue topaz and .925 sterling silver

Balinese Dolphin Pendant (1 carat)

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**Special price only for customers using the offer code.*

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Your Insider Offer Code: DNP189-01



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SET IN STERLING SILVER FOR ONLY \$29

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"Just lovely! Would recommend it as a purchase. Thank you STAUER." — Mary L.

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



How Texas Became a Desert

Films shot in Arizona, Utah and Spain gave the world some wrong impressions

BY W.F. STRONG

TO MUCH OF THE WORLD—and to many Americans who have never been to Texas—the state is a vast desert.

It's not the Sahara but a high-plateaus arid region studded with rocky mesas, sweeping wall-like cliffs and dusty canyons—and sometimes adorned with thousands of saguaro cactuses (native to Arizona, not Texas).

And, yes, certainly there are parts of West Texas that fulfill some aspects of these images, but more than half the state is green, with rolling hills, lush forests and vibrant coastal plains. Yet desert images dominate minds in distant

lands. For that, we can thank Hollywood.

There are many John Wayne Westerns with storylines that meander through Texas, but those films were mostly shot in Utah and Arizona. The most jarring example to me is *The Searchers*.

"Someday this country's gonna be a fine, good place to be," Mrs. Jorgensen, a tough frontierswoman, says in one scene. As she says this on her front porch, Jorgensen is facing Monument Valley, which is in Arizona and Utah.

Wayne made five movies in Monument Valley, even though two of them, *The Searchers* and *Rio Grande*, had story-

lines based in Texas. "Monument Valley is the place where God put the West," Wayne said.

Another Wayne film that is shocking to a Texan is *The Comancheros*. Wayne plays Texas Ranger Jake Cutter.

In one scene, he arrests an outlaw on a boat arriving in Galveston. As Cutter exits the boat with his handcuffed prisoner in tow, he walks right into eastern Utah, where the film was shot. It was stunning country for CinemaScope technology to capture, but it's not Texas.

Rio Bravo and *El Dorado* were two Wayne films with Texas settings shot in and around the Sonoran Desert west of Tucson. The landscape there is dominated by saguaros, enormous 40-foot-tall cactuses called the sentinels of the desert. Such sights don't exist in Texas.

Clint Eastwood's *For a Few Dollars More* is set in and around El Paso, but it was actually shot in the Tabernas Desert near Almería, Spain, and in Italy. Fort Bravo, also called Texas Hollywood, is a movie set town built in Almería in the 1960s that has served as a backdrop for many classic Western films.

Two films more true to Texas in landscape were *Giant*, shot mostly around Marfa, and *No Country for Old Men*, filmed around Marfa and Las Vegas, New Mexico. A 2015 miniseries called *Texas Rising* troubled some Texans for two reasons: It was shot almost entirely in Mexico and it depicted rugged mountain terrain near Victoria, where there are only coastal plains.

Movie Texas depicts a greater diversity of desert land than Texas actually has within it. To the world, we are Arizona, Utah and New Mexico, and we are Mexico, Italy and Spain. Mostly desert. ■

Slow Cooker

The handy appliance that comes through in so many ways

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

My slow cooker punch is my favorite festive drink to serve when hosting for the holidays. This vibrant and bubbly beverage is brimming with holiday flavors. It's always a hit at parties.

Slow Cooker Holiday Punch

6 cups cranberry juice
4 cups apple juice
2 cups orange juice
1 cup grapefruit juice
4 cinnamon sticks
4 cups cranberries, divided use
1 liter ginger ale, chilled
Orange slices
Grapefruit slices

1. Add all juices to a 6-quart slow cooker.
2. Add cinnamon sticks and 2 cups cranberries. Cover and cook on low 4 hours.
3. Allow punch to cool, then pour into a punch bowl. Top with ginger ale.
4. Before guests arrive add orange slices, grapefruit slices and the remaining 2 cups cranberries.
5. Serve over ice.

SERVES 12

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Mexican Christmas Eve Salad.





Crockpot Apple Pie Cinnamon Roll Casserole

SHELLEY JANIK
SAN BERNARD EC

Celebrate the holidays on the sweetest note with Janik's casserole. Cinnamon rolls and apple filling topped with a creamy brown sugar glaze are amazing for Christmas morning or even better after a holiday meal.

- 1½ cups canned apple pie filling**
- 2 tubes refrigerated cinnamon rolls (17.5 ounces each)**
- 2 eggs**
- ¼ cup heavy cream**
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar**
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

1. Dice apples from apple pie filling. Coat the inside of a slow cooker with cooking spray.
2. Remove cinnamon rolls from tubes, place icing aside and cut each cinnamon roll into four pieces. Place half of the cinnamon roll pieces on bottom of slow cooker.
3. Spoon half the apple pie filling over cinnamon roll pieces. Top with remaining cinnamon roll pieces.
4. Whisk together eggs, cream, brown sugar, cinnamon and vanilla. Pour over cinnamon rolls.
5. Spoon the remaining apple pie filling on top. Cover and cook on low 2½–3 hours.
6. Spread the icing that came with the cinnamon rolls on top of the casserole and serve warm.

SERVES 8

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Slow Cooker Cabbage Rolls

WENDY ZWIENER
SAN BERNARD EC



The tangy citrus tomato sauce here evokes the beauty of treasured holiday recipes that have been passed down through the years.

SERVES 6

- 12 cabbage leaves, removed from stem**
- 1 pound ground beef**
- 1 cup cooked white rice**
- 1 egg, beaten**
- ¼ cup milk**
- ¼ cup finely minced onion**
- 1¼ teaspoons salt**
- 1¼ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 1 can tomato sauce (8 ounces)**
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar**
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice**

1. Cut out the thick vein from the bottom of each cabbage leaf, making a V-shaped notch.
2. Blanch leaves for a few minutes in boiling water until slightly softened, then separate leaves and set aside.
3. In a large bowl, combine ground beef, rice, egg, milk, onion, salt and pepper.
4. In a small saucepan over low heat, simmer tomato sauce, brown sugar, Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice. Stir to combine.
5. Place a cabbage leaf on a flat surface and place a tablespoon or more of the meat mixture in the center of the leaf.
6. Roll from the bottom of the cabbage leaf and tuck in the edges as you roll.
7. Continue until you use all leaves and meat.
8. Coat the inside of a slow cooker with cooking spray and place rolls seam side down into it. Pour the sauce mixture over the rolls, then cover and cook on low 6 hours.



TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

SPRING CAKES DUE DECEMBER 10

Some cakes just pair perfectly with a spring day. Send us your best spring cake recipe and you could win \$500. Submit your favorite online by December 10.





Easy BBQ Chicken Sliders

MELISSA ECKHOFF
COSERV

Looking for a quick and easy holiday appetizer or New Year's Eve bite? We've got you covered with Eckhoff's sliders. Shredded chicken bathed in a creamy sauce will take you into 2024 the right way.

4 boneless chicken breasts
1 bottle barbecue sauce (18 ounces)

1 can cream of chicken soup
(10.5 ounces)
12 slider buns
Sliced pickles

1. Coat the inside of a slow cooker with cooking spray and place chicken breasts into it.
2. In a bowl, stir together barbecue sauce and cream of chicken soup. Pour mixture over chicken.
3. Cover slow cooker and cook on low 6 hours.
4. Shred chicken with two forks and serve on slider buns, topped with sliced pickles.

MAKES 12 SLIDERS

TCP Want quick solutions to your slow cooker desires? We can help. Among the more than 1,000 recipes from Co-op Country in our archives, you'll find dozens that call for slow cookers. They're all on our website.

Quick Tips for Slow Cooking

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

If you're feeding two, go for a 3-quart slow cooker. A 5-quart will feed a family of four, and a 6-quart slow cooker can feed a crowd or handle big batches.

Keep it closed. Opening the lid can cause the cooker to lose heat, adding to the cooking time.

Make cleanup a snap. Coat the inside with nonstick spray or use a liner for easy cleanup.

Enliven a dish by adding fresh herbs in the last 15 minutes of cooking time.

Sear meat before adding it to the slow cooker to deepen its flavor.



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HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

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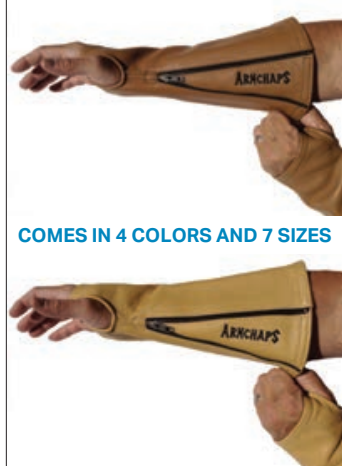
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Art and Parts

A Liberty Hill artist diverts discarded toys from the trash heap

BY CHET GARNER

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD to play with toys. That's the lesson I learned standing next to an 8-foot banana made entirely of plastic dolls, space aliens and rebar. I had tripped to visit off-the-grid artist Terry "Tunes" Parks, 72, who created his own Texas-style island of misfit toys just north of Liberty Hill, outside Austin.

At first, I wasn't sure if I was headed in the right direction. Then I saw a fence line covered in sun-bleached Barbie dolls. This was the place.

I wandered into Parks' yard, which doubles as his public gallery. Dozens of sculptures cover the space, each comprising hundreds of tiny toys organized into larger-than-life shapes—guitars, pyramids and even an Easter Island head. Dolls commingled with gardening tools hang from tree branches. It might have been terrifying if it wasn't so playful.

Parks started creating around 2010, after he was diagnosed with cancer and doctors told him he didn't have much time to live. The art served as therapy, helping him make his recovery while working tirelessly beside his brother Scott. Both are self-admitted music nuts, which explains why most of the art pieces are inspired by Texas artists like Willie Nelson, Frank Zappa and psychedelic pioneers the 13th Floor Elevators.

Every week, visitors and the local mission resale shop bring Parks—a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative—boxes of unwanted toys that sit and wait for him to turn them into something bigger than the sum of their doll parts.

Parks' art isn't commissioned by highfalutin patrons and doesn't exist to fill big-city galleries. Instead, the sculptures serve a higher purpose: making us smile, scratch our heads and remember when we played with toys too. ■

ABOVE Terry "Tunes" Parks shows Chet a pyramid assembled with a mind-boggling array of toys.

TCP Join Chet as he discovers what old toys turn into. We have the video online. And see all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

DECEMBER

01

Burnet [1–3, 8–10] Main Street Bethlehem, (512) 756-4481, fbcburnet.org

02

Wimberley [2–26] Trail of Lights, (512) 847-6969, emilyann.org

07

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

New Braunfels Christmas Market at Historic Old Town, (830) 629-2943, newbraunfelsconservation.org

08

Dallas Mistletoe Market at Preston Hollow Village, thebohohmarket.com

Lake Jackson Easton Corbin, (979) 230-3156, brazosport.edu

Fort Worth [8–9] Connor King, (512) 817-9535, blcomedy.com

Fredericksburg [8–9] A Christmas Journey, (830) 997-2069, bethanyfbg.com

McKinney [8–9] Holidays at the Heard, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

Clute [8–10, 15–17] The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, (979) 265-7661, brazosport.org

09

Comanche Santa Comes to Town, (325) 356-3233, comanchechamber.org

Llano Snow Day, (325) 247-5354, llanostarrystarrynights.com

San Saba Sip N' Stroll and Lighted Christmas Parade,
(325) 372-5141,
sansabachamber.org

Sattler Canyon Lake Noon Lions Christmas Parade,
(806) 420-4824,
facebook.com/
canyonlakenoonlionsclub

Surfside Beach Nighttime Holiday Kites,
(979) 233-1531,
visitsurfsidebeachtx.org

Marble Falls Movie in the Park, (830) 693-4449,
visitmarblefalls.org

Brenham Dailey & Vincent,
(979) 337-7240,
thebarnhillcenter.com

Johnson City Jingle Jaunt 5K & Kids K, (830) 868-7111,
johnsoncitytx.org

Lake Jackson Bird Banding,
(979) 480-0999, gcbo.org

Surfside Beach Surfing Santas, (979) 233-1531,
visitsurfsidebeachtx.org

West Columbia Candlelight Christmas, (979) 345-4656,
thc.texas.gov

Stonewall Tree Lighting,
(830) 644-2252,
tpwd.texas.gov

Round Top Linda Patterson and Friends Concert,
(979) 249-3129,
festivalhill.org

15

16

17

JANUARY

01

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your March event by January 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.



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Mailboxes

Readers certainly didn't mail it in this month, but some got boxed out by the competition. So gather 'round and let's see what's been delivered, as Texans show their colors and a little country flair.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 ROB DANIEL
TRI-COUNTY EC

"First responders often use mailboxes to hang gear on while in rehab after fighting fires."

2 DON BUGH
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

"Tierra Linda Ranch community mailboxes in the Kerrville area at dusk."

3 VANDY MORGAN
BLUEBONNET EC

Texas wildflower mailbox.

4 JANIS HENDRIX
PEDERNALES EC

A mailbox mounted on a retired 1942 fire hydrant during the February freeze.



Upcoming Contests

DUE DEC 10 Pollinators

DUE JAN 10 Rides

DUE FEB 10 Food and Cooking



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Mailboxes photos from readers.



The Best Christmas Gift I Ever Gave

A simple offering made generations ago yields lifetime returns

BY W.A. MCCORMICK
ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID MOORE

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 8 or 10 years old, back in the 1950s, an old man moved into a little shack of a house about a quarter-mile from my family's little, very modest house. He was alone, and I worried about him.

Maybe my folks had mentioned that he was having hard times, but I don't remember for sure.

We had several big native pecan trees, and during the holidays we usually had an abundance of the delicious nuts.

One year when Christmas was coming up, the old man was in the back of my mind. I told my grandmother that I wanted to give him something for Christmas because otherwise he probably wouldn't get anything.

It was the first time in my life that I had thought about giving a gift, but I knew

how a gift could brighten my day. My grandmother suggested that I give the man a paper bag full of pecans, probably a pound or two.

That seemed so wrong to me. Gifts should be bright and shiny. But pecans were so common to me that they were like biscuits. The bag was just plain brown and didn't even have a ribbon.

Nevertheless, Grandma handed it to me and told me to go give it to the old man. I was almost embarrassed about the gift that seemed so unlike Christmas to me, but I did as Grandma said.

When I knocked on the door, the old man came, and I gave him the bag and told him I wanted him to have it for Christmas. He opened the bag and looked inside.

A big, beautiful smile spread across his face, and he told me that his Christmas wish for me was that I would have a "double header." I went back home puzzled about what a double header was until my grandfather explained that it was twice as much good as I might expect.

I learned later that the old man did not have any type of heat in that shack of his, and both his feet froze that winter. He died not long after that.

I have given a lot of gifts in my 76 years, but that one is at the top of my list of memorable gifts. I wish I (we) had done a lot more for a lonely, cold, probably hungry old man.

His wish for me has followed me all my life and kept me warm. ■

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

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

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our **Sedona Turquoise Collection**. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.



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Run-Off Election Ballot *Instructions*

Your 2023 District 4 Run-Off Election Ballot is located on the back of this December Texas Co-op Power magazine.

Director candidate biographies are located on the front inside cover of the magazine.

Voting Information

Every member is eligible to vote in the election, regardless of the district in which you reside. Only one ballot may be cast per membership.

All members who vote prior to the deadlines below will receive a **\$10 credit** on your electric account, which will be applied in January. Members will see the credit on January or February billing statements depending on billing cycle.

How to Vote

Members may vote online or by mail-in ballot. **Ballots will not be accepted at our offices.**

ONLINE



Go to **directvote.net/TCECTX** and enter your ballot ID and election passcode printed on the back of this Texas Co-op Power magazine.

EMAIL



Members with valid email addresses will receive an email on December 1 with member-specific voting credentials and a link to vote online.

MAIL-IN



Complete the ballot located on the back of this magazine and mail to Survey and Ballot Systems (SBS), in the postage-paid envelope provided.

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Wednesday, December 20, 2023.**

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Director candidate photos and biographies are located on the front inside cover of this magazine.

Full voting instructions are located on the reverse side of the ballot.

**VOTE ONLINE
SCAN ME!**



**All members are eligible to
vote regardless of the Director
District in which you reside.**

Find your director district in the top right-hand corner of your billing statement. Director District maps are available on our website at tcectexas.com/board-directors.

Please use blue or black ink. Preferred marking method: 

..... Please detach and mail ballot.

Tri-County Electric Cooperative
**2023 DISTRICT 4
RUN-OFF ELECTION BALLOT**

District 4 Director Run-Off Election

- ☐ **Jerry Walden**
Incumbent
- ☐ **David Miller**
Nomination Candidate

Member Signature

Absolutely no ballots will be accepted at our offices.