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IN BANDERA

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A NEIGHBORHOOD'S
SEED SAVER

Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

APRIL 2024

Vanishing Act

Conservationists
work to save
native plants in decline



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April 2024



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Thorny Task 12 Holding Promise

Scientists, landowners and plant lovers work to preserve hundreds of threatened Texas natives.

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Bandera's Helping Hand puts relief within reach for neighbors in need.

Story and photos by Laura Jenkins

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ON THE COVER

The flower of the rare night-blooming cereus can be seen just one night a year.

Photo by Dave Shafer

ABOVE

The Hinckley oak is an evergreen shrub in the Chihuahuan Desert.

Photo by Keeper Trout | Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Wiring the American Dream

ON LINEWORKER Appreciation Day, April 8, we celebrate the 20 Texas electric cooperative lineworkers who brought electricity to Matasanos, a rural village in Guatemala. They spent two weeks there in November as part of NRECA International, a program that for more than 60 years has delivered electricity to remote places that had none—exactly what co-ops did in rural Texas 85 years ago.

Ten South Texas co-ops sent two crew members each, plus support staff. When they finished, 60 homes had each been wired with four lights, two switches and two outlets. Villagers helped the lineworkers move equipment up the mountain.

“I believe we take the American dream on the road and transplant it to other countries,” says Jim Coleman, general manager at Jackson Electric Cooperative in Edna, who has participated in several international projects. He was joined in Guatemala by GMs from four other Texas co-ops.



No Fooling

Some historians say April Fools' Day customs have been around since the 16th century, when France's King Charles IX decreed the new year would begin January 1—not on Easter. Those who clung to the old ways were called April fools.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Wow! The eclipse was ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our February prompt: **Campfires remind me of ...**

Telling scary stories as kids.

CATHY ONDREJ
HILCO EC
AQUILLA

Me and my dad camping. We would stare at the fire for hours and say, “This is much better than watching TV.”

MIKE EARLY
VIA FACEBOOK

The time I set our tent on fire!

HOOMALIMALI PAULO
VIA FACEBOOK

The possibility of a nostalgic gathering and the surety of an asthma attack.

SHELLY REID
SOUTH PLAINS EC
BECTON

Fresh air, boiled cowboy coffee, staring at the embers.

DURENA KRILEY
VIA FACEBOOK

Visit our website to see more responses.

TCP Contests and More

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RECOMMENDED READING
Ten years ago we looked at the problems caused by the growing population of feral hogs in Texas. See *Here a Pig, There a Pig* from April 2014 on our website.

The Favorite
 “I pay for some magazines, but my very favorite one is yours. Great publication.”

NONA GARDNER
 DEEP EAST TEXAS EC
 GARRISON



R.J. HINKLE PHOTOS

Pieces of Art

We became a fan of Puzzles of Color after meeting them at the Texas State Fair and absolutely loved the artwork of the woman playing bass [Puzzling Times, February 2024]. I made a custom frame for it, and it hangs in our guest bedroom.

Peter Hill
 Pedernales EC
 Austin

The Reality of Gators

We don't always have a resident gator at Magnolia Beach, but most times there's one or two [Later, Gators?, February 2024].

My son and I were fishing when two teens were swimming nearby. I casually asked if they were watching for gators. “What gators?” came back sarcastically. “The one with his nostrils and eyes sticking up under the walking bridge behind you,” I replied.

I swear they walked on water getting to the bank.

Jim Evans
 Victoria EC
 Port Lavaca

The Real Bowie

Yes, Jim Bowie's knife was quite a sensation, and I'm glad you cast some doubt as to his actions at the Alamo, but it might be worth mentioning a bit more of his biography [A Cut Above, February 2024].

He was a slave owner, slave trader, smuggler and an associate of pirates. He also was a land speculator with a suspicious reputation.

Georgia Xydes
 Pedernales EC
 Austin

Shamrock Memories

Glenn McCarthy's two daughters were at Lamar High School when I was [The Green Carpet, January 2024]. The Cork Club was opened on Sunday afternoons for teens to come, dance to a small orchestra and have nonalcoholic drinks.

In 1952, my date and I went with another couple. The featured singer for the week came to entertain us—Tony Bennett. Hearing *I Left My Heart in San Francisco* always reminds me of that very special afternoon.

Betty Akin Morris
 Pedernales EC
 Canyon Lake



DAVID MOORE

TCP WRITE TO US
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 Austin, TX 78701

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

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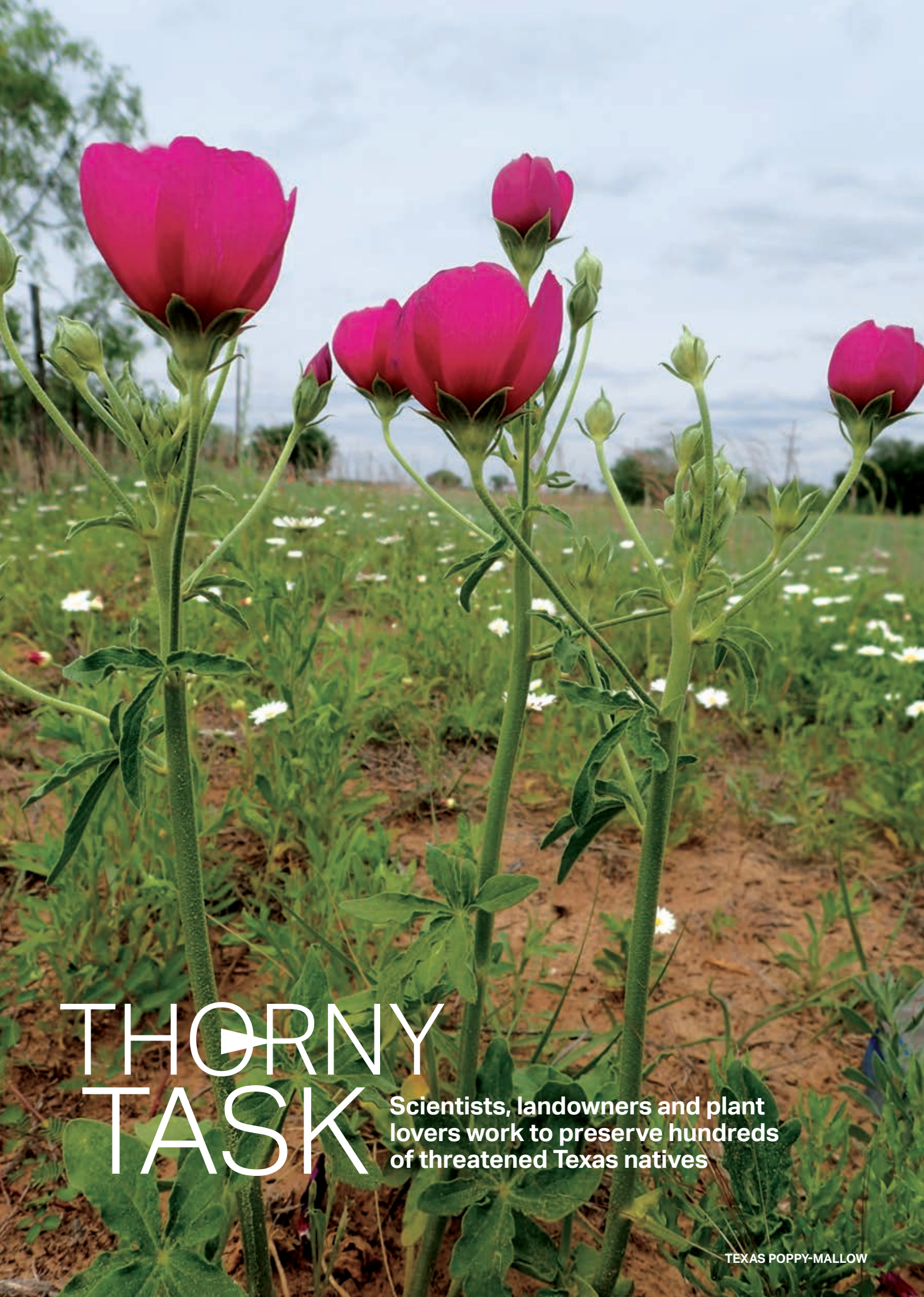
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THORNY TASK

Scientists, landowners and plant lovers work to preserve hundreds of threatened Texas natives

Randy Deming often walks his 10 acres of rural land in Callahan County, near Abilene, always on the lookout for a flower, insect or bird he hasn't spotted before.

Using an app called iNaturalist, he documents the native grasses, yuccas, Ashe junipers, live oaks and other plants that grow there. Thanks to the app, Deming learned in 2021 that one of his flowering species could be one of only a few remaining populations in Texas.

"I took pictures of a pretty flower and forgot about it," recalls Deming, a member of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and Taylor Electric Cooperative. "A few months later, I was skeptical when someone contacted me through iNaturalist and asked to see my large-flower beardtongues.

"When they told me how rare they are, I was excited," Deming says. "I could have mowed them down! Now I'm watching over them."

In the future, large-flower beardtongues—a tall, erect perennial with tubular purple blooms—could be legally protected if researchers collect enough ecological data to substantiate the designation. In the meantime, 437 other Texas plants have already been designated by the state as "species of greatest conservation need," meaning they're in decline and need attention. Some of those species require even more urgent measures. These are further labeled as threatened or endangered.

The two legal terms stem from the Endangered Species Act, a federal law enacted in 1973 to protect and help recover the nation's imperiled plant and animal species and their habitats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service oversees the federal list and partners with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, which manages the Texas list. A species can be federally and state protected, such as shrubby Texas snowbells in the Hill Country, or just one or the other.

However, the process for federally listing a species can stretch out for years. Consider the bracted twistflower, a tall annual with lavender flowers that has been increasingly lost to urban sprawl and hungry herbivores. Found only within the Edwards Plateau, the wildflower has been marked as imperiled since 1975 and was petitioned for



TURNER'S CLIFF THISTLE

federal listing in 2014. In May 2023—nine years later—the USFWS finally listed the bracted twistflower as threatened. In Coryell County, the imperiled Texabama croton faces similar challenges.

Plants of all kinds in Texas face many pressures. Every year, development scrapes away one natural area after another. Invasive plants, agriculture, poaching, mining, weather, loss of pollinators, and land and water management also negatively impact the state's flora.

But does it really matter if a few of Texas' estimated 5,000-plus native plant species go away? The answer is yes.

"We have biodiversity for a reason," says Anna Strong, a rare species botanist with TPWD. "Each organism interacts with others in specific ways. Regardless of whether it's rare or common, if we take out one organism, we don't know the implications amongst all the organisms. If we take out one flower, we may take a food source away from a specific insect that relies on that species."

At the San Antonio Botanical Garden, botanist Michael Eason works to conserve and propagate rare Texas plants. "We have more than 90 species in our collections," Eason says. "Some are displayed in our gardens, which helps to educate the public. Others are seed collections, which haven't been propagated yet."

One of those species, prostrate milkweed, a low-growing perennial, is endemic only to Starr and Zapata counties and northeastern Mexico. Since at least 1980, invasive



Glossary

An endangered species is defined under the Endangered Species Act as “any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.”

A threatened species is defined under the ESA as “any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.”

Imperiled is not a legal term. Biologically, it refers to unprotected species that are in decline and may be in danger of extinction.

Rare plants have very limited ranges or exist in low numbers.

buffelgrass, road construction and development have drastically reduced its numbers. After several petitions to the USFWS, prostrate milkweed—an important monarch butterfly host plant—was federally listed as endangered in March 2023. The agency also designated 661 acres as critical habitat needed by the species to survive.

For his part, Eason spent five years tracking down the scarce milkweeds and collecting seeds, then having a milkweed specialist grow the plants to maturity. “We ended up with 150 plants,” he says. “We passed some to other botanical gardens. We’ll install some in our rare plant gardens. The remainder will be kept for perhaps reintroductions in South Texas and donations to other institutions with the Center for Plant Conservation.”

Headquartered in Escondido, California, the CPC is a



TEXAS SNOWBELL

TEXAS SNOWBELL: CHASE FOUNTAIN | TPWD. TEXABAMA CROTON: RAY MATHEWS | LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER

Grassroots Efforts

The Texas Department of Transportation monitors for rare plants prior to road construction and along state highways and rights of way. Edd Paradise, a TxDOT environmental planner in Pharr and a Magic Valley Electric Cooperative member, worked with USFWS to relocate endangered Zapata bladder-pods in Starr County.

Aaron Lincoln—a biodiversity manager with Lhoist, a global corporation—oversees a pilot project to restore grasslands and a pocket prairie at a 3,000-acre chemical lime plant and quarry in Bosque County. So far, he’s documented glandular blazing stars, Hall’s prairie clover, lemonscent and other declining species. Lincoln also hopes to set aside 122 acres as a refuge for white troutlilies and morel mushrooms.

The Friends of the Warren Ferris Cemetery in Dallas rallied to transform the historic cemetery’s neglected grounds into native habitat. Today, the Constellation of Living Memorials pilot project includes eight old cemeteries and will serve as an example for revitalizing the state’s 5,000-plus historic cemeteries. One project goal is to encourage the recovery of threatened and endangered plant species.



TEXABAMA CROTON

nationwide network of organizations working together to save imperiled native plants. The San Antonio Botanical Garden partners with the CPC, as do the Botanical Research Institute of Texas at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Mercer Botanic Gardens in Humble and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin.

As part of its conservation efforts, the wildflower center stores seeds of 575 Texas plant species for research and sharing with botanical gardens and conservation organizations. The seed bank, housed mostly in freezers, also serves as an insurance policy against the loss of imperiled species.

“We visit wild populations that we have permission to access, either on public land or through contacting land-owners,” explains Jonathan Flickinger, conservation collections manager at the wildflower center. “We harvest seeds



BRACED TWISTFLOWER

from plants, but we don't take too many because our priority is to conserve the plants in their natural habitat."

In some cases, researchers may rescue plants by digging them up. That happened with the Texas poppy-mallow, listed as federally endangered in 1981. The tall perennial with reddish purple flowers grows in deep sandy soils along the Colorado River in four counties.

In 2010, some conservation-minded landowners asked that a population of poppy-mallows be removed from a future construction site on their property. That summer, wildflower center staff and other colleagues extracted 54 plants and fostered them in pots for three years.

"We harvested more than 3,000 seeds from them for our seed bank," Flickinger says. "Then we identified another site where they were reintroduced."

Landowners play a huge role in plant conservation, namely because about 95% of Texas' land is privately owned. When threatened or endangered plants grow on private land, landowners are not legally required to manage them under the Endangered Species Act (the law differs for listed birds and animals).

Botanists and other officials must always ask permission before accessing private land. Typically, they want to survey plant species, perhaps harvest a small amount of seeds and collect plant material for herbarium vouchers.

The Fish and Wildlife Service offers a program that provides property owners with free technical and financial assistance for improving wildlife habitat on their land. "We're always looking for opportunities to work with landowners," says Chris Best, USFWS botanist. "Most of the ones I've met want to protect their land's natural resources."

That aptly describes attorney Liz Rogers, a Medina Electric Cooperative member. For more than two decades, she's welcomed researchers onto her family's 8,000-acre cattle ranch in southeastern Brewster County, along the Mexico border. "They always show me cool things, which has made me appreciate our ranch even more," she says.

Eason has been among many plant conservationists who have botanized the ranch's Trans-Pecos deserts, canyons and mountainsides. "Liz has an assortment of rare plants found along cliff faces and other protected areas," he says. "We've collected plants such as Turner's cliff thistle, rock-daisy and Barton's dalea. She also has a small population of night-blooming cereus."

Whether rare or not, showy or inconspicuous, every native plant matters. "We shouldn't focus conservation merely on species that have declined so far that they're teetering on the brink of extinction," Best says. "We should be working to keep common plants common." ■



PROSTRATE MILKWEED

Noah's Arks for Seeds

Just as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin stores seeds of 575 Texas plant species for research, national and global seed vaults do the same—preserving plant types in case they are wiped out by natural or human-made disasters.

The National Laboratory for Genetic Resources Preservation on the campus of Colorado State University is run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It houses more than 850,000 plant seeds and materials, as well as DNA samples from about 160 breeds of livestock.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault, located about halfway between the North Pole and the coast of Norway, is more than 300 feet inside a mountain, where the permafrost maintains a stable temperature between 26 and 39 degrees. Three large concrete chambers have the capacity to hold 3.5 million seed samples.



HOLDING PROMISE

BANDERA'S **HELPING HAND** PUTS RELIEF WITHIN REACH FOR NEIGHBORS IN NEED



FROM THE ROAD, it doesn't stand out from any other small office complex you might find in the Hill Country. But once you pass through the towering iron gate, get out of your car and start walking, the landscape becomes much more inviting: winding paths that lead to a peaceful courtyard and a sprawling pergola nestled against a scenic lily pond.

This is what hope looks like. More specifically, the Village of Hope—the cluster of buildings owned by Bandera County Helping Hand, a haven for residents facing a personal crisis. Are you sick? There's a free medical clinic. Is your cupboard bare? Head over to the food pantry. Do you need shoes, clothes or basic household items? The thrift store has what you need.

Since 1984, Bandera Helping Hand has been a steadfast safety net for folks who have hit hard times.

"We're here to help people get on their feet," says Jesse Parks, executive director of Helping Hand. "You never know what tomorrow will bring. Everything's great until all of a sudden there's a car wreck and somebody's gone or there's a flood or a fire and you've lost everything. It's devastating."

Parks speaks from experience. In the late 1990s, she and her husband uprooted their lives in Corpus Christi and moved to Medina, just west of Bandera, where they signed a long-term lease on a piece of land and started working on their dream: building a facility for teens experiencing crisis. Two years later, without warning, the landowner sold it out from under them, including the structures and improvements they'd funded with their own money.

They lost everything. To make ends meet, Parks got a job at the Apple Store in Medina (which actually sells fruit). One day a friend came in and told her that she'd recommended Parks for the director position at Helping Hand. Even though she'd never worked at a nonprofit, Parks accepted the position and has led the organization since 2000.

Helping Hand began 16 years earlier, in 1984, when local churches came together to assist neighbors in need. The aim was to pool resources and provide a central place where people could go for help. In the early days, Helping Hand operated a thrift store and a food pantry and provided school supplies for children. It also helped struggling residents pay their utility bills.

But when the Medina River swept through the town during the devastating South Texas floods of 2002, it demolished Helping Hand's facilities. Quite suddenly they were among those in crisis.

"Our building was completely destroyed," Parks remembers, "so we set up shop in a warehouse and started gathering donations from other food banks. The Salvation Army came in and helped us provide aid for flood victims as well."

Seeing how generously and efficiently Helping Hand had been serving the community, Bandera's city council offered them space so they could continue helping residents while they figured out how to start over themselves. And that's when offers of help started pouring in.

"A retired grant writer by the name of Dan Wise got in touch and offered to help us raise funds to rebuild," says Parks, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative. "I looked forever for land that was not in a flood plain and finally found this 3.77 acres. We bought it with money we borrowed from Bandera Bank but were able to pay it back within a year using the grants that Mr. Wise helped us get from various foundations."

By early 2004, Helping Hand's crisis intervention center was complete. At the building's dedication, then-board President Comellia Rue announced that the next structure they would build was a free medical clinic to serve the county's uninsured residents. But no one had any idea where the money would come from.

Enter Kerrville businessman Arthur Nagel, who approached the pastor of a local church and told him God had given him a vision to start a medical clinic in Bandera. The pastor introduced Parks to Nagel, who donated \$150,000 to construct the shell of the clinic building on the Village of Hope grounds. Within a year, Helping Hand had raised enough money to complete the clinic and operate it for a year. The clinic formed its own nonprofit and opened its door to patients in 2008.

Today the Arthur Nagel Community Clinic is open three days a week. In addition to primary care, the clinic offers mental health services and teen and elder care programs. Healthy cooking and cardio fitness classes are also available. The clinic provided an estimated \$1.9 million in health services to 443 Bandera County residents in 2023, says clinic director Chuck Lutke.

The food pantry stays stocked thanks to food and cash donations from individuals and contributions from other food banks. As a result, Helping Hand can feed an average of 130 families a month.

At the thrift store, which thrives on steady donations of gently used clothing and household items, residents purchase what they need at affordable prices. Sales cover nearly three-fourths of Helping Hand's annual operating budget.

"Helping Hand is about community," Parks says. "We all work as a team. I see us as a community of 'hands' that resources pass through. Each one of us has been through hard times and knows what a little compassion and love can mean in a crisis situation.

"Helping people get back on their feet and feeling good about themselves as they overcome whatever they're going through is a privilege.

"It's not a *handout*, it's a *hand up*." ■

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The Village of Hope welcomes folks who have hit hard times. Angelica Hernandez greets patients at the medical clinic, which is open three days a week. The food pantry can feed 130 families a month.

TCP See this story on our website to donate to the Village of Hope.

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

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

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

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

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¹DETAILS OF OFFER: Offer expires 6/30/2024. Not valid with other offers or prior purchases. Buy one (1) window or entry/patio door, get one (1) window or entry/patio door 40% off, and 12 months \$0 money down, \$0 monthly payments, 0% interest when you purchase four (4) or more windows or entry/patio doors between 4/1/2024 and 6/30/2024. 40% off windows and entry/patio doors are less than or equal to lowest cost window or entry/patio door in the order. Additional \$30 off each window or entry/patio door, minimum purchase of four (4) required, taken after initial discount(s), when you purchase by 6/30/2024 Subject to credit approval. Interest is billed during the promotional period, but all interest is waived if the purchase amount is paid before the expiration of the promotional period. Financing for GreenSky® consumer loan programs is provided by federally insured, federal and state chartered financial institutions without regard to age, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or familial status. Savings comparison based on purchase of a single unit at list price. Available at participating locations and offer applies throughout the service area. See your local Renewal by Andersen location for details. CA License CLSB #1050316. Central CA License #1096271. License #RCE-50303. OR License #198571. WA License #RENEWAP877BM. WA License #RENEWAW856K6. FL #CGC1527613. All other license numbers available upon request. Some Renewal by Andersen locations are independently owned and operated. ²Based on testing of 10 double-hung units per ASTM E2068 20 years after installation. ¹It is the only warranty among top selling window companies that meets all of the following requirements: easy to understand terms, unrestricted transferability, installation coverage, labor coverage, geographically unrestricted, coverage for exterior color, insect screens and hardware, and no maintenance requirement. Visit renewalbyandersen.com/nationsbest for details. ³Review aggregator survey of 5-star reviews among leading full service window replacement companies. January 2024 Reputation.com. "Renewal by Andersen" and all other marks where denoted are trademarks of their respective owners. © 2024 Andersen Corporation. All rights reserved. RBA13747

^{*}Using U.S. and imported parts.



POWERING COMMUNITIES

Tri-County Electric Cooperative linemen Ryder Duncan and Tod Freeman are dedicated to ensuring their community has reliable electricity. With April being Lineman Appreciation Month, we're highlighting their career journeys. Despite being at very different stages of their careers, they have both learned about the importance of hard work and the value of serving their teams as much as they serve Tri-County's members.

Duncan, a second-generation lineman, has dedicated over six years to the cooperative.

"My great grandfather was a lineman and actually did some work for Tri-County. I remember seeing pictures of him from back in the day with a wire spool on the back of his pink Cadillac," Duncan said. "He used to tell some great stories about working in the field."

Duncan starts his day at 5:50 a.m. He's at the Azle office by 6:55, and loads his truck with necessary materials by 8, which is when he typically leaves for the field. The rest of Duncan's day involves getting trucks set, preparing safety precautions, working to set inline poles, hanging air switches, and restoring power - sometimes during storms or inclement weather.

"It can be challenging. Sometimes we have to keep lines energized while working on them. Sometimes we have to walk for miles to repair a line, and there can be really long hours," Duncan said. "I remember Winter Storm Uri was really hard. The days and nights were long and cold, but the job had to be done."

Still, Duncan says he finds the drive to keep going from his teammates, who provide constant support and encouragement.

"What kept me going during Uri was having my team out there with me. They weren't going to quit on me, so I definitely wasn't going to quit on them," Duncan said. "Being a tight knit group and having people you are close to is everything - in storm situations or otherwise."

Even though being a lineman ran in the family, Duncan had to learn the tools of the trade. "One of my first jobs, I remember I did it totally backwards," he said, laughing.

Despite the less-than-ideal start, Duncan's career at Tri-County has been energized by the company's growth, with the Azle office growing from just 10 linemen to 34. He finds it rewarding to serve Tri-County's members, including his own family.

If there's one thing Duncan wants people to know about his job, it's that they are trying their hardest to get the power back on as safely and quickly as possible.

"My favorite part about being a lineman would have to be the power restoration or storm work. It makes my night to see how grateful members are whenever we get the power back on," Duncan said.



RYDER DUNCAN

THE JOURNEY OF LINEMEN AND THEIR DEDICATION

Tod Freeman, a seasoned foreman at Tri-County, leads a dedicated team in distribution and underground jobs, based out of Keller, Texas. His day starts early, waking up at 4 a.m. to get to the office by 6:15, but each day's work actually begins the day prior, when the team outlines their tasks, gathers materials and assigns crews for the various jobs.

Freeman's journey in the industry started in 1982 when he moved from Oregon to Texas. "I sort of fell into the job after not getting into the oil fields," he said. He was drawn to Tri-County by his positive experience working with the cooperative as a contractor, honing his skills in building overhead power lines and seizing every opportunity that came his way.

When asked why he chose Tri-County, Freeman's answer is simple: "It's the people. Even when I was contracting, I was treated with respect because I gave Tri-County respect. I did what I said I was going to do. I didn't cut corners, didn't cheat anybody, and I got along with everyone just fine."

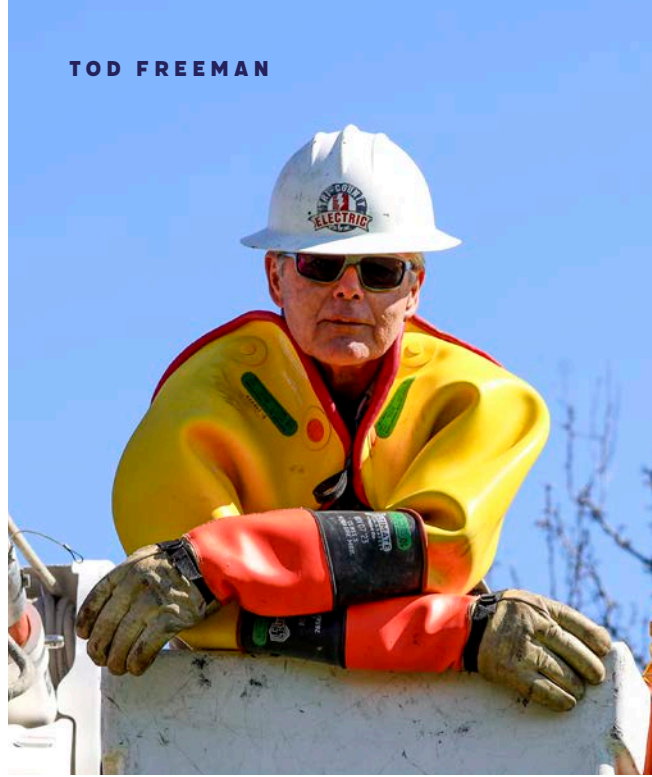
Safety is crucial in this line of work, and Freeman emphasizes the importance of communication, using your head and listening. "You have to have both communication and listening skills," he said. "It's a learning process, and I'm not too big of a man to stop and ask for help or explanations. We all understand that one person's actions can affect everyone on the team."

His advice to apprentices? "Listen, take the advice you get, and apply it. And you have to be ready to climb."

Like Duncan, Freeman emphasizes that being a lineman requires teamwork and dedication to ensure reliable electrical service for members. "There's a lot happening behind the scenes to get the power to you," Freeman said, "and we'll be there until the job is done."

In December 2023, Duncan and Freeman both won prestigious, peer-nominated awards. Duncan was the recipient of the "Golden Hooks" award for demonstrating outstanding apprentice service, while Freeman received the "Golden Kleins" award for demonstrating outstanding service.

In the end, Tri-County lineworkers are connected to more than just their colleagues. They are in it with and for the members.





A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Tri-County Electric Cooperative will be attending community events in our service territory in an effort to reach more of our membership. This will provide you with one-on-one access with employees across departments in your co-op. Win bill credits and take home gifts when you visit our bright red tent and register. Bring the event ticket below to our booth and you will take home a member-exclusive gift.

Check out the upcoming events below and find to find one near you!

Visit tcectexas.com/MEE for more dates and information

UPCOMING EVENTS



May 4

500 S. Oak St.
Roanoke, Texas

SEYMOUR RODEO

July 13

Rodeo Grounds
Seymour, Texas

PARKER COUNTY PEACH FESTIVAL®

July 13

Historic Downtown
Weatherford, Texas



COMING SOON!

This summer Tri-County Electric Co-op will launch Power Engage+, a residential generator program. This program will be an opportunity for members that already have residential Generac standby generators, or members who wish to install one. Benefits of home standby generators will be accentuated by utility program incentives. Perks of the program are designed to cover initial inspection fees, annual maintenance costs, and fuel displacement during months when generators are used. Tri-County Electric Co-op is excited to provide our members with an exclusive opportunity to enhance their homes with reliable backup power and maximize their utility benefits.

Home standby generators help members hedge against unexpected power loss during utility outages. When installed properly, they are safe sources of back-up power that are typically sized to power entire homes. These solutions can provide members with the assurance of reliable power, even during storms. However, standby generators are also a significant investment. Tri-County's Power Engage+ program is designed so members can leverage their generators to gain additional value. As a utility, Tri-County can utilize residential generators as a tool to mitigate peak usage across the system during times of extreme power costs. By controlling generators strategically, Tri-County can save money on power supply, thus enabling members to benefit from program incentives.

Across the state of Texas, the idea of residential generators participating in demand response programs is emerging. ERCOT is working with a select group of utilities to test this innovative concept. As it develops, Tri-County is evaluating the challenges and successes experienced by those involved. The Power Engage+ program will help Tri-County become positioned for statewide involvement and further benefits for our members as the program grows.

Stay tuned for the June *Texas Co-op Power Magazine*, which will contain more information about how to sign up for this program if you already have a compatible generator. There will also be information about our local installer, should you wish to purchase a Generac standby generator to participate. All members that buy a new generator through the program will receive a discount on the equipment and an extended warranty as additional benefits.

HOW IT WORKS

During strategic times throughout the year, the co-op will signal Power Engage+ enrolled generators to turn on and serve members' homes. These "events" will not last longer than 3 hours at a time. Members will always have the choice to opt out of an event, and program participation does not forfeit the ability to control your generator at any time. During events, generators will only serve the load of the home and will not back-feed the electric grid – they will be fully isolated, similar to generator operation during outages.

CONFIRM COMPATIBILITY

To participate in the program, your generator must:

- Be a Generac standby generator, Guardian or Protector series
- Be properly interconnected and maintained
- Have a valid manufacturer's warranty
- Pass an initial 40-point inspection

ADDRESSING CONCERNS

- You will retain full control of your generator
- Power Engage+ events will not coincide with utility outages
- Program terms are three years
- If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to reach out to our team at gridservices@tcectexas.com.

REGISTER NOW FOR MYTRICOUNTYTX

ERS | TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBER-OWNERS | TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBER-OWNERS | TAKING



ALERTS & NOTIFICATIONS

Set up custom usage notifications and other account alerts to stay in the know as you go.



24/7 ACCESS

All members have the power of instant online account management at their fingertips!



PAPERLESS BILLING

Say goodbye to storing stacks of paper. Use MyTriCountyTX to sign up for paperless billing so you can access your bill at anytime from anywhere.



EASY PAYMENTS

Easily pay your bill through MyTriCountyTX with just a few clicks, or sign up for AutoPay to never miss a payment.

AS EASY AS...

1 Register

Locate your account number and scan the QR code to register. You must have a valid email address to register. You can also register online at TCECTexas.com/MyTriCountyTX

2 Get Set...

Sign up for **paperless billing**, set up **account alerts**, and enroll in **AutoPay**. You can change these settings at any time.

All members enrolled in AutoDraft with a credit card or paperless billing prior to **March 4, 2024** will need to re-enroll in these services.

3 Go!

Download the app or bookmark tcectexas.com/MyTriCountyTX to access MyTriCountyTX on your phone, tablet or other internet-enabled device to manage your account and make a payment at any time.



We're Here To Help!

Visit tcectexas.com/MyTriCountyTX
or call Member Service at **817-444-3201**

ERS | TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBER-OWNERS | TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBER-OWNERS | TAKING

HOW TO READ YOUR BILL

1. TOTAL AMOUNT DUE
\$129.28
 Due Date 02/07/2024

2. Account Information
 Account #: 99999999
 Member Name: ANY MEMBER
 Billing Date: 01/18/2024

3. MyTriCountyTX
 Please log into MyTriCountyTX to view bill.

4. Monthly Energy Use Comparison
 Total Energy Use This Month 30 days: 790 kWh
 Total Energy Use Last Month 34 days: 517 kWh
 Total Energy Use This Month Last Year 34 days: 709 kWh

5. Your Average Daily Use
 26 kWh AVERAGE DAILY USE
 \$4.31 AVERAGE DAILY COST

6. IMPORTANT MEMBER INFORMATION
 Thank you for being a valued Member-Owner.

7. Payment Stub
 PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN BOTTOM PORTION WITH YOUR PAYMENT - WHEN PAYING IN PERSON BRING ENTIRE STATEMENT

8. Meter Information
 Meter # 1234567
 Days 30
 Reading Dates From 12/06/2023 To 01/05/2024
 Previous Reading 37192
 Meters Present 37962
 Meter Multiplier 1
 kWh Usage 790
 Demand Reading 6.254

9. Account Information
 Account Number: 999999999
 Phone Number: (123) 456-7890
 Service Address: 123 ANYPLACE ST ANYWHERE TX 76020
 Service Description: HOUSE
 District: 5
 Rate: RESIDENTIAL-SINGLE PH

10. Energy Comparison Graph
 Kilowatt Hours vs. Month (2023-2024)
 Monthly High Temp vs. Monthly Low Temp

11. Account Activity
 Previous Account Activity:
 Previous bill on 12/13/2023: \$91.11
 Payment Received 12/16/2023: -\$91.11
 Balance Forward: \$0.00
 Current Activity:
 Customer Charge: \$18.00
 Energy Charge (790 kWh @ 0.14425): \$113.96
 PCRFB (790 kWh @ -0.02250): -\$17.78
 Bracco Financing Rider: \$9.48
 Reno Franchise Fee 3.00%: \$3.71
 Reno Sales Tax 1.50%: \$1.91
 Current Charges: \$129.28

12. Cash Bill-Pay
 Now offering cash bill pay service at participating retail stores. Barcode below can be scanned at the register, allowing you monthly payment. There is a \$1.50 convenience fee to use. To find a location near you, visit www.usbank.com/cashbillpay

Other Ways to Pay Your Bill
 Online: Play your bill at toectexas.com
 Phone: Call 855-864-5640 for automated payment line
 Mobile App: Download the MyTriCountyTX app on iTunes or Google Play Store
 In-Person: Find the list of pay stations at toectexas.com

- 1. Total Amount Due:** Summarizes the total amount due on this statement including the due date. AutoPay will be indicated if you participate in automatic debit/credit card or bank draft.
- 2. Your Account Information:** Your account number and bill date for the current bill.
- 3. Account Message Center:** Important messages about capital credit allocations, credit card expiration dates, or past due amounts
- 4. Monthly Usage Comparison:** A quick snapshot of your current billing period usage and how it compares to past usage.
- 5. Daily Usage:** Average energy used per day for the current billing period, along with average daily cost.
- 6. Tri-County Message Center:** Read important messages about services, notices and events.
- 7. Payment Stub:** Detach and include this portion of the bill if you're paying by mail, in-person, or using one of our drop-boxes.
- 8. Meter Information:** Meter number, days of service, reading dates, meter readings, and total energy used in the current billing period.
- 9. Account Information:** Account number, main phone number, service description, board district and rate.
- 10. Energy Comparison Graph:** See your usage trends for the past 12 months, along with the average monthly high and low temperatures.
- 11. Account Activity:** A detailed breakdown of previous balance, payments, current charges and current total amount due.
- 12. Cash Bill-Pay:** Use this bar-code to pay your bill at participating retail stores.

2024 Director Nominations

Applications are open for Director Districts 3, 6 and 8

Tri-County Electric Cooperative is owned and governed by local members of the co-op. The nine-member board of directors serves as the governing and regulatory body and is composed of members from throughout the service territory. The nine director seats represent each area of our diverse membership, including four urban districts, four suburban districts and one rural district.

Each year, one-third of the board seats are elected by the entire membership, approximately 108,000 members strong. This year, director districts 3, 6 and 8 will be on the ballot in September. District maps are available at tcectexas.com/director-elections.

- District 3, suburban district
- District 6, suburban district
- District 8, urban district

Members who reside in these districts, are interested in serving their co-op and meet the director qualifications outlined in the cooperative's bylaws may submit a director nomination application packet. Tri-County Electric Co-op offers two paths to the ballot: through the Committee on Nominations & Qualifications or through member petition. Members are encouraged to review the following documents to understand the cooperative's director nomination process, director election process, and director qualifications:

- The director election webpage, tcectexas.com/director-elections
- Tri-County Electric Cooperative's Bylaws, specifically Article 4
- Tri-County Electric Cooperative's Election Policy & Procedures

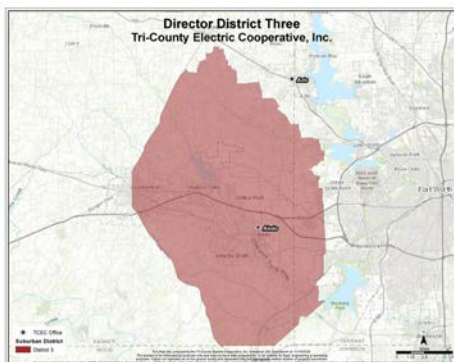
NOMINATION BY COMMITTEE - CLOSED

Members who were interested in seeking nomination through the Committee on Nominations & Qualifications had until March 13, 2024 to submit a complete nomination application packet. The Committee on Nominations & Qualifications will review all applications for nomination by committee and recommend a slate of candidates to the board of directors.

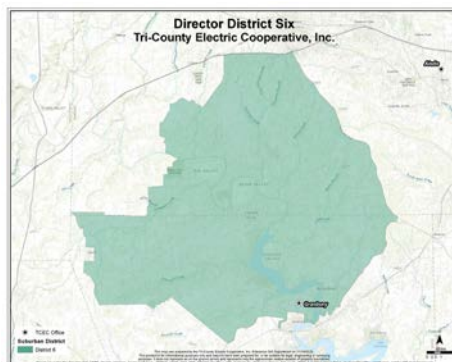
NOMINATION BY PETITION - FINAL CALL

Members interested in seeking nomination through member petition must submit a complete nomination application packet by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 10, 2024. A complete director nomination application packet must include all items listed on the application checklist. The co-op's attorney will accept and review all applications for nomination by petition and recommend a slate of candidates to the board of directors.

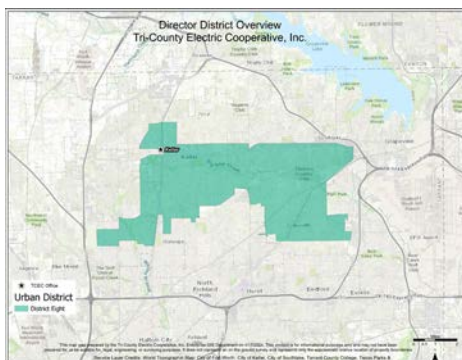
Members can find all director nomination and election details, the director nomination application packets, the co-op's bylaws and the co-op's Election Policy & Procedures online at tcectexas.com/director-elections.



DISTRICT 3



DISTRICT 6



DISTRICT 8

LOAD SHED EXPLANATION AND REMINDER

In compliance with Senate Bill 3, effective from 2021, Tri-County Electric Cooperative provides our members with notice of Electric Load Shed and Critical Load Designation information.

Key takeaways include:

- Tri-County Electric Cooperative follows ERCOT's energy emergency level (EEL) warnings, participating in rolling outages and shedding load
- Members may lose power without advanced notice and are subject to load shed
- Residential and Critical Load and Commercial Medical designated members are not guaranteed continuous power. Critical load and commercial medical designation must be acquired through proper procedure
- Tri-County Electric Cooperative will try to give load shedding notice when available and prioritize critical community services.

Emergency Alerts

Weather Watch: Normal grid conditions, but notification of upcoming forecasted significant weather and high demand.

Voluntary Conservation Notice: Request to voluntarily reduce energy usage during peak demand, if safe to do so.

Conservation Appeal: Request to reduce energy usage during peak demand, if safe to do so.

Energy Emergency Alert 1: Statewide energy reserves are below 2,300 MW. Conserve energy where possible to avoid rotating outages.

Energy Emergency Alert 2: Statewide energy reserves are below 1,750 MW. Conserve energy where possible to avoid rotating outages.

Energy Emergency Alert 3: Statewide energy reserves are below 1,000 MW. ERCOT will issue load shed obligations to transmission companies. Conserve energy where possible.



Find more resources and how to apply for critical load designation at <https://www.tcectexas.com/sites/default/files/2024-02/ElectricLoadShedAndCriticalLoadDesignation2024.pdf>

Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

CONTACT US

200 Bailey Ranch Road

Aledo, TX 76008

Phone 817-444-3201

Web tcectexas.com

Board of Directors

Max Waddell, District 9 - Chairman

John Killough, District 6 - Vice Chairman

Margaret Koprek, District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer

Kevin Ingle, District 1

VACANT, District 3

David Miller, District 4

Steve V. Harris, District 5

Sommer Portwood, District 7

Michael Sivertsen, District 8

24/7

Outage Reporting

For information and to report outages, please contact us.

Online: oms.tcectexas.com

App: MyTriCountyTX

Phone: 817-444-3201

Text: OUTAGE to 25069

ABOUT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

Tri-County Electric Co-op owns and maintains more than 10,000 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 106,000 members in Archer, Baylor, Denton, Foard, Haskell, Hood, Jack, King, Knox, Palo Pinto, Parker, Stonewall, Tarrant, Throckmorton, Wilbarger, and Wise counties.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Aledo

200 Bailey Ranch Road, Aledo 76008

Azle

600 NW Parkway, Azle 76020

Granbury

1623 Weatherford Highway, Granbury 76048

Keller

4900 Keller-Hicks Road, Fort Worth 76244

Seymour

419 N. Main, Seymour 76380

VISIT US ONLINE

tcectexas.com

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

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"I switched to MDHearing aids and so should you. These are better than my \$8,000 hearing aids."

Joe Namath, Superbowl III MVP MDHearing Aid User

How can a rechargeable hearing aid that fits inside your ear and costs as low as \$297 a pair be every bit as good as those that sell for \$4,800 or more?

The answer: Although tremendous strides have been made in Hearing Aid Technology, those cost reductions have not been passed on to you. Until now... **MDHearing™** uses the same kind of technology incorporated into hearing aids that cost thousands more at a small fraction of the price.

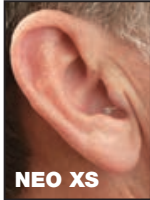
Choose From Our *Smallest NEO XS* or the *Best-Selling NEO*
Both are medical-grade, rechargeable hearing aids offering sophistication and high performance.

MDHearing™ *NEO XS*

NEW!

Our smallest hearing aid ever!

At 50% smaller than our previous model, the NEO XS measures only 15mm long and is virtually invisible. And, at only \$397 for a pair, you won't find a better hearing aid.



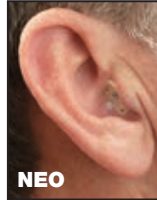
\$397
for a pair



MDHearing™ *NEO*

Our best-selling hearing aid!

At only 20mm long, the NEO is virtually invisible in your ear. And, at only \$297 for a pair of hearing aids, this is our best-selling hearing aid.



\$297
for a pair

Sits discreetly inside your ear canal without anyone knowing
Both products are proudly designed in America and supported by US audiologists

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Republic's End

'Many a manly cheek was wet with tears' when the Texian flag was lowered for the last time

BY W.F. STRONG

IN ABOUT A YEAR and a half—December 29, 2025—we'll mark the 180th year of Texas statehood. That's the day the proudest of Texans would say the U.S. was allowed to join Texas.

The vast majority of Texans—95%—voted for statehood, a level of agreement we haven't enjoyed since. President James Polk signed the joint resolution making Texas a state December 29, 1845, but there was some confusion as to the official moment that the Republic of Texas passed into history and statehood status began.

Anson Jones, president of the republic at that time, said that February 19, 1846, was the actual day that the republic

ceased to exist. That day, Anson presided over a ceremony in Austin where the flag of the young but venerable republic was lowered for the last time and the U.S. flag was raised in its place.

You see, Texas couldn't just let President Polk's signing of a document 1,300 miles away be all there was to the moment. They couldn't allow the republic that so many had died for to pass into history without properly memorializing the occasion.

So Jones arranged a ceremony in front of the Texas Capitol, really just a wooden house at that time, to mourn the passing of the republic and to celebrate Texas as the newest (and by far the largest) state in the union.

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



What was needed here was what linguists call a speech act, a moment in time where something is made real by virtue of pronouncement.

Jones began with "I, as president of the Republic ... am now present to surrender into the hands of those whom the people have chosen, the power and the authority which we have some time held."

Noah Smithwick, a blacksmith in attendance, recorded the moment the Texas flag came down. Here is what transpired in that brief ceremony.

"Many a head was bowed, many a broad chest heaved, and many a manly cheek was wet with tears when that broad field of blue in the center of which, like a signal light, glowed the lone star, emblem of the sovereignty of Texas, was furled and laid away among the relics of the dead republic."

The U.S. flag was raised, and the mood changed dramatically.

"We were most of us natives of the United States, and when the stars and stripes, the flag of our fathers, was run up and catching the breeze unrolled its heaven born colors to the light, cheer after cheer rent the air," Smithwick recalled.

He tended toward that creature still common in Texas—the exceptionally proud Texan. Smithwick thought the star in the lower left corner of the U.S. flag should have been especially dedicated to Texas.

The exchanging of the flags made one statement. Jones made another: "The Republic of Texas is no more." He made it politically true but never absolute because the republic lives on in the minds of Texans who still think of it as their country and their nation. ■

Perfect Potluck

Dishes so good you'll be tempted to eat them en route

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Iliana de la Vega, esteemed owner of the Austin restaurant El Naranjo, shares her ultimate potluck dish: "*Rajas poblanas* (poblano strips) is a vegetarian dish that goes beautifully with grilled meats or fish but also with rice and pasta. You can make tacos with it or even use the rajas as a filling for quesadillas and omelets."



Rajas Poblanas

6 poblano chiles, seeds and veins removed

1 tablespoon canola oil

1 white onion, julienned

1 cup crema Mexicana

Salt, to taste

Corn tortillas

COOK'S TIP If crema Mexicana is unavailable where you shop, making your own is simple. Combine 1 cup heavy cream, 1 cup sour cream, 1 teaspoon salt and 1 tablespoon lime juice, and stir until smooth.

1. Preheat broiler. Place poblanos on a baking sheet. Roast under broiler, carefully flipping with tongs until charred on all sides, about 5 minutes. Place charred poblanos in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap until cooled enough to handle, about 15 minutes.

2. Remove skin from chiles. Slice them lengthwise into strips ½ inch thick.

3. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté the onion just until soft; do not brown.

4. Add the chile strips (rajas) and the crema Mexicana. Cook the chile mixture until heated through, about 5 minutes. Season with salt.

5. Serve immediately with warm corn tortillas.

SERVES 6

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Mexican Corn Salad.



Perfect Potato Salad

CHERYL LEE
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Lee's potato salad is hearty and tangy, with a hint of freshness from the dill. It was so tasty and good that I'd eat plates of it by itself—no need for any of the bris-ket, sausage or hot dogs being served.

- 10 small russet potatoes, unpeeled, rinsed and cubed**
- 1 cup mayonnaise**
- 4 tablespoons mustard**
- 1 large onion, finely diced**
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic**
- 1 tablespoon ground oregano**
- 1 teaspoon onion salt**
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt**
- 8 hard-boiled eggs, cubed**
- 1 tablespoon fresh dill for serving**

1. Place potatoes in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are fork tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and allow to cool.
2. In a large bowl, stir together mayonnaise, mustard, onion, garlic, oregano, onion salt and garlic salt. Gently stir in potatoes and eggs.
3. Chill until ready to serve.
4. Sprinkle with dill before serving.

SERVES 20

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



\$500 WINNER

Easy Chicken Spaghetti Casserole

DONNA KENNEDY
WOOD COUNTY EC



I love this casserole because it's so simple to make. Leftovers heat up great on day two, plus it freezes like a dream! (If there are leftovers of course.) This is serious comfort food.

SERVES 8

- 2 chicken breasts**
- 3 chicken thighs**
- 1 box spaghetti (16 ounces)**
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter**
- ½ bell pepper, stem and seeds removed, diced**
- 1 medium onion, diced**
- 1 can cream of chicken soup (10.5 ounces)**
- 1 can cream of celery soup (10.5 ounces)**
- 1 can chicken broth (14.5 ounces)**
- 2 cups shredded mild cheddar cheese**

1. Place chicken in a large saucepan, cover with water and simmer until fork tender.
2. Prepare spaghetti according to package directions.
3. In a skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter. Sauté bell pepper and onion until the onion is light and translucent.
4. Shred chicken and mix all ingredients except cheese together in a large bowl.
5. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Spoon mixture into a 10-by-14-inch baking pan. Bake 15 minutes.
6. Sprinkle cheese on top and bake 10 more minutes or until bubbly.

\$500 Recipe Contest

FOOTBALL FAVORITES DUE APRIL 10
What do the fans of your cooking crave on game day? Send us your recipe by April 10 and you could score big: \$500.





Cold Broccoli Salad

ALEXANDRA DIBRELL
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

This is one of the best broccoli salads I've ever had. Why? It's crisp and fresh, with a pop of heat—exactly what I want broccoli salad to be. It's also seriously addictive, thanks to the sweet and tangy combination of fresh lemon juice and rice vinegar.

- 1 pound fresh broccoli**
- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**

- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar**
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- ⅛ teaspoon salt**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- ⅛ teaspoon red pepper flakes**

- 1.** Cut broccoli into bite-size pieces. Steam until tender. Allow to cool, then place in fridge.
- 2.** In a large bowl, stir together olive oil, lemon juice, rice vinegar, mustard, garlic, salt, pepper and red pepper flakes. Place in fridge to chill.
- 3.** When ready to serve, remove bowl from fridge and add broccoli, stir to coat and serve chilled.

SERVES 4

TCP Potluck options abound on our website. After trying all these here, see what else has come out of Co-op Country kitchens. Simply search for a dish or key ingredient.

Don't Leave It All to Luck

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Consider whether your contribution will add to high demand for an oven or increase crowding in the kitchen.

If you're not hosting, bring food that travels easily.

Bring the appropriate utensils for your dish: a serving spoon, pair of tongs or ladle. This way dishes won't be double-dipped, and you won't have guests grabbing food with their hands.

Consider the advantages of disposable pans: less mess, no lost casserole dishes and easier cleanup.

Consider the dietary restrictions of other guests.

Remember that beverages will be needed, and this can be your contribution.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Carried Treasure

Canton has hosted the World’s Largest Flea Market since the 1850s

BY CHET GARNER

THIS DEFINITELY wasn’t the shopping trip I expected, I thought, as I loaded an 8-foot-tall Bigfoot sculpture into the back of my truck. I had just finished securing my new (to me) cowhide, vintage street signs and antique chair. I should have brought more tow straps.

This is the experience of visiting the World’s Largest Flea Market, which happens every month in the town of Canton, midway between Dallas and Tyler. My legs, wallet and stomach were not prepared.

The tradition goes back to the 1850s when the circuit judge would make his monthly trip to town and the locals would congregate around the courthouse. They started bringing items to swap and sell: a gun for a dog or a cantaloupe for a dozen eggs. Soon a tradition was born that now attracts upwards of 150,000 visitors to First Monday Trade Days (which actually happens the weekend before the first Monday of each month).

As soon as I stepped onto the grounds, I realized that this wasn’t a normal swap meet. The official area boasts more than 5,000 vendors across 400 acres. That doesn’t even include the dozens (if not hundreds) of merchants who fill the streets and buildings of the town.

I walked from booth to booth, chatting with junkers and thrifters who had brought their special wares in search of the perfect buyer. While there was more than enough vintage “junk,” I was surprised at the unique artisans selling incredible handcrafted goods—furniture, décor and even metal tools.

Very soon I had worked up an appetite and stuffed my face with some of the best fair food in Texas, including corny dogs and “upside-down” lemonade. Hey, with all the walking I did, I figured I had earned it. And so I ordered an extra piece of peach pie. ■

ABOVE The finds for sale at First Monday Trade Days in Canton stretch across 400 acres.

TCP Join Chet as he wades through acres of stuff. Watch the video on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

APRIL

8

Kerrville Totality at the Ridge, (830) 896-0420, shopsattheridge.com

McKinney Total Eclipse of the Heard, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

12

Poteet [12–14] Strawberry Festival, 1-888-742-8144, strawberryfestival.com

13

Sealy Spring Fest, (832) 492-4244, sealyhistoricalsociety.org

Waxahachie Cowboy Gathering, (469) 309-4040, waxahachiecowboy.com

Chappell Hill [13–14] Bluebonnet Festival, (979) 836-6033, chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com

Temple [13–14] Texas State Button Society Spring Show and Sale, texasstatebuttonssociety.com

19

Granbury [19–20] North Texas Gourd Festival, (903) 258-7410, texasgourdsociety.org

Lakeway [19–21] Art Walk, (512) 261-1010, lakewayartsdistrict.com

20

Burton Cotton Gin Festival, (979) 289-3378, texascottonginmuseum.org

Channing Panhandle Children’s Foundation Hogs at the Point, (806) 935-5598, talonpoint.org

26

Gun Barrel City [26-27] Quilt Show, (903) 391-3241, gunbarrelquiltersguild.org

Hallettsville [26-28] Texas State Championship Fiddlers Frolics, (361) 798-2311, fiddlersfrolics.com

Ingram [26-27, May 2, 4-5, 10-12] The Explorers' Club, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

27

Castroville Alsatian Festival of Texas, castrovilletx.gov

Corsicana Derrick Days, (903) 654-4850, derrickdays.com

Huntsville Gen. Sam Houston Day, (936) 294-1832, samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com

Lewisville ColorPalooza, (972) 219-3401, visitlewisville.com

Wimberley Pie Social, info@wimwic.org, wimwic.org

28

Bellville Fruehling Saengerfest, (713) 582-2461, bellvilleions.org

MAY

2

New Braunfels Soul Sessions' Tribute to Tina Turner, (830) 627-0808, brauntex.org

4

Brenham [4-5] Maifest, (979) 337-7580, brenhammaifest.com

TCP Submit Your Event

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

Thanks a Million

The Nature Conservancy is proud to have protected **one million acres of land in Texas**. This milestone could not have been achieved without the collaborative efforts of landowners, partners and supporters across the Lone Star State. Yet, the urgency to protect and preserve Texas' treasured landscapes, rivers, wildlife and way of life is greater now than ever. Together, we can find a way to achieve even more.



nature.org/millionacremilestone



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Pollinators

All aflutter, we are humming with anticipation. Photos flew in from every corner of the state, and we managed to alight on a few critters that have crawled their way to the top. No sting of disappointment here, just a swarm of entries that leave us buzzing with excitement.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 MARK BONAME
JACKSON EC

"It is a rare sight to see hummingbirds feeding on sunflowers, but the drought this year in Texas made these little guys feed on whatever they could find."

2 CINDY VIGIL
GVEC

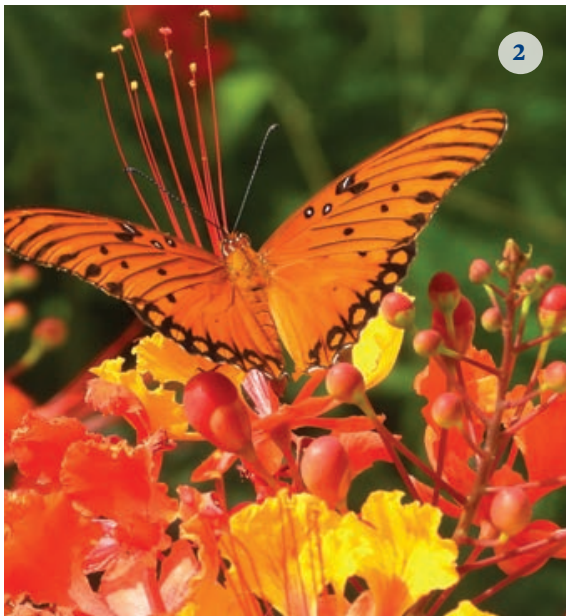
"Gulf fritillary butterflies love this pride of Barbados."

3 SUSAN KNAPP GIBBONS
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A feeding butterfly.

4 GAIL EINKAUF
SAN BERNARD EC

"Taken at Sweet Berry Farm in Marble Falls."



Upcoming Contests

- DUE APR 10** Textures
- DUE MAY 10** Parenthood
- DUE JUN 10** Climbing High



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



Seedy Behavior

Gardening scavengers stoop low to help native species

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS
ILLUSTRATION BY
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

COME MID-MAY, I turn into a street walker. Not *that* kind, mind you. Instead, I ply my trade with a green plastic cup and sharp eyes.

“Oh, there you are,” hollers James, my husband, who’s strolling along Greenlawn Parkway. “I figured I’d find you over here!”

My gaze is fastened on clumps of lazy daisies growing along the street. Among the white-petaled blooms with orange centers, I scan for dried seed heads. Now and then, I spot one. Happily, I lean down, pinch it off, then drop the itsy-bitsy treasure into my cup.

We walk while I scope out wildflowers that grow along a ditch. Patiently, I’m watching for Texas prairie parsleys, wine-cups and beeblossoms going to seed. I’ll collect some seeds—but not all. I want to admire them again next spring.

I also want to establish them in our yard. Since 2008, we’ve nurtured Texas native plant gardens at our Blanco home and adjoining meadow, a former vacant lot. Since then, I’ve expanded into rescuing, preserving and protecting overlooked native species that grow in our neighborhood. I collect seeds whenever I can.

Sometimes I dig up and relocate plants, too. For instance, a next-door neighbor several years ago gave me permission to transplant a yellow passionflower, Texas lespedeza and hoary false goldenaster that grew on her side of the fence, where they were often mowed down. Now the trio grows, unrestrained and lush, in our backyard.

I’ve also relocated Indian mallow, Texas snoutbean, scarlet pea, narrowleaf blue-eyed grass and Texas frogfruit to our gardens. Roemer’s mimosa, too. I love to show kids how their tiny leaves fold up when touched. Magic!

Two regular walkers once rang our doorbell. “What’s this?” asked Yalene, while daughter Arden held up a slender branch with yellow flowers. I eyeballed the specimen. Lindheimer’s senna? James and I beelined to the easement where they’d found the plant. It was twoleaf senna, a new-to-me species. A few weeks later, I collected seeds from the site, which has since been cleared. Hopefully the seeds will germinate in our meadow, and the twoleaf senna will live on.

Why go to all that trouble? Because I deeply care about these plants. Because they were here long before us. Because they’re resilient and adapted to our soils and climate. Because they, unlike most ornamental plants, sustain the pollinators and other wildlife that inhabit this place we call home.

From blunt-leaf rabbit-tobacco to zizotes milkweed, we’ve welcomed neighborhood natives into our gardens, where I hope they’ll be appreciated and perpetuated for years to come. So call me a renegade. Or call me a tree hugger. I’ll answer to either one and make no excuses.

I’m a street walker on a mission in a green-light district. ■



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