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**TRI-COUNTY
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18



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Making History

For more than 50 years, artists have been drawn to a quiet, tucked-away studio row in Edom.

*Story by Patti Pfeiffer
Photos by R.J. Hinkle*

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Students and community leaders collaborate to build tiny homes that help veterans become whole again.

Story and photos by Laura Jenkins

ON THE COVER

TJ Phillips at a tiny home at Langetree Retreat and Eco Center near Liberty.
Photo by Laura Jenkins

ABOVE

Joe Hopps works on a bird-house at his studio in Edom.
Photo by R.J. Hinkle

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By Martha Deeringer



Brimming With Wisdom

NATIONAL HAT DAY is January 15, as if Texans ever needed another reason to don a cowboy hat.

Certainly, everyday wearers know this truism, shared with us by Alice M. Wolf, a member of Navasota Valley Electric Cooperative, as she “finished this sentence” back in November 2021:

“A Texan would never ... set his hat down brim down.”

Read more about hats in *Cowboy Hatters*, April 2016, on our website.

Class Is Not Dismissed

In honor of National Classy Day—January 17—*Texas Co-op Power* writers and editors note these esteemed Texans:

Luke Savage, a former Texas Christian University pitcher, started the nonprofit Blessed Feet, which has collected thousands of pairs of used baseball cleats for budding baseballers in the U.S. and Dominican Republic.
—Chris Burrows

Simone Biles, who owns the most gymnastics medals, exhibits poise in her willingness to speak out against sexual abuse and advocate for mental health awareness.
—Jéden Clark

The late singer **Selena Quintanilla Pérez**’s career was brief but impactful, redefining Latin music for a new generation and an expanded audience. Even at her young age, she was involved with charities and humanitarian causes, especially those benefiting Texas children.
—Alex Dal Santo

Mary Kay Ash said about her cosmetics company’s beauty consultants: “Here’s a woman who’s never had any praise at all for anything she’s ever done. Maybe the only applause she’s ever had was when she graduated from high school. She wants recognition. So we praise her for everything good that she does.” The company does good, too—supporting cancer research and survivors of violence.
—Jessica Ridge

Ima Hogg, born in the 19th century, turned her family’s oil money to philanthropy, including the arts and mental health programs.
—Tom Widlowski

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

If I could turn back the clock ...

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 November prompt: **Why doesn't somebody invent ... ?**

A washing machine that dries the clothes, folds them and puts them up.

NANCY BECKER
CONCHO VALLEY EC
PAINT ROCK

A canoe-shaped hotdog bun to hold all the condiments and chili.

MIKE WEBER
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

A key fob that could roll up the windows on your vehicle when it starts raining and you are inside at work.

LARENDA BRADSHAW
JASPER-NEWTON EC
JASPER

A smoke alarm that can be serviced at ground level or without a ladder.

FRANK M. WAGNON
FORT BELKNAP EC
SOUTHLAKE

Visit our website to see more responses.

Too Much Latitude?

Look at a map too long and weird details emerge.

For example, Portland, Texas, is nearly equidistant from Portland, Maine (1,852 miles), and Portland, Oregon (1,845 miles).

And this: A giant triangle of these Portlands captures more than 30 other states.



A Passing Notion

AS DRIVERS faced gas shortages and long lines at the pump 50 years ago, President Richard M. Nixon signed an act January 2, 1974, lowering the national speed limit to 55 mph.

That went off the books in 1995, and today Texas boasts the highest speed limit in the country: 85 mph on a stretch of State Highway 130, a toll road between San Antonio and Austin.

TCP Contests and More

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JULIA ROBINSON

OCTOBER 2023 Still in the Saddle Again

“After reading about the senior rodeo, my husband and I went to an event. It was wonderful seeing performers from 40 to 80-plus still enjoying what they love to do.”

CARLANNE HICKMAN
TRI-COUNTY EC
HASLET

A Signature Moment

On the reading list for a Texas literature class at Tarleton State University was *The Time It Never Rained* [*It Still Reigns*, October 2023]. We were told there would be a guest speaker to discuss writing—none other than Elmer Kelton himself.

He was soft-spoken, generous, patient and happy to be with us. I walked away with fond memories and his signature in my own copy, which I still have to this day.

Cole Hooper
Pedernales EC
Wimberley

I don't recognize Elmer Kelton without his hat [*It Still Reigns*, October 2023]! Have read many of his books, including this gem. He had a way of capturing a time and place and bringing it to life through many characters. An excellent writer and storyteller.

ERNIE BATTLE
VIA FACEBOOK



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A Stunning Memory

I was an elementary student near Austin [*A School Day Like No Other*, November 2023]. I think most schools were getting out early so parents could take children to see the motorcade. My mother was coming to get me.

Someone came to our room and whispered something to our teacher. Mrs. Griffin put her head down on the desk and began to cry. When she looked up, she said, “President Kennedy has been shot, and he won’t be coming to Austin.” We were stunned.

When my mother came to pick me up, she was crying too. I will never forget that day.

Susie McCalla
Central Texas EC
Kerrville

Family Ties

Frederick Law Olmsted is an ancestor on my mother’s side [*Appraising the Texas Landscape*, November 2023]. I am from Connecticut and worked my entire career at Hartford Hospital. In nice weather we would often go for walks on its approximately 10-acre beautiful campus, which was designed by Olmsted.

Virginia W. Smith
Nueces EC
Corpus Christi

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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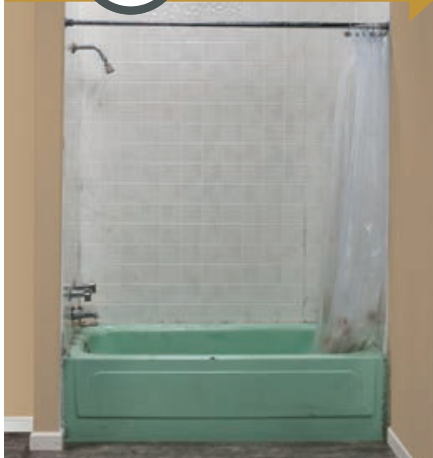
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Making History

For more than 50 years, artists have been drawn to this quiet, tucked-away studio row

BY PATTI PFEIFFER • PHOTOS BY R.J. HINKLE

THE SIGN SAYS Arbor Castle Birdhouses, but within lies an array of fanciful castles that seem perfectly inviting to gnomes and pixies if not birds. Crafted from hollow cedar logs; topped with tall, curvy conical roofs; and adorned in whimsical metal touches, these are more pieces of art than avian abodes.

Creator Joe Hopps has been carving birdhouses for 25 years and started quite simply.

"I saw a hollow log, had an idea, created one, entered it into a birdhouse competition in Oklahoma where I was living, and it won first place," he explains.

Hopps recently added brushes to his repertoire, returning to another of his passions, acrylic abstract painting. "I began painting in the early '70s and began again recently because of a saw accident, which nearly cut off several fingers."

His canvases were showcased at the grand opening of a new art gallery, O3 Collective, just down the road from his shop in the small community of Edom, west of Tyler.



With a population of fewer than 400, what Edom (pronounced “E-dum”) lacks in size, it more than makes up for in gifted artists. From one-of-a-kind jewelry to high-end art and unique pottery, the small town’s main drag, FM 279, is a treasure trove of rare items and artisans eager to share their stories.

It all started a couple of doors down from Arbor Castle, at Potters Brown Collective. Once a grocery store, the wooden structure was for five decades the studio of Doug Brown, a California transplant who moved to Edom in 1970 and founded this artisan community.

A cluster of artists’ studios continues Brown’s vision. His widow, Beth Brown, a potter herself, lives next door to the studio today.

“Doug was a very humble man and wanted somewhere he and his friends could create and sell their goods and felt if he opened a place, others would follow,” Beth says. “Immedi-

ately upon seeing Edom, he knew this was where he wanted to set up shop, start an artists’ community—and he wanted it to be a true community.”

Brown wasted no time turning his dream into reality—buying buildings, setting up his pottery studio and pitching his vision to artisan friends. And they did follow.

In 1972, Brown organized the first Edom Art Festival, which drew more than 3,000 attendees. Since then, every second weekend in October, a sprawling meadow behind studio row is transformed into a bustling venue. Crafters, musicians and festivalgoers from near and far gather to enjoy the sights, sounds, food and festivities of the two-day

OPPOSITE Beth Brown is the director of the Edom Art Festival. ABOVE Arbor Castle Birdhouses along the main drag.



Zeke Zewick, right, creates jewelry using uncommon materials, above. "Not all jewelry has to be gold, diamonds and sparkly," he says.

event that includes a wine-tasting garden featuring local vineyards, musicians and crafting for kids. The festival has grown in content and count, attracting some 15,000 visitors in 2023.

After Brown's death in 2020, his building was eventually sold, but it still bears his name and remains a pottery center that sells ceramics from local makers.

And the community is still going strong.

Stepping outside, my eyes were drawn to a jewelry store of a different sort: Zeke & Marty. Even the door handles are distinctive, custom-made from sika deer antlers from Japan and carved by the owner, Zeke Zewick.

I marveled at the array of custom jewelry of every material, size and sort—even dyed bone pieces inlaid with unique gems, dispelling the adage that diamonds are a girl's best friend.

Using woolly mammoth teeth from Siberia, Turkish agates, shells from the Sea of Cortez, antlers and bones, Zewick prides himself in creating one-of-a-kind pieces.

"Not all jewelry has to be gold, diamonds and sparkly," he says. "Different material provides for different thoughts for pieces. Oxide steel is what some throw away as trash,

but I like the contrast of it with sterling."

He especially likes working with bone, which is malleable and easy to grind and polish, dyeing it with alcohol inks. The materials are uncommon, and so are his pieces.

Zewick, one of the original Edom artists, has been creating since 1969, first with leather but spending the past half-century as a jeweler. He knew Brown and received one of his original invites.

"He knew I was looking for a place to move after graduating art school," Zewick says. "This place had trees and water, and being from Lubbock, I felt we were in heaven."

Prompted by a desire to "get out of the city and move back home to a simpler, less stressful way of life," Shanna Wiggins relocated here from Austin three years ago.





She used to own a succulents shop on FM 279, and like other residents, she was eager to share her story.

“Originally, the locals were hesitant, feeling hippies didn’t belong here,” she says, “but we all love each other, so it doesn’t matter.”

For the traveler looking for a slower slice of life, Edom has a couple of restaurants serving home-cooked meals. Sips offers hand-crafted coffees, sodas and other nonalcoholic drinks.

Edom is eccentric and inviting and a true “poke-n-plumb” place: By the time you poke your head out of the vehicle, you’re plumb outta town, which adds to its charm. It’s a place where strangers don’t exist. ■

ABOVE Whimsy is a dominant feature of Joe Hopps’ birdhouses.
RIGHT A signpost helps visitors to the East Texas town find their way.

East of Edom

Other attractions along FM 279.

Green Goat Winery A cozy tasting room and covered patio overlook 7 acres of vines.

Blue Moon Gardens This 6-acre gardener’s paradise sells plants, tools and supplies.

Coltharp-Beall House The 175-year-old home has housed itinerant preachers and stagecoach travelers.



DREAMING

BIG

Students and community leaders
collaborate to build tiny homes that
help veterans become whole again





What the heck are you doing?"

The sharp sound of his girlfriend's voice jolted TJ Phillips awake. But the bigger shock came when he opened his eyes.

"I had my knee on her neck," says Phillips, shaking his head. "And I was going through the motions of putting flex cuffs on her. She laughed it off after I explained that I'd been dreaming about being on active duty again. But I wasn't laughing. I knew I needed help."

Phillips, an Army sergeant who served 1991–99 and was honorably discharged, says he made an appointment with Veterans Affairs to address his post-traumatic stress disorder. But he felt like he was too young to be on all the medications they prescribed.

Instead, as many do, he turned to alcohol. And he eventually decided to live in his truck so he could save money. Ten years and five DWIs later, he was in the Montgomery County jail, awaiting a trial that was certain to yield an extended prison sentence, when he got the news that his arresting officer had suddenly died. He was free to go.

"And that's when Miss Barbara took me in," he says after an emotional pause. "Now I'm safe. I'm sober. And everything I need to get healthy again is right here."

OPPOSITE Langetree Retreat and Eco Center's community of tiny homes and assistance has helped change TJ Phillips' life. "Everything I need to get healthy again is right here." ABOVE Instructor James Gaylord and his Humble students in front of a tiny home they built.

Barbara Lange gave Phillips, 54, the key to a tiny home at the Langetree Retreat and Eco Center near Liberty, between Houston and Beaumont. But she'll be the first to tell you that she's only one of many who are making Phillips' recovery possible.

"Somehow we all got the memo independently of one another," Lange says. "And then somehow we all found each other. What are the odds?"

There was no actual memo, of course. But indeed, several people in the same corner of Texas had a similar idea around the same time.

At the outset, none of them knew each other—or even about each other. They were simply focused on the same goal: to support veterans by providing them with tiny homes. Their collaboration has no name. There's no one in charge. But it has yielded something much greater than the sum of its parts.

Allen Segura, who recently retired as assistant principal and director of career and technology education for Summer Creek High School, says the idea to integrate building tiny homes into the Humble school district's curriculum came from a bout of insomnia in 2018.

"Late one night I was scrolling through Facebook and saw some people in St. Louis who were building tiny homes for homeless veterans," Segura remembers. "And the simple thought came: 'I wonder if our students could do that?'"

He bounced the idea off James Gaylord and Missi Taylor, who teach CTE classes in construction, architecture and design at high schools in Humble, a Houston suburb whose name is pronounced "Umble." They were in.

"We had been teaching these classes for years, but it was mostly theoretical," Segura says. "Actually building houses would not only let them put what they're learning into practice, it would also help them understand the importance of serving others."

Under the supervision of the three educators, the students developed a presentation and pitched it to Superintendent Elizabeth Fagen, who took it to the school board for approval. Thus, in 2018, Humble ISD's Big Heroes, Tiny Homes program was born.

Meanwhile, about 40 minutes east of Humble, Lange, a retired social worker, was teaching leadership and environmental sustainability at the retreat center she and her husband built in 2004.

Their doors have always been open to people in crisis. They housed numerous people after Hurricane Katrina's devastation in 2005. They took in referrals from Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare, a community-based nonprofit serving those living with mental illness and intellectual disabilities. More recently, Lange had begun working with



Kingwood Park High School students work on a tiny home.

several Veterans of Foreign Wars chapters in an effort to address the crisis of homelessness among veterans.

"I had already started converting a shipping container into a tiny home for one of the veterans I was assisting when I came across a newspaper article about Missi," Lange remembers. "A VFW volunteer named Mark Bowen said, 'Barbara, why don't you go to Kingwood Park and tell those people that they can give us the houses?'"

Never one to leave a stone unturned, Lange went to visit the teachers in Humble. Once they saw her vast experience and her devotion to veterans, the district agreed to donate their tiny homes to Lange's effort.

Since 2005, Operation Finally Home has been improving and constructing mortgage-free homes for wounded veterans, first responders and their families. But it wasn't until spring 2020 that Lee Kirgan, vice president of project management for OFH, learned about Humble ISD's big idea and suggested to President Rusty Carroll that they consider getting involved.

Six months later, Carroll surprised Segura with the news that OFH, based in New Braunfels, had secured a grant from big-box retailer Lowe's, which would provide all the building materials for Big Heroes, Tiny Homes for the foreseeable future.

"Humble ISD had a vision to build tiny homes for home-

less veterans, but they didn't have a sustainable way to source the materials," Carroll says. "By partnering them with Lowe's, we were able to lengthen their runway.

"People have been telling me for years that they wanted to build tiny homes for homeless veterans, but if they're transitional, there has to be some sort of infrastructure to support those living in them. Barbara supplied that missing piece."

Lange's infrastructure is deeply rooted in community. There are currently 10 tiny homes on her property and 27 agencies providing residents with such services as job coaching, counseling, legal aid and palliative care.

But creating a communal environment is one of her highest priorities. When she conveyed that to the people at OFH—who are helping her clear and prepare her land to receive 20 more houses over the next five to seven years—they recommended putting them in pods of six, which will serve as micro communities.

"We now know from a scientific point of view that loneliness can be as harmful to the body as cigarette smoking," Lange says. "When you're in a community of people who've been where you've been, when you're living with others who are going through what you're going through, you're less likely to feel like a freak.

"It advances the healing process."

Humble ISD is expanding Big Heroes, Tiny Homes to five high schools. The program offers students a hands-on building experience with mentoring by professionals—architects, plumbers, electricians, general contractors—giving the teens invaluable work experience and the opportunity to explore various career paths.

Due to its resounding success, other school districts and universities have reached out to Humble ISD to find out how the project works.

"Our instructors are willing to talk to your instructors," Segura says. "We are happy to connect your principals to our principals, your superintendent to our superintendent. Let us tell you how we did this."

Lange estimates that most residents will transition into permanent housing within two years. Phillips, who is approaching that milestone, may stay longer because he's become a strong leader in the community. Though he now has a job as a heating and air conditioning tech, he serves as a liaison and an advocate for the other veterans. He also assists with some of the property's maintenance and administrative needs.

"Veterans aren't homeless because they're not gifted, intelligent or experienced," Lange says. "They are broken. When you connect them with the resources they need and provide a safe place to heal, many will find their way back to the person they were before the trauma. All veterans deserve that chance." ■



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A close-up photograph of a dog's head and front paws resting on a light-colored, textured rug. The dog has black, white, and tan fur. To the right of the dog, a portion of a white space heater with a glowing orange mesh screen is visible. The scene is warmly lit, suggesting the heat from the heater.

Be Cool With Space Heaters

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DISTRICT 9

A Seat at the Board Table *Starting off Fresh*

OFTEN, JANUARY IS SYNONYMOUS WITH a fresh start. As we come into a new year, many of us establish resolutions to better ourselves to start fresh on the right foot. Here at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, we are no different.

At the end of every year, your board of directors holds a planning session to set the strategic direction for the co-op and identify the goals to tackle the big issues. This time together as the governing and regulatory body of the co-op is crucial to keep the co-op on the right path and help guide the staff to take care of you, the members of the co-op. 800670017

CEO SEARCH

The board of directors is actively searching for a new top executive to carry our co-op into the future. We engaged CarterBaldwin, one of the top executive search firms in the nation, and expect to have a new President/CEO in place early this year.

SOLAR PROGRAM

As you may know, we have been re-evaluating our solar program based on member comments and feedback. To get additional feedback, we launched a survey in June and held town hall meetings in August. The cost-of-service study with a third-party consultant started in September and the board considered program recommendations from staff.

On Thursday, January 18, we will hold a town hall meeting to present the future of the solar program. We encourage all members to join us for the town hall, whether you currently have solar, interested in solar, or simply want to hear more about your co-op.

ERCOT GRID UPDATE

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) conducts ongoing studies to determine resource and reserve adequacy for future load growth and seasonal weather pattern predictions. Recent data from these studies has identified several factors, including peak load growth, coupled with new and proposed retirements of dispatchable generation resources, that have led to growing concerns for resource adequacy this winter. Based upon a probabilistic analysis, if the ERCOT Region experiences a winter storm during the 2023-24 season, with weather similar to Winter Storm Elliott in December 2022 or Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, the risk of entering into an Energy Emergency Alert (EEA) during the highest-risk hour (hour ending 8 a.m.) would be approximately 20%.

SOLAR PROGRAM TOWN HALL



Save the Date



THURSDAY, JANUARY 18 | 6 P.M.

Heritage Church of Christ
4201 Heritage Trace Parkway, Fort Worth

That estimate exceeds the 10% level that constitutes an “elevated” risk under the standard ERCOT has set. Further, ERCOT has determined that approximately 3,000 MW of additional capacity would be needed to reduce the probability of EEA below the 10% threshold. In response to these new findings, ERCOT released a request for proposal (RFP) from eligible generation resources and providers of demand response to procure up to 3,000 MW of capacity for the winter 2023-24 peak load season December 2023 through February 2024. 1811000106

Responses to the RFP were due on November 6 with the notice of awards scheduled for November 23. Upon receiving responses, ERCOT announced November 17 that it has canceled the procurement from the RFP due to the limited response from the market, which included only 11.1 MW of potentially eligible capacity. ERCOT noted that it is now focused on expanding demand response capabilities including opportunities in the industrial, commercial, and residential classes.

We continue to monitor ERCOT’s programs and initiatives to improve grid reliability and resource adequacy. Additionally, the ERCOT grid is monitored 24/7 by our system operators. If the ERCOT grid enters into an EEA situation this winter, we will post updates to our website and social media page for members.

NEW SOFTWARE COMING SOON

In March, we are converting our customer information system to NISC. Over the next few months, you will receive updates on this project that include a few requests to ensure an easy transition. This conversion will bring additional resources to help you manage your electric account, including a new and improved billing statement, a new mobile app, and a new online billing portal, just to name a few. We are excited about this new service for you, our members, and we hope it brings added value.



Remembering JORDEN WOOD

August 31, 1951 - November 24, 2023

Tri-County Electric Cooperative is saddened by the passing of Director Jorden Wood, who faithfully served the Tri-County Electric Co-op members as district 3 director since 2006. Wood was dedicated and passionate about serving our co-op and communities.

Jorden Andrew Wood departed from this life on Friday, November 24, 2023, at age 72. Jorden was born August 31, 1951, in Abilene, Texas, to the late Johnnie Wood and Carol (Moss) Wood.

Jorden is survived by his wife of 30 years, Jennifer (Tyler) Wood; two sons, Justin Wood, and Andrew Wood and wife, Venessa; four grandchildren, Justin, Jr., Rhiyann, Andi, and Brooks Wood; siblings, Grace Keith and husband, Doug, Sylvia Teague, and Nathan Wood and wife, Sherrie. He was predeceased by his parents and two brothers, John and Chris Wood.

Jorden got his start in life as a home builder and developer. Later in life, he became a director of Tri-County Electric Co-op, as well as a Board Chairman for many years. He was a talented political fundraiser and planner for local and state political figures.

Jorden will be remembered for his drive and passion to get the job done well, but especially for his love of family and friends.

A funeral ceremony was held at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, December 2, 2023, at the North Side Baptist Church, Weatherford, Texas.



Stay in the Know

BY ANDREA MCCLEESE, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF MEMBER SERVICE

At Tri-County Electric Cooperative, we constantly strive to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for you, our member-owners.

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about other important programs, events and activities.

In the Seat at the Board Table column on page 18, the board chairman announced our conversion to a new software provider, NISC. In preparation for the conversion, we have looked at our business practices, member records, and more to improve our service.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's likely that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many members now use a cell phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system. 7000029301

Up-to-date contact information can also potentially speed up the power restoration process during an outage. For example, the phone number you provide is linked to your service address in our outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected members through automated phone messages, text messages or email, if we have your updated contact information and communication preferences.

Keeping the co-op updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use or billing. Emails and text messages are also used to notify registered members of any changes in co-op event details. In addition, any discrepancies on your account can be taken care of promptly if Tri-County Electric Co-op has accurate account information.

We want to emphasize that in providing your contact information to the co-op, we will never share this information with any third parties. It is only used by Tri-County Electric Co-op to send important information to you. Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by logging into your online member portal and visiting the Account Management area. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all members of the co-op.



Applications Open for 2024 Director Nominations

BY ANNIE WATSON, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

Tri-County Electric Cooperative operates under the cooperative business model, meaning we are governed and regulated by an elected board of directors who represent our members' best interest when making important decisions. Being a member of the co-op's board is an incredibly important position in the community. A director's decisions will impact issues such as the budget, service rates, Capital Credits allocations and retirements, right-of-way maintenance and work plans.

This position holds great responsibility and requires men and women who understand the needs of our communities and are willing and able to serve.

Any co-op member who meets the qualifications listed under article four of the cooperative's bylaws is eligible to run for the board. A copy of the bylaws is available at tcectexas.com/bylaws.

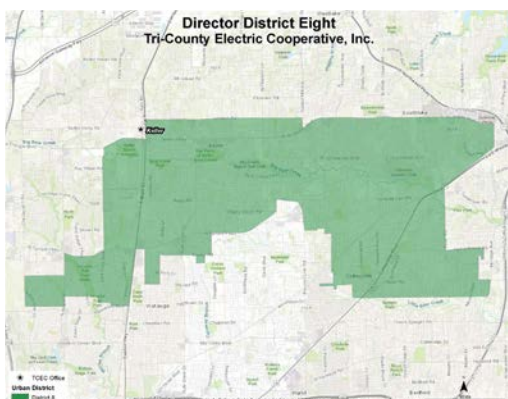
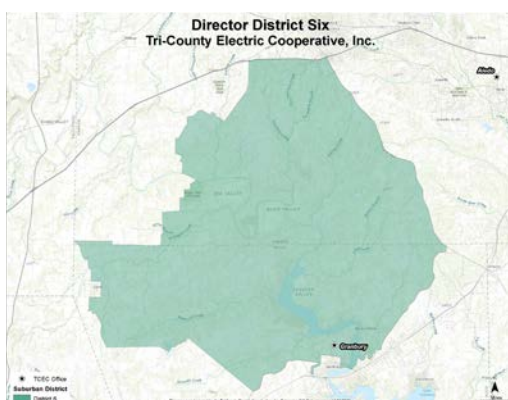
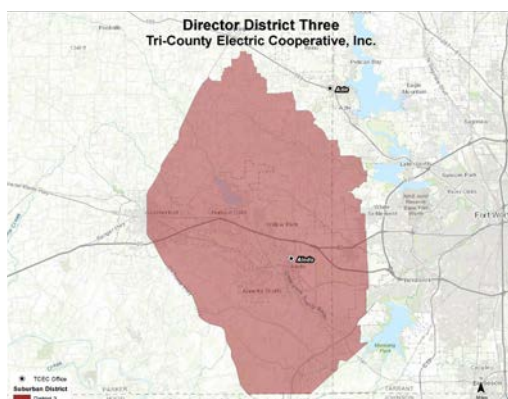
DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

Our board is a democratically elected body – elected by the members and for the members. Each year, one-third of the directors will be up for election. Tri-County Electric Co-op holds elections in September prior to Annual Meeting. This year, director districts 3, 6 and 8 are up for election.

DISTRICT 3, suburban district
DISTRICT 6, suburban district
DISTRICT 8, urban district

Members in these districts who are eligible and interested in running for the board of directors must submit a complete nomination application packet by the deadline. Members seeking nomination through committee must submit applications by 5 p.m. on March 13, 2024. Members seeking nomination through petition must submit applications by 5 p.m. on April 10, 2024.

Director district maps are available at tcectexas.com/director-elections. 9124500001



Director Nominations

Eligible members interested in seeking election to the board of directors may be nominated in two ways:

NOMINATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE

► Eligible members seeking nomination as a director through the committee must submit a complete application packet by 5 p.m. on March 13, 2024.

► Each director applicant must include a petition with at least twenty five (25) member signatures whose primary residence is located within the director district for which the applicant seeks.

► Each director applicant must also attach an application fee payment of fifty dollars (\$50.00) or other fee as determined by the board to cover the application process.

NOMINATION BY PETITION

► Members seeking nomination by petition may nominate themselves for a position on the ballot, by submitting a complete application packet by 5 p.m. on April 10, 2024.

► Each director applicant must include a petition with at least fifty (50) member signatures whose primary residence is located within the director district for which the applicant seeks.

► Each director applicant must also attach an application fee payment of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or other fee as determined by the board to cover the application process.

Director nomination application packets can be found on our website.

tcectexas.com/director-elections



PLAYS WELL WITH OTHERS

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS CONTENT SPECIALIST

Most Monday evenings, you'll see quite a few vehicles parked near the unmarked entrance to the Carroll Senior High School band hall.

No, the kids aren't working up a new halftime routine. Those cars belong to grownups – members of the Southlake Community Band. The players, 65 of them, range in age from 18 to 80. They are ex-band directors, software guys, pilots, nurses, office workers and CEOs.

What they have in common is music. All of them, at some point, got their trumpets, trombones and saxophones out of the closet and decided to get back into the uniquely rewarding practice of playing in a band.

"We have a wide range of people from the community who just come out and play," said director Jay Bach. "A gentleman just showed up tonight going, 'I've got a bari sax, can I come play?' and we're like, 'Sure! Come on down!'"

Bach, a former director of bands for Carroll High School, took the baton for the Community Band in 2018 when David Stone stepped down after 26 years. Bach had been on the back row, playing euphonium, almost since the band's beginning, so they didn't miss a beat. They meet almost year-round and provide music for a variety of community events.

"We take a little sabbatical after the Fourth of July, then come back in September," Bach said.

Although some players arrive a bit rusty, most bring a high level of musicianship with them. They're there for fun – but it's obvious they relish the challenge of playing well and sounding good. 800598889

"I'm sure they were either in college bands or a high school band," Bach said. "They played somewhere in their lives. I think for most, it's just getting back on the horse, back on the bike – getting your chops back, getting your reading back."

And get it back, they do.

Bach can throw almost any kind of music at them, from

Tchaikovsky to Sousa, Gershwin to McCartney. When we visited, they were dusting off some polkas for Oktoberfest. After that, they shifted into holiday mode for the Christmas Tree Lighting. They like marches, but they don't do any marching themselves.

"We leave that for the youngsters," Bach laughed.



JAZZ GROUP HAS ITS OWN SOUND

Members who are into jazz have an opportunity to take on a little extra: The Southlake Swing Band. Under the direction of Larry Abernathy, they play the “Big Band” classics at community events, dances and private parties. They practice after the main band is finished.

“We have 18 players,” Abernathy, a pilot, said. “It’s a standard Count Basie-style jazz orchestra – five saxes, four trumpets, four trombones and a rhythm section – 19 when our singer is here.”

Saxophonist George Virgili suggested a jazz band in 1997. A well-known area band director, he had played in the Fifth Division Marine Corps band as a teenager during WWII. His experience, in the golden age of jazz alongside musicians who went on to careers in music, gave the group a character of its own.

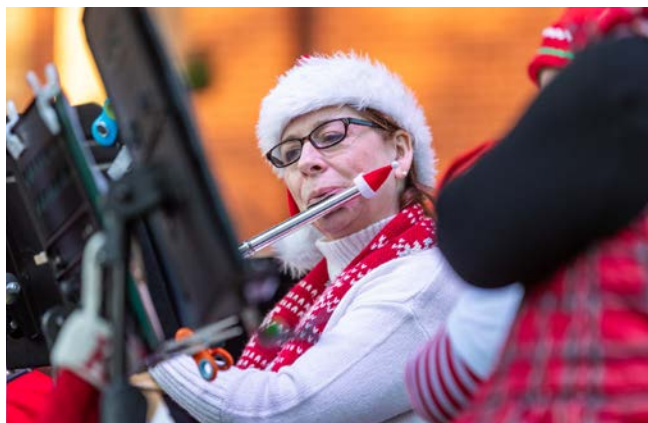
Virgili directed the jazz band for several years before he passed away in 2007. A few directors later, the job fell to Abernathy.

“He had a tremendous background, a tremendous legacy,” Abernathy said. “I’m really kind of honored to be able to carry it on.”

That’s the thing about music: it comes with a legacy, reflecting the composers and their times, the greats who played the songs and the memories attached to them by millions of listeners. 800930208

But perhaps that’s too analytical. Bach summed it up more succinctly.

“It’s just a lot of fun. I think they enjoy playing.”



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

CHECK OUT
southlakeband.com

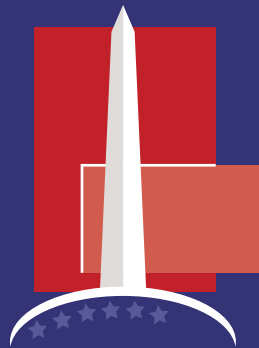


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Sommer Portwood, District 7
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24/7

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to report outages, please
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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!

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FEND OFF THE WINTER CHILL

BY ANNIE WATSON, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

The weather has a big impact on electric bills. Even those with the most efficient HVAC systems will see more use in extreme weather as heating and cooling can make up nearly half your electricity use. 800816102

When extreme cold hits, heaters work overtime. For example, even if you set your thermostat to the recommended 68 degrees in the winter, if it's 19 degrees outside, your system has to work hard to make up that 49-degree difference.

There's value in comfort, of course. But for us to be comfortable in our homes, our heaters will have to work harder. Your heater works harder and cycles on and off more often in colder weather, making your energy use much higher. That means your electric bill will be noticeably higher.

Instead of waiting until after a potentially high bill arrives in your mailbox or inbox, be pro-active. There are steps you can take now to help manage your energy use efficiently and spend less. 8002588801

- Add insulating wraps to exposed pipes and water heaters located in unheated spaces.
- Make sure to change your air filter regularly to keep your system running efficiently.
- Keep drapes closed at night to block out the cold, and keep those that don't get direct sunlight closed during the day, too. Open shades on sunny windows during the day to take advantage of natural warmth.
- Make sure the fireplace damper is closed when it's not in use. Keeping it open can bring cold air into the room.
- Caulk around your hearth, and caulk or weatherstrip around doors, windows and even electrical outlets on exterior walls.
- Block any areas in your home that are particularly drafty, including around window frames and under doors.
- Use a humidifier as humid air generally feels quite a bit warmer than dry air. Running the heater in the colder months can strip your indoor air of its humidity. A humidifier can balance this.
- Reverse the ceiling fan and let it turn clockwise at a low speed. It may seem counterintuitive to use a ceiling fan when you're feeling cold, but it actually helps to push the warm air that rises toward the ceiling back down toward floor level.
- Dress for the weather, even when you're inside. Wearing long sleeves and pants, thick socks, slippers, or wrapping up in a cozy blanket will help combat the temptation to bump up the thermostat.
- Enjoy hot drinks and food such as soups and stews to keep yourself warm. Using a slow cooker, microwave or air fryer could help reduce food preparation costs compared to an oven-baked meal.
- Keep as active as possible to boost circulation. Move around at least once an hour and avoid sitting still for long periods. Even light exercise will help keep you warm.



Happy New Year!

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in January on:

New Year's Day
Monday, January 1

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, January 15



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The blade is full tang, meaning it doesn't stop at the handle but extends to the length of the grip for the ultimate in strength. The blade is made from 420 surgical steel, famed for its sharpness and its resistance to corrosion.

The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

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.

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the **Huntsman Blade**.

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



St. Patrick's Day 1949 for his monolithic hotel. He wanted Hollywood stars but was told that the only way Hollywood would come was if there was a movie opening to attend. But no big studio would launch a film in Texas in those days.

So McCarthy decided to fund his own film—*The Green Promise*, starring Walter Brennan and a young Natalie Wood. In so doing, he had the premiere and hotel grand opening at the same time. Brilliant.

And Hollywood came. Howard Hughes gave McCarthy a good deal on one of his planes so he could fly stars to Houston. McCarthy also chartered a party train that brought in hundreds of celebrities for the opening.

The evening was regarded as the most prestigious event in Houston's social history. And it likely remains so. Everyone who was anyone was there. Ginger Rogers was there. So was Errol Flynn. It was partially broadcast live on national radio by NBC and hosted by actress, singer and World War II pinup girl Dorothy Lamour—until the hotel crowd got out of hand.

Many loved the Shamrock for its sheer size and art deco style: the Emerald Room, where Frank Sinatra sang; the Cork Club that overlooked Houston; and the hotel's grand devotion to its Irish theme.

But not everyone was impressed. Renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright called the Shamrock's 63 shades of Irish green an "architectural venereal disease."

The Shamrock was sold to Conrad Hilton in 1955 and was known as the Shamrock Hilton until it was demolished in 1987. Today, the Texas A&M Health Science Center sits on the site.

I think McCarthy would like that. He was, after all, an Aggie. ■

The Green Carpet

The grand opening of Houston's lavish and large—but short-lived—Shamrock Hotel

BY W.F. STRONG

THERE'S A SCENE in the 1956 movie *Giant* when Jett Rink, played by James Dean, tells the characters played by Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor that he's struck oil. And not only that, he insinuates, it's payback time.

Rink is a hard-drinkin', fierce-brawlin', tough-talkin', uncultured Texas oil well driller who strikes it rich. But everybody in Texas knew that Dean was really playing Glenn McCarthy, a Houston wildcatter who struck it rich—cover of *Time* magazine rich.

The fictional Rink spent millions of dollars building the Emperor, the biggest hotel in Texas. The real-life McCarthy did the same. But McCarthy

called his the Shamrock Hotel.

The Shamrock, nicknamed the Houston Riviera, was the grandest hotel in Texas when it was built in 1947 and the largest outside of New York or Los Angeles.

It was 20 stories tall, counting the two-story emerald Shamrock sign on top, and it towered over southwest Houston. The hotel cost \$21 million to build in the 1940s—or about \$300 million in today's money. It had the biggest hotel pool on the planet—so large that people water-skied in it. There were 1,100 rooms, all air-conditioned and each with a TV and radio, which was remarkably high-tech luxury back then.

McCarthy planned a grand opening for

Texas Citrus

A variety of dishes come alive with the state's prized produce

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

South Texas is home to the delicious ruby red grapefruit. From marinades and salads to cocktails and cakes, ruby reds are so versatile. This grapefruit loaf cake, one of my favorite ways to bake with them, is brimming with the fruit's tart and sweet goodness.



Grapefruit Loaf Cake

CAKE

3 eggs
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain yogurt
1 cup light brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil
1 tablespoon grapefruit zest
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grapefruit juice
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

GLAZE

1 cup powdered sugar
2 tablespoons grapefruit juice
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
Thinly sliced grapefruit, for garnish

- 1. CAKE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 5-by-9-inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray.
- 2.** In a bowl, whisk together eggs, yogurt, brown sugar, oil, grapefruit zest, grapefruit juice, cinnamon and vanilla.
- 3.** In another bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and salt.
- 4.** Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix until just combined. Avoid overmixing.
- 5.** Pour batter into prepared loaf pan. Bake 30–35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
- 6.** Remove from oven, allow to cool for 10 minutes, and carefully remove cake from pan.
- 7. GLAZE** Whisk together powdered sugar, grapefruit juice and vanilla.
- 8.** Place grapefruit slices on cake and drizzle with glaze.

SERVES 8

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Ruby Red Grapefruit Salsa.



Texas Citrus Ceviche

TANNER FULLMER
BANDERA EC

Fullmer's ceviche is a refreshing no-cook appetizer that will wow your guests. Citrus juices cure the shrimp while jalapeño lends spice and avocado adds a touch of creaminess. Serve this bright and flavorful ceviche chilled and with tortilla chips for a beautiful presentation.

- 1 pound wild-caught Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- 1 cup lime juice**
- ¼ cup lemon juice**
- 1-inch ginger piece, peeled and minced**
- 1 red onion, diced**
- 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1½ oranges, peeled and diced**
- 1 grapefruit, peeled and diced**
- 1 cucumber, peeled and diced**
- 1 large avocado, pitted and diced**
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped**
- 1 jalapeño, seeds removed and diced**
- 1½ teaspoons salt**
- Tortilla chips**

1. Cut shrimp into desired size and place into a large, nonreactive bowl. Add lime juice, lemon juice and minced ginger. Stir to combine. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate 45 minutes.
2. Remove bowl from fridge. Stir in red onion, garlic, oranges, grapefruit, cucumber, avocado, cilantro, jalapeño and salt.
3. Return ceviche to the fridge to chill an additional 15 minutes.
4. Serve with tortilla chips.

SERVES 6

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

Moroccan Chicken Skewers

CARRIE RAY
HEART OF TEXAS EC



Marinated in a blend of citrus juice and spices and broiled to perfection, Ray's Moroccan chicken skewers are a tender, mouthwatering dish that's perfect for a weeknight meal or entertaining. Couscous and yogurt complement the skewers and round out the dish.

SERVES 6



- Zest and juice of 1 lemon**
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons honey, plus more for drizzling**
- 1 tablespoon finely grated fresh ginger**
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander**
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs or breasts, cut into large pieces**
- 2 lemons, halved**
- Fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped**
- Couscous (optional)**
- Yogurt (optional)**

1. In a bowl, stir together lemon zest and juice, olive oil, honey, ginger, coriander, cumin, salt, and pepper for the marinade. Set aside 2 tablespoons.
2. Add chicken to marinade, turning to coat evenly.
3. Preheat broiler.
4. Place chicken onto wooden or metal skewers, then place skewers onto a foil-lined sheet pan. Add one lemon half to each corner of the sheet pan.
5. Place baking sheet in oven 4 inches from heating element. Broil until charred, about 12 minutes, turning skewers over halfway through.
6. Remove from oven, spoon the reserved marinade onto the chicken and sprinkle with parsley. Drizzle the lemon halves with honey and serve alongside for squeezing over the chicken.
7. Serve with couscous and yogurt, if desired.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

SIMPLY SALADS DUE JANUARY 10

Come summer, we'll all be looking to escape the heat of the kitchen. Your best salad recipe could win a cool \$500. Go online and submit your favorite by January 10.





Texas Meyer Lemon Pie

RHAE BROWN
SAM HOUSTON EC

Lemon lovers, this easy pie is for y'all! It's jam-packed with heavenly tartness and bakes in a store-bought pie crust. Simple and sublime, Brown's lemon pie is sure to impress.

3 eggs, room temperature
1¼ cups sugar
½ cup Meyer lemon juice
4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, melted
1 deep-dish frozen pie crust, unbaked
Whipped topping (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Whisk eggs, sugar and lemon juice until smooth. Add melted butter and whisk to combine.
3. Pour mixture into pie crust and place on sheet pan. Bake 30–35 minutes.
4. Cool completely before serving. Serve with whipped topping if desired.

SERVES 8

TCP Find hundreds more recipes that feature citrus fruits and juices in our bountiful archive online.

Citrus With the Assist

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Use fresh citrus in marinades for grilling or in dressings for salads.

Brighten baked goods by adding a touch of lemon or orange zest.

Fold orange segments into pancakes, waffles or warm oatmeal.

Add lime zest to salt for a festive salt rim for margaritas.

Add a splash of fresh citrus juice to your water for a refreshing twist.

Tuck lemon slices into the cavity of a chicken for a juicy roast chicken.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Moment's Notice

A history museum in Laredo marks a short-lived republic's capital

BY CHET GARNER

TRAVELING TO DOWNTOWN Laredo feels like visiting a different country. Maybe that's because it was at one point in history! I'm not talking about the fact that Laredo was once part of Mexico (all of Texas was). I'm talking about the lesser-known Republic of the Rio Grande that existed for 11 short months in 1840 with Laredo as its capital.

It's a story that reads more like a movie and is best explored at its former capitol-turned-museum.

I started my travels in the San Agustin de Laredo Historic District with a chile relleno smothered in queso from El Mesón de San Agustin, a local favorite, and then set out to explore the 269-year-old neighborhood's adobe buildings surrounding a Spanish-style plaza.

One of the most significant buildings is a simple, single-story structure that was once the capitol of a new nation. Today it's the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum. I ducked my head as I stepped through the low wooden door frame and was immediately transported back in time.

The story of this short-lived nation starts in 1836, after Texas won its independence from Mexico. Residents between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande sought to quell instability along the border and decided to form their own country made up of the Mexican states of Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. The armies of the new nation tried to fend off Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna's forces, but after a betrayal, a beheading and 283 days, the republic ended.

The museum showcases memorabilia from that time with displays, pictures, books and furniture. There are three restored rooms: an office and sitting area, a bedroom, and kitchen. The republic is gone, but I could still feel a spirit of independence permeating the museum and entire town. ■

ABOVE Chet waves the Republic of the Rio Grande flag.

TCP Follow along as Chet learns about the nation that was centered in Laredo. See the video on our website and see all his Texplorations 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.

JANUARY

09

Orange On Your Feet: The Story of Emilio & Gloria Estefan, (409) 886-5535, lutchter.org

11

Harlingen Sounds of Silence Tribute, (956) 392-9757, harlingenconcert.com

Bandera [11-13] Bandera County Junior Livestock Show, (210) 260-8224, bcjlsa.com

Sweetwater [11-13] Nolan County Stock Show, (325) 235-3484, nolancc.com

12

Fort Worth [12-13] Carter Anderson, (512) 817-9535, blcomedy.com

La Grange [12-13] Ray Wylie Hubbard, (979) 968-9944, thebugleboy.org

Kerrville [12-14] Star Crossed, (210) 492-9519, cameratas.org

Fort Worth [12-Feb. 3] Stock Show and Rodeo, (817) 877-2400, fwssr.com

13

Abilene Don Juan by the Sea, (325) 677-6710, abiphil.com

Brenham Uptown Swirl Downtown Brenham, (979) 337-7580, cityofbrenham.org

Fredericksburg Hill Country Indian Artifact Show, (830) 329-2636, hillcountryindianartifacts.com

Galveston Yaga's Chili Quest and Beer Fest,
(409) 770-0999,
yagaschiliquest.com

Marfa Star Party in the Badlands, (432) 424-3327,
tpwd.texas.gov

Mesquite Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration,
(972) 216-8132,
mesquiteartscenter.org

Round Top Houston Jazz Orchestra, (979) 249-3129,
festivalhill.org

Houston MLK Grande Parade, mlkgrandeparade.org

New Caney [19-20] Hold 'Em & Hit 'Em Barbecue Cook-Off, hhclub.org

Fredericksburg [19-21] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094,
fbgtradedays.com

Bastrop [19-21, 26-28, Feb. 2-4] Freaky Friday,
(512) 200-3826,
bastropoperahouse.org

Victoria Lyle Lovett and His Large Band, (361) 576-4500,
victoriasymphony.com

Plano [20-21] Dallas Area Train Show, (972) 941-5840,
dfwtrainshows.com

Amarillo Bert Kreischer,
1-800-692-1338,
amarillotheater.com

Richards Guthrie Jones,
(936) 436-9050,
wscwinery.com

Raymondville [24-27] Willacy County Livestock Show & Fair, wclsf.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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



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Pick of the Month

Goosebump Jump

Granbury, January 20
(817) 573-5548
visitgranbury.com

Help kick off the winter tourism season with a jump into the frigid waters of Lake Granbury. The forecast includes a 100% chance of snow and shivers, and an after-party will warm you up with coffee, cocoa and cookies.

JANUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

26

La Grange Marcia Ball,
(979) 968-9944,
thebugleboy.org

Fulton [26-27] Cruising the Coast Quilt Show,
piecemakersbythebay.org

South Padre Island [26-28] Market Days,
spimarketdays.com

27

Jefferson Mardi Gras Queen Mab Ball,
(903) 665-3733,
mardigrasupriver.com

Port Aransas Garden Club Home Tour, (361) 834-4130,
portaransasgardenclub.org

Round Top Asleep at the Wheel, (979) 249-3129,
festivalhill.org

29

Johnson City [29-Feb. 23] Wine Lovers Celebration,
(872) 216-9463,
texashillcountrywineries.org

30

Harlingen Barbara Padilla, (956) 392-9757
harlingenconcert.com

FEBRUARY

01

Frisco East-West Shrine Bowl, (813) 281-8686,
shrinebowl.com

Bandera [1-3] Cowboy Mardi Gras, (830) 796-4849,
11thstcowboybar.com

02

Fredericksburg First Friday Art Walk, (830) 990-8160,
visitfredericksburgtx.com

Granbury Aquatic Wild Workshop, (650) 471-3285,
tpwd.texas.gov

Lake Jackson Colbie Caillat, (979) 230-3658,
brasosport.edu

Temple [2-3] Father Daughter Dance, (254) 298-5690,
templeparks.com

Humble [2-4] Rodeo, (281) 241-7436,
humbleroдео.com

Galveston [2-13] Mardi Gras, (409) 770-0999,
mardigrasgalveston.com

03

North Zulch Volunteer Fire Department Chili Cookoff, (979) 488-9214,
facebook.com/nzvf

Sweetwater Lift Every Voice,
sweetwaterauditorium.org

Local Landmarks

They define our landscapes, become guideposts when giving directions, and are a point of pride in communities large and small. Texas landmarks are as full of character and charm as the Texans who create them.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 CASE RAMIREZ-MELTON
LAMAR ELECTRIC

Sunset at the Eiffel Tower in Texas' Paris.

2 CARL BURNHAM
PEDERNALES EC

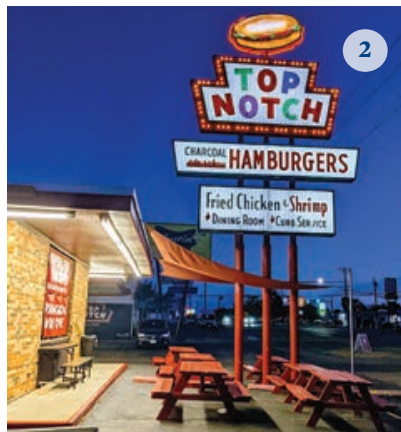
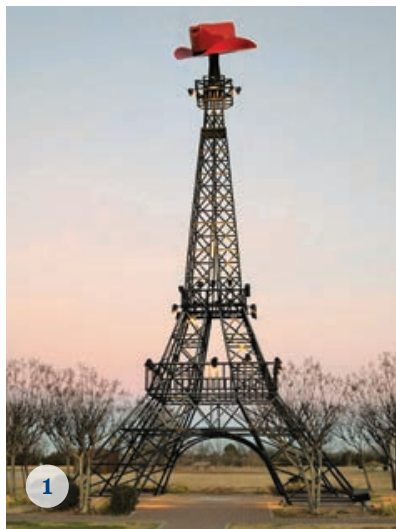
A longtime Austin favorite, Top Notch has been grilling up burgers and other fare since 1971.

3 MARK BONAME
JACKSON EC

You can see these Easter Island statue replicas on the loop in Victoria.

4 DENNIS MURPHY
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

The blueprints mistakenly had inches instead of feet, and the builder in Wichita Falls made it as it was written.



Upcoming Contests

DUE JAN 10 Rides
DUE FEB 10 Food and Cooking
DUE MAR 10 Shells and Scales



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



Touched by an Angel

An unflappable donkey imparts peace on a farm

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN TOMAC

GROWING UP, my family lived on a tree-lined street in Waco but longed for the country life, so my parents bought land in nearby Rosenthal. It was only 24 acres, but we called it “the farm.”

Excitement at the farm escalated when our next-door neighbor—who owned a real farm—came home one day with a trailer load of donkeys. They were a sight to behold—all those impossibly long ears sticking up above the sides of the trailer.

I was smitten. My grandmother had just read Marguerite Henry’s *Brighty of the Grand Canyon* (about a burro that lived in the gorge) aloud to me, and this load of donkeys made my heart ache. I begged my parents to buy one.

Unloaded into a pen, the donkeys were a mixed bag—fat, thin, gentle,

grumpy, young and ancient—but one little brown jenny with shaggy hair and a white nose poked her head through the fence. Her kind brown eyes gazed right into mine. My parents, imagining the word “babysitter” printed in large letters on her forehead, cheerfully handed over \$25. I named her Bright Angel, after the donkey in Henry’s book.

Bright Angel was no Secretariat. She had one speed, a slow walk. She was kind-hearted and quiet and held no animosity toward any living thing. Eventually, she became my best friend.

If I rode her down the gravel road to the little gas station on the corner, she waited patiently outside while I went in to get a Grapette and a Zero candy bar. She won best supporting actress for many a flickery homemade Western after my older brother got an 8 mm movie camera for his birthday.

When Christmas approached, my school, St. Alban’s in Waco, decided to enter a float in the citywide parade. My parents volunteered Angel to ride on the float and carry the Virgin Mary to Bethlehem.

When we loaded her onto the flatbed trailer, she didn’t twitch an ear. I was the Virgin Mary, a most exalted role for a 6-year-old. A large man dressed as the angel Gabriel stood near the front of the float with a tinfoil trumpet in case of unanticipated excitement, but even the bands and the firetruck’s siren left Angel unperturbed.

She got a cinnamon roll for her fine performance.

Eventually my brothers and I graduated to horses and our parents to larger farms, but Angel lived a long and peaceful life as a cherished member of the family, proving that even the most unlikely of best friends can be a lifelong treasure. ■



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