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# Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2023

## Sly Catchers

How the Big Thicket's  
carnivorous plants  
trap and feast  
on tiny victims





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# February 2023



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## 08 Caught Cuisine

Four of the five species of carnivorous plants in the U.S. are found in the Big Thicket.

*By Pam LeBlanc  
Photos by Dave Shafer*

## Breaking Up

Sailors offer bon voyage and watch the USS Kitty Hawk's final journey—to a South Texas recycling yard.

*By Eileen Mattei  
Photos by John Faulk*

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#### ON THE COVER

A pitcher plant awaits its next meal.

*Photo by Dave Shafer*

#### ABOVE

Bob Hope entertains aboard the USS Kitty Hawk in the Philippines in 1962.

*Photo by Corbis | Getty Images*



# Walk This Way

**HOW'S THIS** for a carbon footprint?

The state's severe drought last summer mostly dried up the Paluxy River that runs through Dinosaur Valley State Park, exposing dinosaur tracks from around 113 million years ago.

Scientists say 15-foot-tall *Acrocanthosaurus* left tracks in sediment that hardened into what is now limestone in the park, about 60 miles southwest of Fort Worth.



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE RAINY DAYS MAKE ME ...

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

Below are some of the responses to our December prompt: **I can't believe I used to wear ...**

Bib overalls, no shirt, a straw hat and I went barefoot.

OTIS LINAM  
VICTORIA EC  
VICTORIA

Blue suede cowboy boots.

LEON CASTANEDA JR.  
PANOLA-HARRISON EC  
MARSHALL

White lipstick in the '60s—and we thought we looked good.

GWEN SPIESS  
BLUEBONNET EC  
BRENNHAM

Underwear with no slot in front—made by my mom from flour sacks.

JACK HOWARD  
WOOD COUNTY EC  
WINNSBORO

Parachute pants.

GLENN QUESENBERRY  
HAMILTON COUNTY EC  
HICO

Leisure suits and platform shoes.

JOHN MONK  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES  
GODLEY

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what he can do  
until he tries.”

—CARTER G. WOODSON

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# 988 Saves Lives

**PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP** or counseling in a crisis can now call or text 988 to reach the national suicide prevention lifeline from anywhere in the U.S. The hope is that the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline becomes synonymous with mental health care, just as 911 is with public safety.

Suicide rates in rural America were 18.9 per 100,000 people compared to 13.2 in urban areas in 2021, according to the National Institutes of Health. And the difference in suicide rates between rural and urban areas widened between 1999 and 2019.

Stress and anxiety from raising crops or livestock, depression from being in a remote setting, and the stigmatization of mental illness are factors that sometimes lead to suicidal thoughts, according to Rural Health Information.





## A Raw Deal

“My mom would make meatloaf, and once all the seasoning was mixed in, she and I would eat a tiny bite before she cooked it.”

BROOKE ZUCHA  
VIA FACEBOOK

## Fish Fanfare

Nowadays the accepted way to display a bass is to grip it by the lower jaw and allow it to hang perfectly vertical [*Lakes' Allure*, November 2022]. Alternatively, you can grip the lower jaw and support it under the belly if you want to display it horizontally.

In either case, you *do not* want to twist the fish's jaw to force it open, as the two anglers on Page 14 [below] seem to be doing.

Alan Buckner  
CoServ  
The Colony

These events have exploded in popularity in the past 8–10 years and offer a great experience for many kids who don't play traditional sports. You mentioned a few of the organizations but left out the Southeast Texas High School Fishing Association.

Randy Hanna  
Houston County EC  
Zavalla

I like a rare steak, but I'm not sure I could try this [*A Raw Deal*, December 2022].

JANELLE  
OVERHOUSE  
VIA FACEBOOK



COURTESY JULIAN CLEPPER

## The Wonder of Waylon

*The Arable Twos* [November 2022] was happy, positive, beautifully written and, for me, quite uplifting. I could picture Waylon doing all those things Martha Deeringer so perfectly described. It had me smiling the entire time.

Art Farias  
Pedernales EC  
Lampasas

We raised our two boys this way (in Ohio, not Texas), and I know this is how children become accomplished and confident men and women. Adults, no matter what job they hold, have the roots that built them strong from childhood.

The story is worded so profoundly that it brought tears to my eyes.

Jody Brown  
Tri-County EC  
Perrin

## Under His Guidance

In 1980, Bill Steele took our coed Scout Explorer post and a few of us sponsors on a winter trip to Bustamante, Nuevo León, Mexico, to explore the caves there [*Uncharted Territory*, October 2022]. We learned so much and have many great memories of that trip.

Ed Palmer  
Pedernales EC  
Dripping Springs

**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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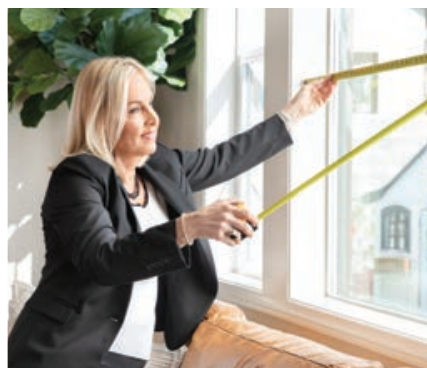
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# Caught Cuisine

The Big Thicket's four species of carnivorous plants entice then consume unwary insects

**H**undreds of slender, funnel-shaped plants line a boardwalk at Big Thicket National Preserve, where I'm trailing biologist Andrew Bennett on a warm April morning.

They look hungry.

The lime green, red-veined throats of the foot-tall plants gape, like baby birds awaiting a worm delivery from a parent. But these unusual plants have other plans for dinner: unsuspecting insects.

Four of the five types of carnivorous plants that grow in North America—the pitcher plants we're now admiring, along with sundews, bladderworts and butterworts—are found here and elsewhere in East Texas. (Venus' flytraps, whose eating parts resemble a hinged lima bean with teeth, don't grow in Texas; they're endemic to the Carolinas.)

I'm on a quest to find all four Texas natives, and Bennett, acting chief of resource management at Big Thicket, has offered his help.

We're off to a good start. We have no trouble finding these trumpet-shaped pitcher plants, which grow by the thousands along the mile-long, aptly named Pitcher Plant Trail in the Turkey Creek Unit of the 113,000-acre preserve.

Carnivorous plants, Bennett says, thrive in soils that are low in nutrients. They're not endangered, but they do require a very specific habitat, and these East Texas bogs provide it.

First, pitcher plants need wetlands. The groundwater in this part of the preserve is close to the surface, so the ground tends to stay wet. They also need periodic fire, to create a more open understory and to recycle nutrients into the soil. Rangers at the Big Thicket use prescribed burns to do that. And finally, they need insects, which provide nutrients in soils without much nitrogen. The Big Thicket has no shortage of those.

For some people, carnivorous plants call to mind the off-Broadway show *Little Shop of Horrors*, based on a 1960 film about a ravenous bit of vegetation. Audrey Jr., as it was called in the original film (it was remade in the 1980s), was a



cross between a Venus' flytrap and a butterwort, and it needed human blood—not just a few insects—to survive.

Unlike Audrey Jr., pitcher plants don't feed on humans. They don't use quick movements to hunt their food, either. And they're a lot smaller than the theatrical version of the plant.

Insects are attracted to pitcher plants because of their color, nectar and scent. When a bug lands on the waxy lip of the plant's funnel, it slides down into the tube, where downward-pointing hairs keep it from climbing out and

OPPOSITE Pitcher plants grow by the thousands in Big Thicket National Preserve in East Texas. ABOVE The entrance to the preserve's Pitcher Plant Trail is outside the town of Warren.









escaping. Eventually, it winds up in a tiny pool of fluid at the bottom of the funnel. Enzymes in that fluid slowly eat away at the wasps, ants and other foraging insects that land there, and the plant absorbs nutrients from the “bug soup.” Cut one open and you might find several disintegrating insects stacked up inside it.

During our walk, the sun lights up the pitcher plants like rows of bright green candles. Bennett and I admire them for a while, strolling up and down the boardwalk. Then he leans over, pointing out something low to the ground. I follow his finger and see it: a small, roundish plant hugging the ground. It’s made up of small arms, each one tipped with a fingernail-sized fleshy paddle flocked in glistening red hairs. Those hairs secrete a sticky substance—and beware any insect that sets foot in it. The sundew, like the pitcher plant, uses enzymes to slowly absorb any prey that gets caught.

The best time to see both plants is late April and May.

“It seems like people always expect them to be a lot bigger, especially sundews, or to trap more actively, like Venus’ flytraps do,” Bennett says. “These are more passive. They wait for bugs to fall in or get stuck.”

Still, they’re charismatic plants, and this concentration of them is among the largest in the U.S.

“I don’t know of a bigger stand in Texas,” Bennett says.

With pitcher plants and sundews checked off our list, Bennett and I head back to our trucks to continue our hunt.

It’s a 20-minute drive to our next stop down a quiet, narrow road inside the preserve, where we pull off and squirt a little bug spray on our ankles to fend off the mosquitoes before striking out into the forest.

The going is slow. There’s no trail to follow here, so we slog our way through thick underbrush and around tall trees. Everything looks the same to me, and it’s hard to maintain a straight line, so Bennett consults his GPS. He knows the exact coordinates of where we’ll find the bladderwort.

At one point a flash of movement catches my eye, and I spring back just in time to avoid a copperhead, a venomous pit viper with beautiful gray and rust-colored markings. The snake blends into the ground cover so well that it disappears from sight a moment later.

Soon we reach a swamp the size of a baseball diamond. The ground squishes underfoot at its edges, and the place smells organic and earthy. Emerald-colored moss covers logs like velvet, and tannins have turned the shallow water the color of tea. A barred owl hoots in the distance. The whole place feels primordial. I wouldn’t be surprised to see a dinosaur emerge from the gloom.

A shaft or two of light filters through the leaves into the bog in front of us, where tupelo trees stand knee-deep in the water. Bennett, who is wearing boots, sashes in. A moment later, he’s found what he’s looking for.

Bladderwort, which looks like delicate strands of dill fringed with clusters of pinhead-sized balls, floats on the surface of the brown water. Those tiny balls are the plant’s namesake bladders, and they not only keep the plant afloat; they trap the tiny aquatic bugs that it needs to survive.

Biologist Andrew Bennett scoops bladderwort from a swamp.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Tiny, colorful sundews use enzymes to absorb insects that get trapped in their glistening hairs. Delicate strands of bladderwort. The elusive butterwort escaped the author's eye, but our photographer spotted one.

And unlike the pitcher plants, which passively trap their food, the bladderwort moves using a reflexive process called thigmotropism. As insects are lured into openings on the tiny bladders, they close, trapping the prey inside.

That leaves just one plant on my checklist: The wily and elusive butterwort.

This time, we're out of luck. We can't find any of the plants, with their taco-shaped leaves dotted with droplets of

## TAKE A HIKE

If you want to examine East Texas' flesh-eating flora, hit these trails.

**The Pitcher Plant Trail** in the Big Thicket National Preserve's Turkey Creek Unit is a 1-mile loop about 40 miles north of Beaumont that's free to the public.

**The Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary** is just down the road. The 6 miles of trails there are also free to access.

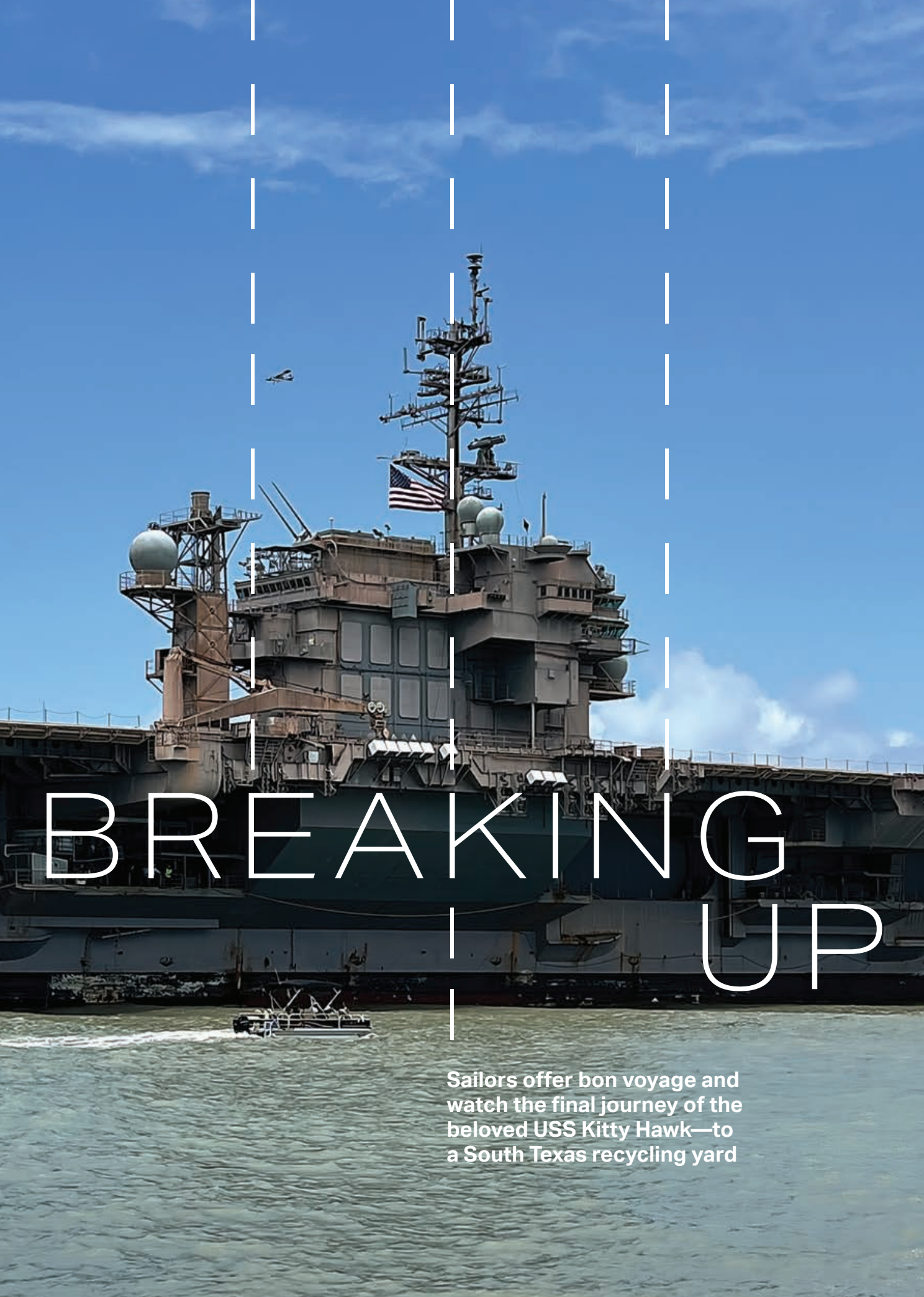


sticky ooze. Bugs looking for water get stuck in the butterwort's secretions, triggering enzymes that break down their soft body parts.

That's OK. Now I have another reason to return to East Texas: to continue my search for these unusual little plants.

I glance at the vegetation around me. Until now, I've thought of all these flowers, bushes, trees and vines as a sort of soft green wallpaper to the outdoors. Now, the carnivorous ways of some of these plants have given me a new jolt of respect. ■





# BREAKING UP

Sailors offer bon voyage and watch the final journey of the beloved USS Kitty Hawk—to a South Texas recycling yard



**D**avid Gross stands among about 5,000 men and women who served on the USS Kitty Hawk between 1961 and 2009 as the towering supercarrier is towed through Brazos Santiago Pass.

They're crowded onto South Padre Island's south shore to pay their respects and reminisce about the extraordinary aircraft carrier that had been their home away from home.

That home moved around: Vietnam and Afghanistan, in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, but mostly in the western Pacific, until it was retired 14 years ago as the last conventionally powered American carrier. But today, after 48 years of active service, the decommissioned ship arrived at the Port of Brownsville, never to sail again.

Watching the Kitty Hawk head to the recycling yard is "kind of like having the house you grew up in torn down," says Gross, who came from San Diego to see the carrier one last time. He served as a roof rat—part of the flight deck crew—40 years ago.

Veterans—from the Silent Generation, baby boomers, Gen Xers and millennials—roar in pride and appreciation as Gross raps out a long, proud tribute: "We are the Kitty, and we ride the back of a Hawk. We were young. We were strong, working day and night long—12 on and 12 off, jet exhaust we did cough. Yeah, we're the crew of the Kitty, and we walk the walk."

## OCEANFRONT HOME

**T**he Kitty Hawk, a small floating city (population 5,280) with a major airport, housed the ship's company, deployed air wing and the admiral's staff. Essential duties of those onboard ranged from air traffic controller, jet mechanic, roof rat and parachute rigger to pilot, electrician and cook working in 12-hour shifts. Many sailors were teenagers when they first came aboard and formed enduring bonds with their ship and shipmates.

"The Kitty was by far my favorite ship. Everyone had a can-do attitude," says Gordon Wilcox, a 21-year veteran who served two tours on the carrier. The Alvarado resident and United Cooperative Services member initially photographed shipboard events for news releases. Later he worked with reconnaissance cameras used by pilots.

Aviation electrician A.J. Reynolds served two tours on the carrier. "I was 18 or 19 when I first went on the Kitty Hawk," says the Bandera Electric Cooperative member. "It was special. I'll never forget it."

OPPOSITE The USS Kitty Hawk, home to 130,000 sailors in its history, sails in Texas waters for its final journey. ABOVE Sailors wave American flags as the supercarrier returned to a Japanese port in 2003 after operations in the Persian Gulf.



His sentiment was echoed by Joseph Houck of Somerset, who was aboard 1989–93. He came to South Padre to see the first ship on which he had served and recalled watching dolphins racing alongside as the carrier reached 30 knots. "For fun, we had roller chair derbies during sea trials," he says.

Jet engines once roared as catapults launched Phantoms, A-6s and Hawkeyes from the carrier's short deck. Coupled with the shrill whines of fighters and reconnaissance planes landing and coming to abrupt stops as their tail hooks caught a cable on the deck, sailors' attempts at sleeping could get complicated.

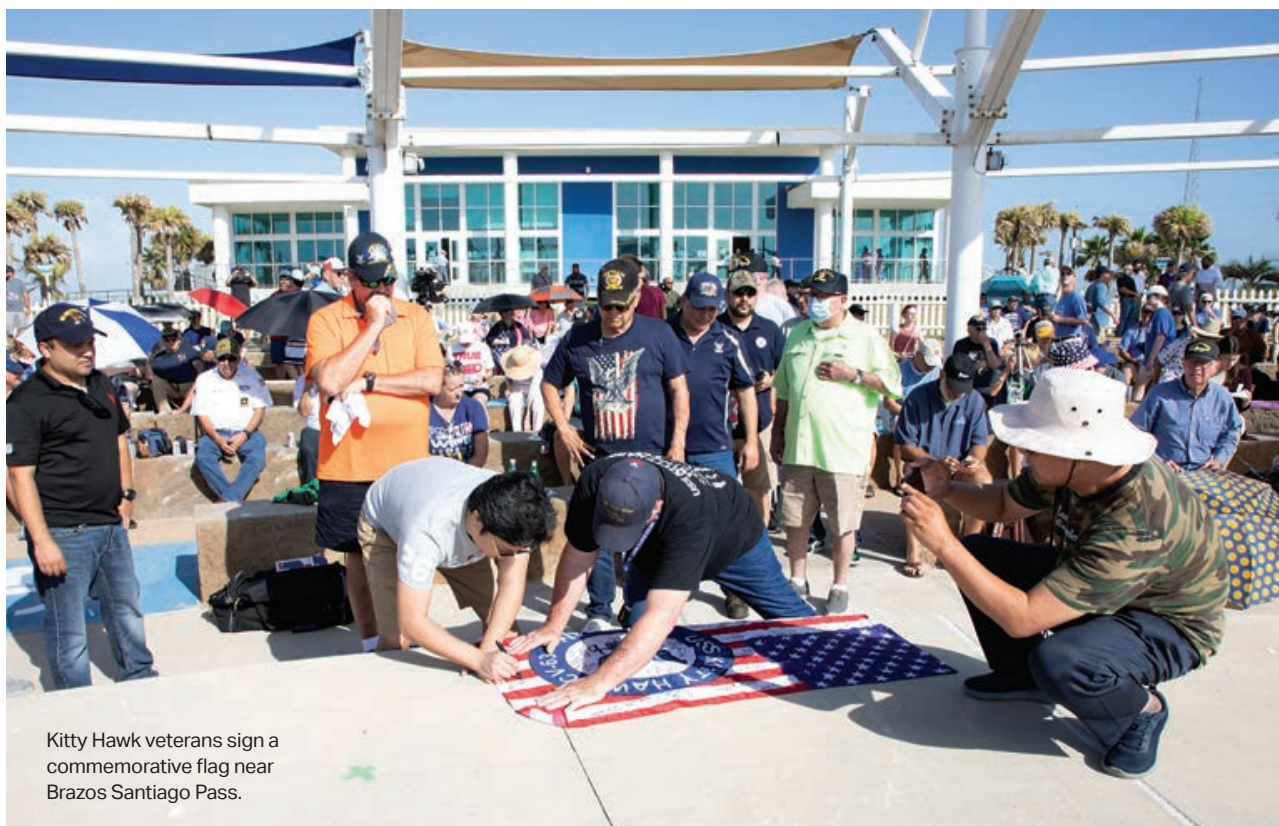
Another complication occurred in March 1984, when a nosy Soviet sub passed directly in front of the Kitty Hawk in the Sea of Japan. The carrier plowed over the nuclear vessel, which rolled underneath it. The sub remained mostly intact but left behind a propeller in the carrier's bow, a Cold War triumph still celebrated by the Kitty's crew. Sailors fondly remembered, too, the superb seamanship of the captain who heeled over the Kitty Hawk to pass under the Golden Gate Bridge without taking off the antennas.

Rich Orth was onboard for the Kitty Hawk's first voyage around the Horn of Africa in 1961, and he was among the 68 civilians invited on board for its last powered cruise, from San Diego to a reserve fleet at Bremerton, Washington. "It was a different Navy back then," he says. "Nothing compared to the Hawk."

## GONE FROM SIGHT

**L**ooming 140 feet above the water, taller than most island condo buildings, the Kitty Hawk slid past its devotees May 31, 2022, en route to the Brownsville Ship Channel while tour boats and fishing boats flitted around it like tiny remoras nibbling on a whale.

The Kitty Hawk came to rest at International Shipbreaking Limited after being towed almost 17,000 miles from Bremerton. ISL is one of three companies in the U.S., all in Brownsville, that meet the strict environmental, safety and health standards required to dismantle Navy and U.S.-flagged ships. ISL counts the aircraft carriers Independence, Ranger and Constellation among more than 80 U.S. Navy and Maritime



Kitty Hawk veterans sign a commemorative flag near Brazos Santiago Pass.

Administration vessels it has recycled since 1995.

ISL has a service contract with the Navy for each ship, secured by a penny payment, says Bob Berry, the company's co-founder and vice president. "We don't own the ship." But once pieces are cut up and set on the ground, they do own the salvaged metal. "Salvage material goes out by barge, rail and truck all over the world, depending on the best prices on the steel scrap market," he says. Armored steel plating, made with special alloys, is destined for a Pennsylvania mill that will remake it for use in other Navy ships.

By May 2024, 60,000 tons of metal (a remarkable 95% of the ship) will have been recycled from the Kitty Hawk, according to Berry. "We've done enough ships that we know exactly how much metal comes out," he says. With all their stainless and structural steel, aluminum, brass, and copper, ships are among the most recyclable manufactured products. (Cars are 65% recyclable.)

A monitor over Berry's desk shows views of the busy, noisy 80-acre recycling yard. He explained the Kitty Hawk first underwent environmental and safety inspections before a contractor removed asbestos and flammable materials. Then rectangles, 8 feet by 10 feet, were cut into the hull superstructure and folded outward like a sardine can lid to provide work crews with natural light and ventilation. After removing wiring and pipes for recycling, ISL employees use cutting torches to break up the 1,047-foot-long ship into sections.

Gawky cranes with giant magnets and grapples remove modular sections of the ship in the reverse order of their assembly 60-plus years ago at a New Jersey shipyard. The

towering structure known as the island, or mast, was the first section cut loose and lowered to the ground. The sections swung from the ship to shore weigh up to 10 tons each. Hydraulic shears and torches reduce the metals to manageable chunks. The carrier's four main steam-driven engines, which supplied up to 100,000 horsepower each, must be cut into segments before removal. Armaments are demilitarized and then cut into unidentifiable pieces.

## Watching the Kitty Hawk head to the recycling yard is "kind of like having the house you grew up in torn down."

ISL donated switches and gauges from the Kitty Hawk to the USS Lexington Museum in Corpus Christi.

While former Kitty Hawk sailors and aviators had hoped the carrier would become a museum, they can console themselves with challenge coins cut from its brass and available from ISL. Hefty chunks of the flight deck have been cut into brick-sized mementos as well.

The public can see the dismantling progress only during the winter months, when South Padre tour companies offer ship channel cruises. The Kitty Hawk and the USS John F. Kennedy are among the eight ships ISL is breaking up in 2023.

"With the remaking of her earthly frame, her spirit will live on," says Chris Green, ISL president.

After the carrier reached its final mooring, one former sailor remarked on Facebook, "She got to go out with her kids all around her showing their love." ■





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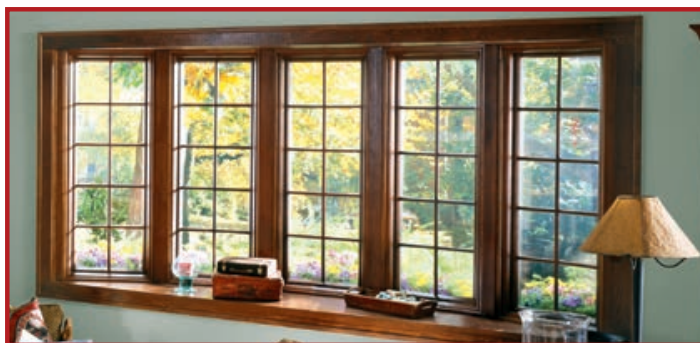
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PAMP Suisse Minted Gold Bars are certified, assayed, guaranteed, and struck in 999.9% pure gold! These gold bars feature an obverse design portraying Fortuna, the Roman Goddess of fortune and the personification of luck in Roman religions. PAMP Suisse's exclusive Veriscan® technology uses the metal's microscopic topography, similar to a fingerprint, to identify any registered product, aiding in the detection of counterfeits. The tamper-evident assay card makes it easy to tell if the bar has been questionably handled, while guaranteeing the gold weight and purity.

### Order Now for Doorstep Delivery!

Add gold to your portfolio. PAMP Suisse Minted Gold Bars are available here in a wide variety of sizes—from one gram to one ounce—at competitive prices. PLUS, you'll receive FREE Shipping on your order over \$149. Call right now to get your PAMP Suisse Minted Gold Bars shipped to your door!

#### PAMP Suisse Minted Gold Bars

1 gm	Gold Bar	\$96	\$89	+ s/h
2.5 gm	Gold Bar	\$229	\$199	+ <b>FREE SHIPPING</b>
5 gm	Gold Bar	\$449	\$369	+ <b>FREE SHIPPING</b>
10 gm	Gold Bar	\$735	\$679	+ <b>FREE SHIPPING</b>
1 oz	Gold Bar	\$2,229	\$1,979	+ <b>FREE SHIPPING</b>

**FREE SHIPPING!** Limited time only. Product total over \$149 before taxes (if any). Standard domestic shipping only. Not valid on previous purchases.

Actual sizes are 11.5 x 19 to 24 x 41 mm

 **SPECIAL CALL-IN ONLY OFFER**

## 1-800-973-9208

**Offer Code PMP137-02**  
Please mention this code when you call.



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**Gold Bars from**  
**Switzerland**

**High-Purity**  
**999.9% Pure**  
**Gold**

**Affordable**  
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**Sizes**

**Easy to Acquire**  
**PAMP Gold Bars!**  
**First Call,**  
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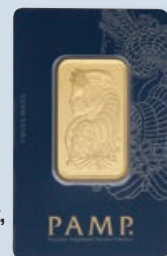
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**Refiner, Since 1977**

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**Gold**

**Individually**  
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# TEXAS ★ FOREVER

## LONE STAR MEN'S DIAMOND CHRONOGRAPH WATCH

A FINE JEWELRY EXCLUSIVE FROM THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE



*Hand-set with a Sparkling Genuine Diamond*



*LONE STAR STATE is etched on the side of the watch case*



*Etched on the back with the distinctive state of Texas overlaid with the state flag, and the words TEXAS FOREVER*

*Crafted in Stainless Steel, with 3 Sub-dials, Date Window and Precision Quartz Movement*

### It's Time to Show Your Texas Pride!

Now you can with a custom-designed timepiece as distinctive and bold as its namesake—the great state of Texas. Crafted in rugged stainless steel, our “Lone Star” Men's Diamond Chronograph Watch showcases a genuine diamond-studded sheriff's badge design on a rich gold-tone watch face, which features 3 sub-dials for seconds, minutes and hours, a date window, and the words TEXAS FOREVER and LONE STAR STATE.

The watch also has a rotating tachymeter bezel, and the stainless steel and gold-tone bracelet is accented with the state's proud Texas Longhorn and the famous Texas star. Etched on the side are the words LONE STAR STATE, and the back is etched with the state of Texas overlaid with the state flag and the sentiment TEXAS FOREVER. The watch's Precision Quartz Movement and adjustable C-clasp provide dependable accuracy and a comfortable fit.

#### Limited-time Offer... Order Today!

Complete with a deluxe case and a Certificate of Authenticity, the “Lone Star” Men's Diamond Chronograph Watch is an exceptional value at \$199.99\*, and you can pay for it in 5 easy installments of \$40.00. To reserve yours, backed by our unconditional 120-day guarantee and a full-year limited warranty, send no money now; just fill out and send in the Reservation Application. But hurry... this is a limited-time offer!

Order today at [bradfordexchange.com/133752](http://bradfordexchange.com/133752)

©2020 The Bradford Exchange 01-13375-002-BIPR



Shown actual size

#### PRIORITY RESERVATION

#### SEND NO MONEY NOW



9345 Milwaukee Avenue · Niles, IL 60714-1393

**YES.** Please reserve the “Lone Star” Men's Diamond Chronograph Watch for me as described in this announcement.

#### LIMITED-TIME OFFER

Reservations will be accepted on a **first-come, first-served basis.**  
Respond as soon as possible to reserve your watch.

\*Plus a total of \$15 shipping and service (see [bradfordexchange.com](http://bradfordexchange.com)). Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your jewelry after we receive your initial deposit. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mrs. Mr. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**01-13375-002-E54813**



**CEO**  
**HERBERT "TREY"**  
**GREBE III**

## You're More Than a Customer

**AUTHOR ANTHONY J. D'ANGELO** once observed that "without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community."

To a large degree, this reflects Medina Electric Cooperative's philosophy toward our consumer-members and the broader community that we serve. As a cooperative, we have a different bottom line. While our priority is always to provide reliable and safe energy, there is another equally important part of this equation: the well-being of our membership.

To us, you're not just a customer—you're a member of our co-op, and without you, we couldn't exist.

In 1938, Medina EC was founded to fulfill a vital need in our community that otherwise would not have been met. Concerned local leaders came together to build this co-op and bring electricity where there was none.

At that time, members of the community understood we were different because they likely knew someone who helped form Medina EC. For many people, the circumstances of our founding have been long forgotten, and over time, folks in the community may have come to think of us as simply another energy provider. But we aren't. We're a cooperative constantly evolving to meet the needs of the communities we serve, and we're able to do this because of members like you.

Since our inception, we've sought feedback and engagement from you and the broader community to guide our long-term decisions. This is why we

hold annual meetings and other events and hold quarterly American Customer Satisfaction Index surveys: to engage with you and obtain your feedback.

That feedback helps guide important co-op decisions that improve our services and enrich the community. We value the perspective of our elected board members, who are members of the co-op and community—just like you. See the information about upcoming nominating meetings on Page 19, if you are interested in becoming a board member.

We strive to find new ways to help you use energy more efficiently. We're always looking to explore options that will help you manage your energy use. And we always seek to keep pace with the changing energy environment, evolving technology and shifting consumer expectations.

As a local business, Medina EC has a stake in the community. That's why we support local charitable organizations and offer scholarships to local students. When you support these efforts, you're supporting the community and making it a better place for everyone.

While times have changed since our co-op was founded, our mission and outlook have not. We always try to exceed member expectations. We also view our role as a catalyst for good. Working together, we can accomplish great things for our community—now and in the future.



CHOOCHART CHOOCHAIKUPT | ISTOCK.COM



# Upcoming Nominating Meetings

Any members interested in running for one of the three board positions up for election in the fall should plan to attend the nominating meeting for their voting district.\* If you are not able to attend your nominating meeting, you can also be placed on the ballot through the petition process. You can download a petition at [MedinaEC.org/Nominee](http://MedinaEC.org/Nominee). The board of directors represents the interests of members and governs the cooperative.

Members who attend their nominating meeting will be entered to win a \$50 bill credit! One will be awarded at each meeting.

**Voting District 1 Meeting**  
*Medina County*  
**Tuesday, February 21, 6 p.m.**  
**Medina EC General Office, 2308 18th St., Hondo**

**Voting District 2 Meeting**  
*Atascosa, Edwards, Frio, Kinney, Real, Uvalde and Zavala counties*  
**Thursday, February 23, 6 p.m.**  
**Medina EC Dilley Office, 1718 W. FM 117, Dilley**

**Voting District 3 Meeting**  
*Brooks, Dimmit, Duval, Jim Hogg, La Salle, McMullen, Starr, Webb and Zapata counties*  
**Wednesday, February 22, 6 p.m.**  
**Medina EC Rio Grande City Office, 601 N. FM 3167, Rio Grande City**

In compliance with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, in reference to assurance of nondiscrimination among beneficiaries of Rural Utilities Service programs, the Medina EC bylaws pertaining to nomination and election procedures for the election of board members can be found at all Medina EC offices and at [MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc](http://MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc). The section that primarily pertains to nomination and election procedures is Article 4 - Board of Directors.

\*If you have meters in multiple voting districts, you may choose one meeting to attend in any of those voting districts. If you are unsure which voting district your meters are in, visit [MedinaEC.org/NomMtg](http://MedinaEC.org/NomMtg) or contact our office.

Learn more and download a petition at **[MedinaEC.org/Nominee](http://MedinaEC.org/Nominee)**.



**CONTACT US**  
**Toll-Free** 1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532)  
**Email** [Info@MedinaEC.org](mailto:Info@MedinaEC.org)  
**Web** [MedinaEC.org](http://MedinaEC.org) - Chat Feature Available

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Voting District 1**  
Larry Huesser, (830) 363-7651  
Wayne W. Scholtz, (830) 426-1328  
Ken Weynand, (830) 426-0762

**Voting District 2**  
Jimmie Raines, (830) 591-8437  
Jim Gates, (830) 334-7170  
Kenneth White, (830) 232-6541

**Voting District 3**  
Annette Sorrells, (361) 231-0173  
J. L. Gonzalez, (956) 286-1863  
Rodolfo H. Rodriguez, (210) 846-1092

**CEO**  
Trey Grebe, 1-866-MEC-ELEC, ext. 1045




**Call us.**

**TOLL-FREE**  
1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532)  
**Option 2:** Report an outage  
**Option 3:** Pay bill, get account balance  
**Option 5:** Speak to a representative

**OFFICE LOCATIONS**

**Bruni** 1300 FM 2050 N., Bruni 78344  
**Dilley** 1718 W. FM 117, Dilley 78017  
**Hondo** 237 Highway 173 N., Hondo 78861  
**Rio Grande City** 601 N. FM 3167, Rio Grande City 78582  
**Uvalde** 2604 Highway 90 E., Uvalde 78801  
**Corporate Office** 2308 18th St., Hondo 78861

**VISIT US ONLINE**  
[MedinaEC.org](http://MedinaEC.org)

This institution is an equal-opportunity provider and employer.

Información sobre todos los programas y servicios que ofrece Medina Electric Cooperative están disponibles en español al llamarnos al 1-866-MEC-ELEC o visitando una de nuestras oficinas.



# Team Members Reach Important Milestones

MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CELEBRATES work anniversaries in five-year increments and honors each employee with an award for their years of service. For each service award, the cooperative donates \$100 to an organization of the employee's choosing. In 2022, Medina EC employees donated \$1,900 to various local organizations in honor of employee anniversaries.

Please join us in celebrating these Medina EC employees who reached milestones between October and December!



**DANIELLE BENDELE**  
Accounting Assistant  
Corporate office  
10 years  
  
DONATION TO  
Autism Speaks



**LIANDRA CARRIZALES**  
Member Services Rep.  
Bruni office  
10 years  
  
DONATION TO  
Bruni Lions Club



**DAVID HERNANDEZ**  
Journeyman  
Dilley office  
5 years  
  
DONATION TO  
St. Jude



**RAYMOND SCHAW**  
Area Line Foreman  
Hondo office  
20 years  
  
DONATION TO  
D'Hanis Lions Club



**BEN FALCON**  
Line Designer  
Rio Grande City office  
5 years  
  
DONATION TO  
MD Anderson Cancer  
Center

IN ADDITION TO employee service awards, we would also like to recognize our longtime employees who retire. Jack Hagan retired at the end of 2022. Thank you for your long-term dedication to the cooperative and our members.

**JACK HAGAN**  
Journeyman  
Hondo office  
Retired after 27 years



# Last Chance: \$25,000 in Scholarships

Medina Electric Cooperative is offering five scholarships for adults pursuing higher education and 20 scholarships for high school graduating seniors.

Eligible applicants will be entered in a drawing, and scholarship winners will be selected at random during the March board meeting.

For more information and to apply, visit [MedinaEC.org/Scholarships](https://MedinaEC.org/Scholarships) or contact us at 1-866-632-3532 or [Scholarship@MedinaEC.org](mailto:Scholarship@MedinaEC.org).

## MedinaEC.org/Scholarships

**Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. March 3.\***

\*Technical support will not be available outside of normal business hours. Encountering technical issues while turning in the application on the last day will not be grounds for an extension.

DAXTON FILINGER, 2022 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



## We Love Serving Our Co-op Members

**VALENTINE'S DAY ISN'T** just for the lovebirds. It's also the perfect time to let our friends, family, co-workers and other special people in our lives know we care about them.

So, Medina Electric Cooperative created our list of the top five reasons we love serving you.

**1.** We love serving our members because without you, the co-op would not exist. Our purpose is to provide you with reliable, economical and safe electricity. Simply put, Medina EC exists to serve you. That's why we were formed—to bring power to our local area when for-profit utilities would not.

**2.** You enable us to complete our mission to give back by supporting our efforts. A major part of our mission is to serve our community and the greater good. With your assistance, we're able to help the most vulnerable members of our community through food and toy drives and programs like Operation Round Up that can help local families pay medical bills and other various needs when times are tough.

**3.** Members of our co-op also serve on the board of directors. They provide guidance for setting priorities and helping make big decisions. Because our board members live in the area, they're able to serve as the pulse of the larger community, identifying immediate and long-term needs.

**4.** You help us get it right. Our members are great about keeping us in the know. We do our best to avoid power outages, but Mother Nature occasionally throws us a curveball; our members are quick to report any power disruptions and are patient as our crews work to safely restore power. We know outages are frustrating, and your support as we work through storms means so much to our employees. We also appreciate your feedback on co-op programs and services.

**5.** You and other Medina EC members make up the community we serve—and for us, it's all about community. Our employees live and work here too and care about our community the same way you do. We're invested in working to help it prosper.

As a co-op, our mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community. We love serving our members—our friends, neighbors and family.



## We Want Your Feedback

### MEMBER SURVEY EMAILS START IN FEBRUARY

Beginning the week of February 6, 350 members will be randomly selected to answer Medina Electric Cooperative survey questions online via email.

These answers will help the cooperative learn how we can improve service too and better communicate with our members.

The online survey should take less than 5 minutes. This feedback is important to the cooperative, and we appreciate members taking time out of their busy schedules to provide it to us.

The cooperative has been conducting these surveys quarterly throughout the last few years and will continue during 2023. The feedback helps staff and management evaluate what practices and processes need improvement.

The surveys are conducted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. If you do not get an email but would like to share feedback or an idea with the cooperative, email us at [MyCoop@MedinaEC.org](mailto:MyCoop@MedinaEC.org).



# MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S ENERGY OPTIONS

**22 KW GENERAC  
PROPANE  
GENERATOR  
W/INSTALLATION**

**5 KW SOLAR PV  
SYSTEM  
W/INSTALLATION**

**MEC**

**MEDINAEC.ORG | 1-866-635-3532**

## Is Your Contact Information Up To Date?



THASPOL | ADOBE STOCK

**MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** is asking members to contact the cooperative to update any changed account information.

This information includes:

- name on the account
- cellphone and landline numbers
- email address
- mailing address
- primary use for electricity
- gate code

It's important to inform Medina EC of any updates to your account so we can continue to provide better service and communication to members.

If at any time you have a change to your account information, please call us at 1-866-632-3532 or email [Info@MedinaEC.org](mailto:Info@MedinaEC.org).

## CONTRACT CREWS HELP WITH OUTAGES

Medina Electric Cooperative has partnered with LineTec and Chain Electric to assist with outages as needed. These crews will have Medina EC markings on their vehicles and carry badges to be identified as contractors for Medina EC.

The addition of contractors will help the co-op to continue to respond to outages as quickly as safely possible to get power back on.

If you see someone on your property and are unsure if it is a contractor for Medina EC, please contact us at 1-866-635-3532.

# How Could We Help Your Community?

\$5,500 in grants available

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Up to \$5,500 in grants will be awarded in local communities in 2023. Could your organization or community use any of that money for a special project?

Application deadline: April 3, 11:59 p.m.\*

Emphasis will be placed on projects that:

- >> Encourage economic diversity.
- >> Contribute to community health and development.
- >> Improve the quality or quantity of services essential for the development of viable communities.

Applicants do not need to be a member of or receive electricity from Medina EC to apply. They only need to provide services in one of the counties served by Medina EC, which are listed below.

*\*Technical support will not be available outside of normal business hours. Encountering technical issues while turning in the application on the last day will not be grounds for an extension.*

## COUNTIES WHERE GRANTS CAN BE AWARDED

Atascosa	Jim Hogg	Starr
Brooks	Kinney	Uvalde
Dimmit	La Salle	Webb
Duval	McMullen	Zapata
Edwards	Medina	Zavala
Frio	Real	

**View eligibility information and apply online at [MedinaEC.org/Grant](https://MedinaEC.org/Grant).**

## Stay Warm, Fed and Safe During Storms

When winter conditions strike, staying safe and warm can be challenging. Medina Electric Cooperative cares about your safety, and we want you to be prepared.

During a power outage, our crews will continue to work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power, and there are a few things you can do to protect yourself.

**Stay warm.** Plan to use a safe alternate heating source, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove during a power outage.

**Stay fed.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends keeping handy several days' supply of food that doesn't need to be cooked. Five gallons of water per person should also be available.

**Stay safe.** When an outage occurs, it could mean power lines are down. If you must travel during a winter storm, take a survival kit and do not travel alone. Stay as far away from downed power lines as possible, and report hazardous situations to Medina EC.

Medina EC is ready for what Mother Nature has in store, and we want you to be ready too.





# Department Spotlight: Engineering

Medina Electric Cooperative's engineering department, composed of six divisions, does a lot to maintain the reliability and plan for system growth for the cooperative. In honor of National Engineer's Week, recognized February 19–23, we'd like to feature our engineering department which is adept at handling the day-to-day challenges in the engineering world, including high levels of math, science and technology literacy in the utility industry.

## GIS

Paula Pohler and Rachel Solis, both GIS technicians, help maintain a connected model of co-op assets. Mapping equipment and technology allows us to store, analyze and manage data geographically.



## LINE DESIGN

The line design team is made up of Jeff Hier, Fidel Aranda, Roger Besares, Ben Falcon, Lindsey Muennink, Isaac Solis and Janet French. They are responsible for designing new service and line extension projects, and creating cost estimates and material lists.

## ENGINEERING EQUIPMENT & ELECTRICIANS

Joel Gonzales, Ricky Cerna, Eduardo Chapa, Marcos Munoz, Fernando Rangel, Darrell Ritchie and Roland Elizondo make up this team. They manage much of the equipment that goes into a reliable and safe electric infrastructure.



## ENGINEERS

Keith Calle is the chief engineering division officer who oversees all six divisions of the engineering department. He brought his wide variety of electrical engineering experience to Medina EC in early 2019.



## System Operations & Outage Management

Allen Boehme, Deborah DeLeon, Chris Muennink and Susie Zerr have filled various other roles at the co-op before joining our system operations team. Their previous roles and knowledge make them experts to find ways to reduce the frequency and duration of outages experienced by members and improve personnel safety.



## Smart Grid

Our infrastructure has been undergoing an upgrade the past few years, a large part of that being done by Philip Crow, Marty DeLeon, Monte Tschirhart and Matthew Stinson. This team manages the meters and communication technology to support more reliable reads of our meters.



## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Katie Haby, Brian Bell and Michael Harkins work to build relationships with key accounts and new prospective businesses in our service area. They also oversee the member rebate program and our solar and generator installations.





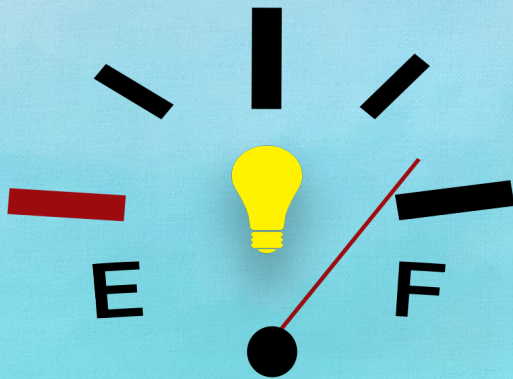
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CHARLES PERRAULT | ADOBESTOCK

# WE LOVE TO BE SOCIAL!

Make sure you follow Medina EC on our  
social media channels! Find, share and  
comment on stories about employees,  
community events, contests and more!



@MedinaEC



@MedinaECTalks



@OurMEC



@Medina Electric  
Cooperative, Inc.

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### Operation Round Up Applications Due

Friday, February 3  
Learn more and apply at  
[MedinaEC.org/ORU](https://MedinaEC.org/ORU).

### Valentine's Day

Tuesday, February 14

### Presidents Day

Monday, February 20  
Our offices will be closed.  
As always, crews will be on call.

### Nominating Meetings

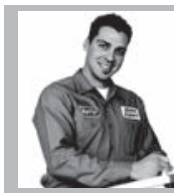
Tuesday, February 21–  
Thursday, February 23  
Learn more about locations and  
times on Page 19 or [MedinaEC.org/NomMtg.org](https://MedinaEC.org/NomMtg.org).

ELI\_ASENOVA | ISTOCK.COM



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

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



Dear  
Darryl

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

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

*Clogged and Smelly – Lewisville, TX*

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

This fast-acting bacteria multiplies within minutes of application and is specifically designed to withstand many of today's anti-bacterial cleaners, soaps and detergents. It comes in dissolvable plastic packs, that you just flush down your toilets. It's so cool. Plus, they actually Guarantee that it restores ANY system, no matter how bad the problem is.

**SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at [www.septicleanse.com](http://www.septicleanse.com) or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "TXS18", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.



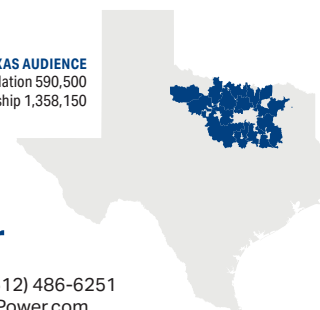
## If North Texas Is Your Market, We've Got You Covered.

Target customers close to home with the North Texas advertising section of *Texas Co-op Power*.

Be part of a statewide magazine without the statewide cost. Reach North Texas customers with *Texas Co-op Power*—a trustworthy name with affordable advertising options for regional and local businesses like yours.

Our North Texas advertising section targets homeowners living around Texas' largest metropolitan area. With a regional circulation of 590,500 and a readership of 1,358,150, *Texas Co-op Power* delivers a huge audience that's loyal and responsive.

**NORTH TEXAS AUDIENCE**  
Circulation 590,500  
Readership 1,358,150



**Texas Co-op Power**

Contact Elaine Sproull at (512) 486-6251  
or [advertising@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:advertising@TexasCoopPower.com)

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512-321-0336  
1083 Hwy 71 W. • Bastrop

Photos for illustration only. Prices subject to change. Please check for your local building codes. Prices include color walls, color trim and galvalume roof.

\*Building prices are before freight and taxes.



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## 30'x40'x12'



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

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A squad leader of the highly decorated 442nd patrols the front lines in France.

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



# Rescue of the Lost Battalion

How Japanese American units saved Texans in World War II

BY W.F. STRONG

**THERE'S A LONG LIST** of honorary Texans. John Wayne is one. No surprise there. Chuck Norris, born in Oklahoma, was made an honorary Texan in 2017, and Gov. Allan Shivers extended the honor to Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

But one case that stands out is when Gov. John Connally awarded honorary Texan status to hundreds of men simultaneously in 1962. He made the entire 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion of the U.S. Army honorary Texans after World War II.

The story begins with the Alamo Regiment, a Texas National Guard unit that

in October 1944 found itself cut off and surrounded behind enemy lines in the mountains of southern France.

The Texans were on top of a mountain and had the advantage of high ground, but they were still pounded by German artillery. It was foggy, rainy and very cold. They quickly dug fighting positions in the wet, muddy soil and covered themselves with tree limbs, rocks and dirt. The Lost Battalion, as it was known, was also running out of food and water.

The U.S. Army redirected its push toward the Rhine River to focus on saving the battalion from the Germans. Ameri-

can forces tried pounding the German lines with their artillery, but the forest was so thick they weren't having much effect. Two infantry battalions tried to break through the German lines, but each was repelled by hailstorms of bullets.

This is when the 442nd, which had joined with the 100th, was called in. Battle-hardened, they had a reputation for succeeding in just these situations. It took them five days of brutal, close-quarters combat on muddy terrain in bone-chilling weather to reach the Texans. The 442nd suffered hundreds of casualties to save 211 soldiers of the Lost Battalion's original 275.

After almost a week, they were freed from the German onslaught.

What makes this story especially significant: The 442nd was a Nisei regiment, composed of second-generation Japanese Americans. Most of them, along with their families, had been detained in camps operated by the War Relocation Authority at the beginning of the war. These men, however, asked if they could fight rather than sit out the war.

And they were extraordinary fighters. The 442nd was called the Purple Heart Battalion because they received more Purple Hearts than any other unit their size in World War II.

When the 442nd returned from Europe, President Harry Truman said, "You have fought not only the enemy, but you have fought prejudice—and you have won."

For Connally, making them all honorary Texans was his way of demonstrating to these soldiers, and their descendants, the solemn gratitude of Texas. ■



# Cupcakes

One might not be enough when serving these delightful treats

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Cupcakes are riding waves of trendiness, but for us they're classic. There's just something about a plate of cupcakes that brings a smile to your face, whether you're celebrating a birthday, graduation or holiday. These cupcakes, inspired by the classic confection, are my favorite Valentine's Day treat, but they're great for any special day.



## Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Cupcakes

### CUPCAKES

**8 ounces strawberries, divided use**  
**2½ cups flour**  
**2 teaspoons baking powder**  
**¼ teaspoon baking soda**  
**¼ teaspoon salt**  
**½ cup (1 stick) butter**  
**1½ cups sugar**  
**2 eggs**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**⅔ cup milk**

### ICING

**¾ cup heavy cream**  
**1 cup semisweet chocolate chips**

1. **CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line muffin pans with 18 paper liners.
2. Stem, halve and purée half the strawberries to yield about ½ cup of strawberry purée. Set aside.
3. In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside.
4. In a large bowl, cream together butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time, then mix in vanilla and strawberry purée until blended and smooth.
5. Alternately add the flour mixture and milk, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Scrape down the sides of the bowl between additions and make sure everything is incorporated before the next addition. Beat batter until smooth.
6. Divide batter among prepared cups. Bake 20–25 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool completely on a wire rack.
7. **ICING** Heat heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium-high. Add the chocolate chips to a bowl. Once cream is lightly bubbling, remove from heat and pour over the chocolate. Whisk to melt until completely smooth. Let cool until slightly thickened.
8. Holding a cupcake upside down, lower it into the chocolate, twisting to evenly coat. Lift and let excess drip back into the bowl, then flip and place on rack to set. Repeat with remaining cupcakes.
9. Slice remaining strawberries into halves and place one half on top of each cupcake. Let cupcakes rest until chocolate is firm.

**MAKES 18 CUPCAKES**

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



## Cookie Butter Spice Cupcakes

AUTUMN PRINCE  
WISE EC

**COOK'S TIP** Cookie butter spread can be found in the peanut butter aisle. It's also available online.

### CUPCAKES

- ½ cup sugar**
- ¼ cup crunchy cookie butter**
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, softened**
- 1 egg**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**
- ¾ cup flour**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons milk**

### ICING

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, softened**
- 2 tablespoons crunchy cookie butter**
- ¾ cup powdered sugar**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- Biscoff cookies (optional)**

**1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line a muffin pan with 6–8 paper liners.

**2.** In a bowl, cream together sugar, cookie butter and butter until fluffy. Beat in egg, vanilla, nutmeg and cloves until smooth.

**3.** Add flour, baking powder and salt until just combined. Scrape down sides, then beat in milk until batter is smooth.

**4.** Divide batter among prepared liners. Bake 20–22 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean and tops are firm. Let cool completely on a wire rack.

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

## OJCs (Orange Juice Cupcakes)

CHUCK BURGESS  
HEART OF TEXAS EC



These delightful cupcakes are full of orange flavor, especially from the orange-flecked icing. Take the time to grate fresh orange zest—it's worth it.

MAKES 24 CUPCAKES

### CUPCAKES

- 1½ cups sugar**
- ¼ cup brown sugar**
- 2½ cups flour**
- 2½ teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 2 eggs**
- ⅔ cup milk**
- ⅔ cup orange juice**
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted and cooled, divided use**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

### ICING

- 3 cups powdered sugar**
- 2 large oranges**

**1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line muffin pans with 24 paper liners.

**2.** In a large bowl, mix together sugar, brown sugar, flour, baking powder and salt. Beat in eggs, milk, orange juice, ½ cup melted butter and vanilla until smooth.

**3.** Divide batter among prepared liners, filling about halfway. Bake 25–30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan 10 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.

**4. ICING** Place the powdered sugar in a bowl. Zest the oranges and add to the sugar. Halve the oranges and juice to get ¼ to ⅓ cup juice, removing seeds. Add juice and remaining ¼ cup melted butter to the sugar and whisk ingredients until completely blended and smooth. Dip cupcakes in icing and return to wire rack until set.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**GARDEN BOUNTY** DUE FEBRUARY 10

What grows in your garden? Share your favorite recipes for making the most of summer produce. Submit them on our website by February 10 for a chance to win \$500.





## RECIPES CONTINUED

**5. ICING** Cream together butter and cookie butter. Add powdered sugar  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup at a time until completely blended. Add vanilla and salt and beat until light and fluffy. Ice cupcakes and decorate with half a Biscoff cookie or cookie crumbs, if desired.

**MAKES 6-8 CUPCAKES**

## Mint Chocolate Cupcakes

SUSAN PRAUSE  
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

### CUPCAKES

**1 cup flour**  
 **$\frac{3}{4}$  cup cocoa powder**  
**1 teaspoon baking powder**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking soda**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt**  
 **$1\frac{1}{4}$  cups sugar**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  cup vegetable oil**  
**3 eggs**  
**3 tablespoons sour cream or plain yogurt**  
**2 teaspoons vanilla extract**  
 **$\frac{3}{4}$  cup buttermilk**



### FROSTING

**$1\frac{1}{4}$  cups ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  sticks) unsalted butter**  
**4-5 cups powdered sugar**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  cup heavy cream**  
**1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons mint extract**  
**Green food coloring (optional)**  
**Mini mint or chocolate chips (optional)**

**1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line muffin pans with 18-24 paper liners. In a bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

**2.** In a large bowl, beat together sugar, vegetable oil, eggs, sour cream and vanilla until smooth. Slowly beat in half the flour mixture, then half the buttermilk, completely mixing in before adding the remaining flour mixture and buttermilk. Scrape down sides and beat until smooth.

**3.** Divide batter among prepared cups. Bake 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool completely on a wire rack.

**4. FROSTING** Beat butter with a stand mixer or hand mixer until fluffy. Turn to low speed and add powdered sugar  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup at a time until desired sweetness is reached.

**5.** Once the sugar is fully incorporated, turn the mixer to high and beat 5-10 seconds. Beat in heavy cream 1 tablespoon at a time until desired consistency. Beat in mint extract a little at a time, tasting until desired flavor is achieved, then add food coloring (if using). Frost cooled cupcakes and decorate with mint or chocolate chips, if desired.

**MAKES 18-24 CUPCAKES**



Based on an 1818 painting that depicts John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin presenting a draft of the Declaration of Independence

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# SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



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

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

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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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Important Entry

After hurricanes, little remains of the once-bustling city of Indianola

BY CHET GARNER

**ASK SOMEONE** to name the largest cities in Texas, and you'll probably get the correct answers. But rewind the clock to the mid-1800s and you'll find that some of Texas' biggest cities were much lesser-known locales, including one that was practically wiped off the map. With my history books in hand, I drove south to explore the disappearance of Indianola.

I started at the Calhoun County Museum in Port Lavaca, a great place to get some perspective with numerous exhibits, paintings and models of the once-bustling city, which had been a camping site for Karankawa natives. It's likely Germans were the first Europeans to arrive, in 1844, and two years later, Indianola was on its way to becoming one of the new state's major ports of entry.

The town grew to more than 5,000 residents as European families immigrated through Indianola to begin their new lives. Indianola grew in influence until 1875, when a terrible hurricane decimated the town and killed hundreds. The city rebuilt on a smaller scale, only to be leveled by a second hurricane in 1886. Within a year the townsite was abandoned.

I followed the edge of Matagorda Bay about 12 miles south, where very little evidence remains of Indianola's former glory. The smattering of residents there are Victoria Electric Cooperative members. I read the historic markers and found remnants of old foundations, including the original courthouse, which sits submerged in the bay as erosion has moved the waterfront.

In the old cemetery, home to more than 2,000 graves, only a few dozen tombstones remain. It is fascinating and sobering to think that a town so vibrant could be almost completely lost. But as long as we keep telling the story of Indianola, it will never truly disappear. ■

ABOVE Chet stands on all that remains of a statue of French explorer René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle.

**TCP** Chet visits the sparse remains of Indianola. Check out the video on our website 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.

## FEBRUARY

09

**Bellville Chocolate Walk**,  
discoverbellville.com

**Bandera [9–11] Cowboy  
Mardi Gras**, (830) 796-4849,  
facebook.com/  
11thstreetcowboybar

10

**Fredericksburg [10–11]  
Hug-In**, (830) 997-3224,  
luckenbachtexas.com

**Clute [10–12, 17–19] Agatha  
Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express***, (979) 265-7661,  
bcfas.org

**Victoria [10–12, 16–19]  
Always ... Patsy Cline**,  
(361) 576-6277,  
theatrevictoria.org

**Galveston [10–12, 17–19, 21]  
Mardi Gras! Galveston**,  
info@yagasevents.com,  
mardigrasgalveston.com

**Fredericksburg [10–12,  
17–19, 24–26] *Dirty Rotten  
Scoundrels***, (830) 997-3588,  
fredericksburgtheater.org

**Matagorda [10–11, 17–19,  
25–March 4] County  
Fair**, (979) 245-2454,  
matagordacountyfair.com

11

**Amarillo Los Tigres del  
Norte**, (806) 378-3096,  
amarillociviccenter.com

**Brenham Sweet Valen-  
tine With Sweet Baby  
James**, (979) 337-7240,  
visitbrenhamtexas.com

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

**Nocona [11-18] Mardi Gras Nocona Style,**  
(940) 825-3526, [nocona.org](http://nocona.org)

16

**Tyler Joel McHale,**  
(903) 566-7424,  
[cowancenter.org](http://cowancenter.org)

**Beaumont [16-19] Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas,**  
(409) 721-8717,  
[mardigrastx.com](http://mardigrastx.com)

17

**Laredo [17-18] Washington's Birthday Celebration Association Jalapeño Festival,** (956) 722-0589,  
[wbcalaredo.org](http://wbcalaredo.org)

**Fredericksburg [17-19] Trade Days,** (210) 846-4094,  
[fbgtradedays.com](http://fbgtradedays.com)

**Los Fresnos [17-19] Rodeo,**  
(855) 537-6336, [lfrodeo.com](http://lfrodeo.com)

18

**Buda The Steeldrivers,**  
(512) 312-9456,  
[bucksbackyard.com](http://bucksbackyard.com)

**Stephenville Cowgirl Crop,** (254) 434-1512,  
[scrapbookcowgirl.com](http://scrapbookcowgirl.com)

**Belton [18-19] Mother Earth News Fair,** 1-800-234-3368,  
[motherearthnewsfair.com](http://motherearthnewsfair.com)

19

**Fredericksburg Emily Jumes Oskins,**  
[fredericksburgmusicclub.com](http://fredericksburgmusicclub.com)

**Huntsville Shake Rattle & Roll,** (936) 293-8681,  
[oldtowntheatre-huntsville.org](http://oldtowntheatre-huntsville.org)

**Texarkana Run the Line Half Marathon,** [runsignup.com/runthelinehalfmarathon](http://runsignup.com/runthelinehalfmarathon)

20

**Brenham [20-25] Fort-nightly Club Used Book Sale,** (979) 525-7414,  
[booksalefinder.com](http://booksalefinder.com)

MORE EVENTS >

## TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com). Submit your May event by March 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.






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EARL NOTTINGHAM | TPWD

### Pick of the Month

#### Black History Month Hike

Karnack, February 11  
(903) 679-3351  
[tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

In honor of the historic contributions  
of Black Americans, Caddo Lake State  
Park hosts a history hike that teaches  
about the Buffalo Soldiers and Black  
conservationists, scientists and envi-  
ronmentalists.

#### FEBRUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

21

**Abilene [21–22] Texas  
Farm, Ranch and Wildlife  
Expo,** (325) 677-7241,  
[abilenechamber.com](http://abilenechamber.com)

22

**Huntsville [22–25]  
Prison City Film Festival,**  
[info@prisoncityfilmfestival.com](mailto:info@prisoncityfilmfestival.com),  
[prisoncityfilmfestival.com](http://prisoncityfilmfestival.com)

23

**Big Spring Tate's Place  
Western Night Benefit,**  
[tatesplaceservingothers@gmail.com](mailto:tatesplaceservingothers@gmail.com),  
[tatesplace.com](http://tatesplace.com)

**Junction Astronomy With  
Buddy,** (325) 446-3994,  
[tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**Port Aransas [23–26]  
Whooping Crane Festival,**  
(361) 749-5919,  
[portaransas.org](http://portaransas.org)

**San Antonio [23–March 6],  
Remember the Battle of  
the Alamo,** (210) 225-1391,  
[thealamo.org](http://thealamo.org)

24

**Boerne Royal National  
Dance Company: Fire of  
Georgia,** (830) 331-9079,  
[boerneperformingarts.com](http://boerneperformingarts.com)

25

**Amarillo [24–25] Star Wars  
and Beyond: An Evening  
of John Williams,**  
(806) 376-8782,  
[amarillosymphony.org](http://amarillosymphony.org)

**La Grange [24–25] The  
Best Little Quilt Show  
in Texas,** (979) 236-4298,  
[coloradovalleyqq.com](http://coloradovalleyqq.com)

**Brenham The Jersey  
Tenors,** (979) 337-7240,  
[thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Granbury Paluxy River  
Children's Advocacy  
Center Gala,** (817) 573-0292,  
[paluxyrivercac.org](http://paluxyrivercac.org)

**Greenville The Everly Set,**  
[greenvilleentertainmentseries.com](http://greenvilleentertainmentseries.com)

**Washington [25–26] Texas  
Independence Day Cele-  
bration,** (936) 878-2214,  
[wheretexasbecametexas.org](http://wheretexasbecametexas.org)

28

**Midland The Power of  
One: Luncheon and  
Children's Style Show,**  
(512) 635-4152,  
[casawtx.org](http://casawtx.org)

**Houston [28–March 19]  
Livestock Show and  
Rodeo,** (832) 667-1000,  
[rodeohouston.com](http://rodeohouston.com)

MARCH

02

**Bastrop The Farm Street  
Opry,** (512) 332-8981,  
[farmstreetopry.com](http://farmstreetopry.com)

**Tyler Trinity Irish Dance  
Company,** (903) 566-7424,  
[cowancenter.org](http://cowancenter.org)

03

**Lufkin Dragons and  
Mythical Beasts,**  
(936) 633-5454,  
[angelinaarts.org](http://angelinaarts.org)

04

**Kerrville Classical Music  
Festival,** (830) 321-0303,  
[hillcountrychorale.org](http://hillcountrychorale.org)

# First Responders

They have specialized training and are among the first to arrive and provide assistance at the scene of an emergency. To all our firefighters, law enforcement, medical personnel and lineworkers who risk their own lives to serve others, we salute you.

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1

**1 DEBRA CHANDLER**  
LIGHTHOUSE EC

Plainview firefighters search through rubble after a downtown building fire.

**2 JACK GOUGE**  
TRINITY VALLEY EC

Trinity Valley EC lineworkers make repairs after a large oak tree toppled onto power lines and a garage in Eustace. "They were our heroes on a hot Texas July night."

**3 KELLY KOENIG**  
PEDERNALES EC

A Killeen Fire Department training exercise.

**4 WENDY ALLEY MLADENKA**  
SAN BERNARD EC

Mladenka, a captain with the Columbus Police Department, captures game wardens launching a rescue boat after Hurricane Harvey in 2017.



2



3

## Upcoming Contests

**DUE FEB 10** Dad  
**DUE MAR 10** Waterfalls  
**DUE APR 10** Hoof and Horn



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

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more First Responders photos from readers.



4





## T-Shirt Weather

Commemorating those days that leave a lasting impression on a kid

BY LORI GROSSMAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY MITCH BLUNT

**THE WEATHER** was the last thing on my mind when I got home from school on January 11, 1985. Mom was waiting for me at the door, and she seemed agitated about something. We have to get groceries, she said. Right away.

Snowfall was predicted—light at first, then heavy. It could be heavy enough to prevent us from going anywhere.

Snow? I'm a native San Antonian, and here, snowfall—any amount—is rare. When my brother and I were growing up, snow flurries were cause for celebration. Several inches almost brought life to a screeching halt.

Mom and I were lucky to beat the rush to the stores that day. Texans know to stock up on the essentials—milk, bread, eggs, toilet paper and beer. By the time we got home, I was excited. Bring it on!

Mother Nature did just that. A band of heavy snow started south of Del Rio and gradually moved north and east toward Bexar County. The frozen precipitation didn't stop until two days later. I couldn't believe my eyes. The views from our windows reminded me of vintage Christmas card scenes (without ice skaters, unfortunately). Dad found a yardstick, and I went out to measure the depth. Thirteen inches!

San Antonio closed down. The city had no snowplows, of course. Kids and a few hardy adults went out to play, but most citizens were stuck indoors until it melted. The official total of 13.5 inches dwarfed the previous record of 6.4 inches in January 1926. I doubt that the new record will ever be broken. It was such a big deal that someone made and sold T-shirts that boasted, "I Survived Winter '85 San Antonio, TX."

A few years later, my family moved to Dallas, where I looked forward to seeing snow more often. The thought of possible bone-chilling cold never crossed my mind. The coldest temperature I remembered in San Antonio was in the low teens.

That personal record was shattered December 23, 1989, when the thermometer plunged to minus 1 degree.

I had to experience it to believe it. Leaving my coat inside, I walked out on our front porch. No snow this time—just cold. I didn't know what to expect. Would I freeze solid?

I don't remember any wind. I actually felt comfortable for a few minutes. Truthfully, I wasn't that impressed.

Still, it made me think somebody should print up T-shirts.

No, better make it sweatshirts. ■

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— Don W., Sherman, TX

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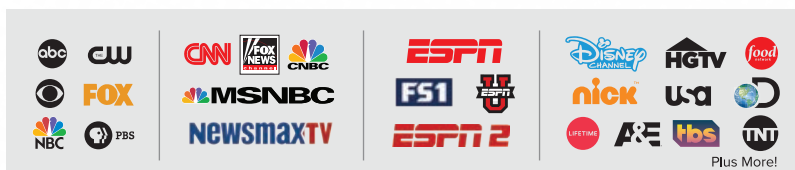
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