

HE UNEARTHED  
ANCIENT TOOLS

SAM RAYBURN TURNED ON  
TEXAS' LIGHTS

I'D DO ANYTHING  
FOR MOM

# Texas Coop Power

FOR MEDINA EC MEMBERS

MAY 2026

## Trickle Your Fancy

The arid West  
is awash, if you know  
where to look



# community phone

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**Forbes** HOME

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**Forbes, January 2026**



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community phone

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**Alford, 84, Navy Veteran**



1



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2



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3



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# May 2026



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## 06 Wet Texas

Beyond and below the tumbleweeds and cactuses, oases beckon out west.

*Photo essay by Erich Schlegel*

## He Kept Digging

Thanks to an archaeologist's persistence, we have 20,000-year-old evidence of Texans.

*By Pam LeBlanc*

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#### ON THE COVER

Under a relentless sun, Lake Nueces on the Nueces River nurtures an inviting ecosystem.

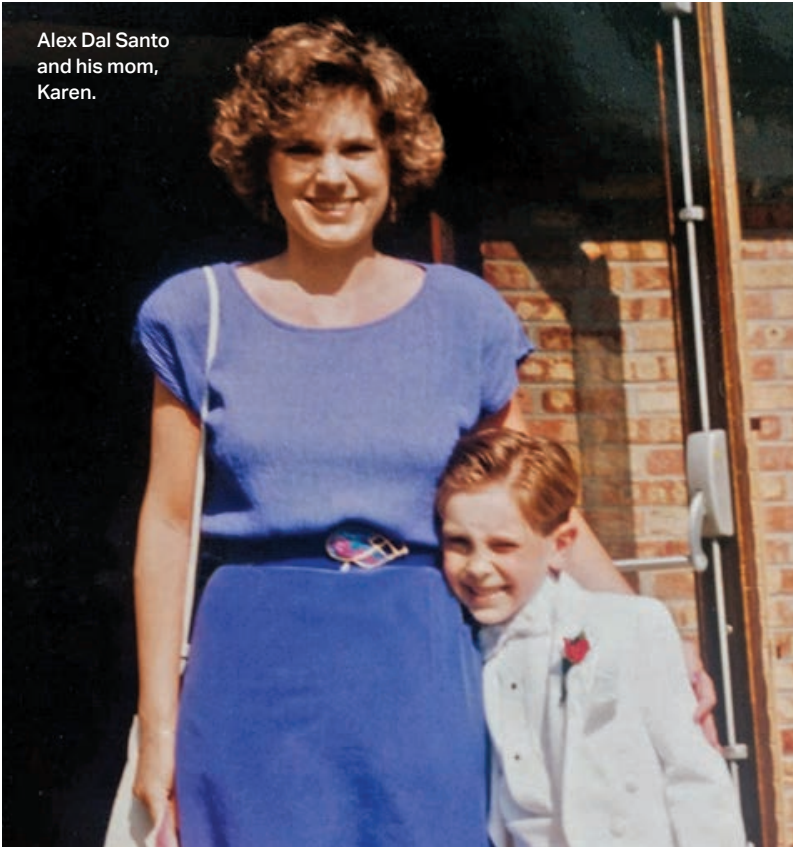
*Photo by Erich Schlegel*

#### ABOVE

Archaeologist Michael Collins examines Gault artifacts with Angela Davis, center, and Jon Lohse in 1999.

*Courtesy Kenneth Garrett*

# Appreciating Our Moms



Alex Dal Santo and his mom, Karen.

IN CELEBRATION OF MOTHER'S DAY, May 10 this year, we ask readers to finish the sentence "Moms are ..." *TCP's* writers and editors also share their thoughts.

**Lifelong learners—always reading, changing and growing.**

—Samantha Bryant, communications specialist

**The first person you want to call when something big happens, and you'll miss her when you can't.**

—Alex Dal Santo, assistant production manager

**Psychic. Mine can sense how I'm feeling even from miles away.**

—Erin Sinclair, communications specialist

**Frequently undervalued for their enormous contributions. They do so much.**

—Claire Stevens, communications specialist

**Family historians, capturing (usually unflattering) smartphone pics at family functions.**

—Kelly Tran, communications specialist

**Eternally selfless.**

—Tom Widlowski, associate editor



**TCP Contests and More**

**\$500 RECIPE CONTEST**

Campfire Favorites

**FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS**

Rodeo

**RECOMMENDED READING**

*Why We Like Bats*, our May 2006 feature story, looked closely at the creatures that still captivate Texans. Download the May 2006 issue at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).



ENTER ONLINE

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

### Moms are ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our March prompt: **My favorite Texas saying is ...**

The sun has risen and the sun has set, but we haven't left Texas yet.

EUGENE NEESE  
BOWIE-CASS EC  
LINDEN

All hat and no cattle.

SISSY CARTER  
HAMILTON COUNTY EC  
GATESVILLE

If you don't like the weather, wait a minute.

TANYA STEELE  
BLUEBONNET EC  
BURTON

The bigger the hair, the closer to God.

DEBRA MILLS  
NUECES EC  
PORT ISABEL

Bless your heart.

KIT VAUGHN  
PEDERNALES EC  
LIBERTY HILL

Visit our website to see more responses.

MARCH 2026 Charted Waters

“Happy to see Pam LeBlanc is still adventurous. And Erich Schlegel’s photos artfully capture her adventure.”

STEVE HARDY  
PEDERNALES EC  
CEDAR PARK



ERICH SCHLEGEL

**Matters of Funding**

Overall, a great article, but there is a quote saying that rebuilding the Mason courthouse “didn’t cost taxpayers a dime” [*In All Their Glory*, March 2026]. At least \$9.6 million of funding from the state wasn’t from the tooth fairy.

Larry Strong  
CoServ  
Lewisville

**Shouldering the Load**

I loved the story of Tyler Schlickeisen, tow truck driver [*Currents*, March 2026]. It’s great to see stories on unsung heroes like him.

I do have to disagree with his comment, “Nobody likes to see a tow truck driver.” When I have needed them—on Interstate 35—my two tow truck drivers were heroes.

Frank Graham  
Navarro County EC  
Hill County

**A Rash of Trash**

Back in the ‘60s, Lady Bird Johnson championed a “Don’t Be a Litterbug” campaign, sending us children home with “litter bags” to hang on the handle of our roll-down car windows [*A Tidy Revolution*, March 2026]. Then in the ‘80s, the “Don’t Mess With Texas” slogan was a fun and effective refresher course.

Now we desperately need a new anti-litter crusade because Texas roadways have grown increasingly trashy.

Cheryl Irish  
Bluebonnet EC  
Bastrop

**Ancestry and ‘TCP’**

My hobby is genealogy and family history. Two articles in March gave enough information about people for me to see if I am related to them.

I discovered Tad Lucas [*Currents*] was the wife of my 10th cousin. Jennie Reynolds [*In All Their Glory*] is my 10th cousin. Our common progenitors date from the 1500s and 1600s.

Judith Tavares  
Nueces EC  
Corpus Christi



RYAN OLBRYSH

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Austin, TX 78701

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Ocotillo reaches out from a bluff overlooking Devils River State Natural Area, north of Del Rio. The river, part of the Rio Grande watershed in Southwest Texas, is one of the most pristine in Texas.

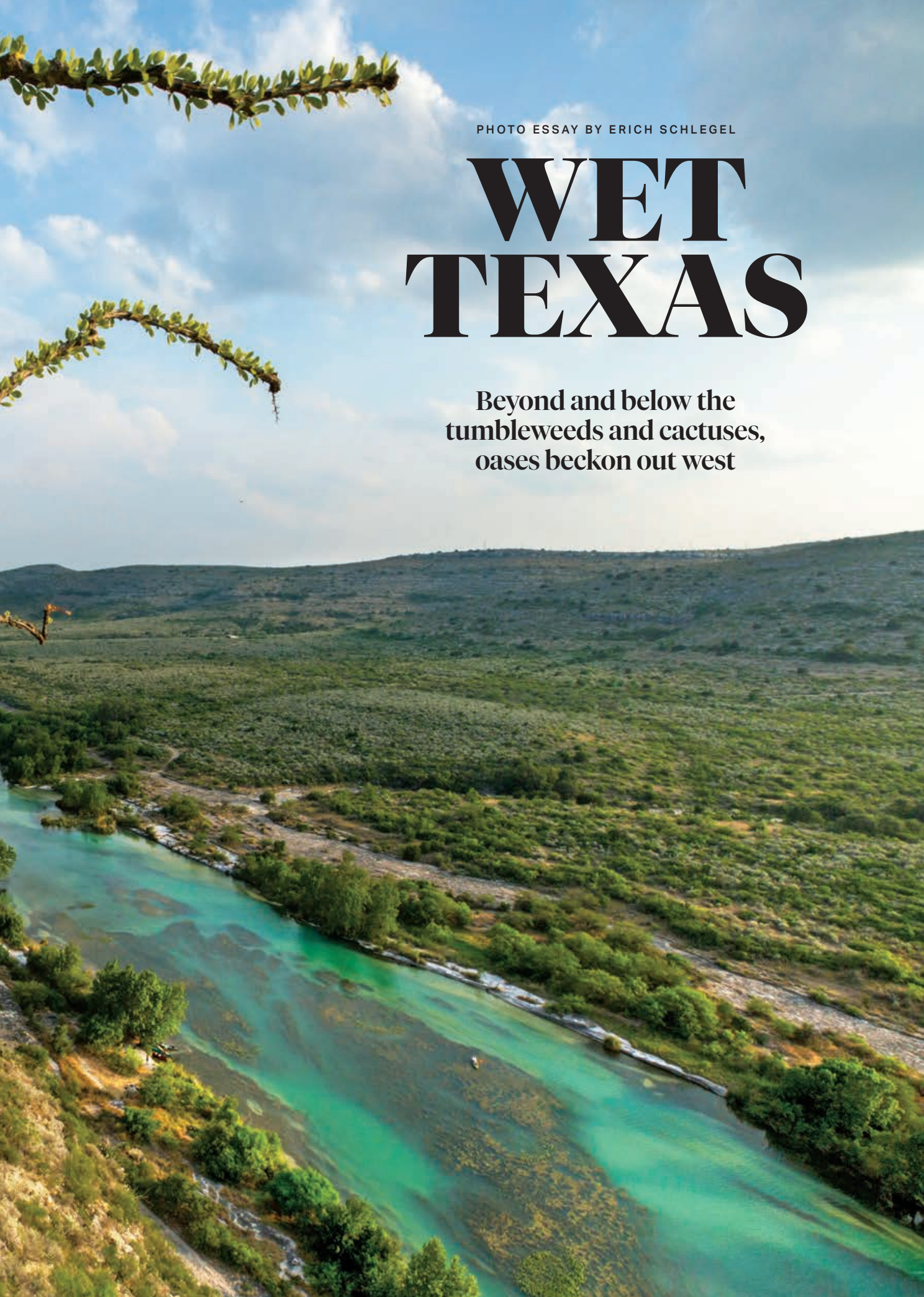
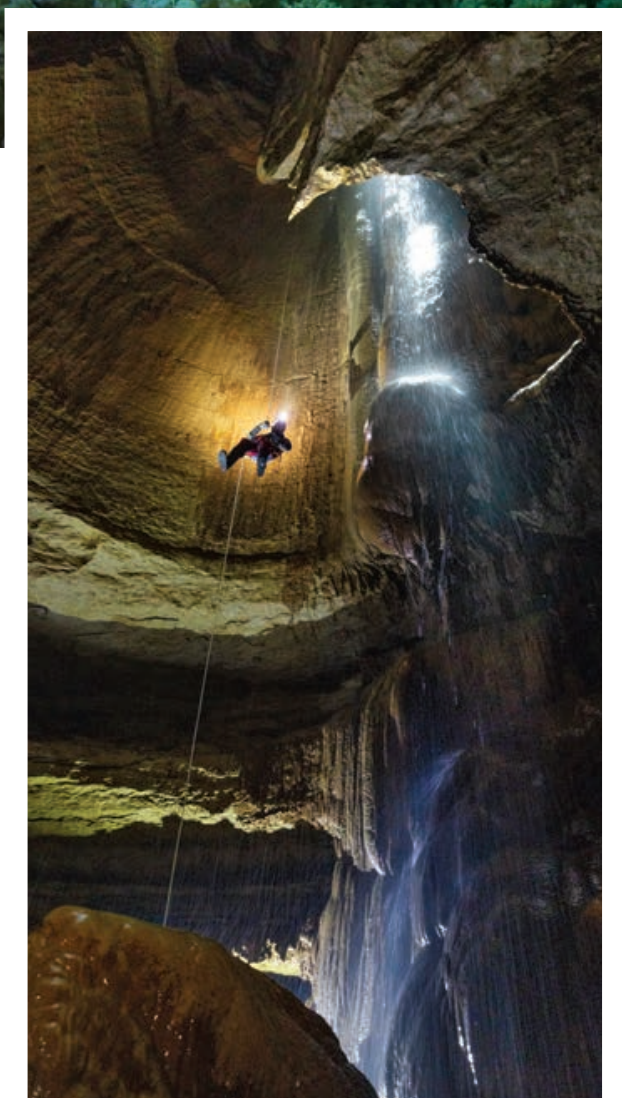
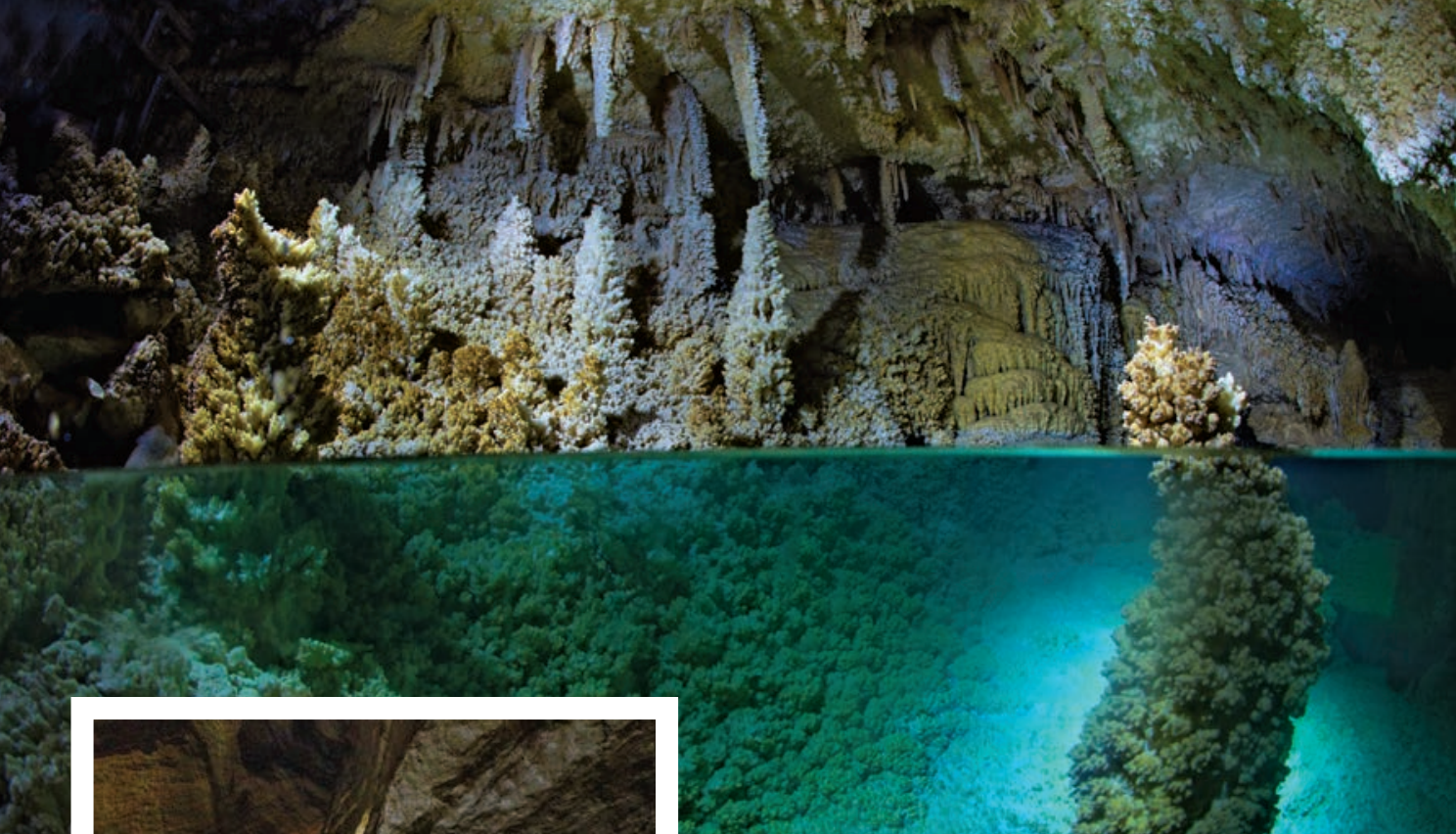
An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush, green landscape. The river is a vibrant turquoise color, contrasting with the surrounding greenery. The banks are lined with dense vegetation and trees. In the background, rolling hills are visible under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A small boat is visible on the river. The overall scene is a beautiful representation of a natural oasis in a semi-arid region.

PHOTO ESSAY BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

# WET TEXAS

Beyond and below the  
tumbleweeds and cactuses,  
oases beckon out west



TOP The Horseshoe Lake room sits beneath the dry, barren landscape of West Texas in the Caverns of Sonora, where the humidity is always about 98%.

ABOVE Austin cave expert Ethan Perrine descends a rope alongside a 70-foot underground waterfall in a cave below a West Texas cow pasture.

## Drive west on Interstate 10 from the Hill Country, through beautiful desert mesas and mountains, and there's no water in sight, right?

Not unless you know where to look. Rivers, springs and even waterfalls are hidden across West Texas.

Most folks know about the Rio Grande, which cuts through the Big Bend, and you may even know of San Solomon Springs, which fills the 1.3-acre pool in Balmorhea State Park.

But you probably don't know about the 70-foot waterfall 143 feet below a cow pasture. It's managed by the Texas Cave Management Association and accessible only by wetsuit-clad expert cavers with advanced vertical rope training.

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, also known as the Lower Canyons, flows down from Big Bend National Park toward Amistad Reservoir near Del Rio—the most remote part of the state. The 83-mile canoe trip takes a week and requires extensive river paddling knowledge and wilderness experience. Help, if needed, can be days away, but only if you carry a satellite phone.

On the other hand, anybody can paddle and swim just west of the Hill Country. Here, the crystal-clear Nueces River is nothing like the muddy flows that empty into the Gulf of Mexico. You'll find swimming pool-clear water in Lake Nueces as well as upstream, in a swimming hole in the town of Camp Wood named for its depth in feet, Quince (15).

It's easy to take water for granted. But seeing and experiencing water in West Texas brings an appreciation of one of our state's most important and sensitive resources. ■



Blue Hole is a spring-fed swimming spot near the headwaters of the Frio River north of Leakey on the private property of the H. E. Butt Foundation Camp. Blue Hole reaches a maximum depth of about 30 feet.



Divers join a school of fish in San Solomon Springs at Balmorhea State Park, home of the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool. The springs have flowed out of the Chihuahuan Desert about 135 miles southwest of Midland for thousands of years.



LEFT The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River is the most remote part of the state. The heart of this stretch of the Rio Grande is an arduous 83 miles called the Lower Canyons, which offers spectacular scenery but requires extensive wilderness experience.

BELOW A campsite along the Devils River, which begins in northwest Sutton County and flows south for 94 miles, emptying into Amistad Reservoir on the Rio Grande.





Thanks to an archaeologist's persistence, we have 20,000-year-old evidence of Texans

COURTESY KENNETH GARRETT

BY PAM LEBLANC

# He Kept Digging



COURTESY KENNETH GARRETT

TOP Michael Collins stands with several chert cores—often called flint—recovered from the Gault site along Buttermilk Creek.

ABOVE Artifacts found at the Gault site by a collector in 1990 include two stones with hatch marks etched onto their surface.

**Last summer**, Michael Collins gazed over a tree-lined valley near Florence, his eyes scanning the grassy field where he once led excavations that changed our understanding of how and when humans first populated North America.

“I describe it as coming back to an old friend,” Collins said during that visit to the Gault archaeological site, about 50 miles north of Austin.

Collins sat beneath pecan trees for a picnic that day with others who had worked at Gault and filmmaker Olive Talley, whose 2025 documentary, *The Stones Are Speaking*, explores the site’s significance—and Collins’ role in saving it.

In the 1980s and ’90s, the film explains, artifact hunters lugging buckets and shovels flocked to the 30-acre plot of land, where a creek flowed and an abundant supply of flint rippled through a rocky ledge. They paid \$25 a day to search for scrapers, projectile points and knives made by Native Americans and walk away with whatever they found. They left behind empty holes and mounds of dirt.

By taking those stone artifacts, collectors were destroying much of the history that they held. “It’s like looking at a book, tearing a picture out and throwing away the rest of the book,” said Elton Prewitt, a longtime Texas archaeologist.

The Gault story could have ended there—as a pay-to-dig site whose significance disappeared along with the ancient implements once scattered in its soil. But that’s not what happened.

In 1990, collectors digging at Gault found something unusual: two stones with hatch marks etched onto their surface. Word got back to the University of Texas, where the discovery perked the ears of Thomas Hester, then the director of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, and Collins, then the lab’s associate director.

The two drove to the site, where more etched stones turned up—along with a Clovis spearpoint, named for a Paleo-Indian archaeological site near Clovis, New Mexico, where scientists had discovered distinctive human-made tools more than 11,000 years old.

Most archaeologists long believed that humans first funneled into North America via a land bridge that formed between Russia and Alaska across what is now the Bering Strait about 13,000 years ago. The so-called Clovis culture was thought to be the oldest in the Americas.

Because Clovis tools had been found at Gault, Collins knew the site was important. But at the time, nobody knew just how significant.

Over the next few years, the land changed hands, and the pay-to-dig operation ended. When the property’s new owners, Howard and Doris Lindsey, stumbled onto some mammoth bones, Collins again got the call. He struck up a friendship with the Lindseys, and in 1998, Collins convinced them to allow a three-year lease so he could conduct an excavation.

That dig turned up more artifacts from the Clovis period, but Collins ran out of time. He filled in the pit and left when the lease ended, convinced the site held even more significance.

Collins stayed in touch with the Lindseys, and in 2007 they agreed to sell him the land. (They still live nearby and keep an eye on the property.) Collins and his wife, Karen, used their own money to buy the site, then immediately donated it to the nonprofit Archaeological Conservancy, where it would be protected in perpetuity.

Collins began a meticulous, long-term excavation project. The people who had come here thousands of years ago made tools, discarded some and lost others, leaving behind a record. The researchers uncovered thousands of artifacts, plus a human-made surface believed to be the floor of a structure at least 15,000 years old.

At first, not everyone believed what the stones were saying. Some pushed back on the idea that humans had been in Central Texas since before the Clovis people. But using a technique called optically stimulated luminescence, which



COURTESY GAULT SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Collins with volunteers at the last part of the Gault site to be excavated. Currently there are no open excavation sites on the property and no digs planned.

tells scientists when sediments were last exposed to light, Collins and his team proved that some of the most deeply buried artifacts were indeed older than Clovis.

Today, most archaeologists agree that humans began to move into North America before the land bridge at the Bering Strait opened, using boats to cross the water and spread down the coast.

Evidence discovered through Collins’ excavations show signs that humans have come to the water at this Texas site—what is now nearby Buttermilk Creek—for 20,000 years.

That arguably makes it the oldest demonstrably inhabited site in the Western Hemisphere.

“What’s important about this site is what we’ve learned about ourselves from it,” says Tim Brown, a board member at the nonprofit Gault School of Archaeological Research, which Collins founded. “This site has been so important in the rewriting of the book about the very early story of man in the Americas.”


And it may have more stories to tell.

Collins, now in his 80s, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in 2022, and the main excavation pit was covered in 2016. But just 3% of the land here has been excavated. New technologies may help future archaeologists unravel even more of its past.

“Walk across this soil,” Brown says. “If you don’t get a humble, awestruck reaction, there’s something wrong. And without Mike, we’d have no idea.” ■

## Dig In

To book a guided tour, visit the GSAR website, [gaultschool.org](http://gaultschool.org).

 Scan the QR code or visit [gaultfilm.com](http://gaultfilm.com) to learn more about *The Stones Are Speaking* and for streaming options.



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37	8.77	8.15	10.52	9.81	15	13	22	20	60	33.49	24.28	60.76	41.71	109	73	206	136
38	8.77	8.16	11.19	10.18	16	14	24	21	61	36.49	25.09	66.43	47.10	122	83	236	154
39	9.13	8.31	11.62	10.55	17	15	25	22	62	39.88	27.91	73.90	51.32	136	92	262	166
40	9.55	8.48	12.04	10.98	18	16	27	24	63	43.69	34.01	81.54	57.25	153	102	287	187
41	10.05	8.72	13.10	11.58	20	17	30	26	64	47.91	38.28	90.20	62.32	170	112	323	200
42	10.48	9.01	14.21	12.30	22	19	33	29	65	52.81	40.88	100.33	68.23	191	125	361	223
43	10.98	9.36	14.72	13.18	23	20	38	31	66	58.71	44.61	114.29	75.40	211	135	392	242
44	11.58	9.73	15.67	14.10	25	22	41	34	67	64.59	49.08	125.27	83.64	234	146	436	261
45	12.17	10.15	16.86	15.16	28	24	45	38	68	72.24	59.65	143.07	105.55	254	173	485	322
46	12.84	10.64	17.85	15.83	30	25	49	40	69	79.34	64.22	158.23	129.28	288	188	547	352
47	13.43	11.16	19.03	16.68	32	27	54	44	70	86.85	68.11	177.24	147.66	318	203	595	375
48	13.48	11.88	20.27	17.37	35	29	58	47	71	102.45	82.60	203.10	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.69	12.33	21.73	18.32	37	31	63	52	72	113.68	93.16	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.36	12.98	23.00	19.82	40	33	69	57	73	127.55	106.68	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.37	13.75	25.30	20.65	45	35	78	62	74	142.08	119.36	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.36	14.87	27.63	22.13	49	38	87	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
53	17.46	15.88	30.95	24.81	54	42	98	73	76	200.03	168.51	418.29	276.67	785	530	1489	982
54	18.68	16.72	33.99	26.20	60	46	110	81	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	956	658	1797	1215
55	20.70	17.50	37.13	27.85	67	50	121	90	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1167	817	2179	1504
56	22.69	19.48	42.01	31.07	74	53	138	96	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1389	983	2578	1807
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**GREBE III**

## Our No. 1 Priority

**SAFETY IS A SERIOUS TOPIC**, especially when it comes to electricity. For Medina Electric Cooperative, it's the No. 1 priority—and that's not just talk. Over the years, our co-op has created a culture in which the safety of our employees and the community is above all else.

Our mission is to provide safe, affordable and reliable electricity to our member-owners. And that means ensuring our workers return home safely to their loved ones at the end of each day. That requires ongoing focus, dedication and vigilance.

### Setting the Standard

Working with electricity brings risks, especially for lineworkers who work in challenging conditions. That's why Medina EC is focused on protecting our employees and the community.

We've established protocols based on leading national safety standards for the utility industry, and our lineworkers wear specialized protective equipment whenever they're working near or with energized power lines.

We encourage our crews to speak up and hold each other accountable. By fostering a culture of openness and transparency, we promote problem-solving rather than blame.

Our safety team meets regularly to discuss upcoming projects and develop the best procedures to tackle them safely. They monitor and track near-miss incidents to understand what happened, share the lessons learned and prevent future occurrences.

We analyze data to identify patterns, and we use safety metrics to improve in areas where we have fallen short. We also brief contractors on our safety

protocols and set clear expectations before they begin work.

### Keeping You Safe

Because we live and work in the community we serve, we care about our neighbors. Medina EC conducts electrical safety demonstrations in schools and at community events, helping people of all ages understand how to stay safe around electricity.

May is National Electrical Safety Month—a good time to remember that electrical safety starts at home. According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured each year because of electrical fires, accidents and electrocutions at home.

The good news is that many of these accidents are preventable, and you can help keep yourself and your community safe around electricity.

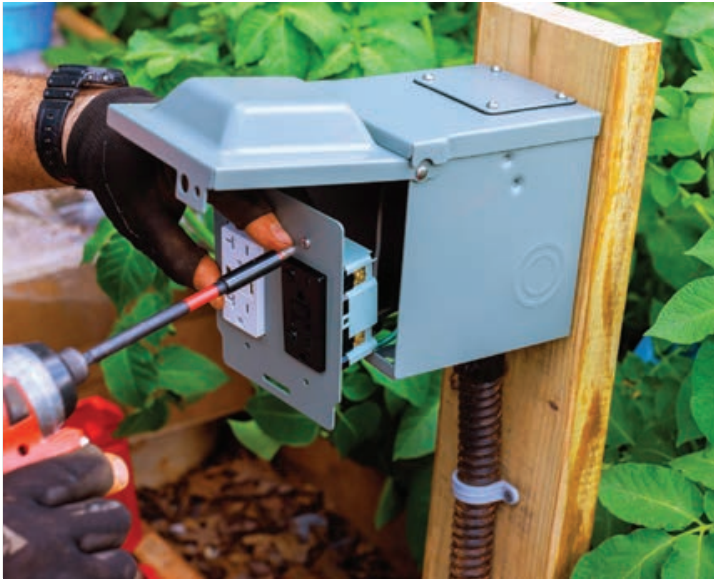
Don't attempt electrical do-it-yourself projects beyond basic tasks, and don't overload outlets. Always report downed power lines immediately, and treat every downed line as if it's energized. Let us know if you spot unlocked substations or pad-mount transformers that look damaged or tampered with.

If you would like Medina EC to provide a safety demonstration at your school or community event, please get in touch.

When it comes to safety, taking a moment to pause and think before you act can make all the difference. Let's work together to plug into safety.

Until next time,  
Trey Grebe





PHOTOVS LISTOCK.COM

## Be Safe Around Outside Electrical Hazards

**WITH SUMMER** not yet here and the sweltering heat still a few weeks out, Texans are likely spending more time outside. You might think you leave electricity indoors, but remember that there are still places outdoors where electricity can be a hazard. Follow these guidelines to help prevent common outdoor electrical issues.

### Power Lines

Before planting trees near a power line, do some research or speak with a professional to ensure that there's enough space for the trees to grow safely. If you suspect that a tree is too close to power lines, report it to Medina Electric Cooperative.

Power lines are also found underground. Call 811 before you dig for any project.

Electricity can jump to nearby objects. Always keep yourself and any equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines.

### Outdoor Outlets

Have ground-fault circuit interrupters installed on outdoor outlets. GFCIs automatically cut power when a plugged-in item comes into contact with water or begins to "leak" electricity.

Install weatherproof boxes or covers on outdoor outlets.

### Extension Cords

They're a temporary solution and should not be used long-term or permanently.

Never use an indoor extension cord outdoors. Outdoor cords are labeled for outdoor use and are often orange.

Never attempt to extend the length of an extension cord by connecting it to another extension cord.

Only use extension cords that bear the mark of a nationally recognized safety testing laboratory such as UL Solutions, Intertek or CSA Group.

Be sure the amperage rating for the extension cord is higher than the amperage of the electrical product being used.

## Medina Electric Cooperative



### CONTACT US

**Toll-Free** 1-866-632-3532

**Email** Info@MedinaEC.org

**Web** MedinaEC.org - Chat Feature Available

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Voting District 1

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Ken Weynand, (830) 426-0762

#### Voting District 2

Joe Foley, (830) 261-1304

Larry Neal, (210) 218-2367

Jimmie Raines, (830) 591-8437

#### Voting District 3

Dennis Gonzalez, (956) 218-8325

J. L. Gonzalez, (956) 286-1863

Rodolfo H. Rodriguez, (210) 846-1092

### CEO

Trey Grebe, 1-866-632-3532, ext. 1046

## Call us.

### TOLL-FREE

1-866-632-3532

Option 2: Report an outage

Option 3: Pay bill, get account balance

Option 5: Speak to a representative

### OFFICE LOCATIONS

**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 1-866-632-3532 o visitando una de nuestras oficinas.

# Medina EC Celebrates Safety Professionals

**NORTH AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL** Safety and Health Week and Electrical Safety Month, both observed in May, highlight the critical role Medina Electric Cooperative's safety team plays in keeping the co-op's employees, members and the general public safe.

Medina EC's safety team consists of Mario Lopez, safety coordinator, with plans to add a second coordinator this year.

This team is essential in developing and enforcing safety protocols, providing specialized training, and ensuring compliance with regulations. By promoting a strong safety culture and implementing rigorous safety measures, our safety culture ensures the well-being of Medina EC's team.



**Mario Lopez**  
Safety Coordinator

# Team Members Reach Important Milestones

**MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CELEBRATED** several special work anniversaries for employees between January and March.

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 also donates \$100 to an organization of the employee's choosing. In 2026, Medina EC employees are on track to donate \$1,900 to various local organizations.

Please join us in celebrating these Medina EC employees!



**JOE CARROLL**  
Line Designer  
Corporate office  
January | 20 years

**DONATION TO**  
Operation Round Up



**BRETT WILLIAMS**  
Manager of Finance  
Corporate office  
January | 5 years

**DONATION TO**  
South Texas Blood & Tissue



**DOUG KINDRED**  
Chief Information Officer  
Corporate office  
February | 25 years

**DONATION TO**  
Semper Fi & America's Fund



**BOBBY CONTRERAS**  
Member Service Representative  
Dilley office  
March | 5 years

**DONATION TO**  
Natalia Veteran's Memorial Library

# Is Your Contact Information Up to Date?



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



## Summer Supply for ERCOT Grid

**EACH MONTH**, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas releases a monthly recap to share key information from the previous month, a look at the future and an overview of additional key items. You can find the monthly update and other helpful resources at [ERCOT.com](http://ERCOT.com).

The summer record peak demand is 85,508 megawatts, set in August 2023. In general, a megawatt of electricity can power about 200 Texas homes. The most recent Capacity, Demand and Reserves Report from December predicts 104,850-plus MW of capacity for summer 2026 peak demand.

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 mandate 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. ERCOT has also established the Texas Advisory Notification System to provide early notifications ahead of periods of higher demand. Learn more about that at [ERCOT.com/TXANS](http://ERCOT.com/TXANS).

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

## Get Energy Star Products Tax-Free

**ENERGY STAR-CERTIFIED** products save you money on your electric bill, and what better time to purchase one than Memorial Day weekend, during the Energy Star sales tax holiday, May 23–25 this year.

Texas shoppers wanting a break on energy-efficient items can buy qualifying Energy Star products tax-free when the item is paid for during the exemption period.

Some items have price limits, so check [comptroller.texas.gov](http://comptroller.texas.gov) before you buy to make sure they qualify for the exemption.

### Qualifying Products

- ▶ Air conditioners (with a sale price of \$6,000 or less)
- ▶ Refrigerators (with a sales price of \$2,000 or less)
- ▶ Ceiling fans
- ▶ Incandescent and fluorescent light bulbs
- ▶ Clothes washers
- ▶ Dishwashers
- ▶ Dehumidifiers

### Nonqualifying Products

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



# Medina EC Celebrates Accounting Professionals

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, and employee payroll. Medina EC's consumer accounting team prepares and processes capital credits, member bills, payments, and helps resolve member billing concerns. These teams also work together to create and manage department and project budgets.

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



**Laurie Van Damme**  
Chief Financial Officer

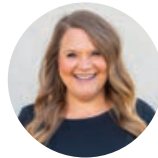
## ACCOUNTING TEAM



**Emily Tankersley**  
Manager of Accounting



**Brooke Bader**  
Accounting Assistant



**Danielle Bendele**  
Accounting Assistant



**Anisa Browning**  
Accounting Clerk

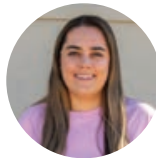


**Kim Mulvany**  
Accounting Assistant

## CONSUMER ACCOUNTING TEAM



**Brett Williams**  
Manager of Finance



**Amber Lally**  
Consumer Accounting  
Assistant



**Pamela Lutz**  
Consumer Accounting  
Specialist



**Shelby Martinez**  
Consumer Accounting  
Assistant



**MEDINA ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE**

## THE COOPERATIVE ADVANTAGE

Your everyday life runs on power and we're here to keep it going.

Co-ops are owned by the people they serve.

That's why service, safety, and education aren't extras, they're part of our everyday commitment.

**MEDINAEC.ORG | 1.866.632.3532**



LEFT TO RIGHT, ROBERT MARKS, CAC PROGRAM DIRECTOR; ASHLEY KOTARA, MDT CO-ORDN./INTAKE SPECIALIST; JEANA HOLZHAUS, FAMILY ADVOCATE; K. IRENE STONE, DEV DIRECTOR; EDWARD GENTRY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; LARRY HUESSEER AND KEN WEYNAND, MEDINA EC DIRECTORS; AND SANDRA TONDRE, ORU COMMITTEE MEMBER.

## Small Change, Big Impact: The Power of Operation Round Up

AT MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, the mission to serve goes beyond the meter. While electricity powers the homes of South Texas, the Operation Round Up program powers the heart of the community by turning spare change into meaningful support.

Since 2024, this collective effort has awarded \$28,000 to local nonprofits. In the first quarter of 2026 alone, the ORU committee awarded \$8,000 to the Bluebonnet Children's Advocacy Center and the Texas Ramp Project. These funds will help the organizations provide essential care, safety and mobility to residents in Medina and Uvalde counties.

The generosity extends across all of Medina EC's 17 counties. The program's reach is felt through the San Antonio and South Texas food banks as they fight local hunger in the co-op's service area, the advocacy work at Anderson House (Uvalde), and in the vital health initiatives supported by the Uvalde Healthcare Foundation's Kate Marmion Rides to Radiation, ensuring that even the most vulnerable members of the community aren't left behind.

These partnerships highlight the supportive community that has shaped the cooperative since 1938.

Ongoing donations to nonprofits, as well as individuals and families, are reviewed quarterly. If you know an organization or individual who could use a donation, have them apply at [MedinaEC.org/ORU](https://MedinaEC.org/ORU).

## Medina EC Celebrates National Skilled Trades Day

IN HONOR OF National Skilled Trades Day on May 6, Medina Electric Cooperative is recognizing the hands-on tradesmen for their skills and expertise that keep our infrastructure running.

Medina EC's electricians install, maintain, and repair electrical systems and smart grid devices for load management, cooperative facilities, and distributed generation, ensuring efficient and reliable power delivery to cooperative members.



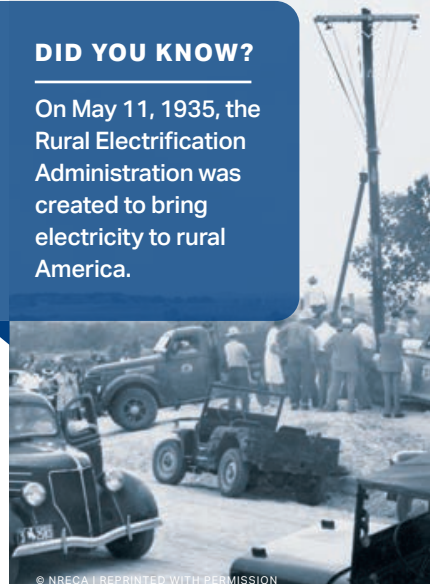
**Darrell Ritchie**  
Master Electrician



**Roland Elizondo**  
Journeyman Electrician

### DID YOU KNOW?

On May 11, 1935, the Rural Electrification Administration was created to bring electricity to rural America.



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CEMAGRAPHS | ISTOCK.COM

## Get Ready for Storm Season

Preparedness is the best defense

**ALTHOUGH SPRING AND SUMMER** allow more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, the seasons unfortunately can create the perfect conditions for severe storms.

Medina Electric Cooperative crews are always prepared and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area. When severe storms cause power disruptions, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines.

We encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for additional resources.

- ▶ Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of nonperishable food, including canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- ▶ Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- ▶ Ensure your first aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- ▶ Set aside basic household items you'll need, including flashlights; batteries; a manual can opener; and a portable, battery-powered radio.
- ▶ Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.
- ▶ In the event of a prolonged power outage, unplug major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics.

This will help avert damage from potential power surges and will also help prevent overloading circuits during power restoration. Be sure to leave one light on so you'll know when power is restored.

- ▶ If you plan to use a portable generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you'll need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.
- ▶ Listen to local news or a weather radio for storm and emergency information.
- ▶ Severe storms can occasionally bring down power lines. If you see a downed line, always assume it's energized and never approach it. If flooding occurs, never walk through areas where power lines could be submerged.
- ▶ Advanced planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and lessen the impact of the storm's effects.
- ▶ If you experience an outage, please don't report it on Facebook. Call our outage reporting number at 1-866-632-3532—this is the fastest way to let us know if your power is out.

During a power outage, we will send outage notifications through text and email to members who have verified their contact methods through SmartHub. Learn more about those alerts at [MedinaEC.org/Outage-Alerts](https://www.MedinaEC.org/Outage-Alerts). You can follow outage updates on our outage map at [MedinaEC.org/Outages](https://www.MedinaEC.org/Outages).

No one wants to experience severe storms, but it can be hard to predict Mother Nature's plans. At Medina EC, we recommend that you make a plan today—because storm preparedness is always our best defense.

# Thank you to everyone who donated to this year's Power Up the Pantry food drive!

Over 6,000 items were collected at Medina Electric Cooperative offices in this year's food drive.



**Bruni and Laredo offices:**  
415 items for the South Texas Food Bank

IN PHOTO (FROM LEFT): BEN SOTO AND JUSTIN CORTEZ.

**Dilley office:**  
705 items for the San Antonio Food Bank



IN PHOTO (FROM LEFT): TRACY GONZALES, BOBBY CONTRERAS, SYLVIA RANGEL AND JUANITA MOLINA.



**Hondo office:**  
1,266 items for the San Antonio Food Bank

IN PHOTO (FROM LEFT): TONY BENAVIDEZ, MICHAEL CARDOZA, ALEXANDRA STALLWORTH, GUS DE HOYOS AND TOBA PEREZ-WRIGHT.

**Rio Grande City office:**  
1,017 items for the South Texas Food Bank



IN PHOTO (FROM LEFT): JOSE OLIVAREZ, DANIELA HINOJOSA AND JOHN RODRIGUEZ.



**Uvalde office:**  
1,956 items for the San Antonio Food Bank

IN PHOTO (FROM LEFT): BRANDI ARANDA, VALERIE VICTORINO, CHASITY MARTINEZ, ROGER BESARES AND MARCOS MUNOZ.

Not pictured: General office: 724 items for the San Antonio Food Bank.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### Operation Round Up Applications Due

Friday, May 1

Learn more about ORU and apply at [MedinaEC.org/ORU](https://MedinaEC.org/ORU).

### Mother's Day

Sunday, May 10

### Armed Forces Day

Saturday, May 16

### Memorial Day

Monday, May 25

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



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If you find computers frustrating and confusing, you are not alone. When the Personal Computer was introduced, it was simple. It has now become a complex Business Computer with thousands of programs for Accounting, Engineering, Databases etc. This makes the computer complex.

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This computer is not designed for business. It is designed for you!

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 Ryan M, Copper Canyon, TX

**"Thank you again for making a computer for seniors."**  
 Megan M, Hilliard, OH

**"Telikin support is truly amazing."**  
 Nick V, Central Point, OR

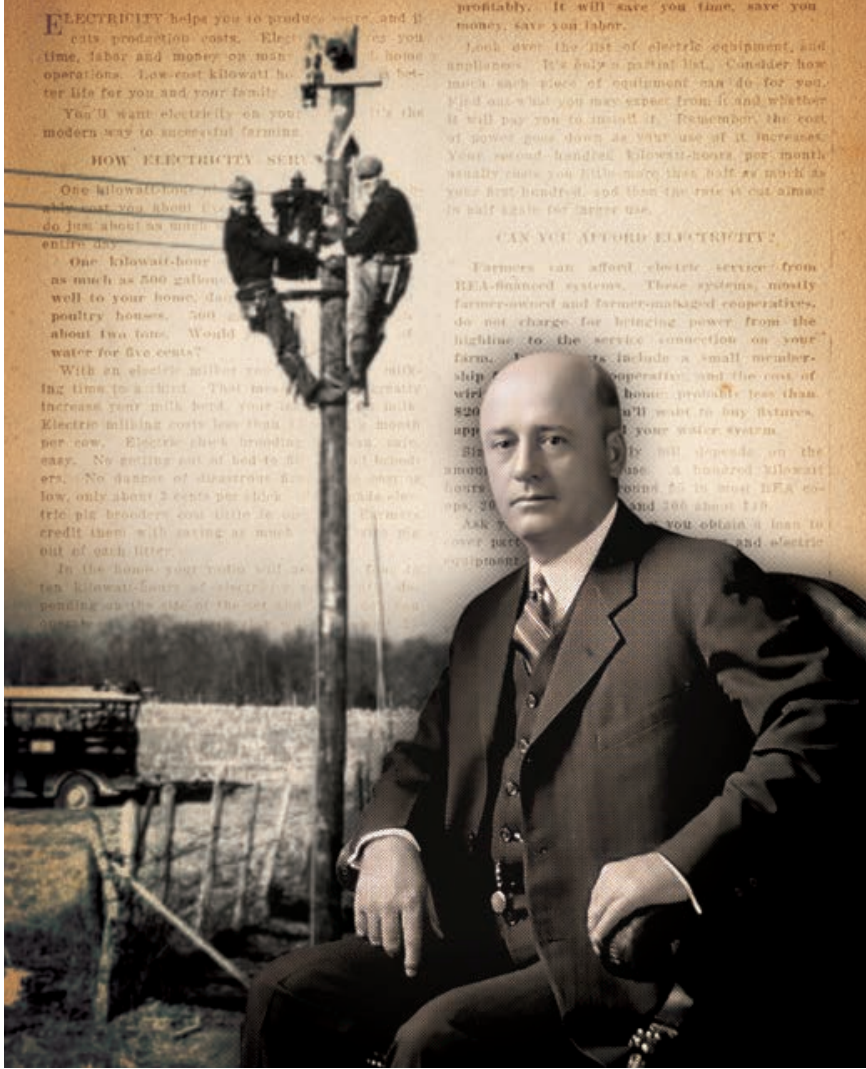
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# Power and Light

Sam Rayburn helped pull rural Texans out of the dark

BY JESSICA RIDGE

**BEFORE THE PASSAGE OF THE** Rural Electrification Act nearly a century ago, in the depths of the Great Depression, most U.S. farmsteads made do in the dark while their neighbors in cities a few miles away experienced a higher standard of living. Investor-owned utilities didn't deem it profitable to run miles of power lines across the countryside.

Without electric lights and appliances, farm families cooked over smoky woodstoves, read and studied under kerosene lamps, and performed laborious agricultural chores by hand.

By the mid-1930s, change was afoot, thanks in large part to a dedicated and diplomatic Texan intent on the empowerment of rural communities. The REA,

enacted 90 years ago this month—May 20, 1936—made available low-cost federal loans to rural landowners who had banded together in hopes of threading the countryside with electric lines.

Electric cooperatives were born, starting with the first, Bartlett Electric Cooperative in Central Texas.

Before the REA, only around 10% of U.S. farms had electricity. By 1950, the federal financing the legislation shook loose had helped electrify nearly 80% of farms. Today, more than 900 co-ops power rural and suburban residents.

A 1960 Department of Agriculture video describes electricity as “magic from nowhere and everywhere” and details “the drab, colorless days” before

its rural availability. The video colorizes a black-and-white sequence, demonstrating the life-changing force of electricity coursing through the home of the fictional family it depicts.

Similar transformations, effected many times across prewar rural landscapes nationwide, were largely enabled by the efforts and advocacy of U.S. Rep. Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn, who cosponsored the REA legislation with Nebraska Sen. George Norris.

Rayburn, born in Tennessee, moved with his family to an unelectrified Fannin County farm, in North Texas, when he was 5, in 1887.

He attended grade school through law school in Texas and served in the Legislature before catapulting to Congress in 1913, where he set records as the longest-serving speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives—17 years over 10 sessions spanning the 1930s to 1960s, accrued piecemeal during his near-half-century tenure.

Rayburn didn't forget his former neighbors. In his papers, housed at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, a March 1938 thank-you on Fannin County Electric Cooperative letterhead notes the co-op's progress in installing its first 110 miles of line, thanks to a \$100,000 REA requisition.

In July 1940, Farmers Electric Cooperative sent its own note to Rayburn, chiefly attributing to him the REA's “birth and success.” Included was a precursor to this magazine, a monthly newsletter called the *REA Co-op Message*, which included a run-down of the co-op's recent annual meeting, a list of new members and updates about members' appliance purchases.

Readers learned that member W.C. McKay had installed an electric range at home. “Naturally,” the newsletter reads, “Mrs. McKay is very happy.”

She wasn't alone. Thanks to Rayburn, life in Co-op Country was changed forever. ■

# Mom's Favorites

Recipes perfected and passed down through the years

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

This salad smells like home. Growing up, my mami had a beautiful garden where she harvested the juiciest cucumbers and tomatoes. Sliced, tossed with panela and drizzled with her homemade dressing, I could eat this salad every day. I'm thrilled to share a dish my mami and I still enjoy together.

## Tomato Cucumber Panela Salad

**2 cups halved cherry tomatoes**  
**2 medium cucumbers, diced**  
**1 package panela cheese (16 ounces), cubed**  
**½ cup olive oil**  
**2 tablespoons white vinegar**  
**2 tablespoons lime juice**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**2 teaspoons ground black pepper**  
**1 bunch cilantro, finely minced**

1. Place tomatoes, cucumbers and panela in a bowl.
2. In another bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, lime juice, salt and pepper until well blended. Stir in cilantro.
3. Pour dressing over salad, stir to combine and store in fridge until ready to serve.

SERVES 4

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Frida Kahlo's Ensalada de Calabacin.





## Lasagna

DANI DECESARO  
TRINITY VALLEY EC

DeCesaro's Norwegian mom married an Italian man and perfected this recipe alongside her sister. It has become a wonderful memory for the entire family.

- 3 quarts plus 1/3 cup water, divided use**
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon salt, divided use**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 9 lasagna noodles**
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter**
- 1 pound ground beef**
- 1/4 cup minced onion**
- 1/4 cup dried parsley flakes**
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic salt**
- 2 tablespoons flour**
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano**
- 1 can evaporated milk (12 ounces)**
- 1 can tomato paste (12 ounces)**
- 1 pound mozzarella cheese, sliced into 18 pieces**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
- 2.** Bring 3 quarts water to a boil. Add 1 tablespoon salt and oil. Cook noodles according to package directions. Drain and place noodles on paper towels.
- 3.** Heat butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add ground beef, onion, parsley and garlic salt. Cook, breaking up ground beef with spoon.
- 4.** When fully cooked, reduce heat to simmer, and stir in remaining 1 teaspoon salt, flour, pepper and oregano until well combined.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



\$500 WINNER

## Mom's Fresh Apple Bars

DIANE KORUS  
KARNES EC



Korus' mom enjoyed these bars in the afternoon with a cup of coffee, and I have to agree that these babies are the ultimate afternoon snack. Packed with fresh apples and a sinfully sweet streusel topping, these bars are a crowd pleaser.

### STREUSEL

- 1/2 cup flour**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, softened**

### BARS

- 2/3 cup shortening**
- 2 cups light brown sugar**

- 2 eggs, room temperature, lightly beaten**
- 1/4 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 cups flour**
- 1/2 tablespoon ground cinnamon**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 1/2 cups peeled and chopped Granny Smith apple (about 1 large or 2 medium apples)**
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans**

- 1. STREUSEL** In a bowl, combine flour, sugar and butter. Mix until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
- 2. BARS** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
- 3.** In a large bowl, beat shortening and brown sugar on medium speed until smooth. Add eggs, salt and vanilla and mix until combined, scraping down sides as needed.
- 4.** With a spatula, stir in flour, cinnamon and baking powder until well combined. Gently fold in apples and pecans.
- 5.** Spread batter into prepared pan and sprinkle with streusel. Bake 35-40 minutes or until the top is golden brown and a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

SERVES 12

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**CAMPFIRE FAVORITES** DUE MAY 10

For our October issue, we're eager to pass around treats and meals to munch on while gathered around the flames. Fire off your best recipe for a chance at winning \$500.

**UPCOMING: CRANBERRY HARVEST** DUE JUN 10



RECIPES CONTINUED

- 5. Add evaporated milk and remaining 1/3 cup water. Cover and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in tomato paste until well combined.
- 6. Layer three noodles on bottom of prepared pan. Spread 1/2 meat sauce over noodles, then layer on 3 more noodles and top with 1/2 of cheese. Add remaining 3 noodles. Top with remaining meat sauce and remaining cheese.
- 7. Bake about 30 minutes, until cheese is melted and begins to brown.

SERVES 8

### Yankee Cake

CHUCK BURGESS  
HEART OF TEXAS EC

Burgess' mom was from Texas, his dad from New York. His dad's family shared this cake recipe with Mom. It's now a family favorite and sure to be your new



favorite too. This Yankee Cake is a cinnamony sweet surprise sprinkled with sugar and nuts.

- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided use
- 7 tablespoons (7/8 stick) butter, softened, divided use
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup heavy cream

- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

- 1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
- 2. In a medium bowl, mix together flour, salt and baking powder.
- 3. In a large bowl, beat 1 cup sugar and 5 tablespoons butter at medium speed until light and fluffy. Reduce speed to low and add egg, heavy cream, milk and vanilla. Mix until combined, scraping down sides.
- 4. Add flour mixture and mix until combined.
- 5. Spread batter evenly into prepared pan. Sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon sugar plus cinnamon and nuts. Dot with remaining 2 tablespoons butter.
- 6. Bake 25–30 minutes, until edges are lightly golden and a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

SERVES 12

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## South Poles

Panna Maria museum shows off Polish heritage in a big way

BY CHET GARNER

**LOTS OF FOLKS** know Texas for its Mexican flavors, its German beer halls and its Czech kolache. But mention our Polish history, and most won't know where to start, even though Texas is home to the oldest permanent Polish settlement in America.

I'll admit, before visiting the small community of Panna Maria, I didn't grasp how deep our Polish roots run. But fortunately, I found the Polish Heritage Center ready to educate me and the rest of Texas.

Panna Maria (population about 40) sits quietly on the rolling plains of Karnes County about an hour southeast of San Antonio.

The entire community revolves around two blocks. On one sits the picturesque Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, which dates to 1855. And on the next is the stately Polish Heritage Center, which dates to 2021. I have visited more than my fair share of small-town museums, but nothing could prepare me for what I found inside this state-of-the-art facility.

After signing my name in the guest book next to visitors from the Polish capital of Warsaw and beyond, I stepped into an immersive experience that transported me to 1854, when a group of Polish immigrants held Mass under the oak trees just outside the church and decided to call Panna Maria home. The museum went on to tell the story of the culture, faith and struggles of this community, including its influence on modern life in Texas.

The history unfolds through hand-embroidered clothing, family photos, tools and letters carried across the Atlantic. It's so well done that it would impress visitors in any big city, making it all the more amazing in tiny Panna Maria.

Texas is a patchwork of cultures, accents and traditions. Thanks to the Polish Heritage Center, one of our more overlooked threads is finally getting the spotlight it deserves. ■

ABOVE Chet stops at a painting in the Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria showing the first Catholic Mass after immigrants reached the site on Christmas Eve in 1854.

**TCP** Watch the video on our website and see all of Chet's Explorations 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

8

**Brenham [8-9] Maifest**, (979) 451-0621, [brenhammaifest.com](http://brenhammaifest.com)

**Round Top [8-10] Fine Art Festival at the Compound**, (281) 236-3821, [bit.ly/fafatthecompound](http://bit.ly/fafatthecompound)

9

**Nacogdoches Scottish Highland Games and Festival**, (936) 371-3072, [nacscottishgames.com](http://nacscottishgames.com)

**Palestine Mother's Day Lunch Train**, 1-855-632-7729, [texasstaterailroad.net](http://texasstaterailroad.net)

**Stonewall Williams Creek (Albert) School Open House**, (830) 685-3321, [historicschools.org](http://historicschools.org)

14

**Giddings [14-16] Lee County Fair**, [info@leecountyfairtx.com](mailto:info@leecountyfairtx.com), [leecountyfairtx.com](http://leecountyfairtx.com)

15

**Columbus [15-16] Magnolia Days Festival**, (979) 732-8385, [magnoliadays.org](http://magnoliadays.org)

**Grapevine [15-17] Main Street Fest**, (817) 410-3185, [grapevinetexasusa.com](http://grapevinetexasusa.com)

16

**Fredericksburg Classic Truck Show**, (830) 990-4433, [pecangrovestore.com](http://pecangrovestore.com)

**Greenville Knights of Columbus Mayfest**, (903) 455-9062, [donvinson75402@gmail.com](mailto:donvinson75402@gmail.com)

17

**Fredericksburg Thomas Pandolfi**, [fredericksburgmusicclub.com](http://fredericksburgmusicclub.com)

21

**Grapeland [21-23] Salmon Lake Park Gospel Bluegrass Festival**, (936) 687-2594, slpbluegrass.com

**Kerrville [21-June 7] Folk Festival**, (830) 257-3600, kerrvillefolkfestival.org

22

**Granbury [22-24] Memorial Day Weekend Festival**, (682) 936-4550, granburysquare.com

**Kerrville [22-24] Texas Masters of Fine Art & Craft Show**, (469) 223-4162, texasmasters.com

23

**Chappell Hill Artwalk on Main Street**, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

**Hondo Heritage Hike**, (830) 660-6908, bit.ly/hondohike

**Levelland [23-25] Panhandle Cutting Horse Association Show**, (325) 518-1424, panhandlecha.com

29

**Corsicana Big Bad Voodoo Daddy**, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

JUNE

5

**Fort Worth [5-7] Hadestown**, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

**Yoakum [5-7] Tom Tom Festival**, (361) 293-2309, yoakumareachamber.com

**San Antonio [5-August 1] Fiesta Noche del Rio**, (210) 226-4651, fiestanochesa.com

**TCP** *Submit Your Event*

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

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Upper Antelope Canyon, fine art giclée print, 2025, 12" x 19", Bobby Greeson



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# Caught Napping

If you find yourself catching a catnap, needing 40 winks on the fly or sawing logs around your siblings, you're in good company. Usually, if you snooze you lose. But these readers won't be losing sleep anytime soon.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

**1 PAUL LAUDER**  
FARMERS EC

"After a hard morning competing in the livestock show at the State Fair of Texas, a young competitor and her pet take a well-earned rest."

**2 REAGAN FERGUSON**  
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

"A number of neighbors went to the CF Ranch in Clarksville to help with their cattle drive. Following the drive, this young lady laid claim to a few bales of hay."

**3 SHAWN DEAN**  
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

"My granddaughter took this of her horse's new colt."

**4 GABRIELLE ETHINGTON**  
PENTEX ENERGY

"Some friends raise kunekune pigs on a small farm outside of Nocona. I photographed this cutie napping in the front pasture area. It looks so happy."



## Upcoming Contests

- RODEO** DUE MAY 10
- TAILGATING** DUE JUN 10
- RIDE THE RAILS** DUE JUL 10



ENTER ONLINE

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Caught Napping photos from readers.



## Mother's Days

They give a lot to their kids, but sometimes moms need a little bit back

BY CAYT CALHOUN

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA GODEASSI

A PANG OF FEAR HIT as the gurney wheeled me away from my family. Months of testing brought me here, and within the hour, I would become my mom's kidney donor.

Until that point, it struck me as odd when people asked if I was afraid. Why? I love her. That's enough. And it was enough to bat away intrusive thoughts as the anesthesia took hold.

Those fleeting moments of anxiety paled in comparison to years of uncertainty.

I understood the crushing weight of losing a parent—my dad died before I turned 2. Between his death and the deterioration of my mom's health, I tumbled through my adolescence fearing I'd lose *both* my parents before adulthood.

My mom received the IgA nephropathy

diagnosis when I was 10. At the time, I didn't understand how to pronounce it, let alone grasp the complexities of an inflammatory kidney disease that has no cure and can be fatal.

But chronic illness doesn't give you time to understand. It creeps in and presents itself with a slew of medications, revolving appointments and the enormously draining toll of it all. Despite everything, she expended energy she didn't have on my behalf. It seemed effortless at the time. I know better now.

Back then it was easier to accept things at a blithe glance—because being anything other than willfully ignorant meant facing a hard reality. I convinced myself that her active role in my life meant all was well.

But I couldn't pretend anymore. For a decade, I watched the quality of my mother's life ebb and flow until her kidney function dwindled to a measly 19%. She had two options: dialysis or surgery. With no known viable donor, she was forced to choose the former.

It had been us against the world for as long as I could remember. What if she lost the ability to do the things she loved? What if I lost her? The scenarios I conjured in my mind felt suffocating.

Watching how nightly dialysis altered her life was heartbreaking. At that point, I didn't have a choice. The voice in my head said the least I could do was try to give back to the person who gave me everything. So when co-workers, professors, peers and doctors asked if I was comfortable with donating a kidney at 20, I said yes emphatically. I don't believe it was selfless. I selfishly wanted more time with my mom.

Luckily, we got it.

We're now approaching the 10th anniversary of the donation, and I'm beyond grateful for the opportunity to have been her donor. There may be a world out there in which I wasn't qualified. There isn't a world where I wouldn't do anything for my mom. ■



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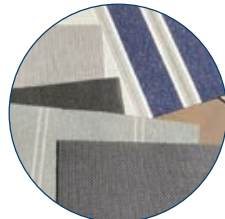
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