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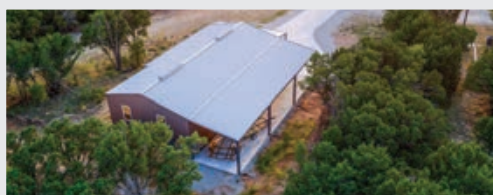
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Eduardo Garza of Mission was one of the big winners at the 2019 Big Squeeze youth accordion competition.

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By Joe Nick Patoski

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GARZA: COURTESY TEXAS FOLKLORE. RATTLESNAKE: FIVE SPOTS | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



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**ON THE COVER** Flaco Jiménez brought the conjunto accordion to Amsterdam in 1989. Photo by Frans Schellekens | Getty Images

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## Scrumptious and Healthy

I am tickled to death to welcome Megan Myers as the new food editor [*New Year's Resolution*, January 2020]. I have eaten healthy most of my life and am excited to be able to consult *Texas Co-op Power* for new recipes.

The January meals look scrumptious, so I am already a fan.

ELAINE FRIEDBERG | BRENHAM  
BLUEBONNET EC

When I was in college, I had to subsist on the meal plan since money was tight. A vegetable that was often served in the cafeteria was Brussels sprouts. I absolutely hated them.

As I have gotten older, I have learned how important it is to eat fresh vegetables.

I can't say enough good things about Megan Myers' recipe for Spicy Glazed Brussels Sprouts. It was easy, and even my husband enjoyed the tasty vegetables.

NANCY GLASSCOCK | SONORA  
SOUTHWEST TEXAS EC



## Brews and Pews

Back Pew Brewing in Porter is located on acreage that once belonged to a little country church [*Texas Feels a Draft*,

## Courthouses as Art

As an artist and student of Texas courthouse architecture, I loved Sheryl Smith-Rodgers' article about architect James Riely Gordon [*Gordon's Gold*, January 2020]. Gordon's iconic structures make some of the most interesting subjects for my Texas courthouse drawings [Wise County, right].

I suspect that there was a rivalry between counties for who could commission the grandest structure, and Gordon was certainly proactive promoting his vision of civic buildings.

NORMAN BEAN | MARTINDALE | BLUEBONNET EC



January 2020]. The church interior has been redesigned into a taproom for customers.

The owners invited the priest from St. Isidore Episcopal Church and the congregation to come and help bless their brewery.

MARY VAZQUEZ | MONTGOMERY  
MIDSOUTH EC

## Tamalada Tradition

We used to do *tamaladas* with my mom and all eight daughters [*The Call of the Tamalada*, December 2019]. Sadly, we lost Mom [a] few years ago, and this year we lost one of our sisters, but the tradition continues even as our circle gets smaller.

BETTY KEIPER | VIA FACEBOOK

At the risk of coming across too picky, I would like to point out that the singular of tamales is not *tamale*; it is *tamal*. In Spanish, when a word ends in "l," it

will be pluralized by adding "es."

MIKE MCEWEN | JACKSONVILLE  
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

**Editor's Note:** Yes, in Spanish, the singular is *tamal*, originally tamalli in the Nahuatl language. However, the word has been adapted into English as *tamale*.

## Letters About Letters

Having grown up in a ranching family, I knew how to change a tire and drive stick shift early on [Letters, January 2020]. Having taught high school 37 years, I always told my students they needed to know those two things, even if they never needed to use them.

CHARLOTTE CASSIN | BATESVILLE  
MEDINA EC

A reader proposes a "dues requirement in Texas for VFDs." Emergency services districts may

be created where all property owners—not just those who feel like it—contribute, and many volunteer fire departments receive funding via the ESD mechanism. Voters must approve the proposed district and tax rate.

RON BOERGER | BRUSHY CREEK  
PEDERNALES EC

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



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## HAPPENINGS

# The Box Tops Are Back

A theater from the 1940s brings a soul band from the 1960s to a 2020s Texas audience.

The **BOX TOPS** of Memphis, Tennessee, who released a string of hit singles in the late 1960s, are back on the scene and play a show **MARCH 13** at the Brauntex Theatre in downtown **NEW BRAUNFELS**.

The Box Tops' heyday was short-lived, but they became a sensation with hit singles *The Letter*, *Cry Like a Baby* and *Soul Deep*.

The Brauntex has a storied history, opening a month after the bombing of Pearl Harbor with a showing of *Birth of the Blues*, starring Bing Crosby and Mary Martin. Today, it is a regular stop for touring and Texas acts.

**INFO** ► (830) 627-0808, [brauntex.org/tickets.html](http://brauntex.org/tickets.html)



**WEB EXTRAS**  
► Find more happenings online.

**BOX TOPS, 1968**

## FLASHBACK

### 175 Years Ago

**Congress passed** a joint resolution annexing Texas on March 1, 1845, and on December 29 that year, Texas joined the union as the 28th state.



## SPORTS SECTION

### RANGERS ARE MADE IN THE SHADE

**Plenty of Texas Rangers** fans will tell you it was the best catch they've ever seen. During a game at then-Ameritrust Field in Arlington on July 1, 2006, Mike Lamb of the Houston Astros sent a shot barreling toward the wall in center field. The Rangers' Gary Matthews gave chase, leapt and snagged the ball with his back to home plate, twisting in the air to rob a home run.

**"People are always** bringing it up," Matthews told the *Los Angeles Times* a year later. "A few days ago, I was on deck in Cincinnati, and I heard a guy in the crowd say, 'That's the best catch I've ever seen.' "

**Over the course** of 26 seasons, sunny Globe Life Park in Arlington saw scores of big moments, including a perfect game pitched by Kenny Rogers on July 28, 1994.

**But when the Rangers** take the field for the start of the season March 31, players—and fans—will no longer have to contend with the sun. The new \$1.1 billion Globe Life Field, just across the street, features 40,000 seats under a retractable roof.



## BY THE NUMBERS



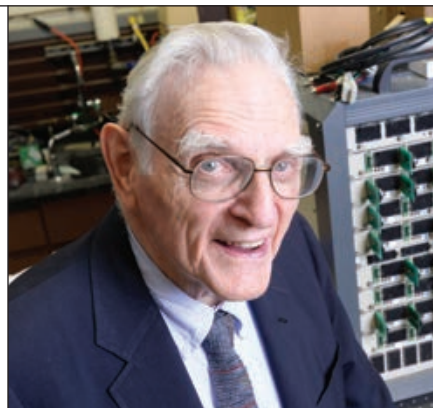
### *Did you know?*

The rubber band was patented 175 years ago. British inventor Stephen Perry received his patent March 17, 1845.

More than 30 million pounds of rubber bands are sold in the U.S. every year.



*The largest rubber band ball ever made used  
**700,000** rubber bands and  
stood 6 feet, 7 inches tall.  
It was made by a Florida man. Some things  
aren't always bigger in Texas.*



## TECH KNOWLEDGE

### Powering the World

The average Texan retires when they're about 64 years old.

John Goodenough passed that mark back in 1986, the same year he joined the University of Texas, after decades spent developing lithium-ion batteries.

He hasn't stopped.

Now, Goodenough, who's 97, is the oldest person to win the Nobel Prize—for his battery breakthroughs that power the smartphones, laptops and cars we use every day. He shares the prize with two other scientists.

Of course, Goodenough is still going. He still works 8-10 hours a day, according to his assistant at UT, and just last year announced a breakthrough: non-flammable, glass powder-based lithium-ion batteries with twice the energy density of traditional lithium-ion cells.

Maybe he'll retire at 100. We hope not.

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

*Why do dogs always . . .*



► Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Your answers can be silly, serious, deep or superficial. Email your short responses to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or post them on our Facebook page. Please include your city and co-op.

Below are some of the responses to our January prompt:  
**I knew I was grown up when ...**

I could kill my own spiders.  
SYLVIA WILLIAMS | NEW BOSTON | BOWIE-CASS EC

I sat at the dinner table and realized my feet touched the floor.  
GEORGE MCNEW | SPRING BRANCH | PEDERNALES EC

I realized I could eat ice cream for breakfast if I wanted.  
ROBIN HODGES | BANDERA | BANDERA EC

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.





SOUL MUSIC OF SOUTH



BY JOE NICK PATOSKI

# CONJUNTO, BUILT UPON A POLKA RHYTHM, TURNS ACCORDIONS AND 12-STRING GUITARS INTO A UNIQUE SOUND AND SUBCULTURE



**D**arren David Prieto played the accordion in Carnitas Uruapan, a meat market on the west side of San Antonio, one Sunday morning in 2016 while customers lined up for tamales and carnitas. Back then, the market hosted a weekly residency with accordionist Santiago Jiménez Jr., younger brother of accordion legend Flaco Jiménez. The gig was practice for Jiménez, but for Prieto, it was an apprenticeship and a steppingstone to a career performing the soul music of South Texas.

Jiménez introduced the shy teenager from New Braunfels, then 16, as “*mi protegido*”—his protégé—and, blushing, Prieto nodded toward Jiménez and added, “*Mi profesor*.” This unlikely venue and early start time was a very big deal for the slight, quiet young man because as part of a new generation of conjunto accordionists, it was his opportunity to learn from a master.

As Jiménez played his diatonic button accordion, accompanied by a sideman strumming chords on a 12-string guitar called a *bajo sexto*, pounding out a rhythm to propel the sounds from Jiménez’s accordion, the meat market’s owner occasionally walked out from behind the counter to harmonize with Jiménez in vocal duets. “Margarita, Margarita,” they crooned, faces inches from each other. Sit-ins from the neighborhood were part of the weekly routine. Grammy Award winner Max Baca of Los Texmaniacs walked into Carnitas wearing a football jersey and shorts rather than his western stage outfit and sat in with the band, playing bajo sexto.

**Opposite: Joel Guzmán at the Alamo.  
Above: Teenage conjunto performer  
Darren David Prieto in 2015.**

# TEXAS

GUZMÁN: JOHN DYER. PRIETO: COURTESY TEXAS FOLK LIFE



AT A TIME WHEN MOST AMERICAN  
ROOTS MUSIC'S POPULARITY  
IS ON THE DOWNSWING,  
CONJUNTO'S ROOTS  
ARE SPREADING.



Conjunto's bouncy rhythm, typically a polka, is why it is also known as *música alegre*, happy music. Like blues and country, conjunto—pronounced coh-noon-toe—is indigenous, only regionally specific to South Texas, with mostly Spanish lyrics. In South Texas, and anywhere conjunto's influence extends, the term is applied to both sound and subculture.

Conjunto has two key instruments: the diatonic button accordion, which, like a harmonica, changes notes as air is pushed or pulled past vibrating reeds, and the bajo sexto, which provides the rhythm and backbeat. Most modern conjuntos also include drums, guitar and bass.

At a time when most American roots music's popularity is on the downswing, conjunto's roots are spreading. Public school programs in La Joya, Los Fresnos, Brownsville and other towns across the Rio Grande Valley have added conjunto to their curricula,

and bajo sexto classes are taught weekly at the Conjunto Heritage Taller and the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio. "We get them from 8 to 80," said Rodolfo Lopez, Conjunto Heritage Taller director. "Conjunto is us, *la gente*. This is a unique music form." Kids from the *taller* (workshop) have dominated the statewide Big Squeeze youth accordion competition sponsored by Texas Folklife since its inception in 2007.

#### WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to learn where to see and hear conjunto music. And check out our playlist.

Conjunto was born in the late 19th century when German immigrants introduced the button accordion to South Texas. In part because of its rural roots, it was known as cantina music. Conjunto made its commercial debut in the 1920s and '30s, when Columbia and Bluebird joined other labels in the fledgling recording business, setting up





**Clockwise from opposite page: Santiago Jiménez Jr., who gave accordion lessons to Prieto. Los Texmaniacs have taken conjunto as far as China. With her 12-string guitar, Lydia Mendoza became the first female star of Mexican American music. San Antonio's Eva Ybarra is known as the Queen of the Accordion. Narciso Martínez was one of the recording pioneers of conjunto.**

studios in rooms at San Antonio's Gunter and Bluebonnet hotels as well as at local WOAI radio to record musicians solicited by talent scouts. Conjunto accordionists were recruited to San Antonio alongside bluesman Robert Johnson, western swingsters Bill Boyd & His Cowboy Ramblers and the Tex-Czech sounds of Adolph Hofner as well as Texan Mexican singer Lydia Mendoza.

The instrumentals by those conjunto accordionists sounded Mexican with additional Bohemian, Czech and German elements, reflecting the influence of the immigrant communities of South Texas.

Texas conjunto recording pioneers Bruno Villarreal from Santa Rosa, Narciso Martínez of La Paloma and Santiago Jiménez of San Antonio all eavesdropped on Czech, German and Polish dances in South Texas and incorporated what they heard into their own music.

Conjunto follows neither mariachi nor ranchera traditions, nor is it *norteño*, the accordion style popular in northern Mexico. "It's a melding of European music and the Mexican bajo sexto," Rodolfo Lopez explained, noting that Czech *redowas*, Bohemian *schottisches*, waltzes and polkas all came from Europe. "We just added our jalapeño chilepin flavor to it."

Flaco Jiménez, the older of conjunto pioneer Santiago Jiménez's two sons, expanded awareness of the genre in 1973, appearing on the album *Doug Sahm and Band*, featuring the rock musician from San Antonio and an all-star lineup that included Bob Dylan. Sahm sought out and played bajo sexto with Flaco Jiménez in his back-





**Esteban “Steve” Jordan began playing accordion at the age of 7.**

yard on San Antonio’s west side. “He could groove,” Jiménez said.

Flaco Jiménez would ultimately take conjunto accordion around the world, recording with Ry Cooder, Peter Rowan, the Rolling Stones, Dwight Yoakum and Emmylou Harris before joining the Tex-Mex supergroup Texas Tornados.

Esteban “Steve” Jordan of Elsa, a dashing figure with an eyepatch known as the Jimi Hendrix of the accordion, also worked as a conjunto innovator. One record label described Jordan’s style as *acordeón psicodélico*. If Jiménez was the standard-bearer, Jordan was the experimentalist—always pushing the envelope until his passing in 2010.

Another notable exporter of conjunto accordion is Joel Guzmán of Buda, who performs with his wife, Sarah Fox, as Aztex; plays and records with country rocker Joe Ely; and joined Paul Simon on his Homeward Bound tour. One of few professional female accordionists, Eva Ybarra earned a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2017.

Conjunto is no longer exclusively a Texas thing. Japan has several conjuntos who were inspired by Flaco Jiménez’s appearance in their country with the Texas Tornados. Dwayne Verheyden from the Netherlands mastered Jiménez’s playing style, then mastered Spanish to better communicate with Jiménez and conjunto audiences. After his performance at the Tejano Conjunto Fest in San Antonio in 2014, fans patiently lined up to have their picture taken with him, as if he was the Justin Bieber of conjunto.

Conjunto’s crossover appeal comes to life in the music of Conjunto Los Pinkys, an Austin band led by octogenarian Isidro

Samilpa; a middle-aged Polish import from Saginaw, Michigan, named Bradley Jay Williams; and Mark Weber, an accordionist from San Antonio. Another crossover success is Stevie Ray Vavages of the Tohono O’odham Nation in Arizona, who learned the bajo sexto playing the native sound called chicken scratch.

Darren Prieto is part of the next wave.

Typical of most Texas kids, he grew up listening to rock, country, jazz and hip-hop. Not typical of most Texas kids, he chose to play accordion when he was 14. “I was always with my grandfather,” he explained. “Around our house, conjunto music was always on. I listened to all types of conjunto, from Los Pavo Reales to Ruben Naranjo.” The summer before he entered high school, Prieto picked up his grandfather’s accordion, just as his own father once had. By that September, he’d learned some polkas. “I started falling in love,” Prieto said.

Those Sunday morning performances on the small stage at Carnitas Uruapan, where he learned from Santiago Jiménez Jr., stoked Prieto’s creative fire. “He helped me learn to get over stage fright, how to talk to the crowd and even how to be a humble musician,” Prieto said.

The gigs at Carnitas Uruapan stopped in 2018 when the owner retired. But Prieto remains tight with Jiménez. “You can hear a little bit of Santiago Jiménez Jr.’s style in my own playing,” Prieto said. “Playing conjunto music is so fun. It isn’t like any other music. It has that beat that makes you want to dance. It makes you feel alive.”

Writer Joe Nick Patoski, a confessed conjunto addict, lives outside Wimberley and is a member of Pedernales EC.

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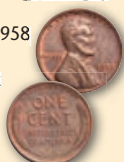
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Chris Rybak continues a tradition brought to Texas by European settlers in the 1800s. Inset: Rybak as an 11-year-old.





BY JOE NICK PATOSKI

# THE ACCORDION HAS BEEN A BELOVED MUSICAL INSTRUMENT SINCE IT GOT HERE

**O**f all the musical instruments brought to Texas by German, Czech, Polish and Moravian immigrants in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the accordion made the most unexpected inroads among Mexican, Cajun and Creole communities who embraced it as their instrument of choice. Generations later, squeezeboxes still move Texans.

Chris Rybak, known as the Accordion Cowboy, who hails from Hallettsville, explains that when he picked up the instrument 30 years ago, at age 11, accordion-playing bandleader Lawrence Welk was a big thing. “But that also made accordion not so cool,” he says, adding that now it’s heard in jazz, rock and a wide variety of other musical genres. “It doesn’t have to be just your grandpa’s oompah anymore.”

Packing the full-bodied sound of an entire band into one instrument, the accordion, invented in Europe in the 1820s, provided entertainment at dances of all kinds as Texas was settled. Without the need for electricity or amplification, its sound carried farther than stringed instruments.

The accordion was a key instrument for western swing bands in the 1930s and ’40s. It remains the most versatile musical instrument going in Texas, straddling regions and borders and injecting its sound into rock, country, blues, jazz and zydeco. It’s the defining instrument of conjunto, the folk music of South Texas, and the faster-paced *norteño*, a folk music of northern Mexico that is similar to conjunto.

Without the accordion, there would be no Mark Halata at Wursthfest, no Brave Combo playing WestFest, no Ennis Czech Boys working the National Polka Festival, no Fritz Hodde and the Fabulous Six performing at an SPJST hall.

The European-style accordion, the traditional large instrument with piano keys on the right-hand side that functions like a glorified organ, is favored by the Bohemians, Czechs, Poles and Germans of South and Central Texas; some Zydeco bands around Houston and southeast Texas; and Fort Worth’s Ginny Mac and Austin’s Debra Peters. It can weigh upward of 30 pounds.

Conjuntos and some zydeco bands favor the smaller, diatonic model of accordion with buttons on both sides that change notes as you push and pull and has considerably faster action. Texas Cajuns play an even smaller, simpler diatonic model with fewer buttons.



**Accordionist and band leader Emil Schuhmann of Fayette County in the 1890s.**

Rybak explains that Czech, German, German-Polish, Tejano and Cajun music each embody a distinct style. “On the other hand, when you go to a conjunto place,” he says, “the band will

throw in a few Czech songs. And vice versa. The accordion is distinctive, and it can cross boundaries and cultures.”

The universality of the accordion is celebrated at the Accordion Kings and Queens at the Miller Outdoor Theatre in Houston on the first Saturday in June, a production of Texas Folklife. All the bands onstage feature accordions as the lead instrument, but the performers sing in English, Spanish, French, German, Polish and Czech, reflecting each group’s ethnic background. Despite those differences, everyone dances the same on the dance floor, moving in a counterclockwise direction.

These days, Rybak says he mostly uses a digital accordion, which has changed his instrument much the way a digital keyboard changed piano playing. He can create blaring trumpets to open the Johnny Cash standard *Ring of Fire*.

“I would say for most shows, I play 70 or 80% with a digital accordion,” he says. “And that’s what the new generation really loves, too. They can do anything on it.”

Although Joe Nick Patoski gave up piano accordion for violin at age 7, he owns a button accordion autographed by Flaco Jiménez.



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# Running for the Board

*Petitions are due in early April for members who would like to serve as a director*



MESSAGE FROM  
**CEO MARK ROLLANS**

**DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL IS ON FULL** display during the first half of the year.

Between nominating meetings in February and petition deadlines in April, this is the time when members have the opportunity to place themselves, or other members, on the ballot for

board elections, which take place in September. Cooperative Principle No. 2, Democratic Member Control, takes center stage during each of these events.

Cooperatives are not-for-profit businesses that exist to serve a need—in our case, the need for reliable, affordable energy in South Texas. We are owned—and governed—by every member that gets a bill from us each month. The strategic direction of the cooperative is set by the board of directors, whom members elect to represent their interests.

Each year, three seats on the board are open—one in each of the cooperative's three voting districts. Nominations for those positions are taken during each of the nominating meetings, which were held last month at our offices in Hondo, Dilley and Rio Grande City. Members who are interested in serving on the board of directors and were not nominated during one of the meetings last month may still be placed on the ballot through the petition process.

The petition process is outlined on our website at [MedinaEC.org/Nominee](https://MedinaEC.org/Nominee). To get started, visit that page and download the petition form for the voting district where you are qualified to run. Those forms can be found under the Paperwork Required for Nominations heading. Requirements are outlined on the document, but you'll need to get 30 signatures from members in your voting district and submit it by the petition deadline for your area. You can also find director qualifications and other required documents at that link. Other documents that must be turned in along with your petition include the Qualifications to Serve as a Director, Background Check Authorization and Declaration Form.

If you have any questions on the process or the paperwork that needs to be completed and submitted, contact us at 1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532), extension 1008, or email us at [MyCoop@MedinaEC.org](mailto:MyCoop@MedinaEC.org) and we can walk you through the process.

Sincerely,  
Mark Rollans

## COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE



# 2

DEMOCRATIC  
MEMBER  
CONTROL

MEMBERS INTERESTED IN  
SERVING ON THE BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS CAN SUBMIT A  
PETITION TO BE PLACED ON  
THE BALLOT.

### PETITION DEADLINES

**VOTING DISTRICT 1: APRIL 6**

**VOTING DISTRICT 2: APRIL 3**

**VOTING DISTRICT 3: APRIL 2**

PETITION INFO AT  
**[MEDINAEC.ORG/NOMINEE](https://MedinaEC.org/Nominee)**





## MEDINA EC MEMBERS HAVE SAVED OVER \$215,000 ON PRESCRIPTIONS USING THEIR CARDS

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- 3 You pay the lowest price between the two.

### TO LOCATE PROVIDERS IN YOUR AREA:

Go to [www.connections.coop/healthy-savings](http://www.connections.coop/healthy-savings) and click Locate Providers.

Set up your account.

Enter your ZIP code to search for providers near you.

Or you can call Co-op Connections at 1-800-800-7616 if you have questions or to find a provider.



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Pharmacy discounts are not insurance and are not intended as a substitute for insurance. Pharmacy discounts range from 10% to 85% on most medications. **The discount is only available at participating pharmacies.** Prescription claims through this program will not be eligible for reimbursement through Medicaid, Medicare or any other government program.



## Medina Electric Cooperative

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### VOTING DISTRICT 1

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

#### VOTING DISTRICT 2

Jimmie Raines, (830) 591-8437  
Chris Surles, (830) 965-5538  
Kenneth White, (830) 232-6541

#### VOTING DISTRICT 3

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

### CEO

Mark Rollans, 1-866-MEC-ELEC, ext. 1045

### COOPERATIVE OFFICES

#### Headquarters

2308 18th St., Hondo 78861

#### Area Offices

Hondo Office  
237 Hwy. 173 N., Hondo 78861

Dilley Office  
1718 W. FM 117, Dilley 78017

Rio Grande City Office  
601 N. FM 3167, Rio Grande City 78582

Uvalde Office  
2604 Hwy. 90 E., Uvalde 78801

Bruni Office  
1300 FM 2050 N., Bruni 78344

## CONTACT US

### CALL US

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

### EMAIL

[Info@MedinaEC.org](mailto:Info@MedinaEC.org)

### FIND US ONLINE AT

[MedinaEC.org](http://MedinaEC.org)

[Facebook.com/MedinaEC](https://www.facebook.com/MedinaEC)

[Twitter.com/MedinaECTalks](https://twitter.com/MedinaECTalks)

[Instagram: @OurMEC](https://www.instagram.com/OurMEC)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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





# **Lineman Appreciation Day is April 13.**

**They're the ones doing the work behind the scenes to make it all work.**

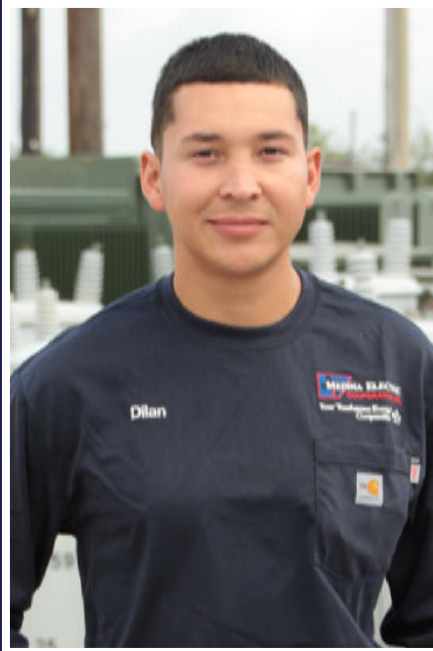
**Help us tell #ourMEC linemen thanks for what they do by posting something on our Facebook page or sending us an email at [MyCoop@MedinaEC.org](mailto:MyCoop@MedinaEC.org). We will share it with them on April 13 to celebrate Lineman Appreciation Day.**



# Three Apprentices Promoted to Journeymen-Linemen



**David Hernandez**  
Dilley



**Dilan Santillan**  
Bruni



**Felipe Moreno**  
Laredo

**MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE** that three of its apprentice linemen have successfully completed the Merchant Job Training and Safety Program. David Hernandez, who works in Dilley, Dilan Santillan, Bruni, and Felipe Moreno, Laredo, have completed the MJTS program, which is a comprehensive training program for power line personnel. All three have also been designated as official Journeymen Linemen after completing the apprentice/journeyman program requirements.

Cooperative Principle No. 5 is Education, Training and Information. An educated workforce brings value to cooperative members, and educating our employees is our duty as a cooperative. That is why Medina EC began administering the MJTS program to employees in January 2016.

The MJTS program is administered to line personnel in 40 states throughout the United States and exceeds the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship

minimum requirement of 144 hours of related instruction per year. The MJTS program includes a four-year curriculum and covers material critical to on-the-job productivity and safety.

Coursework is structured so that the linemen can study at their own pace when it is convenient for them. Each utility has a training coordinator that administers closed book testing for the employees. Employees move through the training process according to rules set by the MJTS program and statewide association and are required to take exams along the way.

"The hard work the Medina EC linemen have put in the program shows in the ease with which they have moved through the coursework. It lets me know that the on-the-job training we are doing has been good and reinforces what I already knew: that some of the best guys in the business are standing behind the Medina EC system when you turn your lights on every day," noted Medina EC CEO Mark Rollans.



# Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# Declaración de No a la Discriminación

De acuerdo con la ley federal de derechos civiles y las reglamentaciones y políticas de derechos civiles del Departamento de Agricultura de Estados Unidos (U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA), se prohíbe al USDA, sus agencias, oficinas y empleados, e instituciones que participan o administran los programas del USDA, discriminar por motivos de raza, color, origen nacional, religion, genero, identidad de genero (incluidas las expresiones de genero), orientacion sexual, discapacidad, edad, estado civil, estado familiar/parental, ingresos derivados de un programa de asistencia publica, creencias polfticas, o reprimendas o represalias por actividades previas sobre derechos civiles, en cualquier programa o actividad llevados a cabo o financiados por el USDA (no todas las bases se aplican a todos los programas). Las fechas limite para la presentacion de remedios y denuncias varian segun el programa o el incidente.

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Para presentar una denuncia por discriminacion en el programa, complete el Formulario de denuncias por discriminacion en el programa del USDA, AD-3027, que se encuentra en linea en [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), o en cualquier oficina del USDA, o escriba una carta dirigida al USDA e incluya en la carta toda la informacion solicitada en el formulario. Para solicitar una copia del formulario de denuncias, llame al (866) 632-9992. Envie su formulario completado o su carta al USDA por los siguientes medios:

- (1) correo: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; o
- (3) correo electrónico: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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**COMMUNITY  
EMPOWERMENT  
PROGRAM**

**Eligibility information and  
application available at  
[MedinaEC.org/Grant](http://MedinaEC.org/Grant).**

**The application deadline is  
5 p.m. April 1.**

## \$5,500

### Available in Grants

Emphasis will be placed on projects that:

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

**Counties where grants can  
be awarded:**

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DUVAL	STARR
EDWARDS	UVALDE
FRIO	WEBB
JIM HOGG	ZAPATA
KINNEY	ZAVALA
LA SALLE	



# Board Approves Tariff Changes: Minimum of \$35 for General Service Accounts

**AT THEIR SEPTEMBER 2019 MEETING**, the Medina EC board of directors approved changes to the Medina EC tariff that go into effect May 1.

These changes will place a \$35 minimum bill on the General Service rate class. This means that for any members within the General Service rate class that would have received a bill for less than \$35, the bill will now be rounded up to \$35. Based on members' use in prior years, this change will impact about 4,500 members who generally use 50 kilowatt-hours or less per month.

This rate change is the result of the 2018 cost-of-service study performed by Guernsey. In cost-of-service studies, which the cooperative has historically undergone every two to three years, an outside firm reviews the cooperative's financials and looks at the costs associated with serving each rate class. They then determine rates for each class based on the cooperative's revenue requirements and financial goals set by the board.

This cost-of-service study revealed that there is an under-recovery of fixed costs for low-use accounts—or those that use less than 50 kWh per month—on the General Service rate. In other words, accounts with very low kWh use are not being billed enough to cover the costs incurred in serving them.

Our goal in setting rates is to make them as fair as possible for all groups of members and to ensure they are based on the costs to serve that group. This \$35 minimum will ensure members who use very little power are not being subsidized by members who use larger amounts of power.

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, our rates are set to continue efficient operation of the cooperative, not to make profits to line the pockets of any investors. Delivering reliable electricity is a capital—and labor—intensive business, with many fixed costs involved. It requires employees, equipment and technology to maintain the power lines that serve your home and run business behind the scenes, regardless of if you ever use a kWh or not.

This change to the bill minimum does not impact the Member Charge, which is currently set at \$29, or the energy charge, which is applied per kWh used. Both those charges will remain the same.

You can read Medina EC's current tariff and view other important cooperative documents at [MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc](https://MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc). Rates for all rate classes can be viewed at [MedinaEC.org/Rates](https://MedinaEC.org/Rates).

If you have questions on if these tariff changes could impact you, please contact us at 1-866-MEC-ELEC or [Info@MedinaEC.org](mailto:Info@MedinaEC.org).



## HVAC Tuneup Time!

**SUMMER IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER**, and that means air conditioning units will be working overtime across our area of South Texas.

In preparing for warmer temperatures, it is a good idea to have your air conditioning system serviced to ensure it is in top working order and ready to operate like it should. Keep in mind that Medina EC offers a \$60 rebate for HVAC tuneups. In 2019, Medina EC members received more than \$24,000 in rebates related to air conditioning efficiency changes.

If time has caught up with your HVAC unit and it needs to be replaced, Medina EC also has rebates of \$200 or \$400 for that, depending on what you replace the system with. There is also a \$35 rebate for Energy Star-certified window units.

However you keep cool this summer, there may be a rebate to help you out!

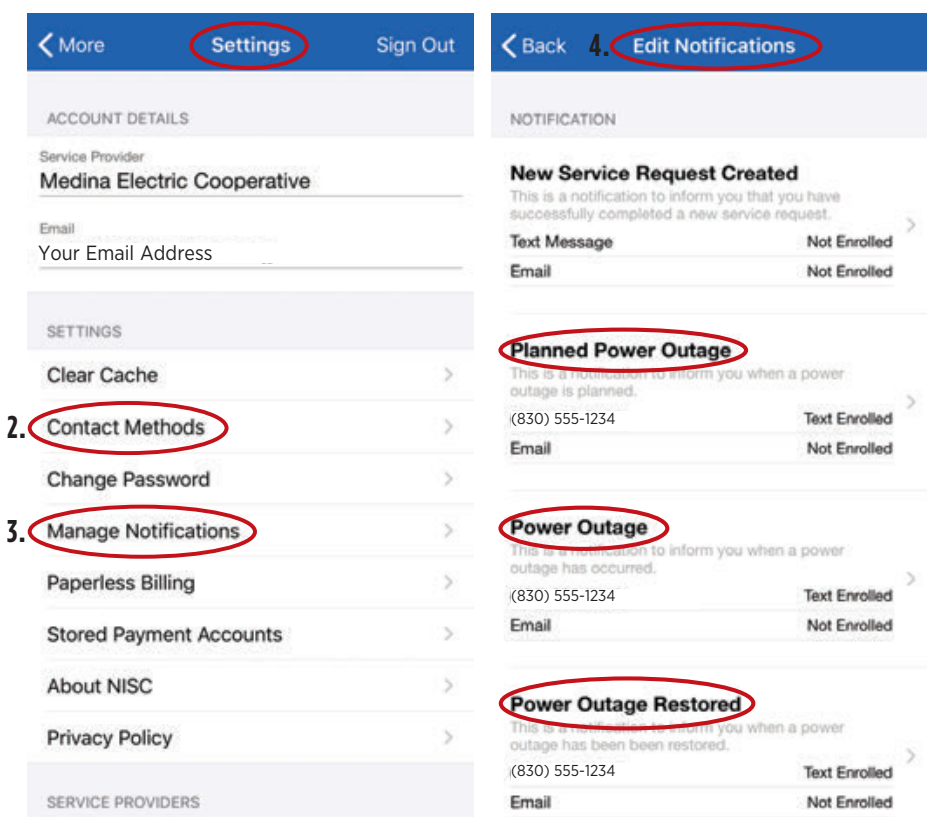
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OTHER REBATES  
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TO MEMBERS AT  
[MEDINAEC.ORG/  
REBATES](https://MEDINAEC.ORG/REBATES)**

# Have You Signed Up?

**THOUSANDS OF MEDINA ELECTRIC MEMBERS** are managing their bills and monitoring their power use by using the free SmartHub app, but many don't know that they can sign up to also get text notifications. These notifications will let you know when your meter has an outage and can also tell you when your power has been restored!

## HOW TO ENABLE TEXT NOTIFICATIONS ON SMARTHUB:

1. Once you have logged in, click the **Hamburger Menu** at the top left (for Android users) or **More** in the bottom left (for Apple users).
2. Chose **Settings** and **Contact Methods**. This helps to ensure you have the correct phone number associated with your account.
3. Go back to the **Hamburger Menu/More** and choose **Settings** then **Manage Notications** and **Service**.
4. Select **Edit Notifications** for the options **Power Outage**, **Power Restored** and **Planned Power Outage**.



## Public Cellphone Charging Ports Invite Hackers

**YOU MIGHT WANT TO GET IN THE HABIT** of making sure your phone is fully charged before your next visit to the airport—because it turns out that public cellphone charging ports can put your information at risk.

According to findings from forensics experts, when you plug your phone into a USB charging hub at an airport, shopping mall or other public place, hackers may be able to access your device's data. Those convenient chargers are an easy target for criminals.

To protect yourself and your data, invest in your own charger and carry it with you when you're away from home.

The same goes for plugging in while riding in a taxi or with a ride-hailing service. Ports in some cars automatically sync with Bluetooth, which means the car could download your data—from playlists to financial records.

In cars with a hard drive or data storage mechanism, hackers could steal more than playlists—they could steal your identity with the information they collect from your phone.

Connecting to public Wi-Fi is risky as well because anyone who is on the same network could gain access to your data.



# TAME YOUR Trees

**We love our trees, but when branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and other safety concerns. Here are some rules to follow:**

**If a tree** or a large branch is touching—or falls on—an electric line, call Medina Electric Cooperative, or the area electric provider, immediately.

**Never trim trees** that grow close to power lines; that's a job for professionals. Call your electric cooperative for assistance and guidance.

**Use extreme caution** when doing any overhead trimming. Branches often fall in unexpected places.

**Don't allow children** to climb trees or build treehouses close to power lines.

**Plant appropriate** distances from all power lines.

**When planting a tree**, consider how tall the tree will grow. At maturity, trees should be at least 10 feet away from power lines.

**Medina EC encourages you to always practice safety.**



## SOLAR INSTALLATIONS AVAILABLE

If you have been considering a solar photovoltaic system, we now offer Solar by Medina EC for you! Through Solar by Medina EC, members can purchase a 5-kilowatt, ground-mounted solar PV system with installation for \$15,000 plus tax.

For more information on Solar by Medina EC:  
**[MedinaEC.org/Solar](https://MedinaEC.org/Solar)**

For more information on installing any distributed generation system:  
**[MedinaEC.org/DG](https://MedinaEC.org/DG)**

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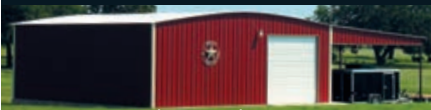


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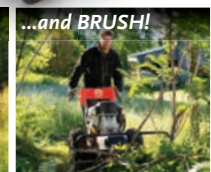
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# The Dirt on Soapy

Onetime Texan cleaned up as a nefarious con man and syndicate boss

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

THOUGH HIS LEGEND IS most associated with skulduggery in Colorado and Alaska, Soapy Smith spent his teenage years in Round Rock and began his career as a swindler in Fort Worth.

Before he was Soapy Smith, he was Jefferson Randolph Smith II, son of a wealthy Georgia family that lost everything after the Civil War and moved to Round Rock in 1876. Smith and a cousin reportedly witnessed the shoot-out there that killed outlaw Sam Bass in 1878. But the crime-doesn't-pay lesson inherent in the Bass incident was apparently lost on Smith: His two years in Round Rock were his last as a law-abiding citizen.

Jefferson Smith morphed into Soapy Smith following his most famous swindle, the "Prize Package Soap Sell." He'd set up a display featuring bars of soap on a street corner, establish a friendly patter with passersby and then wrap some of the soap with paper money. He then rewrapped the bars in plain paper, mixed them in with the others and sold them for 50 cents—about \$12 in today's money.

Someone—a ringer—always bought a bar of soap, unwrapped it and found money. The excitement spread to passersby who took the bait and bought up the whole pile of soap. Only Smith cohorts

ever bought a bar with money. He ran this swindle for decades.

Fort Worth was Smith's first operational base. He assembled a skilled gang, and they pooled their money, paid off cops and bribed politicians to overlook their nefarious activity. Jeff Smith V, Smith's great-grandson and biographer, wrote that Soapy's particular gift was organization.

"Alone, these men were forced to be drifters, moving from one town to the next, as Jefferson had done," Jeff Smith wrote. "Jefferson united the men, and together as an organization, they were almost unstoppable. ... In the late 1870s Jeff became so powerful and known for his crimes that laws were enacted at Fort Worth especially due to him. It was time for Jeff to move on."

Though the gang opted for Denver and points north, Smith maintained contact with Texans for the rest of his life. His younger brother, Bascom, was arrested in 1883, when he was 14, for trying to set fire to a Belton hotel, and two sisters lived in Bell County.

**Jefferson "Soapy" Smith stands at the bar in a Skagway, Alaska, saloon.**

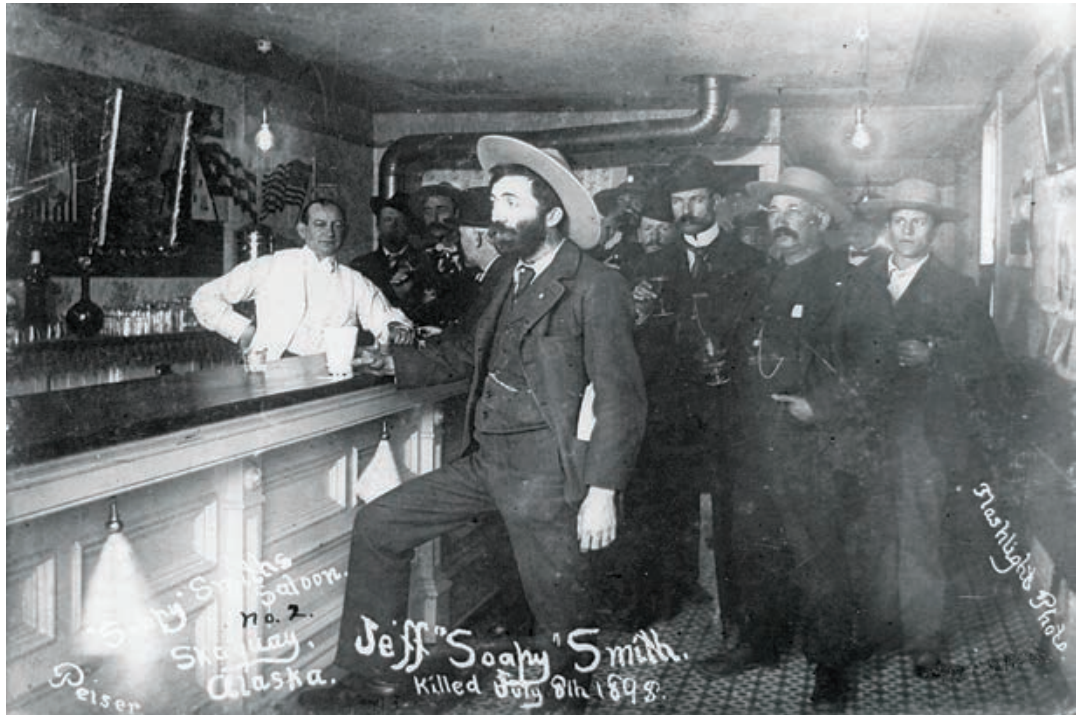
Smith's reputation as King of the Frontier Con Men prompted him to seek dishonest work beyond Colorado. He traveled to Skagway, Alaska, gateway to the Klondike gold fields.

In Skagway, citizens formed a vigilance committee to run Smith and his confederates out of town. Smith responded by announcing his own committee to run the original committee out of town.

The tipping point came when a theft of \$2,000 was pinned on a Smith associate, and Smith wouldn't give up the robber or return the money. A group met at the Juneau Wharf on July 8, 1898, to discuss their next move. An armed and intoxicated Smith confronted the meeting. His enemies claimed his last words were, "My God, don't shoot!"

Twenty years to the month after Sam Bass was gunned down in Round Rock, Soapy Smith met the same fate in Alaska.

Clay Coppedge, a member of Bartlett EC, lives near Walburg.



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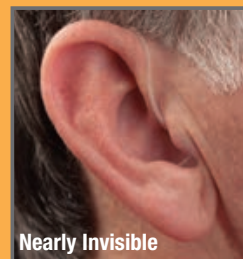
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# Crawfish, Oysters, Crab and More

FROM A SIMPLE FISH FRY TO SHELLFISH harvested from the Gulf, Texas' bounty of seafood is one of the state's great pleasures and a wonderful blank slate for applying layers of flavor.

Chef Maggie Perkins, a food writer and former farmer, frequently uses Texas seafood in demos at farmers markets and in cooking classes. Perkins took inspiration from Texas' coastal ingredients and combines them with her Creole roots for this approachable dish.

It's easy enough to prepare on a weeknight but still impressive should guests pop by. The key is to be patient in making the roux—cook it fully to achieve a beautiful, deep color.

MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

## Shrimp Étouffée

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 1 small green or red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 large ribs celery, chopped
- 3 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) whole tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 2 cups shrimp stock
- 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning
- 2 pounds medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- ¼ cup chopped green onions
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Cooked rice, for serving
- Hot pepper sauce, for serving

**1.** In a large heavy skillet or Dutch oven, melt butter over medium heat. Increase heat to medium-high and whisk in flour until incorporated fully. Whisk continuously until roux is the color of peanut butter, about 10 minutes.

**2.** Add onion, bell pepper, celery and garlic, mixing into roux. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until vegetables are softened and onion is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



# Recipes

## Crawfish, Oysters, Crab and More



### THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

DEANNA PAYNE | GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

This easy yet flavorful recipe is perfect for entertaining, as it comes together quickly. Payne learned of it through a chef at a private club in Corpus Christi, where it was often served as an appetizer. Scoop the crab onto toast points or simply enjoy on its own; it's equally delicious chilled. When serving, squeeze the paprika-dipped lemon slices over the crab for a citrusy kick.

### Gulf Lump Crabmeat Sauté

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1 pound lump crabmeat, picked through for shells
- ½ cup slivered almonds, toasted
- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Lemon slices
- Paprika
- Salad greens or toast points, for serving

1. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until golden, 2–3 minutes.
2. Add crabmeat and stir-fry until all meat is very hot, 3–5 minutes, stirring carefully to keep crab pieces intact.
3. Stir in almonds and parsley, adding salt and pepper to taste. Heat through 1 minute and ladle onto a preheated serving platter.
4. Garnish with lemon slices dipped in paprika. ▶ Serves 8 as an appetizer.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

transparent, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and stir to combine well.

3. Increase heat to medium-high and slowly stir in the stock. Continue to stir until sauce is smooth and bubbling and has thickened. Stir in seasoning.

4. Bring to a low boil, stirring, then reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes.

5. Fold shrimp, parsley and green onion into sauce and cook until shrimp is opaque, about 3 minutes. Taste and adjust seasonings, adding more Creole seasoning, salt and pepper as needed. Serve over rice with hot pepper sauce on the side. ▶ Serves 8.

**COOK'S TIP** In lieu of shrimp stock, use seafood stock, chicken stock, clam juice, water or any combination thereof.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com).

### Crawfish Bread

GERI HUPP | DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

This unexpected side dish is a wonderful addition to a larger seafood spread. Look for the crawfish tail meat in the freezer section of your grocery store. Try experimenting with a variety of cheeses.

- 1 package (6 ounces) cornbread mix
- 1 tablespoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning
- ⅓ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper, plus more to taste
- 12 ounces fully cooked crawfish tail meat, thawed
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 can (15.25 ounces) corn, drained
- 3 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup diced green onions
- ½ cup diced white onion
- ½ cup diced green bell pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together cornbread mix, baking soda, Creole seasoning and cayenne pepper.
3. In a large bowl, stir together crawfish, cheese, corn, eggs, onions and bell pepper. Fold in dry ingredients until well incorporated. Mixture will be thick.

New  
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### \$500 Recipe Contest

August's recipe contest topic is **Cool Foods**. Ease this month's swelter with some no-stove-or-oven-needed dishes. Send us your best. The deadline is **March 10**. Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://TexasCoopPower.com/contests); MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.



4. Spread batter into an ungreased 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Bake 30–40 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool slightly before cutting, then serve warm. ▶ Serves 12.

## Gulf Coast Corn Chowder With Shrimp and Pico de Gallo

SHERRY SCOTT | PEDERNALES EC

Chowder is always a winning way to enjoy seafood. This version uses potatoes, corn and plenty of toppings. “While visiting South Padre Island one fall, we were experimenting with seafood recipes and came up with this delicious option that has become a requested favorite,” Scott says.

- 1 poblano pepper
- 4 slices bacon
- ½ cup (⅓ stick) butter
- 1 cup diced white onion
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 pounds potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks

- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tablespoons seafood seasoning (such as Old Bay)
- 2 cups 2% milk
- 1 can (5 ounces) evaporated milk
- 2 cups corn, thawed if frozen
- 1½ teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 avocado, diced, for garnish
- Pico de gallo, for garnish

1. Roast the poblano over an open flame until all skin is charred black. Place charred pepper in a plastic bag until it cools. Rinse the pepper under running water to remove charred skin.
2. Cook bacon until crisp. Drain and set aside.
3. Melt butter in a stockpot over medium heat. Add poblano, onion, garlic, and a pinch of salt and pepper and sauté until onion is translucent, about 3 minutes.
4. Add potatoes and broth and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and sim-

mer until potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes.

5. While potatoes are cooking, heat a pot of water to boiling. Add shrimp and seafood seasoning, reduce heat to a simmer and cook 2–3 minutes. Remove shrimp from water, set aside and keep warm.

6. When potatoes are done, slightly mash some of the potatoes in the pot, leaving some chunks. Whisk ¼ cup of broth from the pot into milk, then add milk and evaporated milk to stockpot.

7. Stir in corn and oregano, and add salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat and simmer until corn is heated through, about 15 minutes.

8. To serve, place 6 shrimp in each bowl. Add chowder, and garnish with crumbled bacon, avocado and pico de gallo. ▶ Serves 4-6.

**COOK'S TIP** You can substitute 1 can (4 ounces) roasted hatch peppers for the poblano.



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

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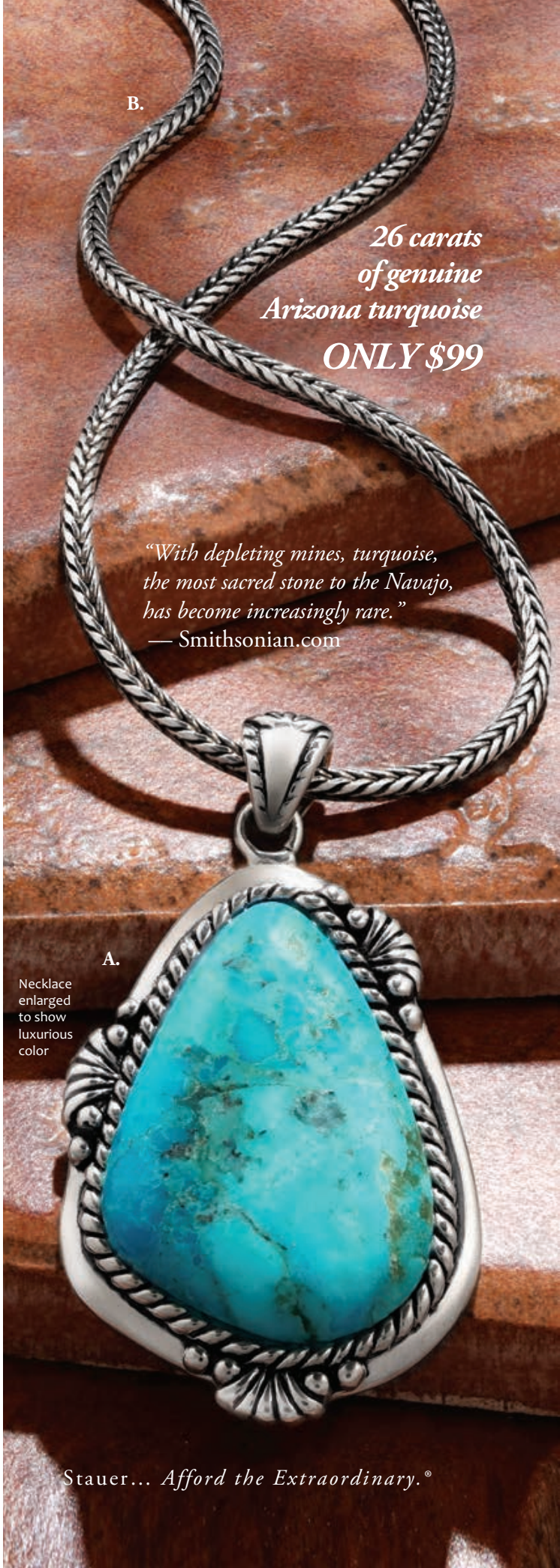
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**WEB EXTRAS** ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



▲ **JENNIFER RIECK**, Medina EC: Billy Rieck Sr., Rieck's husband, in his soap box derby car in 1948.

▼ **JOSE GARZA**, Magic Valley EC: "Twenty-one-month-old Jordan takes his first pony ride and loves it."



▲ **LYNN LEISTER**, Guadalupe Valley EC: "Harper's first mutton bustin' ride at Yorktown Western Days."

▶ **PAUL GARCIA**, Medina EC: Garcia's granddaughter got to take control momentarily during a youth program flight at the Castroville airport.



▲ **JUDY TRUESDELL**, Farmers EC: Kids race old-time pedal cars down Wylie's Ballard Avenue.



## UPCOMING CONTESTS

JULY	EXPLORATION	DUE MARCH 10
AUGUST	ON THE WATER	DUE APRIL 10
SEPTEMBER	SHAPES	DUE MAY 10

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



## Pick of the Month RISE for Families Chili Cook-Off

**Leander** March 28

(512) 736-8887, [riseforfamilies.org](http://riseforfamilies.org)

RISE for Families offers families of children with special needs free assistance in learning about the resources available to them. This event features a cook-off judged by Leander firefighters, children's activities, a silent auction, live music and vendors.



BOY: LENA MAY | STOCK.ADOBE.COM. CAR: LEEKRIS | STOCK.ADOBE.COM. UFO: JAMES THEW | STOCK.ADOBE.COM

## March 7

**Lake Jackson** Youth Fishing Day at Sea Center Texas, (979) 292-0100, [visitbrazosport.com](http://visitbrazosport.com)

**Rosanky** Rosanky Christian Academy Annual BBQ Dinner Fundraiser, (512) 360-3109, [rosankychristianacademy.com](http://rosankychristianacademy.com)

**Clarendon** [7-8] Whistle-Stop Trade Days, (806) 206-6815, [facebook.com/whistop](https://facebook.com/whistop)

## 9

**Fredericksburg** [9-14] Spring Break at the Pioneer Museum, (830) 990-8441, [pioneermuseum.net](http://pioneermuseum.net)

## 12

**New Braunfels** T.G. Sheppard & Kelly Lang, (830) 627-0808, [brauntex.org](http://brauntex.org)

## 13

**Dallas** [13-15] Dallas Quilt Show, (214) 766-2212, [quiltersguildofdallas.org](http://quiltersguildofdallas.org)

March 14  
**Bellville**  
Classic Car  
Stampede



**Ingram** [13-29] *No Body Like Jimmy*, (830) 367-5121, [hcaf.com](http://hcaf.com)

## 14

**Bellville** Classic Car Stampede, (979) 865-3187, [austincountycruisers.com](http://austincountycruisers.com)

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**Seguin** Eastern Star Stew Dinner & Country Store, (720) 394-8514

**Fort Worth** [14-15] Funky Finds Spring Fling, (903) 665-7954, funkyfinds.com

20

**Round Top** [20-21] Herb Society of America: Pioneer Unit Herbal Forum Plant and Gift Sale, (979) 421-9980, herbsocietypioneer.org

**West** [20-21] West, Central Texas Ceramic Expo & Handcrafted Items, (254) 716-5227, westceramicshow.com

21

**George West** Patsy Torres as Patsy Cline, (361) 436-1098, dobie-westtheatre.com

**Kerrville** Camerata San Antonio: *Blueprint*, (210) 492-9519, cameratasa.org

**Lakehills** Lakehills UMC Annual Fish Fry and Auction, (830) 751-2404, lakehillsumc.org/fishfry

**Woodville** [21-22] Festival of the Arts and Dinner on the Grounds, (409) 283-2272, heritage-village.org

27

**Tyler** [27-28] Quilters' Guild of East Texas Annual Quilt Show, (903) 747-7072, qgetx.org/quilt-show.html

**Sabinal** [27-29] Wild Hog Festival and Craft Fair, (830) 486-8549, sabinalwildhogfestival.com

28

**Huntsville** Herb Festival at the Wynne Home, (936) 891-5024, texasthymeunit.org



April 2-4  
Edinburg  
UFO Festival

30

**Canton** [30-April 4] Van Zandt County Fair, (903) 292-6250, vzfair.org

April  
2

**Brenham** Texas A&M Singing Cadets, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

**Edinburg** [2-4] UFO Festival, (956) 383-6246, edinburgarts.com

3

**Cuero** [3-4] Heirloom Stitchers Quilt Show, (361) 550-9388, cuero.org

4

**Port Arthur** [4] Cajun Heritage Fest, (409) 835-2787, cajunheritagefest.com

**Quintana** [4-May 6] Spring Fling, (979) 480-0999, gcbo.org/spring-fling

### Submit Your Event!

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# Sharpening My Knowledge

Poking around the Devil's Rope Museum in McLean

TEXAS IS KNOWN FOR WIDE-OPEN SPACES. On the 19th-century range, cowboys could ride from dawn to dusk without seeing a sign of civilization. Then came the invention of barbed wire, creating fences that made it near impossible to drive cattle. On a recent trip to the Panhandle, I found myself entangled in the history of the so-called devil's rope.

On Route 66, about 75 miles east of Amarillo, I discovered the perfect place to stop and stretch my legs while simultaneously pondering the weird and wonderful: the Devil's Rope Museum in McLean.

While cruising McLean's red brick streets and beyond, I noticed a beige building with two large orbs adorning its entrance. As I got closer, I realized these were actually rusted bundles of barbed wire, rolled up like yarn.

"How could any museum covering something as strange and specific as barbed wire be interesting?" I thought. I quickly realized how wrong I was. The museum was cavernous, with every inch of wall and countless educational panels filled with information, artifacts and stories. I decided to poke around and begin my education.

Barbed wire was invented after the Civil War, and hundreds of types received patents as inventors looked to outdo one another and create the next best thing. There's single twist, double twist, ribbon wire, diamond wire, sawtooth wire and one called the Dodge Star that can fetch upward of \$500 a foot from the right collector. Joseph Glidden of DeKalb, Illinois, came up with the design, which used two strands of wire twisted together to hold the barb spurs in place, that became the most popular in the country.

The museum in McLean displays 2,000



**Chet gets right to the point at the Devil's Rope Museum in McLean.**

to the sort of metal cockleburs that ripped through so many pairs of my childhood jeans.

In addition to barbed wire, the museum boasts other really cool exhibits. There's a full-size cowboy wagon set against a painted diorama of the Texas sky. There are countless tools used for tasks from digging fence posts to mending busted barbs. There's even a number of barbed wire sculptures that include a scorpion, armadillo and cowboy hat. I can only imagine how many pairs of gloves the artists must have gone through. Also set in a corner is a sobering exhibit about how humans have used barbed wire against one another in times of war.

When it was first introduced, almost everyone in Texas hated barbed wire. It sectioned off the prairie, cutting cowboys off from grazing and watering their cattle wherever they pleased. At night, renegade groups would go on fence-cutting sprees


types of wire. The number blew my mind because, in truth, I had never paid any attention

that resulted in bloodshed, and not just from pricking their fingers. It got so serious in the 1880s that Gov. John Ireland and the Texas Rangers had to step in and quash the violence.

Soon, Texans began to accept fencing as a way of life. Barbed wire was cheaper than wooden fencing. It helped ranchers control the breeding of their cattle, and it helped farmers grow crops without the threat of wandering herds mowing everything down.

As I learned, barbed wire truly changed the Texas frontier, and very few Texans understand its impact—something this small museum hopes to change, one visitor at a time. I also learned that sometimes the strangest roadside stops lead to the best road trip education.

**Chet Garner** shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

 **WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video from the Devil's Rope Museum. To learn more about the fence-cutting wars, read *Barbed Wire, Barbaric Backlash* in our January 2014 issue.

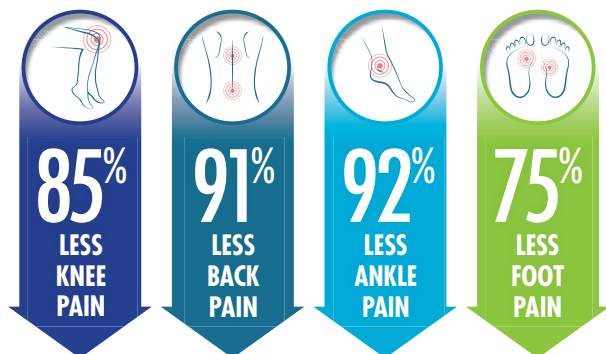


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