

SCIENCE STUDENTS  
REACH GREAT HEIGHTS

PRAISE FOR A TEXAS NOVEL  
NEVER RUNS DRY

KINDNESS VISITS  
A TINY CHAPEL

# Texas Co-op Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2023

## Still Grabbing Glory

Senior rodeo competitors' pride  
'just won't let them be old yet'





gdefy®

EXPERIENCE THE

Miracle



PATENTED  
VERSOSHOCK®  
SHOCK ABSORPTION  
TECHNOLOGY

"After suffering with extreme foot pain for months, I can finally walk again with no pain. **They are truly miracle shoes!**" – Carol D.

See more miracle testimonials at [gdefy.com](http://gdefy.com)

Enjoy the benefits of exercise without harmful impact on your joints!

- ✓ Renewed Energy
- ✓ Improved Posture
- ✓ Maximum Protection
- ✓ Relieve Pain

60-DAY "TRY DEFY" MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE!

**ENERGIYA \$160** MED/WIDE/X-WIDE AVAILABLE

This product is not intended to treat, cure or prevent any disease.

Women



- TB9037FBL  
Black
- TB9037FMA  
Maive
- TB9037FUO  
Blue/Orange

Men



- TB9037MBL  
Black
- TB9037MGP  
Gray/Purple
- TB9037MWG  
White/Gray

**\$30 OFF** orders of \$150 or more

Promo Code **MQ8KQT5**

Expires December 31, 2023

FREE SHIPPING, EXCHANGES & RETURNS

**800-429-0039** · [www.gdefy.com](http://www.gdefy.com)

Plus Free Corrective Fit Orthotics  
for plantar fasciitis, stability & support!



VersoShock® U.S Patent #US8,555,526 B2. \$30 off applies to orders of \$150 or more. Cannot be combined with other offers. Free shipping on orders over \$50. Free Corrective Fit orthotics not included with sandal purchase. Additional sales taxes may apply. Shoes must be returned within 60 days in like-new condition for full refund or exchange. Credit card authorization required. See website for complete details.



# October 2023



06

## It's Rocket Science (And so Much More)

High school students learn to problem-solve by building giant, powerful rockets.

*Story by Mark Wangrin  
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

ON THE COVER  
The 88-year-old hands of Jimmy Tobolka await their next chance to rope a calf.  
*Photo by Julia Robinson*

ABOVE  
Time for McGregor's rocket class to learn whether all its hard work will fly.  
*Photo by Scott Van Osdol*

## 10 Still in the Saddle Again

Calf roping at 80? Competition—and camaraderie—have no upper limits in the senior rodeo circuit.

*Story and photos by Julia Robinson*

04

**Currents**  
The latest buzz

05

**TCP Talk**  
Readers respond

16

**Co-op News**  
Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative

25

**Footnotes in Texas History**  
It Still Reigns  
*By W.F. Strong*

26

**TCP Kitchen**  
Beans  
*By Vianney Rodriguez*

30

**Hit the Road**  
Puffy Taco Trailblazer  
*By Chet Garner*

33

**Focus on Texas**  
Photo Contest: Helping Out

34

**Observations**  
Noteworthy Grace  
*By Spike Gillespie*



# ‘The Right Thing To Do’

**SHORTLY AFTER** Mark and Cheryl Brown bought 200 acres near Ammannsville, halfway between Houston and San Antonio, they turned to conservation.

They gave their land a break from grazing, worked on grassland restoration and began networking with fellow landowners on the benefits of habitat management.

“Changing that mindset where people want to be a part of the land rather than dominate the land—it just seems like the right thing to do,” says Mark, a member of Fayette Electric Cooperative.

It’s been rewarding—for Mother Nature and the Browns.

More than 250 species of native plants thrive on their land, as do bird species with dwindling populations. And in May, the Browns received the Leopold Conservation Award—the state’s highest honor for private land conservation—for their prairieland restoration and community outreach.



## Concern for Community

Texas electric cooperatives donated nearly \$750,000 to at least 360 volunteer fire departments across the state in 2022. We celebrate that community involvement during October, which is National Co-op Month.

## TCP Contests and More

**ENTER CONTESTS AT**  
[TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM](https://TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM)



**\$500 RECIPE CONTEST**  
Best Brunch

**FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS**  
Vibrant Color

**CAST-IRON GIVEAWAY**  
We’re giving away heirloom-quality cookware from Fredericksburg Cast Iron Co. Enter online now to win.

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I collect ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our August prompt: **Back to school means ...**

Making new memories with my best friends, getting to meet new people, learning and experiencing new things.

ELVIRA PULIDO  
MAGIC VALLEY EC  
MISSION

An uninterrupted second cup of coffee.

PHYLLIS SUTTLE  
MIDSOUTH EC  
IOLA

New shoes, cooler weather and FOOTBALL!

MIKE WEBER  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES  
GRANBURY

Mother buying each of us boys two pair of Levi’s blue jeans for the new school year. (We used them as work jeans at the farm the following summer.)

MANUEL G. TREVIÑO  
MEDINA EC  
PEARSALL

Visit our website to see more responses.



AUGUST 2023 Charming the Alamo

“There’s a new Alamo cat? Ruby is my favorite part of Alamo history, so good to see they’re continuing the tradition.”

CINDER SCOTT  
VIA FACEBOOK



STEPHANIE DALTON COWAN

**Good To Hear**

Thank you for the audio about Larry McMurtry in *A Page of the Past* [August 2023]. It was much easier and enjoyable to listen to the story than to try to read the small print with my old eyes of 75 years.

Becky Parks  
Bluebonnet EC  
Maxwell

**A Long and Winding Labyrinth**

About 20 years ago, my husband built a labyrinth on top of a hill on our 17-acre hobby farm west of Trent [*Circles of Life*, August 2023]. He integrated it into the natural landscape of the hill, resulting in a multilevel path.

The entire labyrinth is approximately a mile walk. At the time it was built, we were told it was the largest one in North America. Visitors can reach us at dancingwithherbs@gmail.com.

Cyndi Hughs  
Taylor EC  
Trent



LAURA JENKINS

**In Defense of Mockingbirds**

The mockingbird was chosen by the Legislature to be the state bird of Texas in 1927—chosen because of its courage to protect its home and family even in the face of death [TCP Talk, August 2023]. It stands tall without fear to protect its brood, much like those who fought for Texas independence. That’s why it was chosen.

We have witnessed the mockingbird attacking snakes and hawks. It would serve us all well to take note of the parenting skills, courage and intelligence of these awesome birds.

Tim and Tammy Layman  
Coleman County EC  
Ballinger

Legislators in 1927 described the mockingbird as “a fighter for the protection of his home, falling if need be, in its defense, like any true Texan.” Need any more be said?

David Snipes  
HILCO EC  
Aquilla

**TCP WRITE TO US**  
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power  
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

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

Facebook Instagram Twitter YouTube LinkedIn Texas Co-op Power

**TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Chair** Neil Hesse, Muenster  
**Vice Chair** Avan Irani, Robstown  
**Secretary-Treasurer** Bryan Wood, San Augustine  
**Board Members** Dale Ancell, Lubbock  
Mark McClain, Roby • Julie Parsley, Johnson City • Brandon Young, McGregor

**PRESIDENT/CEO** Mike Williams, Austin

**COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
Mike Ables, Bellville • Matt Bentke, Bastrop  
Marty Haught, Burleson • Gary Miller, Bryan  
Zac Perkins, Hooker, Oklahoma  
John Ed Shinpaugh, Bonham  
Rob Walker, Gilmer • Buff Whitten, Eldorado

**MAGAZINE STAFF**

**Vice President, Communications & Member Services** Martin Bevins  
**Editor** Chris Burrows  
**Associate Editor** Tom Widlowski  
**Production Manager** Karen Nejtkek  
**Creative Manager** Andy Dougthy  
**Advertising Manager** Elaine Sproull  
**Communications Specialist** Jéden Clark  
**Communications Specialist** Alex Dal Santo  
**Print Production Specialist** Grace Fultz  
**Digital Media Specialist** Caytlyn Phillips  
**Senior Communications Specialist** Jessica Ridge  
**Food Editor** Vianney Rodriguez  
**Senior Designer** Jane Sharpe  
**Proofreader** Shannon Oelrich

**TEXAS CO-OP POWER** Volume 80, Number 4 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives. Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 76 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS** Subscription price is \$4.44 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50.

**Co-op members:** Please notify your co-op of address changes or other subscription requests.  
**POSTMASTER** Send address changes to *Texas Co-op Power* (USPS 540-560), 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. Please enclose label from this copy of *Texas Co-op Power* showing old address and key numbers.

**ADVERTISING** Contact Elaine Sproull at (512) 486-6251 or esproull@texas-ec.org for information about purchasing display ad space in *Texas Co-op Power* and/or in our 26 sister publications in other states. Advertisements in *Texas Co-op Power* are paid solicitations. The publisher neither endorses nor guarantees in any manner any product or company included in this publication.

**COPYRIGHT** All content © 2023 Texas Electric Cooperatives Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this issue or any portion of it is expressly prohibited without written permission. Willie Wirehand © 2023 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.





# IT'S ROCKET SCIENCE

(AND SO MUCH MORE)





## High school students learn to problem-solve by building giant, powerful rockets

In the predawn hours one Friday in May, a yellow school bus hurtles down U.S. Highway 281 with 19 students, one teacher and a lot of uncertainty.

A few things are known. The juniors and seniors from McGregor High School are heading to the town of Stonewall in the Hill Country. They will launch three rockets they have designed and built based on their own research and calculations—part of a curriculum called SystemsGo, developed by a local STEM teacher in 1996.

And that's where the uncertainty begins.

The science, technology, engineering and math students have never done this before. The year before, a funding mishap robbed them of the chance. This school year, they've done and redone the math, studied and applied the physics, checked the aerodynamics, and then built the rockets based on what they've taught themselves, measuring 100 times if they measured once. Because of the nature of rockets, they haven't been tested outside of computer simulations.

If that isn't enough, weather forecasts call for afternoon thunderstorms in Stonewall, which means their launch window could be compressed.

And it doesn't help that most haven't slept much. Some worked through the night. Others were bothered by an overnight storm; others consumed by what-ifs.

And there are a lot of what-ifs.

Moments after stepping down the bus steps at the Stonewall Chamber of Commerce, where five other classes from five other schools are already gathered, teacher Johnathan Whatley is approached by one of his students. Mario Suarez is wearing a T-shirt with "Never Waste Talent" on the back and a sheepish grin.

"We have a predicament," he says. Of course they do.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP A.J. Jimenez carries a McGregor High School rocket off the bus on launch day. Aaron Olivera checks parachute lines. McGregor rocket club students huddle during the competition. A rocket launches during a SystemsGo event in Stonewall. RIGHT The thrill of a successful launch for members of the McGregor class.

### STAGE 1 | Getting Off the Ground

Dozens of high schools participate in the SystemsGo rocketry curriculum, which culminates in competitive launches at the end of the school year. Teachers leave the rocket building and problem-solving up to the students.

Whatley's go-to response is, "That's interesting. What do you think?" The idea is for the students to figure things out on their own, which is how SystemsGo got started.

Brett Williams was a marine fisheries expert at Texas A&M University at Galveston. When he retired in 1996, he became a science teacher at Fredericksburg High School.

"I didn't have lab equipment," Williams says. "I didn't really have anything. I didn't have a curriculum. I was making it all up as I went."

Today—27 years later—65 schools across Texas and New Mexico launch more than 150 rockets each spring at test sites in Texas and New Mexico as part of SystemsGo, Williams' brainchild.

These aren't toy rockets. These are full-fledged 7-foot-long projectiles, some carefully configured to carry a 1-pound payload as close to a mile high as possible or break the sound barrier. The most advanced few among them carry a payload of university research to an altitude of 50,000 feet.

### STAGE 2 | Preparing the Mission

A few miles down the road from McGregor is Crawford, home of SpaceX's rocket testing facility. Occasionally, Whatley's class hears the loud roar of ignition.

Last year's class even got to visit. They saw the facilities



McGregor's Kirsten Galle, left, and Isaiah Thomas prepare a rocket. Teacher Johnathan Whatley calls Galle "a mathematical whiz."



and were allowed off the bus just once—to see close-up the first rocket the company landed safely.

"That was the 100th rocket they'd launched," Whatley says. "That's not a cautionary tale, it's a tale of hope. Here are professionals who have it blow up on them. And then they succeed."

After graduating from Baylor University in 2014, Whatley applied for a coaching job at McGregor, also agreeing to teach the rockets class after he was hired.

"It made me really excited for just the possibilities of different types of education," he says. Some students—even the brightest ones—don't learn to think for themselves, and some need to be challenged, he says. So that's what he does.

The fall semester focuses on the basics of flight. During the first weeks of class, Whatley dumps an assortment of rocket parts on a large table and asks the students to build a small rocket that's fitted with a beginner's rocket engine and launched.

"They make some pretty terrible stuff," Whatley says. "They think the more fins the better. They get creative. Like why not? But that's them failing—but then learning from their mistakes."

Their second goal, Whatley says, "is to build a stable rocket." That's the one they'll try to fly in Stonewall.

### STAGE 3 | The Race to Launch

It turns out the predicament Suarez mentions is minor. They forgot a section of plastic tubing vital to fueling. "It's a chance to work on your social skills," Whatley says to Suarez. The implication is clear: Ask around.

The group is an amalgam: football players, makers, math nerds and more. But all plan to attend college, many in technical fields.

"This class definitely reshaped the way I went about doing school," says Suarez, who wants to be a hair stylist. "Before, I would slack in classes. But whenever I got to rockets, I understood that you can't do that. There are deadlines that need to be met."

For Williams, there's more than just hard work, or even serendipity, at play with SystemsGo. He recalls cold calling a rocket parts company only to unexpectedly catch the CEO at lunch, reading an article about the program as he ate. He was a yes.

And there was a real long shot—dialing the Pentagon from the middle of nowhere, hoping to find someone to ask about borrowing some launch technology. He reached a general's adjutant, who was in Fredericksburg the week before for a presentation. Impressed, he connected Williams to the general, who said, "I know I'm supposed to say no, but this guy tells me I have to say yes." And he did.

### STAGE 4 | Launch, Recovery, Retrospection

The storms do not materialize in Stonewall. After much back and forth with officials examining the rockets, a few close calls, and frantic recalculations, all three McGregor rockets pass muster: They launch and fly straight and high.

None earns an award, though one just misses reaching the 1-mile threshold. The students don't know that as they bus back to McGregor, stopping at the Chick-fil-A in Marble Falls for a celebratory feast.

Once back, the teams do their post-launch analyses, looking at what they did right and what they didn't. Uncertainty will be met with experience next year, when the nucleus of 11th graders returns for a chance to improve.

Schematics will be honed. Math will be tightened. Construction will be polished.

Next May, the sky's the limit (weather permitting). ■





# HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

In the magazine and on [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com), we make it easy to shop for friends and family.



## Homegrown Texas Pecans and Pecan Treats

**Berdoll's has been family-owned for 44 years.** We make delicious pecan pies, chocolate pecans, honey-glazed pecans and more. Shop our retail store or let us ship the perfect gift for you!

(512) 321-6157  
[berdoll.com](http://berdoll.com)



## Ideal Arm Protection for Any Activity

**Helps Prevent Bruising and Protects Those With Thin Skin!** Soft leather protective sleeves help protect you from 100's of injury-prone chores you do at work, home, farm, or ranch. Even has adjustable airflow!

(651) 492-4830  
[armchaps.com](http://armchaps.com)

COMES IN 4 COLORS AND 7 SIZES



## 1950s Flashback Calendar

**Large 20-by-15-inch calendar with 12 watercolor scenes.** Revisit the past with these iconic '50s settings by Texas State Artist George Boutwell. \$15 plus tax and \$3.50 shipping. See website for quantity pricing.

1-800-243-4316  
[gboutwell.com](http://gboutwell.com)



## Texas Red Grapefruit and Avocados

**Always a gift in good taste.** Orchard-fresh grapefruit and other Texas products are all hand-selected, carefully packed and shipped to be delivered just in time for the holidays.

1-800-580-1900  
[crockettfarms.com](http://crockettfarms.com)



## The Best of Typically Texas Cookbook

**Favorite recipes from Texas Co-op Power.** Look back at these best-loved recipes from two of our most popular cookbooks. Contact your local co-op today, or place your order online.

[texascooppower.com/shop](http://texascooppower.com/shop)



## Fudge and Divinity for the Holidays

**The Best Fudge in Texas. The Best Divinity in the World.** Bring back those childhood memories of Christmas with the sweet gift of fudge and divinity from Holiday Farms.

[holidayfarmscandy.com](http://holidayfarmscandy.com)  
[divinitybydave.etsy.com](http://divinitybydave.etsy.com)





***Still in  
the Saddle  
Again***





## **CALF ROPING AT 80? COMPETITION—AND CAMARADERIE— HAVE NO UPPER LIMITS IN THE SENIOR RODEO CIRCUIT**

**C**ompetitors pace their horses before a barrel racing event on a warm October day at Circle T Arena. It's the statewide finals, and competitors are wearing their finest—spotless boots, hats and tack. Their high-strung mounts trot back and forth at the dusty arena in Hamilton, about 70 miles west of Waco, awaiting their call times.

When the clock starts, horse and rider burst from the gate in a blaze of energy and graying hair. Precision turns, pivots and raw speed streak through the arena. Cheers of support rise from the grandstands: "You got this, Grandma!" and "Let's go, Gram!"

It's all over in a few blinks.

Billie Bright, 63, takes the win with a time of 15.8—only 2.5 seconds slower than the current national champion, who is about 35 years younger. Not bad for an oldster. Four-time National Finals Rodeo world champion Hailey Kinsel, 29, holds the fastest barrel time—13.34 seconds.

Today's statewide finals are one of the 23 events the Texas Senior Pro Rodeo Association, celebrating 45 years in 2023, hosts for competitors 40 and older. Rex Sandifer's father, Morris, was one of the founding members of the organization in Waco in 1978.

"There were lots of amateur rodeos at the time, but it's just difficult as a 40-year-old to compete against 20-year-olds," Sandifer says. So Morris and a few other aging cowboys organized calf roping events for the older crowd. That grew into steer dogging, bareback and bull riding. "And all of them said, well, why don't we just go in and make a rodeo association out of it?"

The TSPRA put on full rodeos, including bull and bronc riding, in the 1980s. "There were probably two or three of those guys that were pretty good bull riders, and then the rest of the guys were people who wished that they were bull riders earlier in their lives," Sandifer says with a laugh.

The decision was made to drop the more dangerous events from the schedule but not because they didn't have competitors. "It was hard to get producers to haul animals for eight or 10 people," says Sandifer, a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

Today, many of TSPRA's 300-plus members are former pro rodeo riders, ropers and barrel racers from Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Ages range from the association minimum into the 80s, and competitors are grouped by age. But some old-timers can still beat the young whippersnappers, and many older members choose to compete in multiple younger divisions.

"Some people join and think it's going to be easy because it's all old-timers, but we have cowboys and cowgirls that are still going to circuit finals and winning open rodeos," says Beverly Shoaf, secretary of the TSPRA board of directors.

Bright, a member of Taylor Electric Cooperative from Baird, has been competing in rodeos for 50 years and is one of the top barrel racers in the 60-plus division. She has had to refine her approach.

"For me, at my age, I've learned that I can't ride just every horse that comes around," she says. "I have to look for a



OPPOSITE J.J. Jolley of Stephenville whips around a barrel during the Texas Senior Pro Rodeo Association finals last October in Hamilton. ABOVE Karen Little of San Saba gets a hug from her grandson Asher.



*"It's real important to have these rodeos because if you ever quit, you're done." —REX SANDIFER*

horse that moves a little smoother and doesn't throw a whole lot of torque."

Earlier in her career, Bright could spend hours training on horseback, but these days, she rides for half an hour before giving her knees a break. "We have to have a lot of core strength to do what we do at our age," she says. "Your hand-eye coordination needs to be real sharp. And if you don't compete fairly often, like every two weeks or so, you get slower and slower."

But Bright says other skills have only improved. Her ability to read animals gives her a competitive advantage that came with age. "You can anticipate nearly what a horse is fixing to do from each step that they take," she says. "Each stride that they take, they're telling you something if you're really listening."

Tomm Owens, vice president of the TSPRA board and a member of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative, didn't join the association until he was 50.

Rex Sandifer of Elgin prepares his lasso. His father, Morris, was one of the founders of the senior circuit in 1978.

"I was competing in [pro] events when I was 35, 40, 45. I was one of them that held out," says Owens, who's trying to convince his friends to join. "Their pride just won't let them be old yet."

For Owens, aging into a new bracket is part of the fun. "You kind of get excited again," he says, "because you're going to be the youngest in the group, and you're hoping you're one of the best."

Like Bright, he says his experience gives him a competitive advantage—but for a different reason. "Mentally it's easier as I get older. I don't get as frustrated when things don't go right," Owens says. "You learn not to let the little things bother you."

But he admits that the physical aspect only gets tougher. "Once you get out of shape, it's really hard at 55–60 to get back into shape," he says. "I do 20–30 minutes of stretching every morning and then some situps and pushups."

Jimmy Tobolka is living proof that bodies in motion tend to stay in motion. At 88, he's TSPRA's oldest member and still competes in the 80-plus breakaway, where a mounted rider ropes a running calf.





ABOVE Pat and Jimmy Tobolka of Caldwell are regular TSPRA competitors. Jimmy, at 88, is the circuit's oldest member. LEFT Doug Richards of Bedias closes in on a calf.

"Once you start doing it, it's hard to get quit doing it, you know?" he says. "It's helped keep me going all these years."

One of the youngest members of the association is Seth Smithson, the president of the board, who turns 40 in December. "I think it's a breath of fresh air from the hustle and bustle," he says. The 2023 TSPRA statewide finals are October 19–21 at Circle T Arena in Hamilton. "You come hang out with the older crowd and watch these guys compete and see how great they are with their horses, and you can definitely learn a thing or two."

**T**he TSPRA's prizes aren't much—trophy saddles and buckles—but that's not the main reason any of these competitors are here.

"Nobody's going to get rich at our rodeos," Owens says. "So much of it is just being able to see all the guys you used to rodeo with, cook steaks out back at the trailers and eat a meal Saturday night with maybe 10 or 15 people at every other trailer. That's a big, big part of it."

But no one can question the enthusiasm and the dedication these athletes have for their sport—for continuing to hone their craft, even as their bodies falter.

"We're all just very grateful to still be able to throw a leg over a horse," Bright says. "And when you have that gratitude of still being able to do it, nobody's moaning and groaning about winning." ■







# 1920s Style for a 1920s Price

It was a warm summer afternoon and my wife and I were mingling with the best of them. The occasion was a 1920s-themed party, and everyone was dressed to the nines. Parked on the manse's circular driveway was a beautiful classic convertible. It was here that I got the idea for our new 1920s Retrograde Watch.

Never ones to miss an opportunity, we carefully steadied our glasses of bubbly and climbed into the car's long front seat. Among the many opulent features on display was a series of dashboard dials that accentuated the car's lavish aura. One of those dials inspired our 1920s Retrograde Watch, a genuinely unique timepiece that marries timeless style with modern technology.

With its remarkable retrograde hour and minute indicators, sunburst guilloche face and precision movement, this design is truly one of a kind. What does retrograde mean? Instead of displaying the hands rotating on an axis like most watches, the hands sweep in a semicircle, then return to their starting point and begin all over again.

Retrograde watches by the big brands can set you back thousands; one recent offering from a big French fashion house is selling for more than \$150,000! But because we've designed the 1920s Retrograde Watch in-house, we can offer it to you for just \$99!

This watch is so wildly popular with our customers that we're actually concerned about running out; we only have 937 729 left for this ad!



JOIN MORE THAN 1 MILLION SMART PEOPLE WHO LOVE STAUER WATCHES

#### Watch Specifications:

- Precision movement
- Stainless steel case, caseback and crown
- Retrograde hour and minute indicators
- Water-resistant to 5 ATM
- Brown genuine leather band
- Fits wrists up to 8"

#### 1920s Retrograde Watch

~~\$399~~ \$99\* + S&P **Save \$300**

*\*Special price only for customers using the offer code.*

**1-800-333-2045**

Your Insider Offer Code: **RGW141-01**

*"An elegant and exciting timepiece that every collector will love."*

— George Thomas, internationally renowned watch expert

*"[A] unique and beautiful timepiece."*

— Carlos C., Los Banos, CA

Stauer, 14101 Southcross Drive W., Ste 155, Dept. RGW141-01, Burnsville, MN 55337 [www.stauer.com](http://www.stauer.com)

**Stauer® | AFFORD THE EXTRAORDINARY®**



CEO  
HERBERT "TREY"  
GREBE III

## Have Your Say

Join Voices for Cooperative Power this election season

**NOBODY KNOWS THE** importance of voting better than members of electric cooperatives.

It's how you have your say on the Medina Electric Cooperative Board of Directors every year and on statewide and federal issues and leaders every spring and fall. It's just part of being an American and a co-op member.

But as election season ramps up again, I want to tell you about an important new way to stay engaged in the political process to help ensure the future for electric cooperatives.

You see, Medina EC is part of a network of almost 900 co-ops across the U.S. that serve more than 42 million Americans. And now those folks are joining together through Voices for Cooperative Power, a grassroots network of co-op members created to help our elected officials better understand the many ways your electric co-op supports you and your community.

Much of the focus in Washington, D.C., these days is on large utilities in big cities, and as you know, co-ops like Medina EC are fundamentally different.

We're a local business that employs local people to power our community. We're not motivated by profits but by people—our friends and neighbors—which is why energy affordability and reliability and economic development mean so much to us.

We could use your help putting a human face on the opportunities and hurdles facing America's electric cooperatives. With tens of millions of small-town folks just like you, VCP hopes to build influence among the halls of power—but we need your help to get there.

By visiting [VoicesforCooperativePower.com](http://VoicesforCooperativePower.com) and joining the VCP movement, you can receive updates on the issues that matter most to you and, when needed, information on how to contact your elected officials and government agencies on proposed legislation or regulations that impact your co-op.

That way, you'll be ready October 23, when early voting starts across Texas this year. When we go to the polls with the cooperative principle of Concern for Community in mind, we instantly impact our political system.

It's a system designed to produce a government "of the people, by the people, for the people"—just like your local co-op. Help us make sure your voice and your friends and neighbors are represented by going to [voicesforcooperativepower.com](http://voicesforcooperativepower.com).

Until next time,  
Trey Grebe

**VCP** **Voices for Cooperative Power**  
*United for Stronger Communities*

**POWERING AMERICAN AGRICULTURE**

[voicesforcooperativepower.com](http://voicesforcooperativepower.com)

M.A.GENCY | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM





## October Is National Co-op Month

FALL IS A BUSY TIME, and October is a particularly eventful month with school, community and sports activities in full swing. It's also when all cooperatives celebrate National Co-op Month.

When Medina Electric Cooperative celebrates Co-op Month, it really means we're celebrating you! After all, our co-op wouldn't exist without you, our members.

Our core business purpose is to serve as your electricity provider, but the larger mission of the co-op is to help make our corner of the world a better place.

Concern for Community is one of seven guiding principles that all co-ops share. Like our wires running through our service territory, our concern for friends and neighbors flows through all of our decisions—because being a co-op means being a responsible partner and good neighbor.

Medina EC works to help our community thrive through initiatives led by our employees and local board that's composed of neighbors who live right here in our community. Because we're local, we understand our community's unique needs and strive to help meet them.

We're proud to support local youths through the Government-in-Action Youth Tour and scholarship programs. With your help, our Operation Round Up program and committee provide assistance to our community's most vulnerable members.

The word "cooperative" is close to "cooperation," meaning people working together toward a common goal—mutually benefiting one another and the larger community. That's the essence of the cooperative spirit. Our employees and member-elected board are invested in the community in which we live and serve.

Above all, as a co-op, we put our members' priorities first. As your trusted energy partner, we know that saving energy and money is important to you. We have numerous programs in place to help, so give us a call if you have questions about your energy bills.

Medina EC is continually examining ways to operate more efficiently while continuing to provide the highest level of friendly, reliable service you expect and deserve. After all, we were built by the members we serve. We're your local co-op.

## Medina Electric Cooperative



### CONTACT US

Toll-Free 1-866-632-3532

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

Web [MedinaEC.org](http://MedinaEC.org) - Chat Feature Available

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Voting District 1

Larry Huesser, (830) 363-7651

Wayne W. Scholtz, (830) 426-1328

Ken Weynand, (830) 426-0762

#### Voting District 2

Jimmie Raines, (830) 591-8437

Kenneth White, (830) 232-6541

Joe Foley, (830) 261-1304

#### Voting District 3

Annette Sorrells, (361) 231-0173

J. L. Gonzalez, (956) 286-1863

Rodolfo H. Rodriguez, (210) 846-1092

### CEO

Trey Grebe, 1-866-632-3532, ext. 1045

## Call us.

### TOLL-FREE

1-866-632-3532

Option 2: Report an outage

Option 3: Pay bill, get account balance

Option 5: Speak to a representative

### OFFICE LOCATIONS

**Bruni** 1300 FM 2050 N., Bruni 78344

**Dilley** 1718 W. FM 117, Dilley 78017

**Hondo** 237 Highway 173 N., Hondo 78861

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

**Uvalde** 2604 Highway 90 E., Uvalde 78801

**Corporate Office** 2308 18th St., Hondo 78861

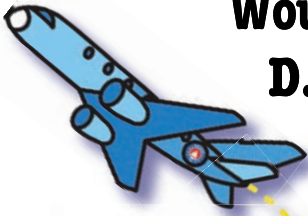
### VISIT US ONLINE

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



This institution is an equal-opportunity provider and employer.

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



# Would your teen enjoy a **FREE** trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2024? The Government-in-Action Youth Tour may be for them. **Apply now!**



YOUTH TOUR | TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

**Deadline to apply is January 5.**

**BONUS: Winners will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship!**

*Scan here to apply & learn more!*





# Medina EC Updating Member Information



**MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** is asking members to contact the cooperative to update any account information.

This information includes:

- name on the account
- cellphone and landline numbers
- email address
- mailing address
- primary use for electricity
- gate code

It's important to inform Medina EC of any updates to your account so we can continue to provide better service and communication to members.

If at any time you have a change to your account information, please call us at 1-866-632-3532 or email [Info@MedinaEC.org](mailto:Info@MedinaEC.org).

## POWER TIP

Ceiling fans can make a room feel 4 degrees cooler. To save energy with a ceiling fan, remember to raise your thermostat a few degrees while fans are turned on.



# Operation Grocery Give

## H-E-B gift cards are available for those in need



THIS PROGRAM IS MADE POSSIBLE BY OPERATION ROUND UP.

- ▶ Twenty-five H-E-B gift cards valued at \$200 each will be awarded.
- ▶ The ORU committee will review all applications and make award decisions. Recipients will be notified in early December.
- ▶ You can apply for yourself or on behalf of someone else at [MedinaEC.org/ORU](https://www.MedinaEC.org/ORU). The applicant does not have to be a member of Medina EC but must live in one of the 17 counties the cooperative serves. Applications are also available in Spanish.
- ▶ General ORU applications are also due November 3. You can apply for both Operation Grocery Give and Operation Round Up.

*Scan here to apply!*



**Get all the details on Operation Grocery Give and general ORU donations at [MedinaEC.org/ORU](https://www.MedinaEC.org/ORU). Applications for both programs are due **November 3**.**

# Color Your Co-op

A COLORING CONTEST FOR KIDS:  
THEY COULD HAVE THEIR ARTWORK FEATURED  
ON MEDINA EC'S WATER BOTTLES!

**CONTEST OVERVIEW:** Children who live in one of the 17 counties served by Medina EC are encouraged to participate in Medina EC's Color Your Co-op contest to design our next water bottle labels.

Two entry categories:

1. **Freestyle:** Use the freestyle format to design your own label. Artwork must not contain any copyrighted material.
2. **Neighborhood Style:** Use the predesigned neighborhood label to creatively color.

Children may only enter one category. A winner for each category will be chosen. Each winner will win a \$50 gift card. The contest begins on August 1, 2023, and ends October 31, 2023. Contest rules and dates may be changed at Medina EC's discretion. For every entry, Medina EC will make a \$1 donation to a local charity.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Children who live in one of the 17 counties served by Medina EC and are 4 to 17 years of age by October 31, 2023, are eligible. Employees and their immediate families are not eligible to participate.

**CONTEST RULES:** Artwork must be submitted or post-marked by Tuesday, October 31, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. Late entries will not be accepted. Freestyle submission must be original work created by applicants. Each child may only submit one design total. Artwork must include the submission form. All submitted artwork is owned by Medina EC and may be shared throughout MEC communication channels including but not limited to website, social media and magazine. Winners and their parents or guardians agree to the use of the winner's name, age, school and/or city to promote the Color Your Co-op program.

**DESIGN RULES:**

- Artwork must be flat (two-dimensional) and may use crayon, markers, paint, pencil, ink, and/or pastels. Artwork may also be digitally designed using digital art software.

- Designs must not include copyrighted material, including but not limited to company logos, product brands, store names, characters, etc.

- Designs must not be folded or damaged.

- Do not include the artist's name on the front of the artwork.

**SUBMISSIONS:** Artwork must be submitted using one of the templates in the August issue of *Texas Co-op Power* or from [MedinaEC.org/ColorYourCoop](http://MedinaEC.org/ColorYourCoop).

**JUDGING:** Entries will be judged by Medina EC staff based on creativity, uniqueness, overall visual appeal, composition and age appropriateness.

**PRIZES:** A minimum of two winners will be chosen, one for each category. Each winner will receive a \$50 gift card. Winners will be announced by December and their work will be featured on future Medina EC water bottles and in other Medina EC communication channels as needed.

For every entry submitted, Medina EC will make a \$1 donation to a local charity. The charity is TBD.

**SUBMISSION:** Include the submission form with entry. In Person - Drop off your entry at any Medina EC office during normal business hours.

Mail – Mail your entry to:

Medina EC  
ATTN Color Your Co-op  
PO Box 370  
Hondo, TX 78861

**\*\*Do not bend your entry!\*\*** Entries will not be returned.

**Digital**

Upload a high-resolution version of your artwork at [MedinaEC.org/ColorYourCoop](http://MedinaEC.org/ColorYourCoop) or email [MyCoop@MedinaEC.org](mailto:MyCoop@MedinaEC.org). Please do not use your phone to take a picture of your entry to submit. If you want to submit digitally, please use a high-quality scanner to send a copy of the entry.

Learn more about the contest  
and find the design templates at  
[MedinaEC.org/ColorYourCoop](http://MedinaEC.org/ColorYourCoop).



# Luck of the Draw

You have FIVE chances to win a \$100 credit on your electric bill.

- **Chance 1:** Register your account on SmartHub.
- **Chance 2:** Sign up for automated payments.
- **Chance 3:** Choose paperless billing.
- **Chance 4:** Join Operation Round Up.
- **Chance 5:** BONUS drawing for all four programs!

All members signed up for each of the programs above as of 5 p.m. on November 1 will be entered, including members who are already signed up for these options and any new sign-ups between now and November 1.

Learn more at  
[MedinaEC.org/Lucky](https://MedinaEC.org/Lucky).

GETANGELSTUDIO | FREEPIK

## BEWARE OF ENERGY VAMPIRES!



Standby power accounts for  
5% to 10% of home energy use.

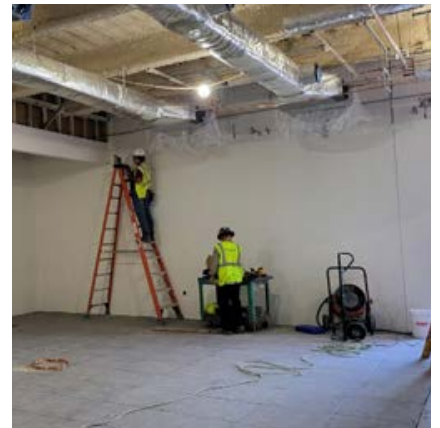
### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**World Teachers' Day**  
Thursday, October 5

**Farmers Day**  
Thursday, October 12

**Halloween**  
Tuesday, October 31

**Operation Round Up Applications Due**  
Friday, November 3  
*Learn more about ORU and apply at [MedinaEC.org/ORU](https://MedinaEC.org/ORU).*



## New System Operations Team Improves Reliability

IN 2021, MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE began researching the idea of an in-house 24/7 system operations team to increase the situational awareness of field crews and their location with a goal of improving the safety of our employees, contractors and the public. They also help ensure the reliable and efficient operation of the co-op's distribution system. A system operations team performs grid monitoring and controls operations

for the flow of electricity, including outage management and dispatching lineworkers to restore power as well as working closely with Medina EC's wholesale power supplier.

After much research, it was decided that this team needed to be housed in a separate building, built with extra precautions in case of natural disasters such as weather emergencies. In spring 2022, Medina EC's board of directors voted to approve the construction of

this new center that is built to withstand tornado force winds. In addition to our system operations team and equipment, the building also houses part of our information and technology team and their equipment.

The cooperative began staffing the system operations team in winter 2021. The operators worked out of a small conference room at the cooperative's corporate office while construction took place on the same property.

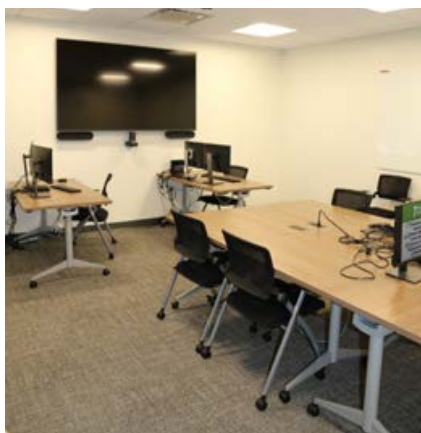
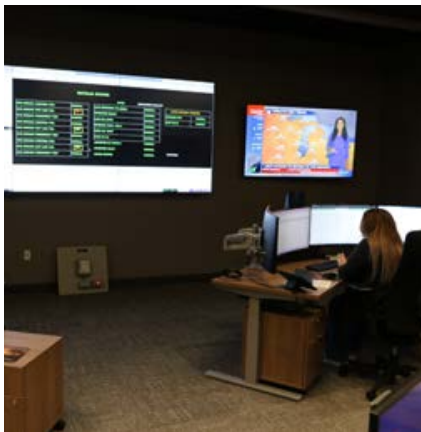


Construction was completed and the system operators and IT teams moved into the building at the beginning of 2023.

The system operators utilize a remote communications system, known as SCADA, to monitor our distribution grid in real time while collecting data from various sensors, devices and control systems to provide up-to-date information on the performance and status of Medina EC's distribution grid. Currently, Medina EC has this communications system only in the distribution substations and

on metering equipment, but the co-op has begun a project to extend SCADA to more than 750 electronic devices on more than 10,000 miles of distribution lines. In addition, the new technology will be able to run algorithms and analytics that can detect faults, abnormalities and deviations from normal operating conditions. When a fault occurs, such as a power outage or equipment malfunction, the system can quickly pinpoint the affected area, isolate the problem and provide diagnostic information to aid in troubleshooting repair.

Medina EC members are already seeing the benefits of having an in-house system operations team: full-time grid monitoring, enhanced situational awareness, and improved outage restoration times and communication are just a few that contribute to the reliable, efficient and safe operation of our power distribution.



FROM OPPOSITE: MEDINA EC BROKE GROUND IN 2021 ON A NEW BUILDING TO HOUSE THE SYSTEM OPERATIONS AND IT TEAMS. CONSTRUCTION ON THE BUILDING WAS COMPLETED AND THE TEAMS MOVED IN EARLIER THIS YEAR, UTILIZING NEW EQUIPMENT TO BETTER MANAGE THE EFFICIENT AND SAFE OPERATION OF OUR LOCAL DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTRICITY.



October is

**BOGO**

**Bonanza Month!**



**RENEWAL**  
by **ANDERSEN**  
FULL-SERVICE WINDOW & DOOR REPLACEMENT



Call before October 31

**Pay \$0 for a year!<sup>2</sup>**

Buy One,  
Get One

**50% off**

Windows and Doors<sup>1</sup>

**Call or scan the code to book your FREE Window & Door Diagnosis**



**RENEWAL**  
by **ANDERSEN**  
FULL-SERVICE WINDOW & DOOR REPLACEMENT

Scan to  
self-schedule  
your  
appointment



Austin

**512-298-1858**

San Antonio

**210-961-9990**

West Texas

**432-257-3640**

Dallas/Fort Worth

**469-606-5229**

**TopWindowSolution.com**

<sup>1</sup>Subject to availability, on a total purchase of 4 or more. Buy 2 windows or doors and get the second 2 windows or doors, of equal or lesser value, 50% off – applied to lowest priced window and/or door products in purchase. BOGO 50% off discount valid during first appointment only. Cannot be combined with other offers. To qualify for discount offer, initial contact for an appointment must be made and documented on or before 10/31/23 with the purchase then occurring on or before 11/10/23. <sup>2</sup>No payments and deferred interest for 12 months available from third-party lenders to well qualified buyers on approved credit only. No Finance Charges will be assessed if promo balance is paid in full in 12 months. Products are marketed, sold and installed (but not manufactured) by Renewal by Andersen retailers, which are independently owned and operated under Central Texas Windows & Doors LLC, d/b/a Renewal by Andersen of Austin and San Antonio. North Texas Windows & Doors LLC, d/b/a Renewal by Andersen of Dallas/Fort Worth and West Texas. See complete information and entity identification at [www.rbaguidelines.com](http://www.rbaguidelines.com). ©2023 Andersen Corporation. ©2023 Lead Surge LLC. All rights reserved.





# It Still Reigns

At 50, Elmer Kelton's 'The Time It Never Rained' remains 'a book of the heart'

BY W.F. STRONG

**WE SHOULD ALL BE** grateful that Elmer Kelton was a poor cowboy. When he was a young man, the now-famous writer said his inability to rope and ride well pushed him toward reading and then writing. Had he been a better cowboy, he told a reporter in 1984, "I'd still be working out on some ranch on the Pecos River."

It's been 50 years since *The Time It Never Rained*, Kelton's classic novel, was published. Many Texas literary critics consider it one of the best novels written by a Texan about Texas. It was also Kelton's favorite book and what he called his signature work—of the nearly 50 novels he wrote before he died in 2009.

The novel received the Spur Award

and the Western Heritage Award.

The book is not your run-of-the-mill Western. There are no shootouts. No one dies. Wallace Kaufman, who taught at Duke University, wrote that the novel should rank "with Faulkner's work as the local made universal."

Author Shelley Armitage grew up in the 1950s in the Texas Panhandle, when and where the novel takes place.

"To see oneself and one's landscape so accurately and aesthetically rendered was life-changing—as it remains today: a book of the heart," Armitage says.

Mike Cox, author of 14 books on Texas and the West, notes that Kelton covered the terrible 1950s drought for the *San Angelo Standard-Times* and began

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



writing fiction on the side.

"He used what he knew about the dry spell for *The Time It Never Rained*, a novel I don't believe he ever expected to become a classic," Cox says. "I predict that as the West continues to get drier and drier due to global warming, his book will become even more important."

For prolific author Wyman Meinzer, Texas' official state photographer who once shared a book signing with Kelton, his "words conjured memories of blinding dust storms, dry stock tanks and a land void of palatable grass."

Jac Darsnek, the man behind the much-loved *Traces of Texas* accounts on social media and a ubiquitous traveler and photographer of Texas, was 17 when he discovered the novel. He still draws inspiration from Charlie Flagg, the novel's admirable protagonist, whom Kelton created from his own cowboy father.

"Elmer Kelton's tale of hardship and endurance and main character Charlie Flagg's astonishing self-reliance resonated within me in a place I never knew I had, and his descriptions of ranch life spoke to my inner Texan," Darsnek said. "Decades later, when confronted with some obstacle or tough choice, I'll ask myself, 'What would Charlie Flagg do?'"

Steve Davis, curator of the Southwestern writers collection at the Wittliff Collections at Texas State University, says *The Time It Never Rained* is one of the most important Texas novels and a masterful example of eyewitness literature.

"Kelton was on the front lines when the great drought devastated the land and people he knew intimately," Davis says. "His resulting novel, richly observed and deeply empathetic, stands as the truest, most profound portrait of that era." ■



# Beans

Versatility turns this kitchen staple into a star

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

A quick and easy mixture of green, black and red beans tossed in a delicious, tangy dressing, this three-bean salad is great the day you make it, but it's even better to enjoy the next day for lunch.



## Three-Bean Salad

4 teaspoons salt, divided use  
 12 ounces fresh green beans,  
 rinsed and cut into 1-inch pieces  
 6 tablespoons olive oil  
 6 tablespoons lemon juice  
 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
 1 teaspoon ground cumin  
 1 teaspoon ground black pepper  
 1 can black beans (15 ounces),  
 drained and rinsed  
 1 can red beans (15 ounces),  
 drained and rinsed  
 ¼ cup finely diced red onion  
 1 cucumber, diced  
 1 cup finely diced carrot  
 ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley  
 4 tablespoons chopped fresh dill

1. Fill a pot halfway with water, add 2 teaspoons salt and bring to a boil.
2. Add green beans and cook for 3 minutes. Drain and pat dry.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, cumin, pepper and remaining 2 teaspoons salt.
4. Add green beans, black beans and red beans to bowl. Stir to combine, then stir in red onion, cucumber and carrot.
5. Cover and chill until ready to serve. Before serving, stir in parsley and dill.

SERVES 6

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at [sweetliffbake.com](http://sweetliffbake.com), where she features a recipe for Roasted Tomatillo Garbanzo Salad.





## Little Pots of Red Beans With Sour Cream

ALEXANDRA DIBRELL  
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Sometimes cooking for two can be tricky. Don't worry—Dibrell has hungry twosomes covered with a simple one-pot dinner idea. Bacon, beans and a little jalapeño kick, served warm and topped with sour cream, are pure comfort.

- 2 strips bacon, diced**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- ½ small red onion, finely diced**
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely diced**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ¾ cup chicken broth or stock**
- 1 can kidney beans (15.5 ounces), drained**
- 4 tablespoons sour cream**
- Fresh cilantro sprigs, for garnish**

1. In a skillet, cook bacon until crisp. Remove from pan and drain.
2. Add olive oil, onion, jalapeño and salt. Sauté until soft and translucent.
3. Pour in chicken broth or stock and return bacon to skillet, bringing to a simmer.
4. Stir in beans and simmer until warmed through.
5. Ladle the beans into two bowls and top each with sour cream and cilantro.

**SERVES 2**

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



**\$500 WINNER**

## Hurry Up Stew

EDITH FORSHAGE  
GVEC



A filling, hearty meal that's easy to prepare at the end of a busy day, Forshage's Hurry Up Stew is pantry-friendly and can be whipped up in under 30 minutes.

**SERVES 6**

- 1 pound ground beef**
- 2 tablespoons dried beef bouillon**
- 1 can diced tomatoes with green chilis (15 ounces)**
- 1 carton chicken, beef or vegetable broth (32 ounces)**
- 1 can pinto beans (15 ounces), drained**
- 1 can garbanzo beans (15 ounces), drained**
- 1 can hominy (15 ounces), drained**
- 1 can potatoes (15 ounces), drained**
- 1 can diced carrots (15 ounces), drained**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper**

1. In a nonstick pot, brown ground beef and drain.
2. Stir in bouillon, diced tomatoes and broth.
3. Add pinto beans, garbanzo beans, hominy, potatoes and carrots.
4. Add salt and pepper.
5. Simmer for 20 minutes to thoroughly heat ingredients.

## **TCP** \$500 Recipe Contest

**BEST BRUNCH** DUE OCTOBER 10

Brunch is at your place this time. What will you serve? We're looking for the best recipes in Texas. Submit your favorite online by October 10 for a chance to win \$500.





## Homemade Bean Dip

KAREN YEOMAN  
SAN PATRICIO EC

Yeoman has been cooking up this family-favorite dip for 40 years for family gatherings, church functions and parties. It's easy and delicious, and we're excited to share it with you.

**2 cups fully cooked pinto beans**  
**2 tablespoons picante sauce**  
**½ teaspoon garlic powder**

**¼ pound processed cheese product**  
**2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter**  
**Tortilla or corn chips, for serving**

1. Place beans, picante sauce and garlic powder into a blender. Blend until smooth.
2. In a glass bowl, melt cheese and butter in microwave, stirring at 30-second to 1-minute intervals until smooth.
3. Stir bean mixture into the cheese mixture until smooth. Microwave dip for 30-second to 1-minute intervals until thoroughly heated.
4. Serve warm dip with chips.

**SERVES 10**

**TCP** Among the more than 1,000 recipes in our online archive are dozens that include beans—even some for chili. You can find them all on our website.

## Fabulous and Versatile Beans

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Canned beans, a pantry staple, are not only delicious, they also are extremely versatile and budget-friendly, can shine as a main dish or side, and even work in desserts.

Try these ideas to get more from your pantry beans:

**Blend them into a creamy dip.**

**Stir some into your favorite stew.**  
(And they really are even OK in chili.)

**Use beans as a satisfying filling for your next taco night.**

**Consider them as a meatless option for making burgers.**

**Mix into cold salads for potlucks.**

**Bake puréed beans into brownies for added protein.**



FREDERICKSBURG  
CAST IRON CO.  
FBI USA



GO TEXAN.

## Cast-Iron Cookware

### Giveaway Contest

Enter today for your chance to win an heirloom-quality, handcrafted No. 14 "Comal" griddle or No. 12 skillet from Fredericksburg Cast Iron Co.

**TCP** Enter Today  
[TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://www.texascooppower.com/contests)



**PERMA-ROOF**  
from Southern Builders

**Steel Mobile Home Roofing**

High energy bill?  
Roof rumble?  
Leaks?

MOBILE HOME ROOFER SYSTEMS

Since 1983

Contact us at 800.633.8969  
or [roofer.com](https://www.roofer.com)

**Bank C.D.'s Due?**  
**CALL US NOW**

**1-800-359-4940** TEXAS TOLL-FREE  
[www.mattsonfinancialservices.com](https://www.mattsonfinancialservices.com)

**BLAKE MATTSO, CFP™**  
Signal Securities, Inc., 5400 Bosque, 4th Floor, Waco, TX 76710  
Serving Customers All Over Texas

All C.D.'s are insured to \$250,000 per institution by the F.D.I.C. All C.D.'s are subject to availability. Securities offered thru Signal Securities, Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC 700 Throckmorton, Ft. Worth, TX 76102. (817) 877-4256.



# FALL SAVINGS



## Bolt Together Steel Building Kits

Customer Service  
Second to None

**DDM Brenham Office**  
979-251-9503  
301 Salem Road · Brenham

**DDM Bastrop Office**  
512-321-0336  
1083 Hwy 71 W. · Bastrop

Photos for illustration only. Prices subject to change. Please check for your local buildings codes. Prices include color walls, color trim and galvalume roof.

\*Building prices are before freight and taxes.



### All Metal Structures



### Made in Texas



### Custom Barndominiums/Metal Houses

Affordable · Low Maintenance · Energy Efficient



### 40'x50'x12'



### 30'x40'x12'



Call today for our best pricing!

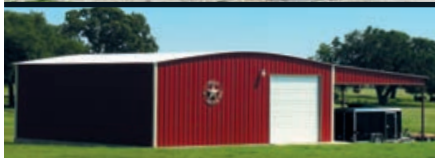
**\$14,485-30x40x12**  
2-10x10 roll up doors, 1-3070 walk door

**\$22,710-40x50x12**  
2-10x10 roll up doors, 1-3070 walk door

Freight and taxes not included in prices.

[www.ddmbuildings.com](http://www.ddmbuildings.com)

## TURNKEY METAL BUILDINGS



Erected Metal Buildings • 5" Concrete Slabs • 30 Years of Experience  
Instant Prices @ [WDMB2.com](http://WDMB2.com)

### WE PAY TOP PRICES FOR COLLECTIBLES

Coins • Banknotes • Gold & Silver Jewelry & Scrap  
Vintage Costume Jewelry • Watches • Stamps  
Tokens • Historical Documents • Other Collectibles  
TEXAS BUYERS GROUP • FREDERICKSBURG, TX  
All transactions private, confidential & secure.

830-997-6339 • [rzcoins@twc.com](mailto:rzcoins@twc.com)

### Low Cost Pole Barns

26' x 48' x 10'  
3 Sides Enclosed

Call now for our best pricing!

Hay/Horse Barns, Shops, Decks, Concrete Work and Pad Sites

Call Ron: 512-367-0428



**ARK-LA-TEX**  
SHOP BUILDERS  
"WE GOTCHA COVERED"  
SHOPS • BARNs • CABINS • [WWW.SHOPSBUILT.COM](http://WWW.SHOPSBUILT.COM)  
**830-730-0515**  
8670 IH 35 N NEW BRAUNFELS, TX




**BUILDINGS OF ALL SIZES**  
Shops • Garages • Barns • Equipment Sheds • Barndominiums  
**WE MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE!**

Price includes all labor and materials with 4" steel reinforced concrete slab with moisture barrier, one 10'x10' heavy duty roll up door, one 3 foot steel entry door, concrete aprons, electric stub \*(Dirt may be extra)




**SKID STEER MOUNTED SHEAR**  
• 1/2" to 6" diameter trees and brush.  
• Perfect for cedar, shin oak, persimmon, mesquite.  
**(512) 263-6830 • [www.brushshark.com](http://www.brushshark.com)**

**TCP Marketplace**  
Across Town | Across Texas

Advertise in Texas Co-op Power Marketplace  
Elaine Sproull (512) 486-6251  
[advertising@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:advertising@TexasCoopPower.com)



COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Puffy Taco Trailblazer

Legendary Ray's Drive Inn was the first and remains the best

BY CHET GARNER

**WHEN I HEAR** the term “drive-in,” I immediately envision greasy cheese-burgers, thick milkshakes and smiling carhops. But Ray's Drive Inn on the west side of San Antonio isn't that kind of joint. Sure, it's full of nostalgia, an old jukebox and belly-pleasing food. But Ray's has a magical, signature dish that separates it from all others—puffy tacos. After hearing the legend, I took a day trip to the Alamo City to try them for myself.

Ray's opened in 1956 as the entrepreneurial dream of Raymond Lopez. Legend holds that one day, Ray's grandmother was frying corn masa for tostadas. She stepped away from the fryer and a wooden stick (no doubt guided by the hand of God) fell from a shelf and folded the masa into a tacolike form. The family started selling these crispy yet fluffy shells full of meat, cheese, lettuce and tomatoes. In no time, a legend was born.

After almost 70 years, the restaurant is still family owned and operated by the children of Arturo Lopez, Ray's younger brother.

I found the restaurant far from the beaten path and could smell the deep-fried tortillas as soon as I stepped out of my truck. Inside, the walls were a menagerie of family photos, taxidermy and even a neon altar to the Virgin Mary. I ordered up a platter of three puffy tacos (beef, chicken, and bean and avocado) and found a table tucked below a painting of Ray, Arturo and their three other brothers.

One bite let me know that this was unlike any taco I had ever eaten. It was crunchy but soft and perfectly greasy. I had no choice but to order a few more with different fillings. You know, for research. ■

ABOVE Chet shows a close-up of a puffy taco before making it disappear.

**TCP** Follow along as Chet enjoys puffy perfection. See the video on our website and see all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



### Know Before You Go

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

## OCTOBER 07

**Boerne Book Festival,**  
(830) 249-3053,  
boernebookfest.com

**Grapevine Celebra**  
**Grapevine,** (813) 807-3382,  
latinosingrapevine.org

**Huntington Catfish**  
**Festival,** (936) 635-3306,  
shophuntingtontx.com

**San Marcos [7-8] Sacred**  
**Springs Powwow,**  
(512) 393-5930,  
sspowwow.com

**Weatherford [7-Dec. 2]**  
**Spirit of the West,**  
(817) 599-6168,  
weatherfordart.com

## 12

**Corsicana 175th Anniver-**  
**sary Time Capsule**  
**Ceremony,** (903) 654-4850,  
corsicana175years.com

## 13

**Albany [13-14] Living His-**  
**tory Days,** (512) 463-6100,  
thc.texas.gov

**Ingram [13, 15, 20-22,**  
**26-29] Frankenstein,**  
(830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

## 14

**Fredericksburg Monarch**  
**Celebration,** (830) 990-1393,  
wildseedfarms.com

## 19

**Tyler [19-22] Texas Rose**  
**Festival,** (903) 531-1212,  
texasrosefestival.com

## 20

**Brenham Brass Transit,**  
(979) 337-7240,  
thebarnhillcenter.com

## 21

**Cisco TX Pie Fest,**  
(254) 334-9621,  
ciscotxpiefest.com



**San Marcos Eddie Durham Jazz Fest**, (512) 217-0600, facebook.com/calaboosemuseum

**Waco Oakwood Cemetery's Walking Tales**, (254) 717-1763, facebook.com/heartoftexasstorytellingguild

27

**Galveston [27-28] Oktoberfest**, (409) 762-8477, galvestonoktoberfest.com

28

**Cibolo Cibolofest**, (210) 619-3104, cibolotx.gov

**Point Venture Holiday Bazaar**, (781) 363-7161, facebook.com/pvholidaybazaar

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

**Waxahachie Texas Country Reporter Festival**, (469) 309-4045, waxahachiecvb.com

31

**Johnson City Trunk-or-Treat at the Square**, (830) 868-7111, johnsoncitytx.org

## NOVEMBER

03

**Oakville Dobie Dichos**, (361) 319-3067, dobedichos.com

04

**Cottonwood Shores Legends of the Falls Festival**, (225) 747-0730, cottonwoodshores.org

### TCP *Submit Your Event*

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

# CELEBRATE THE ARTS IN KERRVILLE, TX!



Kerrville Chalk Festival  
October 14 - 15, 2023  
www.kerrvillechalk.org

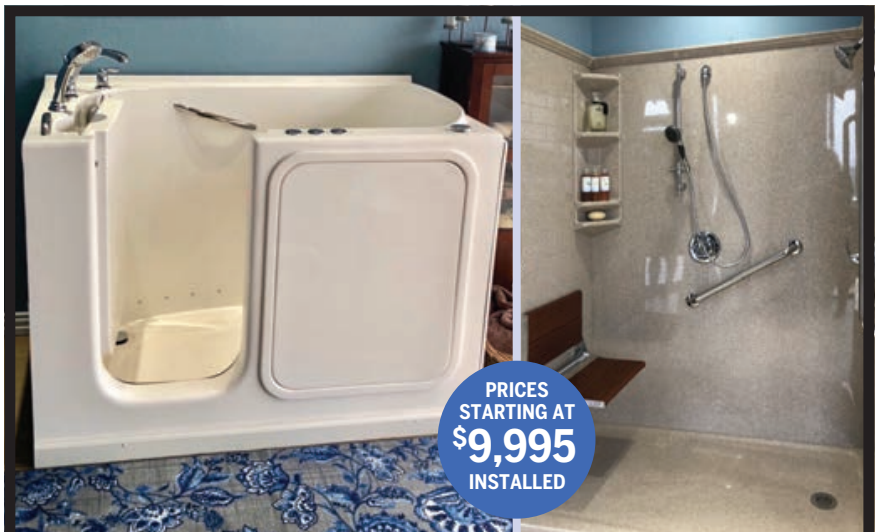


Welcome Home Fest  
October 12 - 15, 2023  
www.kerrvillefolkfestival.org



**KERRVILLE**  
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

[www.KerrvilleTXArts.com](http://www.KerrvilleTXArts.com) • 830-792-3535



PRICES  
STARTING AT  
**\$9,995**  
INSTALLED



**BEST BUY WALK-IN TUBS**  
FEATURING "SEALTITE" TECHNOLOGY

🇺🇸 SERVING TEXANS FOR 18 YEARS 🇺🇸

**From \$129 per month!**

- Lifetime Warranty
- Custom Sizes Available
- 100% Financing Available
- A+ BBB Rating
- Good Contractors List

Tubs and Showers Made in America  
🇺🇸 Visit Our Texas Showroom 🇺🇸

[bestbuywalkintubs.com](http://bestbuywalkintubs.com) • 682-205-3532 • 888-825-2362

# Heirloom Seed Kits

VEGETABLES, FRUITS, & HERBS • 100% NON-GMO

## Start A Home Garden Or Store Seed Vaults For Years To Come!

Provide for your family with **100% Non-GMO / Non-Hybrid** heirloom seeds that have been passed down from generation to generation.



### (125) VARIETY SEED VAULT

(With Ammo Storage Box) Survival seed kit includes 22,000+ seeds & 125 varieties of vegetables, fruits, & herbs, packed in an ammo box, for long-term storage. **\$119**

### (50) VARIETY SEED KIT

50 varieties of vegetables, fruits, & herbs, packed in a moisture proof, mylar storage bag. **\$49**

Now Shipping Fresh Seeds  
for the 2024 Growing Season!



**HEARTSGOOD**  
— F A R M S —

[HeartsgoodFarms.com](http://HeartsgoodFarms.com)

(866) 861-7111

Family-owned & operated.  
Cave Springs, Arkansas

# MOBILE SOLAR IS HERE



POWER ANYWHERE USA

- ◆ THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE GREEN SOLUTION
- ◆ LATEST TECHNOLOGY & ALL-IN-ONE DESIGN
- ◆ BATTERY STORAGE AND PROPANE BACKUP
- ◆ ELIGIBLE FOR THE 30% FEDERAL TAX CREDIT



POWER ANYWHERE USA



It Really Is ... **POWER ANYWHERE!!**

Call us today 833-SOLAR55

[www.poweranywhereusa.com](http://www.poweranywhereusa.com)



**AT LEAST 15% LESS THAN A ROOFTOP INSTALLATION - LET US PROVE IT!!\***

\* Conditions apply, subject to deed restrictions, equivalent power analysis, and quote verification



# Helping Out

From food donations to fundraising, Texans love to answer the call and lend a helping hand. Here's to all those who look out for others and embrace a challenge, rolling up their sleeves and pitching in for those in need.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 HANNAH WESTERVELT  
SAN PATRICIO EC

"My son and husband working on his truck."

2 KERI NAKAMURA  
TRI-COUNTY EC

"A son takes his 93-year-old mother on an evening walk."

3 BRANDON EMBRY  
DEAF SMITH EC

"I always liked this photo of my grandpa with my son trailing him around. We were getting ready to harvest wheat, and my kids always liked hanging out with Pop."

4 LINDSAY HUMPHREYS  
SOUTH PLAINS EC

"The beauty of raising kids in West Texas is they get to experience traditional branding and working cattle."



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE OCT 10** Vibrant Color
  - DUE NOV 10** Architecture
  - DUE DEC 10** Pollinators
- 

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

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Helping Out photos from readers.



## Noteworthy Grace

When the pandemic paused events, a tiny chapel celebrated kindness

BY SPIKE GILLESPIE  
PHOTO BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

**SEVERAL YEARS AGO** I bought an abandoned ranch just east of Austin. I dreamed of one day converting it to a meditation center, providing space for people of all walks to gather and sit in peace.

Running a ranch, even a small one, is pricey though. So I put my dream on hold and instead created a small wedding venue, a more lucrative way to support the place.

The crown jewel was a tiny chapel I had moved here from Luling. Couples loved the rustic feel and unique beauty of the building, fashioned from reclaimed wood and antique stained glass.

During the pandemic, business fell off and grumpiness befell some of the couples who proceeded with their plans. Frustrated with how the pandemic forced unwanted change—some had to reschedule, others watched guest lists

dwindle—they sometimes took out their aggravation on me. Overwhelmed by this negativity, sometimes I snapped back.

For a spell, after a particularly enraged bride eviscerated me because of the weather, I shut down altogether. Dismayed at how joyful celebrations had become overshadowed, I knew I needed to make a change.

A flash of an idea struck me. I recalled a Vermont chapel where people make pilgrimages to honor their dogs who have passed. I remembered a little chapel in Mexico where visitors leave notes of gratitude and *milagros* (prayer offerings) for St. Francis. I dubbed my itty-bitty church the Tiny Chapel of Kindness and invited people to send stories of kindness to adorn the walls.

And they did.

Their notes run the gamut from heartwarming to heartbreaking to flat-out hilarious. One describes being saved from a car wreck by strangers. Another hails an internet stranger who sent free motorcycle parts to a fellow tinkerer. One details the discovery, late in life, of a long-lost half-brother who embraced his “new” sister wholeheartedly (the siblings had been kept secret from each other because of the sins of their father).

I had many stories of my own to share, finally settling on one. Last fall, one of my longhorns went into labor. It was a bad journey. Unable to assist her alone, I called a neighbor for help. We cried as we worked together to deliver the stillborn calf. Then he administered penicillin so the mom would survive.

Grateful visitors come to read the stories and leave notes of their own. This is not the meditation center I’d envisioned when I first laid eyes on an old run-down property, but in our own fashion, we each meditate on the power of kindness. Powerful indeed.

As I had hoped, my attitude has shifted back to positive and, inspired by others, my anger has been replaced by joy and gratitude. ■



## Brand New for 2023!

2023 Pure Silver Dollars  
from FIVE Countries

ADDED this Year! 2023  
British Silver Britannia

This 2023 Set Includes  
Two "Firsts" and a "Last!"



5 Countries,  
5 Pure Silver  
Coins!

# Your Silver Passport to Travel the World

## The 5 Most Popular Pure Silver Coins on Earth in One Set

Travel the globe, without leaving home—with this set of the world's five most popular pure silver coins. Newly struck for 2023 in one ounce of fine silver, each coin will arrive in Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition. Your excursion includes stops in the United States, Canada, South Africa, China and Great Britain.

### We've Done the Work for You with this Extraordinary 5-Pc. World Silver Coin Set

Each of these coins is recognized for its breathtaking beauty, and for its stability even in unstable times, since each coin is backed by its government for weight, purity and legal-tender value.

**2023 American Silver Eagle:** The Silver Eagle is the most popular coin in the world, with its iconic Adolph Weinman Walking Liberty obverse backed by Emily Damstra's Eagle Landing reverse. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the U.S. Mint.

**2023 Canada Maple Leaf:** A highly sought-after bullion coin since 1988, this 2023 issue includes the FIRST and likely only use of a transitional portrait, of the late Queen Elizabeth II. These are also expected to be the LAST Maple Leafs to bear Her Majesty's effigy. Struck in high-purity 99.99% fine silver at the Royal Canadian Mint.

**2023 South African Krugerrand:** The Krugerrand continues to be the best-known, most respected numismatic coin brand in the world. 2023 is the Silver Krugerrand's 6th year of issue. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the South African Mint.

**2023 China Silver Panda:** 2023 is the 40th anniversary of the first silver Panda coin, issued in 1983. China Pandas are noted for their heart-warming one-year-only designs. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the China Mint.

GovMint.com • 1300 Corporate Center Curve, Dept. WRD357-05, Eagan, MN 55121

**2023 British Silver Britannia:** One of the Royal Mint's flagship coins, this 2023 issue is the FIRST in the Silver Britannia series to carry the portrait of King Charles III, following the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. Struck in 99.9% fine silver.

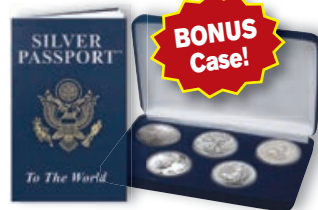


### Exquisite Designs Struck in Precious Silver

These coins, with stunningly gorgeous finishes and detailed designs that speak to their country of origin, are sure to hold a treasured place in your collection. Plus, they provide you with a unique way to stock up on precious silver. Here's a legacy you and your family will cherish. Act now!

### SAVE with this World Coin Set

You'll save both time and money on this world coin set with FREE shipping and a BONUS presentation case, plus a new and informative Silver Passport!



**2023 World Silver 5-Coin Set Regular Price \$229 – \$199**

**SAVE \$30.00 (over 13%) + FREE SHIPPING**

FREE SHIPPING: Standard domestic shipping. Not valid on previous purchases.

For fastest service call today toll-free

**1-888-201-7070**

Offer Code WRD357-05  
Please mention this code when you call.

 SPECIAL CALL-IN ONLY OFFER

Not sold yet? To learn more,  
place your phone camera here >>>  
or visit [govmint.com/WRD](http://govmint.com/WRD)



GovMint.com® is a retail distributor of coin and currency issues and is not affiliated with the U.S. government. The collectible coin market is unregulated, highly speculative and involves risk. GovMint.com reserves the right to decline to consummate any sale, within its discretion, including due to pricing errors. Prices, facts, figures and populations deemed accurate as of the date of publication but may change significantly over time. All purchases are expressly conditioned upon your acceptance of GovMint.com's Terms and Conditions ([www.govmint.com/terms-conditions](http://www.govmint.com/terms-conditions) or call 1-800-721-0320); to decline, return your purchase pursuant to GovMint.com's Return Policy. © 2023 GovMint.com. All rights reserved.



# MUELLER STEEL BUILDINGS AND METAL ROOFING



## READY TO BUILD YOUR DREAM?

With Mueller, you have access to a wide range of high-quality steel buildings, residential metal roofing, and components.

From complex buildings to self-storage units, from living spaces to backyard buildings, Mueller manufactures our products to ensure years of reliability. We invite you to see our many options at [muellerinc.com](http://muellerinc.com), then call or come by one of our 36 locations.



Learn more at: [www.muellerinc.com](http://www.muellerinc.com)  
877-2-MUELLER (877-268-3553)