

JON WALK'S ENDLESS
RUNNING LIST

PORT MANSFIELD'S
SUNKEN TREASURE

TASTY GLUTEN-FREE
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A Running List

Jon Walk can't help himself. He runs—all over the state—and keeps lists of his expansive exploits.

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Illustration by John Kachik*

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*By Margaret Buranen
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ON THE COVER
Salye Coles and Joshua,
a mustang in her care.
Photo by Dave Shafer

ABOVE
Jon Walk is on a quest to run
a mile in every Texas county.
Illustration by John Kachik

Startling Fact

LEAVE YOUR FRIENDS star-struck with your smarts.

Polaris, the North Star, sits directly above the North Pole along Earth's rotational axis. That's the imaginary line that extends through the planet and out of the North and South poles.

But here's the dazzling part: Polaris hasn't always been the North Star. Because Earth wobbles, that rotational axis sometimes points to a different star. That's why, about 14,000 years ago, Vega was the North Star. And it will be again in about 12,000 years.



“Keep your eyes on the stars but remember to keep your feet on the ground.”

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT



Turning Your Stomach?

Michigan State University researchers say a newly developed material for making wind turbines could later be recycled into objects ranging from car parts to gummy bears.

TCP Contests and More

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FINISH THIS SENTENCE THE GREATEST TEXAN EVER IS ...

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 November prompt: **It's been so long since I ...**

Listened to the red wolves howl in answer to a sawmill steam whistle.

WAYMON VEST
HOUSTON COUNTY EC
CROCKETT

Caught fireflies in a jar.

WANDA LOVELACE
TRI-COUNTY EC
WEATHERFORD

Hopped across the sun-warmed, deep furrows of a freshly plowed cotton field.

DIANN STOVALL
CECA
ZEPHYR

Dialed a rotary telephone.

REBECCA VANCE
WOOD COUNTY EC
MINEOLA

Drank from a garden hose.

DUWAYNE ALBRECHT
COSERV
MCKINNEY

Visit our website to see more responses.



It Sounded Like a ...

ABILENE HAS A NEW sculpture little more than a buffalo chip's toss away from the eight giant steel bison twisting in the wind 35 feet above Frontier Texas. Singing Ringing Tree, above, installed in July 2022, takes advantage of the West Texas town's bluster, turning 27 tons of pipes into giant flutes that create music audible up to 400 feet away, depending on the prevailing gusts.

The 22-foot-tall stack of pipes is arranged in a way that reminds knowing residents of a tornado and takes advantage of the winds that blow through town at an average of 12 mph.

Guess what?

January 4
is National
Trivia Day.



CHANELLE NIBBELINK

The Arable Twos

“We should be grateful for every 2-year-old out there who loves the land like he does. Thank you, farmers. We don’t say that enough.”

BARBARA MACHA
COSERV
HIGHLAND VILLAGE

Newcomer Nuance?

I’ve noticed a pattern developing of a decrease in articles featuring long-established country folk and an increase in showcasing new arrivals to the state [Connecting With the Land, September 2022].

From the content that’s been featured over the past few years, I can only deduce that our co-op magazine seems to be trying to placate readers with an appetite for citified country life.

Buzz Payne
Wood County EC
Big Sandy

I love her [Watch Grandma Cook, November 2022]. I am addicted to her on TikTok.

KRISTIN SPRINKLE
VIA FACEBOOK

I have inherited an interest in a farm that belonged to our parents and grandparents. At age 70, I suddenly became the caretaker of the houses and land—as your writer said, a blessing and a curse. I’ve loved learning how to care for it, but I worry who will do this after me.

Patricia Ricks
Fayette EC
Round Top

Birds of a Feather

I am a transplanted Minnesotan from the rival Turkey capital, Worthington [Not for the Birds, October 2022]. The article brought me back to the September “turkey days” of my youth. Thank you for highlighting the friendly atmosphere and camaraderie of the festivals.

Marcia Opsata-Sparks
Pedernales EC
Dripping Springs

Summer Pursuit

I was a summer employee for a South Texas power company [Reading Between the Lines, October 2022]. Once a month we had to read meters. One time a smart dog hit his gate, the gate opened, and he escaped. I ran for blocks to capture the dog and return it to its yard.

Ken Steed
Pedernales EC
Georgetown



COURTESY: CUIERO TURKEYFEST

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

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

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A Jon Walk can't help himself. He runs—all over the state—and keeps lists of his expansive exploits.

Running List

BY CARLTON STOWERS

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

WHEN JON WALK stared down at the scale that morning in 2003 and saw that his weight had gone several pounds beyond the 300 mark, he determined that it was hardly a good look for someone in the health care consulting business. He vowed to make changes and decided to start running.

Early on, he could jog only a few hundred yards through his neighborhood in Spring, north of Houston, before stopping to catch his breath and massage aching calves.

That was long before he finished a marathon in Austin in a personal best time of four hours and 48 minutes; before he had run the grueling 26-mile race 53 times in 48 states; before he set a goal of running at least 1 mile in every county in Texas; and before he had run the streets and back roads of 375 towns and cities across the nation.

And before the 55-year-old native Pennsylvanian, now a well-conditioned 205 pounds, became a list-making wanderer in pursuit of better health and a unique hobby he can't fully explain.

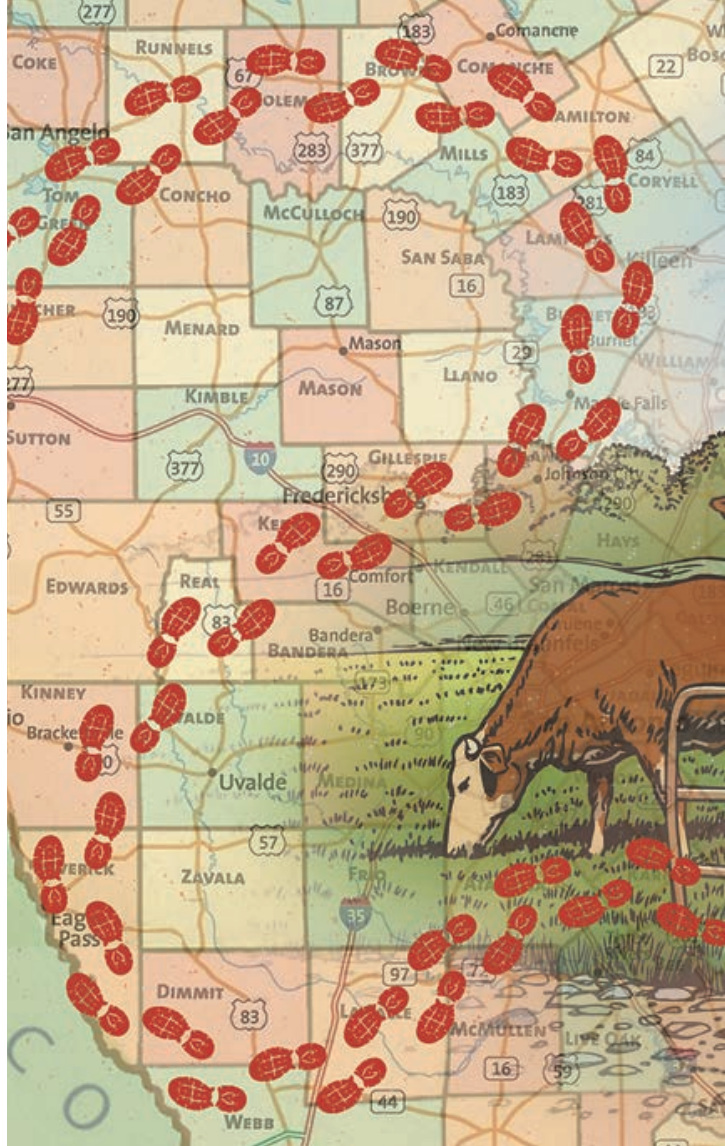
Jon Walk makes lists, many tied to his newfound love for running.

He offers no psychobabble explanation, no Zen-like reasoning. "It just keeps me active and motivated," he says. "I like to think of it as a healthy addiction."

Walk's inspiration came from an old *Runner's World* magazine article about a man who had run at least a mile in every city and township in the state of Massachusetts. Walk borrowed the idea and made all 254 Texas counties his goal. He's getting there, having run in 196 thus far.

"When I'm planning my weekend trips," says the empty-nest parent, "I make an effort to get to as many counties as possible."

Recently he tied his personal record when he flew to Amarillo, rented a car and visited seven Panhandle county seats in a day. He'd achieved the same number in East Texas a year earlier. "I love seeing the architecture of some of the older courthouses, reading the historical markers and meeting new people," he says. Once his downtown sightseeing and local history lessons are recorded in his notebook, he goes on a 15-minute run to assure that he's run at least a mile.



Then it's back in the car and off to the next county.

He's run in triple-digit heat and below-freezing temperatures, pouring rain and West Texas dust storms. Early on, he learned to precheck his route for loose and unfriendly dogs.

On an early evening run in Archer City, a local sheriff's deputy watched him closely as he ran past native son Larry McMurtry's famed bookstore. After flying into the Midland-Odessa airport, he recalls snow and ice making it difficult to keep his rental car on the road.

"The unexpected," he says, "is part of the fun."

Whenever possible, he likes to visit a new locale when an organized race has been scheduled. To date, he has competed in races—10Ks, half-marathons and marathons—in 96 counties. "To do so isn't always possible," he points out. "For instance, Loving County out in West Texas doesn't have but 34 people, so it's a little unreasonable to expect them to organize any kind of race. So, when I went there, I picked a route on a caliche road and waved at the cows as I ran by."

Then, there's the other quests.

Though his own athletic career ended with Little League baseball back in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, Walk has enjoyed sports for as long as he can remember. He's got an impressive collection of back issues of *Sports Illustrated* and *Sporting News* to prove it.

A lifelong basketball fan, Walk has been in high school,



college and professional venues from El Paso to Amarillo to the Gulf Coast. With new arenas and gymnasiums opening regularly throughout the state, it's unrealistic to think he might achieve a onetime goal of visiting them all. "I just want to keep seeing as many places and things as I can until I run out of time or money," he says.

While Walk focuses his travel plans on basketball, baseball and football stadiums, he occasionally finds time for soccer and rugby venues and last spring watched his first Premier Lacrosse League game.

Walk's lists also spawn new lists.

He has stopped for coffee and a quick snack at 20 of the 34 Buc-ee's gas stations in Texas. He need only check his notebook to tell you every bowling alley and movie theater he's visited in the past few decades.

When the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted his travels, Walk turned to reading and, yes, began listing each book he finished. He focuses primarily on—what else?—nonfiction books about sports, recently finishing a biography of Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan.

In addition to his traveling pursuits, he annually serves as an announcer and official at numerous Houston-area running competitions, including The Woodlands Marathon and the Houston Half Marathon.

He's also a storehouse of historical knowledge about run-

ning. "If I need something like a list of everyone who has ever competed in all seven Texas Ironman competitions, I go straight to Jon," says Lance Phegley, a longtime friend and former editor of *Texas Runner and Triathlete* magazine. "In addition to his personal pursuits, he's constantly promoting others and their accomplishments. He's always alerting me to something noteworthy that a young runner in some small Texas town has done or some forgotten but fascinating moment in sports history."

Willie Fowlkes, director of The Woodlands Marathon who has known Walk for over a decade, agrees. "He's a great friend and asset to the local running community," he says. "His hobbies are just another cool part of his personality."

In the summer lull before high school and collegiate teams return to competition, Walk stays busy adding baseball stadiums to his list. On consecutive weekends, he traveled to Birmingham, Alabama, and Pearl, Mississippi, to visit minor-league ballparks. Meanwhile, he was checking schedules to find when and where the upcoming 7-on-7 football tournaments would be held.

As stadiums and gymnasiums begin filling with cheering fans in the fall and winter months, Walk's calendar quickly fills.

And he'll be off and running. ■

STABLE



FUTURES

Texas-based organizations help find homes for needy steeds of different stripes



AN EXCITED SALYE COLES and her husband were driving six hours from their West Texas ranch to a Bureau of Land Management facility in Oklahoma. They were headed north last May to pick up a bay mustang gelding, tag No. 3345—a wild horse that had been collected by the BLM as part of an emergency gathering of the animals in the Jackson Mountains of northern Nevada.

In a random drawing, the horse was assigned to Coles, who lives in Sterling City, northwest of San Angelo. She was to train him and make him fit for adoption.

When Coles saw the horse, she almost cried.

“He was at least 250 pounds underweight, so skinny that his ribs were showing,” she says. “His coat was dull, and his mane was matted in knots.”

The listless mustang’s demeanor worried her even more. “He was so dejected, so withdrawn. He didn’t look at me or show interest in anything.”

Droughts in the 10 Western states where mustangs roam free have caused a shortage of not just water but also the grass that sustains them. As conditions worsen, the BLM gathers horses to be cared for and eventually adopted.

Most of these wild animals have been under the protection of the federal agency since 1971. More than 20,000 wild horses have been adopted since then, but 50,000 under BLM protection still need homes.

The Mustang Heritage Foundation, based in Round Rock, has partnered with the BLM since 2006 to train and home thousands of these animals. The nonprofit works with horse trainers like Coles in 40 states.



ABOVE It took 10 days before Joshua, once a wild mustang, allowed Salye Coles to touch his neck. RIGHT Coles says she almost cried when she first saw the haggard horse.



Coles, a retired schoolteacher, is an experienced horse-woman. She trail rides on her two other mustangs and two quarter horses. Still she wondered if she could give the poor mustang in Oklahoma all the care and training he needed. She had only 100 days to get him ready for a Fort Worth adoption event in August.

After seeing its grim condition, Glenn Coles asked his wife if she still wanted to take the horse home.

Coles had prayed that she would get the right mustang for her. So she told her husband yes, that she felt at peace with the decision.

On their drive home, Ann Souders of the MHF called. She had already found an adopter: Dale Long wanted him as an equine therapy horse at his Western Cross Ranch in Azle.

A biblical name for the horse seemed appropriate to both women. When Souders suggested Joshua, Coles knew that was the right name. The mustang would have a battle to overcome his poor physical and mental state.

Back home, Coles started earning Joshua's trust. It took 10 days before he allowed her to touch his neck. Another week before she could untie the BLM tag around his neck.

Still more days until he let her put on his halter.

Gradually Joshua started nickering to Coles, indicating he was glad to see her. In the third week of July, she was finally able to saddle and ride him.

What does it mean to bond with a horse that once ran wild and free? Salye Coles says that she most enjoys gaining a mustang's trust. "To watch them willingly give up that wildness, to trust you, is amazing," she says.

"A mustang is a clean slate, no pretenses," Coles says. "They're the most honest animals I've ever been around. They're smart, and they analyze every single thing."

What does it mean to bond with a horse that once ran wild and free? Coles says that she most enjoys gaining a mustang's trust. "To watch them willingly give up that wildness, to trust you, is amazing," she says.

When people ask how she can bear to give up this mustang she has nursed back to health and grown to love, Coles tells them she knows Joshua is going to a wonderful home.

"His purpose is to help people who are struggling and fighting back," she says. "He has had to fight a battle too."



SEE FOR YOURSELF

The next **Roses to Ribbons** adoption event will be held in March at Sam Houston Race Park in Houston. The Mustang Heritage Foundation's **Mustang Magic** showcase is January 19–21, during the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo.

OPPOSITE Coles and Joshua at the Extreme Mustang Makeover event in Fort Worth. LEFT Tracy Sheffield and Eliot, a former racehorse, have found success in dressage competitions.

O Beyond the Finish Line

F COURSE, mustangs aren't the only horses in need of homes.

Tracy Sheffield's passion is thoroughbreds—her own and those that need help finding a life outside of racing.

Like the MHF, the Paddock Foundation, a charitable arm of the Texas Thoroughbred Association, advocates for these majestic animals. The nonprofit has placed hundreds of former and failed racehorses since March 2015—whether they raced for several years or didn't go to post even once, so-called off-track thoroughbreds.

"Since our first event, we have helped almost 200 thoroughbreds find new homes," says Sheffield, the Paddock Foundation's president who lives in Wimberley, southwest of Austin.

Some thoroughbreds, even if they descend from top racing bloodlines, don't do well in racing. Others have successful track careers cut short by injury. If the injury takes months to heal, the owner may decide it makes more financial sense to move the horse to a new owner and career.

To help new owners connect with these thoroughbreds, Sheffield, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member who works as a business consultant for veterinary practices,

established horse fairs called **Roses to Ribbons**. The roses represent racing, like those awarded at the Kentucky Derby, and the ribbons represent the awards given at shows and competitions—an analogy for these horses' transitions.

The events are held at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie, Sam Houston Race Park in Houston and Retama Park near San Antonio. Two weeks before a meet ends, Sheffield visits with trainers to get details and photos of horses that need new homes. "Through social media—I belong to over 20 horse groups online—I post photos of the available thoroughbreds," she says.

Each fair is held before the day's racing starts and always draws a crowd. Trainers bring their horses to the paddock and talk directly with prospective adopters. Each adoption fee is a private sale by the trainer to the new owner.

"The horses have been well cared for," she says. "The trainers are very picky about who gets to adopt their horses [and can] refuse any sale. I have heard them tell prospective adopters, 'This horse isn't right for you.'"

Sheffield herself has adopted two thoroughbreds. Eliot, a 12-year-old bay, showed no talent for racing. Now he competes in dressage and does trail riding. Sheffield says that Eliot isn't high-strung, as many thoroughbreds are.

"He is so trustworthy," she says. "He takes such good



care of his rider. I've taught people who have never ridden to ride on Eliot."

Gus is 7 years old, has a dark coat and is like a friendly, curious puppy. He was training well for racing when he fractured a sesamoid bone near one foot. The bone healed after surgery, but because of his height, the trainer decided not to risk a second injury from racing that might have left him unsound for other riding. Now he does trail riding.

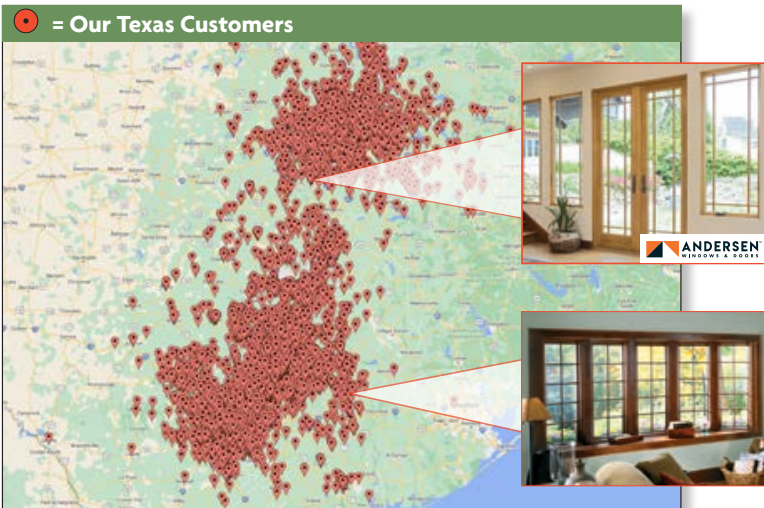
Thoroughbreds' speed makes them suitable for competitions. They do well in jumping, dressage and trail riding. Sheffield advises potential adopters to "think outside of the box with thoroughbreds.

"They can do well in the Western sports world, too, in Western dressage or barrel racing," she says. "The most sure-footed trail horse I've ever had was a thoroughbred." ■

ABOVE Eliot needed little coaxing from Sheffield to perform a bow.
RIGHT Watch Eliot and Sheffield interact in a video with this story online.



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	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
30	8.87	7.69	9.93	8.80	14	11	18	16	58	26.66	21.79	50.12	36.39	89	64	166	118
36	9.05	7.98	10.56	9.43	15	13	22	19	59	29.20	23.39	55.24	39.45	98	70	185	130
37	9.17	8.21	11.07	9.74	15	13	23	20	60	32.20	25.28	61.29	43.07	109	77	207	144
38	9.31	8.48	11.69	10.13	16	14	24	22	61	35.24	28.02	67.54	47.42	120	86	228	159
39	9.46	8.78	12.35	10.53	17	15	26	23	62	38.92	31.35	75.14	52.70	134	97	253	177
40	9.63	9.12	13.13	11.01	18	16	28	25	63	43.48	35.46	84.52	59.23	150	111	284	199
41	10.00	9.27	13.66	11.60	20	17	30	26	64	48.24	39.77	94.35	66.07	168	125	317	223
42	10.44	9.46	14.30	12.31	21	18	33	29	65	53.88	44.87	105.96	74.15	188	142	356	251
43	10.99	9.68	15.09	13.19	24	20	37	31	66	59.39	48.85	116.50	84.59	208	150	392	270
44	11.57	9.92	15.92	14.11	26	22	41	34	67	66.07	53.68	129.30	97.26	232	161	437	293
45	12.25	10.20	16.90	15.20	28	24	46	38	68	74.33	59.65	145.11	112.92	262	174	491	322
46	12.56	10.67	17.87	15.91	30	26	49	40	69	82.98	65.91	161.68	129.33	293	188	548	352
47	12.94	11.23	19.04	16.76	32	27	53	44	70	93.20	73.30	181.25	148.72	330	204	615	387
48	13.40	11.93	20.50	17.82	35	29	58	48	71	102.45	82.71	204.38	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.89	12.66	22.02	18.92	37	31	63	52	72	113.68	94.13	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.46	13.52	23.82	20.23	41	34	69	57	73	127.55	108.24	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.33	14.15	25.81	21.48	44	36	77	62	74	142.08	123.01	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.38	14.92	28.22	22.99	49	39	86	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
53	17.69	15.86	31.20	24.87	54	42	97	74	76	200.03	174.92	418.29	276.67	785	530	1489	982
54	19.05	16.85	34.33	26.83	60	46	108	82	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	956	658	1797	1215
55	20.66	18.02	38.02	29.15	67	50	122	90	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1167	817	2179	1504
56	22.28	19.04	41.28	31.10	73	54	134	98	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1389	983	2578	1807
57	24.24	20.27	45.24	33.46	80	58	148	107	80	450.51	386.48	859.57	596.78	1651	1180	3050	2164

* \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 monthly rates are rounded up to the nearest dollar. Therefore, actual monthly rates at \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 may be slightly less.

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**DARRYL
SCHRIVER**

PRESIDENT/
CHIEF
EXECUTIVE
OFFICER

We're All in this Together

TO MOST OF YOU, rising costs is not new news. It is hard to go anywhere or read anything without seeing rising costs and inflation. Your co-op has not been immune. The past two years have proven to be very difficult with Winter Storm Uri and rising power costs due to increased price of natural gas. Additionally, we have been working through the chapter 11 bankruptcy of Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, our wholesale power provider.

As costs continue to rise, we are doing everything we can to control costs. We have tightened down on operations and expenses to do our best to absorb the increases without impacting you, the members. Our all-in rate includes budgeted power costs, transmission delivery costs, and operation and maintenance expenses. We do everything within our power to keep costs low, but more than 75% of your overall bill is going straight to power costs. During this time, any effort to reduce energy use will benefit you as the end consumer. 800829357

For nearly two years, we have been fighting for you, the members of this co-op. With the help of our bankruptcy attorneys and consultants, the board and I quickly became chapter 11 bankruptcy “experts.” Chapter 11 bankruptcy is a reorganization bankruptcy, meaning the organization remains a business and a plan must be filed to route a better path forward. This also means that debts are not simply erased like other forms of bankruptcy. With this being said, the board and I fought hard to protect you during the process by retaining our own bankruptcy attorneys and consultants to help us make the best decisions rather than relying solely on Brazos’s resources. Our original power bill from Brazos for power costs during Uri totaled more than \$595 million. Through our efforts during the trial, our portion of the costs came to \$477 million – nearly a 20% decrease.

I worked with the leadership team and the board to search high and low to find the best option for the members. We had the opportunity to securitize, which we feel is not a good option because of three main reasons: (1) securitization benefits Wall Street investors who purchase the bonds that fund the debt; (2) securitization is long-term, often upwards to 30 years; and (3) there is no option to pay the long-term debt early. We chose traditional financing through CoBank, a member of the Farm Credit System, which provides flexibility that is not available in the securitization model. First, CoBank is a co-op itself so we earn capital credits that will help lower the overall cost to you the members. This allows us to keep money local rather than lining the pockets of Wall Street investors. Second, there is no penalty to paying off the debt early.

Last month, you saw a timeline of the entire bankruptcy process that included key moments and how we worked for you. I wrote that we expected Brazos’s bankruptcy exit plan to be confirmed on November 14. Judge Jones confirmed the plan, meaning that we are approaching the end of this endeavor and we will see the fruits of our efforts. Starting March 1, 2023, we will gain power supply freedom. This allows Tri-County Electric Co-op to go directly to the ERCOT market to procure power, which we predict will lower your bill over time. Additionally, we advocated for Brazos to sell assets, specifically the generation fleet. This too will come to fruition in 2023 which will help lower Brazos’s liability. I truly believe these are huge wins for you as members. Power supply freedom alone will save your co-op millions, and potentially bring cost savings that ultimately offset the Brazos Financing Utility Plan Rider each month.

I have heard that many of you do not feel you, the members, should have to pay for the failures of managing power supply during Winter Storm Uri. First, I want to reiterate your co-op, Tri-County Electric Co-op, did not fail you during Uri and our employees worked around the clock to make sure you were in the best position possible. Second, the Brazos Financing Utility Plan Rider goes well beyond the impacts of Uri – it is the cost of power supply freedom. As members of the co-op, we are collectively paying to exit Brazos as our wholesale power provider. I say we, because I am a member of this co-op just like you. You have my word that I will continue to fight for you and transparently communicate what is happening at your co-op. We are in this together. ■



**MAX
WADDELL**

CHAIRMAN

DISTRICT 9

A Seat at the Board Table

AS WE EMBARK ON A NEW YEAR, many of you may be working on new year’s resolutions. It may be focusing on your physical, financial or spiritual health, or it may be learning a new hobby or trade. Here at your co-op, we have resolutions as well. Each year, we strive to set goals that improve your member satisfaction and service reliability. Here are a few things your board is focused on in the first part of 2023:

RISING COSTS

As costs continue to rise, we are doing everything we can to control costs. We have tightened down on operations and expenses to do our best to absorb the increases without impacting you, the members. Our all-in rate includes budgeted power costs, transmission delivery costs, and operation and maintenance expenses. We do everything within our power to keep costs low, but more than 75% of your overall bill is going straight to power costs. During this time, any effort to reduce energy use will benefit you as the end consumer. There are energy-saving tips available at tcectexas.com/energy-efficiency

BRAZOS BANKRUPTCY

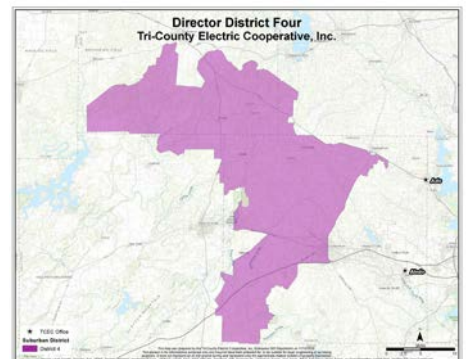
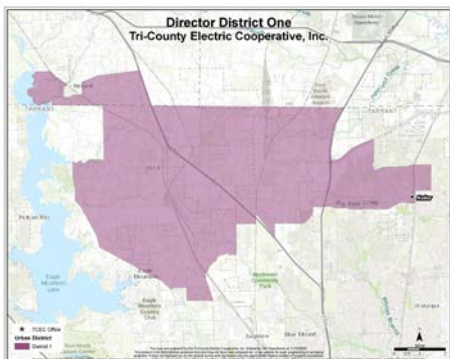
President/CEO Darryl Schriver has provided continuous, transparent updates throughout the process. When Brazos filed for bankruptcy in March 2021, we as a board tasked him with leaving no stone unturned. The board is very pleased with the outcome of the bankruptcy process and have had your best interest at the forefront since the beginning. We engaged in meetings almost weekly with the co-op’s leadership team and the bankruptcy attorneys and consultants to ensure we were up to speed on recent developments so we could make the best decisions for the co-op. 800722996 As we approach the end, I can firmly say that I believe we are on the best path possible for the future of the co-op. Tri-County Electric Co-op worked with other Brazos member-cooperatives to advocate for all members, and as a result a hardship fund was created to assist members who are financially unable to pay for the additional monthly cost.

BRAZOS FINANCING UTILITY PLAN RIDER

Starting January 3, members will see a new line item for the Brazos Financing Utility Plan rider on billing statements. The tariff will accumulate revenue to repay our loan to CoBank. We sought traditional financing through CoBank to cover our portion of the Brazos bankruptcy due to the benefits it brings you as a member of this co-op. This tariff will cover the costs to exit Brazos and the all-requirements power contract and allow Tri-County Electric Co-op to secure its own power from the ERCOT grid. This power supply freedom will ultimately bring savings to the members.

2023 DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS

Applications are now available for interested and eligible members seeking nomination to the board of directors. This year’s election cycle will have director districts 1, 2 and 4 on the ballot. Interested members of these districts are encouraged to read the director qualifications and disqualifications in Article 4 of the Tri-County Electric Co-op bylaws, as well as the Election Policy and Procedures. All nomination information, including the application, is available on the website at tcectexas.com/director-elections. ■





Above: Matt Brockman, a Tri-County Electric Co-op member, pauses at the top of the John Justin Arena in the Will Rogers Memorial Complex as a reining horse event is held below.

TELLING THE STOCK SHOW STORY

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS CONTENT SPECIALIST

FOR SOMEONE who has never been a farmer, Matt Brockman has done an awful lot in agriculture.

Brockman's dad was a cattle buyer and hauler, and the family moved often. He finished high school in Granbury, then graduated from Tarleton State University and went to Washington, D.C., to work for Congressman Charles Stenholm.

Stenholm, a former co-op manager, was on the House Agricultural Committee and Brockman was a legislative aide, helping hammer out the details of farm-related bills amid the budget cuts of the 1980s. When he left Stenholm's staff, he went to work for the National Grain & Feed Association, representing warehousemen, processors and marketers. A few years later, Stenholm's childhood friend Rick Perry got elected Texas Commissioner of Agriculture and offered Brockman a job in Austin.

"Perry was a Texas House member [1985-1991] and when he would come to D.C., he would always come see Charlie, hang out with me and the other aides and use our telephone," Brockman said. "When he called, I was ready to come back to Texas."

In 2000, Brockman took a job as executive vice-president of the Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and moved to Fort Worth. After six years, the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show asked him to be its administrative manager. He left for a couple of years to serve as director of the National Ranching Heritage Center at Texas Tech University but came

back in 2015 as the Stock Show's communications manager.

That's when he and his wife bought a place near Thorp Spring, in Hood County, and became members of Tri-County Electric Cooperative. It wasn't exactly a leap into the unknown.

"I had known Bea and Neil Allen since I was a kid," he said. Neil managed the co-op's Granbury district office for 32 years, and his wife Bea, along with a close-knit staff, made it feel like a family business.

"They waved the co-op flag," he said. "Then a couple of years later, Darryl Schriver, my buddy from college, was named the CEO. Like a lot of people, I didn't really think about the fact that I belonged to an electric co-op, but Neil and Bea and Darryl put a face on it."

Having worked so long in agriculture, joining the co-op felt like coming full circle. 800717194

"I didn't grow up farming," he said. "I didn't belong to a co-op elevator or a co-op gin, although I dealt with a bunch of them. But my experience with this co-op has been very good."

He cited the friendliness of the guys who came out to install his new "smart meter" and the fact that during the winter storm of February 2021, his power never even blinked.

"I was working from home," he said. "I had plenty of firewood and I was hunkered down, but my electricity stayed on the whole time."

STOCK SHOW STORYTELLER

"I like to think of myself as a storyteller," he said. "Being able to tell the story of the Stock Show every day is very rewarding."

Brockman oversees the Stock Show's publications and advertising, and works to develop relationships with print, digital and broadcast media. During the 2022 rodeo, he pitched a story to a local television station to focus on one of the world's first female breakaway ropers, Lari Dee Guy of Abilene – a 2021 inductee into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame.

"They sent a photojournalist named Noah Bullard, and he came out and did an awesome story," Brockman said. "We were able to get Noah connected with the folks at the Hall of Fame. That was so fun."

"Does this kind of stuff help sell tickets? Sure, and that's part of my job. But it's really fun just to enlighten people on the fascinating aspects of what happens out here for 23 days in January and February, every year."

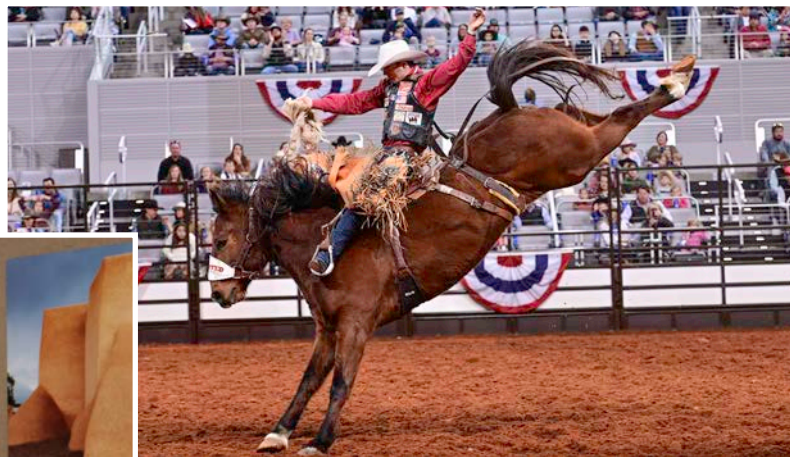
He also does "issues management," dealing with crises that come up, calming troubled waters and trying to keep the focus on the Stock Show's many positives.

"This job has its ups and downs, but at the end of the day, it's very rewarding," he said. "It doesn't hurt that it's 125 years old and has all this history and nostalgia and legacy to it." 3030887001



Above: Lari Dee Guy during the women's breakaway roping event at the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo on January 27, 2022. Image courtesy of Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo.

Below: Brody Cress during the bronc riding event at the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo on January, 23 2022.. Image courtesy of Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo.



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CROWDS AND COWS ARE BACK

The Fort Worth Stock Show began as the “Fat Stock Show” in 1896. It skipped a year in 1944 due to World War II and moved the following year from the Stockyards to the Will Rogers Memorial Complex.

In 2021, it skipped another year – this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic – but came roaring back last year with more than 1.2 million in attendance. This year’s event, which opens January 13 and runs through February 4, looks to be even bigger. Exhibitors from all over Texas and vendors from throughout the U.S. are expected to descend on Cowtown as concerns about vaccination and masking continue to fade into memory.

Even last year, with masks available everywhere and testing and vaccination sites operating on the grounds, Brockman said smiles still “overwhelmed the frowns.” 8002216501

He enjoys the smiles and tries to learn from the frowns.

“It’s a double-edged sword, for any business,” he said, drawing a comparison to the way Tri-County Electric Co-op deals with large numbers of members but stays loyal to its rural roots, nurturing personal relationships even as membership soars past the 100,000 mark.

Brockman calls those relationships “touchpoints” – and celebrates each one.

“Those are really cool,” he said. “They give it a face. The rest of the time, my power’s on and I have no complaints at all.”

That’s another story Matt Brockman is happy to tell.



Top Right: This 2022 stock show was another success. Image courtesy of Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo.

Middle Right: Oliver Grote, continuing his families tradition of competing in livestock shows. He won four Grand Champion Car Lot of Fat Steers during his competition years. Image courtesy of Shannon Worrell.



WAYS TO STAY WARM

With winter weather underway, it's important to be proactive and know ways to stay warm. From fuzzy socks to reversing your ceiling fan, we've got some tips and tricks to help keep you warm and cozy.

BY KENNEDY L. MOORE, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

1

What to Wear

Comfort trumps cute when we're talking below freezing temperatures. Layering your clothes will keep body heat trapped inside. Additionally, fuzzy or thick socks are integral to staying warm since our feet are closest to the cold, hard ground. Make sure your furry friends stay warm with a cute sweater or soft blanket.

2

Kitchen Comforts

Who doesn't love a nice bowl of chili or homemade soup during the colder months? Comfort meals, such as a noodle-based dish or stew, not only warm us up, but keep us warm! Our bodies work harder to produce heat, using up a lot of energy. The best way to get more energy is to load up on the carbs. Don't be shy about a second (or third) helping.

In addition to hot dishes, hot beverages are another great way to warm up. Coffee, tea, and hot cocoa are delicious options to sip on throughout the day. 800888700

3

Keep it Closed

When a room is not in use, keep the doors fully closed. You can also purchase door draft blockers or roll up a towel or blanket to cover the space underneath the door to prevent drafts from escaping. The same goes for closets and cupboards.

Lock your doors and windows. This will reduce drafts. Additionally, keep your garage door closed to prevent cold air from reaching the inner walls of your home.

4

Double-duty Décor

Rugs can tie a room together, but did you know they also act as an insulator? Invest in rugs in commonly used areas around your home to keep the floors from freezing your feet. Another great way to keep out the cold is to hang heavy duty curtains and keep them closed during dark hours when it's coldest.

5

Appliance Alliance

Reverse your ceiling fan to pull the warm air from the ceiling down to your level.

After running the dishwasher, dryer, or oven, prop open the door. Be mindful if you have pets or children!

Try a space heater. Smaller appliances use less energy, but always be sure to follow the directions and safety warnings for them! 800769192



Banner photo via Texas Time Travel

Callie Storek: I work for you

"GROWING UP IN A SMALL TOWN is having one big family. Working for the co-op is the same thing – we support each other, we're here for each other. We care for one another."

Callie Storek is a third-generation Seymour resident and a 2013 graduate of Seymour High School. She worked at a local grain company, alongside her husband, for eight years, and enjoyed dealing with the farmers who made up their customer base.

But when a job opened at Tri-County Electric Co-op, in her words, she "jumped on it."

Turns out, she still has many of the same customers – and a few thousand more. 800820666

Callie started March 29, 2021, as the fallout of Winter Storm Uri was still echoing. Now she's on the "front lines" every day, dealing with applications, service problems, billing questions and other problems that come up, anywhere in the 16-county service area.

Her small-town approach fits the co-op model like a glove.

"I love dealing with the people," she said. "I love hearing their stories and having conversations with them. I love the family feel."

She and her husband Cody have one son, Jake, who is eight and in the second grade. He accounts for most of their extracurricular activities.

"We're into baseball, football, basketball, dirt bikes, you name it," she said. "We fish a lot."

At home and at the co-op, it's all family. ■

Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

CONTACT US

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Darryl Schriver

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- Sommer Portwood, District 7
- Michael Sivertsen, District 8

24/7

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- App: TCEC Connect
- Phone: 817-444-3201
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Sweet & Sour Pork

BY ESMERALDA COUNTS OF MILLSAP

- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 lb. lean pork, boiled until tender and cut into 1" cubes
- Cooking oil for frying
- ½ cup broth on water
- 1 cup pineapple chunks
- 6 pcs. Sweet pickles, sliced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 1 carrot, cut in rounds
- 1 clove garlic, chopped fine
- 1 tbsp cornstarch, dissolved in 1 tbsp water

Sweet and sour sauce

- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup water
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ cup vinegar

Make a batter with flour, eggs and salt. Dip pork cubes in batter, one at a time.

Fry in hot oil until golden brown. Remove and drain in absorbent paper.

Return pork pieces to frying pan. Add pineapple chunks, sweet pickles, green peppers, carrots, garlic and ½ cup of broth.

Cover and cook for 10 minutes.

Prepare sweet and sour sauce by combining all ingredients. Pour in saucepan. Let boil uncovered for 5 minutes. Thicken with cornstarch.

Enjoy!

Cook's Tip: Recipe from the Philippines. Double the recipe to feed a larger family.



IMAGE COURTESY OF JANA: UNSPLASH

Tri-County Electric Co-op Member Recipe Submission Form

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CITY

EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER

RECIPE NAME

SUBMITTING YOUR RECIPE:

EMAIL: Please include the above information with your recipe and send to communications@tcctexas.com

ONLINE: tcctexas.com/recipe-submission

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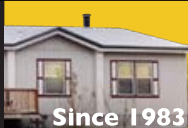
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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



together from Veracruz, Mexico, in 1554 on the way back to Spain. The king had ordered the ships to bring back 100,000 coins of gold and silver from Mexico for the Spanish treasury, smartly dividing the loads among the four vessels.

A tropical storm blew the ships off course, and winds pushed them across the entire Gulf and smashed three of them against the sandbars of Padre Island. Their hulls were pried open and their treasures spilled out onto the sandy bottom. The fourth ship, the San Andrés, was battered in the storm but made it to Havana, Cuba. In the centuries ahead, Padre would be known as the “graveyard of the gulf.”

The three wrecked ships—the San Esteban, Espíritu Santo and Santa María de Yciar—sat undiscovered for four centuries. The former two were found years later a few miles north of the Mansfield cut. Treasure hunters descended on them and had collected quite a fortune before the state of Texas took action and forced them to cease operations and turn over their plunder. The state eventually paid them \$313,000 for their efforts and then placed the coins, anchors, cannons and other artifacts from the wrecks in the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, where you can see them today.

And if you’re wondering if coins can still be found, the channel was dredged to its greatest depth in the past few years, said Ron Mills, executive director of Port Mansfield. “During those operations, there were no reported discoveries of new coins or other artifacts that may have pertained to the shipwrecks,” he said.

Sorry, treasure hunters. ■

Priceless Passage

The Port Mansfield Channel led to the Gulf—
and a 400-year-old Spanish treasure

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY BRAVE UNION

PADRE ISLAND is the longest barrier island in the world, measuring 113 miles from Corpus Christi to Brazos Santiago Pass. Up until the late 1950s, you could drive the length of the island with a decent four-wheel-drive vehicle. That changed in 1957, when the Port Mansfield Channel was dredged. The cut had been a decadeslong dream of the Laguna Madre-locked locals and gave them convenient access to the Gulf of Mexico.

At 4 a.m. on September 23, 1957, a giant dredger dug out the last sand dune, cutting the island in two and creating North and South Padre islands.

A Port Mansfield resident named Bill Rapp was elated. “I was there,” he wrote,

“when the dredge Miami took the final cut out of the old Padre and the waters of the Laguna Madre went rushing into the Gulf of Mexico.”

The Port Mansfield Channel is about 9 miles long, running 7 miles through the bay and through 2 miles of island mud flats and dunes to reach the sea.

During the dredging, the mud and clay being sucked from the channel and spewed onto the banks suddenly brightened with silver coins sparkling in the sunlight. The dredge had crushed an old Spanish galleon buried there for centuries.

The Santa María de Yciar was one of four ill-fated ships that had set sail

Gluten-Free

Try these special treats that stick to specialized dietary needs

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Gluten-free cooking has become more accessible thanks to the spread of products filling grocery shelves. Gluten-free recipes, required by some for health reasons, are a great way to explore new ingredients. While my family craves sweet crepes, I love using nutty buckwheat flour to make savory versions. Ham and cheese are classic fillings, but feel free to experiment.



Gluten-Free Ham and Cheese Crepes

1½ cups milk
1 cup gluten-free buckwheat flour
3 eggs
2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, melted, plus more for the pan
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
10–20 pieces thinly sliced ham

COOK'S TIP Crepes cook quickly, so keep an eye on the heat level and reduce as needed if the crepe is cooking before you can spread the batter around the pan.

1. In a large bowl, whisk together milk, buckwheat flour, eggs, melted butter and salt until smooth. Cover and place in the refrigerator to chill for at least 30 minutes and as long as overnight.
2. When ready to cook, place a nonstick frying pan over medium heat. Add a small amount of butter to the pan.
3. Whisk the crepe batter again and pour a small amount of batter into the pan, just enough to thinly cover the bottom. Quickly swirl the pan to coat the pan with an even layer.
4. Cook 1–2 minutes, then loosen the edge with a thin spatula and carefully flip the crepe over. Cook 1–2 minutes more, then transfer to a plate. Repeat with remaining batter.
5. To fill, return a crepe to the pan. Sprinkle on a small amount of cheese, then place 1–2 slices of ham and sprinkle with more cheese. Cook until warmed through and cheese is melted, then fold over edges toward the middle to form a packet. Serve topped with fresh herbs or a fried egg.

SERVES 10

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Bacon-Wrapped Asparagus.



Flourless Chocolate Cake

CAROL YOUNKIN
SAM HOUSTON EC

With no flour needed, this rich cake is a cinch to prepare. To cut into neat slices, Younkin recommends chilling the cooled cake until firm, then warming in the microwave as desired.

¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces, plus more for greasing the pan

1 cup bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips

½ cup unsweetened natural cocoa powder

¾ cup sugar

4 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Whipped cream or ice cream, for serving

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Generously butter the bottom and sides of an 8-inch springform pan or press a sheet of foil into the bottom and sides of an 8-inch round cake pan, smoothing the sides and buttering the foil.

2. Add a few inches of water to a saucepan and set over medium heat, bringing to a simmer. Set a heatproof bowl over the saucepan to create a double boiler and add the chocolate chips. When the chocolate looks soft and is starting to melt, stir with a spatula until smooth and completely melted.

3. Turn off the heat and add butter to the bowl, stirring until melted. Add cocoa powder and stir again until completely incorporated and smooth. Remove bowl from the saucepan.

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Gluten-Free Baked Spinach Fritters

KATHLEEN RUST
PEDERNALES EC



Perfect for brunch or as an appetizer or side, these tasty fritters are a great way to get more vegetables to the table. Rust came up with the recipe as an alternative to frying. She recommends gluten-free panko (Japanese-style bread-crumbs) as an alternative to cornflakes.

MAKES 15 PIECES

1 package frozen spinach (10 ounces), thawed but not drained

3 eggs

½ cup cassava flour

1 teaspoon adobo seasoning

⅛ teaspoon pepper

2 cups shredded mild cheddar cheese

1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese

¾ cup chopped leeks or onions

½ cup chopped bell pepper

1 large clove garlic, minced

¼ cup avocado oil

¾ cup crushed unsweetened gluten-free cornflakes, plus extra for topping

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

2. In a large bowl, combine spinach, eggs, cassava flour, adobo seasoning and pepper. Add cheeses, onion, bell pepper and garlic and stir until ingredients are evenly mixed.

3. Pour avocado oil onto a 9-by-13-inch sheet pan and tilt to coat the entire bottom and sides. Sprinkle crushed cornflakes over the bottom.

4. Dollop spinach mixture onto sheet pan, pressing gently with a spoon or spatula to spread evenly. Sprinkle additional crushed cornflakes over the top.

5. Bake 35 minutes, until browned. Cool until just warm and cut into squares.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TEXAS SEAFOOD DISHES DUE JANUARY 10

We want a boatload of recipes for all manner of seafood. Submit your recipes on our website by January 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

4. Stir in the sugar until incorporated, then add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the vanilla, then pour batter into prepared pan.

5. Bake 40–50 minutes, until crackly and dry on top. A toothpick inserted 2 inches from the edge should come out clean. Cool cake in the pan on a wire rack, then remove springform side or lift cake out using foil overhang. Serve warm, at room temperature or chilled with whipped cream or ice cream on top.

SERVES 8–10

Pão de Queijo (Brazilian Cheese Bread)

CAROLINE TEIXEIRA
PEDERNALES EC

Tapioca flour, also called tapioca starch, is essential for making chewy Brazilian cheese bread. Note that the dough will be wetter and stickier than a traditional bread, so avoid the temptation to add too much flour.



1¼ cups whole milk
½ cup water
6 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
2 teaspoons salt
4 cups tapioca flour, plus more as needed
2 eggs
1½ cups grated Parmesan cheese
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a saucepan, combine whole milk, water, oil and salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.

3. Add the tapioca flour to the bowl of a stand mixer and pour the boiling liquid over the flour. Mix well on low speed until mixture looks soft, sticky and stringy.

4. With the mixer running, add eggs one at a time, fully incorporating after each. Add cheese a little at a time until all is added and dough is fully mixed.

5. If dough is too moist, add a small amount of tapioca flour until a soft and sticky dough is reached.

6. To shape the bread, wet your hands with cold water. Scoop a small amount of dough out with a spoon or your fingers and roll into a ball slightly smaller than a golf ball. Arrange on a baking sheet and repeat until all dough is shaped, rewetting hands as needed during the process.

7. Bake 15–20 minutes, until puffed and golden.

MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN

TCP You don't have to wait until January 20, National Cheese Lovers Day, to partake of this dairy delight. We have more than 300 recipes that include cheese on our website. Now you can't wait, can you?



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The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Afterlife Sentence

John Wesley Hardin remains behind bars even in an El Paso cemetery

BY CHET GARNER

LIKE MANY TEXANS, I grew up hearing legends of famous gunfighters who roamed the Wild West. They were quick with a pistol and even quicker to gun down anyone who crossed them. Among the most notorious was John Wesley Hardin, who claimed to have killed more than 40 people in his lifetime.

On a trip to El Paso, I stopped by the historic Concordia Cemetery to visit his grave and see if he could still send shivers down my spine like his stories did when I was a kid.

Concordia Cemetery looks like the set of an old Western movie. Tombstones and wooden crosses cover a landscape of dirt and cactuses. It holds more than 60,000 graves dating back to the 1850s, but it didn't take long for me to find Hardin's final resting place, which is protected by a canopy of iron and stone.

Hardin's story is a violent one. Despite numerous arrests and escapes, starting in his teens, the native of Bonham was eventually sentenced to 25 years in prison for killing a deputy sheriff in Comanche County. During his time in prison, Hardin studied law, led Sunday school and attempted to change his nefarious ways.

At the age of 41, he received a full pardon and moved to El Paso to practice law. Sadly, his old ways followed him westward, and he was shot in a saloon. The coroner famously said, "If Hardin was shot in the eye, it was excellent marksmanship. If he was shot in the back, it was excellent judgment."

Hardin's grave was covered with coins and tokens left by visitors and a pair of golden guns. It's a fitting reminder that those who live by the sword die by the sword. Or in Hardin's case—the gun. ■

ABOVE As Chet can see, there will be no more escaping for John Wesley Hardin.

TCP Chet aims to pay a personal visit to one of Texas' shadiest outlaws. 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.

JANUARY

07

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Western Swing, (830) 896-9393, caillouxperformingarts.com

Valley View Trout Kids Derby, (940) 637-2294, tpwd.texas.gov

09

Uvalde [9-14] San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo Qualifier Event, (210) 985-4748, sarodeo.com

12

Glen Rose [12-14] Somervell County Youth Fair, (817) 964-2752, somervellcountyyouthfair.com

Plano [12-14, 19-21, 26-28] Four Weddings and an Elvis, (972) 849-0358, roverdramawerks.com

13

La Grange Kelly Willis, (979) 968-9944, thebugleboy.org

Lubbock Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan and William Shatner, (806) 792-8339, buddyhollyhall.com

New Braunfels [13-15] Antique Show and Sale, (918) 619-2875, heritageeventcompany.com

14

Fredericksburg Blues Festival, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Granbury The Mammoth Ice Age Run, mammothrace.com

Monahans Sandhills Resolution Run, (432) 943-2187, monahans.org

Austin [14-15] Citywide Vintage Sale, (512) 441-2828, citywidevintagesale.com

15

Fredericksburg Take 3,
fredericksburgmusicclub.com

**San Antonio Untamed
With Filipe DeAndrade,**
(210) 223-8624,
tobincenter.org

16

**Houston MLK Grande
Parade,** (713) 560-8328,
mlkgrandeparade.org

20

Lufkin Pink Martini, (936)
633-5454, angelinaarts.org

**Galveston [20-21] Yaga's
Chili Quest and Beer
Fest,** (409) 770-0999,
yagaschiliquest.com

**South Padre Island
[20-22] Market Days,**
spimarketdays@gmail.com,
spimarketdays.com

**Port Aransas [20-29]
Restaurant Week,**
(361) 749-5919,
portaransas.org

21

**Irving Las Colinas
Symphony Orchestra,**
(972) 252-2787,
lascolinassymphony.org

**Kerrville ZuZu African
Acrobats,** (830) 896-9393,
caillouxperformingarts.com

**Lake Jackson Delfeayo
Marsalis With the
Brazosport Jazz Orchestra,**
(979) 285-2501,
brazosport.org

**Victoria Jason Scheff's
Chicago Nights,**
(361) 576-4500,
victoriasymphony.com

MORE EVENTS >

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Pick of the Month

Wild Game and Wine Camofest

Bay City, January 28
(979) 245-8081
baycitycamofest.net

Break out the camouflage and blend into a festival with locally caught samples of wild game, fish and fowl; wine; food inspired by Texas wines; live entertainment; shopping; and activities for the kids.

29

Port Aransas Home Tour, portagardenclub@hotmail.com, facebook.com/portaransashometour

Surfside Beach Food and Art Festival, (979) 233-1531, surfsidetx.org

Temple Temple Symphony Orchestra, (254) 778-6683, templesymphony.org

Lufkin Marian Anderson Quartet, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Richardson Rhapsodies in Blue, (972) 744-4650, www.eisemanncenter.com

FEBRUARY

JANUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

21

Fredericksburg [21-22] Rockhounds Gem and Mineral Show, (325) 248-1067, rockngem.com

Plano [21-22] Dallas Area Train Show, chris@railroadmodelers.com, dfwtrainshows.com

24

Tyler The Doo Wop Project, (903) 566-7424, cowancenter.org

26

Schulenburg Turtle Wing Toast, (979) 505-5090, turtlewingfoundation.org

27

San Angelo [27-29] Comic Con, sanangelocomiccon.com

28

Coppell San Jose Taiko Interactive Matinee, (972) 304-7047, coppellartscenter.org

Mathis Kid Fish, (361) 547-2635, tpwd.texas.gov

02

Orange The Simon and Garfunkel Story, (409) 886-5535, lutcher.org

South Padre Island [2-4] Kite Fest, (956) 761-1248, spikitefest.com

03

Burnet [3-4] Highland Lakes Quilt Festival, hlqguild@gmail.com, hlqq.org

04

Brenham Brenham Heritage Museum Dance at La Bahia, (979) 337-7580, visitbrenhamtexas.com

Corpus Christi Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra: An Interplanetary Experience, (361) 883-6683, ccsymphony.org

North Zulch Chili Cook-Off, (979) 488-9214, facebook.com/nzvfvd

Rockport [4-5] Clay Expo, (361) 729-5519, rockportartcenter.com

Nature's Color

"Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour."
—From *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

"The majestic Frio River offers amazing fall colors in the Texas Hill Country near Concan."

2 JAZZMIN AGUAYO
PEDERNALES EC

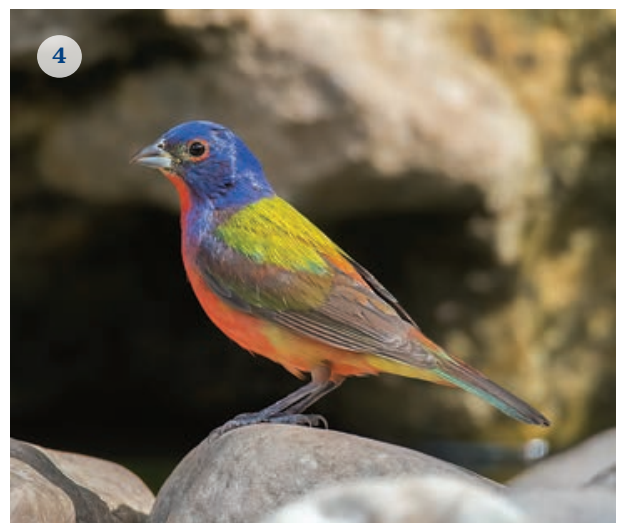
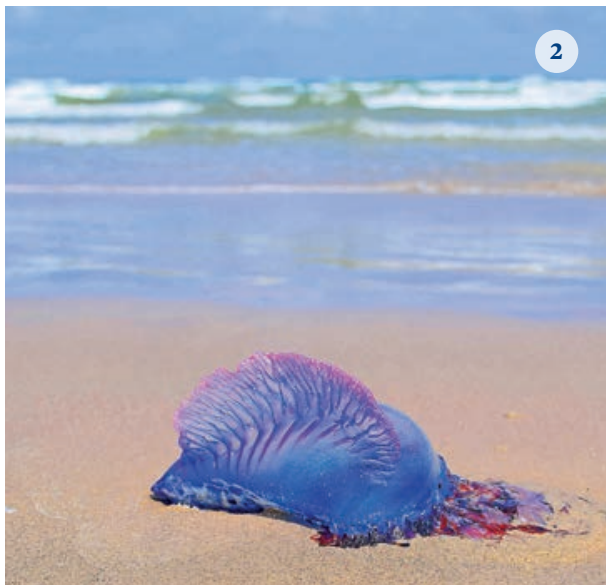
"A Portuguese man-of-war on the shore of Port Aransas provides a vibrant display of brilliant color."

3 GARY IMM
SAM HOUSTON EC

This emission nebula, as seen from the shores of Lake Livingston through a large telescope, is called the Cat's Paw Nebula.

4 MIKE ZARELLA
PEDERNALES EC

This male painted bunting stopped for a drink at the bird blind water feature at Pedernales Falls State Park.



Upcoming Contests

DUE JAN 10 **Taking Flight**

DUE FEB 10 **Dad**

DUE MAR 10 **Waterfalls**



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Nature's Color photos from readers.



Oh! Possum!

Learning to like a late-night neighbor

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY KIRSTEN ULVE

THE FIRST TIME our resident opossum and I met in the dark on a tiny, enclosed back porch was traumatic for both of us. I may have screamed. He may have hissed.

We made hasty retreats in opposite directions—he back through the broken pet door he had rudely entered.

The next night, my husband caught him in a humane trap, took him to the farthest corner of our back pasture and shook his seemingly dead body out of the trap. He was “playing possum.” And he had already developed a taste for the cat food we keep on the back porch.

He was back the next day.

After his return from eviction, I looked up some fascinating facts about him.

In spite of their naked, ratlike tails, opossums are not rodents. They are the

only marsupial—pouched mammal—native to North America and have been around for 70 million years, once coexisting with dinosaurs. Their short life span, one to two years, is due to their many predators—dogs, coyotes and humans.

There are 65 species of opossums, and all are related to kangaroos and koalas. While the only species that populates the U.S. is the Virginia opossum, others reside in Central America, South America, Australia and New Guinea.

Opossums are not aggressive. Their open-mouthed hissing is a bluff—but with 50 teeth, more than any other North American land mammal, it worked on me. If hissing isn’t successful, they feign death, falling on their sides with tongue extended in hopes that predators will lose interest and move on. If the predator decides to call this ultimate bluff, the opossum is a sitting duck.

Opossums have a number of redeeming qualities. They eat cockroaches, ticks, crickets, spiders, beetles and June bugs and find snails and slugs a delightful delicacy. We once had an infestation of slugs, which left their slimy, silvery trails all over the sidewalks, storm doors, back porch and the bowl of cat food. Since our opossum began his nightly visits, the slugs have been vanquished. Eureka!

Opossums, which can hiss and foam at the mouth as defense mechanisms, get a bum rap. They almost never carry rabies because their body temperature is too low to sustain the virus. President Benjamin Harrison kept two pet opossums in the White House. President Herbert Hoover had one too.

Our little visitor doesn’t kill chickens, nor does he tip over the garbage cans. He has learned to coexist with our cats, who are too fat and lazy to stay up for his late-night visits.

So I guess we won’t be installing a new pet door any time soon. He’s welcome to his cat food appetizer. ■

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