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May 2024



10

Overpass Easels

Michael Ford's larger-than-life art merges traffic and culture along Texas highways.

*Story by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers
Photos courtesy Michael Ford*

06

Sixes on the Small Screen

The people of the storied Four Sixes Ranch—as seen on 'Yellowstone'—work to preserve its legacy.

*Story by Margaret Buranen
Photos by R.J. Hinkle*

04

Currents
The latest buzz

05

TCP Talk
Readers respond

16

Co-op News
Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative

25

Footnotes in Texas History
Payback Time
By W.F. Strong

26

TCP Kitchen
Spring Cakes
By Vianney Rodriguez

30

Hit the Road
Breaking News
By Chet Garner

33

Focus on Texas
Photo Contest: Rides

34

Observations
Grandma's Best Friend
By Martha Deeringer

ON THE COVER

Some of the 700–800 quarter horses at the Four Sixes Ranch.
Photo by R.J. Hinkle

ABOVE

Michael Ford with his sculpted panel that celebrates Wichita Falls' Hotter'N Hell Hundred cycling event.
Photo courtesy Michael Ford



May 16
**National Love
 a Tree Day**

One of Texas' largest and oldest—Big Tree, a live oak at Goose Island State Park near Rockport—is estimated to be up to 1,100 years old.

**FINISH THIS
 SENTENCE**
 Summer means ...

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 March prompt: **Music makes me ...**

Forget my troubles for a little while.
 RENEE TWEED
 VIA FACEBOOK

Release those wonderful endorphins that make me grab a broom and give a concert for my plants and fish.
 JAMES D. WILLIAMS
 VIA FACEBOOK

Reminisce about the time in my life that the song came out.
 HARRY MACK
 UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
 GRAFORD

Think of the many times I danced with my dad.
 PATTI FISHER
 BOWIE-CASS EC
 TEXARKANA

Connect to yesterday, hope for the future and dance today.
 MICHELLE WINN
 PEDERNALES EC
 KYLE

Visit our website to see more responses.

Wakeboard Wizardry

FUN TIMES for a 6-year-old wakeboarding on Coletto Creek Reservoir outside Victoria turned into a teenager's passion. And for 14 years, Blake Daniel, pictured above, practiced and competed, even as he became a distribution engineer at South Texas Electric Cooperative.

Finally, in September 2023, Daniel reached the pinnacle—capturing a wakeboarding world title in his age group in an international competition in Portugal.

"It was crazy. I can't explain it," he said. "It's something that I feel like we've been working for forever. Finally, to win is an unreal feeling."

Many family members, wearing shirts that read, "I throw Texas-sized tantrums," shared Daniel's joy. In wakeboarding lingo, tantrums are good things—blackflips on a board.

Contests and More

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RECOMMENDED READING
 On National Paranormal Day, May 3, consider the mysterious musical presence that sometimes intrudes upon a Houston library's stillness. Read *Shh!* from December 2020.



DANIEL: COURTESY BLAKE DANIEL; BABY: JOSE MANUEL GELPI DIAZ | DREAMSTIME.COM

MARCH 2024 The Retirement of a Legend

“Danny Williams and his son, Gordon, used to come to Concho Valley Electric Cooperative for safety meetings. If you didn’t learn something from Danny, you weren’t listening.”

TOMMY EARNEST
CONCHO VALLEY EC
SAN ANGELO



DAVE SHAFER

Pier Placement

Buoyed by Vice [March 2024] stated that the Balinese Room “sat atop a pier that jutted into the bay.” I thought it was on the seawall, jutting out over the Gulf of Mexico.

John Eaves
Pedernales EC
Leander

EDITOR’S NOTE You’re correct. We have fixed the story online.

Katy’s Spunk

Gordon Jennings was my husband’s great-great-grandfather [*A Revere of Our Own*, March 2024]. I am writing the story of our family history for our eight grandchildren, and one of them is named Katy. I believe she has as much spunk as the first Katy Jennings!

Judy Jennings
Wise EC
Paradise

Vintage Puzzles

My grandfather made quite a few wooden puzzles in the 1920s and ’30s and apparently sold them, as some have labels from Vincil Novelty Co. [*Puzzling Times*, February 2024]. My brothers, all my cousins and I still have many of them.

Dorothee Johnson
Grayson-Collin EC
Whitesboro

Adorable Donkeys

As a former longtime breeder, trainer and exhibitor of donkeys, it warms my heart whenever something positive is written about these wonderful animals [*Touched by an Angel*, January 2024].

The story of Angel riding on a float during a Christmas parade was priceless.

Sandra Osborne Neeley
United Cooperative Services
Grandview



KATE GLEYZER

TCP 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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Sixes ON THE Small Screen

The people of the
storied Four Sixes
Ranch—as seen
on 'Yellowstone'—
work to preserve
its legacy



IF you watched *Yellowstone* spinoff *1883*, you probably saw Joe Leathers. But you likely didn't know it.

He was on screen for about three seconds, driving cattle on horseback.

"It was a long-distance shot, so you couldn't tell it was me," he says.

It was a bit part, but Leathers is the leading man at the ranch that has become a centerpiece for the *Yellowstone* TV series. He has managed West Texas' Four Sixes Ranch since 2008.

The show and its characters are make-believe, but Leathers' work is quite real. He spends "as many days as possible" working cattle with his colleagues at the ranch, though his job keeps him out of the saddle more than he would like.

Yellowstone, created and written by actor Taylor Sheridan, tells the story of a fictional Montana ranch owned by the Dutton family. Four Sixes makes its on-screen debut in the fourth season, when ranch hand Jimmy Hurdstrom is sent away to improve his attitude and cowboy skills. But instead of hating it, Jimmy loves the ranch and wants to stay there.

The real-life Four Sixes covers more than a quarter-million acres, making it one of the 10 largest ranches in Texas.

The main ranch, near Guthrie, east of Lubbock, comprises 142,372 acres and gets its electricity from South Plains Electric Cooperative. In the Panhandle, the Dixon Creek Ranch division in Carson and Hutchison counties spans another 114,455 acres. A third portion, the Frisco Creek Ranch division, covers 9,428 acres in Sherman County and is served by Rita Blanca Electric Cooperative.

There are plenty of outdoor sights to film at the ranch, including sprawling fields and swift, beautiful horses herding cattle. Wildlife includes quail, deer, Barbary sheep, turkeys, wild hogs, coyotes, bobcats, migrating ducks and geese, songbirds, rattlesnakes, and even some antelope. Every year the main ranch house is surrounded by migrating butterflies for two or three days around Halloween. "It's the most beautiful sight," Leathers says.

The Burnett family established Four Sixes more than 150 years ago and passed it down for four generations.



In 1870, Samuel "Burk" Burnett bought some cattle already branded 6666 (contrary to a legend about the ranch being named for a winning poker hand). He kept on buying more land and more cattle, and the four sixes stuck.

Burnett left the ranch to his only surviving grandchild, Anne Valliant Burnett Hall (later Tandy), in trust for her unborn child. Upon the death of "Miss Anne," as she was known, in 1980, her only child, Anne Burnett Windfohr Marion, inherited her grandfather's and great-grandfather's estates, including Four Sixes.

Nowadays, Four Sixes is a whole lot more than a part-time TV set. It's still a working ranch with large herds of high-quality beef cattle and the quarter horses it breeds.

The ranch raised longhorns, shorthorns and Herefords in its earlier years, but for the past 25 years, the cattle herd has been entirely Black Angus. Leathers says this breed has provided the most consistent quality.

One thing that hasn't changed: The cattle have always been cared for the same way—on horseback. Each of the 16–18 cowboys working the ranch has several quarter horses for their work. Vaquero (Spanish for cow herder) is Leathers' favorite horse. He says the sorrel gelding "has a big motor. He's tough, very athletic and has a lot of cow sense. He's a pretty exceptional horse."

The ranch's use of quarter horses is no wonder given that Marion and Four Sixes have a deep connection with the breed. Marion's mother, Miss Anne, co-founded the American Quarter Horse Association in 1940, and Marion displayed a devotion to her animals.

"Anne [Marion] was a strong woman, a very good businessperson. She knew cattle and horses," Leathers says. "Anne was very giving and very demanding. She didn't set you up for failure. She set you up for success."

OPPOSITE The mare pasture at Four Sixes Ranch in West Texas. ABOVE Joe Leathers has managed Four Sixes, which covers more than a quarter-million acres, since 2008.



During one crisis, the drought of 2010–11, the ranch went to great lengths to keep its herd and its acres healthy.

“There was no water between Guthrie and Nebraska,” Leathers says. “We ended up taking our cattle to nine ranches in five states, leasing land to make sure we didn’t hurt our land. Our herd was not completely back home until 2015.”

After Marion assumed control of Four Sixes in 1980, she hired Dr. Glenn “Doc” Blodgett as the ranch’s resident veterinarian and horse division manager. Together they established a first-class quarter horse breeding program. Adding artificial insemination services for Four Sixes’ stallions allowed mares across the U.S. to be bred to them.

Today, Dr. Nathan Canaday fills Blodgett’s role. He and two associate veterinarians care for the ranch’s herd of 700–800 quarter horses.

Canaday first came to the ranch in 2006 as a college intern at the veterinary hospital. He returned the next summer. The experience “convinced me to become a veterinarian,” he says. “I thought if I could become a veterinarian at a large ranch like Four Sixes, I would have my dream job.” Canaday became a full-time vet at Four Sixes in 2011 and assumed his current role in 2022, after Blodgett died.

The veterinary team works out of a clinic with state-of-the-art imaging and other equipment. The hospital also serves

‘It’s a LOVE AFFAIR with the land of WEST TEXAS.’

other residents in the area, including several big ranches. Canaday says he and his team are the only vets within 60 miles. They treat the region’s horses for colic and lameness, do dentistry work, and even provide breeding services.

“We keep the history and culture of ranching, but we operate on the cutting edge of veterinary medicine,” Canaday says.

When Sheridan decided to add the Texas storyline to *Yellowstone*, he secured Marion’s permission to film at Four Sixes. Though shooting the show means bringing a small army of hundreds of cast and crew members to the ranch, it “really doesn’t interfere with ranch work,” Leathers says. “There’s a lot of people, equipment and vehicles, but they get it done and then they’re gone.”

Pandemic restrictions delayed the filming of Season 4 until August 2020, and it began to air in late 2021. Sadly, Marion didn’t live to see her beloved ranch on TV. She died in February 2020 at the age of 81. Her will stipulated that all her ranch holdings be sold.



OPPOSITE Boots O'Neal has been a working cowboy for more than 75 years, including 30-plus years at Four Sixes. LEFT Two of the thousands of Black Angus cattle that make up the ranch's herd.

As Seen on TV

Before it was a backdrop for *Yellowstone*, Four Sixes was a setting for several Marlboro cigarette commercials during the 1960s. *Yellowstone's* final six episodes are set to premiere in November.

That meant Four Sixes would not be Burnett family-owned for the first time since its founding. Fortunately, a new owner who shared the family's values was interested. Sheridan, who was raised in Fort Worth, put together a group of investors and became the majority owner in 2022.

Sheridan also has a ranch down the road, in Weatherford, and another in Wyoming. But this one is special for him.

"It's a love affair with the land of West Texas," Sheridan told *Fort Worth Magazine* in 2022. "There's a tremendous amount of discipline that it takes to build a ranch like this. It takes strength, excellence, integrity and faith, and that's the main mission statement of the ranch. We're going to live up to that."

Leathers says that having all of Four Sixes under one owner helped the ranch exist for 150 years. Now that the ranch is in Sheridan's hands, "he's determined for it to be here for another 150 years," Leathers says.

"You have to make money for the ranch to be successful,

but you can still hold on to the traditions. Taylor has a passion for the cowboy life. Four Sixes will continue it on. We'll continue to be a leader in breeding and ranching."

Protecting that legacy means protecting the animals and the land of Four Sixes through conservation. The ranch works with an environmental firm and employs a variety of best practices.

To prevent soil erosion and save precious water, workers have built dams to create small lakes and ponds. They've cleared 100,000 acres of invasive mesquite and cedar. Composted manure from the barns is the only fertilizer used.

Leathers is proud of how they're caring for the land that has served generations of Texans.

"The cattle and the wildlife are not just coexisting," he says. "They're both thriving." ■



- O - V - E - R - P - A - S - S - - E -

Munday Mayor Robert Bowen still remembers when he showed up at City Hall nearly two decades ago to have his picture taken. More than 350 other residents of the small Knox County town between Abilene and Wichita Falls were also there. Everyone had agreed to pose to help with the creation of a bridge mural—part of a highway project to widen and reroute U.S. 277, which now runs through the east part of town.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Munday residents are depicted in the silhouettes that detail an American flag mural in town. Michael Ford, in front of a cactus wall in San Antonio, with his signature gecko just to his right. Pelicans in Corpus Christi and cotton bolls in Lubbock.

Carvings of the residents' silhouettes now form the textured red stripes of a huge depiction of an American flag that unfurls across an overpass retaining wall where U.S. 277 crosses Texas 222. There's a boy bouncing a basketball, a wife kissing her firefighter husband, two girls holding watermelon slices, a cowboy toting his saddle. Bowen—who's still mayor—stands with two neighbors.

"Like any small town, we were worried when the highway went around us," he recalls. "But we've done OK, and we've enjoyed our mural. It's unique."

Munday's road art is among more than 50 pieces across Texas that Michael Ford designed over the course of about 14 years of working for the Texas Department of Transportation. "I've been retired 10 years, and I still get to talk



A-S-E-L-S

about my public art,” quips Ford, who lives near Wimberley and is a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member. “I like to say my hobby became my job.”

Artistic since childhood, he served as a medical illustrator while in the Army and later worked 10 years for a civil engineering firm. In 1994, TxDOT’s bridge division in Austin hired Ford as a draftsman. Soon he was helping engineers create graphics for their presentations. In the meantime, his wife, Betsy, signed him up for a stone-carving class.

“During lunch at work, I’d pull out my limestone block and chisel on it,” Ford recalls. “When my boss saw my gargoyle sculpture, he said, ‘Somehow, someday, we’re going to put one on a bridge.’”

Michael Ford’s larger-than-life art merges traffic and culture along Texas highways

A few months later, Ford had his chance. When TxDOT’s Lubbock division wanted a whimsical logo to dress up a new east-west freeway, he offered to do the work himself. The project became his. He also acquired a new job title—graphics artist. That was in 1998.

Using his own furrowed brow as a model, Ford sculpted Windy Man as a symbol of Lubbock’s infamous gusts and dust. With flowing hair and puffy cheeks, the 3D concrete face blows a dust cloud through pursed lips. However, after the first of a planned 20 went up in 2004—after years of highway design and construction—opponents demanded that the “pagan” Windy Man be removed.

Eventually, TxDOT tried again and installed one Windy Man at the intersection of the Marsha Sharp Freeway and

Avenue L in 2011. He blows dust high above an arts district bridge mural, also designed by Ford. Lubbock overpasses also display red yuccas and a Buddy Holly tribute, courtesy of Ford.

“They all have stories,” Ford says. “Their main purpose has always been to give residents something that’s unique to their community.”

Town by town, Ford worked with mayors and residents to design what they desired. About five years before *Windy Man*, Childress debuted Ford’s talents. Just west of the town, on the edge of the Panhandle near the Oklahoma border, a gigantic stagecoach, windmill and wheat heads—set into overpass retaining walls on U.S. 287 at County Road 9—symbolize the town’s strong ties to agriculture.

Similarly, Goree in Knox County and Robstown in Nueces County chose cotton bolls to grace their highway walls.

And, like Munday, Goree showcases an American flag and Texas flag in addition to cotton. Sinton, just north of Corpus Christi, features a cattle drive on all four overpass ramps as U.S. 181 comes into town from the east.

In Wichita Falls, concrete bicyclists in helmets race across retaining walls in celebration of the city’s annual *Hotter’N Hell Hundred* cycling event. Comanche residents chose rolling hills, live oaks and Native Americans on

horseback to honor their natural heritage.

Kemp’s ridley sea turtles adorn concrete pillars of an overhead sign on the John F. Kennedy Memorial Causeway in Corpus Christi. White-tailed bucks and does pose among prickly pear cactuses in Laredo.

During an Interstate 35 expansion project, TxDOT offered cities the chance to have their own bridge art along frontage roads. Jump off the freeway at Salado to see a stagecoach driven by three cowboys and six horses. At Troy, a bird flits from fence post to post in a series of four windmill murals.

Farther north in West, three murals depict twirling Czech dancers and a polka band, reflecting the city’s cultural roots. In Abbott, silhouettes of a farmer on a tractor and a windmill behind a derelict barn stretch across retaining walls.

“I always designed on a dime,” says Ford, who used pencil sketches and computer software to construct his images that, when enlarged, measure up to 100 feet wide and 50 feet high. Instead of expensive rubber, he carved sheets of extruded foam to form molds that precast concrete companies used to make 5-by-10-foot concrete panels. At work sites, construction crews pieced the panels into place like a puzzle.

And like any good puzzle, some of Ford’s artworks contain a secret.



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE A stagecoach seems to be charging through Salado. Ford with bas-relief troops just east of Copperas Cove on Fort Cavazos. Ford sculpts Windy Man in extruded foam. Czech dancers in West.



“If the design allowed, I’d hide a tiny gecko, like in the oak leaves of a state seal and Windy Man’s hair,” he says. “That became my maker’s mark and the brand name that I continue to use as an artist—Art Gecko.”

Nowadays Ford pours his creativity into crafting sculptures from gourds. Since his retirement from TxDOT, he’s transformed the hard-shelled fruits—kin to pumpkins and melons—into award-winning pieces, such as fairy houses, abstract sculptures, a fanged monster mask and a retro spaceship on the moon.

As Ford and his wife make their way to gourd festivals, they sometimes pass his bridge art. His reaction is what he hopes other travelers have.

“They always bring a smile,” he says. “And I love it when I get messages and photos from people who have spotted one of my walls. Life doesn’t get much better than that.” ■

TCP Find this story on our website for a map of Ford’s highway art and direct links to each of the pieces mentioned.



Ford’s Favorite Five

U.S. flag wall, Munday Etched into the U.S. 277 overpass at Texas 222.

Czech dancers, West Along the Interstate 35 frontage road, where it crosses West Oak Street/T M W Parkway.

Windmill, wheat and a covered wagon, Childress Cast into the north side of Highway 287, where it crosses Farm to Market Road 164/County Road 9.

Stagecoach walls, Salado Along the Interstate 35 frontage road near Williams Road/Salado Plaza Road.

Pilot walls, Kingsville Where East Caesar Avenue runs under U.S. 77.



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While veterans are innately motivated to serve, in a similar vein, electric co-ops are guided by foundational principles that put community first. After all, electric co-ops were founded to bring electricity to rural areas where there was none. In doing so, they powered local economies and helped them to thrive.

I believe this close connection to an essential mission is why there are so many veterans in the utility industry and why they're such a great fit for electric co-ops.

Today's veterans are often skilled and sought-after because of technical expertise and exposure to advanced technology during their years of service.



BUMBLE DEE | ADOBESTOCK

Many veterans have experience in engineering, communications and cybersecurity, which are all beneficial for the utility industry.

Medina Electric Cooperative is proud to employ veterans, and we're especially grateful for their contributions to the co-op and to our community. We are also proud to have one veteran serving on our board of directors.

Leadership and Team-Building

Our veteran colleagues joined the co-op equipped with training in leadership and teamwork. That's because while on duty, servicemen work closely together; their lives depend on it. This fosters a high level of self-discipline, personal responsibility and passion for excellence.

The utility industry is increasingly complex and is undergoing profound transformation. While there are the traditional engineering and operational aspects of the utility industry, it now also encompasses technology, cybersecurity and the electrification of the transportation sector.

Veterans are adept at responding to changing conditions and learning and adapting to new technologies, which is essential in our evolving industry.

Mission-Oriented Outlook

Working for an electric co-op is more than a job. There's a clear mission in the work—to help our members and the community. We have a strong sense of commitment and responsibility to our members.

It's similar to the sense of duty and responsibility that veterans experience in the military. They feel deep, personal responsibility and commitment to their country and to the co-op members we serve. Servicemen are goal-oriented, wanting to do right by their community and their friends and neighbors.

Giving Thanks

May is Military Appreciation Month, and at Medina EC, we're grateful for the men and women who serve to protect our rights. We're also proud to have veterans within our ranks, and we're proud to serve the military families within our community. But beyond our gratitude, we demonstrate our deep appreciation through our actions and ongoing commitment to all who serve and their families.

At the national level, electric co-ops support the Vets Power Us program, which recruits and honors veterans and their families. This effort involves partnering with other electric co-ops across the country along with the departments of labor and defense, the Veterans Administration, and other agencies to bring vets to the energy industry.

This month, I hope you'll join me in recognizing the sacrifices our military families have made to our great country—and the many contributions they continue to make to our wonderful community.

Veterans, we salute you,
Trey Grebe



OASISAMUEL | ADOBESTOCK

Get Ready for the Energy Star Tax Holiday

MARK YOUR CALENDAR for the Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday, May 25–27. Texas shoppers wanting a break on energy-efficient items can buy qualifying Energy Star products in stores, online or by phone, mail, custom order or any other means (including in-store purchases) tax-free, when either: The item is both delivered and paid for during the exemption period or you order and pay for the item and the seller accepts the order during the exemption period for immediate shipment, even if delivery is made after the exemption period ends.

If you pay sales tax on qualifying items during the sales tax holiday, you can ask the seller for a refund of the tax paid or a refund form to send directly to the Texas comptroller’s office.

Qualifying Products

- Air conditioners with sales price of \$6,000 or less
- Refrigerators with sales price of \$2,000 or less
- Ceiling fans
- Incandescent and fluorescent lightbulbs
- Clothes washers
- Dishwashers
- Dehumidifiers

Nonqualifying Products

- Water heaters
- Clothes dryers
- Freezers
- Stoves
- Attic fans
- Heat pumps
- Wine refrigerators
- Beverage chillers

Learn more at [Comptroller.Texas.gov](https://www.comptroller.texas.gov).

Medina Electric Cooperative



CONTACT US

Toll-Free 1-866-632-3532

Email Info@MedinaEC.org

Web [MedinaEC.org](https://www.MedinaEC.org) - Chat Feature Available

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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](https://www.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 1-866-632-3532 o visitando una de nuestras oficinas.



PHOTO CREDIT: TEC

The love for Derly Carrizales, center, and electric cooperatives run deeply as he proudly displays his safety award alongside his family. On each side are not only his kids, but fellow co-workers and colleagues. Liandra Carrizales, left, is a member services representative at Medina Electric Cooperative, and DJ Carrizales, right, is a lineman at Nueces Electric Cooperative.

Commitment to Safety Earns Top Award

Derly Carrizales recognized with the Ray Pantel Meritorious Service Award

MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE PROUDLY CELEBRATES the achievement of Derly Carrizales, safety manager, who has been honored with the prestigious Ray Pantel Meritorious Service Award at this year's Texas Electric Cooperatives Loss Control conference. This distinguished award pays tribute to the outstanding service of the late Ray Pantel and recognizes individuals who, like Pantel, demonstrate commitment to the TEC Loss Control Program, carrying out their responsibilities with the utmost dedication to safety.

Carrizales was nominated for this esteemed honor by his safety counterpart, Joe Huerta, from Nueces Electric Cooperative, with whom he has collaborated with for numerous years in promoting safety initiatives across Texas cooperatives and communities.

His receipt of this award not only emphasizes Carrizales' deserving character but also serves as a testament to his embodiment of the safety culture at Medina EC throughout his remarkable 42-year tenure. Carrizales stands as a highly regarded figure within the safety community, earning respect not only from colleagues, management and the board of directors at Medina EC but also from peers in the safety field and the communities where he passionately advocates for safety through various educational endeavors. He is the epitome of the roles of teacher, coach and cheerleader for safety every single day.

Over his 13-year tenure as safety manager, Carrizales has spearheaded significant enhancements and advancements to the safety program at Medina EC, elevating it to the pinnacle of excellence it has today. His unstoppable mission and enthusiasm revolve around ensuring that every employee returns home safely at the end of each day. His dedication, leadership and persistent efforts serve as an inspiration to all.



PHOTO CREDIT: TEC

Derly Carrizales was overjoyed to receive the Ray Pantel Meritorious Service Award.



Derly Carrizales presents his popular live line demonstration to linemen, employees, first responders and community members as a teaching opportunity on the dangers of electricity.



Scan to learn more!

Summer Supply for ERCOT Grid

IN EARLY MAY the Electric Reliability Council of Texas is expected to release its Seasonal Assessment of Resource Adequacy report for summer 2024. This report will provide an outlook on the available generation and a prediction for energy demand during the summer season. You can find the assessment on ERCOT's website, [ERCOT.com](https://ercot.com).

The record peak demand in 2023 was 85,508 megawatts, set in August. In general, a megawatt of electricity can power about 200 Texas homes.

As in the past, ERCOT will issue alerts and declare energy emergencies if needed. Alerts help consumers, including Medina Electric Cooperative members, know that

conservation is needed. Declaring an emergency allows the grid operator to take advantage of additional resources. If grid conditions continue to worsen, the grid operator can implement forced outages across the state. If this occurs, it is likely to happen quickly with little warning or time for advance notifications. Medina EC will do its best to notify members as quickly as humanly possible.

Learn more about what to do during a load shed event, energy conservation requests, our notification process and more at MedinaEC.org/ERCOT or scan the QR code above.

Is Your Contact Information Up to Date?



THASPOL | ADOBE STOCK

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

This information includes:

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

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

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

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

During May, 350 members will be randomly selected to answer Medina Electric Cooperative survey questions by email. The surveys are being done by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and should take less than five minutes. If you do not get an email but would like to share feedback or an idea with the cooperative, email us at MyCoop@MedinaEC.org.



Department Spotlight: Accounting and Consumer Accounting

Medina Electric Cooperative's finance and accounting teams manage the financial condition of the co-op. In honor of National Accounting Day on May 19, we're featuring our accounting and consumer accounting departments.

Medina EC's accounting team is responsible for financial statements and work orders, data entry, reconciling accounts, working with and paying co-op vendors, creating and maintaining department and project budgets, and employee payroll. Medina EC's consumer accounting team prepares and processes capital credits, member bills, payments, and supports the member services team to resolve member billing concerns.

These financial departments are critical to co-op operations. Meet the accounting and consumer accounting departments below.



LAURIE VAN DAMME
Chief Financial Officer



EMILY TANKERSLEY
General Accounting Supervisor

THE ACCOUNTING TEAM



ANISA BROWNING
Accounting Clerk



DANIELLE BENDELE
Accounting Assistant



BROOKE BADER
Accounting Assistant



KIM MULVANY
Accounting Assistant



BRETT WILLIAMS
Manager of Finance

THE CONSUMER ACCOUNTING TEAM



JOE CARROLL
Consumer Accounting Assistant



PAMELA MCFADIN
Consumer Accounting Assistant



SHELBY HERNANDEZ
Consumer Accounting Assistant

YUROLAITSALBERT | ADOBESTOCK



ELENATHEWISE | ADOBESTOCK

May Is National Electrical Safety Month

FAMILIES SHOULD PRACTICE electrical safety all year round. But May is National Electrical Safety Month—a good time to pay special attention to cleaning up electrical hazards around the home.

Here's how to start:

- ▶ Call a licensed electrician to inspect your home's wiring. Wiring wears out and can pose a fire hazard.
- ▶ Unplug appliances that you keep near water—like the blow-dryer and curling iron on the bathroom sink. Find another outlet where it's safer to use them.
- ▶ Replace lightbulbs in lamps and overhead fixtures whose wattage does not match the manufacturer's recommended wattage. If a lightbulb's wattage is higher than the lamp was designed to handle, it can overtax the lamp's wiring and cause a fire.
- ▶ Unclutter power strips. Just because your power strip has room for eight plugs doesn't mean the outlet you plug it into can handle that much load. High-voltage devices, like toaster ovens, shouldn't be plugged into the same strip.
- ▶ Put away extension cords. They're not designed for constant use. Use them only temporarily.

Breaking Down Your Energy Use

MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE residential members will soon be able to have a better understanding of their energy use with increased insight into which appliances may be contributing to their monthly bill and by approximately how much.

Armed with this personalized information, members will have increased opportunities to make informed decisions regarding their electricity usage, potentially leading to energy and cost savings on their monthly bills.

To access these insights, members must have a residential account and be enrolled in SmartHub. Once enrolled, various analytics including energy breakdown, cost analysis, detailed consumption data, projected bills and top energy-saving tips will be available through the menu widget within SmartHub.

This feature, known as consumer analytics, is powered by Bidgely, a company specializing in energy intelligence. Bidgely utilizes meter data disaggregation to identify individual appliance types and their respective contributions to total energy consumption within the home.

The accuracy of appliance details provided through consumer analytics is derived from trends in meter data, which

reflect the unique usage patterns of different appliances. For instance, the electrical pattern use of a washing machine differs from that of a refrigerator and can be distinguished as such to assess their respective impacts on monthly bills. To enhance the accuracy of these analytics, it is recommended that members complete their Home Profile using the Build Your Home Profile tool.

Learn more about this feature, which will be available after May 13, at MedinaEC.org/ConsumerAnalytics.

Department Spotlight: Communications

In honor of World Communications Day, recognized May 12, Medina Electric Cooperative is recognizing our communications department. This team works hard to communicate with our members, employees, and our board of directors. They manage marketing pieces like this monthly magazine and newspaper advertisements, manage Medina EC's website, social media platforms, and emails to name a few. They also handle the annual election process and plan the annual membership meeting.

Our communications team also works to help the communities Medina EC serves through monetary and water donations, sponsorships, and they participate in various community events. Additionally, they coordinate Medina EC's member programs including scholarships, Youth Tour, Operation Round Up and the Community Empowerment Program.



PATTI TAYLOR
Chief Administrative Officer

THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



JACKIE MUENNINK
Communications
Supervisor



MAKENNA LANGE
Communications
Specialist



CAROLINE LEE
Communications
Specialist

REDPIXEL | ADOBESTOCK

For the Love of Food: Medina EC Hosts Food Drive and Operation Round Up Donates to Food Banks

IN HONOR OF Canned Food Month, Medina Electric Cooperative held a food drive in all of its offices in February encouraging members and employees to donate. The donated food was split between two food banks, the San Antonio Food Bank and the South Texas Food Bank, which feeds individuals and families in a combined 14 of the 17 counties served by Medina EC. San Antonio Food Bank serves Atascosa, Edwards, Frio, LaSalle, Medina, Real, Uvalde and Zavala counties, and the South Texas Food Bank serves Dimmit, Jim Hogg, Kinney, Starr Webb and Zapata counties.

After a month of donations, Medina EC's southern offices, which include our Bruni, Laredo and Rio Grande City offices, were able to donate over 400 pounds of food to the STFB. Medina EC's northern offices, including our corporate, Hondo, Dilley and Uvalde offices, were able to donate 963 pounds of food for the SAFB.

Operation Round Up

DUE TO AN INCREASE in the number of Operation Round Up applications asking for assistance with food, gas and other life necessities, the ORU committee had been discussing the possibility of donating to local food pantries and food banks in hopes of alleviating the stress so many in our service area are feeling in regard to purchasing food and increased prices.

In an effort to learn more about food banks and how they work with local pantries, as well as answer some of the committee's questions, Eric Cooper, the president and CEO of the SAFB visited Medina EC's corporate office in Hondo. After his presentation, the committee voted to donate \$4,000 to the SAFB and \$3,000 to the STFB to be distributed to the 14 counties they serve in Medina EC's service area.



MEDINA EC'S RIO GRANDE CITY EMPLOYEES DONATING FOOD IN FEBRUARY.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The San Antonio Food Bank and South Texas Food Bank are two of the 200 food banks that are part of Feeding America and two of the 21 food banks that are part of Feeding Texas.
- Both food banks offer assistance with completing paperwork for government assistance programs including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP, WIC, and others.
- Both food banks offer programs specifically for children and senior citizens. For school-aged children, both food banks offer a backpack program, which provides food for students to take home on the weekends or over holidays to help relieve childhood hunger. For senior citizens, the available programs aim to help bridge the gap for those on fixed incomes and would otherwise be unable to afford food.
- At the San Antonio Food Bank, 98 cents of every \$1 goes toward the purchase of food, and at the South Texas Food bank, \$1 purchases 10 meals.
- Both food banks understand how much pets are a part of the family and offer a program to help families feed their pets. In fact, pet food is one of the 12 most wanted food donations.

Learn more and volunteer at:

- San Antonio Food Bank: SAFoodBank.org
- South Texas Food Bank: SouthTexasFoodBank.org



PHOTO CREDIT: SOUTH TEXAS FOOD BANK



PHOTO DESCRIPTIONS: A: SAFB CEO and President Eric Cooper speaking with the ORU committee, MEC CEO Trey Grebe and MEC Chief Administrative Officer Patti Taylor; B: SAFB CEO and President Eric Cooper with the ORU Committee and MEC staff (from left: Eugene Verstuyft, Jim Stiles, MEC Communications Specialist Caroline Lee, Eric Cooper, Sandy Kunkel, Richard Peterson, Becky Brown, John Brigman, MEC CEO Trey Grebe, MEC Chief Administrative Officer Patti Taylor); C: Presenting STFB with \$3,000 ORU donation (from left: MEC director JL Gonzalez, STFB Accounting specialist Gabriela Machuca, STFB Marketing and Development Director Angie Osterman, MEC Communications Specialist Makenna Lange, STFB Programs Director Juan Solis and STFB Accounting Manager Juan C. Gonzalez); D: STFB north warehouse; E: STFB volunteer packing room.

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS:
**WE HAVE A TRUCK
FOR YOU!**

MEDINA EC IS DONATING A RETIRED
SERVICE TRUCK TO AN AREA VFD.



DEADLINE: MONDAY, JULY 1
ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION:
MEDINAEC.ORG/VEHDONATION

Photo of 2018 recipient Sabinal VFD, after completing their modifications to the donated truck.

**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR**

**Operation Round Up
Applications Due**

Friday, May 3

Learn more about ORU and
apply at MedinaEC.org/ORU.

Mother's Day

Sunday, May 12

Armed Forces Day

Saturday, May 18

Memorial Day

Monday, May 27

Our offices will be closed in
observance of the holiday.
As always, crews will be on call.

**OPERATION
ROUND UP**

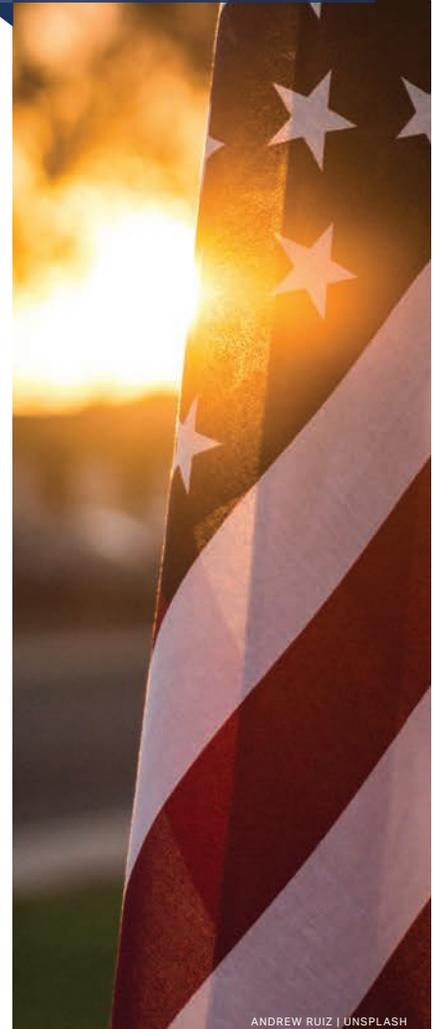
helps organizations too!

If you are a nonprofit organization
that helps communities in one of
Medina EC's 17 counties, consider
applying for ORU!



Learn more and apply at
MedinaEC.org/ORU.

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ANDREW RUIZ | UNSPLASH

150 Years of Iconic U.S. Silver Dollars

FIVE OF THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER U.S. SILVER DOLLARS, IN ONE SET!



Peace

Silver Eagle Type 1

Dates will vary

Morgan

Eisenhower

Silver Eagle Type 2

Actual sizes: 38.1-40.6 mm

YOUR ULTIMATE SILVER DOLLAR SET

150 Years of Iconic U.S. Silver Dollars from the Morgan to the Silver Eagle in One Master Collection!

The heritage of American Silver Dollars is rich and diverse, marked by stunningly beautiful designs, leading to an enduring desirability in the hearts of collectors around the world. In this iconic U.S. Silver Dollar set, spanning nearly 150 years, you're getting FIVE American Silver Dollars issued over the last 15 decades that each reflect the history, culture and economic aspects of the United States.

We've Done the Work for You with this Extraordinary 5-Pc. U.S. Silver Dollar Set

Each of these U.S. Silver Dollars is sought-after by collectors individually, but this set includes every design of U.S. Silver Dollar in American history, issued from 1878 to 2024!

Morgan Silver Dollar: First struck 146 years ago in 1878, the Morgan has a historic legacy as the coin that helped build the American West. Minted until 1904, then again in 1921, this 90% silver coin with its iconic Lady Liberty design is the most collected vintage Silver Dollar in the world. Extremely Fine (XF) condition coin included in set.

Peace Silver Dollar: With a beautiful design memorializing peace following the end of World War I, the 90% silver Peace Dollar was intended as a one-year only release struck in 1921—but it proved so popular with the American people, it was struck until 1928, then again in 1934-35. Extremely Fine (XF) condition coin included in set.

Eisenhower Dollar: The last circulating U.S. dollar coin, the Eisenhower Dollar, aka the "Ike Dollar," was prized by Americans, with its design featuring war hero President Dwight D. Eisenhower, backed by an image symbolizing the Apollo II moon landing. First struck with silver 1971-1976, the Eisenhower Dollar in this set was struck in 40% silver for collectors, and you will receive a coin in Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition.

Silver Eagle Type 1: The first-ever U.S. Silver Dollar minted in 99.9% silver, these coins were first minted in 1986 following President Ronald Reagan's signing of the Liberty Coin Act into law on July 9, 1985, which authorized the U.S. Mint to strike America's new silver bullion coin. This gorgeous Silver Dollar features the original, revered Type 1 "Heraldic Eagle" reverse design by John Mercanti, 12th Chief Engraver of the U.S. Mint. Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition coin included in set.

Silver Eagle Type 2: In honor of the popular 99.9% silver coin's 35th anniversary in 2021, the Silver Eagle received a new, esteemed Type 2 "Eagle Landing" reverse design. This is the current issued coin by the U.S. Mint. Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition coin included in set.

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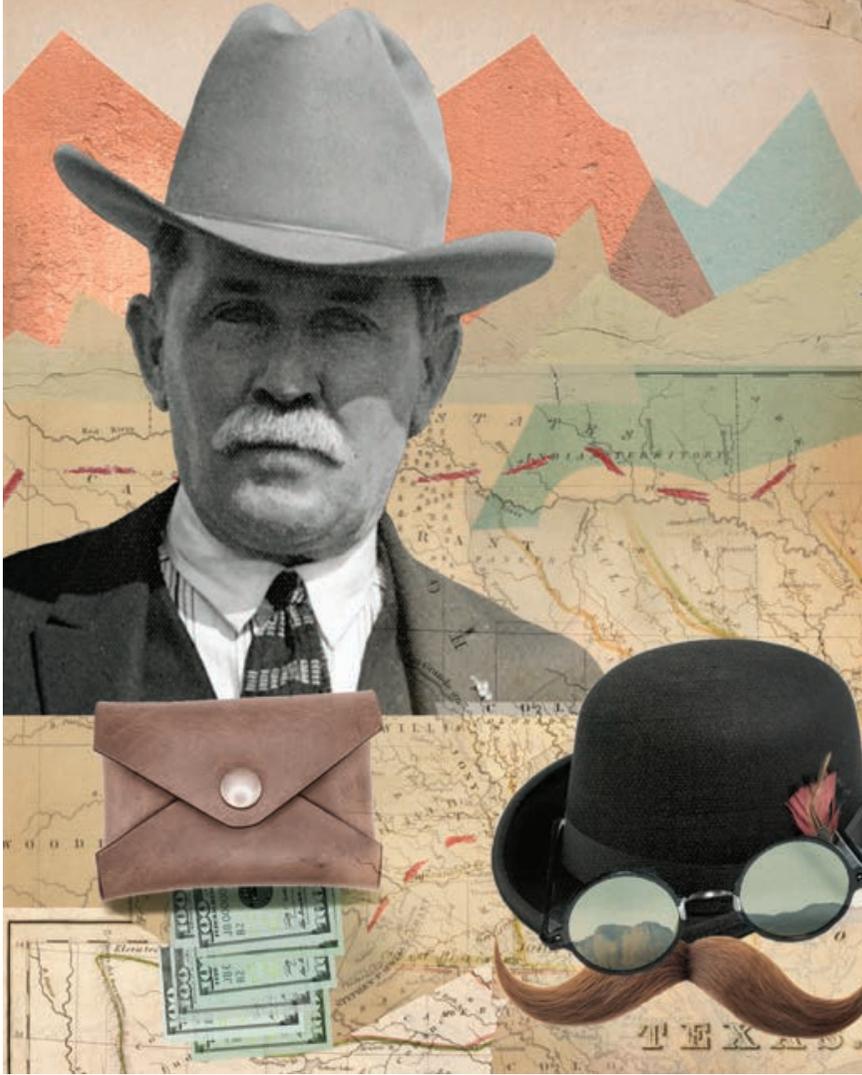
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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



be interested in his land. That person, Spencer, magically appeared and said they would need to go to the Adolphus Hotel to see another man.

When they sat down in the lobby to wait, Spencer cleverly steered Norfleet so that he'd sit in just the right place to discover a man's pocketbook "lost" in the crevice of the couch. Stetson was the name on an ID card inside. Spencer and Norfleet inquired at the front desk for a Mr. Stetson, got his room number and returned the pocketbook to him.

Stetson (Furey) offered them both \$100 rewards. When Norfleet refused, Stetson told him that he was a stockbroker with the Dallas exchange and said, "Would you mind me placing that money on the market and would you accept what money it might earn?"

Later that day, Stetson gave Norfleet \$800 as the amount his \$100 earned. And that's how the hook was set. From there, Norfleet handed over his own money and eventually cash guarantees, hoping to grow his wealth in the fake exchange. When the con men cleared out on the last round, absconding with all of Norfleet's money, he was left repeating to himself in a stunned haze: "\$45,000 gone, \$90,000 in debt, 54 years old." They stole nearly \$750,000 in today's money.

Norfleet tells the story of his cross-country pursuit of Furey—which took him all the way to Mexico, California, Canada and Florida—in his fast-moving autobiography, *Norfleet*, published in 1924. It's a great adventure and demonstrates an old cowboy's enormous creativity and grit. Or read a more modern version historically contextualized in Amy Reading's *The Mark Inside*.

Whichever you choose, cinch up your saddles nice and snug. It's a wild ride. ■

Payback Time

When a Texas rancher was conned, he spent years tracking down the swindlers

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY DANA SMITH

THE YEAR WAS 1921. J. Frank Norfleet, after two years and 30,000 miles of pursuit, finally slapped handcuffs on "Mr. Stetson" in Florida. Stetson—real name Joe Furey—had swindled Norfleet out of \$45,000 in North Texas.

"Well, you old trail hound, I never expected to see you out here," Stetson said. "I thought we left you in Fort Worth, broke."

Norfleet had no experience in law enforcement, city life or sophisticated cons. He was a rancher, a man who had always lived on the edge of the Texas frontier. So when he made up his mind to pursue the band of bunco men who conned him, he used the only tools he had: unfathomable patience, cutting for

sign, camouflage by way of disguises and weaponry. He out-conned the con men.

Norfleet grew up on the Texas plains. He was a trail herder in his early days and eventually managed to buy his own ranch, near Lubbock. By the age of 54, he had finally accumulated some real wealth.

So he went to Dallas with the intent of selling his ranch to buy a bigger one. It was there that con men ensnared him in their sophisticated plot. It went like this.

Norfleet got into a seemingly casual conversation about mules in the lobby of the St. George Hotel in Dallas with a man named Hamlin. Upon hearing Norfleet had a ranch to sell, Hamlin said he just happened to know someone who might

Spring Cakes

Celebrate every occasion with fresh and fruity flavors of the season

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Spring is here! Bring on the light, fluffy and lemony desserts. My Strawberry Pecan Icebox Cake captures the season in every bite. There's nothing more satisfying than a simple yet elegant dessert you can easily whip up. The best part of this one: It requires no baking.

Strawberry Pecan Icebox Cake

8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature

1 cup powdered sugar

3 cups heavy cream

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon lemon zest

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 box graham crackers (14.4 ounces)

4 cups sliced strawberries

½ cup chopped pecans

1. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese at medium speed until smooth. Gradually add powdered sugar and continue beating until smooth.
2. Add 1 cup heavy cream and beat at low speed until smooth. Add remaining 2 cups heavy cream and mix at medium speed until light and fluffy, increasing the speed as the mixture begins to thicken. Fold in the vanilla, lemon zest and lemon juice.
3. Coat the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray. Line the bottom of the pan with ⅓ of the graham crackers.
4. Spread ⅓ of the mixture over graham crackers followed by ⅓ of the strawberries and pecans. Repeat layers two times using remaining ingredients, ending with strawberries and pecans.
5. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 4 hours or up to overnight.

SERVES 8-12

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Concha Icebox Cake.





Poppy Seed Cake

PATTI CROW
FANNIN EC

Once I bit into Crow's Poppy Seed Cake, I knew why my *abuelita* (grandma) enjoyed these tiny gems. This light, moist cake boasts a sweet nutty flavor. I love snacking on it with my afternoon tea.

- 1 package yellow cake mix (15.25 ounces)**
- 1 package lemon pudding mix (3.4 ounces)**
- ½ cup orange juice**
- ½ cup vegetable oil**
- ½ cup water**
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds**
- 4 eggs**
- ½ cup lemon juice**
- 2 cups powdered sugar**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a Bundt pan with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, beat the cake mix, pudding mix, orange juice, vegetable oil, water, poppy seeds and eggs at medium speed 5 minutes. Pour into prepared pan.
3. Bake 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
4. In a small saucepan, bring lemon juice and powdered sugar to a boil.
5. Remove cake from pan and poke holes throughout top with a fork. Pour hot glaze over cake. Allow to cool before serving.

SERVES 10-12

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Mandarin Crush Cake

DEBRA GIFFORD
PEDERNALES EC



Hello spring ... hello yum!
This cake is pure happiness. A touch of citrus with a pop of pineapple make Gifford's layered cake simply delightful.

SERVES 10



CAKE

- 1 can mandarin oranges (15 ounces), undrained**
- 1 package yellow cake mix (15.25 ounces)**
- ¾ cup vegetable oil**
- 4 eggs**
- 1 teaspoon orange extract**

FROSTING

- 1 package vanilla pudding mix (3.4 ounces)**
- 2 cans crushed pineapple (8 ounces each), undrained**
- 1 container whipped topping (8 ounces)**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

1. **CAKE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat two 8-inch round baking pans with cooking spray.
2. Reserve a few mandarin segments to decorate cake. In a large bowl, beat remaining mandarin oranges and their liquid, cake mix, oil, eggs, and orange extract at medium speed about 3 minutes.
3. Pour batter evenly into cake pans. Bake 20–25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
4. **FROSTING** In another bowl, mix pudding mix, pineapple and its liquid, whipped topping, and vanilla until smooth. Place in fridge to chill at least 1 hour.
5. Once cakes are cooled, place 1 cake layer on a serving plate and spread half the frosting on top. Place the remaining cake layer on top and spread remaining frosting over top and sides of cake, then place reserved mandarin slices on top to decorate.
6. Chill until ready to serve.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

PUMPKIN AND SPICE DUE MAY 10
We're looking for something special for our October recipes. Send us your best by May 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Mary Smith's Coconut Cake

MB WATSON
FANNIN EC

This cake is a sweet tribute to Watson's friend Mary, who was a world-class hostess. No one turned down an invitation to her home or for any of her baked desserts. This cross between a cake and a macaroon is soft and chewy on the inside, crisp and golden on the outside. It's also the ultimate coconut lover's dream.

- 2 cups flour
- 1½ cups shredded coconut
- 3 cups sugar, divided use
- 1 cup solid vegetable shortening
- 6 eggs
- 3 teaspoons orange extract, divided use
- ½ cup water

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, combine flour with coconut and set aside.
3. In a large bowl, cream 2 cups sugar and shortening together at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Reduce speed to low and alternate adding eggs, one at a time, and flour until all eggs and flour are mixed. Add 1 teaspoon orange extract, beating until well mixed.
4. Spoon batter into prepared pan. Bake 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Remove pan from oven and set aside.

5. In a saucepan over medium-high heat, bring water, remaining 1 cup sugar and remaining 2 teaspoons orange extract to a boil. Continue boiling for 1 minute. Carefully pour over cake.

6. Allow cake to cool completely before serving.

SERVES 16

TCP Search "cake" on our website and you'll find dozens of recipes. Whatever you crave this spring, we have you covered.

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Breaking News

Take a sledgehammer to a printer in Kyle's 'rage room'

BY CHET GARNER

IF YOU WERE to envision a day trip to the Pie Capital of Texas, you might picture homey cafés, cozy cups of coffee and buttery crusts filled with sugary happiness. And you can certainly find those things in Kyle, south of Austin. But you can also smash pie plates into tiny bits and shatter coffee cups into smithereens—legally (and safely)—at Uncharted Adventures, a unique indoor entertainment center.

I stepped into what looked like an inconspicuous warehouse on the outskirts of town and met owner Damon Fogley. He started a junk removal business after serving in the Army and soon learned about a phenomenon called rage rooms, where folks can pay to break stuff.

Fogley had more than enough junk for the job, and the concept was born in Kyle. But to create a full-on destination, he added two escape rooms, a zombie shooting range, splatter-paint lounge and plenty of Instagram-worthy backdrops. It's unconventional family fun at its finest.

Before letting out my inner Hulk on inanimate objects, I tried the zombie shooting range. Armed with a gun that shot tiny gel balls, I took aim at zombie robots jumping out from an apocalyptic set. I don't think I killed any of them (they are undead, after all), but it felt great.

Finally, it was time to rage. And so, donning full-body coveralls and a face shield, I stepped into a room full of bottles, vases, TVs and printers. I picked up a sledgehammer and, with a Neanderthal's scream, I swung it straight into a coffee maker. It flew across the room, hit the wall and broke into pieces.

It was awesome. I'm not angry by nature, but this was a strange kind of therapy that I think everyone could use. ■

ABOVE Chet poses in an Instagram-worthy setting. (No, that is not videotape of *The Daytripper* show.)

TCP Readers know Chet is a smashing success. See for yourself with the video on our website. Find all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

MAY

07

Lewisville The Elton Johns with the She, (972) 219-3401, cityoflewisville.com

09

Corsicana 50 Years of Rock and Roll, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

10

Alamo [10–11] Watermelon Festival & BBQ Cook-Off, (956) 787-0006, alamotexas.org

New Braunfels [10–11] Ballet Texas Presents *Peter Pan*, (830) 627-0808, brauntex.org

15

Lakeway Lakeway Photography Club Meeting, (512) 263-2885, lakewayphotographyclub.com

16

Luling Field Day, (830) 875-2438, lulingfoundation.org

Giddings [16–18] Lee County Fair, leecountyfairtx.com

17

Columbus [17–18] Magnolia Days Festival, (979) 732-8385, magnoliadays.org

18

La Grange Bluff Schuetzen-Fest, friendsofkbmh.org

23

Kerrville [23–June 9] Kerrville Folk Festival, (830) 257-3600, kerrvillefolkfestival.org

24

Fredericksburg [24–26] Crawfish Festival, fbgcrawfishfestival.com

25

Brenham Elvis! by Vince King and the Vegas Mafia Band, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Chappell Hill Art Walk, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

26

Lewisville Fiesta Charra, (972) 219-3401, visitlewisville.com

New Braunfels Antique Barn Sale and Makers Market, (830) 629-2943, newbraunfelsconservation.org

31

Kerrville [31-June 1] The Comedy of Errors, (830) 896-9393, caillouperformingarts.com

JUNE

01

Graham Food Truck Championship of Texas, (940) 549-0401, foodtruckchampionshipoftexas.com

Leander Old Town Street Festival, (512) 259-1907, oldtownstreetfestival.com

Waxahachie [1-2] Gingerbread Trail Tour of Homes, (972) 937-0681, elliscountymuseum.org

07

Fredericksburg [7-8] Craft Beer Festival, fbcraftbeerfestival.com

Blanco [7-9] Lavender Festival, (830) 833-5101, blancolavenderfest.com

Ingram [7-8, 13-15, 20-22] Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

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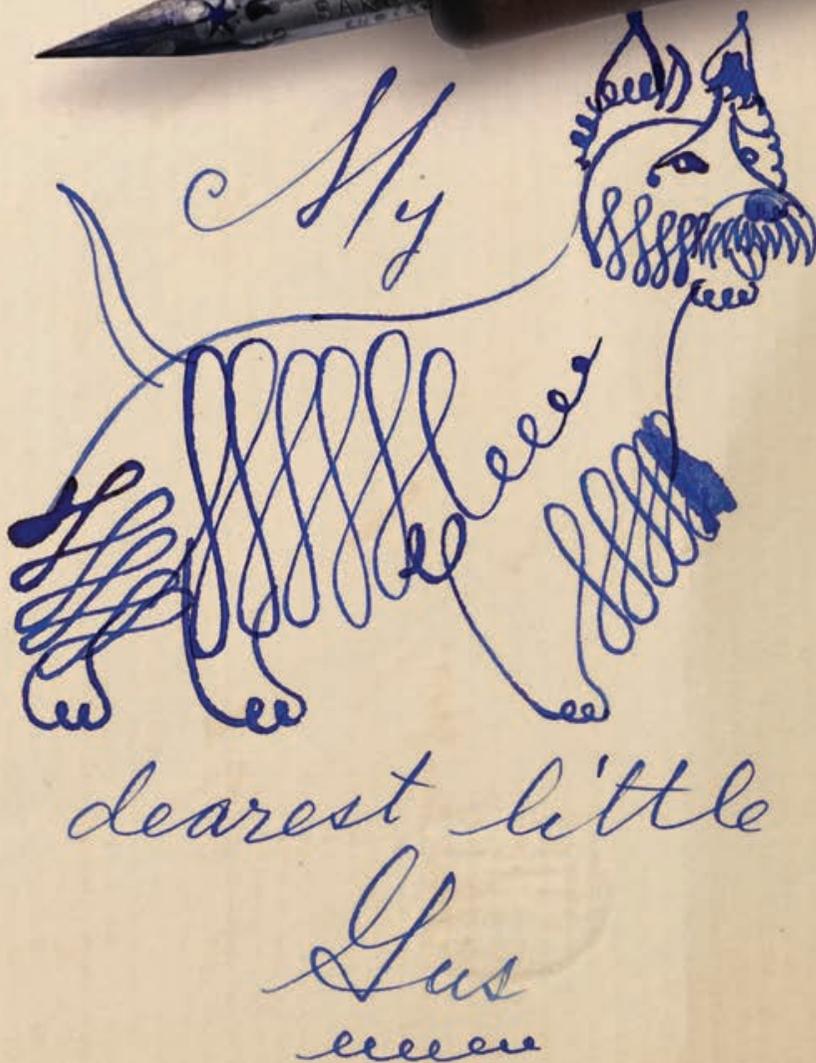
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TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Rides photos from readers.



Grandma's Best Friend

Life is better when people and dogs can age together

BY MARTHA DEERINGER
ILLUSTRATION BY
ELVIS SWIFT

WHEN MY MOTHER finally made the difficult decision to move in with my family in her early 80s, she harbored plenty of misgivings, deciding on the move only when her rheumatoid arthritis and congestive heart failure made it unsafe for her to live alone. Mother brought along her aging West Highland white terrier, Gus, a bone cancer survivor who hopped gamely through the house on his three remaining legs.

Mother left behind a sprawling brick home in town where she had lived for 30 years and took up residence with us in the country in an addition designed to accommodate her needs. Suddenly she was 20 miles from the nearest hub of civilization.

There were plenty of people to take care of her here. Still, she missed her

independence and the opportunity to go out to lunch with friends or run errands on a moment's notice.

Our grandchildren doted on their great-grandma. They drank her Ensure, did somersaults on her couch, fed Gus their cookies and badgered her to read stories. Since her addition was attached to the main house, she had to install a latch on the inside of her door in order to catch uninterrupted naps.

Gus was also unsettled by the move, his lush St. Augustine lawn replaced by spiky Bermuda grass with cows across the fence. He viewed these large animals with deep suspicion and barked ferociously when they approached his empire, a small separate yard he accessed through a doggie door.

Most of Gus' time was spent curled beside the swivel rocker where Mother read biographies and watched our pair of free-ranging peacocks, who chose the porch rail outside her window to preen themselves and admire their reflections in the glass.

For a couple of years after she came to live with us, Mother was able to drive to town for haircuts, church and social occasions, but as her health slipped, she stayed home more. Her friends, also in their 80s, came to visit less often.

But she had Gus, and scientists have known for decades that older adults who own pets reap vast benefits.

In good weather Mother strolled our long driveway with Gus' lead slipped over the handle of her walker. She could talk to Gus about anything. Unlike her great-grandchildren, he never interrupted.

Gus seemed to know the help he provided, and he was always there beside her, sporting a whiskery grin and waving tail.

She celebrated five Mother's Days with us before she died, giving three generations of our family the chance to benefit from her wisdom and to learn to honor and appreciate the life lessons older folks can teach us all.

Gus passed away peacefully a few weeks after she did. ■

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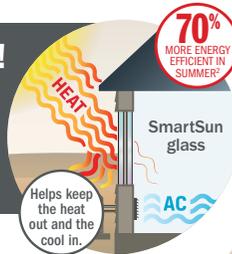
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