

Prize Entry Name

Fill in the information requested on the back of this card, detach it and return it in the enclosed envelope by Wednesday, October 7, to be included in a drawing for fun prizes. This is a small way to show you, our members, how much we appreciate you!

A list of prizes that will be awarded can be found at MedinaEC.org/Prizes.

Since we can't get together this year, enter your membership account for prizes!



The 82nd Annual
Membership Meeting
has been canceled, but we
still have fun planned!
Details on this cover.

SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES



AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE



The 2019 Annual Report, financials and opportunities for member appreciation prizes are found in this issue of
Texas Coop Power

MEMBER APPRECIATION PRIZES!
Return the card on the back cover to be entered to win prizes!
We will randomly select winners in October.
Prize List: MedinaEC.org/Prizes

Dear Member,

We are conscious of member and employee safety and mindful of the governor's orders regarding COVID-19. The board and staff value the opportunity to gather with members; however, after deliberation and discussion, the board made the difficult decision to cancel the annual membership meeting. We hope to see you all in the fall of 2021. Until then, stay safe and healthy!

Sincerely,

Mark Rollans, CEO, and Kenneth White, Board President

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON THE MEMBERSHIP MEETING FOR ALL MEMBERS:

The Annual Membership Meeting of Medina Electric Cooperative, originally scheduled for Saturday, October 10, **has been canceled**. All business will be moved to the meeting held in the fall of 2021.

INFORMACIÓN IMPORTANTE SOBRE LA MEMBRESÍA REUNIÓN PARA TODOS LOS MIEMBROS:

La reunión anual de membresía de Medina Electric Cooperative, programada tentativamente para el sábado 10 de octubre, **ha sido cancelada**. Todos los asuntos de negocios se pospondrán para la reunión celebrada en otoño del 2021.

MEMBER APPRECIATION PRIZES!

Return the card on the back cover to be entered to win prizes!

We will randomly select winners in October.

Prize List: [MedinaEC.org/Prizes](https://www.MedinaEC.org/Prizes)



VERIFY / UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Please fill in your contact information below. We will verify your account to be sure we have your most current information. We will also use it to contact you if you are a winner. Watch our Facebook page in October for announcements!

Email Address: _____

Preferred Phone Number: _____

Is the number above a mobile? Yes or No

Alternate Phone Number: _____

Is the number above a mobile? Yes or No

Check what you are interested in learning more about or seeing offered by the cooperative.

____ Residential Solar Generation

____ Standby Generators

____ Electric Vehicles

____ Outage Text Messaging

____ Online Account Access

Other: _____



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YEAR-ROUND JOY

CROCKETT'S FIDDLE:
AN ALAMO MYSTERY

MEADOW OASIS:
NATURE TAKES OVER

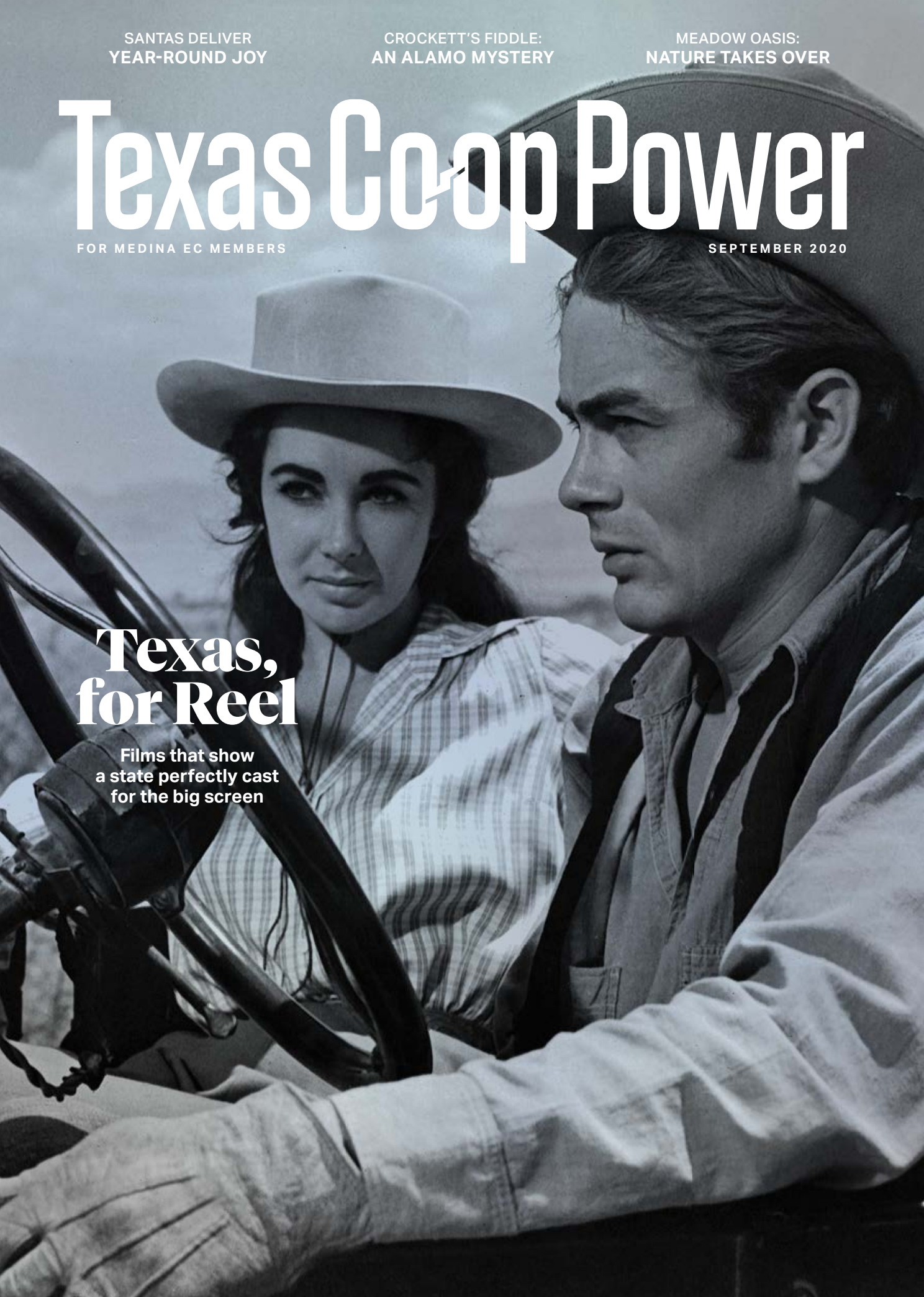
Texas Coop Power

FOR MEDINA EC MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 2020

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a state perfectly cast
for the big screen





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September 2020



08

Reel Moments

Film trails guide cinephiles through a slice of the state's silver screen history.

By Jessica Ridge

14 'Tis Always the Season

Lone Star Santas deliver joy when and where children need it.

*Story by Melissa Gaskill
Illustration by David Moore*

ON THE COVER

Elizabeth Taylor and James Dean in *Giant*.

Photo by Warner Brothers | Getty Images

ABOVE

Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde*.

Photo by Fotos International | Getty Images

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Observations

Meadow Oasis
By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Where Trouble Was Brewing

JEFF GERRITT, editor of the *Palestine Herald-Press*, won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in May. He received the award for a series of editorials revealing medical neglect and horrific deaths of county jail inmates in the paper's own Anderson County and other county jails in rural Texas, where inmates are awaiting trial.

Gerritt had stepped out for a cup of coffee before word came that he had won one of journalism's highest honors. The *Herald-Press* publisher greeted an astonished Gerritt with the news in the newspaper parking lot when he returned. "I just broke down and fell to the ground," he said.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I CAN'T BELIEVE I BOUGHT ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and city. Here are some of the responses to our July prompt: **It's not really summer until ...**



BALES OF BENJAMINS

There's enough cotton in one bale, which weighs about 500 pounds, to make about 300,000 \$100 bills. The Texas High Plains produces 3.7 million cotton bales a year.

More than 4,500 films have been shot in Texas since 1910.

You hear a Texan say, "It ain't the heat; it's the humidity."

JESSICA MURRAY
BLUEBONNET EC
CALDWELL

The cicada symphony starts playing at sunset.

TONY HALL
VIA FACEBOOK

The lines start getting longer at the raspa (snow cone) stand.

LUIS GARZA
NUECES EC
ALICE

To see more responses, read Currents online.

eBay turns 25

The online auction site launched Labor Day weekend 1995 in San Jose, California.

Did You Know?

Company founder Pierre Omidyar listed a broken laser pointer for \$1. It ended up selling for \$14.83—the site's first transaction.



Roll Call

The *American City Business Journals* compiled enrollment figures for U.S. colleges and compared the 2019 numbers to those from 2013 to determine the fastest-growing colleges in Texas.

TEXAS' TOP FIVE

with their enrollment increase

- 1 University of Texas Permian Basin, Odessa **75%**
- 2 University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler **52%**
- 3 Angelo State University, San Angelo **51%**
- 4 Parker University, Dallas **46%**
- 5 University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg **44%**

Pass the Guac

OUR RECIPES THIS MONTH, starting on Page 30, feature Game Day Eats. The largest crowd ever to see a football game in Texas, 110,633, was at Kyle Field in College Station on October 11, 2014, when Texas A&M University hosted Mississippi.

Kyle Field is the fourth-largest college football stadium in the country with a capacity of 102,733.

Our dishes may not feed quite that many.



TCP Contests and More

[ON TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM](https://www.texascooppower.com)

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTO CONTEST
Forests

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST
Quick Breads and Muffins
Easy dough if your recipe wins.
Enter online.

WEB EXTRA
Learn more about plein air painting in Texas.



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Georgia O'Keeffe in Texas

Thank you for the brilliant story on Georgia O'Keeffe by Chris Burrows [*Palo Duro Love Letters*, July 2020]. It is great with the large photos and timely information about the new book. We had visited the Canyon campus in 2015 and had a very hard time locating the tiny O'Keeffe section of its holdings. I am so delighted that a new person has taken such an interest.

Priscilla Poupore
Taylor EC
Clyde



I used to see them all the time growing up [*The Lizard Brigade*, June 2020]. I was wondering what happened to them. Good to know they are trying to bring them back.

GLADYS CLARIDGE
VIA FACEBOOK



Something's Fishy Here

"While I don't believe in paranormal activities, all of the items and foods mentioned make me really homesick for the 'old' days."

SARENA MICHAELS
COSERV
LITTLE ELM

Who's a Texan?

Pam LeBlanc's decision that she is indeed a Texan [*No Longer a Yankee*, July 2020] may be a bit premature. Stating that her "personal vehicle is a bicycle, with a Fiat Spyder convertible as a backup" tends to make me believe she is an Austinite rather than a Texan.

Charles Busbey
Pedernales EC
Dripping Springs

I have an opposite story from Pam's. I am a 67-year-old native-born Texan who has lived out of Texas since I was 25. I am still Texan, not Floridian.

Gayl Mikeska Brotherton Laird
Taylor EC
DeFuniak Springs, Florida

Vintage Winedale

The performances and, most of all, the students bringing Shakespeare's characters brilliantly to life are the highlight of the summer for me. I so enjoyed Clayton Maxwell's memory of Shakespeare at Winedale [*Sweet Adversity*, July 2020], with her perspective on what it was like to be a part of it all, onstage, 30 years before.

Linda St. Clair
Pedernales EC
Austin

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

Texas Co-op Power

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Discovered! Unopened Bag of 138-Year-Old Morgan Silver Dollars

Unopened for
138 Years!

Coin experts amazed by “Incredible Opportunity”

The Morgan Silver Dollar is the most popular and iconic vintage U.S. coin. They were the Silver Dollars of the Wild West, going on countless untold adventures in dusty saddlebags across the nation. Finding a secret hoard of Morgans doesn't happen often—and when it does, it's a *big deal*.

How big? Here's numismatist, author and consultant to the Smithsonian® Jeff Garrett:

“It's very rare to find large quantities of Morgan Silver Dollars, especially in bags that have been sealed... to find several thousand Morgan Silver Dollars that are from the U.S. Treasury Hoards, still unopened, is really an incredible opportunity.”

—Jeff Garrett

But where did this unique hoard come from? Read on...

Morgans from the New Orleans Mint

In 1859, Nevada's Comstock Lode was discovered, and soon its rich silver ore made its way across the nation, including to the fabled New Orleans Mint, the only U.S. Mint branch to have served under the U.S. government, the State of Louisiana and the Confederacy. In 1882, some of that silver was struck into Morgan Silver Dollars, each featuring the iconic “O” mint mark of the New Orleans Mint. Employees then placed the freshly struck coins into canvas bags...

The U.S. Treasury Hoard

Fast-forward nearly 80 years. In the 1960s, the U.S. government opened its vaults and revealed a massive store of Morgan Silver Dollars—including *full, unopened bags* of “fresh” 1882-O Morgan Silver Dollars. A number of bags were secured by a child of the Great Depression—a southern gentleman whose upbringing showed him the value of hard assets like silver. He stashed the unopened bags of “fresh” Morgans away, and there they stayed...

The Great Southern Treasury Hoard

That is, until *another* 50 years later, when the man's family finally decided to sell the coins—still in their unopened bags—which we secured, bag and all! We submitted the coins to respected



Actual size is 38.1 mm

- ✓ Historic Morgan Silver Dollars
- ✓ Minted in New Orleans
- ✓ Struck and bagged in 1882
- ✓ Unopened for 138 years
- ✓ 26.73 grams of 90% fine silver
- ✓ Hefty 38.1 mm diameter
- ✓ Certified Brilliant Uncirculated by NGC
- ✓ Certified “Great Southern Treasury Hoard” pedigree
- ✓ Limit five coins per household

third-party grading service Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC), and they agreed to honor the southern gentleman by giving the coins the pedigree of the “Great Southern Treasury Hoard.”

These gorgeous 1882-O Morgans are as bright and new as the day they were struck and bagged 138 years ago. Coins are graded on a 70-point scale, with those graded at least Mint State-60 (MS60) often referred to as “Brilliant Uncirculated” or BU. Of all 1882-O Morgans struck, *LESS THAN 1% have earned a Mint State grade*. This makes these unopened bags of 1882-O Morgans extremely rare, certified as being in BU condition—nearly unheard of for coins 138 years old.

Don't Miss This Rare Opportunity—Order Now!

Regular 1882-O Morgans sell elsewhere for as much as \$133, and that's without the original brilliant shine these “fresh” 138-year-old coins have, without their special NGC hoard designation, and without their ability to tell their full, complete story from the Comstock Lode all the way to your collection.

Given the limited quantity of coins available from this historic hoard, we must set a strict limit of five coins per household. Call quickly to secure yours today as supplies are sure to sell out quickly!

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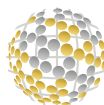
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BY JESSICA RIDGE

REEL MOMENTS

Film trails guide cinephiles through a slice of Texas' silver screen history



GIANT

Giant's outsize reputation precedes it. The 1956 movie's 201-minute running time, wide-open West Texas landscape and generations-spanning timeline all connote epic. The film, based on Edna Ferber's book of the same name, also garnered its director an Oscar. Despite that accolade, and the film's nominations for a passel of others, some present-day viewers are wary.

"I show this to my graduate students, who expect to hate it, and they wind up—I don't want to say they love it—but they wind up being amazed by this movie," says Tom Schatz, author and film professor at the University of Texas at Austin. He acknowledges the movie's challenging running time and its parallel cultural heft. "In its own way, it's an extremely progressive movie," he says, that influenced the perception of Texas as "more nuanced, more sophisticated, and more oriented toward Mexico and the Southwest."

The Texas Film Commission includes *Giant* on its Texas Classics Trail, one of the self-guided tours it offers from which cinephiles can build itineraries of film production sites statewide. Since 1971, the film commission has supported the state as a production hub by connecting filmmakers with locations, staff, grants and other resources. Through the choose-your-own-adventure setup of its film trails, the TFC encourages movie fans to explore Texas' silver screen history while supporting local communities and economies.

The making of *Giant* accomplished that latter aim, according to Vicki Barge, general manager of Marfa's Hotel Paisano, a stop on the trail and where the movie's cast stayed for the first two weeks of production. "At the time it

was filmed, it was this huge shot in the arm for Marfa," she says. "There were four hotels in town, and cast and crew filled every room."

Even after its famous guests had decamped to private residences nearby, the Paisano remained a hangout. "They took a lot of meals together here, even after they were not living here," says Barge. The U-shaped bar at the hotel's restaurant was at that time a lunch counter. Lined with windows at perpendicular angles, it's easy to imagine the film's stars—Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson and James Dean among them—lingering there in a desert light-filled inverse of Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*.

Giant cast photos today line the hotel's hallways, a primer for the uninitiated, who can watch the movie in full in a quiet corner of the gift shop. It's an opportunity at least some guests avail themselves of. "They don't often sit through the entire show but will watch for a while," Barge says. "It's a long movie!"

Still, "it's got its moments," according to Schatz, "where it's getting at the human element in a pretty touching way." The silent, somber homecoming of a Mexican American veteran of World War II; an underdog's insouciant wave as he exits a meeting; a woman's acidly articulated response to being shut out of a conversation about politics; and the film's parting look at two infants, whose contrasting skin tones don't preclude the sharing of a playpen and a lineage in 1950s Texas, despite the scene's discordant use of an epithet. "What it's doing with race and class and gender is pretty remarkable," Schatz says.

Elizabeth Taylor, foreground, on the set of *Giant*. The film's Reata Ranch and mansion facade are in the background.





★
SELENA

A trailblazer herself, Selena Quintanilla Pérez inspired the eponymous 1997 biopic on the Texas Classics Trail. And though it cites Corpus Christi's Swantner Park, the waterfront backdrop for a scene in *Selena*, trail-goers can veer from the official path to the coastal city's Selena Museum and bayside *Mirador de la Flor* to learn about the singer, who was murdered at 23 in 1995.

At the bilevel mirador, whose name translates to "view-point of the flower," a bronze likeness of Selena stands, accompanied by narration about the barrier-breaking Tejano artist, interspersed with snippets of *Como la Flor*. The song was one of Selena y los Dinos' first U.S. hits and has inspired a swath of genre-bridging covers from artists including country performer Kacey Musgraves and indie duo Dracula. The cumbia's effervescence almost obscures its narrator's lament, which likens the end of a love affair to a dying flower.

A performance of *Como la Flor* in *Selena* marks the sole instance in Jennifer Lopez's portrayal of the artist in which Lopez sings, the song's first few words only, in a scene where her



character must calm the crowd at an overcapacity outdoor venue, with the integrity of the band's stage threatened.

A different moment in the film can be experienced vicariously at the Selena Museum. A studio in which Lopez's Selena records in the movie—and where Selena herself recorded the song *Dreaming of You*—is housed at the museum. The studio's acoustic panels are the same ones that appear in the film, in a scene punctuated with a simple request: "Hey, Dad, pizzal!"

Selena's Porsche, which has a cameo in the movie, is on display at the museum, along with her Grammy—the first awarded to a female Tejano artist for best Mexican American album. Outfits rendered iconic as markers of specific performances are displayed, along with clothing designs sketched by Selena.

A less-trafficked corner of the museum bears a collage of Selena snapshots. In many, she's dressed casually and wears little or no makeup. Her smile radiates joy. In conjunction with *Selena*, the images hint at the person behind the performer. They also gesture to a lyric in *Como la Flor*: "*Cómo me duele.*"

How it hurts.

TOP LEFT Except for the first few words of *Como la Flor* in the Monterrey concert scene, Jennifer Lopez lip-synced her singing parts.
LEFT Selena in concert in 1995.



BONNIE AND CLYDE

Art imitates life again on the Texas Classics Trail, albeit several hours north and three decades earlier. Pilot Point's town square is home to the Farmers and Merchants Bank building, where a robbery scene from *Bonnie and Clyde* was filmed. To commemorate its spell in the limelight, the town north of Dallas hosts an annual Bonnie and Clyde Days Festival, which includes a reenactment of the scene.

Wayne Purser, a longtime member of CoServ, an electric cooperative in Corinth, coordinates, performs in and corals volunteers for the scene's annual reprise. Sometimes the wrangling requires some straight talk. In 2019 a prospective Clyde showed up to audition with long hair and a beard. Given the look's incongruity with hairstyles popular in the 1930s, when the movie is set, Purser put it plainly: "Dude, that's not gonna work." The man returned, less hirsute, and clinched the role, earning praise from Purser for his acting chops.

Purser plays the town sheriff in the reenactment, which is rife with antique vehicles, weapons that fire blanks, and actors and spectators in period dress. Whereas the movie scene occurs in and outside of the bank building, the reenactment satellites the Richardsonian Romanesque structure that today appears essentially identical to how it looks in the 1967 film.

Though the actual pair of outlaws never robbed Farmers and Merchants Bank, which closed during the Depression, the site doesn't want for history. The building dates to 1896 and has been home to Farmers and Merchants Gallery, a purveyor of antiques and art, since 1975. The space's erstwhile identity shines through occasionally. Marly McCullough, the gallery's manager, has found century-old checks tucked away in drawers used by the bank's tellers. "The oldest one I've come across was from 1906," she says. "I have a ton of those that I have kept."

Other handwritten finds have also popped up. A visitor in her 60s came across a book from her childhood. She knew it was hers because she had written her name in it, perhaps around the time a movie about a ragtag group on the lam was leaving its imprint on Pilot Point.

The alchemy of those moments echoes the power of movies to transport. "To me, it's magical. Like once I step inside there, it's another world, and the outside world is almost put on hold for a while," McCullough says. "It's my favorite place in the world."



TOP Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway played the title characters in 1967's *Bonnie and Clyde*.

ABOVE The gang races out of Pilot Point's Farmers and Merchants Bank building in a scene from the movie.



★
BOYHOOD

Boyhood is a different kind of movie. It follows its actors over 12 years as they age, change and criss-cross the state, then distills that footage into a 165-minute panorama of a fractured Texas family, moored in love, figuring it out as they go. Though its title implies a focus on a single character, the movie offers a naturalistic depiction of the interiority and ecology of a post-divorce family, anchored by Patricia Arquette's Oscar-winning portrayal of single parenthood. The film is included on the Texas Film Commission's Richard Linklater Trail, which guides visitors to seven *Boyhood* sites in Central, Southeast and West Texas.

From its second year of production in 2003 through *Boyhood*'s 2013 completion, Matt Lankes worked as the film's still photographer, capturing behind-the-scenes photos of cast and crew. As he was shooting those images, Lankes conducted a parallel photography project on the film's set: a series of black-and-white portraits of the movie's four main actors that culminated in his book *Boyhood: Twelve Years on Film*.

"It was like we became a family over the years," Lankes says. "It was always a wonderful reunion for the three to five days that we would shoot each year." The portraits he

made suspend time and mark its passage for each of Lankes' subjects. "We all were watching each other get older," Lankes says, "and it was amazing."

The closing scenes of *Boyhood* were filmed in West Texas in October 2013. Originally intended to be filmed in Big Bend National Park, a 16-day shutdown of the federal government scrambled those plans and diverted the movie's cast and crew to Big Bend Ranch State Park. Even a cursory look at the film's final few moments, backlit by a violet and pink sky, show that the finished product didn't suffer from the ad hoc change in locale.

"Thankfully, you know, that part of our state is so wonderful," Lankes says. The park's otherworldly rock formations at its Hoodoos Trail appear in the movie, along with Closed Canyon, whose soaring walls approximate hiking in a natural cathedral.

Boyhood's protagonist, Mason, college-age at this point in the film, meanders through the canyon with a trio of new friends near the film's end. "It's just a beautiful scene—they're in a real moment, and it's just kids doing what kids do," Lankes says. "The landscape is irreplaceable." ■

ABOVE Ellar Coltrane, left, and Jessi Mechler in the final scene of *Boyhood*, shot in Big Bend Ranch State Park.

TCP WEB EXTRA See a map of film trails in Texas.

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for the Lone Star State



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Ladies Black Sapphire Bracelet

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BY MELISSA GASKILL
ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID MOORE

'Tis Always the Season

Lone Star Santas
deliver joy when and
where there is a need

SANTA CLAUS LIVES IN TEXAS. Actually, hundreds of Santa Clauses do, and they spread cheer all year long through a group called Lone Star Santas.

"It's a calling," says Gene Goetz of San Antonio, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative. He got his first Santa gig in 1981 for a twins club where his boys participated. "I bought a suit and a fake beard, and it was a lot of fun," he says. "I did that for a few years and then started doing a lot of charity work." In 2014, Goetz took his first role as a professional Santa Claus at San Antonio's Ingram Park Mall. That's when he heard about Lone Star Santas.

One of the organization's co-founders, Jim Fletcher of Cypress—whose voicemail says, "Apparently, I'm off feeding the reindeer or packing toys or helping Mrs. Claus bake cookies"—became a Santa somewhat by accident. "My then-fiancée, Madge, invited me to a homeowners association meeting, where we learned that their usual Santa was ill," Fletcher says. "I didn't have a beard then, but I did have the girth. They asked me if I could be Santa, and I said sure, why not? I bought a suit and a book on how to be a Santa, dressed up, did the gig and fell in love with it."

When Fletcher and Madge married the following June, Madge walked down the aisle to the tune of *Here Comes Santa Claus* rather than the traditional *Here Comes the Bride*. In 2007 Fletcher and fellow Santa Gene Clayton decided to start Lone Star Santas. They welcome any Santa, Mrs. Claus, elf, reindeer herder or other Texan with the spirit—counting more than 400 members today.

After an EF5 tornado hit Joplin, Missouri, in 2011, Fletcher rounded up a bunch of members, collected toy donations and drove to Joplin to hand them out. The expedition inspired the group's ongoing mission, Convoy of Toys.

"When disaster strikes, we bring love, hope and joy, and a big Santa hug along with trailers full of toys," Goetz says.



"We go wherever houses get destroyed and kids are displaced and lose their toys. After the [Hurricane] Harvey flood in Houston, we went into the shelters. Everyone is sad, then a few Santas walk in and the entire mood changes."

The group also participates in the Belton Fourth of July parade each year, with many Santas wearing country-western-style suits. They attend a dinner with the Temple Elks Lodge and visit the area children's hospital and veterans facility. "The vets love us," Fletcher says. "We give them a stuffed toy and an American flag, and it brightens their day. And it brightens our day to see their reaction."

Karen Stagner, who works with the Elks Lodge to arrange the Fourth of July parade, says the Lone Star Santas are a hit wherever they go. "It's just a tremendous group," she says, "and some of the most caring people I've ever met."

Goetz says it takes a special heart to be a Santa. "You can go to all the classes and conventions you want, but if being a good Santa isn't in your heart, it isn't going to matter," he says. "People think it is easy, but you have to know how to talk to kids."

Even though 8 in 10 Santas bleach their hair white, Goetz's is naturally that way. His beard and belly are real,



TCP WEB EXTRA

Read about other co-op members who are making a difference in their communities in TCP's Power of Our People program.

too. "The more you look real," he says, "the more you have kids saying they met the real Santa."

That reality is not an inexpensive proposition, says member Dennis Queen. "I have about \$4,000 in each suit and have three or four of them," he says. Queen and his wife, Jane, a Mrs. Claus, relocate from Kerrville to San Antonio in a motor home each Christmas season.

All Lone Star Santas are volunteers. They pay for their own gas, hotel stays and meals on convoys. "Every penny donated to Lone Star Santas stays in it; none of it goes to our members," Goetz says.

Why go to all the trouble? "It's important for kids to believe in Santa, to have something to believe in," he says. "We try to make kids grow up too quick now. A lot of people say it is a calling, and I'm starting to believe it. I'll probably be buried in my Santa suit."

The organization sponsors at least one "Santa school" in Texas every year to help teach members the ropes. Jane Queen says she and Dennis also learn a lot from other participants. "Santas are so smart and willing to share their craft," she says.

"This is who I've become, all year long," Dennis Queen says. "I think I've become a different person because of it. Our Christmas tree is up all year long."

Jane Queen says that when the couple goes out, people regularly call them Santa and Mrs. Claus. "We wouldn't trade it for anything—meeting the other Santas, the friendships we've developed," she says.

Fletcher agrees that being Santa is a calling. "Once I put on the red suit and walk into a store or restaurant, invariably someone stops me and wants to get a picture with Santa," he says. When a child says "Hi," Fletcher explains, all of the attention goes to that child. He appreciates the smiles on every face when he leaves a restaurant because those smiles mean that the people forget about things that are going on and just enjoy a moment.

"I can't get over what we can do," he says, "Our brand is love, hope and joy. There's just a joy to being Santa." ■

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MESSAGE
FROM BOARD
PRESIDENT

KENNETH
WHITE

Committed to the Cooperative Difference

The world has changed since our last Annual Membership Meeting

IT IS AN HONOR to have been elected president of the Medina Electric Cooperative board, and I appreciate the support and cooperation of the board of directors and the staff.

A year ago, who would have ever imagined that the world would have been so impacted by COVID-19? It has taken a serious toll on lives and has affected each of our daily routines in some way.

Medina EC had to make quick decisions to adjust some of our daily operations. At times, information and recommendations were coming so fast that procedures had to be changed weekly. The parking lots of Medina EC buildings have looked different during COVID-19, and lobbies may not have been open to the public, but Medina EC employees did not stop working.

I would like to thank the staff for meeting the challenges head-on and adapting quickly. With their efforts, Medina EC has continued to provide the reliable service members expect while also keeping everyone healthy and safe.

The most recent change made as a result of COVID-19 was the difficult decision to cancel the

annual membership meeting, scheduled for October 10 in Uvalde. This was a very difficult decision for your board because we look forward to this event each year, as we know staff and many members also do. Ultimately, we want to do our part to keep everyone healthy and we felt this was the only way.

In lieu of this year's meeting, we have some exciting prizes

planned for all members who return the card on the back of this magazine, so I hope many of you will take advantage of that.

Since we won't be getting together this year, I would like to highlight a few things that have been accomplished since the September 2019 meeting.

Medina EC has added 723 services, bringing the

total to 34,385* meters served. The co-op has one of the largest service areas in the state, serving 10,750 square miles across 17 South Texas counties. Over 50 miles of new distribution lines were added, so cooperative staff now has more than 9,725* miles of lines to maintain.

The co-op's goal is to inspect about 10% of the distribution system poles every year and replaces the poles not meeting industry standards. Since last year's meeting, 1,522* poles have been replaced at an average cost of \$2,294.76 per pole.

The electric industry is continually advancing, and Medina EC strives to adopt new technologies to stay abreast of these changes for our members. Newer meters can provide valuable data pertaining to service at each location. For example, new meters can report any loss of power automatically instead of members needing to call in to report outages.

After numerous consultations and presentations by Medina EC staff, the board approved a plan to begin replacing existing meters, which were installed in the early 2000s and nearing the end of their life, with these newer, more advanced meters, enabling the cooperative to offer better service to members going forward. To date, 10,519 meters have been replaced.

We have several years remaining to complete installing these meters at the co-op's more than 34,000 service locations, but this is a great start.

One benefit of cooperative membership is the return of capital credits. The Medina EC board approved the return of \$1.8 million to members in 2019, and since inception, the cooperative has returned more than \$31 million to members.

COVID-19 has impacted all of us. Through it all, Medina Electric Cooperative has remained committed to safely providing the most reliable electric service at the most affordable price to its member-owners.

During these difficult times, the actions taken by the board and staff have made it possible to continue to keep the lights on for you, the members. We hope to see you again, in person, in Uvalde next fall. Until then, stay safe and healthy. ■

**as of June 30, 2020*





MESSAGE
FROM CEO

**MARK
ROLLANS**

Coexisting with COVID-19

Quick adjustments necessary in a changing world

IF EVER THERE WAS A YEAR that was different than expected, it is 2020.

For the cooperative, the arrival of COVID-19 quickly changed how we did business. Employees adapted to new ways of working. That meant moving many in-office employees to home offices; ensuring that vehicles were distributed so that each crew member had their own truck whenever practical; and for employees that needed to stay in the office, ensuring we had practices in place to keep them safe. A COVID-19 outbreak among our employees could prevent us from delivering reliable electricity to our members, so we took all the steps we could to prevent that from happening.

Our mission is to exceed member expectations in everything we do, and we kept that at the forefront of all our decisions regarding COVID-19.

Storm season brought additional challenges. Memorial Day saw a weekend of storms and outages impacting the northern part of our service area, in Uvalde, Medina, Frio and La Salle counties. At the end of July, Hurricane Hanna made her way inland, causing flooding and high winds for our members in Starr County, at the southern end of our service area.



Throughout all the unknowns from COVID-19 and storms, your cooperative has maintained financial stability and implemented new technologies to help us continue to exceed member expectations in the future.

Just as many of us have had to change habits in our personal lives—washing our hands more, wearing masks in stores, having less in-person interactions—Medina EC has changed many of our business processes, and we made those changes in a few weeks. While we have changed the way we do business, we never changed our mission.

It will be interesting to see what the coming year holds. My hope is that you all stay healthy, and I look forward to seeing you again. ■

**Medina Electric
Cooperative**



CONTACT US

Toll-Free 1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532)

Email Info@MedinaEC.org

Web MedinaEC.org

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 Surlis, (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

Outage? Call us.

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Option 2: Report an outage

Option 3: Pay bill, get account balance

Option 5: Speak to a representative

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Bruni 1300 FM 2050 N., Bruni 78344

Dilley 1718 W. FM 117, Dilley 78017

Hondo 237 Hwy. 173 N., Hondo 78861

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

Uvalde 2604 Hwy. 90 E., Uvalde 78801

Corporate Office 2308 18th St., Hondo 78861

VISIT US ONLINE

MedinaEC.org



This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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

Operating Statistics

REVENUE	2019	2018
Sales of Electric Power	\$124,269,419	\$120,447,335
Miscellaneous Electric Revenue	1,810,279	1,875,588
Total Revenue	\$126,079,698	\$122,322,923

EXPENSES	2019	2018
Power Production	\$0	\$0
Purchased Power	85,929,609	84,685,896
Operations & Maintenance	14,369,786	13,571,390
Consumer Accounting	2,914,451	2,922,142
Member Services	302,347	274,594
Administration / General	6,611,897	6,222,112
Depreciation	7,024,549	5,862,616
Taxes	0	0
Interest	4,432,831	4,220,298
<i>(RUS, FFB, CoBank, Other)</i>		
Total Expenses	\$121,585,470	\$117,759,048

MARGINS	2019	2018
Operating Margins	\$4,494,228	\$4,563,875
GT & Other Capital Credits	7,055,487	5,207,732
<i>(Generation / Transmission)</i>		
Non-Operating Margins	812,686	531,829
Total Margins	\$12,362,401	\$10,303,436

ASSETS	2019	2018
Total Utility Plant	\$213,154,923	\$203,360,854
Accumulated Depreciation	(32,955,851)	(31,715,614)
Net Utility Plant	180,199,072	171,645,240
Cash, Commercial Paper & CDs	2,421,690	2,682,869
Investments	55,077,503	48,280,442
Accounts Receivable	10,268,886	9,629,247
Materials & Supplies	0	0
Deferred Charges & Other Assets	1,626,619	2,146,402
Total Assets	\$249,593,770	\$234,384,200

LIABILITIES	2019	2018
Long-Term Debt	\$107,324,396	\$102,305,803
Short-Term Notes	0	0
Accounts Payable & Notes Payable	9,913,608	13,217,120
Membership Fees & Consumer Deposits	2,962,427	3,585,008
Deferred Credits & Accruals	12,705,012	8,953,005
Patronage Capital	110,677,386	100,200,067
Accumulated Provision for Pensions/Benefits	3,205,798	3,085,662
Accumulated Other Comprehensive Loss	2,805,143	3,037,535
Total Liabilities	\$249,593,770	\$234,384,200

ANNUAL AUDIT

Medina EC is audited annually. The audit of the 2019 financials was performed by Certified Public Accountants Bolinger, Segars, Gilbert & Moss, L.L.P. of Lubbock.

The audit covered the period from January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019.

Per the auditor's March 5, 2020 report, "in our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Medina Electric Cooperative, Inc. as of December 31, 2019 and 2018, and the results of their operations and cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."

Dollar Breakdown

Medina EC is a **not-for-profit** business, so each dollar you send the cooperative covers **business costs**. Here is how your dollar was spent in 2019*, by percent.

**Each figure is rounded to the nearest one-tenth of a percentage point.*

POWER COST

70.7%

MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

11.8%

DEPRECIATION

5.8%

ADMINISTRATION

5.4%

INTEREST

3.6%

CONSUMER ACCOUNTS & MEMBER SERVICES

2.7%

Where Your Electricity Came From

THERE ARE LOTS OF STEPS involved in getting electricity to your home. The first step is procuring the fuel used to produce it.

As a cooperative, we purchase our power from our wholesale power supplier, South Texas Electric Cooperative. With all fuel sources for energy production, there are advantages and disadvantages. The goal, very much like with a financial portfolio, is to take a balanced approach and to adjust as the market changes.

Here are the resources that made up the fuel for the power the cooperative provided to members during 2019.

Natural Gas—65%

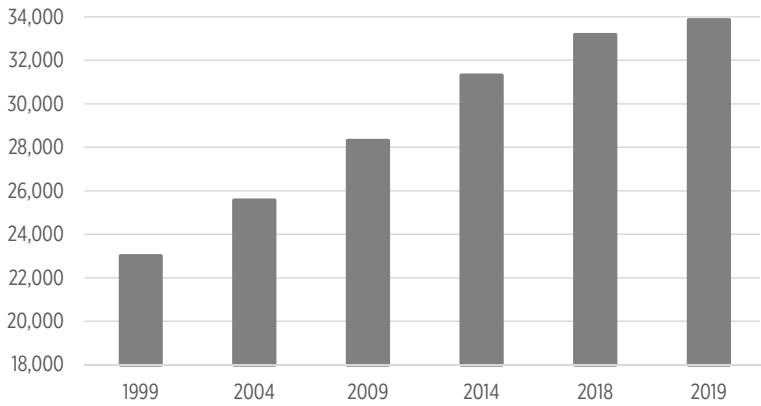
Texas Lignite—20.6%

Renewables (Wind & Hydro) —14.4%



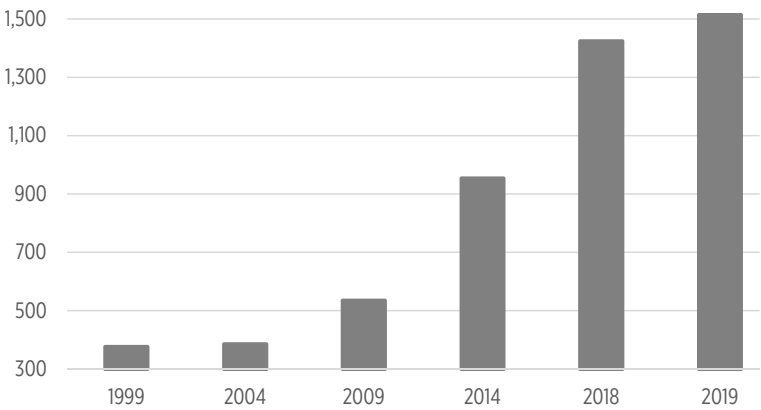
Meters

1999: 23,003 2019: 33,848



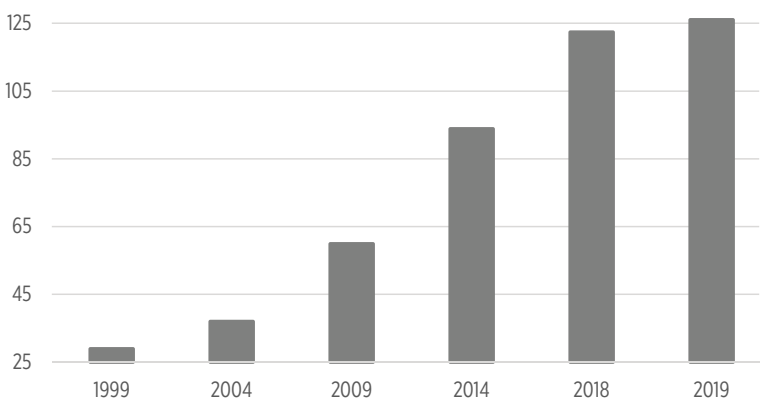
kWh Sold (in millions)

1999: 376M kWh 2019: 1.513M kWh



Revenue (in millions)

1999: \$28.8M 2019: \$126M



HELPFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

WEBSITE:

MedinaEC.org

RATES:

MedinaEC.org/Rates

CORPORATE DOCUMENTS:

MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc

Includes Tariff, Bylaws and Your Rights as a Member

MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE may be our name, but we serve more than just Medina County. Medina EC actually serves all or parts of 17 counties across South Texas.

We have five offices that members can visit for business, located in Uvalde, Hondo, Dilley, Bruni and Rio Grande City, and two additional offices where internal staff operate, the corporate office in Hondo and a Laredo facility that houses materials and vehicles for staff in that area. ■



With 9,695 miles of line (year-end 2019), Medina EC has enough to stretch along the driving route from our Rio Grande City office to Anchorage, Alaska, and back—and still have 962 miles of line left over. Our power lines stretch across the 17 South Texas counties we serve. At 10,750 square miles, Medina EC's service area is 1,000 square miles larger than the land area of Maryland as well as eight other states.

Year-end 2009—8,985 miles
Year-end 1999—8,705 miles



Seven Cooperative Principles

As an electric distribution cooperative, Medina EC operates under the Seven Cooperative Principles.

VOLUNTARY & OPEN MEMBERSHIP

DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE

EDUCATION, TRAINING & INFORMATION

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Benefits of Membership

SOLAR

You can now purchase a ground-mount solar panel system with installation from your cooperative. Learn more at MedinaEC.org/Solar.

SMARTHUB

Have your account information at your fingertips with this free tool. Available at MedinaEC.org or as an app for Android and Apple devices. Pay your bill, review past use, report outages and more.

REBATES

You can take advantage of rebates for multiple energy efficiency upgrades. Get all the details and information at MedinaEC.org/Rebates.

PREPAID ELECTRICITY

PrePaid Electricity is a great option if you want to pay for your electricity as you use it. Learn more about the program at MedinaEC.org/PrePaid.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

We offer many payment options. See details at MedinaEC.org/BillPay.

CO-OP CONNECTIONS CARD

This discount card can save you money on purchases with local and national retailers and on prescriptions. Details at MedinaEC.org/Connections.

FILTER CHANGE PROGRAM

Order discounted HVAC filters and have them shipped to your home or business. Then get an email reminder when it is time to change them. Find details at MedinaEC.org. Just click on Filters under the Products tab.

LIFE-SUPPORT REGISTRY

If someone in your home depends on an electrically operated health aid, they need to be on the life-support registry. The form and details are at MedinaEC.org/Registry.

Since the cooperative will not be holding an Annual Membership Meeting this year, the business meeting agenda in 2021 will include a vote on approval of minutes from the 81st Annual Membership Meeting, held in 2019. Below are minutes from that meeting for members to review.

Annual Membership Meeting: September 28, 2019

The Medina Electric Cooperative, Inc. 81st Annual Membership Meeting was held at the Graff 7A Ranch in Hondo, TX beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 28, 2019.

The welcome and opening comments were delivered by CEO Mark Rollans who noted that this Annual Meeting celebrates 81 years of serving electricity to South Texas.

1. The invocation was given by CEO Rollans followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.
2. CEO Rollans then recognized veterans, current service members, and first responders in attendance. Further, he introduced special guests in attendance at the meeting. CEO Rollans then introduced the Board of Directors and the Medina Electric employees who have reached service milestones, asking them to stand and be recognized.
3. Board President Glenn Schweers called the meeting to order, asking Board Secretary Annette Sorrells to address the next order of business including:
 - a. The notice of the meeting: Secretary Sorrells reported this notice was provided in the September Texas Co-op Power magazine.
 - b. Registrar's Report: Secretary Sorrells read the following Registrar's Report,:
 - c. Reading of the Membership Roll and 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes: Secretary Sorrells stated that she could hold the roll call of the members and read the 2018 Annual Meeting minutes, noting that the minutes were included in the September Texas Co-op Power magazine

At this time, President Schweers stated he would entertain one motion to: 1) Accept the Registrar's Report, 2) Dispense of the Reading of the Membership Roll, and 3) Approve the 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes as presented in the September 2019 issue of the Texas Co-op Power magazine.

Motion was made and seconded to 1) Accept the Registrar's Report, 2) Dispense of the Reading of the Membership Roll, and 3) Approve the 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes as presented in the September 2019 issue of the Texas Co-op Power magazine. Motion carried.

4. CEO Rollans then presented his annual report.
5. CEO Rollans read the names of the 2019 director nominees as well as the dates and places of the Voting District Nominating Meetings. The nominees were asked to stand and were thanked for their support and for taking an active interest in their cooperative.
6. The results of the 2019 director election were announced. It was noted that Medina utilized Survey and Ballot Systems to coordinate the election. This third party company collects and tallies all votes made by members online and through mail-in ballot, ensuring that the election is secure and confidential. CEO Rollans called upon Medina County Judge Chris Schuchart who reported the following results:

Director Election

District 1: Kenneth Weynand
Unopposed
1,306 Votes
District 2: Chris Surles
Unopposed
1,251 Votes
District 3: Annette Sorrells
Unopposed
1,314 Votes

7. President Schweers then asked whether there remained any new or unfinished business. None was indicated by the membership.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Sorrells, Secretary

Attest:

Glenn Schweers, President

SECRETS OF A BILLIONAIRE REVEALED

*"Price is what you pay; value is what you get.
Whether we're talking about socks or stocks, I like
buying quality merchandise when it is marked down."*

— wisdom from the most successful investor of all time

We're going to let you in on a secret. Billionaires have billions because they know value is not increased by an inflated price. They avoid big name markups, and aren't swayed by flashy advertising. When you look on their wrist you'll find a classic timepiece, not a cry for attention— because they know true value comes from keeping more money in their pocket.

We agree with this thinking wholeheartedly. And, so do our two-and-a-half million clients. It's time you got in on the secret too. The **Jet-Setter Chronograph** can go up against the best chronographs in the market, deliver more accuracy and style than the "luxury" brands, and all for far, far less. \$1,150 is what the **Jet-Setter Chronograph** would cost you with nothing more than a different name on the face.

With over two million timepieces sold (and counting), we know a thing or two about creating watches people love. The **Jet-Setter Chronograph** gives you what you need to master time and keeps the superfluous stuff out of the equation. A classic in the looks department and a stainless steel power tool of construction, this is all the watch you need. And, then some.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Experience the **Jet-Setter Chronograph** for 30 days. If you're not convinced you got excellence for less, send it back for a refund of the item price.

Time is running out. Now that the secret's out, we can't guarantee this \$39 chronograph will stick around long. Don't overpay to be underwhelmed. Put a precision chronograph on your wrist for **just \$39** and laugh all the way to the bank. Call today!

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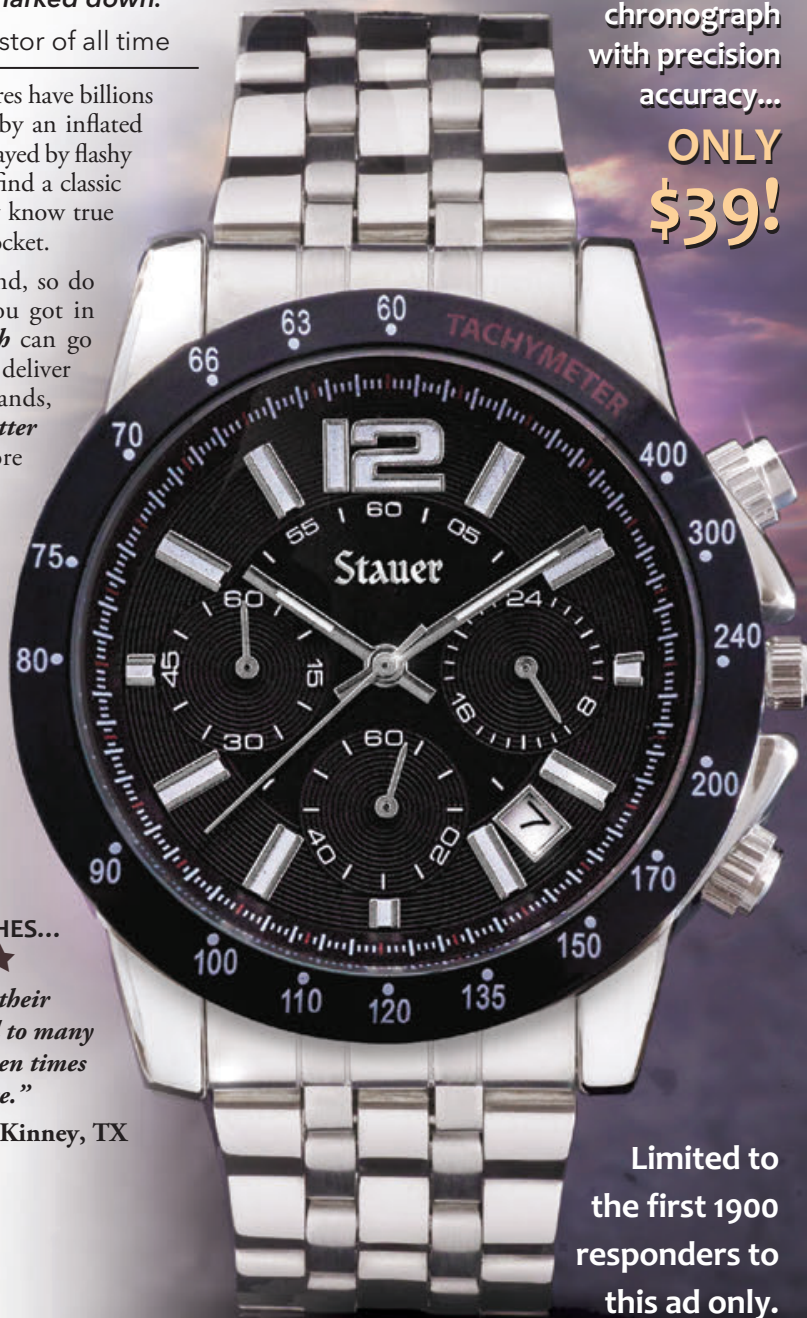


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WEB EXTRA

Listen to the strains of the Witte Museum's Crockett fiddle.

Davy Crockett's Fiddle

Did the Alamo legend and frontiersman have musical chops?

BY GENE FOWLER • ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN A. WILSON

DAVID CROCKETT'S frontier celebrity arrived in San Antonio before he entered the city on February 5, 1836. The 1833 book *Sketches and Eccentricities of Col. David Crockett of West Tennessee* and the 1831 New York stage play *The Lion of the West* established his public image with more tall tales of wilderness exploits than truth about his accomplishments. As a three-term congressman from Tennessee, he'd been courted as a possible presidential candidate before he told his constituents that they could go to hell and he'd go to Texas.

After Crockett died at the Alamo, his legend grew like wildfire. And more than

a century later, as the 1955 Disney film *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier* inspired coonskin cap mania, the Crockett story remained a swirling churn of folklore and fact. That same year, country-western singer Red River Dave McEnery recorded *When Davy Crockett Met the San Antonio Rose* with a fiddle that reportedly had belonged to Crockett himself. But as Alamo researcher William Groneman III, author of *David Crockett: Hero of the Common Man*, observes, "We don't really know for sure that it was Crockett's instrument or that he even played the fiddle."

Curators at San Antonio's Witte

Museum, which has possessed and periodically exhibited the fiddle since 1934 (it was lent in 1934 and formally donated to the museum in 1950), have always been careful to qualify that the instrument was *reportedly* owned by Crockett. Documents on file at the Witte track the fiddle's acquisition in 1934 by San Antonio Mayor C.K. Quin from T.S. Quinn (no relation), an Alabama violin maker and repairman. The affidavits further state that Quinn obtained the fiddle from one Frank Hollis of Tennessee, whose father had obtained it from David Crockett's son, Joseph Crockett. But Davy Crockett did not have a son named Joseph.

Further—and equally uncertain—indication of ownership is penciled inside the instrument: "This fiddle is my property, Davy Crockett, Franklin County, Tenn. Feb. 14, 1819."

The earliest mention historians have found of Crockett playing a fiddle in San Antonio—or anywhere else for that matter—is a quote from Alamo survivor Susanna Dickinson published in James M. Morphis' 1875 volume, *History of Texas, from its Discovery and Settlement*, that Crockett often took up his violin and "played his favorite tunes" during the siege. While it appears certain that Crockett did not tote the Witte's instrument to the Alamo, another Davy fiddle that could have been played during the siege surfaced in 1936.

John Houston Thurman of Longview, described in news reports as "an 80-year-old drover" and "an oil field fiddler," displayed an instrument his father had obtained in Mexico while fighting in the Mexican War. Carved into the fiddle's neck was "D. Crockett. Tenn. 1835. D. C. Texas, 1836." ■

Game Day Eats

We've got you covered, from tailgating to the fourth quarter

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Forget crunchy leaf piles, cozy sweaters and apple cider. In Texas, fall means football—a tradition we hope continues this year. Even if tailgating isn't an option this season, game day snacks are still a great opportunity to try new twists on favorite dishes. These chicken wings allow time to prep other snacks or catch some of the game while they bake. The plum jam adds a touch of sweetness, with even my 6-year-old gobbling these up.

Sticky Plum Chicken Wings

3 pounds chicken wings

½ cup plum jam

⅓ cup soy sauce

¼ cup water

1 green onion, diced, white and green parts divided

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

2 tablespoons chopped fresh ginger

2 large garlic cloves, chopped

1–2 teaspoons chili garlic sauce or other hot sauce

COOK'S TIP I've used chili garlic sauce for a light heat, but you can use your favorite hot sauce to taste.

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil, then top with a wire baking rack (or use a broiler pan). Coat lightly with nonstick spray and arrange chicken on top. Bake 35 minutes.
2. While the chicken bakes, make the sauce. In a small saucepan, whisk together jam, soy sauce, water, white parts of green onion, rice vinegar, ginger, garlic and chili garlic sauce and simmer over medium heat. Cook until reduced by half, whisking occasionally, about 15 minutes.
3. When chicken is done, put pieces into a large bowl. Pour sauce over chicken and toss gently with tongs to fully coat, then put chicken wings back onto the baking pan and cook an additional 5–10 minutes, letting the sauce caramelize. Remove to a plate and garnish with remaining green onion.

SERVES 6

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Bacon Onion Dip.



Everything but the Kitchen Sink Cheeseball

PATRICIA HEFTI
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

This cheeseball is Hefti's favorite for game day snacking. She recommends making it a few days in advance so all the flavors have time to mingle. Be sure to let it stand at room temperature for 15–30 minutes before serving so that it's spreadable.

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- ½ cup sour cream**
- ¼ cup finely chopped yellow onion**
- 1 jar (2 ounces) diced pimientos, undrained, optional**
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish**
- ½ cup chopped cooked bacon (about 4 slices) or bacon bits, divided use**
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans, divided use**
- Dash salt**
- Dash pepper**
- 2 cups shredded Swiss cheese**
- 2 cups shredded colby or American cheese**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley, optional**
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds**
- Assorted crackers, to serve**

1. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and sour cream until fluffy. Add onion, undrained pimientos, pickle relish, ¼ cup bacon, ¼ cup pecans, salt and pepper and stir to incorporate. Stir in cheeses and mix well.
2. Cover with foil or plastic wrap and chill in refrigerator until firm, about 4 hours.
3. In a small bowl, combine the remaining bacon bits, remaining pecans, parsley and poppy seeds. Turn cheese mixture

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Magic Red Chili

MAGDALENA AVILA
FARMERS EC



Chili is always a crowd-pleaser. This flavorful recipe gets a boost from cascabel chile sauce, which can easily be doubled to use for enchiladas or pork stew, says Avila. Serve the chili with onions and cheese or enjoy it atop hot dogs or corn chips.

SERVES 8

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 2 cups diced onion, divided use**
- 1½ pounds ground beef**
- 1 pound bulk chorizo**
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) chili sauce**
- 1 can (15 ounces) pinto beans, drained**
- 1 tablespoon chili powder**
- 1½ teaspoons garlic powder**
- 1½ teaspoons onion powder**
- 1½ teaspoons oregano**
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt**
- ½ teaspoon cumin**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes, optional**
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper, optional**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- 4 cascabel chiles**
- 2 large cloves garlic**
- 2 cups water**
- Shredded cheddar cheese, for topping**

1. Into a stock pot or Dutch oven set over medium heat, pour the vegetable oil. When the oil is hot, add 1 cup diced onion and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes.
2. Add ground beef and chorizo and cook until browned. Stir in chili sauce, pinto beans, chili powder, garlic powder, onion powder, oregano, seasoned salt, cumin and bay leaf. Add crushed red pepper flakes and cayenne pepper, if using, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and let simmer on medium-low while you make the red sauce.
3. To make the red sauce, remove stems and seeds from cascabel chiles, then rinse under warm water. Add to a small saucepan with garlic and cover with water. Bring to a boil and let simmer for 10 minutes, or until chiles are soft. Let cool slightly, then pour chiles, garlic and cooking water into a blender and purée, taking care to let steam escape. Strain if desired, then stir into chili.
4. Cook chili another 5 minutes to let flavors meld, then serve with remaining diced onion and cheddar cheese.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

QUICK BREADS AND MUFFINS DUE SEP 10

Do you love muffins? Does your family go crazy for your quick breads? Send us your tried-and-true favorites or heirloom recipes. Enter our February contest by September 10.

RECIPES CONTINUED

onto waxed paper and form into a ball. Roll the chilled cheeseball into the bacon mixture to coat, pressing gently to adhere to cheese.

4. Wrap the completed ball in waxed paper, then in plastic wrap or foil. Chill until ready to serve.

SERVES 16

Sweet and Spicy Pretzel and Nut Mix

BARBARA REISS
PEDERNALES EC

It will be hard to keep from diving into this snack mix while it cools. Fragrantly spiced with just a bit of heat, it will stay fresh for about a week when stored in an airtight container.

4 cups mixed raw nuts, such as pecans, almonds and cashews



1/3 cup dark brown sugar
3 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter, melted
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4–1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, to taste
4 cups unsalted pretzels
2 teaspoons kosher salt

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil or parchment. Spread the nuts in an

even layer and bake about 10 minutes, turning the sheet and stirring halfway through, just until the nuts are lightly toasted and become fragrant.

2. While the nuts are toasting, place the brown sugar, maple syrup, melted butter, cocoa and spices in a large bowl and stir to combine. Pour in the warm nuts and stir until well coated.

3. Add in the pretzels and salt, and stir until thoroughly blended and coated, taking care not to break up pretzels. Spread the mixture onto the baking sheet. Bake 12–15 minutes, stirring twice during baking and watching to make sure nuts do not burn.

4. Remove from the oven and let cool completely on the pan before storing in an airtight container.

SERVES 12

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Fronds in High Places

Sabal Palm Sanctuary in Brownsville brings hikers into archaic avian grove

BY CHET GARNER

THE PLANTS AROUND ME were so thick that I could barely see beyond the hiking trail. Above me, the fronds of native, 50-foot palm trees swayed with the breeze. Suddenly the green canopy overhead erupted into a squawking symphony so loud I thought I was being attacked. I wanted to run for my life. Instead I calmly looked up to see a flock of birds dancing atop the palms. My pocket guide identified them as chachalacas. It was the first of more than two dozen bird species I would identify that day.

I was hiking along the trails of the Sabal Palm Sanctuary, a 557-acre preserve operated by the Gorgas Science Foundation in southeast Brownsville, near the southernmost point in Texas. This refuge was part of a sugar cane plantation in the 19th century, when steamboats churned along the nearby Rio Grande. The sanctuary's visitors center sits inside the immaculate Rabb Plantation House that was built in 1892 and is worth a visit on its own. However, most visitors don't stay long in the mansion, as they're eager to hit the 3 miles of trails and identify avian species they can add to their birding life list.

Hiking below the palms was an experience that transported me to a tropical environment that seemed more likely to be in a different part of the world. Sabal palms, particularly native ones, are rare in Texas. This grove is the last piece left of a native palm forest that once extended 80 miles inland, throughout the Rio Grande Valley. As I stood on the Rio Grande observation deck without a fence or a building in sight, it wasn't hard to imagine a world without humans, where palm trees prosper and chachalacas can scream to their hearts' content. ■

ABOVE Chet Garner among the sabal palms and other tropical plants.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Chet's video from the Sabal Palm Sanctuary and check out his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

Some events may have been affected by COVID-19. Call or check an event's website for scheduling details.

SEPTEMBER

09

Tyler [9-13] Texas Rose Classic, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

11

Fairfield [11-12] Show of Wheels, (903) 389-5792, fairfieldtexaschamber.com

Fredericksburg [11-13] Fall Planting Days Kick-Off, (830) 990-8080, wildseedfarms.com

12

Jacksonville Cherokee Craft & Trade Fair and Old-Fashioned Quilt Show, (903) 268-1598

Kerrville Run for Riverside 5K, (830) 257-4837, riversidenaturecenter.org

Lake Jackson Farmers Market, (979) 285-2501, visitbrazosport.com

Sanger Sellabration, (940) 458-7702, sangertexas.com

17

Georgetown Virtual Benefit Concert, (512) 924-3911, faithinactionngt.org

18

Nacogdoches Wood & Wire, (936) 564-6631, facebook.com/millardscrossing

Fredericksburg [18-19] Admiral Nimitz Foundation Annual Symposium, (830) 997-8600, pacificwarmuseum.org

19

Levelland [18-20] Texas High School Rodeo Association Region 2 Rodeo, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

Tyler [18-20] Texas Rose Dressage Fall Classic, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

Freeport Texas Navy Day, (979) 233-0066, visitbrazosport.com

Onalaska Annual Cow Plop, (936) 433-2710, business.polkchamber.com

24

Amarillo [24-26] Tri-State Rodeo, (806) 376-7767, facebook.com/amarillo.tristate.fair

Kerrville [24-26] Texas Heritage Music Days, (830) 792-3535, schreiner.edu

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Levelland [25-26] Senior Team Ropers Association Team Roping, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

26

Canadian Canadian River Beach Club Calf Fry & State Championship BBQ Cook-Off, (806) 323-9413, facebook.com/canadianriverbeachclub

New Braunfels Cody Johnson, (830) 964-3800, whitewaterrocks.com

Tyler [26-27] Feathered Horse Spring Classic, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

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Event Calendar

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Pick of the Month

Oktoberfest

McKinney, September 25–27

(972) 547-2660

mckinneytexas.org

The original Oktoberfest in Munich celebrated local breweries and their traditional craft. This festival showcases McKinney's own Franconia and Tupps breweries. Crafts and food, including German-style fare such as brats, sausages, schnitzel and strudel, are also main attractions.

EVENTS CONTINUED

OCTOBER

01

Tyler [1–4] Texas Rose Spring Festival—Horse Show, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

02

Fort McKavett [2–4] 50 Miles by Wire, 1875, (325) 396-2358, facebook.com/visitfortmckavett

03

Bryan Buffalo Stampede Half Marathon & 5K, (979) 776-2195, brazosvalleymuseum.org/buffalo-stampede

Marble Falls Main Street Car Show, (512) 657-1699, marblefallskiwanis.org

Mason Mason County Republican Women's Home Tour, (325) 347-2221

Powderly Red River Valley Veterans Memorial Concert, (903) 517-0904, rrvvm.org/concert

Shapes

Ordinary objects become extraordinary on the right canvas, where repetition, lighting and perspective change everything. This month has shaped up to be one of our best. So don't be a square. Check out these diamonds in the rough.

GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Light fixtures cast shadows on a building in Fort Worth.

JOHNATHAN KANA
BLUEBONNET EC

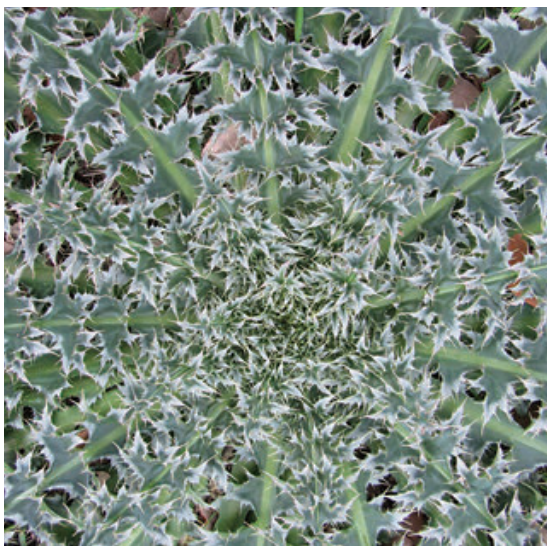
The Fred Hartman Bridge connects Baytown and La Porte.

RANDALL GAY
PEDERNALES EC

The amazing pattern of a thistle plant.

MARLENE VOTION
COSERV

Eggsactly three dozen.



Upcoming Contests

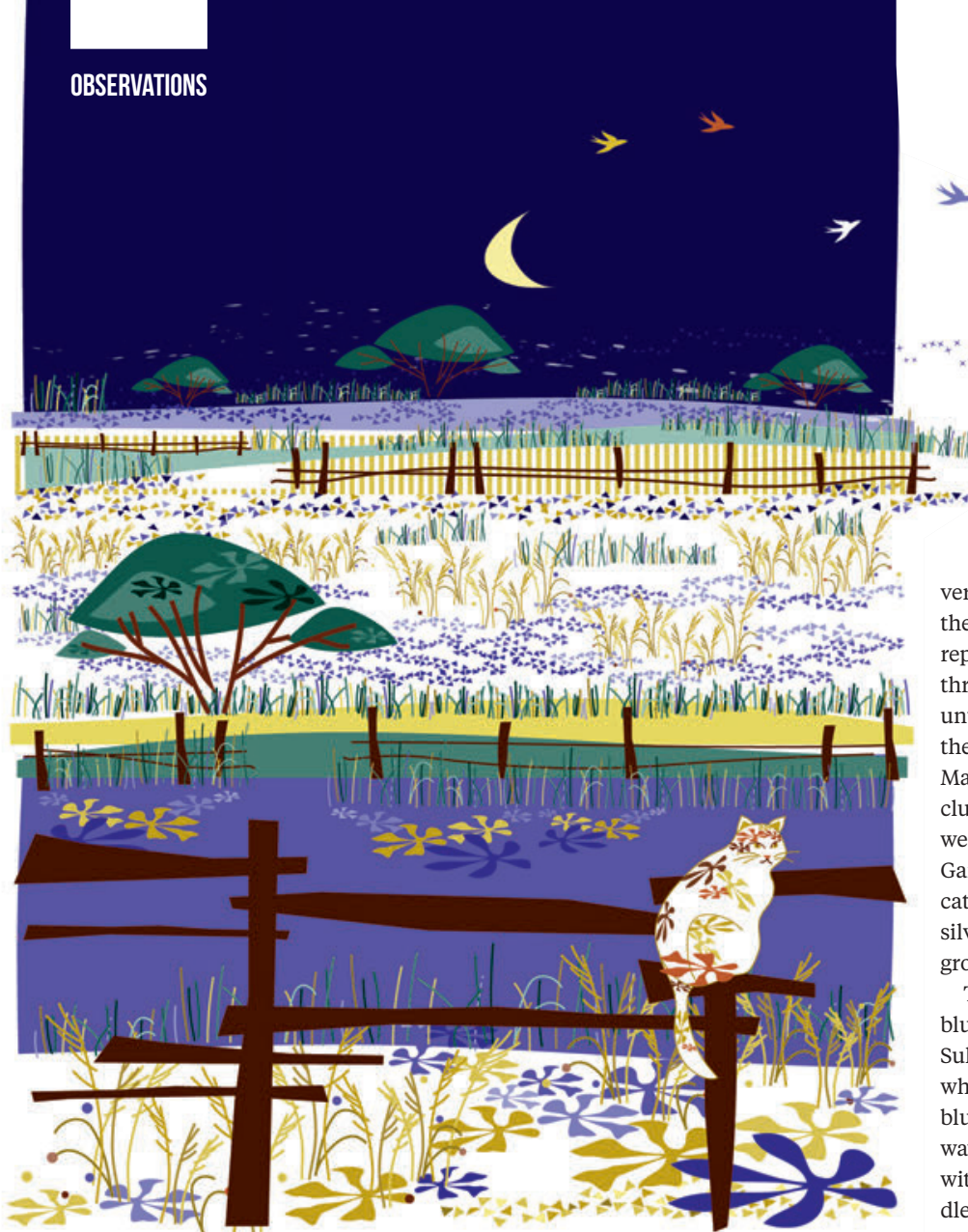
DUE SEP 10 Forests

DUE OCT 10 Saddles

DUE NOV 10 Diners

Enter online and review submission rules at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



Meadow Oasis

Serene evenings at a vacant lot given over to nature leave the author grounded and grateful

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS
ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA COBB

JAMES CARRIES the lawn chairs. I follow behind with Prima, a sweet calico who claimed us not long after we buried our last elderly cat. Behind a low cedar-post fence, we unfold our chairs and plop down. Prima chooses a lap and nestles into a comfortable position.

Overhead, cedar waxwings fly across the open sky followed by some black-bellied whistling-ducks and a lone white-winged dove. With our feet propped up on the fence, we breathe in the evening air and gaze at what we call the Meadow, our adjoining vacant lot turned nature preserve.

Our evening “sits” in the Meadow go back more than a decade. Through the years, we’ve observed change, loss and rejuvenation. One spring, prairie

verbena laid a purple carpet across the property. That show has yet to be repeated. Another year, stiff green-threads bloomed in golden profusion—until coreopsis leaf beetles decimated their foliage. And we still talk about the Malta starthistle that grew in thick clumps along the street—then I learned we were hosting a nasty invasive. Garbage bags later, we finally eradicated the species. Gray vervain, fleabane, silverleaf nightshade and other natives grow there now.

This evening, we admire the abundant bluebonnets that grace our corner lot. Sulphurs, honeybees and an occasional white-lined sphinx moth flit among the blue flower heads. From our chairs, we wave at a couple walking their dog. Chat with a father who has brought his toddler son to see the wildflowers. Holler greetings at a nearby neighbor who tells us how much she loves her view of the Meadow.

It could be just another evening in our neighborhood. Only it’s not. Because a global pandemic keeps us apart. We must social distance and share air hugs.

Prima yawns and jumps down to nibble grass. James tracks a miniscule jet across the darkening sky. I lean over to watch a wolf spider scuttle through the grass. Virus or no virus, our sits in the Meadow keep us grounded and grateful. Our time there reminds us that we, too, as human beings, will always experience change, loss and rejuvenation. Like our vacant lot turned nature preserve, we will adapt and move on. That’s the cycle of life. ■

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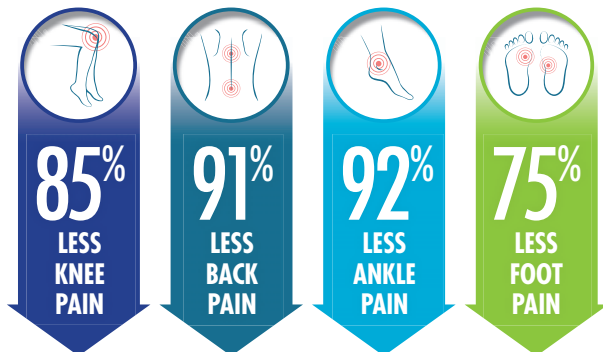
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