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January 2024



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Making History

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TJ Phillips at a tiny home at Langetree Retreat and Eco Center near Liberty.
Photo by Laura Jenkins

ABOVE

Joe Hopps works on a bird-house at his studio in Edom.
Photo by R.J. Hinkle



Brimming With Wisdom

NATIONAL HAT DAY is January 15, as if Texans ever needed another reason to don a cowboy hat.

Certainly, everyday wearers know this truism, shared with us by Alice M. Wolf, a member of Navasota Valley Electric Cooperative, as she “finished this sentence” back in November 2021:

“A Texan would never ... set his hat down brim down.”

Read more about hats in *Cowboy Hatters*, April 2016, on our website.

Class Is Not Dismissed

In honor of National Classy Day—January 17—*Texas Co-op Power* writers and editors note these esteemed Texans:

Luke Savage, a former Texas Christian University pitcher, started the nonprofit Blessed Feet, which has collected thousands of pairs of used baseball cleats for budding baseballers in the U.S. and Dominican Republic.
—Chris Burrows

Simone Biles, who owns the most gymnastics medals, exhibits poise in her willingness to speak out against sexual abuse and advocate for mental health awareness.
—Jéden Clark

The late singer **Selena Quintanilla Pérez**'s career was brief but impactful, redefining Latin music for a new generation and an expanded audience. Even at her young age, she was involved with charities and humanitarian causes, especially those benefiting Texas children.
—Alex Dal Santo

Mary Kay Ash said about her cosmetics company's beauty consultants: “Here's a woman who's never had any praise at all for anything she's ever done. Maybe the only applause she's ever had was when she graduated from high school. She wants recognition. So we praise her for everything good that she does.” The company does good, too—supporting cancer research and survivors of violence.
—Jessica Ridge

Ima Hogg, born in the 19th century, turned her family's oil money to philanthropy, including the arts and mental health programs.
—Tom Widlowski

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

If I could turn back the clock ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our November prompt: **Why doesn't somebody invent ... ?**

A washing machine that dries the clothes, folds them and puts them up.

NANCY BECKER
CONCHO VALLEY EC
PAINT ROCK

A canoe-shaped hotdog bun to hold all the condiments and chili.

MIKE WEBER
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

A key fob that could roll up the windows on your vehicle when it starts raining and you are inside at work.

LARENDA BRADSHAW
JASPER-NEWTON EC
JASPER

A smoke alarm that can be serviced at ground level or without a ladder.

FRANK M. WAGNON
FORT BELKNAP EC
SOUTHLAKE

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TCP Contests and More

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RECOMMENDED RECIPES

You'll need something special for National Pie Day, January 23. Pick a pie recipe from among the dozens on our website. It's as easy as (searching) "pie."

Too Much Latitude?

Look at a map too long and weird details emerge.

For example, Portland, Texas, is nearly equidistant from Portland, Maine (1,852 miles), and Portland, Oregon (1,845 miles).

And this: A giant triangle of these Portlands captures more than 30 other states.



A Passing Notion

AS DRIVERS faced gas shortages and long lines at the pump 50 years ago, President Richard M. Nixon signed an act January 2, 1974, lowering the national speed limit to 55 mph.

That went off the books in 1995, and today Texas boasts the highest speed limit in the country: 85 mph on a stretch of State Highway 130, a toll road between San Antonio and Austin.



JULIA ROBINSON

OCTOBER 2023 Still in the Saddle Again

“After reading about the senior rodeo, my husband and I went to an event. It was wonderful seeing performers from 40 to 80-plus still enjoying what they love to do.”

CARLANNE HICKMAN
TRI-COUNTY EC
HASLET

A Signature Moment

On the reading list for a Texas literature class at Tarleton State University was *The Time It Never Rained [It Still Reigns, October 2023]*. We were told there would be a guest speaker to discuss writing—none other than Elmer Kelton himself.

He was soft-spoken, generous, patient and happy to be with us. I walked away with fond memories and his signature in my own copy, which I still have to this day.

Cole Hooper
Pedernales EC
Wimberley

I don't recognize Elmer Kelton without his hat [*It Still Reigns, October 2023!*] Have read many of his books, including this gem. He had a way of capturing a time and place and bringing it to life through many characters. An excellent writer and storyteller.

ERNIE BATTLE
VIA FACEBOOK



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A Stunning Memory

I was an elementary student near Austin [*A School Day Like No Other, November 2023*]. I think most schools were getting out early so parents could take children to see the motorcade. My mother was coming to get me.

Someone came to our room and whispered something to our teacher. Mrs. Griffin put her head down on the desk and began to cry. When she looked up, she said, “President Kennedy has been shot, and he won’t be coming to Austin.” We were stunned.

When my mother came to pick me up, she was crying too. I will never forget that day.

Susie McCalla
Central Texas EC
Kerrville

Family Ties

Frederick Law Olmsted is an ancestor on my mother’s side [*Appraising the Texas Landscape, November 2023*]. I am from Connecticut and worked my entire career at Hartford Hospital. In nice weather we would often go for walks on its approximately 10-acre beautiful campus, which was designed by Olmsted.

Virginia W. Smith
Nueces EC
Corpus Christi

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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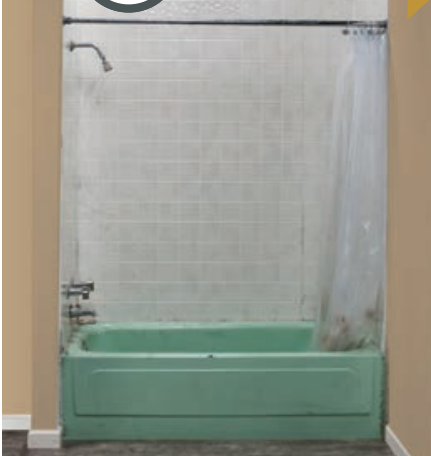
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Making History

For more than 50 years, artists have been drawn to this quiet, tucked-away studio row

BY PATTI PFEIFFER • PHOTOS BY R.J. HINKLE

THE SIGN SAYS Arbor Castle Birdhouses, but within lies an array of fanciful castles that seem perfectly inviting to gnomes and pixies if not birds. Crafted from hollow cedar logs; topped with tall, curvy conical roofs; and adorned in whimsical metal touches, these are more pieces of art than avian abodes.

Creator Joe Hopps has been carving birdhouses for 25 years and started quite simply.

“I saw a hollow log, had an idea, created one, entered it into a birdhouse competition in Oklahoma where I was living, and it won first place,” he explains.

Hopps recently added brushes to his repertoire, returning to another of his passions, acrylic abstract painting. “I began painting in the early ’70s and began again recently because of a saw accident, which nearly cut off several fingers.”

His canvases were showcased at the grand opening of a new art gallery, O3 Collective, just down the road from his shop in the small community of Edom, west of Tyler.



With a population of fewer than 400, what Edom (pronounced “E-dum”) lacks in size, it more than makes up for in gifted artists. From one-of-a-kind jewelry to high-end art and unique pottery, the small town’s main drag, FM 279, is a treasure trove of rare items and artisans eager to share their stories.

It all started a couple of doors down from Arbor Castle, at Potters Brown Collective. Once a grocery store, the wooden structure was for five decades the studio of Doug Brown, a California transplant who moved to Edom in 1970 and founded this artisan community.

A cluster of artists' studios continues Brown's vision. His widow, Beth Brown, a potter herself, lives next door to the studio today.

“Doug was a very humble man and wanted somewhere he and his friends could create and sell their goods and felt if he opened a place, others would follow,” Beth says. “Immedi-

ately upon seeing Edom, he knew this was where he wanted to set up shop, start an artists' community—and he wanted it to be a true community.”

Brown wasted no time turning his dream into reality—buying buildings, setting up his pottery studio and pitching his vision to artisan friends. And they did follow.

In 1972, Brown organized the first Edom Art Festival, which drew more than 3,000 attendees. Since then, every second weekend in October, a sprawling meadow behind studio row is transformed into a bustling venue. Crafters, musicians and festivalgoers from near and far gather to enjoy the sights, sounds, food and festivities of the two-day

OPPOSITE Beth Brown is the director of the Edom Art Festival. ABOVE Arbor Castle Birdhouses along the main drag.



Zeke Zewick, right, creates jewelry using uncommon materials, above. "Not all jewelry has to be gold, diamonds and sparkly," he says.



event that includes a wine-tasting garden featuring local vineyards, musicians and crafting for kids. The festival has grown in content and count, attracting some 15,000 visitors in 2023.

After Brown's death in 2020, his building was eventually sold, but it still bears his name and remains a pottery center that sells ceramics from local makers.

And the community is still going strong.

Stepping outside, my eyes were drawn to a jewelry store of a different sort: Zeke & Marty. Even the door handles are distinctive, custom-made from sika deer antlers from Japan and carved by the owner, Zeke Zewick.

I marveled at the array of custom jewelry of every material, size and sort—even dyed bone pieces inlaid with unique gems, dispelling the adage that diamonds are a girl's best friend.

Using woolly mammoth teeth from Siberia, Turkish agates, shells from the Sea of Cortez, antlers and bones, Zewick prides himself in creating one-of-a-kind pieces.

"Not all jewelry has to be gold, diamonds and sparkly," he says. "Different material provides for different thoughts for pieces. Oxide steel is what some throw away as trash,

but I like the contrast of it with sterling."

He especially likes working with bone, which is malleable and easy to grind and polish, dyeing it with alcohol inks. The materials are uncommon, and so are his pieces.

Zewick, one of the original Edom artists, has been creating since 1969, first with leather but spending the past half-century as a jeweler. He knew Brown and received one of his original invites.

"He knew I was looking for a place to move after graduating art school," Zewick says. "This place had trees and water, and being from Lubbock, I felt we were in heaven."

Prompted by a desire to "get out of the city and move back home to a simpler, less stressful way of life," Shanna Wiggins relocated here from Austin three years ago.



She used to own a succulents shop on FM 279, and like other residents, she was eager to share her story.

“Originally, the locals were hesitant, feeling hippies didn’t belong here,” she says, “but we all love each other, so it doesn’t matter.”

For the traveler looking for a slower slice of life, Edom has a couple of restaurants serving home-cooked meals. Sips offers hand-crafted coffees, sodas and other nonalcoholic drinks.

Edom is eccentric and inviting and a true “poke-n-plumb” place: By the time you poke your head out of the vehicle, you’re plumb outta town, which adds to its charm. It’s a place where strangers don’t exist. ■

ABOVE Whimsy is a dominant feature of Joe Hopps’ birdhouses. RIGHT A signpost helps visitors to the East Texas town find their way.

East of Edom

Other attractions along FM 279.

Green Goat Winery A cozy tasting room and covered patio overlook 7 acres of vines.

Blue Moon Gardens This 6-acre gardener’s paradise sells plants, tools and supplies.

Coltharp-Beall House The 175-year-old home has housed itinerant preachers and stagecoach travelers.



DREAMING

BIG

Students and community leaders collaborate to build tiny homes that help veterans become whole again





W

hat the heck are you doing?”

The sharp sound of his girlfriend’s voice jolted TJ Phillips awake. But the bigger shock came when he opened his eyes.

“I had my knee on her neck,” says Phillips, shaking his head. “And I was going through the motions of putting flex cuffs on her. She laughed it off after I explained that I’d been dreaming about being on active duty again. But I wasn’t laughing. I knew I needed help.”

Phillips, an Army sergeant who served 1991–99 and was honorably discharged, says he made an appointment with Veterans Affairs to address his post-traumatic stress disorder. But he felt like he was too young to be on all the medications they prescribed.

Instead, as many do, he turned to alcohol. And he eventually decided to live in his truck so he could save money. Ten years and five DWIs later, he was in the Montgomery County jail, awaiting a trial that was certain to yield an extended prison sentence, when he got the news that his arresting officer had suddenly died. He was free to go.

“And that’s when Miss Barbara took me in,” he says after an emotional pause. “Now I’m safe. I’m sober. And everything I need to get healthy again is right here.”

OPPOSITE Langetree Retreat and Eco Center’s community of tiny homes and assistance has helped change TJ Phillips’ life. “Everything I need to get healthy again is right here.” ABOVE Instructor James Gaylord and his Humble students in front of a tiny home they built.

Barbara Lange gave Phillips, 54, the key to a tiny home at the Langetree Retreat and Eco Center near Liberty, between Houston and Beaumont. But she’ll be the first to tell you that she’s only one of many who are making Phillips’ recovery possible.

“Somehow we all got the memo independently of one another,” Lange says. “And then somehow we all found each other. What are the odds?”

There was no actual memo, of course. But indeed, several people in the same corner of Texas had a similar idea around the same time.

At the outset, none of them knew each other—or even about each other. They were simply focused on the same goal: to support veterans by providing them with tiny homes. Their collaboration has no name. There’s no one in charge. But it has yielded something much greater than the sum of its parts.

Allen Segura, who recently retired as assistant principal and director of career and technology education for Summer Creek High School, says the idea to integrate building tiny homes into the Humble school district’s curriculum came from a bout of insomnia in 2018.

“Late one night I was scrolling through Facebook and saw some people in St. Louis who were building tiny homes for homeless veterans,” Segura remembers. “And the simple thought came: ‘I wonder if our students could do that?’”

He bounced the idea off James Gaylord and Missi Taylor, who teach CTE classes in construction, architecture and design at high schools in Humble, a Houston suburb whose name is pronounced “Umble.” They were in.

“We had been teaching these classes for years, but it was mostly theoretical,” Segura says. “Actually building houses would not only let them put what they’re learning into practice, it would also help them understand the importance of serving others.”

Under the supervision of the three educators, the students developed a presentation and pitched it to Superintendent Elizabeth Fagen, who took it to the school board for approval. Thus, in 2018, Humble ISD’s Big Heroes, Tiny Homes program was born.

Meanwhile, about 40 minutes east of Humble, Lange, a retired social worker, was teaching leadership and environmental sustainability at the retreat center she and her husband built in 2004.

Their doors have always been open to people in crisis. They housed numerous people after Hurricane Katrina’s devastation in 2005. They took in referrals from Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare, a community-based nonprofit serving those living with mental illness and intellectual disabilities. More recently, Lange had begun working with



Kingwood Park High School students work on a tiny home.

less veterans, but they didn't have a sustainable way to source the materials," Carroll says. "By partnering them with Lowe's, we were able to lengthen their runway.

"People have been telling me for years that they wanted to build tiny homes for homeless veterans, but if they're transitional, there has to be some sort of infrastructure to support those living in them. Barbara supplied that missing piece."

Lange's infrastructure is deeply rooted in community. There are currently 10 tiny homes on her property and 27 agencies providing residents with such services as job coaching, counseling, legal aid and palliative care.

But creating a communal environment is one of her highest priorities. When she conveyed that to the people at OFH—who are helping her clear and prepare her land to receive 20 more houses over the next five to seven years—they recommended putting them in pods of six, which will serve as micro communities.

"We now know from a scientific point of view that loneliness can be as harmful to the body as cigarette smoking," Lange says. "When you're in a community of people who've been where you've been, when you're living with others who are going through what you're going through, you're less likely to feel like a freak.

"It advances the healing process."

Humble ISD is expanding Big Heroes, Tiny Homes to five high schools. The program offers students a hands-on building experience with mentoring by professionals—architects, plumbers, electricians, general contractors—giving the teens invaluable work experience and the opportunity to explore various career paths.

Due to its resounding success, other school districts and universities have reached out to Humble ISD to find out how the project works.

"Our instructors are willing to talk to your instructors," Segura says. "We are happy to connect your principals to our principals, your superintendent to our superintendent. Let us tell you how we did this."

Lange estimates that most residents will transition into permanent housing within two years. Phillips, who is approaching that milestone, may stay longer because he's become a strong leader in the community. Though he now has a job as a heating and air conditioning tech, he serves as a liaison and an advocate for the other veterans. He also assists with some of the property's maintenance and administrative needs.

"Veterans aren't homeless because they're not gifted, intelligent or experienced," Lange says. "They are broken. When you connect them with the resources they need and provide a safe place to heal, many will find their way back to the person they were before the trauma. All veterans deserve that chance." ■

several Veterans of Foreign Wars chapters in an effort to address the crisis of homelessness among veterans.

"I had already started converting a shipping container into a tiny home for one of the veterans I was assisting when I came across a newspaper article about Missi," Lange remembers. "A VFW volunteer named Mark Bowen said, 'Barbara, why don't you go to Kingwood Park and tell those people that they can give us the houses?'"

Never one to leave a stone unturned, Lange went to visit the teachers in Humble. Once they saw her vast experience and her devotion to veterans, the district agreed to donate their tiny homes to Lange's effort.

Since 2005, Operation Finally Home has been improving and constructing mortgage-free homes for wounded veterans, first responders and their families. But it wasn't until spring 2020 that Lee Kirgan, vice president of project management for OFH, learned about Humble ISD's big idea and suggested to President Rusty Carroll that they consider getting involved.

Six months later, Carroll surprised Segura with the news that OFH, based in New Braunfels, had secured a grant from big-box retailer Lowe's, which would provide all the building materials for Big Heroes, Tiny Homes for the foreseeable future.

"Humble ISD had a vision to build tiny homes for home-



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A close-up photograph of a dog's head and front paws resting on a textured, light-colored rug. The dog has black, white, and tan fur. To the right, a white space heater with a glowing orange mesh is visible, casting a warm light on the dog and the rug. The background is dark, making the dog and the heater stand out.

Be Cool With Space Heaters

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Making 2024 Better Together

A BRAND-NEW YEAR IS UPON US, and just as many of our members might, we at Medina Electric Cooperative have a few resolutions for 2024. With our core mission to exceed member expectations in everything we do, we have built goals to help continue to provide reliable electric service, enhance member experience, and make improvements as needed to serve our members and our communities.

We will continue the deployment of our new systemwide supervisory control and data acquisition equipment that helps monitor our distribution grid in real time to improve the performance of Medina EC's system. Ongoing upgrades and maintenance are planned to improve meter and transformer equipment throughout Medina EC's service area as needed.

We're always looking for more impactful methods of communicating with members during outages. In 2024, eligible members will be enrolled in outage alerts via text message notifying members directly when their meter is no longer receiving power and when power is restored. We're excited about this direct communication tool for members to be notified about outages impacting them. You can learn more about that on Page 23.

With over 150,000 power poles on our system, it's important to continue to maintain a plan to inspect and replace old and damaged poles. Our goal is to inspect approximately 16,000 poles and we anticipate to replace over 2,000 poles that were previously inspected. By doing this, we can increase reliability and safety.

Targeting that same goal, our vegetation management plan for 2024 includes clearing approximately 550 miles of line. Regular trimming to direct growth away from power lines is essential to prevent outages and increase employee and public

safety. We must plan for ongoing maintenance to keep up with the more than 9,911 miles of line on our system to ensure that vegetation does not impact the delivery of power.

In response to the rapid growth in our service area, particularly in Medina County, we've recognized the need to grow our service operations in the area. After extensive research, including the exploration of potential new locations, we've determined that our current Hondo service office on Highway 173 remains the optimal site to serve our members in Medina County.

Beginning this year, you will see preparation of the recently acquired land adjacent to our existing Hondo office as we prepare for an expansion on our site. The development plans include a new warehouse and a truck barn which will allow us to continue to serve the needs at the rate of growth we're experiencing in this service region.

Finally, we expect to maintain our involvement in community outreach efforts. These contributions—whether through Operation Round Up, Youth Tour, scholarships, Community Empowerment Program grants, food drives or donations to the many worthy organizations across our area—are the core of who we are and articulate our enduring concern for community. We resolve to keep doing our part to empower our community across a broad spectrum of charitable endeavors.

These are just a handful of the goals and plans we look forward to this year. With thoughtful attention to these resolutions, together we can make this year one of our best yet.

Until next time,
Trey Grebe



\$25,000 in Scholarships!

Medina Electric Cooperative is offering five scholarships for adults pursuing higher education and 20 scholarships for high school graduating seniors.

Eligible applicants will be entered into a drawing, and scholarship winners will be selected at random during the March board meeting.

For more information and to apply, visit MedinaEC.org/Scholarships or contact us at 1-866-632-3532 or Scholarship@MedinaEC.org.

MedinaEC.org/Scholarships

Applications are due by
11:59 p.m. March 1.*



**Technical support will not be available outside of normal business hours.*

Encountering technical issues while turning in the application on the last day will not be grounds for an extension.

CAROLINA K SMITH MD | ADOBE STOCK

Medina Electric
Cooperative



CONTACT US

Toll-Free 1-866-632-3532

Email Info@MedinaEC.org

Web 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



This institution is an equal-opportunity provider and employer.

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

HOW COULD WE HELP YOUR COMMUNITY?

\$5,500 in grants are available to nonprofit organizations in any of Medina EC's 17 counties.

Deadline to apply:
April 1



View project and organization eligibility information and apply online at MedinaEC.org/Grant.

HELLO-PIXEL | FREEPIK.COM

Operation Round Up Gives Back During the Holidays

AT MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, we know how special the holiday season is for all of our members. The cooperative also knows that many in our communities may be struggling. Members who participate in Operation Round Up do their part to help community neighbors by rounding their monthly electric bills up to make donations to those in need. Because of their generosity, ORU was able to offer general donations and Operation Grocery Give, a special program offered during the holiday season that gives families a \$200 H-E-B gift card to assist with buying their holiday meals.

In December, Medina EC's ORU committee awarded a total of \$8,500: \$5,200 in the form of \$200 H-E-B gift cards with Operation Grocery Give and the remaining in general donations.

General Donation Recipients

General donations are awarded to help families with a variety of needs and who request financial assistance.

Amy and Alfredo Calderas, Hondo—\$200

Delfino and Teresa Longoria, Zapata—\$1,000

Jorge Sanchez, Rio Grande City—\$200

Leonor and Juan Moncada, Yancey—\$500

Miranda Sisneros and Matthew Verrett, Knippa—\$200

Patricia Garcia and David Gonzalez, Uvalde—\$500

Slaytonn Reyes and Ariel Cordaway, Uvalde—\$200

Susan and Pete Lopez Garza, Santa Elena—\$500

Grocery Give Recipients

Abigail Castillo and Caesar Martinez, Batesville

Amelia "Emily" DeLa Fuente, Hondo

Annemarie and Christopher Spencer, Castroville

Annette Loera, Roma

Belinda and Juan Valle, Cotulla

Caycee Evans, Devine

Christina Palacios Aguilar, Laredo

David and Janice Baca, Hondo

Enriqueta Fernandez, D'Hanis

Erica Avalos and Daryl Schofield, Devine

Faustina Bermea, Hondo

Gloria Guyer, Pearsall

Gustavo and Maria Cardenas, Hondo

Jessica Garcia, Moore

Kecha Murry and Deb Franz, Devine

Lisa and Samuel Christopher, Uvalde

Lorena Canales, Roma

Louisa Alvarez, D'Hanis

Mary-Francis Godsey, Castroville

Melinda Rheinfeldt, Cotulla

Melissa Mendez, Devine

Naomi and Tiburcio Medrano, Devine

Noe and Elmira Diaz, Roma

Olivia Hinojosa, Devine

Rojelio Estrada, Uvalde

Yadira Hernandez-Ramos and Juan Ramos, Natalia

Do You Have a Medical Need for Electricity?

IF SOMEONE IN YOUR HOME depends on an electrically operated health aid, your account should be listed on Medina EC's Critical Care Registry. To be added, fill out the form at MedinaEC.org/Registry and attach a physician's directive or prescription.

Accounts on this list are notified before planned outages and are flagged as a priority for restoration during unplanned outages. It does not guarantee uninterrupted electrical service, will not prevent you from losing power during forced statewide outages and will not keep your meter from being disconnected for nonpayment. Outages are unavoidable and occur for reasons outside the cooperative's control.

Individuals who rely on life-support equipment should have an emergency plan, including a place to go in the event of an extended power outage, and should consider obtaining backup equipment, such as a generator and any necessary fuel or a battery backup system.

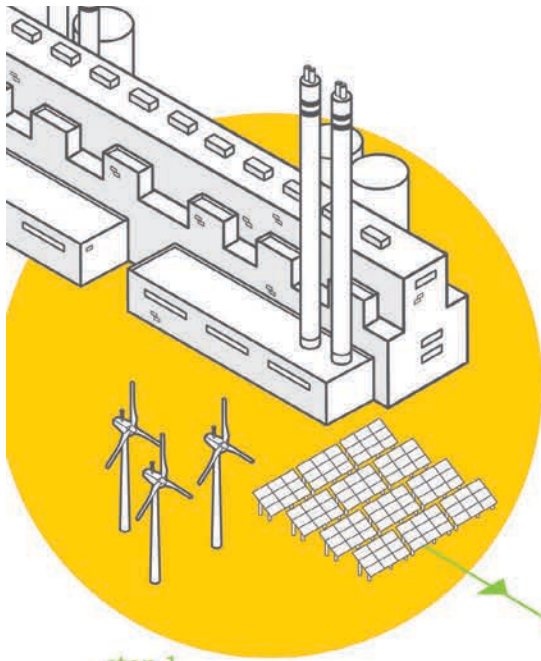
Medina EC offers GenerLink, a device installed by our employees, as an option for members to safely operate their generators should they own one. You can learn more about the requirements to connect a generator to our system at MedinaEC.org/Generators.



Learn more and submit an application at MedinaEC.org/ORU. The next application deadline is February 2.

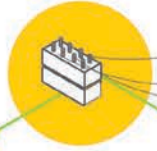
CRITICAL CONNECTIONS: HOW ELECTRICITY GETS TO YOU

The electric grid is considered one of the most complex machines in the world, delivering the electricity we need for everyday life.



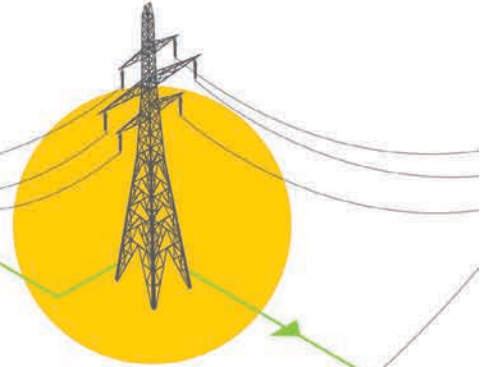
step 1 GENERATION

Power plants generate electricity using a variety of energy sources, like solar, natural gas, nuclear and wind energy.



step 2 STEP-UP TRANSFORMER

A step-up transformer increases the voltage to push the electricity over long distances.



step 3 TRANSMISSION LINES

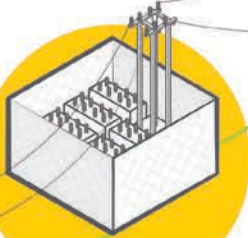
High-voltage electricity travels over long distances through these lines.

step 5 DISTRIBUTION SUBSTATION

These substations lower the voltage again so the electricity is ready to travel on distribution lines.

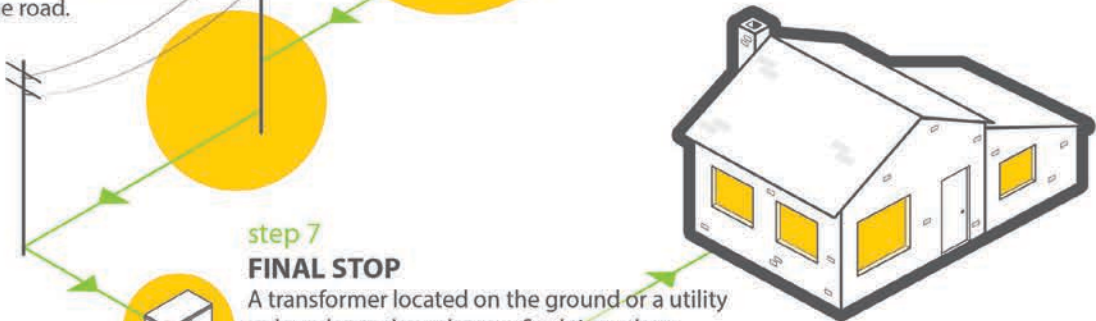
step 6 DISTRIBUTION LINES

Lower-voltage electricity travels through distribution lines, like the ones you typically see on the side of the road.



step 4 TRANSMISSION SUBSTATION

Voltage is lowered at a transmission substation so electricity can travel across the local distribution system.



step 7 FINAL STOP

A transformer located on the ground or a utility pole reduces the voltage a final time, then electricity is sent inside your home, school or business.



Medina Electric Cooperative is responsible for steps six and seven. The cooperative works closely with our generation and transmission providers, South Texas Electric Cooperative and San Miguel Electric Cooperative, as they manage steps one through five.

\$2.05 Million in Capital Credits Returned to Members

Members saw credit on their December bill

CAPITAL CREDITS are an important part of the cooperative difference.

As a not-for-profit cooperative, Medina Electric Cooperative allocates any margins at the end of the year to members and retires them as the financial position of the cooperative allows. At their November meeting, the board reviewed the cooperative's financials to determine what money needs to be reinvested in the system and made a decision to approve the retirement of \$2.05 million in capital credits.

Current members who had service prior to 2023 were issued a credit on December bills. If you look at the back of your December bill, where charges are broken down, you will see a line item that shows your capital credits return. Members who connected service with the cooperative within the last year may not have a bill credit, but they can look forward to one in future years.

For former members who are due a return, credits were mailed as checks. That is one reason it is important to keep

your mailing address updated with the cooperative if you move out of Medina EC's service area.

More than \$40 million in capital credits have been returned to members since Medina EC was formed in 1938.

To learn more about capital credits and how they are allocated to members' accounts and eventually retired, visit MedinaEC.org/CapitalCredits. Sometimes, capital credits checks remain uncashed and unclaimed. To check if you or anyone you know has unclaimed capital credits, search by last name at MedinaEC.org/CapitalCredits.

There really is a difference in the cooperative business model: You get reliable, affordable electricity—and money back in the form of capital credits.

**Learn more at
MedinaEC.org/CapitalCredits.**

Upcoming Nomination Petition Deadlines

Any members interested in running for one of the three board positions up for election in the fall can be placed on the ballot through the petition process. Petitions will be completely online. Candidates wishing to run can find the online petition at MedinaEC.org/Nominee. The board of directors represents the interests of members and governs the cooperative.*

If you have questions about the process or need assistance, please contact us at MyCoop@MedinaEC.org or call 1-866-632-3532.

Petition Details

Members who are interested in running for a position on the board of directors will need to get at least 30 valid member signatures from members who have service in the voting district the potential nominee wishes to represent. For example, members wishing to be nominated for the Voting District 1 board position will need signatures from members who have electric service in Voting District 1.

Petition Deadlines

All petitions are due **March 1**.

In compliance with the United States Department of Agriculture, in reference to assurance of nondiscrimination among beneficiaries of Rural Utilities Service programs, the Medina EC bylaws pertaining to nomination and election procedures for the election of board members can be found at all Medina EC offices and at MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc. The section that primarily pertains to nomination and election procedures is Article 4—Board of Directors.

Learn more and find the online petition* link at MedinaEC.org/Nominee.

*Nominations will be completed by online petitions only. There will be no in-person nominating meetings this year.

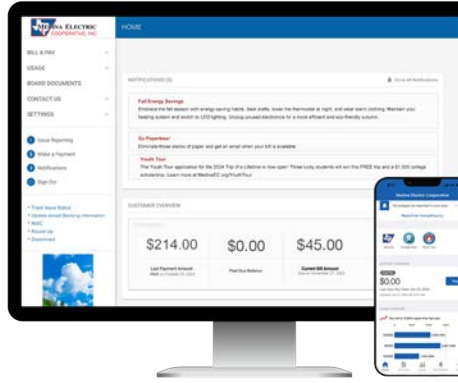
A Power Up for your Electric Account

Medina Electric Cooperative is implementing upgrades to improve your experience when managing your electric account

MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE has upcoming technology upgrades to improve the experience of members when managing their electric account.

SmartHub

Members who use SmartHub on the web will notice a new look the next time they log in. After January 10, SmartHub on the web will get a refresh to improve the layout and functionality of the site, very similar to what mobile users experience on the app.



SmartHub is a great tool to manage your account—from paying your bill to reporting an outage, tracking use and more. The mobile version is a convenient way to access your account information from your phone with an easy-to-use app.

Outage Alerts: Texting Enabled

Save this number in your cellphone: 1-833-649-0801. Medina EC will send outages alerts by text from this number. Beginning in February, eligible accounts will automatically receive outage notifications via text message to notify members when their meter is no longer receiving power and when it is restored. If you want to ensure you receive these notifications, make sure you are enrolled in SmartHub and have a valid mobile number on your account.

Members who do not wish to receive these alerts via text will simply need to respond “Stop” to opt out of these notifications. If you don’t want to wait until February to begin receiving these notifications, you can enroll yourself through SmartHub under the Settings tab by going to Manage Notifications and then Service.

Consumer Analytics by Bidgely

In February, residential members will soon have access to advanced analytics detailing their energy use by appliance. Consumer Analytics is powered by Bidgely, a utility monitoring software that helps consumers better engage and understand their energy use. As a result, members will receive tips and tricks for maximizing their energy dollars.

Learn more about these resources to enhance your experience managing your electric account at MedinaEC.org/SH.

It’s OK To Be a Winter Weather Prepper

WE ALL KNOW HOW unpredictable winter weather can be in Texas. Ice, winds and flooding all have the potential to strand you on the road or at home, possibly without power. Despite the reputation that “preppers” might have earned for their zeal about getting ready for emergencies, preparedness is essential for ensuring your safety this season.

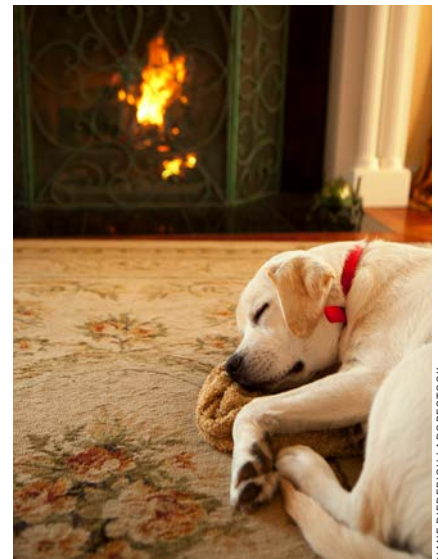
Here are just a few prepper tips for you and your family this winter.

Keep a three-day supply of nonperishable foods and drinking water in storage. Consider having a way to heat water that does not require electricity. Camping gear can be a solution for cooking during power outage emergencies.

Bring pets and companion animals inside during winter weather. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas with nonfrozen drinking water.

Insulate pipes and allow faucets to drip during cold weather to avoid freezing pipes. Locate your home’s water valve and learn how to shut it off, just in case a pipe bursts.

Learn more winter weather prepper tips at Ready.gov.



DIANE DIEDERICH | A DOBESTOCK

From Farm Hand to Helping Hand

BY CAROLINE LEE

IN THE RURAL TOWN OF LYTLE, where the population scantily reaches 3,000, the esteemed president of Lytle State Bank has accomplished an inspiring and successful feat. Having dedicated an impressive four decades to the institution, Randy Garcia's journey from humble beginnings in the Texas Panhandle cotton fields to the command of Lytle State Bank reflects not just a personal triumph but an embodiment of resilience and dedication. His remarkable 40-year tenure with the bank adds an extra layer of significance to his inspiring story, underscoring the lasting commitment that has shaped both his career and the institution he leads.

Born in Devine, Garcia's family moved to the panhandle to work as cotton pickers where his early years were marked by toil and responsibility. Following the passing of his father, he assumed the weight of caring for his younger siblings, instilled with values of hard work by his mother. The developmental experiences from the intensive labor of picking cotton and assuming a paternal role fueled his commitment to education and growth as the key

to breaking free from the cycle of poverty. After returning to Devine and graduating from high school, he embraced the responsibilities of supporting his family by cleaning school buses, mowing lawns and doing whatever it took to help his mother. Guided by teachers who saw his potential, Garcia recognized the importance and reward of education, and pursued a college degree at Texas A&I University—now Texas A&M University-Kingsville. He then received his MBA from Our Lady of the Lake University and also graduated from the Southwestern Graduate School of Banking at SMU. His mother's influence, emphasizing the necessity of hard work, stayed with him. "Without work, you have nothing," said Garcia when sharing his mother's consistent encouragement to him. "And don't ever complain about your job or your worth, or else God may listen to you and take it away."

Garcia became a guiding force for his siblings, leading by example and setting a goal to be a positive influence in their lives. The maturity he developed from helping raise his siblings and stepping

Randy Garcia's 40-year legacy of resilience, leadership and community commitment.



TOP: RANDY GARCIA AT LSB IN 2002. BOTTOM: RANDY GARCIA AS LSB PRESIDENT IN 2023.



up to a parental role laid the foundation for his leadership skills. Joining the Lytle State Bank team as a management trainee in 1984 at the age of 23, Garcia's journey within the bank reflects a steady climb and is a testament to his unwavering work ethic through various roles, from a management trainee to the first Hispanic president—with many positions in between.



PHOTO CREDIT: LYTLE STATE BANK



PHOTO DESCRIPTIONS: A: RANDY GARCIA IN FRONT OF LYTLE STATE BANK; B: COMMUNITY BANK SIGN ON GARCIA'S DESK; C: GARCIA WITH CUSTOMER AFTER GIVING AUTO LOAN IN 1990; D: GARCIA TALKING ABOUT TEACHING FINANCIAL LITERACY AND COMMUNITY EFFORTS; E: VFD CORNER IN BANK LOBBY; F: PURPLE HEART PARKING SPOT; G: LSB'S NATIONAL PURPLE HEART RECOGNITION SIGN.

Throughout his tenure, he has witnessed the banking industry evolve but ensured that Lytle State Bank maintained its commitment to community service. Embedded in his character, Garcia fortifies the bank's philosophy of a "true Texas community bank," by emphasizing serving everyone, regardless of the loan amount. Additionally, Garcia makes it a point to represent the bank and himself by actively participating in local events and charities. His leadership has transformed the bank into a cornerstone of Lytle, emphasizing community service, financial literacy and unwavering support for local initiatives.

In a banking landscape where mergers and acquisitions are prevalent, Lytle State Bank, under Garcia's stewardship, remains a beacon of community-centric banking. Rejecting the impersonal, transactional approach, Garcia leads the bank to thrive on personal connections, ensuring every customer, whether seeking a small loan or a substantial mortgage, receives the same respect and attention. "Because it doesn't matter to us if you come in for a \$300 loan or you come in for a or a larger loan," said Garcia. "We're here to help the community." Beyond banking, Garcia's impact extends to various community organizations, including local little leagues, and stock shows, food pantries, churches, and other organizations. In fact, under his leadership, Lytle State Bank was

recognized in 2018 as the first and only Purple Heart Bank in the U.S. by the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of Texas State Commander, Jon Lunkwicz, showcasing the institution's commitment to supporting veterans. This prestigious designation comes from years of supporting the Lytle

if you want to." Through challenges faced during his formative years, he emerged stronger, armed with an unyielding belief in the value of hard work.

Garcia's focus now turns to ensuring a seamless transition, leaving behind a legacy of community engagement, financial wisdom, and a steadfast commitment to the values that define Lytle State Bank.

Randy Garcia's story is more than a journey from cotton fields to boardrooms; it's a call to action, an inspiration for those who expand their horizons beyond their circumstances. Garcia encourages young professionals to find opportunities in their small communities, emphasizing that success is achievable regardless of the starting point. His story is a testament to the power of determination, hard work and the

impact one individual can have on a community. In every handshake, loan approval and community project, he leaves an indelible mark—a testament to the enduring will of hard work and the pursuit of aspirations.



PHOTO CREDIT: LYTLE STATE BANK



VFW Memorial Post and veterans across the nation as well as providing transportation back home for wounded warriors and other active military as needed during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As Garcia celebrates his 40th anniversary with the bank, he reflects on his journey with gratitude, acknowledging the pivotal moments and the evolution of the bank. As the first Hispanic president and board member of Lytle State Bank, Garcia's story resonates beyond the confines of the boardroom. He stands as a living example that success is not confined to prestigious institutions or urban landscapes. His message to the youth echoes loudly: "You can do it

Do you have an idea for a story you want to share with other Medina EC members?

Send it to MyCoop@MedinaEC.org to be considered*.

Include as many details as possible, the point of contact, and a phone number or email address for the point of contact.

*Story ideas will not be guaranteed a magazine story.



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Throw Yourself a Bone

Full tang stainless steel blade with natural bone handle —now **ONLY \$79!**

The very best hunting knives possess a perfect balance of form and function. They're carefully constructed from fine materials, but also have that little something extra to connect the owner with nature.

If you're on the hunt for a knife that combines impeccable craftsmanship with a sense of wonder, the **\$79 Huntsman Blade** is the trophy you're looking for.

The blade is full tang, meaning it doesn't stop at the handle but extends to the length of the grip for the ultimate in strength. The blade is made from 420 surgical steel, famed for its sharpness and its resistance to corrosion.

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.

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the *Huntsman Blade*.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

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— H., Arvada, CO





The Green Carpet

The grand opening of Houston's lavish and large—
but short-lived—Shamrock Hotel

BY W.F. STRONG

THERE'S A SCENE in the 1956 movie *Giant* when Jett Rink, played by James Dean, tells the characters played by Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor that he's struck oil. And not only that, he insinuates, it's payback time.

Rink is a hard-drinkin', fierce-brawlin', tough-talkin', uncultured Texas oil well driller who strikes it rich. But everybody in Texas knew that Dean was really playing Glenn McCarthy, a Houston wildcatter who struck it rich—cover of *Time* magazine rich.

The fictional Rink spent millions of dollars building the Emperor, the biggest hotel in Texas. The real-life McCarthy did the same. But McCarthy

called his the Shamrock Hotel.

The Shamrock, nicknamed the Houston Riviera, was the grandest hotel in Texas when it was built in 1947 and the largest outside of New York or Los Angeles.

It was 20 stories tall, counting the two-story emerald Shamrock sign on top, and it towered over southwest Houston. The hotel cost \$21 million to build in the 1940s—or about \$300 million in today's money. It had the biggest hotel pool on the planet—so large that people water-skied in it. There were 1,100 rooms, all air-conditioned and each with a TV and radio, which was remarkably high-tech luxury back then.

McCarthy planned a grand opening for

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



St. Patrick's Day 1949 for his monolithic hotel. He wanted Hollywood stars but was told that the only way Hollywood would come was if there was a movie opening to attend. But no big studio would launch a film in Texas in those days.

So McCarthy decided to fund his own film—*The Green Promise*, starring Walter Brennan and a young Natalie Wood. In so doing, he had the premiere and hotel grand opening at the same time. Brilliant.

And Hollywood came. Howard Hughes gave McCarthy a good deal on one of his planes so he could fly stars to Houston. McCarthy also chartered a party train that brought in hundreds of celebrities for the opening.

The evening was regarded as the most prestigious event in Houston's social history. And it likely remains so. Everyone who was anyone was there. Ginger Rogers was there. So was Errol Flynn. It was partially broadcast live on national radio by NBC and hosted by actress, singer and World War II pinup girl Dorothy Lamour—until the hotel crowd got out of hand.

Many loved the Shamrock for its sheer size and art deco style: the Emerald Room, where Frank Sinatra sang; the Cork Club that overlooked Houston; and the hotel's grand devotion to its Irish theme.

But not everyone was impressed. Renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright called the Shamrock's 63 shades of Irish green an "architectural venereal disease."

The Shamrock was sold to Conrad Hilton in 1955 and was known as the Shamrock Hilton until it was demolished in 1987. Today, the Texas A&M Health Science Center sits on the site.

I think McCarthy would like that. He was, after all, an Aggie. ■

Texas Citrus

A variety of dishes come alive with the state's prized produce

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

South Texas is home to the delicious ruby red grapefruit. From marinades and salads to cocktails and cakes, ruby reds are so versatile. This grapefruit loaf cake, one of my favorite ways to bake with them, is brimming with the fruit's tart and sweet goodness.



Grapefruit Loaf Cake

CAKE

- 3 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain yogurt
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon grapefruit zest
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grapefruit juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

GLAZE

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons grapefruit juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Thinly sliced grapefruit, for garnish

1. **CAKE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 5-by-9-inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a bowl, whisk together eggs, yogurt, brown sugar, oil, grapefruit zest, grapefruit juice, cinnamon and vanilla.
3. In another bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and salt.
4. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix until just combined. Avoid overmixing.
5. Pour batter into prepared loaf pan. Bake 30–35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
6. Remove from oven, allow to cool for 10 minutes, and carefully remove cake from pan.
7. **GLAZE** Whisk together powdered sugar, grapefruit juice and vanilla.
8. Place grapefruit slices on cake and drizzle with glaze.

SERVES 8

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Ruby Red Grapefruit Salsa.



Texas Citrus Ceviche

TANNER FULLMER
BANDERA EC

Fullmer's ceviche is a refreshing no-cook appetizer that will wow your guests. Citrus juices cure the shrimp while jalapeño lends spice and avocado adds a touch of creaminess. Serve this bright and flavorful ceviche chilled and with tortilla chips for a beautiful presentation.

- 1 pound wild-caught Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- 1 cup lime juice**
- ¼ cup lemon juice**
- 1-inch ginger piece, peeled and minced**
- 1 red onion, diced**
- 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1½ oranges, peeled and diced**
- 1 grapefruit, peeled and diced**
- 1 cucumber, peeled and diced**
- 1 large avocado, pitted and diced**
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped**
- 1 jalapeño, seeds removed and diced**
- 1½ teaspoons salt**
- Tortilla chips**

1. Cut shrimp into desired size and place into a large, nonreactive bowl. Add lime juice, lemon juice and minced ginger. Stir to combine. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate 45 minutes.
2. Remove bowl from fridge. Stir in red onion, garlic, oranges, grapefruit, cucumber, avocado, cilantro, jalapeño and salt.
3. Return ceviche to the fridge to chill an additional 15 minutes.
4. Serve with tortilla chips.

SERVES 6

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Moroccan Chicken Skewers

CARRIE RAY
HEART OF TEXAS EC



Marinated in a blend of citrus juice and spices and broiled to perfection, Ray's Moroccan chicken skewers are a tender, mouthwatering dish that's perfect for a weeknight meal or entertaining. Couscous and yogurt complement the skewers and round out the dish.

SERVES 6



- Zest and juice of 1 lemon**
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons honey, plus more for drizzling**
- 1 tablespoon finely grated fresh ginger**
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander**
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs or breasts, cut into large pieces**
- 2 lemons, halved**
- Fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped**
- Couscous (optional)**
- Yogurt (optional)**

1. In a bowl, stir together lemon zest and juice, olive oil, honey, ginger, coriander, cumin, salt, and pepper for the marinade. Set aside 2 tablespoons.
2. Add chicken to marinade, turning to coat evenly.
3. Preheat broiler.
4. Place chicken onto wooden or metal skewers, then place skewers onto a foil-lined sheet pan. Add one lemon half to each corner of the sheet pan.
5. Place baking sheet in oven 4 inches from heating element. Broil until charred, about 12 minutes, turning skewers over halfway through.
6. Remove from oven, spoon the reserved marinade onto the chicken and sprinkle with parsley. Drizzle the lemon halves with honey and serve alongside for squeezing over the chicken.
7. Serve with couscous and yogurt, if desired.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

SIMPLY SALADS DUE JANUARY 10

Come summer, we'll all be looking to escape the heat of the kitchen. Your best salad recipe could win a cool \$500. Go online and submit your favorite by January 10.





Texas Meyer Lemon Pie

RHAE BROWN
SAM HOUSTON EC

Lemon lovers, this easy pie is for y'all! It's jam-packed with heavenly tartness and bakes in a store-bought pie crust. Simple and sublime, Brown's lemon pie is sure to impress.

3 eggs, room temperature
1¼ cups sugar
½ cup Meyer lemon juice
4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, melted
1 deep-dish frozen pie crust, unbaked
Whipped topping (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Whisk eggs, sugar and lemon juice until smooth. Add melted butter and whisk to combine.
3. Pour mixture into pie crust and place on sheet pan. Bake 30–35 minutes.
4. Cool completely before serving. Serve with whipped topping if desired.

SERVES 8

TCP Find hundreds more recipes that feature citrus fruits and juices in our bountiful archive online.

Citrus With the Assist

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Use fresh citrus in marinades for grilling or in dressings for salads.

Brighten baked goods by adding a touch of lemon or orange zest.

Fold orange segments into pancakes, waffles or warm oatmeal.

Add lime zest to salt for a festive salt rim for margaritas.

Add a splash of fresh citrus juice to your water for a refreshing twist.

Tuck lemon slices into the cavity of a chicken for a juicy roast chicken.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Moment's Notice

A history museum in Laredo marks a short-lived republic's capital

BY CHET GARNER

TRAVELING TO DOWNTOWN Laredo feels like visiting a different country. Maybe that's because it was at one point in history! I'm not talking about the fact that Laredo was once part of Mexico (all of Texas was). I'm talking about the lesser-known Republic of the Rio Grande that existed for 11 short months in 1840 with Laredo as its capital.

It's a story that reads more like a movie and is best explored at its former capitol-turned-museum.

I started my travels in the San Agustin de Laredo Historic District with a chile relleno smothered in queso from El Mesón de San Agustin, a local favorite, and then set out to explore the 269-year-old neighborhood's adobe buildings surrounding a Spanish-style plaza.

One of the most significant buildings is a simple, single-story structure that was once the capitol of a new nation. Today it's the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum. I ducked my head as I stepped through the low wooden door frame and was immediately transported back in time.

The story of this short-lived nation starts in 1836, after Texas won its independence from Mexico. Residents between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande sought to quell instability along the border and decided to form their own country made up of the Mexican states of Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. The armies of the new nation tried to fend off Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna's forces, but after a betrayal, a beheading and 283 days, the republic ended.

The museum showcases memorabilia from that time with displays, pictures, books and furniture. There are three restored rooms: an office and sitting area, a bedroom, and kitchen. The republic is gone, but I could still feel a spirit of independence permeating the museum and entire town. ■

ABOVE Chet waves the Republic of the Rio Grande flag.

TCP Follow along as Chet learns about the nation that was centered in Laredo. See the video on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

JANUARY

09

Orange On Your Feet: The Story of Emilio & Gloria Estefan, (409) 886-5535, lutchter.org

11

Harlingen Sounds of Silence Tribute, (956) 392-9757, harlingenconcert.com

Bandera [11-13] Bandera County Junior Livestock Show, (210) 260-8224, bcjlsa.com

Sweetwater [11-13] Nolan County Stock Show, (325) 235-3484, nolancc.com

12

Fort Worth [12-13] Carter Anderson, (512) 817-9535, blcomedy.com

La Grange [12-13] Ray Wylie Hubbard, (979) 968-9944, thebugleboy.org

Kerrville [12-14] Star Crossed, (210) 492-9519, cameratasora.org

Fort Worth [12-Feb. 3] Stock Show and Rodeo, (817) 877-2400, fwssr.com

13

Abilene Don Juan by the Sea, (325) 677-6710, abiphil.com

Brenham Uptown Swirl Downtown Brenham, (979) 337-7580, cityofbrenham.org

Fredericksburg Hill Country Indian Artifact Show, (830) 329-2636, hillcountryindianartifacts.com

Galveston Yaga's Chili Quest and Beer Fest,
(409) 770-0999,
yagaschiliquest.com

Marfa Star Party in the Badlands, (432) 424-3327,
tpwd.texas.gov

Mesquite Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration,
(972) 216-8132,
mesquiteartscenter.org

Round Top Houston Jazz Orchestra, (979) 249-3129,
festivalhill.org

Houston MLK Grande Parade, mlkgrandeparade.org

New Caney [19-20] Hold 'Em & Hit 'Em Barbecue Cook-Off, hhclub.org

Fredericksburg [19-21] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094,
fbgtradedays.com

Bastrop [19-21, 26-28, Feb. 2-4] Freaky Friday,
(512) 200-3826,
bastropoperahouse.org

Victoria Lyle Lovett and His Large Band, (361) 576-4500,
victoriasymphony.com

Plano [20-21] Dallas Area Train Show, (972) 941-5840,
dfwtrainshows.com

Amarillo Bert Kreischer,
1-800-692-1338,
amarillotheater.com

Richards Guthrie Jones,
(936) 436-9050,
wscwinery.com

Raymondville [24-27] Willacy County Livestock Show & Fair, wclsf.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP *Submit Your Event*

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Pick of the Month

Goosebump Jump

Granbury, January 20
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visitgranbury.com

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30

Harlingen Barbara Padilla, (956) 392-9757
harlingenconcert.com

FEBRUARY

01

Frisco East-West Shrine Bowl, (813) 281-8686,
shrinebowl.com

Bandera [1-3] Cowboy Mardi Gras, (830) 796-4849,
11thstcowboybar.com

02

Fredericksburg First Friday Art Walk, (830) 990-8160,
visitfredericksburgtx.com

Granbury Aquatic Wild Workshop, (650) 471-3285,
tpwd.texas.gov

Lake Jackson Colbie Caillat, (979) 230-3658,
brazosport.edu

JANUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

26

La Grange Marcia Ball, (979) 968-9944,
thebugleboy.org

Fulton [26-27] Cruising the Coast Quilt Show,
piecemakersbythebay.org

South Padre Island [26-28] Market Days,
spimarketdays.com

27

Jefferson Mardi Gras Queen Mab Ball, (903) 665-3733,
mardigrasupriver.com

Port Aransas Garden Club Home Tour, (361) 834-4130,
portaransasgardenclub.org

Round Top Asleep at the Wheel, (979) 249-3129,
festivalhill.org

29

Johnson City [29-Feb. 23] Wine Lovers Celebration, (872) 216-9463,
texashillcountrywineries.org

03

North Zulch Volunteer Fire Department Chili Cookoff, (979) 488-9214,
facebook.com/nzvfcd

Sweetwater Lift Every Voice,
sweetwaterauditorium.org

Local Landmarks

They define our landscapes, become guideposts when giving directions, and are a point of pride in communities large and small. Texas landmarks are as full of character and charm as the Texans who create them.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 CASE RAMIREZ-MELTON
LAMAR ELECTRIC

Sunset at the Eiffel Tower in Texas' Paris.

2 CARL BURNHAM
PEDERNALES EC

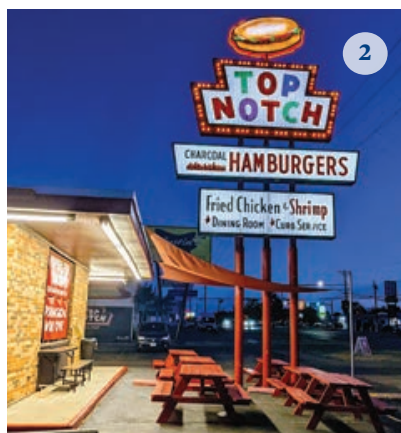
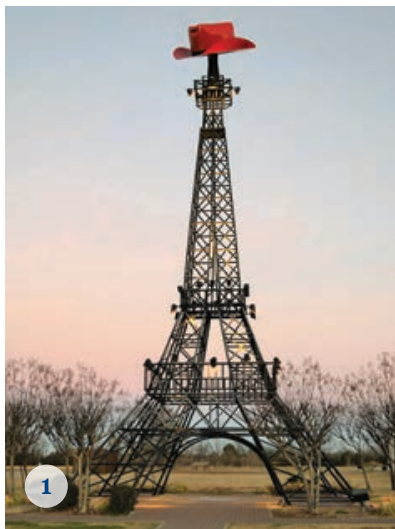
A longtime Austin favorite, Top Notch has been grilling up burgers and other fare since 1971.

3 MARK BONAME
JACKSON EC

You can see these Easter Island statue replicas on the loop in Victoria.

4 DENNIS MURPHY
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

The blueprints mistakenly had inches instead of feet, and the builder in Wichita Falls made it as it was written.



Upcoming Contests

- DUE JAN 10** Rides
- DUE FEB 10** Food and Cooking
- DUE MAR 10** Shells and Scales



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Local Landmarks photos from readers.



Touched by an Angel

An unflappable donkey imparts peace on a farm

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN TOMAC

GROWING UP, my family lived on a tree-lined street in Waco but longed for the country life, so my parents bought land in nearby Rosenthal. It was only 24 acres, but we called it “the farm.”

Excitement at the farm escalated when our next-door neighbor—who owned a real farm—came home one day with a trailer load of donkeys. They were a sight to behold—all those impossibly long ears sticking up above the sides of the trailer.

I was smitten. My grandmother had just read Marguerite Henry’s *Brighty of the Grand Canyon* (about a burro that lived in the gorge) aloud to me, and this load of donkeys made my heart ache. I begged my parents to buy one.

Unloaded into a pen, the donkeys were a mixed bag—fat, thin, gentle,

grumpy, young and ancient—but one little brown jenny with shaggy hair and a white nose poked her head through the fence. Her kind brown eyes gazed right into mine. My parents, imagining the word “babysitter” printed in large letters on her forehead, cheerfully handed over \$25. I named her Bright Angel, after the donkey in Henry’s book.

Bright Angel was no Secretariat. She had one speed, a slow walk. She was kind-hearted and quiet and held no animosity toward any living thing. Eventually, she became my best friend.

If I rode her down the gravel road to the little gas station on the corner, she waited patiently outside while I went in to get a Grapette and a Zero candy bar. She won best supporting actress for many a flickery homemade Western after my older brother got an 8 mm movie camera for his birthday.

When Christmas approached, my school, St. Alban’s in Waco, decided to enter a float in the citywide parade. My parents volunteered Angel to ride on the float and carry the Virgin Mary to Bethlehem.

When we loaded her onto the flatbed trailer, she didn’t twitch an ear. I was the Virgin Mary, a most exalted role for a 6-year-old. A large man dressed as the angel Gabriel stood near the front of the float with a tinfoil trumpet in case of unanticipated excitement, but even the bands and the firetruck’s siren left Angel unperturbed.

She got a cinnamon roll for her fine performance.

Eventually my brothers and I graduated to horses and our parents to larger farms, but Angel lived a long and peaceful life as a cherished member of the family, proving that even the most unlikely of best friends can be a lifelong treasure. ■



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