

A MERKEL CARTOONIST'S
UNCOMMON CALENDAR

TOM LANDRY'S
FINEST SEASON

THE STARS BELOW
IN WEST TEXAS

Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

AUGUST 2022



Rodeo's Razzle- Dazzle

Texas Spirit Riders thrill
with precision and speed



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August 2022



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Drilled To Thrill

The Texas Spirit Riders' razzle-dazzle aims to rise above other rodeo performance squads.

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Photos by Dave Shafer*

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ON THE COVER

Captain Erica Bednarz leads the Texas Spirit Riders around the arena.

ABOVE

The Spirit Riders, who range in age from 8 to 60, with coach Rachael Kiowski.

Photos by Dave Shafer



Tickle Kids Pink

FAMILIES AND TEACHERS are encouraged to ask managers of kid-friendly restaurants to save their discarded crayons during August, which is National Crayon Collection Month.

More than 150 million restaurant crayons end up in landfills each year, enough to span the contiguous United States three times if placed end to end.

Resource-strapped schools can use those crayons in classrooms.



TCP Contests and More

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FINISH THIS SENTENCE

THE SONG THAT TAKES ME BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL IS ...

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.

Below are some of the responses to our June prompt: **My singing is so bad ...**

No one would ever believe that my name is Melodie.

MELODIE GREIDER
PEDERNALES EC
DRIPPING SPRINGS

My fifth grade teacher asked me to just move my lips when my class sang to the PTA.

GARY GALLOWAY
TRI-COUNTY EC
WEATHERFORD

In church my granddaughter said, "No sing, Granny."

ANN MOSELEY
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC
SHINER

My own mother, a music teacher, said, "Some people just shouldn't sing and, son, you are one of them."

PERRY JEFFERIES
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
GATESVILLE

I can't carry a tune in a bucket.

TERRY HOLDERNESS MCADAMS
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

To see more responses, read Currents online.

120°

The hottest temperature ever recorded in Texas—120 degrees—first occurred in Seymour on August 12, 1936. It was matched in Monahans on June 28, 1994.

Keep Your Cool

Summer's hot days are wearing on many of us and keeping air conditioners humming. Before you set the AC even cooler, your electric cooperative reminds you to use fans—but only while you're in the room—to help you stay cool and save on energy costs.

“Thankfully, perseverance is a great substitute for talent.”

—STEVE MARTIN

Shortcut Shortfalls

THE SHORTEST WAY might not always be the best way.

So say Texas A&M University researchers who studied online navigation tools using Texas destinations. Mapping apps can help you drive the shortest and quickest routes, but research shows they might bypass some safety considerations.

Shortcuts over local roads can come with a higher risk of crashes because of poor design, drainage problems, inadequate lighting and a higher risk of collisions with wildlife.



Back to School

KidsHealth offers these tips for a fantastic school year:

Get enough sleep.

Eat a healthy breakfast.

Try your best.

Use good work habits, like writing down your assignments and turning in your homework on time.

Take your time with schoolwork. If you don't understand something, ask the teacher.

Keep a sense of humor.



Speaking to Children

“Kudos to illustrator John Jay Cabuay for the lovely, colorful and expressive portrait of María Alma González Pérez. It took my breath away.”

MARTI M. BURNS
BLUEBONNET EC
BASTROP

Find Dining

I am one of the foraging experts [pictured below] interviewed for *The Grazing Craze* [June 2022], and I want to correct a couple points in it for your readers.

I was quoted as referencing “wood clover,” but it should have said “wood sorrel.”

Also, the article states it is illegal to forage on public land, which is not entirely accurate. Foraging in national parks and many state parks is generally not allowed, but those constitute a very small percentage of public land. There are vast areas of public land that are accessible to foraging legally.

Check out my Wild Foraging North Texas page on Facebook.

Courtney Taylor
Grayson-Collin EC
Weston



COURTESY COURTNEY TAYLOR

My mother, Evelyn Roffe, helped initiate the bilingual program in McAllen in 1937–38 [Speaking to Children, June 2022]. She had a one-room schoolhouse. She taught all ages of Mexican farmworkers' children.

PENNY HAULMAN
VIA FACEBOOK

Eating Wild

I am a regular “customer” of local dewberry patches and neighborhood mulberry trees, so I can relate. I also wanted to point readers to the Useful Wild Plants of Texas Project, which has a wealth of information. Check it out at usefulwildplants.org.

David Todd
Fayette and San Bernard ECs
Austin

Stirring Review

I saw your recipe for Beef and Green Bean Stir-Fry [June 2022], and that's what was for dinner. As soon as I added the sauce mix—holy cow—I thought I was in a Chinese restaurant. It was simple and delicious, paired perfectly with white rice.

Paul Garcia
Medina EC
Castroville

Our 1.2-acre lot has chile pequins growing wild and quite a few black persimmons (nothing like regular persimmons).

I have devised a recipe for black persimmon jelly. It tastes like blackberry jelly.

Lamar Hankins
Pedernales EC
San Marcos

WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

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

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★ DRILLED TO THRILL

TEXAS SPIRIT RIDERS' razzle-dazzle aims to rise above other rodeo performance squads



BY GENE FOWLER • PHOTOS BY DAVE SHAFER

LOOK GOOD. RIDE FAST. DAZZLE THE CROWD.

The moment the Texas Spirit Riders enter the arena, their motto becomes a force of nature.

“We! Are! TSR!” the riders chant as their horses trot into formation before breaking off and zooming past bleachers. The riders whoop and holler with joyful abandon.

The rodeo drill team based in Winnsboro, about an hour north of Tyler in East Texas, performs choreographed maneuvers on horseback for audiences all over Texas. The all-woman team appears most often at cowboy and cowgirl sporting events, and they’re part of a decadeslong tradition of rodeo drill teams in Texas that has included Terrell’s Cowgirl Congress, Magnolia’s Lone Star Cowgirls, Refugio County’s Independence Belles, Jack Sellers’ Bexar County Palomino Patrol and many more. But none, one might wager, embody their appellation more than the Texas Spirit Riders.

Every time these ladies swing into the saddle, they draw on the memory of a fallen teammate.

“We started out with huge dreams and lots of ambition,” explains Erica Bednarz of Bullard, who was named captain of the Spirit Riders in August 2020—about 24 years after the team was founded, in 1996. She picked her friend Lynsey Berger of Wills Point as co-captain. “We wanted to make a difference in the rodeo industry and really grow the sport of equestrian drill teams.”

After the team’s first organizational meeting with its new

leaders, however, Berger, 29, was killed in a head-on collision. Bednarz was on the phone with her friend October 2, 2020, when another car drifted into her lane. “There was a loud noise,” she recalls, “and then everything went silent.”

The Spirit Riders’ first performance under Bednarz’s captaincy was for Berger’s funeral. “The team was shaken,” she says. “Our world was forever changed, and I wasn’t sure if I could find the strength to keep the riders going.

“In the midst of tragedy, we found strength in each other. We vowed to honor Lynsey by following her dream of making it all the way to the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas.”

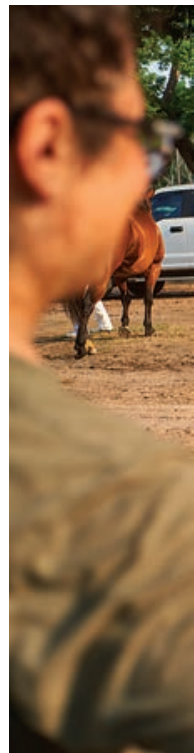
The “rodeo road,” as the drill team calls it, is a long, hard one. Heck, it’s a long, hard road to just make the rodeo in Mesquite or Wichita Falls. The Spirit Riders rely on their reputation to land bookings. The NFR would be the ultimate gig.

“What we do is not easy,” Bednarz explains. “We travel hundreds of miles—some riders haul their horses that far just for a practice—and spend countless hours away from our families. The drills require exquisite horsemanship and trust in 11 other horses and 11 other riders, who at any moment could make a wrong move and seriously injure you or your horse.”

As the Spirit Riders burst into the arena for an official rodeo performance, lights flashing off their shiny, Texas-themed outfits, the horse-savvy crowds recognize equine athletes who, in many cases, have been livin’ large in the saddle since they were toddlers. Former captain Rachael Kiowski of Lone Oak, who passed the TSR torch to Bednarz and now serves as a coach for the team, first perched on horseback at the tender age of 2. Senior rider Ellen Larue, 60, of Cooper waited till the advanced age of 7 to mount up, acquiring her first horse, a Welsh pony named Lightning, at 10.

Larue currently rides a 16-year-old sorrel mare named Reba. “She’s a little spoiled and doesn’t like to get her feet dirty,” Larue says. Reba will retire from drills after this year but will serve as a flag horse in military rides. Most drill horses, Larue says, are 3–10 years old, though the younger the better. The drills are such a workout that older horses can develop arthritis. “And it’s generally quarter horses, thoroughbreds and mustangs. Gaited and saddle horses, not so much.”

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Riders feed off energy from the crowd at Winnsboro Rodeo Arena in May. Jennifer Keahey makes sure Maddy Farem’s knot is just right. Katrina Czarnecki sprinkles glitter on a horse. Shelby Woolly sports a personalized belt buckle. Erica Bednarz parades the Stars and Stripes.



As the Spirit Riders burst into the arena for an official rodeo performance, lights flashing off their shiny, Texas-themed outfits, the horse-savvy crowds recognize equine athletes who, in many cases, have been livin' large in the saddle since they were toddlers.

In a practice session in March, Larue participates in a flag drill that pays tribute to every branch of the armed forces. “We Support The Troops,” reads the flag of the next-to-last rider who solos through the arena to join the other riders carrying flags of each branch. The last rider, 19-year-old Savannah Nichols of Leesburg, stands on her horse’s saddle and holds the Stars and Stripes aloft as her mount gallops across the arena. It’s a stirring display.

Nichols says it’s an adrenaline rush to ride into the arena for a roaring crowd. Even the horses get pumped up, Larue says. “They start dancing in the alleyway, and their ears perk up,” she says. “And the louder the crowd whoops and hollers, the faster they run.”

The Texas Spirit Riders’ performance style, Larue says, is

more intense, with faster riding and two to three times as many maneuvers in a drill as other teams. “Even our music is different,” Bednarz says. “In addition to pop and country, we ride to heavy metal.”

The team incorporates cross, charro and pinwheel maneuvers into its routines. In the standard cross, riders crisscross the arena diagonally, each passing through just as another has moved on. A more complex variation is a box cross. “That’s when you have four horses to a ‘box,’ ” Kiowski explains, “and they cross other boxes in the center of the arena. It’s scary to watch, and the riders really have to be on their toes.”

The charro is a drill in which the horses all line up behind a lead rider, each horse’s head tucked at the knee of the



CATCH THE SPIRIT RIDERS NEAR YOU

In August they will perform at rodeos in Paris, San Saba, Wolfe City and Wichita Falls. In September they will dazzle at the Palomino Fest & Pro Rodeo in Uvalde and end the season with their Disney in the Dirt extravaganza at the Winnsboro Rodeo Arena.



rider in front of it. “Teams generally include several standard drills, mixed with elements of their own choreography,” Kiowski says. “We still have Lynsey’s handwritten drills, and we’ll be honoring her with those.”

The team’s leaders have also worked toward Berger’s desire to grow the Spirit Riders. A team of just six riders appearing at five rodeos a year has expanded to four teams with a total of 32 riders, with performances for at least 14 rodeos booked this year.

“Doors opened left and right,” says Bednarz, “and riders just began falling from the sky.” The 2022 Texas Spirit Riders team includes a novice team, ages 4–8; a junior team, 8–13, which trots through maneuvers; a semipro team; and a pro team that usually performs with 12 riders. Most of the pros are in their 30s. All four teams have performed in (or are scheduled to perform in) at least three appearances this rodeo season, which began in May.

“Erica’s a dreamer with big goals,” Kiowski says. “And she doesn’t stop until she reaches them. She’ll make it to the NFR.” ■

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE Bednarz, atop Blue, has led the Spirit Riders since August 2020. A young fan gets a celebrity pic with some of the riders. Casey Partanen, left, and Keahey perfect their makeup early in the morning before a parade through Winnsboro.



Bringing Texans UP TO Date

Cartoonist **ROGER MOORE** marks his uncommon calendar with amusing tidbits

The Bona Fide Original Real Texas Calendar doesn't start with January like most calendars, but why should it?

Texas didn't start in January, either.

At least that's how cartoonist Roger Moore, a third-generation Texan who has been making the calendar since 1997, sees it. In classic maverick style, Moore's calendar begins on March 2, the date in 1836 when Texas settlers famously declared their independence from Mexico. A lot has happened in Texas since then, of course, and Moore addresses much of it with humorous and history-packed notations.

Besides the calendar, Moore has written *The Handy Pocket Tex-Book: A Pocket-Sized Guide to Essential Information That Every Good Texan Must Know About Texas*, which informs readers about such necessary facts as the official state dog breed (blue lacy), the official state vehicle (not the pickup truck but the chuck wagon) and the official state snack (tortilla chips and salsa). Kids can read his *Critters of the Lone Star State*, filled with trivia about javelinas, armadillos and rattlesnakes, and *Slim's Hat*, which teaches the proper uses of a cowboy hat beyond decorating the top of a person's head. And Moore has produced a collection of his favorite cartoons, *Texas, My Texas*.

But the calendar remains his biggest seller.

Each month features a full-page cartoon celebrating an important Texan or poking irreverent fun at something that happened on Texas soil. Interesting factoids about the Lone Star State and the people who have lived here pepper every page.

Flip through a few copies and you'll learn that Emma Banister of Coleman County became the first female sheriff in the U.S. on

August 1, 1918; Popeye the Sailor was born in a comic strip by Elzie Crisler Segar in the *Victoria Advocate* on January 17, 1929; and Texan Van Cliburn won his first international piano competition in Moscow on April 14, 1958.

Moore, 77, lives on a small farm near Merkel, west of Abilene, with his wife, Martha. On a cool spring morning, he wore a cowboy hat, red bandana, blue jeans and boots as he sat at a lighted drawing table in his home office and used an archival fine-tip black pen to sketch out a quick cowboy. A pair of tiny boots doubled as a lamp base behind him; a wooden roll-top desk stood in one corner; and a framed Texas flag hung on the wall.

"I can't remember when I wasn't drawing," he says with a wisecrack. "I tell people I drew before I walked when I was 13."

Moore was born in Beaumont and later moved to Merkel. His mother, who liked to make delicate pencil sketches, encouraged him to draw.



OPPOSITE Roger Moore sketches a cowboy at his home near Merkel.
RIGHT Moore hopes his cartoons "make you giggle a little bit."

“Everything happens in my pickup. It’s a think tank.”

Moore



“She told me it was all right to be an artist, even when I took some heat for it at school,” Moore says. “I got some paddlings for drawing in class.”

Moore was a standout athlete in high school. After college, he briefly coached at a high school in Hamlin, about 30 miles north of Merkel. He went on to work as a foreman for Texas Instruments, then began selling textbooks. He launched his own advertising agency, called Moore & More, after moving to Austin in 1971. About that time, he began selling editorial cartoons to newspapers.

“I went to a couple of newspapers and said, ‘Y’all need a cartoonist,’ ” Moore says. At first, he drew political cartoons but eventually switched to less controversial topics. “I gave up on politics. I really wasn’t all that into it, but they liked my style and my price, which was damn near nothing.”

His cartoons—now focused on topics near to Texans’ hearts, like Stetson hats, barbed wire, pink grapefruit and cowboys (football and otherwise)—still appear in about 25 small newspapers around the state. A binder filled with hundreds of sketches rests on his desk.

“I’m not very good, but I’m real fast,” says Moore, a Taylor Electric Cooperative member. In his heyday, he could whip up a cartoon in a couple of hours. “The hard part is the idea, and it needs to be mildly amusing. It’s stupid to have a cartoon that doesn’t make you giggle a little bit.”

But cartoons, he says, are much more than drawings.

“Cartooning is not artwork; it’s enhancing the words,” Moore says. “First, you’ve got to come up with the idea. I think of an event and try to come up with a play on words. That usually leads to an idea. Some come easy, some don’t.”

Moore says he gets his best inspiration while driving Texas back roads and highways.

“Everything happens in my pickup. It’s a think tank,” he says, adding that he was driving between Austin and Abilene when the idea for a calendar first popped into his head. He and an assistant researched the state’s history and picked out people and events to highlight.

Lou David Allen, a retired NASA engineer and former mayor of Merkel, met Moore when they were high school students, but they became friends after the cartoonist moved back to Merkel in 2008.

“I say every person is a poem waiting to be written. Roger thinks every circumstance is a cartoon waiting to be expressed in his iconic way,” Allen says. “He understands people. He reads them pretty quickly—and sometimes will announce their faults.”

Moore was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease two years ago, so cartooning takes longer now. Lines start out squiggly, getting smoother as his muscles warm up. He’s trying to shift to a slightly different style of drawing, without as many curves, dots, and dashes—anything that requires fine precision.

“It takes about 10 times as long,” he says. “It’s frustrating, to say the least.”

But Moore plugs on, digging deep into the can-do spirit that makes Texans Texan.

“It’s the only thing I can do that provides a release,” Moore says. “I’ve got creative ideas about a lot of things, but I can only cartoon. And I know I can do that, even with Parkinson’s.” ■

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"The feel of this knife is unbelievable...this is an incredibly fine instrument."

— H., Arvada, CO





CEO

**HERBERT "TREY"
GREBE III**

Understanding Rising Costs

MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IS PROUD to power the homes and businesses of our members. We know that keeping power safe and reliable is key to our service, but we also understand that affordability is crucial too. As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we are just trying to recoup the costs of doing business. We are not looking to make a profit or make money for investors.

We are all experiencing the impact of rising costs—at the gas pump, at the grocery store and on everyday items. Unfortunately, electric co-ops are not immune to this impact, and we must look at our monthly charges to ensure we are keeping pace with the rising costs.

If you look at your bill each month, you will notice your energy charge, which is the rate established for the type of service for your account. Also on your bill is the power cost adjustment. The PCA is the difference between the Medina EC rate—your energy charge—predicted in advance and the actual rate paid for wholesale power. Each month, Medina EC's financial team looks at our wholesale power bill. If your statement has a positive PCA, then the wholesale power cost was higher than the rate for your service and the PCA is making up the difference. If your statement shows a negative PCA, then the price of power was lower than the rate and you're getting credited that difference. The fluctuation is largely caused by the changes in the cost of fuel for generation. A history of power cost adjustments is available on our website at MedinaEC.org/PCA-History.

I've been getting the question, "Is our bill going to go up, like everything else?" and the answer, unfortunately, is probably. The increase of natural gas prices is pushing up wholesale power costs across the electric industry, and natural gas is the leading source of power generation for the U.S. Our wholesale power bill has been steadily increasing as a result, and experts advise that we should prepare for higher wholesale power prices through the end of the year. That increase will be reflected on the monthly PCA and will vary month to month, based on our wholesale power bill.

We understand that seeing a higher electric bill is never easy, especially when everything else is more expensive. If you have questions about your bill, please do not hesitate to call us at 1-866-632-3532 and speak to one of our member service representatives. If you need assistance with your bill, we have resources listed on our website at MedinaEC.org/AssistancePrograms.

Please know the team at Medina EC is mindful of costs in our operations while maintaining the integrity of our service. We know it costs money to operate and provide electricity, but we do so with our members in mind.

Until next time,
Trey Grebe



JACKF | ADOBE STOCK

Is Your Refrigerator Running?

If you're not home, you may not know. SmartHub can help you determine if you're out of power.

IF YOU HAVE AN ELECTRIC meter at a hunting camp, stock water well, second home, or another location that isn't a primary residence or business location, it may be weeks or even months between visits. If there was a power interruption during that time, you may come back to blinking clocks, a refrigerator off or other inconveniences as a result. If you haven't visited that location in a while, you may not know to report your outage until a long time has passed.

If you want to keep track of your power use at a location that isn't visited often, you can do so by using SmartHub's Usage Explorer. This tool allows you to see your monthly, daily and even hourly electricity use. Even if the location isn't occupied, if you have items plugged in, then you are still drawing electricity and will see kilowatt-hour readings. If you start to see 0 kWh readings, that means there is no power at the meter and you need to report your outage.

Medina Electric Cooperative's technology is always improving, and most times we know when your power is out. However, technology isn't perfect and there are things out of our control, like lightning damaging equipment, that may prevent your meter from registering the outage on our system. Use SmartHub to monitor your electricity use, report outages, pay your bill and more.

Outage? 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



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.



Co-op Connections Corner: Local Eats

WANT TO TRY SOMETHING NEW for dinner tonight or need a snack while out running errands? These local eateries offer discounts to Medina Electric Cooperative members who use the Co-op Connections card or app:

LaCoste Meat Market—LaCoste

(830) 762-3231 | lacostemeatmarket.com

10% off counter sales (does not include custom processing)

Los Alamos Restaurant—Uvalde

(830) 591-0083 | [Facebook.com/AlamosRestaurant](https://www.facebook.com/AlamosRestaurant)

Free fountain drink every Tuesday with purchase of a dine-in meal (\$5 minimum, exclusions apply)

Pepe's Pizza—Hondo

(830) 426-3207

One large thin-crust pepperoni or cheese pizza for \$7.99 (carryout only)

R and R Alsatian Sausage and Products LLC—Castroville

(830) 931-2430

10% discount on retail purchases and 5% discount on processing

The Country Mart (Café) – D'Hanis

(830) 363-7286 | [Facebook.com/TheCountryMart](https://www.facebook.com/TheCountryMart)

10% off café purchases

The Tea Room—Uvalde

(830) 486-0722 | [Facebook.com/TheTeaRoomUvalde](https://www.facebook.com/TheTeaRoomUvalde)

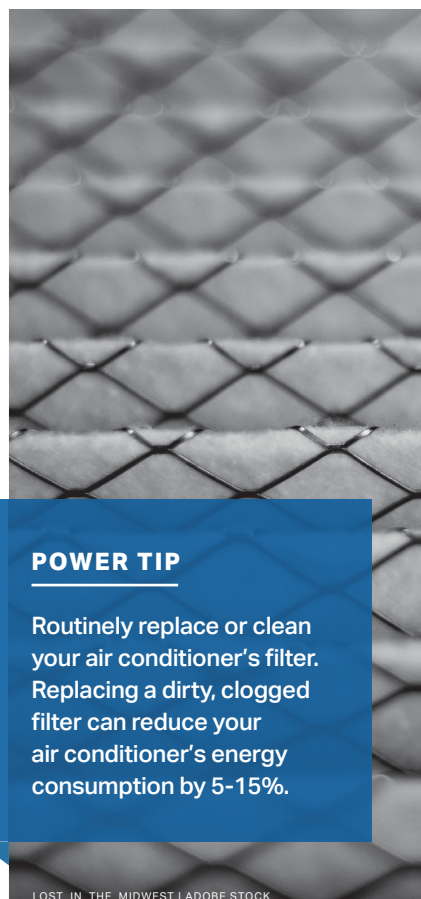
One free drink with the purchase of lunch



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Operation Round Up
Applications Due**
Friday, August 5

Board Election Open
Wednesday, August 17
*Learn more about the
candidates at [MedinaEC.org/
BoardElection](http://MedinaEC.org/BoardElection)*



POWER TIP

Routinely replace or clean your air conditioner's filter. Replacing a dirty, clogged filter can reduce your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5-15%.

We hope to see you at our

83rd

Annual Membership Meeting

Saturday, Sept. 24 | Meeting at 10 a.m.

Texas A&M International University | Laredo

Join Us In Person To:

- Have a chance to win \$1,000
- Win door prizes
- Get updates on your cooperative
- Meet with Medina EC staff and directors
- Mingle with other members
- Enjoy breakfast on us

Can't make it in person? There will be an option for you to join online!

**More details will be available in the
September Texas Co-op Power or visit
MedinaEC.org/AnnualMeeting2022.**



**MEDINA ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Operation Round Up Helps Uvalde Students and Families

AT THEIR JUNE MEETING, the Operation Round Up committee voted to donate \$5,000 to the Bluebonnet Children's Advocacy Center.

The center has locations in Hondo and Uvalde and is providing therapy to students and families who were affected by the Robb Elementary shooting in May. The ORU donation will go towards hiring more therapists to assist with this effort. Learn more about Bluebonnet Children's Advocacy Center at BCACTX.org.



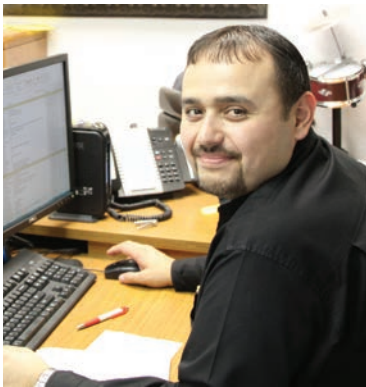
We Want Your Feedback

STARTING THE WEEK OF AUGUST 1, 350 members will be randomly selected to get a call or email to answer some survey questions about Medina Electric Cooperative. Your answers will help the cooperative understand how we can improve service to and better communicate with our members.

The survey, email or phone call should take less than five 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 surveys are conducted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Phone calls will either come from an 844 or 507 area code. Emails will show Medina Electric in the "From" line.

The cooperative has been con-



ducting these surveys quarterly throughout the year, and the last survey for 2022 will take place in November.

If you do not get a phone call or email to do a survey but would like to share feedback or an idea with the cooperative, email us at MyCoop@

Cool Effects for a Hot Summer

KEEP COOL THIS SUMMER with these life hacks that won't overwork your home's air conditioner.

Make aloe vera cubes. Simply fill an ice tray with aloe vera gel, freeze it and then place the cubes on your skin.

Try a cooling pillow. These cushions can help you feel more comfortable on muggy summer nights.

Add mint. Menthol makes our bodies feel cool, so by adding spearmint essential oil to products like body wash and lotion, you can get an instant cooling effect.

Get a handheld fan mister. Sure, you may feel a little silly carrying around a tiny fan, but you'll be more comfortable than everyone else—and they'll probably ask to borrow it.

Here are additional ways to keep you and your home cool this summer:

- Close blinds and curtains during the day and open them during the evening, when temperatures are cooler.
- Use ceiling fans and portable fans to stay comfortable.
- Only use appliances that put out heat, like clothes dryers and dishwashers, during the evening, to minimize indoor heat during the day. ■



Luck of the Draw

You have FIVE chances to win a \$100 credit on your electric bill.



Chance 1: Register your account on SmartHub.

Sign up at MedinaEC.SmartHub.coop, or download the app and register your account there. SmartHub allows you to report outages with one click, view past electricity use and see your use before you get your monthly bill.



Chance 2: Sign up for automated payments.

Have your bill automatically charged to your credit or debit card or bank account each month. Set it up online through SmartHub or by calling 1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532).



Chance 3: Choose paperless billing.

Opt out of receiving a paper bill every month and have your bill emailed to you instead. Change your account settings in SmartHub, or call us at 1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532) and staff will change it for you.



Chance 4: Join Operation Round Up.

Sign up your account for Operation Round Up and have your monthly electric bill rounded up to the next whole dollar. That spare change is used to make donations to community members and families in need. Sign up at MedinaEC.org/ORU or by calling 1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532).



Chance 5: BONUS drawing for all four programs!

If you are signed up for all four programs, you will be entered into an additional drawing for a \$100 bill credit.

All members signed up for each of the programs above as of 5 p.m. on November 1 will be entered. This includes members who are already signed up for these options and any new sign-ups between now and November 1.

There will be five separate drawings, and five \$100 bill credits will be awarded and automatically issued as bill credits.

Winners in each category will be randomly selected and announced in the December issue of *Texas Co-op Power*.

Community Empowerment Grants: \$5,500 Awarded to Area Organizations

In June, Medina Electric Cooperative awarded \$5,500 in grants to area organizations through the Community Empowerment Program to encourage community and economic development throughout the 17 counties served by the cooperative.

The program focuses on projects that encourage economic diversity, contribute to community health and development, and improve the quality or quantity of services essential for the development of viable communities.

The CEP committee decided on the following awards:

Children’s Advocacy Center of Laredo (Laredo) – \$500

The grant is being used to purchase a state-of-the-art big-size tactile sensory panel for the center’s waiting room. These walls help children develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

Knights of Columbus Council 2810 (Hebbronville) – \$500

The grant is being used to create a museum inside the Scotus College building to highlight the history of the first Franciscan friars and seminarians that came to Hebbronville from Mexico in 1926.

Medina Healthcare System (Hondo) – \$1,000

The grant is being used to purchase a stand assist lift for rehabilitation patients. The Arjo Sara Plus powered standing and raising aid is designed to help mobilize patients during everyday activities.

Mico VFD (Mico) – \$750

The grant is being used to purchase 10 Guardian Angel safety light and seven Fire Ninja Safety vests to improve safety and visibility during traffic events.

Pleasanton Fire Department (Pleasanton) – \$500

The grant is being used to purchase fire prevention supplies for the department to use during fire safety presentations and to raise the level of awareness of fire safety in the community.

South Texas Advancement Resource (Aguilares) – \$1,500

The grant is being used to purchase tools and supplies needed by the Laredo College vocational program students.

Webb County VFD (Laredo) – \$750

The grant is being used to purchase four new self-contained breathing apparatuses. The department currently has masks, but recently the units didn’t pass testing and will need to be replaced.

“Beyond providing safe, reliable electricity, it is important that we help make a difference in our service area,” said Trey Grebe, Medina EC CEO. “These organizations promote and provide safety to our communities, as well as foster growth and development amongst its citizens.”

Medina EC is proud to include these organizations in the more than \$73,000 in grants awarded to various nonprofits and local governments since the CEP program was started in 2015.

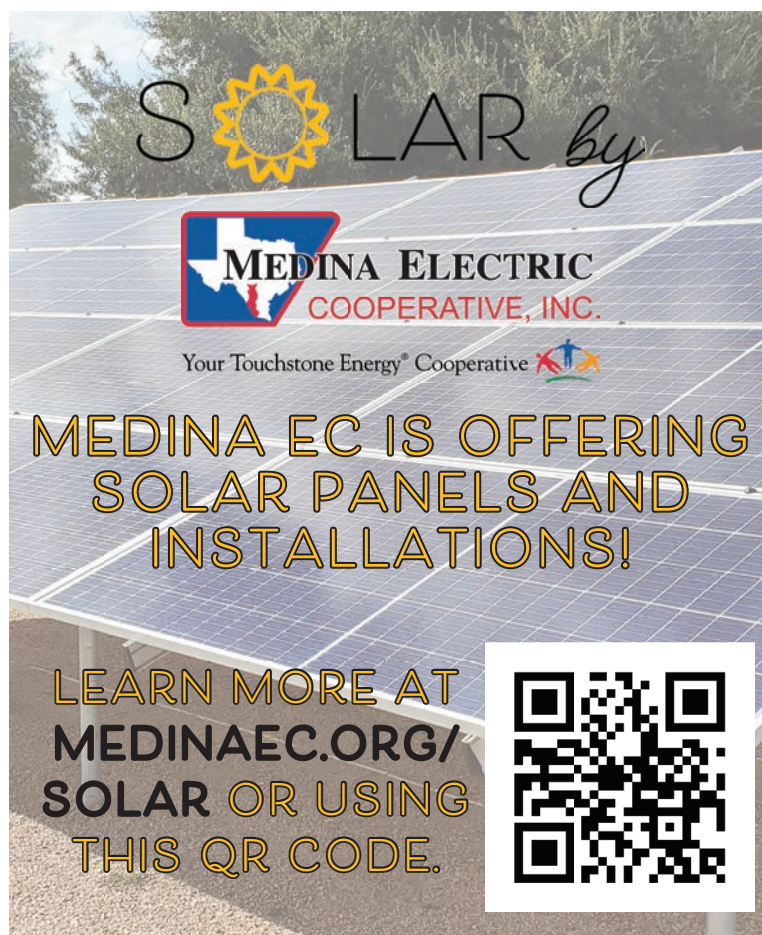
For more information visit MedinaEC.org/Grant.



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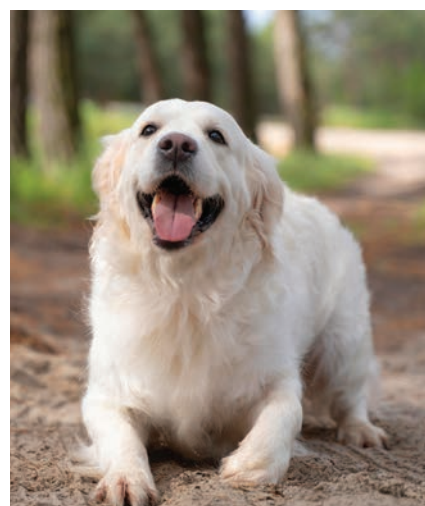
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Pets Get Overheated Too

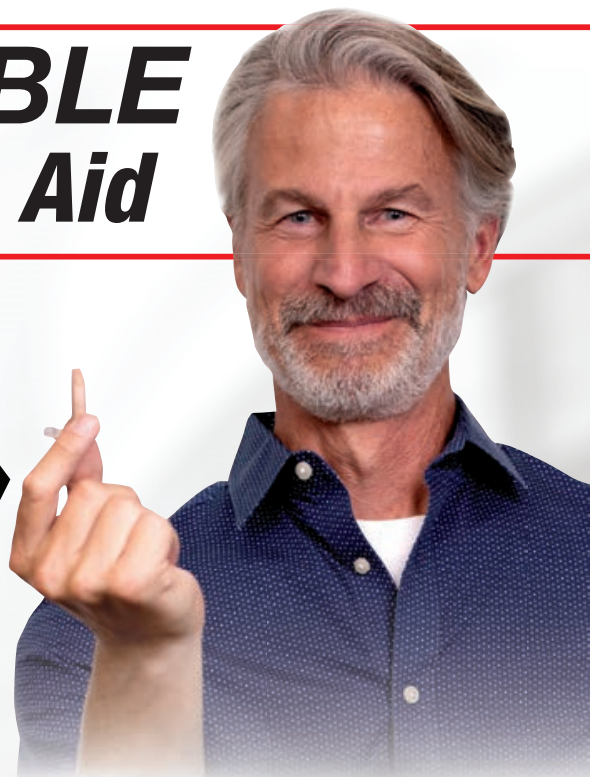
AS MUCH AS YOU ENJOY BEING outdoors in the summer, you probably find cool, indoor spaces—like your home, a shopping mall or a movie theater—a more comfortable place to spend lazy afternoons when it's extra hot outside.

If it's too hot for you to be outdoors, then it's too hot for your pets. In fact, pets can get even hotter than you do because they're covered with fur.

Some pet-safe tips for summer:

- Leave your dogs and cats inside your air-conditioned home when you leave for an extended period or when the heat drives you indoors yourself.
- Take walks or runs with your dogs early in the morning or at dusk when the weather is cooler.
- Remember that your pets don't wear shoes, so hot asphalt on streets and sidewalks can burn their paws.
- If you let your pets into your yard, choose plants that are pet-safe. Some popular flowering plants, like azaleas and hydrangeas, can poison pets.
- Store fertilizer out of pets' reach. ■

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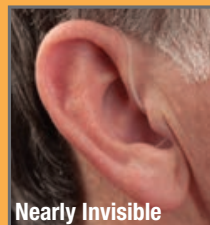
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— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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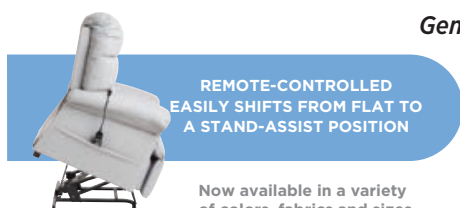
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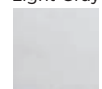
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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



The Most Glorious Autumn

Tom Landry's finest season came in Mission, years before his reign in Dallas

BY W.F. STRONG

TOM LANDRY and Charles Schulz died on the same day: February 12, 2000. Mike Thompson of the *Detroit Free Press* honored the legendary football coach and cartoonist with a drawing showing them entering the Pearly Gates together. Schulz was depicted as Charlie Brown, and Landry had his arm around him, saying, "Now a few pointers on kicking a football ..."

For coach Landry, at least, I can't imagine a finer eulogy.

Known as the man in the hat, Landry was the stoic leader on the Dallas Cowboys sidelines, always impeccably dressed, sporting his fedora. "If there were a Mount Rushmore for the NFL," former commis-

sioner Paul Tagliabue said, "the profile of Tom Landry would have to be there, wearing his trademark hat."

In his 29 years as Dallas' head coach, Landry led the Cowboys to more playoff seasons than they've had since. His team won 13 division titles and played in five Super Bowls, winning two. They enjoyed 20 consecutive winning seasons.

As glorious as those years were, none equaled Landry's finest season in football.

Sure, he played for the New York Giants and was All-Pro one year, but that wasn't his finest season either. Landry also played for the University of Texas, but after only one semester, his career there was put on hold by World War II. He

volunteered to join the Army Air Corps and flew 30 missions over Europe, crash-landing once in Belgium.

To get to his best season ever, we must go all the way back to his high school years in Mission, in the Rio Grande Valley.

It was Landry's senior year, 1941. He played quarterback and defensive back and led the Mission Eagles to a perfect 12-0 season. In those 12 games, they gave up only one score: Donna High School managed to eke out one touchdown.

The Eagles went all the way to the regional championship, which was as far as they could go (there was no state championship then). In the regional game, they demoralized Hondo 33-0.

"That autumn of glory, shared with my boyhood friends ... remains perhaps my most meaningful season in my fifty years of football," Landry wrote in his 1980 autobiography. "The game was never more fun, the victories never sweeter, the achievement never more satisfying."

Landry's nearly flawless season and his professional career were honored in 1975 when the Mission school district named its football stadium for the coach.

After Landry's coaching days were over, he developed a sterling reputation as an inspirational speaker. He was fond of saying, "As of today, you have 100% of your life left."

He took his own words to heart. After he was fired by the Cowboys in 1989, while fans were livid about the way he was sacked, Landry was already moving on.

With characteristic optimism, he saw a silver lining. "As a boy growing up in Mission, Texas, I always dreamed of being a cowboy," he said. "For 29 wonderful years, I was one." ■

Best Burgers

Beyond the beef lie flavorful options that are sure to sizzle

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

I love exploring new burger recipes, and that includes patties made from chicken, fish or vegetarian substitutes. Bean burgers are a great meatless option that can take on various spices and flavor additions. My family loves falafel, so we often opt for making them burger-style. Note that they are a bit more finicky than meat patties. Be sure to let the mixture rest before cooking to let the breadcrumbs absorb excess liquid, and take care handling the patties because they can crumble easily.



Falafel Burgers

1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, rinsed and well drained
½ onion, quartered
½ cup packed parsley leaves
2 cloves garlic
¼ cup breadcrumbs
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon pepper
Pinch ground cayenne pepper
¼ cup vegetable or olive oil

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a food processor, add chickpeas and pulse until well chopped and somewhat smooth. Transfer to a bowl. Add onion, parsley and garlic to food processor and pulse until finely chopped, then transfer to the bowl with the chickpeas. Add the breadcrumbs and spices and mix until uniformly incorporated. Let mixture rest 20 minutes.

2. Pour cooking oil into a skillet and heat to medium. Divide chickpea mixture into 4 patties and gently place in hot pan. Cook 4 minutes, then carefully flip and cook another 4 minutes.

3. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and bake 15 minutes, until cooked through. Let burgers rest 10 minutes to firm up before serving. Serve with hummus, cucumber, tomato, lettuce, pickled onions or other favorite toppings.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Hatch Chile Turkey Burgers.



Homemade Popper-Topped Burgers

MARIA PENNER
LAMAR ELECTRIC

If you love jalapeño poppers, this burger is for you. Jalapeños can vary a lot in heat level, so feel free to reduce or increase the amount of peppers used.

TOPPING

8 ounces bacon, chopped
3 jalapeño peppers
8 ounces cream cheese, softened
¼ cup heavy cream

BURGERS

1 egg
1 jalapeño pepper
⅓ onion
1 pound ground beef
⅓ cup finely ground saltine crackers
1 teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
Mustard

1. TOPPING In a skillet over medium heat, cook bacon until crispy. Drain on paper towels. Broil or grill the jalapeños until skins are slightly charred on all sides. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Dice jalapeños, removing seeds first for less heat if preferred.

2. In a bowl, combine bacon, jalapeños, cream cheese and heavy cream until well blended. Scoop into a small baking dish and bake until heated through, about 15 minutes.

3. BURGERS Meanwhile, in a food processor, pulse together egg, jalapeño (removing seeds if preferred) and onion until smooth. Pour into a large bowl and

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Spicy Bacon Burgers

DANIEL BATES
COSERV



Full of flavor thanks to chorizo and added spices, these burgers are sure to be a hit fresh from the grill. If you don't have smoked paprika on hand, substitute your favorite variety.

SERVES 8

COOK'S TIP Bates suggests pressing a shallow divot into meat patties with a spoon or thumb so they come out flat after cooking.

1 pound 80% lean ground beef
1 pound Mexican-style chorizo
8 ounces thick-cut bacon, chopped into small pieces
1 egg
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon light brown sugar
1 tablespoon smoked paprika
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 tablespoon dried minced garlic
1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic
1½ teaspoons salt
1½ teaspoons pepper
½ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes
1 tablespoon liquid smoke (optional)

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine all ingredients except liquid smoke. Mix by hand until evenly blended and smooth.

2. Divide mixture into 8 even portions, about ⅓ pound each. Form each portion into a patty and set onto a baking sheet lined with waxed paper. Press a spoon into the center of each patty to create a divot. If using liquid smoke, add 3 drops into each divot.

3. Preheat grill or a stovetop skillet to medium heat. Cook the burgers 3–5 minutes per side, depending on thickness. Serve with your favorite toppings.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

GLUTEN-FREE RECIPES DUE AUGUST 10

Gluten-free cooking isn't a trend; it's here to stay. What's a fixture in your kitchen? Submit your recipes on our website by August 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

add ground beef, ground saltines, garlic salt and pepper. Mix by hand until evenly blended. Form into 4 large patties or 6 thinner patties.

4. Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat and add oil. Cook patties 3 minutes, then drizzle mustard onto uncooked side, flip and cook another 3 minutes. Serve with warm popper topping.

SERVES 4-6

Spicy Lamb Burgers

CINDY JOHNSON
COSERV

Fresh herbs are a great addition to burgers, especially combined with the unique flavor of lamb. Serve on brioche buns or tuck into a pita along with greens, tzatziki sauce, tomato slices and cucumbers.

1 pound ground lamb
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint leaves



2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 teaspoon sherry
1 teaspoon white wine vinegar
1 teaspoon molasses
1 teaspoon cumin
¼ teaspoon allspice
½ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
Feta cheese
Baby spinach
Tzatziki sauce
4 brioche buns or pitas, for serving

1. Preheat grill to medium heat. Place ground lamb into a large bowl. In a smaller bowl, combine mint, cilantro, oregano and garlic. Mix into lamb. Add sherry, vinegar and molasses and mix again. Add cumin, allspice, chile flakes, salt and pepper and mix until evenly blended.

2. Divide meat into 4 portions and shape into patties. Lightly brush grill grates with oil. Grill burgers 5 minutes per side, then place on buns or into pitas and immediately sprinkle with feta. Serve with baby spinach and tzatziki sauce.

SERVES 4

TCP You'll find more burger recipes on our website that are sure to help turn your cook-outs into grand successes. Most of them are from the kitchens of *Texas Co-op Power* readers just like you.

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35	10	9	11	10	15	12	21	19	62	42	32	77	54	138	99	260	181
40	10	10	14	12	19	16	28	25	63	46	36	86	60	156	112	292	204
44	12	11	17	15	26	22	42	35	64	50	41	96	67	174	126	327	227
45	13	11	18	16	29	24	47	38	65	55	46	107	75	195	142	365	253
46	14	11	19	17	31	26	50	41	66	61	50	118	86	214	152	403	274
47	14	12	20	18	33	28	54	44	67	68	55	131	99	234	163	447	297
48	15	13	21	19	35	30	59	48	68	76	61	147	115	260	176	500	325
49	16	13	23	20	38	32	65	53	69	84	67	164	131	287	190	556	355
50	16	14	25	21	41	34	70	58	70	94	74	183	150	318	205	619	389
51	17	15	27	22	45	37	78	63	71	104	84	208	162	367	239	712	450
52	18	16	29	24	50	40	87	69	72	116	96	236	175	423	276	818	519
53	19	17	32	26	55	43	99	76	73	129	110	271	191	493	323	949	604
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Heaven Beyond Hell's Gate

Possum Kingdom Lake offers a scenic slice of paradise

BY CHET GARNER

ON THE SHORT LIST of places I never wanted to find myself, Hell's Gate sounded like it should be near the top. And yet there I was, about to pass through its ominous opening to see what might lurk on the other side.

Ironically, I found a slice of Texas paradise—refreshing water, warm sunshine and great tunes. Did I cheat death? Am I writing this article from the great beyond? Oh no! Hell's Gate, on the banks of Possum Kingdom Lake, is simply heavenly.

While the Hill Country west of Austin gets all the attention, there's a hidden hill country in North Texas that encompasses the sprawling Palo Pinto Mountains. And in the middle of it all lies a meandering lake named Possum Kingdom, about an hour west of the Metroplex. Its name dates to the early 1900s, when a prominent fur trader would refer to locals as the "boys of Possum Kingdom" due to an abundance of the furry varmints.

Today the lake is best known for the towering limestone cliffs that mark its banks and the countless boaters who flock there on weekends. Many of them congregate behind the stone walls of Hell's Gate and around Devil's Island. It's a narrow opening of water flanked by 90-foot cliffs.

The cliffs are so sheer they have hosted the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series, which attracts hundreds of spectators who watch professional divers dance with the devil. And while brave novices may be tempted to jump, it's extremely dangerous and illegal.

I could feel a swell of Texas courage welling up in my chest, but I wasn't about to break the law. Luckily, my buddy knew of other cliffs within the legal limit for jumping (20 feet or less), and so we sped off and spent the afternoon jumping from much less hellish heights. ■

ABOVE Chet and the 90-foot cliffs at Possum Kingdom Lake.

TCP What the heck is Chet doing at Hell's Gate? See his latest video on our website to find out. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

AUGUST

07

D'Hanis Holy Cross Catholic Church Homecoming Picnic, (830) 363-7269, holycross-dhanis.org

11

Uvalde [11–14] Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, (830) 278-4184, uvaldeoperahouse.org

12

Boerne Movie in the Park: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, (830) 249-9511, ci.boerne.tx.us

Cedar Park [12–13] Rodeo, (512) 600-5000, hebcenter.com

Junction [12–13] Hill Country Fair Association Rodeo, (325) 446-3190, junctiontexas.com

Plano [12–13] Quilt Plano, 1-800-817-5266, qgplano.org

Sonora [12–13] Outlaw Rodeo and Sutton County Days, (325) 387-2880, sonorataxas.org

Levelland [12–14] World Series Team Roping Qualifier, (806) 894-4161, wstroping.com

13

Cedar Park Treasure of the Hills Senior Center Senior Expo, (512) 331-6000, toth-seniors.com

Grand Prairie Hatch Chile Fest, (972) 237-8084, grandfungp.com/farmersmarket

Junction Car Show, (325) 446-5658, junctiontexas.com/car-show

Kerrville Kids Triathlon,
(830) 257-7300,
kerrvilletx.gov

**Fredericksburg [13-14,
27-28] Live Pari-Mutuel
Horse Racing,**
(830) 997-2359,
gillespiefair.com

**Johnson City [17-20] Blanco
County Fair and Rodeo,**
bcfra.info@gmail.com,
bcfra.org

**Palacios [19-20] Fish Fest
Family Fishing Tournament,**
(361) 972-2615,
palacioschamber.com

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

**Denton [19-27] North
Texas Fair and Rodeo,**
(940) 387-2632, ntfair.com

**Ingram [19-21, 26-28,
Sept. 2-3] The Nerd,**
(830) 367-5121, hcfa.com

**Grand Prairie Lost '80s
Live,** (972) 854-5076,
texastrustcutheatre.com

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

Temple Touch-a-Truck,
(254) 298-5690,
templeparks.com

**Washington Giants of
Texas History at Washing-
ton-on-the-Brazos,**
(936) 878-2214,
thc.texas.gov

**Junction [20-21]
Up & Back Boat Race,**
(325) 446-3190,
junctiontexas.com/
up-back-boat-race

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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

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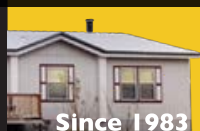
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Pick of the Month

AIA Sandcastle Competition and Viewing

Galveston, August 20-21
(409) 797-5000, visitgalveston.com

Dozens of teams swarm East Beach to create sculptures that get judged on concept, artistic execution, technical difficulty, carving technique and utilization of the site. The competition is a fundraiser for the Houston chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Architecture Center Houston Foundation.

28

Bandera Frontier Times Jamboree, (830) 796-3864, frontiertimesmuseum.org

SEPTEMBER

01

Belton [1-4] Central Texas State Fair, (254) 933-5353, centraltexasstatefair.com

La Grange [1-4] Fayette County Fair, (979) 968-3911, fayettecountyfair.org

02

Fredericksburg [2-3] Vereins Quilt Guild Show: Quilted Fields of Dreams, (325) 347-5515, vereinsquiltguild.org

Boerne [2-4] Kendall County Fair, (830) 249-2839, kcfa.org

Odessa [2-11] Permian Basin Fair and Expo, (432) 550-3232, pbfair.com

03

Brenham The Everly Brothers Experience by the Zmed Brothers, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Fredericksburg Pride in the Pacific, (830) 997-8600, pacificwarmuseum.org

Kerrville Kerr County Market Days & Hill Country Swap Meet, (830) 459-6198, kerrmarketaidays.org

Sunrise Beach Sip & Stroll, (713) 299-1728, sunrisebeachvfd.org/sipandstroll

04

Fayetteville St. John Annual Feast, (979) 378-2277, stjohnfayetteville.com

AUGUST EVENTS CONTINUED

25

Fredericksburg [25-28] Gillespie County Fair, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

26

Killeen [26-27] Crossroads to Texas Quilt Guild Quilt Show, (254) 702-2425, cttquiltguild.org

Corsicana [26-28] Hydroplane Classic, (903) 654-4850, visitcorsicana.com

27

Albany CareFest, (325) 762-2447, facebook.com/resourcecare

Kerrville River Roadster Show, (830) 257-7300, kerrvilletx.gov

Lakeway Cool Arts Show and Studio Tour, (512) 314-7509, lakewayartsdistrict.com/coolarts

Stonewall Commemoration of Lyndon Johnson's Birthday, (830) 868-7128, nps.gov/lyjo

Motor Sports

And they're off! Our readers love to rev and race. These were first across the finish line.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 DANNY PICKENS
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

"The rider appears to reach for the lights as he hangs in the air several feet off the ground at a motocross track in Swan."

2 RONALD HAVARD
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A jet engine dragster heads to the starting line for a quarter-mile race against a P-51 Mustang at an air show.

3 PAIGE LUECKEMEYER
TRI-COUNTY EC

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4 LISA BENNETT
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

"Getting to ride my Ducati 1098S at the famous Circuit of the Americas was truly a bucket list item."



1



2



3



4

Upcoming Contests

DUE AUG 10 Winter Wildlife

DUE SEP 10 Nature's Colors

DUE OCT 10 First Responders



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Motor Sports photos from readers.



The Stars Below

An abundant West Texas cactus garden sparkles in its own way

BY SUZANNE FEATHERSTON
ILLUSTRATION BY CARL WIENS

CLOUDS ROLLED IN the evening before a star party at McDonald Observatory in far West Texas, changing my plans for a summer night in Big Bend.

This was years ago, when a weeklong writers' retreat had taken me to Alpine, where I stayed in the dorms of Sul Ross State University. In our free time, the other writers and I explored the nearby Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center, marveled at the Marfa Lights, hiked to a hilltop at sunrise and drank wine at sunset in the Holland Hotel courtyard.

That night, my colleagues stuck with their itinerary for stargazing, but I stayed behind to tour the grounds at Sul Ross. A cactus garden in front of Lawrence Hall beckoned me to look down instead of up.

The demonstration garden showed off some of the flora produced by the

university's native plant propagation program that has been in operation since 1979. Cactuses were used for decoration and scientific investigations.

The garden showcased about 100 species of promising and already established native ornamentals. From the towering ocotillo scratching at the sky to the diminutive golf ball cactuses, the desert environment nurtures a variety of spiny succulents. The range of prickly pears alone amazed me—some with spines, others “blind”; some with round pads and others pointy; some towering and others cowering.

The cactuses' shapes and names captured my imagination. The resurrection plant resembled a crown of thorns. The living rock cactus looked like a tortoise shell buried in dirt. The eagle-claw cactus carried curved, talonlike needles.

Several cactuses were familiar. I'd seen the horse crippler, a sneaky low-lying succulent with merciless spikes, at what would become Garey Park in Georgetown. The claret cup reminded me of the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry that features a walking trail arrayed with native plants. Seeing ephedra took me back to the Davis Mountains, where I first recognized the medicinal plant.

Instead of studying the star-studded sky, I gazed at the spine-studded ground and gained an appreciation for the “stars” of this Earth.

The experience inspired the landscape around my home in Central Texas. I planted knobby, white mammillaria in the crevices of a large limestone landscaping rock. I used blue agave harvested from a construction site and white-striped agave to grace my meandering crushed granite pathways.

They reminded me that gazing at the ground can be just as awe-inspiring as gazing at the stars. ■



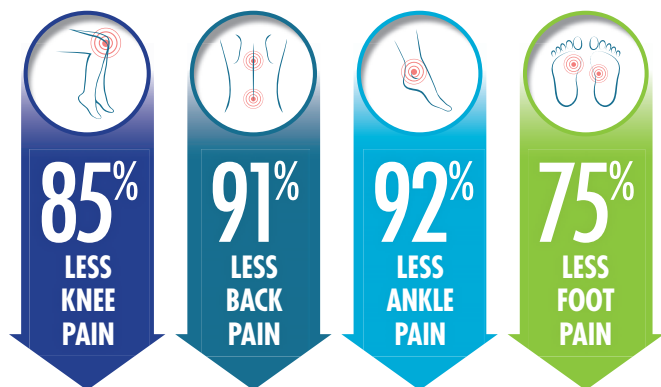
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