

THE CARDINAL:
OUR STATEWIDE BIRD

HOW 'BOUT A HAND
FOR FINGER FOODS

I'LL BE GONE
FOR CHRISTMAS

Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2022

Silent Night

The Christmas story
comes to life in San Elizario
with Las Posadas





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December 2022



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*By Mike Leggett
Illustration by Sarah Ferone*

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Las Posadas sustains a centuries-old Mexican reenactment of the biblical story.

*By Melissa Gaskill
Photos by Erich Schlegel*

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Photo by Erich Schlegel

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Illustration by Sarah Ferone

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Hallmark of the Holidays



December 6

National Microwave Oven Day

Your electric cooperative, your trusted energy adviser that strives to help you save money on electric bills, reminds you: Microwaves use about 60% as much energy as full-size ovens.

BECAUSE OF HENRY COLE, we have Christmas Card Day, which falls on December 9.

Cole, an Englishman, sent the first Christmas card—in 1843.

He fretted over the new custom of sending personalized letters to all his friends. He simply didn't have the time.

So he printed up 1,000 postcards, below, with the greeting "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You."



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I CAN'T BELIEVE I USED TO WEAR ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our October prompt: **The best Christmas gift I ever gave was ...**

A stove with a window in the oven door, to my mother-in-law, who proclaimed with joy, "Now I can watch my cookies as they are baking."

LINDA STEINHEBEL
VIA FACEBOOK

To my mother, in 1967, my return from the war.

ALLEN LINDERMAN
NUECES EC
CORPUS CHRISTI

In 2021, when I surprised our daughter Elizabeth with a book it took me 41 years to write about her

much-loved baby sister Rebecca, who died in 1980 at the age of 9 months.

PHYLLIS CRAM
PEDERNALES EC
AUSTIN

Visit our website to see more responses.

For the Rest of Us

Festivus, the TV holiday that isn't really a holiday, came into the vernacular 25 years ago.

The December 18, 1997, *Seinfeld* episode included a storyline about Festivus, a supposed alternative to the pressures and commercialization of the Christmas season.

“Nothing smooths out the past like a present.”

—GLADYS PARKER



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Wreaths for the Fallen

THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEERS across the country will honor veterans December 17 by laying wreaths at graves on National Wreaths Across America Day. In Texas, 210,000 wreaths are expected to be placed at 300 locations. We featured Texans' involvement in this endeavor in *Circle of Life* in November 2018.

Wreaths Across America grew out of an effort that began in 1992, when Worcester Wreath Co. in Harrington, Maine, had extra wreaths near the end of its busy holiday season. The business arranged for the surplus wreaths to be delivered to Arlington National Cemetery and placed on headstones.



JULIA ROBINSON

Bison at the Brink

“It was also Charles Goodnight who created the cattalo breed on his Texas Panhandle ranch.”

BILL LAMZA
SAN BERNARD EC
HEMPSTEAD

Goodnight Slight

I was “buffaloed” by *Bison at the Brink* [October 2022]. I’m proud to know a Texan was responsible for saving buffalo from extinction in the U.S., but I was stunned the credit was repeatedly given to Charles Goodnight, even though the writer casually acknowledges that his “herd had been gathered and nurtured by his wife, Mary Ann Goodnight, who personally saw to it that the orphans found wandering the ranch were saved and protected.”

That’s the only time her name appeared. It’s a shame we can’t give credit where credit is due.

Susan Rosenberger
Pedernales EC
Spicewood and Johnson City

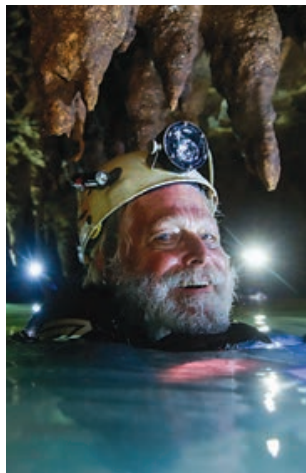
A similar story is told about how George Mitchell’s epiphany for the Woodlands came about [Good on Paper, September 2022].

MELINDA WOOD
SASARAK
VIA FACEBOOK

The Bottom Line

Eric Schlegel’s excellent photo captured a live look at the thrill and excitement of an uncharted cave explorer [Uncharted Territory, October 2022]. And Pam LeBlanc added intriguing coverage of the adventure.

Martha E. Jones
Victoria EC
Victoria



ERICH SCHLEGEL

Colossal Cluster

In December 2005 we visited the monarchs’ nesting grounds at Sierra Chincua [Funnel Vision, October 2022]. Monarchs numbered in the millions—billions? Located at about 11,000 feet in elevation in a remote area of the Sierra Madre, they literally weighed down large pine tree boughs.

Wayne P. Blackley
Trinity Valley EC
Terrell

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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Roll Out the Red Carpet

All Texans know the striking blush and cheery chirps of our other state bird: the northern cardinal

BY MIKE LEGGETT
ILLUSTRATION BY
SARAH FERONE

JUST ABOUT everyone knows that the northern mockingbird is Texas' state bird. But there's another bird we all know that is common throughout our state, nesting and feeding in brush and trees close to our homes and out in the pastures.

Some know it as the redbird, but it's correctly called the northern cardinal. This strikingly colored bird is known for its happy chirping calls that can go on all

day and for the beautiful crest and orange bill of the adults.

Cardinals are the first birds we hear and see hopping around in the brush outside our houses in the mornings. They are the last birds to go to bed every night, which makes them common prey for screech owls and other raptors. But if we ever get around to reconsidering Texas' allegiance to the mockingbird, I suggest we consider the northern cardinal. After all, at least seven other states have chosen the cardinal as their own state bird.

The redbird is ubiquitous, especially in the winter since it doesn't migrate, showing up everywhere from the border country of South Texas to the prairies of the Panhandle. All Texans know the cardinal.

Growing up in the tiny East Texas community of DeBerry in the 1950s, I spent a goodly portion of my young life walking the pastures and open fields around our house. I knocked off



more than my share of sparrows, starlings and brown-headed cowbirds as an eager beaver hunter with a BB gun.

I once made a long, long shot with my pellet rifle to kill what we called a French mockingbird. I know that bird now as the shrike, or butcher bird, named for its habit of hanging things it chases down on mesquite thorns and sharpened spikes on barbed wire fences.

I was not allowed, however, to shoot any of the small group of colorful songbirds that lived and nested near our home. The mockingbird was the state bird then, and I feared that could have gotten me locked up.

My dad, who established the shooting list at our house, probably would have pounded me for killing that shrike if he'd known about it. I kept that quiet. But Dad had a long list of birds with bright colors that I would have been in real trouble if I'd killed. Cardinals were his favorites and first on his protected list, followed by blue jays, bluebirds, scissor-tailed flycatchers and the always cooperative killdeer. Dad loved the way adult killdeers would feign injury and try to lead predators away from their babies and nests.

The beloved cardinal eats mostly seeds and nests around the edges of openings in low brush, especially in the cedar trees of Central Texas. We once had a nest that was built about thigh high in a cenizo just off the front porch of our house. I watched those pinkish eggs for a couple of weeks, until they hatched into three of the ugliest pink babies you

could imagine.

The babies got stronger and bigger and were just about to fledge when the nest was robbed by a Texas rat snake that had taken up residence in our flower bed. That was a sad morning when I found the nest emptied and the adults off squawking in the live oaks in the roundabout a few yards away.

There is a similar bird, actually another member of the cardinal family, known as a pyrrhuloxia. The male has a striking crest that's larger than the cardinal's but is colored mostly gray and crimson. They are common on ranches in South Texas during the winter. Their beaks are much more parrotlike than the cardinal's obvious seed-cracking orange beak.

One ranch where I hunt has repurposed fiberglass water tanks buried in the ground for use as bow blinds. The rancher has piled dirt and brush on top of them and put one-way glass windows at eye level as you stand. It's exciting to watch the male red cardinals flit through the trees as they scout for safe feeding spots on the ground.

Often they land just outside the windows where I can study them closely from just a couple feet away. It's fascinating to watch them pick up a kernel of corn and quickly demolish it to get at the sweet meat inside. There's comfort in that tiny, mighty act—in knowing that Texans yet to come will delight in the redbird. ■

CONTINUING A

Christmas Ritual



Las Posadas sustains a centuries-old Mexican reenactment of the biblical story



AS THE LIGHT FADES on a chilly December evening, a row of luminarias glows against the white facade of the Presidio Chapel of San Elizario. The luminarias, paper bags containing lit candles, outline an adobe museum next to the 140-year-old church and extend around the plaza and on down the streets, giving the night a festive feel.

In the tree-lined plaza, a group of young people in costume gathers next to a gazebo. This is a dress rehearsal for Las Posadas, which translates as “the inns” and refers to a procession or play that reenacts the biblical story of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter in Bethlehem and the birth of

Jesus. This telling of the Christmas story originated in 16th-century Mexico and continues there and in cities and towns north of the Rio Grande with musicians and costumed children going from house to house on Christmas Eve.

San Elizario, southeast of El Paso, has strong historic ties to Mexico, and the San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society has staged a mostly annual Las Posadas as part of its Luminarias Festival for some 20 years. Lillian Trujillo, president of the organization, says many of the participants are teens from San Elizario Catholic Church.

“Sometimes we have to talk them into it; they’re shy,” Trujillo says. “We tell them that they don’t have to speak, that it’s just dressing up and walking around.” Older kids and adults sometimes fill in any gaps. For years, the costumes were an assortment of donated and leftover items, but in 2021, the society received enough donations to buy new ones.

As the dress rehearsal wraps up, people spill from the church where Mass has just ended, joining a crowd beneath the trees. Dozens of small children play in the leaves. Customers line up at a food truck at the back of the plaza. Las Posadas begins.

Students playing Mary and Joseph—the former perched on a real, live mule—make their way past the steps of the church, the mule’s hooves clapping on the pavement. In the gazebo, Trujillo reads the Christmas story aloud, her voice projected over speakers, as an “innkeeper” at the top of the steps turns the couple away. They continue on to the gazebo,

where they settle on bales of hay, and the girl playing Mary pulls a baby doll from under her robe.

Youngsters dressed as wise men step forward to present their gifts: boxes representing gold, frankincense and myrrh. Under a nearby tree, the angels tell those dressed as shepherds the news of the baby’s arrival, and they all make their way into the gazebo to see him. The story is familiar to everyone here.

Las Posadas complete, the players scatter, some pausing to pet the placid mule. In front of the museum, boys and girls from a local folklórico class in traditional dress entertain the crowd with lively dances. Then the youngest kids take turns having a go at a giant piñata. Finally, Santa Claus shows up in a firetruck, sirens blaring and lights flashing, to hand out toys. The night ends with a drawing for bicycles, and every child entered takes home a shiny new bike and helmet, thanks to generous donations.

OPPOSITE Students reenact the biblical story of Mary and Joseph, who, led by angels, seek shelter in Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus.

ABOVE A dazzling dancer at the San Elizario Luminaria Festival.



The church sits at the center of the community, literally and figuratively. In San Elizario, as in other small towns all along the Rio Grande, church bells once served as a timekeeper, ringing at noon to signal lunch break; when it was time for Mass; and to announce weddings, baptisms and deaths.

THE COMMUNITY spends weeks preparing for the festival, which is held on the second or third Saturday of December—December 17 this year.

Local families founded the San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society in 1997 after a conversation at a family reunion about the importance of passing this area's rich history on to younger generations. Board member Elizabeth Baker-Teran's parents, Teresa and Miguel Teran, were among the founders. "They wanted to preserve the genealogical history of the families of San Elizario and the historical buildings that are still there and to educate the public about the hundreds of years of history," Baker-Teran says.

That history includes construction of the presidio chapel by the Spanish for members of the military and their families in 1788. That first chapel flooded in 1829, and another was built to take its place. In 1877, the existing, larger church was built. Its walls were repainted and the current electric lights installed in the 1950s. The Stations of the Cross on the walls inside date back to about 1918.



OPPOSITE A service inside the Presidio Chapel of San Elizario, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. ABOVE Folklorico students perform dances that trace their origins to Indigenous peoples of Mexico.

of Mexico. In the 1829 flood, the river cut a new channel, leaving all three churches on the northern bank. When the U.S. declared the deepest channel of the Rio Grande as the international boundary with Mexico in 1848, these communities became part of the U.S.

The Los Portales Museum occupies a circa-1850 building in San Elizario and tells the area's history. The exhibit room is small but contains a wealth of maps, photos and descriptions of significant events and everyday life in the area. At one point, the town supported a trade in salt from the Guadalupe Mountains. Local farmers employed a complex irrigation system to grow grapes, pears, onions and wheat, which was ground in a private gristmill.

Trujillo says that for many of the families that attend the Christmas festival, the evening fittingly has been about holiday fun. For Trujillo, whose family has been here since the 1700s, an annual Las Posadas is part of keeping that history alive. ■

The church sits at the center of the community, literally and figuratively. In San Elizario, as in other small towns all along the Rio Grande, church bells once served as a timekeeper, ringing at noon to signal lunch break; when it was time for Mass; and to announce weddings, baptisms and deaths.

San Elizario anchors the El Paso Mission Trail, which includes two other historic missions. The Ysleta Mission, originally built in 1680, is considered the first and oldest mission established in Texas and is the second-oldest continually active Catholic parish in the U.S. The original Socorro Mission was completed in 1691, making it the second-oldest Texas mission; the current building dates to 1843.

Socorro Road, which runs from Ysleta to Socorro to San Elizario, is the designated Mission Trail. The 9-mile route follows a segment of the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (Royal Road of the Interior), a trade and supply route that ran from Mexico City to present-day Santa Fe, New Mexico, linking communities, missions and presidios. The oldest road in North America and once the longest, El Camino Real, or what remains of it, was designated as a National Historic Trail in 2000.

Originally, San Elizario, Socorro and Ysleta all sat on the south bank of the Rio Grande, in what became the country



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CEO

HERBERT "TREY"
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Merry Christmas From Medina EC

THE HOLIDAYS ARE a time of reflection. I'm grateful for my own family as well as my co-op family at Medina Electric Cooperative. We're driven by a sense of mission and purpose, and our team feels a strong connection to our community and our members because we live here too.

While many of our community-focused programs and activities ramp up this time of year, we have several programs and services in place to help our members year-round. I'd like to remind you about some of these offerings in hopes you'll find them beneficial.

We hope you'll take advantage of our smartphone app, SmartHub, which empowers you to monitor your electricity usage and pay your energy bill through your phone. We also offer our members various ways to pay their electricity bills, including automatic payments, budgeted payments and prepaid electricity. You can learn more about our payment options at MedinaEC.org/BillPay.

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Our Community Empowerment Program provided \$5,500 in grants this year to seven nonprofit organizations in our service area and donated a retired fleet truck to one of our area's volunteer fire departments.

One of the most important investments we make is in our local youths. Medina EC has awarded more than \$652,000 in scholarships to local students since our scholarship program began in 2001. And each year, through our Government-in-Action Youth Tour program, we send high school sophomores and juniors to Washington, D.C., for an immersive weeklong experience of democracy in action.

At the heart of all of these programs is you—the members we proudly serve. Looking back, I'm grateful for so many wonderful community partners and for the positive impact we can continue to make.

This holiday season, I wish you and your loved ones peace, joy and prosperity. Speaking on behalf of our team at Medina EC, I know the future will be bright because of you.

Until next time,
Trey Grebe



MINERVA STUDIO | ADOBE STOCK

Don't Ignore Your Water Heater

YOU PROBABLY NEVER see it, but your water heater works hard all year round to make sure your family can take hot showers, rinse caked-on food on dishes and wash your clothes at any temperature you choose.

During the winter, however, the water heater works even harder. Cold weather means it has to spend extra energy to heat water. Extra showers, laundry and dirty dishes during the holiday season mean heating more tanks of water to keep up.

So don't ignore it. Like any appliance, your water heater needs attention and maintenance to stay in good working condition.

Take a look. Most homeowners don't look at their water heaters until there's a problem, but a glance every now and then could keep those problems at bay. If the outside of the tank is rusting or if water is leaking from it or you see rusty water stains on the floor surrounding it, call a plumber right away.

Reset the temperature. It's easier than you think to accidentally raise or lower the temperature setting on a water heater, just by knocking it with a mop while you're cleaning the floor, for example. Verify that the appliance is set to 120 degrees. You'll notice a difference in the water temperature in the shower if it's too low or too high.

Insulate the water heater. Insulating the pipes and tanks will keep heat inside the tank and prevent it from escaping into the air. Consider investing in an inexpensive water heater blanket, usually made from foil or fiberglass. It will help the tank maintain a consistent temperature. A tip: Leave it on year-round.

Call for service. An annual flush will remove sediment and minerals that can build up in the tank and reduce the water heater's efficiency and life span.

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.



LOST_IN_THE_MIDWEST | ADOBE STOCK

Is Your Holiday Décor Naughty or Nice?

EVERY YEAR AFTER the holidays, you carefully zip your artificial Christmas tree into a waterproof bag. You lovingly place your precious ornaments into padded boxes. You neatly fold your leftover wrapping paper and stack it in a plastic box so it will come out fresh and ready next December.

But are you jamming tangles of electric light strands into a box that's a little bit too small? And how about the extension cords that let you plug your tree into an outlet that is way too far away for a regular cord to reach?

It's a good bet that those extension cords are still plugged in.

Once this holiday season is over, take as much care with electrical cords as you do with the family heirlooms that help make your holidays special. Here are five ways to keep your light strands in good shape and prevent them from becoming next winter's fire hazard.

As you take down each strand of lights, inspect it for broken or burned-out bulbs. Replace the bulbs and discard any strands with frayed or damaged cords.

Label each strand of lights to remind you where you like to hang it. A year is a long time to remember those details.

Pack up all extension cords along with the decorations. Extension cords are designed for temporary use and are not safe for continual use.

Invest in a storage wheel designed for string lights and a bag sized for the reels. That will keep the cords from tangling, the bulbs from breaking, and the weather and bugs from ruining your lights. Or, instead of a reel, use a rectangular piece of cardboard with a slit cut in one end. Slide one end of your lights in the slit and then wrap the strand around the cardboard and slide the end into the slit. Your lights will remain tangle-free until next year.

Remove batteries from decorations before you put them away. You use the decorations only for about one month every year, and the batteries likely won't last until next December, even if they're dormant. Plus, batteries can corrode and leak all over your packed-up electric toys and decorations.

Luck of the Draw Winners

Our Luck of the Draw contest encourages members to participate in a variety of our programs for a chance to win a \$100 bill credit. Those programs include registering your account on SmartHub, automated payments (autopay), going paperless and joining Operation Round Up. Members who enroll in all four programs are also entered for an extra chance to win.

Winners were randomly selected. The winners in the 2022 Luck of the Draw are:

- ▶ **SmartHub:** MSH Family Real Est Partnership LLC
- ▶ **Paperless:** Dan Lawrence
- ▶ **Autopay:** Patrick B. Clark
- ▶ **ORU:** Alfonso Lopez
- ▶ **Bonus (All 4):** Tommy Hamilton

**Learn more at
MedinaEC.org/Lucky.**

FREPIK | FREPIK.COM

LETTER TO SANTA'S ENERGY ELVES



**Energy
Explorers**

Happy Holidays, Energy Explorers! Santa's Energy Elves are teaming up with our friends at Medina EC to encourage energy-efficiency. We help Santa keep his shop as efficient as possible! That means turning off lights when we leave a room, unplugging tools when we're done and leaving the doors closed. Use this letter to show us how you've been energy efficient this year.

After you complete the letter, give it to an adult to take a picture and email it to us at mycoop@medinaec.org. You can also fill out our digital letter online at MedinaEC.org/EnergyElves. Energy Explorers will receive a special Medina EC gift from us.

Dear Energy Elves,

My name is _____ and I am ____ years old.

I live at _____.

Please put your mailing address to receive a special Medina EC ornament.

This year, I have been very good and have tried to be more energy efficient by:

Please tell Santa I would really like _____ for Christmas.

Love,



(sign your name here)

Team Members Reach Important Milestones

MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CELEBRATED several special work anniversaries for employees between July and September of this year.

Medina EC 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 are on track to donate \$1,900 to various local organizations.

Please join us in celebrating these Medina EC employees!



ALLEN BOEHME
System Operator
Corporate office
45 years

DONATION TO
The Blood & Tissue
Center Foundation



DEBORAH DELEON
System Operator
Corporate office
5 years

DONATION TO
Texas Kidney Foundation



DANIELA HINOJOSA
Member Services Rep.
Rio Grande City office
10 years

DONATION TO
229th District Attorney's
Office - Crime Victim Center



JANET FRENCH
Engineering Assistant
Corporate office
5 years

DONATION TO
Medina Valley Stock
Show Booster Club

Meet Your New Board Member

JIM GATES WAS ELECTED to the Medina Electric Cooperative board of directors during the 2022 director election. His director seat is one of three for Voting District 2 representing members in Atascosa, Edwards, Frio, Kinney, Real, Uvalde and Zavala counties. He attended his first official director meeting in October following the announcement of election results at the 83rd annual membership meeting held on September 24.

Gates is the President and CEO for Stockmens National Bank in Cotulla and has more than 35 years of banking involvement at various other banking facilities.

"I'm excited to use my extensive experience in finance to contribute to the co-op's mission to provide safe, reliable electricity at the lowest possible cost to the members," he said.

Gates is a local rancher and the owner of commercial and residential property. He is an alumnus of Texas

A&M University, class of 1983, and is a director for the Frio Regional Hospital and the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association.



JIM GATES, NEW BOARD MEMBER

Medina EC has nine board members—three from each voting district—who represent the interests of members and govern the cooperative. Directors serve three-year terms, and each year, one director position in each voting district is up for election.

WANT TO RUN FOR MEDINA EC'S BOARD?

Medina EC will be holding district nominating meetings in February 2023 for each voting district. Learn more about the meeting schedule and nomination process at MedinaEC.org/NomMtg.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

ONE OF THIS MONTH'S FEATURES is about paying tribute to a Christmas tradition.

Meet some of Medina Electric Cooperative's employees who share their favorite family Christmas traditions.

YVETTE GARZA

MEMBER SERVICES REP. - RGO

My favorite tradition is that every Christmas, my mom has a Santa for me! If she can't find someone to be Santa, she will dress up herself, like in this picture with me and my two kids.



PATTI TAYLOR

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

When we were blessed with the birth of our first granddaughter, the tradition of the 12 days of Christmas began. Twelve small gifts to open, one each of the 12 days leading up to Christmas.



Fast forward 12 years later, and we now do this for seven grandkids—that's 84 small tokens of love!

JACKIE MUENNINK

COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISOR

Christmas is my favorite holiday, and I have a few traditions, but the one I look forward to the most every year is Christmas tree shopping with my kids. They have so much fun looking at all the different trees in the lot. Then we go home and decorate it together.



KATIE HABY

MANAGER OF KEY ACCOUNTS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

My favorite Christmas tradition with my immediate family is our Christmas card pictures. We have taken them every year since our first child was born, and I love looking back at how much they have changed from year to year. I know I'll cherish that even more as they get older.



2021 LIGHT ENTRY. DEVYN BLUDAU

DECK THE HALLS CONTEST - WIN \$250

Two lucky Medina EC members will get a prize for submitting a photo of their properties decorated in lights, garland, candy canes, wreaths or any other festive decorations.

- ▶ Only Medina EC members are eligible to enter. One entry per membership. Decorations must be done at the property where your Medina EC account is located.
- ▶ Lights may be on your home, Christmas tree, fence line, business, water well or any other creative display on your property.
- ▶ Medina EC encourages energy efficiency—use LED lights and timers to schedule limited lighting use.
- ▶ Entries must include member/account number, account address and mailing address.
- ▶ All photos become property of Medina EC and can be reprinted without payment.

Entries due by December 23. Submit your entry at MedinaEC.org/ChristmasLights or send it through email to MyCoop@MedinaEC.org.

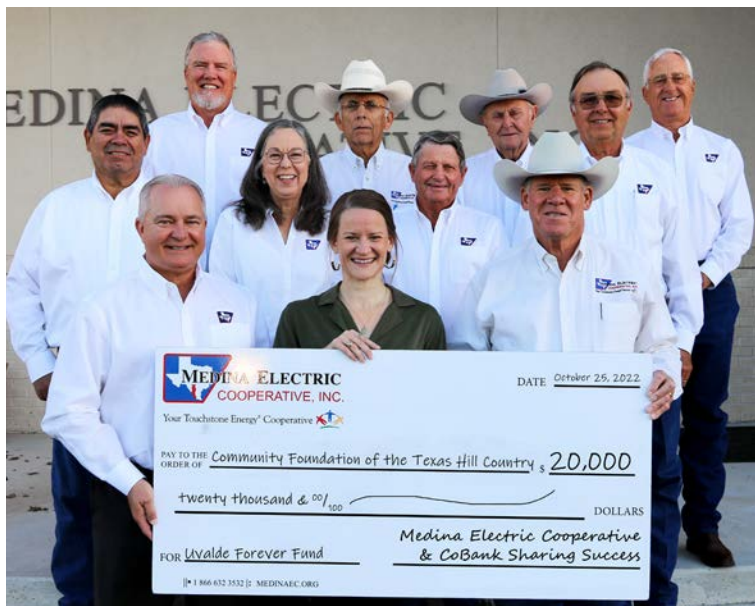
Medina Electric Cooperative Offers Support to Uvalde

Medina Electric Cooperative presented the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country with a \$20,000 donation to benefit the Uvalde Forever Fund. The gift will support the Uvalde community following the recent tragedy at Robb Elementary. The Uvalde Forever Fund will raise, manage and distribute grants for long-term community benefit—such as a community center, youth programs and mental health resources—but can also offer short-term solutions.

"Uvalde is home to many of our employees and members," said Trey Grebe, Medina EC's CEO. "As a co-op family, we continue to grieve and mourn with our Uvalde community." Kenneth White, Medina EC board president, added, "As this community works towards long-term healing, Medina EC will be honored to have a part in that effort to see Uvalde rise above this event."

Concern for Community is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that structures Medina EC's business model. Cooperatives, like Medina EC, work to support and empower the communities they serve, and supporting the Uvalde Forever Fund is just one way of doing that.

The donation was made possible through the members of Medina EC and through CoBank's Sharing Success charitable contribution program. CoBank, a national cooperative bank, is one of Medina EC's financial partners. Through the Sharing Success program, CoBank matched a \$10,000 donation that Medina EC made to a nonprofit organization in their 17-county service area, for a total contribution of \$20,000.



THE \$20,000 DONATION FROM MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COBANK WAS PRESENTED TO THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY FOR THE UVALDE FOREVER FUND. PRESENT FOR THE DONATION WERE, FRONT ROW FROM LEFT, MEDINA EC CEO TREY GREBE, UVALDE FOREVER FUND COORDINATOR LUCY CAPT AND MEDINA EC BOARD PRESIDENT KENNETH WHITE; MIDDLE ROW FROM LEFT, MEDINA EC BOARD MEMBERS R.H. RODRIGUEZ, ANNETTE SORRELLS, LARRY HUESSER AND WAYNE SCHOLTZ; AND BACK ROW FROM LEFT, JIM GATES, JI GONZALEZ, JIMMIE RAINES AND KEN WEYNAND



BOB RICCA | UNSPLASH

Decorate Safely

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY started hanging Christmas lights, make sure to do so safely. Nearly three people every hour are treated in hospital emergency rooms for decorating-related injuries during every holiday season, according to the National Safety Council.

Here are five ways to keep yourself safe during decorating this season.

1. Inspect stored lights before using them again this holiday season. Discard any with frayed or exposed wires, loose connections, or broken sockets.
2. Decorate the tree with kids in mind. Place breakable ornaments and those with metal hooks near the top of the tree, where little ones can't reach them.
3. Some holiday plants, including varieties of poinsettias, can be harmful to children and pets. Keep them out of your home—or at least out of reach.
4. Use sturdy ladders when decorating outdoors. Indoors, use stepladders instead of onto chairs.
5. Don't hide extension cords under rugs or furniture. They can overheat and catch fire. ■

Summer 2023 Plans:

- ✓ Have unforgettable experiences
- ✓ See national treasures
- ✓ Make new friends
- ✓ Go on the trip of a lifetime!



Would your teen enjoy a **FREE** trip to Austin and Washington, D.C., in June 2023?

The Government-in-Action Youth Tour may be for them!

Apply now! Deadline is **January 6**.
Application and eligibility information can be found at MedinaEC.org/YouthTour.

BONUS: Winners will receive a \$500 college scholarship!



EUROBANKS | ADOBESTOCK

BEWARE OF SCAMMERS!

Protect yourself against scammers and know the signs of fraudulent callers! If you are not sure if the call is Medina EC, hang up and call us at 1-866-632-3532.

Learn more at
MEDINAEC.ORG/SCAMMERS.

ALIAXSANDR MARKO | ADOBE STOCK



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
Wednesday, December 7

National Wreaths Across America Day
Saturday, December 17

Christmas
Sunday, December 25
Our offices will close at noon on Thursday, December 22, and be closed on Friday, December 23, and Monday, December 26, in observance of the holiday. As always, crews will be on call.

New Year's
Sunday, January 1
Our offices will be closed on January 2. As always, crews will be on call.

Youth Tour Applications Due
Friday, January 6

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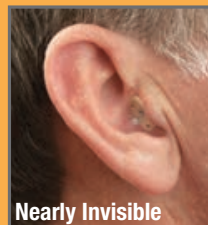
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TOUR OF HOMES**

+ + +

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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**.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you aren't completely happy with your purchase, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

The supply of Arizona turquoise is limited, don't miss your chance to own the Southwest's brilliant blue treasure. Call today!

Jewelry Specifications:

• Arizona turquoise • Silver-finished settings

Sedona Turquoise Collection

A. Pendant (26 cts)	\$299 *	\$99 +s&p Save \$200
B. 18" Bali Naga woven sterling silver chain		\$149 +s&p
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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



A Brief but Determined Texan

Samuel Walker's violent adventures became the stuff of legend

BY W.F. STRONG

SAMUEL WALKER arrived in Texas six years after the republic won its independence. In five more years, he would be dead. But in those five years, he would defend San Antonio from Mexican forces, invade Mexico four times, escape from a Mexican prison and help design one of the most famous guns in history.

One hundred and seventy-five years later, he's also remembered as one of the most fascinating Texas Rangers of all time.

Before he was a Ranger, Walker was part of the ill-fated Mier expedition, during which 176 Texian militiamen were captured by Mexico in 1843. Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna ordered them all

shot, but cooler heads in the Mexican government prevailed, demanding one in every 10 killed instead. The Texans drew beans from a pot. Those who got one of the 17 black beans would be executed; those who drew white beans would live. Walker got a white bean.

The survivors were marched 800 miles across Mexico's brutal deserts. Once in Mexico City, Walker and some other captives were imprisoned; others were marched another 100 miles and incarcerated in the infamous Perote Prison.

There is a much-shared myth that while he was incarcerated, Walker was ordered to dig a hole for a flagpole and

raise the Mexican flag. According to one version of the legend, he put a dime at the bottom of the hole and vowed to return one day, reclaim the coin and raise the Texas flag. Several years later, the story goes, he retrieved his dime when he returned with American forces.

It's a good story but probably not true. Walker never mentioned it in his journals, and the flagpole in the various versions of the myth is always in Perote Prison. Walker was never held there.

Walker eventually escaped—a story that would make a good novel in itself—and made it back to Texas. He joined up with Jack Hays and the Texas Rangers in 1844.

When Gen. Zachary Taylor sent out a call in 1845 for volunteers to scout for his federal troops, Walker immediately signed up. He ran messages through the Mexican lines to keep Fort Texas (soon to be Fort Brown) aware of Taylor's plans, and Walker led the charge in the battle for Monterrey.

It was after Taylor's forces had secured Monterrey, in 1846, that Walker took a brief furlough and traveled east. There he gave Samuel Colt some ideas for improving an earlier model of Colt's revolver. Colt, in gratitude, named a special, very heavy model—more than 4½ pounds—of his new six-shooter after the Ranger.

Walker next joined up with Gen. Winfield Scott's campaign to attack Mexico City, sacking Perote Prison on the way. But Walker would not live to make it back to Texas. He died fighting in the town of Huamantla in 1847.

Walker's body was eventually returned to San Antonio, interred in the Odd Fellows Cemetery, next to the unidentified remains of defenders of the Alamo. ■

Finger Foods

Make room on your plates for these yummy treats this holiday season

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

December is the perfect time of year for gathering with friends and family, and for me that always means having plenty of nibbles on hand. I love serving (and eating) appetizers. Everyone gets to taste a variety of dishes, and you don't need to worry about overfilling your plate.

Jalapeño Popper Bites

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
½ cup finely shredded cheddar cheese
½ cup chopped jalapeño peppers
⅓ cup cooked and crumbled bacon
½ teaspoon salt
Pinch ground cayenne pepper (optional)
30 phyllo shells
Pickled jalapeño slices, for garnish

COOK'S TIP For a vegetarian option, the bacon can be left out.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a bowl, combine cream cheese, cheddar, chopped jalapeños, bacon, salt and cayenne until smooth and uniformly mixed.
3. Use two spoons or a small cookie scoop to divide mixture among phyllo shells. Place filled shells on a rimmed baking sheet and bake 10 minutes, until shells are crisp and filling is just starting to brown.
4. Let cool slightly and top each shell with a slice of pickled jalapeño. Serve warm.

MAKES 30 POPPERS

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Everything Bagel Pretzel Bites.





Cheesy Pepperoni Pizza Puffs

BEV KELLY
BANDERA EC

Young guests will love these pizza puffs, but adults will enjoy them too. If you can't find mini pepperoni rounds, use diced pepperoni or cut standard pepperoni slices into small pieces.

5 ounces (1 package) mini pepperoni rounds, divided use
2 cups flour
1 cup fresh shredded Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons Italian seasoning
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes
1½ cups whole milk
2 eggs, beaten
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 cups shredded four-cheese pizza blend
Marinara sauce, for serving

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat two 24-cup mini muffin pans with nonstick spray. Reserve about ¼ cup pepperoni rounds and set aside.

2. In a large bowl, stir together flour, Parmesan, Italian seasoning, baking powder, sugar and red chile flakes. Stir in milk, eggs and oil until well blended, then stir in pizza cheese blend and remaining pepperoni.

\$500 WINNER

Texas Brisket Empanadas

ANN MCCOOL
TRI-COUNTY EC



These empanadas will be among the first to disappear from the table thanks to their flavorful filling and dipping sauce. If you like, roll the puff pastry out thinner to create more empanadas with the same amount of filling.

MAKES 12-20 EMPANADAS



EMPANADAS

1 sheet puff pastry
1 tablespoon olive oil
⅓ cup finely chopped red onion
1 jalapeño pepper, finely chopped
1¼ cups finely chopped cooked brisket
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
2 tablespoons barbecue sauce
1 teaspoon hot sauce
½ cup finely grated sharp cheddar cheese
1 egg
1 tablespoon water

DIPPING SAUCE

⅔ cup sour cream
⅓ cup barbecue sauce
2 tablespoons hot sauce
Lime juice, to taste

1. EMPANADAS Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Thaw puff pastry according to package directions and line two baking sheets with parchment.

2. Pour olive oil into a skillet and heat to medium, then add onion and jalapeño. Cook about 5 minutes, until starting to soften. Add brisket, garlic, barbecue sauce and hot sauce and cook another 3 minutes, stirring to combine well.

3. Transfer mixture to a bowl and stir in cheddar cheese until evenly mixed.

4. Roll out puff pastry to a large rectangle, approximately 9 by 12 inches, and cut into 3-inch squares.

5. Whisk together egg and water in a bowl and brush a small amount on edges of pastry squares. Place about 1 tablespoon of brisket filling in the center of each square, then fold over one side, bringing edges together. Crimp edges together with a fork.

6. Arrange empanadas on baking sheets and bake 20 minutes, until light golden brown.

7. DIPPING SAUCE In a bowl stir together sour cream, barbecue sauce, hot sauce and lime juice.

8. Serve empanadas warm with sauce on the side.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

BERRIES DUE DECEMBER 10

We're looking for your favorite ways to enjoy strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and more of the small juicy delights. Submit your recipes on our website by December 10 for a chance to win \$500.



CONTINUED >

RECIPES CONTINUED

3. Scoop a heaping tablespoon into each muffin cup and top with reserved pepperoni slices.

4. Bake 20 minutes, until puffed and golden brown. Let cool 5 minutes, then remove from pan and serve.

MAKES ABOUT 4 DOZEN PIZZA PUFFS

Crispy Coconut Shrimp

VAN FULTON
PEDERNALES EC

Homemade coconut shrimp is a wonderful appetizer for any occasion. Make sure to leave the tails on when peeling the shrimp, as it will make it easier to dip the shrimp into the coatings.

1¼ cups shredded coconut
½ cup panko breadcrumbs
½ cup flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar



¼ teaspoon pepper
2 eggs
1 pound raw jumbo shrimp, defrosted, peeled and deveined
Oil for frying
Chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish
Thai sweet chili sauce, for serving

1. In a shallow bowl, combine coconut and panko. In another shallow bowl, combine flour, salt, sugar and pepper. Beat eggs in a third bowl.

2. Pat shrimp dry with paper towels. Holding by the tail, dip shrimp first into the

flour mixture, coating all sides. Then dip into the egg, let excess drip off and dip into the coconut mixture, pressing gently to adhere. Place coated shrimp on a baking sheet and repeat until all shrimp are coated.

3. In a heavy-bottomed pot such as a Dutch oven, add about 2 inches of oil and heat over high to 365 degrees. Use a thermometer to monitor temperature.

4. Fry shrimp in batches until golden brown, 1–2 minutes. Drain on a rack and let cool slightly before serving.

5. Garnish with cilantro, if desired. Serve with Thai sweet chili sauce for dipping.

MAKES ABOUT 20 SHRIMPS

TCP Remember, we have nearly 1,000 recipes on our website to make your holidays perfect. Search by dish or ingredient and dig in.

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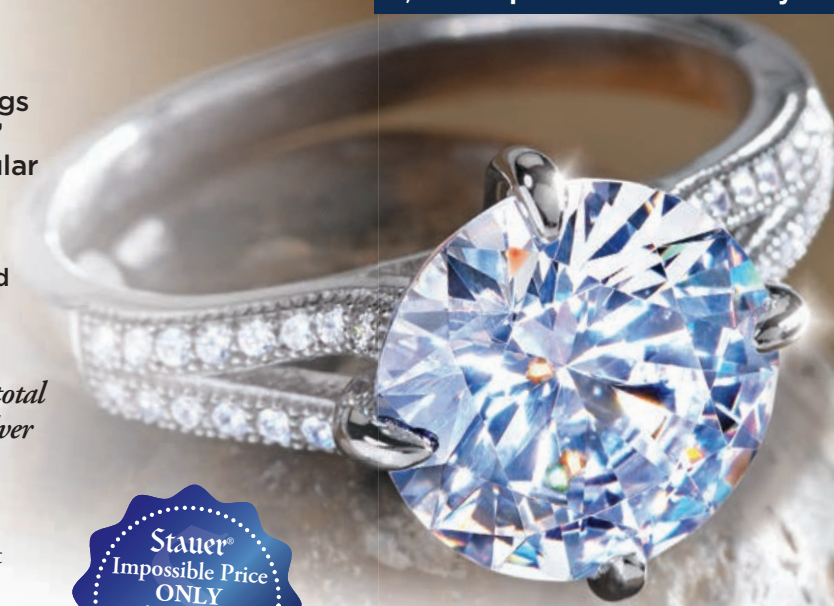
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Fredericksburg

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TCP Enter Today
TexasCoopPower.com/contests





COURTESY CHET GARNER

A Raw Deal

Dziuk's Meat Market has perfected so-called Texas tartare

BY CHET GARNER

WHEN I THINK of all the things I've eaten on the road that were most unfamiliar, a few dishes come to mind. There was the smoked cow eyeball in Brownsville, chicken feet in Houston and deep-fried rattlesnake in Sweetwater. I had to overcome some hesitations but still finished each one. That's what I expected when I set out to try raw beef parisa at Dziuk's Meat Market. But not only did I finish my plate, I left with an entire pound for later.

Dziuk's (pronounced "jukes") has been around since the 1960s, when it was started in Poth by two brothers. Later another location opened in Castroville, west of San Antonio. It's an old-school meat market where you can buy a great steak cut to order and even bring in deer for processing. But despite selling every cut of meat your heart might desire, the most popular item remains their house-made parisa.

Parisa is a traditional dish made of raw round steak that's ground up and mixed with salt, pepper, onions, jalapeños and soft easy-melt cheese. The locals buy hundreds of pounds a week to eat with crackers and bring to family gatherings. It's a regional delicacy that, as far as I can tell, is only made at a handful of markets across Medina County. Third-generation owner Kenton Sims told me to think of it as "Texas tartare."

I plunged my saltine deep into a pile of parisa then took a deep breath and a big bite. The flavor was instantly familiar: Tex-Mex spices blended deliciously with the mouthfeel and taste of a juicy hamburger. I loved it and finished off the whole platter. Then I ordered some parisa for the road—and made sure not to leave it behind in a hot car. ■

ABOVE A platter of parisa didn't last long once Chet got ahold of it.

TCP Chet cooks up another video featuring one of his culinary adventures. Watch it on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

DECEMBER

08

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

Dallas [8-11] Lone Star State Classic Dog Show, dallasdogshow.com

Granbury [8-11, 15-18, 20-23] Miracle on 34th Street, (817) 579-0952, granburytheatrecompany.org

09

Fredericksburg [9-10] Christmas Journey, (830) 997-2069, bethanyfredericksburg.com

Lake Brownwood [9-10] Holiday at the Lake, (325) 784-5223, tpwd.texas.gov

Montalba [9-11] A Walk Through Bethlehem, (903) 764-8048, visitpalestine.com

Palestine [9-11] The Man Who Wanted To Be Santa Claus, (903) 922-1146, thetexasattheater.com

Waxahachie [9-11] A Charlie Brown Christmas, (972) 646-1050, waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com

Fredericksburg [9-11, 16-18] Miracle on 34th Street, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

10

Canton East Texas Book Bash, easttexasbookbash@gmail.com, easttexasbookbash.weebly.com

Chappell Hill Christmas Home Tour, (713) 562-6191, chappellhillgardenclub.com

Corpus Christi Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra: *Home for the Holidays*, (361) 883-6683, ccsymphony.org

Huntsville Houston Family Christmas, (936) 294-1111, samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com

Llano Snow Day!, (325) 247-5354, llanochamber.org

Round Top *The Nutcracker*, (979) 249-3129, festivalhill.org

Weslaco Lighted Christmas Parade, (956) 968-2102, weslaco.com

Fredericksburg [10-11] Red-bud Artisan Market Holiday Show, (512) 660-3328, redbudartisanmarket.com

Spring [10-11] Islamic Arts Festival, info@islamicartsociety.org, islamicartsociety.org

Seguin Mid-Texas Symphony: *A Storybook Holiday*, (830) 463-5353, mtsymphony.org

Texarkana Christmas at the Perot, (870) 773-3401, texarkanasymphony.org

Lubbock Glimpses of Lubbock History: Christmas in Lubbock, (806) 767-3733, ci.lubbock.tx.us

Corsicana Christmas Variety Show, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

Katy Christmas Gift Market, (936) 900-1900, bigtop.show

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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



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DEC. 19-23

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COURTESY JOSÉ HERNÁNDEZ



Pick of the Month

Mariachi Sol de México de José Hernández: Merry-Achi Christmas

Midland, December 14
1-800-514-3849, wagnernoel.com

José Hernández's Mariachi Sol de México blends cultural traditions with modern genres and styles to create an award-winning sound that has appealed to listeners the world over. This is a Christmas concert you won't soon forget.

DECEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

15

Anson [15-17] Texas Cowboys' Christmas Ball, (325) 696-9040, texasccb.com

16

Tyler K-Love Christmas, (903) 525-1100, gabc.org

Boerne [16-18] Kinder Fest, (830) 816-2176, ci.boerne.tx.us

Leander [16-18] GoGames360, 1-866-582-5422, gogames360.com

17

Amarillo Amarillo Symphony: Happy Holiday Pops, (806) 376-8782, amarillosymphony.org

Bandera Horse-Drawn Wagon Rides With Santa, (830) 688-3063, banderacowboycapital.com

Boerne Winter Solstice: Rudi and the Rudiments, (830) 537-4212, cavewithoutaname.com

18

Brenham The Grand Ol' Christmas Show, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Coldspring It's a Charlie Diggs Christmas, charliediggs.com

Waco Carpenters Legacy: A Christmas Portrait, (254) 296-9000, wacohippodrometheatre.com

Austin [17-23] Armadillo Christmas Bazaar, (512) 447-1605, armadillobazaar.com

Grand Prairie Michael Martin Murphey's Cowboy Christmas, (972) 854-5076, texastrustcutheatre.com

Richards James Zimmerman, (936) 436-9050, wscwinery.com

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

22

New Braunfels Deck the Dancehalls, (830) 606-1281, gruenehall.com

Palestine Christmas Carol Sing Along, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

31

Elgin Glowing Into 2023, (512) 281-5724, elgintexas.gov

Fredericksburg Countdown to 2023, (830) 997-7521, fbgtx.org

JANUARY

01

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

Surfside Beach Polar Plunge, (979) 233-1531, visitbrazosport.com

Winter Wildlife

Step into the crisp air, slide a gloved hand over snow packed all around, and see evidence of animals large and small as you step into a sparkling winter wonderland. When a twig snaps behind you, you'll have to act fast to capture an image as stunning as these.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1

1 MIKE PRESTIGIACOMO
BARTLETT EC

A thirsty fox.

2 FRANKI SALDIVAR
J-A-C EC

"I put a bird feeder out for the cardinals when it snowed, and they sure seemed to appreciate it."

3 RICK BLACKMORE
PEDERNALES EC

"A buck lounging in the snow during the winter storm of 2021."

4 GABRIELLE ETHINGTON
PENTEX ENERGY

A doe curiously walks up to a dove looking for food.



2



3



4

Upcoming Contests

DUE DEC 10 Riding the River
DUE JAN 10 Taking Flight
DUE FEB 10 Dad



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Winter Wildlife photos from readers.



I'll Be Gone for Christmas

The gift of escaping and passing along a mother's curious nature

BY BABS RODRIGUEZ
ILLUSTRATION BY KEVIN FALES

TRAVEL DURING the Christmas season is my way of clearing my head of the clutter that can weigh down the celebration. I just need a few deep breaths beneath trees that don't have lights on them. And a spare winter landscape regenerates my spirit like nothing else.

I first discovered how meaningful such a journey could be when my son was barely school age. It was 20 years ago, just after our mom died, and my youngest brother, Jimmy, and I were struggling to reinvent the holiday season without her.

I invited Jimmy, whose eccentric education in anthropology and fishing made him an ideal camp companion, to join my son and me in a nearby state park.

As we settled into a campsite, I realized that I had been so fixated on keeping the planning minimal that I had packed no

chairs, no plates, no knife. I did bring salt and pepper, a big cake of lavender soap and one plastic fork. It was a few days after I'd hosted a Christmas event for 50 people; I was so tired I was stupid.

My brother was undaunted. Before I had discovered I'd also forgotten firewood, he had chicken seasoned and cooking nicely on his portable grill—gamely making do with the single plastic utensil. I headed to a nearby store for split logs.

When I returned, my son was barefoot. In the time I'd been gone, he'd cast his rod into the lake, then waded in after it—soaking socks and shoes. He appeared delighted to be wearing leather work gloves on his feet, like some giant splay-footed bird cozied up to the grill. Uncle Jimmy was already steaming the socks dry.

After eating, we hiked to a spectacular scenic overlook. That was when I consciously noted Jimmy's pink stocking cap. The hat was familiar. And comforting. It had been knitted by our mother. In her passion for handcrafts, Mom would get stuck in loops of creativity. Jimmy was the beneficiary of the Year of the Knitted Caps. By wearing one, he brought her along.

Jimmy also inherited Mother's adaptability and resourcefulness. We both have a heaping share of her curiosity. She taught us to pause often on any walk, to study stones and insects and scat. She was monumentally successful in opening our eyes to the natural world.

After we took in the view from the overlook, we began exploring cautiously. I focused my attention on my son, introducing him to nopales and miniscule fungi. But watching Jimmy bobbing through the woods in that pink hat, I realized it was I who most needed the lessons of this day away from the holiday: a reminder to be the mother to my son that she had been to me. ■

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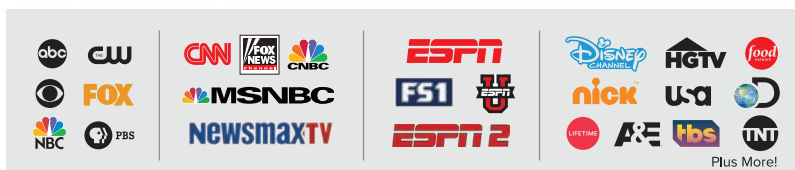
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