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Texas Coop Power

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MAY 2022

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**TRI-COUNTY
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18



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May 2022



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How the Kerrville Folk Festival has launched careers and brought people together for 50 years.

By Bobby Bridger

Illustration by Stephanie Cowan Dalton

'A Little Source of Joy'

Nonprofits work with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to spark an early love of reading.

By Jessica Ridge and Chris Burrows

ON THE COVER

Dolly Parton has been supplying children with free books since 1995.
Courtesy the Dollywood Foundation

ABOVE

The Wantland family enjoys Imagination Library books in Round Top.
Photo by Erich Schlegel

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By Kathleen McElroy

Eye on Language

MERRIAM-WEBSTER added “doorbell camera” to its dictionary in 2021 as more consumers incorporate home security measures.

A two-word term added to the dictionary 100 years ago was “eye shadow.” Even though ancient Egyptians are known to have worn eye makeup, cosmetics use emerged as a trend in the U.S. in the years after World War I. Thus, eye shadow made it into the lexicon in 1922.



TCP Contests and More

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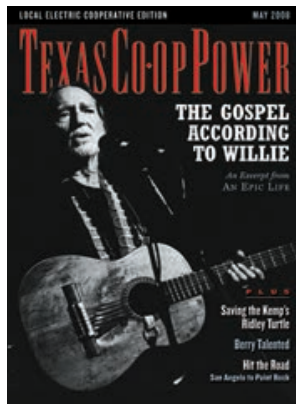
Nuts About Nuts

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Light and Shadow

RECOMMENDED READING

Featuring Dolly on our cover is a treat, as was Willie in May 2008 for *The Gospel According to Willie*.



Merchandising Mom

Shoppers spent an average of \$220 on Mother's Day gifts in 2021. Her special day is May 8 this year. Sorry, dads: Father's Day gifts averaged \$174.

Danger of Downed Lines

Never touch or even approach a downed power line. Here's why:

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The ground near a downed line can be energized.

Never forget these guidelines and share them with friends and family, especially during May—National Electrical Safety Month.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

THREE WORDS THAT BRIGHTEN MY DAY ARE ...

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.

Below are some of the responses to our March prompt: **The woman I admire most in history is ...**

Harriet Tubman.

DONNA FALDYN
VIA FACEBOOK

Rosa Parks.

SANDRA LONGORIA
VIA FACEBOOK

Sacagawea, who helped make the Lewis and Clark expedition a great success.

ALFRED WILSON
COSERV
NORTHLAKE

Barbara Jordan, the first African American woman elected to the Texas Senate.

DEBORAH MILLER
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC
CUSHING

Mother Teresa.

JOHN TINOCO
VICTORIA EC
VICTORIA

To see more responses, read Currents online.



IN THE RED

Mars can't yet sustain humans, but it can sustain ketchup. Heinz teamed up with researchers to grow tomatoes in a Mars-like environment—with soil, climate and water conditions similar to the red planet—to fill bottles of its experimental Heinz Tomato Ketchup Marz Edition. It's not available for purchase, but Mars' first Texans will probably pack their own Whataburger spicy ketchup anyway.



Head of the Class

IN CELEBRATION of National Teacher Appreciation Day—May 3—*Texas Co-op Power* staffers fondly remember our influential teachers.

Chris Burrows: Jazz legend Maynard Ferguson played at my high school after an invite from my band teacher, instilling in me a love of America's music.

Travis Hill: My middle school Old Testament teacher introduced a world of avant-garde art, film and music that altered my worldview.

Jessica Ridge: My fifth grade teacher cheered me on from the auditorium as I competed in the city spelling bee, the year she taught me and the next.

Jane Sharpe: My third grade art teacher inspired me to design "magazines" on notebook pages bound with yarn.

Tom Widlowski: A high school teacher sparked my love for language and writing, which I turned into a career.

Is Your AC OK?

Now is a perfect time to schedule the annual tuneup for your home's cooling system. Your electric cooperative wants to help you save money, and a tuneup will help your AC run efficiently.



COURTESY ARLINGTON CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

A Whole New Ballgame

“Schreiner University has a varsity esports program, prompted by students who wanted to compete at intramural and intercollegiate levels.”

BILL REID
PEDERNALES EC
HORSESHOE BAY

Moved to Tears

The Shoes [March 2022] moved me to tears. I’m a wife and mother of career soldiers whom I lost after their combat tours. My husband took his own life due to addiction to opioid meds in 2009. He was a Vietnam veteran who had two tours there.

My son was a retired veteran who was in Panama and Desert Storm. He died in a motorcycle accident in 2016.

I am remarried to an Air Force retiree.

Suzanne Cornett
Pedernales EC
Lakeway

Truly a blessing
[*Hope in a Box*,
March 2022].

LAWRENCE AND
CINDY HRACHOVY
VIA FACEBOOK



COURTESY CHRIS LEBLANC

Always Worth It

To Pam LeBlanc’s exhortation to *Just Add Adventure* [March 2022], I offer a hearty “amen.” In my 50s, I began competing in triathlons. I learned white-water kayaking. I married for a second time—an adventure to rival rappelling down a 38-story building.

In my 70s now, I often sense a vague resistance to the unfamiliar, to the potentially uncomfortable. I’ve learned to ignore the feeling and forge ahead. The payoffs, even if I fall on my face, literally or figuratively, are always worth it.

Patty Moynahan
Pedernales EC
Austin

Country Cooking

We are miles away from cities and only have Dollar Store and maybe one or two grocery stores that do not sell the exotic ingredients sometimes featured in your recipes.

Please remember that we grow some of our food and meat, so please publish “country people” recipes.

Nancy Lynch
Deep East Texas EC
Jasper-Newton EC
San Augustine

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.

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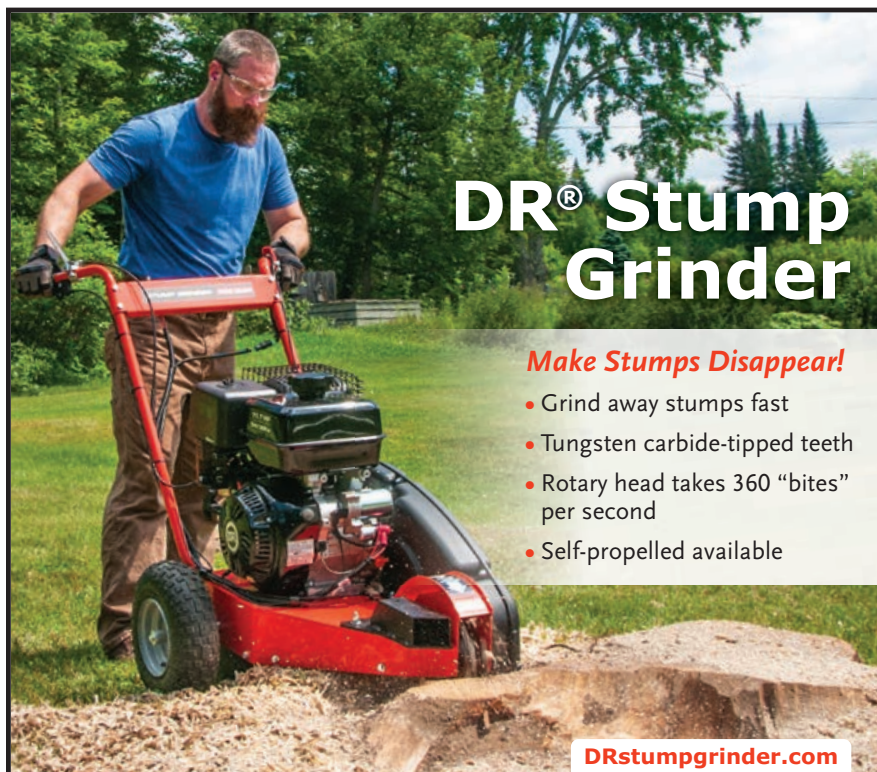
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FOLK'S GOLDEN HOUR

Musician Bobby Bridger has seen the
Kerrville Folk Festival launch careers
and bring people together for 50 years

BY BOBBY BRIDGER • ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANIE COWAN DALTON

The festival is the longest continuously running folk festival in America. It has played a significant role in launching the careers of scores of international musical stars and, in doing so, continues to shape the trajectory of American folk music.

BUFFALO BILL made a fortune and built his Wild West show into an international empire by following one simple rule: Perform where people are already gathering.

So in 1972, when the people behind the inaugural Texas State Arts and Crafts Fair reached out to music impresario Rod Kennedy about providing entertainment for their Memorial Day weekend event in Kerrville, Kennedy saw an opportunity. Between the folks gathering in the Hill Country and the large contingent of artists, musicians and students in nearby Austin, the Kerrville Folk Festival was meant to be.

Now, as the festival approaches its 50th anniversary, time has proved that Kennedy picked the perfect location for an annual celebration of songwriters. It's the longest continuously running folk festival in America. It has played a significant role in launching the careers of scores of international musical stars and, in doing so, continues to shape the trajectory of American folk music. This year's milestone fest runs May 26–June 12.

Back in 1972, America had entered a new era of music festivals. The Monterey International Pop Festival in California and Woodstock in New York were defining events of the counterculture era of the late 1960s.

Even then, Austin clubs attracted a range of talented singers and songwriters who found success on the fringes of the recording industry but felt it constricted their musical vision. This community of musicians and the University of Texas students who filled out their shows created a culture conducive to Kennedy's next move.

Kennedy and Peter Yarrow of folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary got to work, and in May 1972, Steven Fromholz, Carolyn Hester, Bill and Bonnie Hearne, John Lomax Jr., Mance Lipscomb, Michael Martin Murphey, and eight other acts performed on the main stage at the first Kerrville Folk Festival. Former President Lyndon B. Johnson and Lady Bird were in the audience with Longhorns football coach Darrell Royal that year, when the fest was still held at the Kerrville Municipal Auditorium downtown.

Kennedy ran the festival with input from the performers. He was a former big band singer and race car driver, a Marine, and a lover of classical and folk music. He was a singular character of the era who could convince folk artists to work for a vision instead of money and come together for what he called "music from the heart."

That love for music and songwriting held the Kerrville Folk Festival together during its very rough first two decades.

The main stage lineup in 1973 included Allen Wayne Damron, Willie Nelson, Robert Shaw, B.W. Stevenson, Kenneth Threadgill, Townes Van Zandt, Jerry Jeff Walker

and me. I also played the inaugural festival—and the next 26 fests. In 1972 I wasn't on the main stage but played as part of the New Folk Concert,

held outdoors at Schreiner College in those early years.

The idea behind the New Folk Concerts was to create a platform to showcase lesser-known talent, and the concerts later became a competition for folk performers and contributed greatly to the success of artists including Robert Earl Keen, Lyle Lovett, Nanci Griffith and John Gorka.

Since 1974, the festival has been held outdoors at the Quiet Valley Ranch, about 16 miles outside Kerrville.

Songwriters Steve Young and Van Zandt and I were the judges for the New Folk Concert in 1977. After we made our choices for the top three songs and I had announced the winner, I took Kennedy aside and told him that the judges agreed the New Folk Concert was no longer a simple showcase for new singers and songwriters. It had become a launch pad for careers in folk music. I suggested we needed a new venue to showcase unrecognized talent and put forth Chapel Hill, which had a lovely oak that could also be a great location for a "ballad tree," where unknown artists could perform a couple of songs for a concert hosted by a main stage artist. Kennedy liked the idea, and it became a staple of the annual festival. In the mid-1980s, someone recorded Michelle Shocked performing at the tree, and the recording launched her into stardom.

In 1979, I was rehearsing with musicians David Amram and John Inmon backstage at the festival preparing to go onstage. I was teaching them a new song of mine called *Heal in the Wisdom*. Kennedy heard us rehearsing and told me he wanted the song to be the festival's official anthem. We celebrated the anthem's 40th anniversary in 2019.

Drawing on the hardscrabble drive that keeps folk musicians afloat, Kennedy willed the Kerrville Folk Festival through floods and other hardships until his death in 2014. Folk singers and songwriters have since kept alive his vision and determination, keeping it going through the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the festival to resort to livestreaming for the past two years.

We couldn't let a virus get in the way of decades of coming together to celebrate singers and songwriters. And we still found a way to meet people where they were already gathering—online—and celebrate our sacred music from the heart. ■



Jihyun and John Wantland with daughter Lilianna and son Noah visit the Round Top Family Library, which partners with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program.



BY JESSICA RIDGE AND CHRIS BURROWS

Co-ops and other nonprofits work with ***Dolly Parton's Imagination Library*** to spark an early love of reading

John Wantland opens a slim volume at a sturdy wooden table at the Round Top Family Library, his family gathered around him. “There’s a log on the bottom of the lake, there’s a log on the bottom of the lake, there’s a log? There’s a log! There’s a log log log, there’s a log on the bottom of the lake,” he reads aloud, displaying the pages’ nature-inflected palette of green, gold and brown.

“And that would be the first refrain. It’s a sing-songy call-and-response story, and it builds on itself,” says Wantland, a ranch manager who lives near Round Top in east Central Texas. *There’s a Hole in the Log on the Bottom of the Lake*, written and illustrated by Loren Long, introduces elements with each successive refrain, including a frog, fly and gnat. “So by the end of it, you’re just out of breath and laughing,” Wantland says.

The tale is a favorite of Lilianna’s, John and Jihyun Wantland’s 4-year-old daughter, who received it as one of more than 1.9 million participants in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. Every child enrolled in the program receives a free, personalized, age-appropriate book in the mail each month.

Parton started the program in 1995 to supply books to children in her Tennessee hometown, and over 27 years it has grown exponentially with the help of 3,745 community partners in five countries.

When Lilianna was born, the family bought and was given many books, John says. But as their home library grew familiar, Lilianna’s interest in spending time together reading began to wane.

All that’s changed thanks to the Imagination Library.

“It’s certainly a special treat for her to get a book once a month,” Jihyun says. “We have 100 books for her, but she was tired of some.”

The fresh reads spark excitement for Lilianna and her younger brother, Noah. “Whenever these books come in, she’s like mailbox to the chair, and let’s read it now,” says John, a member of Fayette Electric Cooperative.

The Wantlands and some 17,000 other Texas children take part in that same magical trip to the mailbox each month thanks to the more than 1.7 million Imagination Library books that have been delivered in the state over the years. The whole goal is to get kids reading early so they’re

‘A Little Source of Joy’

ABOVE Dolly’s program has grown to reach more than 1.9 million children.

TCP Join Dolly Parton as she reads *There’s a Hole in the Log on the Bottom of the Lake*.





"My daddy could not read or write, so I grew up with seeing how limiting it can be. I often say he was the smartest man I have ever known, but I always wonder what else he could have done if he knew how to read." —DOLLY PARTON

more prepared for school and better equipped for a lifetime of success.

"Over the years, we learned a lot about what works, but the one thing I knew for sure is that to have even a remote chance for success, you have to know how to read and write," Parton says. "And the best way to learn is to love books and love reading."

An author herself, Parton founded the program as a tribute to her father.

"My daddy could not read or write, so I grew up with seeing how limiting it can be," she says. "I often say he was the smartest man I have ever known, but I always wonder what else he could have done if he knew how to read."

Community investment is at the core of the Imagination Library, which partners with nonprofits—Lions Clubs, library foundations, electric cooperatives and other organizations—to fund and administer the program at the local level. Parton's Dollywood Foundation handles the rest, tapping a committee of early childhood experts to select books focused on values including kindness, respect, acceptance and inclusion.

Children can receive the free reads from birth until age 5,

when they head off to school. The selections change as readers age to expand on their abilities; two titles per year are English-Spanish bilingual, and every book includes reading tips that extend the engagement and interaction between child and caregiver.

The Imagination Library has found that participants are nearly twice as likely to read every day, more than 85% read at least three times a week and participants outperform their peers on assessments when they get to school. Reading aloud with an adult adds to those benefits, helping children build empathy, expand their vocabulary and recognize emotions.

Jihyun, who is from South Korea and not a native English speaker, has found that she and Lilianna learn from each other when they read together. "She will correct my pronunciation," Jihyun says, smiling.

Despite all the good that books can provide, some 60% of U.S. children living in poverty don't have a single children's



LEFT Dolly reads *Coat of Many Colors*, her book based on the song she wrote and the Imagination Library's 100 millionth donation, during a 2018 ceremony at the Library of Congress. BELOW Enrolled children receive a new book in the mail every month.



book in their homes. The Imagination Library is working to change that, especially among rural children who often have less access to public libraries.

"We know that receiving monthly books has a positive and significant impact on family literacy habits, kindergarten readiness and grade-level reading by third grade," said Nora Briggs, executive director of the Dollywood Foundation. "DPIL puts country kids on more equal footing with their big-city peers."

Parton reads aloud stories on the Imagination Library's YouTube channel. Those videos spurred Emily Shisler to enroll her daughters, Eleanor, 4, and Victoria, 2, in the program. "I watched them with my daughters when they would get up from their naps during the worst of the pandemic," says the educational consultant from Houston and Fayette EC member. "And it was a little source of joy."

The Shisler and Wantland families participate in the Imagination Library through its partnership with the Round Top Family Library, which has registered dozens of children in a five-ZIP code swath of Fayette and Washington counties since April 2020.

Julie Wantland, a member of the RTFL board and grandmother to Lilianna and Noah, implemented and coordinates the program at the community library. Despite the

disruption caused by the pandemic, including a months-long closure of the Round Top library, its collaboration with the Imagination Library meant it could continue to bring books to children, she says. "It really was one of the few things not terribly affected."

Not all DPIL programs are supported by a physical library; all that's required is investment from a local nonprofit. "It's actually pretty easy to fundraise for because it's such a wonderful program," says Julie, also a member of Fayette EC. Neighboring organizations have pitched in to help cover the program's costs, a portion of which each Imagination Library affiliate bears. The Round Top Lions Club contributed a year's worth of funding last summer.

Several electric cooperatives across the U.S. have also found ways to fund local programs and bring free books to their youngest members. That's what Maegan Caffey did for the folks in Comanche Electric Cooperative Association's service area, which reaches parts of seven counties southwest of Fort Worth.

Caffey's 4-year-old son, Oliver, is obsessed with books, she says, but she was disappointed to find that they didn't have a local Imagination Library affiliate to feed his appetite. So the resident of the town of Comanche, between Waco and Abi-



Some 60% of U.S. children living in poverty don't have a single children's book in their homes. The Imagination Library is working to change that.

lene, made it her mission to start her own. When Caffey realized the goals of the DPIL align with that of the co-op, where she works as a communications and public relations specialist, she knew she had to act.

"This was a good way to show that we are not just the normal electric provider," she says.

Caffey says it was an easy sell for the co-op's general manager and the board that oversees its community giving program. They immediately recognized the value for the co-op's some 10,000 members and the greater community.

"They loved it," she says. "A lot of the board members either have kids or grandkids, and so the idea of being able to bring that to families who may not have that opportunity was just a no-brainer for us. We wanted everyone to get that opportunity."

The co-op funds its books with donations from members and partnered with the public library in nearby Eastland to bring the program to fruition in January. Eastland librarian Kathy Druesedow, a CECA member, is thrilled.

"The sad truth is that many children are unable to go to a library until they have access to their school library," she says. "Dolly Parton and CECA are putting books straight into the hands of children who would otherwise not have the opportunity to touch or read a book until they attend school."

Beyond preparing students for school, some parents have found that the books provide shared experiences that children can hopefully build on when they start kindergarten.

"I think there's something really cool about the girls reading the same books that kids from all over the place are reading," Shisler says. "It's kind of this connected web: Here are all these kids from these different rural and other communities that are all having read *The Little Engine That Could*. And I think that's a really special thing to be a part of."

But for every individual young reader, there's a much greater benefit found between pages. "I think they can learn so much from books," Shisler says. "A world that's a little different from theirs—different people, different cultures, different places. Books open a world of possibility." ■

FIND OUT MORE

Go to imaginationlibrary.com to see if there's an Imagination Library affiliate in your area.

ABOVE Dozens of Texas counties have affiliates that partner with the Imagination Library.

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Get Drunk on the Sun?

Sunny citrine brightens even the cloudiest day.



The most valuable citrine is Madeira citrine, characterized by its blazing orange-yellow hues.



In the day-to-day rat race, it's easy to take for granted some of the finer things in life, like walking barefoot on a well-kept lawn, drinking a cold beer on a hot summer day, or the warmth given by the sun while getting a tan at the beach. That's why we propose a toast to the sun with our Sunny Madeira Citrine Collection. Citrine, after all, is known for its warm, attractive color that makes it a favored stone among jewelers. With its excellent transparency and luster, citrine is a gem of a gem.

**ONLY 2% OF THE
WORLD'S CITRINE IS THIS COLOR!**

At the top end of the citrine scale are glowing specimens like the Madeira citrine you see here. This darker, red-gold variety of citrine is named for the fortified wine made in the Madeira Islands just off the coast of Portugal. *Only 2% of the world's citrine is this color.* Here, Madeira citrine captures the radiance of the sun in a spectacular dance of rich honey color. Offset with white topaz studs and surrounded by yellow gold-finished .925 sterling silver, this ring, pendant and earring set captures one of our favorite stones in all its glory.

So, we're giving you permission to get sun-drunk. Get the luxurious Sunny Madeira Citrine Collection and bask in its red-orange glow. As Madeira is the rarest of all citrine,

similarly designed jewelry sets can cost three times as much, but because of our gem connections across the globe and our dedication to cutting out the middleman, we can offer this collection for a fraction of the price! This is our lowest price on Madeira citrine ever! Already, the Sunny Madeira Citrine Collection is shaping up to be one of this year's best sellers. Of our artisans' initial run of 3,487, 60% of these jewelry sets have already sold.

Your satisfaction is guaranteed. If for any reason you don't absolutely adore the Sunny Madeira Citrine Collection, return it within 30 days for a full refund of your item price. But we promise that once you get a look at this citrine up close, you'll agree with the thousands of jewelers who love this stone!

Jewelry Specifications:

- Madeira citrine in yellow gold-finished .925 sterling silver
- Ring: whole sizes 5-10
- Pendant: ¾" drop
- Earrings: ⅔" drop with post backs

Sunny Madeira Citrine Collection

Ring (2 ⅔ ctw) ~~\$399~~ \$99* + S&P **Save \$300**

Complete Set** ~~\$1,266~~ \$299* + S&P **Best Value!**

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Powering Through

THE OLD WIVES' TALE GOES, *April showers bring May flowers.* Spring is notorious for thunderstorms with rain, hail and strong winds. While rain is greatly appreciated after the long dry winter we had, Mother Nature is not always nice to our electric distribution system.

During the first quarter of 2022 our system fared well, and we experienced excellent outage indices. From January 1 through March 31, our System Average Interruption Index (SAIDI) – how long the average Tri-County Electric Co-op member is out of power – was 38.132 minutes. Our System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI) – how often a member experiences an outage – was 0.300. And our Customer Average Interruption Duration Index (CAIDI) – how long a member who experiences an outage is out of power – was 127.313 minutes. Basically, the average member experienced less than one outage, and members who did experience an outage were out for an average of 2.121 hours.

I know I threw out quite a few statistics, but I want you to stay up-to-date on the status of your cooperative – specifically when it comes to the reliable flow of your electricity. The main cause of outages during the first quarter was equipment failure, followed by animals and weather. Equipment failure can be something as simple as a blown fuse, or a task like replacing a transformer that takes a few hours. 800666668

Our engineering, field services and operations teams are working on the most robust and extensive work plan in Tri-County Electric Co-op's history. This work is cutting down on outages and the outage length significantly. When I came to Tri-County Electric Co-op nearly five years ago, our outage indices were out of control. We are not to the standard I believe we should be, but please rest assured that we are working to minimize outages.

Brazos Bankruptcy Update

By the time this magazine hits your mail box, our wholesale power supplier, Brazos Electric Power Cooperative (Brazos), will have been in bankruptcy for 14 long months. Its decision to file for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy protection on March 1, 2021 was beyond our control and continues to be a very fluid situation. From the beginning of the bankruptcy, I have done my best to keep you up-to-date on what we know without violating the stay. The bankruptcy continues to be a long, costly, and difficult process for all involved and is far from over. 800778659

At the time of this writing, mediation with the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) continues and we still do not have a clear picture on how much Brazos will have to pay. I know members are anxious to know what impacts the bankruptcy may have, but we still do not have answers. Tri-County Electric Co-op has a seat at the table during mediation and we are fighting on your behalf. I have your best interests at the forefront, and I promise to do my best to take care of you. We are in this together.

Items of Interest

The first quarter here at Tri-County Electric Co-op was full of notable accomplishments. From progress on setting meters for our Advanced Member Power meter installation, to launching CheckOut, a new way to pay your electric bill in cash, to introducing Outage Texting so members can text in outages and receive outage updates, to rolling out the new Home Audit Program to help you save energy and money – it has been productive to say the least.

I encourage you to review the *Texas Co-op Power* each month for important updates on your co-op and the release of new services and programs that benefit you as a member. There is a great team here that works for you and strives to constantly better your experience. Tri-County Electric Co-op is your co-op and we welcome your feedback.

As your President/CEO, I work for you and will do all I can to take care of you. ■

Outage Stats

Tri-County Electric Co-op's 2022 January - March Outage Statistics

- ▶ SAIDI: 38.132 (minutes)
- ▶ SAIFI: 0.300 (events)
- ▶ CAIDI: 127.313 (minutes)



**MARGARET
KOPREK**

SECRETARY/
TREASURER

DISTRICT 2

A Seat at the Board Table

FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS, your board of directors has published updates from our monthly meetings to keep you informed on your cooperative. My name is Margaret Koprek and I serve as the board secretary/treasurer. I was appointed to the District 2 seat on the board in February 2021.

Prior to the regular board meeting in March, the board's budget committee met to look at costs and revenue for the first two months of the year. The committee meets every quarter to review financials, reports back to the entire board of directors and provides financial recommendations.

Here are items of interest discussed during the budget committee and regular board meeting:

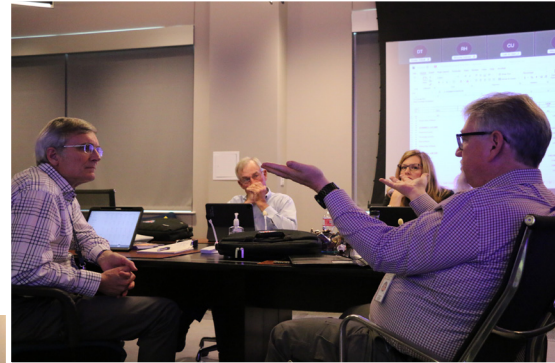
Power Costs. For every dollar collected, \$0.76 goes directly to Brazos Electric Power Cooperative for power costs. Around \$0.09 covers fixed costs, including interest and depreciation. The remaining \$0.15 stays with Tri-County Electric Cooperative to operate the business and cover all expenses. The co-op uses this money to pay property taxes, perform maintenance on existing infrastructure, right-of-way and vegetation maintenance, offer training for employees to stay up-to-date with industry changes, maintain adequate facilities, provide services like this monthly magazine to members, and so much more.

Rates have remained the same for the past 20 years, meaning Tri-County Electric Co-op has efficiently used the same 15 cents from every dollar collected to take care of you, the members. While we cannot always control power costs, we do everything we can to keep operating costs low.

The budget committee engaged in deep conversations around the future of power costs and our rates, while continuing to spend your money wisely. Everything these days is costing more – from groceries, to gas, clothing, and everyday essentials. Tri-County Electric Co-op is feeling it as well. For example, equipment, like transformers, poles and wires, is costing more and harder to come by due to supply chain issues. We have been tracking trends and inflation over the past few years and are doing everything possible to absorb costs. 7272500001

Growth. The co-op connected more than 570 new meters in January and February and we now have 126,849 meters across the system. This equates to approximately 2.5 percent annual growth. With the national growth rate for electric cooperatives at less than 1 percent, our healthy growth rate allows us to invest back into the system while being mindful of the bottom line.

The board of directors is comprised of nine members that serve as the governing and regulatory body. We work for you and make decisions in your best interest. Thank you for trusting in us to represent you, the members, in the board room. ■



TOP: Kevin Ingle weighs two financial scenarios with the budget committee.

BOTTOM: The board listens to President/CEO Darryl Schriver explain how the co-op uses 15 cents from every dollar collected to manage the co-op's operations and expenses.

Well Grounded in Safety

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

CODY PERKINS ISN'T VERY OLD, but when it comes to working with electricity, he's a veteran.

He's been doing it most of his life.

After graduating from Brock High School in 2003, he started working as an apprentice, wiring custom homes in Brock, Aledo and Keller. That led to a job that took him on the road, wiring everything from schools and hospitals to prisons and high-rise buildings. Along the way, he earned his journeyman electrician's license.

Wishing to stick closer to home, he decided on a career with the railroad. He went to work for Union Pacific, repairing and servicing the electric motors that drive locomotives.

"It was great," he said. "I learned a lot. There's a blend of AC/DC – some of your older locomotive units are DC only – then there's traction motors where every axle is actually a motor, and you have to change out the brushes and get all dirty. It was fun."

Eventually, the constant threat of layoffs became something he didn't want to live with. He pulled the books off the shelf, earned his master electrician's license – passing the test on the first attempt – and started his own business.

"I would wake up at 6 in the morning, go do my electrical work, then go to the railroad at 3:30, get off at midnight," he said. "I probably got four or five hours of sleep at night for a year." 800677696

From the beginning his company, CLP Electric, was a licensed and bonded contractor.

"There's so many guys getting into hot water, even as journeymen, trying to do side work, and they don't have insurance," he said. "I wanted to do it the right way."

High standards, doing everything at or above code, paid off. After about a year he went full-time on his own. Now he has seven employees, four trucks and enough work to keep them all busy.

Perkins spends most of his time wiring houses and outbuildings, installing breaker panels, switches and outlets as a key player in the Parker County building boom. He and his crew – Gilbert Olvera, Simon Ramos, Christian Ogle, Fisher Hicks, Harley Humphries, Hunter Hord and Logan Pitt, who are "like family" – cover a wide area.

"They're younger, and they can do a lot of this stuff easier than me – especially crawling around in attics," he laughed. They do a lot of new

ABOVE: Cody Perkins by the breaker panel he wired in the home.

LEFT: Perkins wiring a switch for a bedroom.

RIGHT: Breaker panels bring electricity from the meter to different wiring circuits throughout the home that power your lives.





Carter, Cody and Cason enjoying a slushie on the tailgate after a hard day's work.

construction, but they can handle most anything electrical, from troubleshooting to add-ons and remodels. In the past year, Cody has set up several backup generators for homeowners.

Perkins, his wife Bethany and boys Cason, 7, and Carter, 6, are members of Tri-County Electric Cooperative. After building a new home in the Peaster/Poolville area four years ago, they got a chance to have a little more land near Perrin, so they sold their new home and moved into a small barn apartment.

"It's 600 square feet, with two kids, but my wife loves it," he said. "For now..."

Often on Saturdays, the boys will help him out on jobs, picking up cut-off pieces of wire and keeping the site clean. He only takes one of them at a time, though.

"If I take them both, they'll be wrestling in somebody else's house," he laughed. "But I pay them \$5 and a slushie, and it teaches them how to work."

His sons will be free to choose their own career paths, of course. But for their dad, working with electricity, doing it the right way and knowing someone's home is wired safely not only makes him a living – it makes him happy. 800754742

"I enjoy doing electrical work," he said. "It's what the Lord has blessed me to do." ■

Breaker Panel Safety

Here are a few things homeowners should know about that "breaker box" – the panel, usually in the garage, where electric power comes in from the meter and is delivered throughout the house:

- ▶ Know where the panel and circuit breakers are located in case of an emergency.
- ▶ Do not block access to panels and circuit breakers or fuse boxes.
- ▶ Label all circuit breakers and fuse boxes clearly. Each switch should be positively identified as to which outlets or appliances it is for.



Grounding, grounding, grounding.

Surges happen, whether they're caused by lightning, someone crashing their car into a power pole, or after an outage when the power comes back on. When they do, having your home's electrical system grounded can make a huge difference.

Perkins remembers a time when his crews were called out after an automobile accident knocked a Tri-County Electric Co-op pole over and the power line fell onto a Weatherford Electric line, sending a surge through a residential neighborhood.

Utility crews cut the power, but before they turned it back on, they needed electricians to check for damage inside the homes.

"They had us and three other contractors checking out 112 homes, just trying to get people's power back on," Perkins said. "They would turn it on, then we would turn the main on and test voltage and everything."

Most of the GFCIs were burned out, but damage was different from house to house.

"A lot of people's TVs were out, and a handful of people's ovens had burned up, things like that," he said. "One of the other contractors turned on all the breakers and smoke started coming out of somebody's oven, so they had to shut it off."

A surge protector at the breaker panel would likely have prevented that.

"For no more than they cost – probably \$500 to \$600 to have a professional do it – not having to pay a deductible or replace an appliance when something like that hits, it helps."

"Grounding," he said, "is the key. Grounding, grounding, grounding."

Director Nominations

BY ANNIE MCGINNIS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

THE COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS met on Monday, March 14, 2022, to accept and review applications from members seeking nomination to the board of directors. Director Nomination Application packets were due by 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 11, 2022.

The committee accepted and reviewed five applications and deemed all candidates met the qualifications outlined in the cooperative bylaws. The Committee on Nominations and Qualifications recommended the following candidates to the board of directors for the official 2022 election ballot:

District 5

Steven Harris, Incumbent candidate

Michael Hall, Nomination candidate

District 7

Larry Miller, Incumbent candidate

Sommer Portwood, Nomination candidate

District 9

Max Waddell, Incumbent candidate

2022 Official Election

Each year, three director seats are up for election by the membership. This year, director districts 5, 7 and 9 will be on the ballot. While directors are nominated from within their district, the entire membership votes on directors during the official election. 47984001

Members can expect personalized voting information on the September *Texas Co-op Power* magazine. Tri-County Electric Co-op is partnering with Survey and Ballot Systems, a third-party election service, to conduct the election. Survey and Ballot Systems will assist with ballot creation and administer all aspects of the election.

Watch your *Texas Co-op Power* magazine for more information regarding the director candidates, the election and Annual Meeting details. ■

Meet the Committee

The Committee on Nominations and Qualifications is responsible for accepting and reviewing applications from director candidates for each district scheduled for election each year.

The committee, composed of no more than nine members, is nominated by the board to serve a three-year term and includes one member from each district. The membership elects and confirms appointments of committee members whose terms expire that year at the Annual Meeting.

In order to serve on the committee, members must be in good standing with the cooperative, not serving as a cooperative board member, not employed by the co-op, not a director candidate, or closely related to a co-op director or a director candidate.

Nomination through a committee is one of the most transparent methods a cooperative can use for director nominations. Tri-County Electric Co-op's committee is composed of a great group of members who are looking out for the overall well-being of the cooperative. ■

2022 COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS

Jeffrey Bass, District 1 | **Christin Bugaj**, District 2 | **J. Steven Bartley**, District 3, Chairman | **Randy Marshall**, District 4 | **Ramey Keeth**, District 5 | **Danny Tuggle**, District 6 | **Ranell Scott**, District 7 | **Paula Baron**, District 8

Not Pictured: Robert Gotcher, District 9



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President/CEO

Darryl Schriver

Board of Directors

Max Waddell, District 9 - Chairman
John Killough, District 6 - Vice Chairman
Margaret Koprek, District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer
Kevin Ingle, District 1
Jorden Wood, District 3
Jerry A. Walden, District 4
Steve V. Harris, District 5
Larry Miller, District 7
Michael Sivertsen, District 8



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ABOUT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

Tri-County Electric Co-op owns and maintains more than 9,600 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 99,800 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
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Home Audit Winners

BY ANNIE MCGINNIS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE launched the Home Audit Program to members in March. To celebrate the new service, we hosted a contest to give away three free audits. More than 160 members entered for the chance to win. Will Gray, Engineering Manager and the Home Audit Program administrator, drew three names at random.

Congratulations to **Gerald Tarleton** of Fort Worth, **David Holland** of Granbury, and **Casie Hilliard** of Haslet. Tarleton and Holland will each receive a free Standard Audit and Hilliard is the winner of the Advanced Audit.

Gray said the Home Audit Program has been a success so far.

“Response has been overwhelming for the new Home Audit Program,” he said. “Members understand the value of the program and are looking to reduce their electric use and save money.” 12117001

A home audit allows you to see where your home may be losing energy or where you can save electricity through altering your everyday habits. Tri-County Electric Co-op partnered with Swift Energy Partners to bring the program to life. The Swift technician is trained in energy conservation and does a thorough review of the home. Each audit comes with a detailed report, photos and recommendations to save energy.

Gray recommends the Home Audit Program to any member who is looking to save energy, save money, or make their home more efficient.

“If a member is looking for guidance on energy-savings, a home audit will provide the tools they need.

Members can learn more and sign up for a home audit at tcectexas.com/home-audit-program. ■

Highest Rank on the High Line

BY ANNIE MCGINNIS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE recently honored 17 gentlemen for achieving journeyman lineman. Journeyman is the highest level within the lineman career path and comes with high honor.

A few years ago, Chief Operations Officer and Vice President of Operations Wesley Scheets revamped the lineman progression program from the lowest level apprentice to the top of the line. Each step in the progression includes training modules and schools, learning initiatives, and core competencies. From the time an apprentice starts at Tri-County Electric Co-op, they will receive all necessary training and skills needed to become a journeyman.

To achieve journeyman, a lineman must pass a 100-question test and perform two in-field demonstrations flawlessly without breaking any safety rules. 800783595

Scheets said he developed the program to allow for consistent training among all the co-op's line crew members and to provide an organized growth plan.

"Through the lineman development program, every member of the line crew has the ability to achieve journeyman," he said. "The road map is there and available, all it takes is a highly motivated individual."

Tri-County Electric Co-op offered the first journeyman test and certification last fall. To date, 24 men have achieved journeyman, including Don Dyer, David Hager, Keith Simms, Chris Arnett, Dalton Stevens, Justin Swann and Jimmy Swindell.

The lineman profession is one of the most difficult and dangerous careers out there. We are thankful for this group of employees that is passionate about their job and taking care of you, the members. ■



LEFT TO RIGHT, FRONT ROW: Kenny Watson, Jeremy Choate, Justin Johns, Joe Ponce, Shadi Perez, Kenny Boenisch, Jimmy Villa and Colton Andersen. SECOND ROW: Elijah Long, Carlos Martinez and Mike Whitt. THIRD ROW: Kurt Westhoff and Jason Ranspot. BACK ROW: Scotty Blevins, Aaron Shoop and Wesley Scheets.

Green Creamy Salsa

BY JOE C. YOUNG
GRANBURY

- ¾ cup olive oil
- 12 serrano chilis, stemmed – or jalapenos or other chili/pepper
- 1 medium onion, chopped or sliced
- 1-2 gloves garlic, optional
- ¼ bunch cilantro, washed/patted dry
- ½ cup water
- 1 teaspoon chick bouillon granules or one cube

1. Pour olive oil in pan with steep sides and put on simmer.
2. Add chilis and allow to cook slowly. Continue to cook the chilis until they have turned color and are very soft. Stir frequently, but not constantly. Sometimes the chilis will pop, so be cautious or use a lid.
3. Add chopped onion and sauté until soft and sweet. At the point, you may add the garlic, but be careful not to burn it.
4. Add cilantro, stems and all. Turn off heat and stir for about 2 minutes.
5. Pour mixture into the blender. Add water and bouillon granules/cube. Blend well, about 3-4 minutes. Mixture should be absolutely smooth.
6. Enjoy!



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ONLINE: tcectexas.com/recipe-submission

MAIL: Please detach and submit this form with your recipe and mail to:
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— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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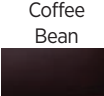
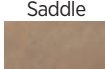
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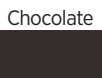
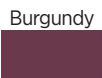
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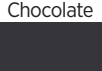
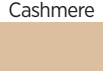
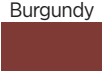
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A Deep Dive

Explorers map the recent history of the state's deepest ancient cave

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY BRAVE UNION

THERE'S A 10-FOOT-WIDE river in West Texas that almost no one can reach. That's because the Sirion River is on private land near Sanderson—and at the bottom of the deepest cave in the state. The Sorcerer's Cave descends about 570 feet, or as a Texan might put it, "damn near two football fields deep."

The first part of the cave goes down quickly. Explorers have to negotiate a series of steep, dramatic drops totaling 500 feet—50 stories—to reach the Sirion, so named because one of its discoverers, Randy M. Waters, was a huge fan of author J.R.R. Tolkien. The underground river reminded Waters of the fictional river of the same name. Texas' Sirion flows a long way through the cave system, descending 70 feet or more and

passing over two short waterfalls before disappearing beneath a rock wall.

George Veni, executive director of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute in New Mexico, is said to know more about the cave than anyone and is credited as the discoverer of its record-setting depth. He said the water of the Sirion is very clean. "You could drink from it if you wanted to," he said, "though to be perfectly safe, you probably shouldn't." The water at that depth might have fallen as rain on the surface decades or even hundreds of years ago, he said, and likely flows another 40 miles into the Rio Grande. If fully explored, the Sorcerer's Cave could be the longest cave in Texas, Veni believes.

He fondly remembers the day in 1979

when he was rappelling down the cave's deepest shaft and hollered with delight to his friends above when he realized he had set the depth record for caves in Texas, a record that remains intact today. Since then, he has been one of the primary mappers of the tunnel system.

Once a cave has a theme, Veni said, the naming of its features continues to be inspired by that theme. That's why the Sorcerer's Cave includes a Poltergeist Pit, Demon Drop and Mormoops Chamber, named for the ghost-faced bats that live there. The theme even extends to another cave in the area—the Wizard's Well.

Bill Steele, another internationally known caver who has explored and helped to map the Sorcerer's Cave, said it's a fun cave to explore because of its numerous and substantial vertical drops. For the "properly equipped vertical caver, it's not dangerous, but for the inexperienced, it certainly would be," he said.

Steele has spent 45 years exploring and mapping the deepest cave in this hemisphere, Sistema Huautla in Oaxaca, Mexico. At nearly a mile deep, Huautla is nine times as deep as the Texas cave. But Steele said Sorcerer's Cave is still important beyond its record depth. Ancient drawings and mortar holes used for grinding at the entrance show it was used as a shelter, with one item dated to the year 700. Human bones found in the Sirion River, almost certainly washed down from above, are the deepest human remains known in North America.

That important history helps form the basis for the caver's motto: Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, kill nothing but time. ■

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



Pickles and Jams

Canning captures the delightful flavors of today for use later

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Making strawberry jam is a yearly tradition in my house that began after we started taking the kids to Sweet Berry Farm in Marble Falls. We've explored all kinds of jams, jellies, pickles and preserves, but we still make this Strawberry-Vanilla Jam every year. We love the warm floral flavor the vanilla brings to the berries. If you're new to making preserves, be sure to follow the directions on the pectin box for safe canning practices, or store your jars in the refrigerator.

Strawberry-Vanilla Jam

7 cups sugar
8 cups whole strawberries
¼ cup lemon juice
1 box (1.75 ounces) powdered fruit pectin
1 7-inch vanilla bean

1. Prepare a water bath canner and heat to boiling, adding jars to sterilize.
2. Measure sugar into a large bowl and set aside.
3. Wash and hull strawberries. In a large bowl, crush berries one layer at a time using a potato masher, leaving some chunks. Pour berries and juices into a large pot and stir in lemon juice.
4. Heat over medium-high heat, then stir in pectin. Continue heating until it reaches a rapid boil, then add sugar all at once, stirring to dissolve.
5. Split the vanilla bean, scrape out the insides and add to the jam. Bring jam back to a rapid boil that cannot be stirred down, and boil 1 minute.
6. Test for doneness by spooning some jam onto a chilled plate and letting it cool. Touch to see if a skin is forming and feels gellike; if so, jam is ready. Remove from heat.
7. Ladle jam into jars, leaving about ¼-inch headspace. Wipe edges clean and place lids on top, securing with screw bands. Return jars into hot-water bath and boil 10 minutes, then remove to counter and let rest until completely cooled. Store any unsealed jars in the refrigerator.

MAKES 8 HALF-PINT JARS

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Pickled Red Onions.



Zingy Candied Jalapeños

MYRA HUNSICKER
MEDINA EC

You won't have any trouble finding ways to enjoy these sweet and spicy candied jalapeños. Hunsucker recommends using them on eggs and nachos or over cream cheese as a dip. She uses the leftover syrup for marinating meats.

- 1½ pounds fresh jalapeños**
- 1 cup cider vinegar**
- 3 cups sugar**
- 1½ teaspoons garlic powder**
- ½ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric**
- ¼ teaspoon celery seeds**

1. Wash jalapeños, remove stems, and slice into rings or chop in a food processor.
2. In a large pot over medium-high heat, combine vinegar, sugar, garlic powder, cayenne, turmeric and celery seeds and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer 4 minutes. Add sliced jalapeños and simmer another 4 minutes.
3. Scoop into heated jars, packing semi-firmly and leaving ¼-inch headspace. Ladle syrup into jars. Use a chopstick or wooden dowel to remove air bubbles, pressing down on jalapeños, then place lids.
4. Let jars cool to room temperature, then store in the refrigerator.

MAKES 2 PINT JARS

MORE RECIPES >



\$500 WINNER

Gigi's Bourbon Blueberry and Pear Jam

TAMERA BUSSEY
TRINITY VALLEY EC



Reminiscent of blueberry pie, this jam is wonderful for lovers of the fruit. The bourbon adds depth of flavor, but you can leave it out if you prefer.

MAKES 12 HALF-PINT JARS

- 10 cups blueberries**
- ¼ cup diced pear**
- ½ cup powdered fruit pectin**
- ⅓ cup lemon juice**
- ¼ cup bourbon**
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract**
- ½ teaspoon almond extract**
- 6½ cups sugar**

1. Prepare a water bath canner and heat to boiling, adding jars to sterilize.
2. In a large pot, stir together blueberries, pear and pectin, crushing fruit as you mix. Stir in lemon juice, bourbon, and vanilla and almond extracts.
3. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring frequently. Add sugar all at once and bring jam back to a full rolling boil, stirring constantly. Hard boil for 1 minute, then remove from heat.
4. Ladle jam into warm jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace, and apply lids. Process in canner for 10 minutes, then remove and let rest until completely cooled.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

NUTS ABOUT NUTS DUE MAY 10

We want to know the many ways readers use nuts in the kitchen. Submit your recipes on our website by May 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Carrot Cake Jam

CATHY TOWER
HAMILTON COUNTY EC

Carrot cake lovers will delight in this unique jam.

- 1 can (20 ounces) crushed pineapple in juice, undrained**
- 1½ cups shredded carrots**
- 1½ cups peeled and chopped ripe pears**
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice**

- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves**
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- 1 box (1.75 ounces) powdered fruit pectin**
- 6½ cups sugar**

- 1.** Prepare a water bath canner and heat to boiling, adding jars to sterilize.
- 2.** In a large pot over medium-high heat, combine pineapple, carrots, pears, lemon juice, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer until pears are tender, 15–20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 3.** Stir in the pectin and bring to a boil over high heat, continuing to stir. Stir in the sugar all at once and return to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down. Boil 1 minute, then remove from heat and skim off foam if desired.
- 4.** Ladle jam into heated jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Using a chopstick or wooden dowel, remove air bubbles and add additional jam if necessary. Place lids and process in canner for 10 minutes. Remove jars and let cool.

MAKES 8 HALF-PINT JARS

Essential Canning Tools

BY MEGAN MYERS

Canning doesn't have to be complicated, but you'll want to have these basics before you start.

Large pot: You don't need a special water bath canning pot; any pot large enough to hold jars covered with water will do.

Jar holder: These special tongs help you transfer hot jars into and out of the water bath.

Wooden dowel or chopstick: Use either of these implements instead of a knife to remove air bubbles to prevent scratching the inside of the jar.

Fresh canning lids: Wax seal lids cannot be reused, so be sure to have enough on hand. Rings can be reused until they start to rust.



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3,000-Year-Old Beauty Secret Revealed

Turquoise — the original fashion icon — comes full circle for an amazing price.

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Time is running out for timeless turquoise. Just because turquoise is timeless, doesn't mean supplies of it will last forever. Turquoise is only found a few places on Earth. Typically unearthed in arid climates like the American Southwest and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, turquoise requires a delicate balance of minerals and water to achieve its gorgeous range of blues. But even when conditions are optimal for turquoise to form, finding stones of gem-worthy quality is a challenge. There are very few turquoise mines left, and then, less than 5% of turquoise mined worldwide is of jewelry condition, making it rarer to come by than even diamonds.

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— The Jewellery Editor, 2021



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Something Fishy

Lampasas sculpture garden gets feet—and minds—meandering

BY CHET GARNER

FOR CENTURIES FOLKS have flocked to Lampasas to take a dip in natural springs that supposedly possess life-giving properties. I'm not sure they can heal the sick, but they seem to have stimulated creativity and inspired artists to fill a small city park with larger-than-life sculptures.

When I cruised through Lampasas, I discovered all the trappings of a charming Texas town—a historic courthouse, inviting businesses and the sort of pie that makes your eyes roll back in your head. But then I discovered something that I've never seen in any small town: an old rusty truck laden with a giant metal catfish stretching from the windshield to beyond the tailgate. I needed an explanation.

Apparently I had stumbled upon the Hanna Springs Sculpture Garden that fills Campbell Park. The city built the park around Hanna Springs, which pushes crystal clear and pungent-smelling—like an old shoe—water out of the ground and into a large pool. The sulfur spring is stunning to see—and smell.

In 2005 the Lampasas Association for the Arts decided it was time to add a little more flash to the underutilized park. The group commissioned three artists to carve large limestone sculptures. There's a couch, a gateway and one that's ... open to interpretation. After this, the creativity started to flow faster than the springs. The sculpture garden now boasts more than 20 sculptures ranging from abstract spinning shapes to a painted tractor that kids can climb on. The fun comes in walking through the garden and letting your mind wander along with your feet.

It's the sort of unexpected delight you find when you hit the road, and it defies the stereotype that art is just for big-city galleries. In fact, some of the best art can be found in the great outdoors of small-town Texas. ■

ABOVE Chet finds himself hooked on the funky art at Hanna Springs Sculpture Garden.

TOP See what else caught Chet's eye in Lampasas on our website. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

MAY
07

Abilene Abilene Philharmonic: 1812 Overture, (325) 677-6710, abilenephilharmonic.org

Bellville Farmers Market, (979) 865-3407, bellvillefarmersmarket.com

Galveston Michael Cavanaugh: The Music of Billy Joel and Elton John, 1-800-821-1894, thegrand.com

Kerrville Mother and Son Dance, (830) 257-7300, kerrvilletx.gov

Mesquite Cinco de Mayo Celebration, (972) 329-8331, visitmescquitetx.com

New Ulm Honey Bee Jubilee, (713) 568-5584, newulmtexas.com

South Padre Island Jailbreak Beach Escape, (956) 761-5900, runthejailbreak.com

Temple National Train Day, (254) 298-5172, discovertemple.com

The Colony Up, Up and Away! Festival of Flight, (972) 625-1106, thecolonytx.gov

Dallas [7, 14, 21] Dinner Detective Interactive Mystery Dinner, 1-866-496-0535, thedinnerdetective.com/dallas

08

New Ulm Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church-Frelsburg 175th Anniversary & Country Festival, (979) 732-3430, peterandpaulparish.com/country-festival

12

Lufkin Orquesta Akokán,
(936) 633-5454,
angelinaarts.org

**Abilene [12-15] Western
Heritage Classic,**
(325) 677-4376,
westernheritageclassic.com

13

**Coolidge [13-14] Mesquite
Tree Festival,** (254) 203-8531,
facebook.com/
mesquitetreefestival

**Stafford [13-15, 20-22]
The Hunchback of Notre
Dame,** (713) 302-5329,
inspirationstage.com

14

**Boerne Hill Country Mini
Milkers Texas Two-Step,**
(830) 964-4155,
hillcountryminimilkers.org

Celina Cajun Fest,
(972) 382-2682,
lifeincelinatx.com/cajunfest

**Grand Prairie Roberto
Carlos,** (972) 854-5050,
texastrustcutheatre.com

**Irving Las Colinas
Symphony Orchestra: Eldred
Marshall,** (972) 252-4800,
lascolinassymphony.org

**La Grange Bluff Schuetzen-
Fest,** (979) 968-5658,
friendsofkreischebrewery.org/
schuetzenfest

McKinney Night Hike,
(972) 562-5566,
heardmuseum.org

**New Braunfels Cooder
Graw,** (830) 606-1281,
gruenehall.com

15

Dallas Flora Fest,
(214) 428-7476,
txdg.org/flora-fest

MORE EVENTS >

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



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Event Calendar

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TCP Plan now
TexasCoopPower.com/events

19

Corsicana Jim Brickman, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

20

Kyle Ash Pavilion Family Skate Night, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com/recreation

Columbus [20-21] **Magnolia Days Festival**, (979) 732-8385, magnoliadays.org

Fredericksburg [20-22] **Trade Days**, (210) 846-4094, fbgtradedays.com

21

Amarillo Eli Young Band, (806) 372-6000, bigtexan.com

Brenham Ronstadt Revue With Special Guest John Beland, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com/events

Clifton Bosque Tour de Norway, (254) 675-3720, tourcenorway.com

Frisco National Soccer Hall of Fame Induction Weekend Concert: Zac Brown Band, (469) 365-0043, nationalsoccerhof.com

Hilltop Lakes Run Fore the Roses Golf Tournament, (713) 503-0470

Lake Jackson Bird Banding, (979) 480-0999, gcbo.org

Mesquite Mesquite Symphony Orchestra: *An Ode to Joy*, (972) 216-6444, visitmesquitetx.com

25

College Station [25-29] **Remembering the Fallen**, (979) 690-0501, americangimuseum.org

26

Kerrville [26-July 9] **Southwest Gourd & Fiber Fine Art Show**, (830) 895-2911, kackkerrville.com

27

Smithville [27-28] **Lost Pines BBQ Showdown**, (713) 540-1695, bastroprotary.com

Fredericksburg [27-29] **Crawfish Festival**, (830) 997-6523, fbgjaycees.com/crawfish-festival

28

Hunt Mike Donnell, (830) 238-4441, cridersrandd.com

Rockport Wine Festival, (361) 729-1271, texasmaritimemuseum.org/rockportwinefestival

29

Abilene Waitress, 1-800-869-1451, celebrityattractions.com

Brazoria River Wine Festival, (979) 964-3167, riverrendezview.com

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

JUNE

02

Fredericksburg [2-5] **Hill Country Film Festival**, 1-866-224-7714, hillcountryff.com

03

Stephenville [3-4] **Moo-La Fest**, (254) 552-1222, visitstephenville.com/moo-la-fest

04

Fredericksburg Car Fest, (830) 997-6523, fredericksburgcarfest.com

San Marcos Heritage Tour of Homes, (512) 392-4295, heritagesanmarcos.org

Austin [4-5] **Pond and Garden Tour**, publicity@austinpontsociety.org, austinpontsociety.org

Feathered Friends

We're not ones to get our feathers ruffled, but we've been surprised by how many entries flew in from all over Texas.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 ROSS HINES
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

"The February 2021 winter storm brought purple finches to my feeder."

2 MARK CHAPMAN
HEART OF TEXAS EC

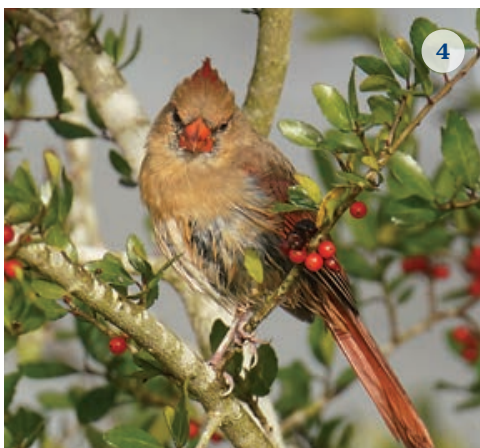
"I located a mated pair of barred owls in a heavily wooded creek and watched for several hours before capturing this image."

3 PAMELA SLAUGHTER
FANNIN COUNTY EC

Granddaughter Rachel loves her chickens but has taken a special liking to this hard-to-catch banty rooster.

4 CHRIS WEYLAND
TRINITY VALLEY EC

Female northern cardinal.



Upcoming Contests

DUE MAY 10 Light and Shadow

DUE JUN 10 Hometown Pride

DUE JUL 10 Aerials



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for a whole flock of Feathered Friends photos from readers.



Community Crusader

Remembering journalism stalwart George McElroy on his birth's centennial

BY KATHLEEN MCELROY
ILLUSTRATION BY TAYLOR CALLERY

SOMETIMES, BEING the first of anything is beside the point.

George McElroy, my father, accumulated a lot of firsts as a pioneering African American journalist in Texas. As the Texas State Historical Association points out, he was the first Black journalist at a mainstream daily newspaper in Texas, *The Houston Post*; first to earn a master's degree from the University of Missouri's prestigious school of journalism; first to be a member of the Houston Press Club; first to teach journalism at the University of Houston; and first to be inducted into the Texas Newspaper Hall of Fame.

But as much as Dad enjoyed accolades from big-time journalism, his true journalistic love was his community newspaper, *The Houston Informer* and *Texas*

Freeman, the first African American newspaper published west of the Mississippi River. He started reporting there at age 16 and never really left until he died at 84 in 2006.

At the *Informer*, Dad was dogged as the eyes and ears of Houston's Black communities and cherished the opportunity to report back on the world beyond their neighborhoods. He kept every press badge he ever carried, pinning them on the paneled walls of our den.

The *Informer*, a storied part of the Black press, shared much with community and rural papers across the state. For Dad, it was home—located in a neighborhood where he lived most of his life. Mainstream newspapers might call its coverage hyperlocal: weddings and deaths, scholarship announcements, photos of smiling children and corsaged ladies. It's the kind of journalism that Texas community papers—ethnic and rural—have been practicing for more than a century.

Dad was probably most proud when the Texas Gulf Coast Press awarded him first place for editorial writing. Like any good small-town publisher and editor, he chose his words wisely and lovingly, knowing that the person reading them might be sitting in the next pew or barbershop chair.

In the centennial year of my father's birth, I'm part of two projects that honor the kind of journalism he practiced: the Headliners Foundation's George McElroy Scholarship (yes, the first Black person to be so honored by the prestigious nonprofit) and the University of Texas at Austin's Rural Journalism Pipeline Project, which seeks to sustain rural Texas newspapers by finding successors for aging publishers.

Whether it's Houston's bustling Third Ward or a one-stoplight town in the Panhandle, we're all richer living in a place where that one journalist knows your name. ■



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Qualification: Advertised price requires credit qualification and 24-month commitment. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. **Offer ends 7/13/22.** **2-Year Commitment:** Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee at \$69.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 programming package, local channels, HD service fees, and Hopper Duo Smart DVR for 1 TV. **Included in 2-year price guarantee** for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$84.99 for AT120+, \$94.99 for AT200, \$104.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15). **Regional Sports:** RSN Surcharge up to \$3/mo. applies to AT120+ and higher packages and varies based on location. **NOT included in 2-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change):** Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. **Premium Channels:** 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$30/mo. for Showtime, Starz, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. **Remote:** The DISH Voice Remote with the Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey, or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. The Google Assistant Smart Home features require Google account and compatible devices. Google is a trademark of Google LLC. **Other:** Netflix streaming membership required. All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price lock are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$9.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 2 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Indiana C.P.D. Reg. No. 19-08615. ©2021 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$40 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability of 25 Mbps plan is subject to change without notice. The application of "Unlimited Data with no Hard Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly mean that your access to the internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.