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FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

JANUARY 2025

## The Bears Are Back

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1. 14.5¢ kWh - June 2024 Texa's Monthly Electricity Rate Average | Actual data powered by Symphony

2. ENERGY STAR rated units qualify for 30% through 2032, 26% through 2033 and 22% through 2034

# January 2025



10

## 06 Our Nosy New Neighbors

Decades after black bears were forced out of Texas, they're traipsing back and causing a ruckus.

*By Pam LeBlanc*

## Wheel Estate

Wherever you wander, a Texas RV-maker has the rig for your next trip.

*By Brandon Weaver*

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

Striking It Big  
*By Anne R. Keene*

26

### TCP Kitchen

Hearty Soups  
*By Vianney Rodriguez*

30

### Hit the Road

Nuts About Pecans  
*By Chet Garner*

33

### Focus on Texas

Photo Contest: Parks

34

### Observations

Miles of Memories  
*By Lauren Sena*

#### ON THE COVER

A black bear heads toward Chisos Basin in Big Bend National Park.

*Photo by Jared Markgraf*

#### ABOVE

Betty McCord Studzinski and her bulldog, Tonka, with their home away from home at Lake Georgetown.

*Photo by Eric W. Pohl*



# Looming Large



THIS MONTH, CHET takes us to the world’s largest pecan, in Seguin (see Page 30). Other attractions in Texas lay claim to being the world’s largest because, you know, everything’s bigger ... . These include the world’s largest:

- Patio chair**, in Dallas
- Roadrunner**, Fort Stockton
- Rattlesnake**, Freer
- Caterpillar**, Italy

- Watermelon**, Luling
- Muleshoe**, Muleshoe
- Jackrabbit**, Ralls

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Download our issue from January 2005 and learn about Gainesville’s quirky circus history. Find it at [TexasCoopPower.com/magazine-archives](http://TexasCoopPower.com/magazine-archives).



“Kindness and consideration of somebody besides yourself keeps you feeling young.”

—BETTY WHITE

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

The best year of my life was ...

**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 November prompt: **Snakes are ...**

Misunderstood.

JAMES KLEIN  
FARMERS EC  
EAST TAWAKONI

Frightfully fascinating.

TAMMY TEMPLIN  
PEDERNALES EC  
AUSTIN

Nope ropes.

SUSAN ALLEN LITTLEFIELD  
VIA FACEBOOK

Better seen than felt.

LORI GUSTAVSSON  
HAMILTON COUNTY EC  
GOLDTHWAITE

Lovely to look at, tempting to hold, but if you are bitten, you might not grow old.

NOLAN GREEN  
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC  
JACKSONVILLE

Visit our website to see more responses.



NOVEMBER 2024 A Good Snake

“Hopefully a few snakes will live on because of this, and folks will start to understand better that snakes are valuable members of our wildlife community.”

MELINA BAKER  
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC  
RUSK



RUSSELL A. GRAVES

**A Smart Pet**

I had a corn snake pet I adopted [A Good Snake, November 2024]. He lived for about 16 years. Junior loved humans but did not trust my two cats. Smart dude.

Diane Cabiness  
MidSouth EC  
Montgomery

**Interpreting Maps**

I know very little Spanish. I enjoyed the article [Found in Translation, November 2024]. I knew some of the names in English. It caused me to think of two towns with Spanish names. One is Cuero, which means leather. The other is Port Lavaca. Vaca means cow.

Ron Tietz  
Medina EC  
San Antonio

**A Memory Burns Brightly**

Raised on a farm in Wilson County, Kansas, I remember well when the area received electricity in the early 1940s



NICK LU

[In the Beginning, August 2024]. That evening, the neighborhood was aglow as most had their yard lights on. The first appliance my parents purchased was a refrigerator, replacing the kerosene-powered one.

Thanks to the Rural Electrification Administration, those lights continue to burn brightly in my memory 80 years later.

Dick Stanley  
Farmers EC  
Greenville

**Kindness in Kerrville**

Folks who move to Kerrville, over time, become Kerrverts [Vegan Panhandlers, July 2024]. Nothing perverted is meant by it; it's more about conversion.

In my case, it had to do with shedding a sort of crust acquired living my first few decades of life in a major metro area (Houston). A few years after moving to Kerrville, its pervasive aura of authentic kindness and old-fashioned neighborliness softened my somewhat city-hardened exterior.

Kristin Mudry  
Bandera EC  
Kerrville

**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.

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# OUR NOSY NEW NEIGHBORS

BY PAM LEBLANC

Decades after bears were forced out of West Texas,  
they're traipsing back and causing a ruckus

In 1994, when Alida Lorio and her husband moved to the quirky Terlingua Ranch development north of Study Butte, where off-the-grid shacks sprout alongside hipster hideouts in the desert of far West Texas, they never expected they'd be living among black bears.

That changed in 2022, when several of the large, furry omnivores began ambling through their 110-acre, cactus-dotted backyard and diving for greasy pizza boxes in a dumpster.

"It's like Terlingua Ranch just got invaded by bears," Lorio says. "We have an arroyo right behind our house, and they were using that as a highway."

Lorio reported the animals to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials who connected her with researchers at the Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University, up the road in Alpine. They set up traps and collared some of the animals as part of an ongoing, multiyear project to learn more about their movements.

Bears, they've discovered, are making a comeback in Texas. And as the animals expand their territory beyond just West Texas, it's time for Texans to prepare to live alongside them.

## HOMeward BOUND

Black bears once roamed across much of Texas, from the Big Bend to the Pineywoods, the Panhandle to the

Rio Grande, but habitat loss and overhunting—along with ranchers who killed them over fears for their livestock—decimated their population. By the 1950s, they had been extirpated from the state.

A remnant population survived in the remote mountains of northern Mexico, though, and began to rebound. In the late 1980s, a few bears wandered across the Rio Grande and into Big Bend National Park. Now they've been spotted outside the park's gates, along the Rio Grande and even as far as the Hill Country.

"A lot of that is due to the protected landscape, restrictions on hunting bears in Texas and most importantly, a change in people's attitudes in the last 50 years," says Matthew Hewitt, a wildlife research assistant who works on the Borderlands Research Institute's black bear project.

The influx of the animals indicates improving habitat, but it also means an increased likelihood that humans will cross paths with bears, who are drawn to garbage, outdoor grills, deer feeders and pet food.

And that sometimes leads to conflict.

"Human-bear interactions are going to start becoming more common as bears continue to recolonize," Hewitt says. "We're working to get Texans in general to realize bears are a real thing and they do exist here."

In 2020, someone shot and killed a bear that roamed into a Del Rio neighborhood. In 2022, a bear nicknamed Oscar





A black bear, seemingly unconcerned about a nearby photographer, feasts on prickly pear tunas just off the road in Big Bend National Park.







ABOVE A mama and her three cubs meander along Chisos Basin Road on the way into the Chisos Mountains.

BELOW Matthew Hewitt of the Borderlands Research Institute collects vitals and records the condition of a creature's mighty paws.



began hanging around a dumpster outside a barbecue restaurant in Terlingua. The animals have popped up in Laredo, the Davis Mountains and Guadalupe Mountains National Park, too, and last September, TPWD officials trapped and relocated a bear on the outskirts of Uvalde, 85 miles west of San Antonio.

Three years ago, Melanie Kaihani noticed a bear on the 243 acres of land she'd just purchased near Sanderson, southeast of Fort Stockton. She set up a wildlife camera and struck gold: a bevy of bears cavorting beneath a deer feeder and climbing a salt lick to take a dip in the water tank she constructed for wildlife. (You can watch their antics on Instagram at @bigbendcountry.)

"With their size and teeth and claws, you'd expect them to be really intimidating creatures, but they're really just big, goofy raccoons," says Kaihani. She notified researchers, who advised her to quit filling the deer feeder. "If they had opposable thumbs, they'd rule the world."

For now, no one really knows how many black bears live in Texas, where they're still considered threatened and hunting them is banned. "More than a dozen, less than a thousand," Hewitt says. "Possibly a couple hundred."

Researchers want to know more about the bears—which have ears shaped like castanets; oval paws with candy corn-sized claws; eyes the size of a quarter; and a distinctive, musky odor—so they're fitting them with collars to track their movements.

Their diet includes mostly plants: prickly pear tunas, acorns, wild persimmons, berries and seeds from piñon pine cones. They also eat insects and roadkill, and researchers in Texas have documented one incident of true predation (a javelina). Full-grown males typically weigh up to 300 pounds.

## BEARS WILL BE BEARS

Twice a year, in the spring and fall, Hewitt and others from the Borderlands Research Institute load baked goods and fruit into live traps they set on land where bears have been reported.

"We have learned that bears sure do like doughnuts," Hewitt says.

When the trapdoor shuts behind a bear, the researchers get a text alert on their phones. Someone is always within a 90-minute drive.

"If a trap goes off, it's boots on ground," Hewitt says.



## BEAR NECESSITIES

- Never feed or approach bears.
- Secure food, garbage and recycling.
- Remove bird feeders when bears are active.
- Never leave pet food outdoors.
- Clean and store grills and smokers.
- Alert neighbors to bear activity.



“We jump out of bed, drop what we’re doing and drive out to the trap site.”

The researchers use a dart gun or jab stick to anesthetize the bear. Once it’s unconscious, they check its vitals; gather biometric data; attach tracking tags; and take hair, blood and tissue samples. Finally, they attach a rubber collar equipped with a transmitter and battery pack so they can follow the animal’s movements.

So far, they’ve collared about 30 bears, including five on Kaihani’s land near Sanderson and a couple on Lorio’s property in Terlingua Ranch.

“We have been extremely surprised by the sheer size of the area these animals are using,” Hewitt says. “We’ve seen some 80-mile movements from Terlingua Ranch down into Mexico.”

Another surprise? The bears are apparently thriving in the harsh, prickly environment of West Texas.

That’s why Borderlands researchers and scientists with TPWD want to educate the public on how they can safely coexist with the animals.

“Bears get into problems when there’s food involved,” Hewitt says. “Outside that, they’re good at keeping to themselves.”

By removing food that attracts bears, storing grills where bears can’t access them and installing bear-safe dumpsters, people can lessen the odds of a problem, Hewitt says.

If you do encounter a black bear, remember that it’s likely

to scamper off if threatened or scared. Stay at least 100 yards away, and if you accidentally find yourself in close proximity to one, continue facing it and back away slowly. Bear spray is a good tool if a bear acts aggressively.

Also, consider yourself lucky.

“Take a second to marvel at a cool critter in a cool place,” Hewitt says.

### OH, BOTHER

Back at Terlingua Ranch, Lorio and her husband say they’re learning to coexist with their new neighbors.

“William and I are adaptive, and we figure the bears were here first,” she says. “So we just made some adjustments on how we dealt with garbage.”

They now store trash indoors. They rinse out pet food and other food containers to eliminate odor, and they put chicken bones in the freezer until trash pickup day. Bear-proof dumpsters have been installed in the rural neighborhood too.

Although not all her neighbors appreciate the bears as much as the Lorios do, Alida says she enjoys observing them.

“A lion is kind of regal, but bears look like you’d want to go have a beer with them,” she says. “The rare times that you do see them, it’s like a gift from Mother Nature.” ■



# WHEEL

Wherever you wander, a Texas RV-maker  
has the rig for your next trip





# ESTATE



BY BRANDON WEAVER

## IN THE SUMMER

of 2023, Betty

McCord Studzinski caravanned to Alaska from her home in Georgetown, north of Austin, with 12 other RVers. The majority made the trek in large 45-foot motor homes, but her recreational vehicle was the smallest of the bunch: a 17-foot Texas-made travel trailer perfect for her and Tonka, her bulldog.

“They were breaking down here and there,” says Studzinski, 78. “We had no issues at all.” She and Tonka covered 11,000 miles on that trip. Her favorite part was the wildlife. “They were everywhere,” she says. “And the scenery was just breathtaking.”

Studzinski has seen 49 states and many national parks with her Casita trailer in tow and has no plans to slow down. This year, she’s planning a trip to Maine and the Maritime Provinces of Canada.

Texas was the top destination for shipments of new RVs in 2023, according to the RV Industry Association, but our state also produces its very own travel rigs. Casita, Capri Camper and Sportsmobile are niche manufacturers compared to the corporate behemoths, and each of these companies has a wait-list for every RV that they build right here in Texas. The folks who buy these vehicles are loyal, and for them, it means buying into an ethos of community, since they don’t have to go through a dealership.

Each of the companies’ RVs take unique forms. Sportsmobile’s converted vans are like turtle shells—you live and drive in your home. Casita makes small, fiberglass egg-shaped trailers that you tote behind you. And Capri makes the classic truck camper for pickups.

An RVIA study found that RV ownership has increased 62% over the past 20 years, with nearly a quarter of owners aged 18–34. These are a few of the intrepid travelers who love their Texas-built homes on wheels.

Betty McCord Studzinski loves her Casita Spirit Deluxe camper. “I hardly ever go back to a place I’ve been before,” she says.

ERIC W. POHL





## TOP

**LARRY PANCAKE IS** a professional saddle bronc rider and music and rodeo promoter from Amarillo.

"I started rodeoing when I was 12," he says. "My seventh grade PE teacher taught me to rope." The Capri camper is a mainstay for professional cowboys like him. The campers are so iconic in Western culture, several have been featured in the TV series *Yellowstone*.

And they've been custom-made in Texas since 1969. In 2003, the company set up manufacturing in the tiny town of Bluff Dale, southwest of Fort Worth. They offer four models to top every size of pickup, with retro styling on the outside and modern amenities inside.

Pancake has owned four Capri campers, and his current one sits atop a 1997 Freightliner chassis. He spends about 150 days a year in it, hunting elk in New Mexico, riding broncs and promoting events across the U.S. The interior is decorated with a neon flamingo and a Welcome to Las Vegas sign.

"Anytime I leave the house, I'm in my Capri. I don't rent hotel rooms," Pancake says. "I like having my own space."

His favorite feature is his Capri's blackout shades that keep the interior completely dark in the daytime and under streetlamps. At big rodeos, there are sometimes hours between rotations. "I can watch a movie or take a nap," Pancake says. "The blackout shades are huge."

He also had Capri build a dream rig from his childhood rodeo days. The Bronc Stomper is a 1977 Chevrolet C20 Camper Special with a Capri camper on it. It's a show truck he uses to promote his National Finals Rodeo events in Las Vegas.

"When I was a kid growing up in the '70s, you had made it big time if you had a Chevy Camper Special with a Capri camper on it," Pancake says. "You either pulled horses with it or rode bulls. That's what the elite rodeo rig was."



COURTESY LARRY PANCAKE

Larry Pancake, a professional saddle bronc rider, calls his outfit, made by Capri Camper, the Bronc Stomper. He also outfitted a Freightliner with a Capri camper, and he uses the big rig to haul his smaller truck.

## TOTE

**STUDZINSKI, THE AVID RVer** from Georgetown, has owned just about every type of home on wheels—from a pop-up tent trailer to a massive motor home.

"I never could find the right size for me," Studzinski says. "I thought being a single female, traveling alone, with just a dog, I needed an engine-driven vehicle." That way if she felt unsafe camping, she could go from her bed to the driver's seat without exiting the rig.

Studzinski likes to boondock (camp off-grid, without hookups), but when all you have is one vehicle, you're likely to lose your spot if you leave briefly and drive to a trailhead or into town. So she started looking at trailers and settled on Casita.

The tough little fiberglass trailers have been built in





LEFT: COURTESY KATIE PERKINS; RIGHT: COURTESY BRANDON WEAVER

# TURTLE

**CHARLES BORSKEY SET** up shop in El Paso in 1961, converting Volkswagen and Ford vans. In the following decades, his company added innovations like “penthouse” tops (expandable roofs for sleeping) and four-wheel-drive conversions. In 1984, Borskey moved Sportsmobile to Austin.

I built my first van in 2005 with Sportsmobile, a four-wheel-drive Ford Econoline. The interior was sparse, with a compact cabinet, microwave, TV and a small “garage” area in the back for my mountain bike.

These days, the company offers standardized floor plans but also has an infinite selection of custom options to build your Goldilocks van. I chose the minimalist approach and christened my go-anywhere machine the Travel-All.

My first excursion was a shakedown trip to the Big Bend. The penthouse top, which raises above the van’s roof, withstood a blustery windstorm in Terlingua, and the four-wheel-drive chassis had no problem navigating the rough and rocky Black Gap Road in the backcountry of Big Bend National Park.

I deemed the Travel-All ready for a remote expedition in Colorado and drove it deep into the Rio Grande National Forest, inching down an impossibly steep Jeep trail to a

The author and his camper outfitted by Sportsmobile. It eats highway miles the way he eats breakfast tacos—with glee and fervor.

campsite along the rushing headwaters of the Rio Grande. I spent four glorious days in absolute solitude next to a Texas river born in Colorado.

I quickly outgrew the Travel-All’s sparse interior, so back to Sportsmobile I went.

In 2007, a few years after Mercedes-Benz introduced their sleek Sprinter van to the American market, I ordered one from Sportsmobile, one of the first certified outfitters in the U.S., and christened it Bruce. Unlike the Travel-All, it ate highway miles like I consume breakfast tacos—with glee and fervor.

I drove it all over the Western states, from Carmel-by-the-Sea, on the coast of central California, to the Grand Canyon, where my wife and I honeymooned in it with our trusty beagle, Pizza. In the 2000s, the Mercedes Sprinter van was uncommon, but now they’re ubiquitous. Ford and Dodge offer their own Euro-styled vans, and Sportsmobile does conversions on those as well out of their facility in North Austin.

Texas since 1983. Their current manufacturing plant is in Rice, south of Dallas, where they produce five models that are 17 feet long. The molded two-piece fiberglass design is built more like a boat than an RV. When a hailstorm damaged Studzinski’s home, her Casita, which sits uncovered outside, sustained no damage.

She purchased her Spirit Deluxe model in 2019 and had it outfitted with 325 watts of rooftop solar panels and four 100-amp-hour batteries. She bought a Subaru and promptly loaded up Tonka and went to Big Bend National Park, where she camped in the Chisos Basin campground.

The sites are small, but her little fiberglass “egg” fit perfectly, and with all her solar power, she could run her fridge with ease. Finding her perfect RV has fueled more wanderlust for Studzinski.

“I hardly ever go back to a place I’ve been before,” she says. “There are so many other places on my list that I want to see.” ■



ERIC W. POHL

Studzinski’s compact camper includes rooftop solar panels and four 100-amp-hour batteries.

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## Making Progress in 2025

**A NEW YEAR BRINGS A RENEWED FOCUS ON PROGRESS.** At Medina Electric Cooperative, we're committed to serving our members and empowering our community through reliable, affordable electricity. To achieve this, we're investing in significant upgrades to our facilities and infrastructure, enhancing member resources, and optimizing our operations. These strategic initiatives will strengthen our infrastructure, improve service delivery and empower our members to thrive in the years to come.

For Medina County members who visit our Hondo area office, you've likely noticed ongoing construction. This work, which will continue through 2026, is part of a board-approved plan to build a new warehouse and remodel the office. As Medina County grows, so do our needs. A larger warehouse will accommodate our expanding fleet of trucks, poles and other equipment.

This portion of the project is expected to be completed mid-year. The office remodel will begin this year to optimize our workspace, allowing us to better serve our growing membership with a larger, more efficient team.

This year, we'll launch a new phase of our 24/7 system operations center by implementing a state-of-the-art supervisory control and data acquisition system. This in-house solution will improve our operations by enabling faster fault detection, contribute to quicker restoration times, and provide advanced analytics to proactively identify potential issues. Additionally, by allowing remote control of circuit breakers and other equipment, we'll enhance safety for our linemen, first responders and the public as well as improve overall system reliability. As we roll out this multi-year project, our members will experience the benefits of a more robust and efficient electric grid.

As part of our commitment to reliable service, we'll inspect over 20,000 poles in 2025, replacing approximately 800 from our 2024 inspections that don't meet our quality standards. With over 150,000 poles supporting our network, regular inspections and replacements are crucial for maintaining system integrity.

Additionally, our vegetation management program will clear nearly 500 miles of lines, mitigating risks from hazardous trees and other vegetation. This proactive approach enhances both reliability and safety.

To enhance member experience, we're revamping our website for easier access to vital information, tools and resources. Additionally, we're exploring platform integrations with our phone system to streamline the payment process while upholding rigorous PCI compliance standards to safeguard member data.

Another key project focuses on ensuring that our rates are accurate and provide a fair and equitable return. We'll complete a full cost-of-service study to ensure that rates fairly allocate costs between rate classes and support operations as well as maintenance and capital improvements.

Our team works hard to consider the focus for each year as they develop business objectives and the strategies to achieve them. Some efforts are more visible—like construction of our new warehouse addition to our Hondo service office—and others happen behind the scenes—like implementation of new SCADA equipment to improve efficiency and expand our services. Our plans for the future are bold and ambitious, but they are targeted with our members in mind.

Until next time,  
Trey Grebe







## Why Electric Co-ops Replace Utility Poles

**YOU PROBABLY DON'T** pay much attention to the utility poles found throughout Medina Electric Cooperative's service territory, but did you know they're the backbone of our distribution network?

Strong, sturdy poles ensure a reliable electrical system, which is why we routinely inspect the poles on our lines. Throughout the year, our crews check for decay caused by exposure to the elements. They know which poles are oldest and conduct inspections through a rotational process. Typically, a standard wooden distribution pole is expected to last more than 50 years.

Occasionally, poles need to be replaced for reasons besides decay and old age. Weather disasters, power line relocation and car crashes are potential causes for immediate replacement.

When possible, Medina EC communicates through emails, calls and text messaging when pole replacements will take place so you stay informed of where crews will be working.

Here's a quick breakdown of how crews replace a utility pole:

Crews will start the process by digging a hole. The depth of the hole must be 15% of the new pole's height.

Next, the new pole must be fitted with bolts, cross arms, insulators, ground wires and arm braces—all of the necessary hardware for delivering safe, reliable electricity. Then crews safely detach the power lines from the old pole. The new pole is then raised and guided carefully into position, and the lines are attached, leaving the new pole to do its job.

So the next time you come across a Medina EC crew replacing a pole, use caution and know that this process ensures a more reliable electric system for you, our members.

## 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

Ken Weynand, (830) 426-0762

Larry Huesser, (830) 363-7651

Mickey Holzhaus, (210) 422-3310

#### Voting District 2

Jimmie Raines, (830) 591-8437

Jimmy Crawford, (830) 591-3477

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.

Información sobre todos los programas y servicios que ofrece Medina Electric Cooperative están disponibles en español al llamarnos al 1-866-632-3532 o visitando una de nuestras oficinas.





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## Be Prepared for Winter Storms

**WHEN WINTER TEMPERATURES** drop and storms hit, staying safe and warm can be challenging. Winter storm severity varies depending on where you live, but nearly all Texans are affected by extreme winter storms at some point.

Medina Electric Cooperative cares about your safety, and we want you to be prepared.

Ice and snow can lead to downed power lines, leaving co-op members without power. During extremely low temperatures, this can be especially dangerous. Our crews will always work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power, but there are a few things you can do to prepare yourself.

**Stay warm.** Plan to use a safe alternate heating source, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove during a power outage. These are great options to keep you and your loved ones warm, but exercise caution when using them, and never leave the heating source unattended. If you're using gasoline-, propane- or natural gas-burning devices to stay warm, never use them indoors. Remember that fuel- and wood-burning sources of heat should always be properly ventilated. Always read the manufacturer's directions before using.

**Stay fed.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends having on hand several days' supply of food that doesn't need to be cooked. Crackers, cereal, canned goods and bread are good options. Five gallons of water per person should also be available in the event of an extended power outage.

**Stay safe.** When an outage occurs, it often means power lines are down. It's best not to travel during winter storms, but if you must, bring a survival kit along, and do not travel alone. If you encounter downed lines, always assume they're live. Stay as far away from the downed lines as possible, and report the situation the utility or emergency services.

**Stay informed.** If you experience a power outage, especially due to winter weather, Medina EC encourages you to report the outage through SmartHub or by calling 1-866-632-3532, and to check outages at [MedinaEC.org/Outages](https://www.MedinaEC.org/Outages).

Winter weather can be unpredictable and dangerous, and planning ahead can often be the difference between life and death. Medina EC is ready for what Mother Nature has in store, and we want you to be ready too.

## 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](https://www.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 us, 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](https://www.MedinaEC.org/Generators).



PHOTOGRAPHYEEU | ADOBE STOCK



# Team Members Reach Important Milestones

MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CELEBRATED several special work anniversaries for employees between August and December.

Medina EC celebrates work anniversaries in five-year increments and honors each employee with an award for their years of service. For each service award, the cooperative also donates \$100 to an organization of the employee's choosing. In 2024, Medina EC employees donated \$2,300 to various local organizations.

Please join us in celebrating these Medina EC employees!



**JACQUELYN MUENNINK**  
Communications Supervisor  
Corporate office  
10 years

**DONATION TO**  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for  
Parkinson's Research



**ALBERT VELA**  
Area Line Foreman  
Bruni office  
20 years

**DONATION TO**  
St. Jude Children's  
Research Hospital



**JOHNNY GARZA**  
Journeyman  
Uvalde office  
5 years

**DONATION TO**  
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline



**TREY GUERRA**  
Journeyman  
Bruni office  
5 years

**DONATION TO**  
Jim Hogg County Sheriff's  
Department Toy Drive



**ARMANDO CASTILLO**  
Working Foreman  
Laredo office  
20 years

**DONATION TO**  
St. Jude Children's  
Research Hospital



**RAEGAN MAZUREK**  
Manager of Member Services  
Corporate office  
5 years

**DONATION TO**  
Tunnel to Towers  
Foundation



**GREG ZAPATA**  
Facilities Coordinator  
Corporate office  
10 years

**DONATION TO**  
Hearts Up For Cancer



**JOEL GONZALES**  
Engineering Equipment  
Supervisor  
Corporate office  
20 years

**DONATION TO**  
Hondo Little League



**SHELBY HERNANDEZ**  
Consumer Accounting Assistant  
Corporate office  
5 years

**DONATION TO**  
CASA of South Texas

## \$2.024 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 \$2.024 million in capital credits.

Current members who had service prior to 2024 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 \$42 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](https://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](https://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.

# 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](https://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](mailto: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 Deadline

All petitions are due **March 3**.

Learn more and find the online petition\* link at [MedinaEC.org/Nominee](https://MedinaEC.org/Nominee).

\*Nominations will be completed by online petitions only.

*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](https://MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc). The section that primarily pertains to nomination and election procedures is Article 4—Board of Directors.*

## ELECTION TIMELINE

### January 2

#### Online Petitions Open

Find petition link and paperwork at [MedinaEC.org/Nominee](https://MedinaEC.org/Nominee).

### March 3

#### Online Petitions Close

Nomination materials are due by 5 p.m.

### April 22

#### Certification Committee Meets

Certify nominees who meet the criteria and will appear on the ballot.

### May 1

#### Certified Nominee

#### Paperwork Due

Find paperwork at [MedinaEC.org/Nominee](https://MedinaEC.org/Nominee).

### August 26

#### Election Opens

### September 26

#### Election Closes

Ballots must be received by third-party election services provider by 5 p.m.

### October 4

#### 86th Annual Membership Meeting

Election results announced.

### Late October

#### New Board Members Seated

At the October board meeting.

# \$50,000 in Scholarships

Medina Electric Cooperative is offering five scholarships for adults pursuing higher education and 20 scholarships for high school graduating seniors. Each scholarship will be \$2,000!

Eligible applicants will be entered in 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](https://MedinaEC.org/Scholarships) or contact us at 1-866-632-3532 or [Scholarship@MedinaEC.org](mailto:Scholarship@MedinaEC.org).

**MedinaEC.org/Scholarships**  
Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. March 7.\*

*\*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.*



ELENA GONZALES, 2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



# The Power of Home Analytics

**EVER WONDERED** where your energy dollars go? With SmartHub, you can gain valuable insights into your home's energy consumption.

By creating a personalized home profile, you'll generate the most personalized data. Discover how much energy your appliances use, identify usage trends, and receive tailored recommendations to reduce your energy bills.

Here's how it works:

## 1. Log in to Your SmartHub

**Account:** Access your personalized energy dashboard.

## 2. Create Your Home Profile:

Provide details about your home's size, insulation, and appliances.

## 3. Analyze Your Energy Usage:

Dive into detailed reports, track your consumption over time, and compare your usage to local weather trends.

## 4. Receive Personalized Recommendations:

Get expert tips on energy-saving measures, from upgrading appliances to adjusting thermostat settings.

By taking advantage of your energy analytics, you can make informed decisions to reduce your electric use and save money. Start your energy-saving journey today!



# Keep Warm a Cheaper Way

**BEFORE YOU CRANK UP** the thermostat on an especially chilly day this winter, first try a method that won't increase your electric bill.

**Here are four practical alternatives to avoid sending your energy bills through the roof this winter:**

**Dress in layers.** Pull a T-shirt on and layer a sweater over it. Choose fleece-lined sweatpants for lounging around the house.

**Keep your feet warm.** Did you know heat escapes your body through your feet and hands? So never walk around barefoot indoors during the winter, even if you have wall-to-wall carpeting. Wear thick socks with your slippers.

**Put an electric blanket on your bed** before you crawl into it, and the sheets and blankets will be toasty warm. Turn the electric blanket off before you fall asleep, or invest in one that will turn off automatically.

**Move around.** You'll be colder if you sit still all day than if you're active. Use chilly days to clean the house, exercise or play with the kids. The more you move, the warmer you'll feel.

**Learn more energy saving tips at [MedinaEC.org/EnergySavings](https://www.MedinaEC.org/EnergySavings).**

## Operation Round Up

If you or someone you know needs financial help, apply for a donation from Operation Round Up.\*

### Application deadlines for 2025:

February 7, May 2, August 1 and November 7

Apply at [MedinaEC.org/ORU](https://www.MedinaEC.org/ORU).



*\*Applicants must live in one of the 17 counties served by Medina EC. ORU funds cannot be used for electric bills, solar panels or anything related to the purchase of power.*





ART WAGER | ISTOCK.COM

## EPA's Power Plant Rule Is Wrong for America

Co-ops need options to meet growing energy demands

**HERE AT MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**, we work hard to keep the lights on every single day. But these days, we do so much more than that.

Without electricity, remote workers can't log on and do their job. Businesses can't reach their customers. Students can't attend class and finish their homework. Families can't visit their doctor or attend worship or community meetings. Heating and cooling our homes, manufacturing American-made products, even charging our cars—all these things depend on reliable, affordable electricity.

That's why we're so concerned about the Environmental Protection Agency's new power plant rule to limit greenhouse gas emissions from existing coal and new natural gas power plants. In general, starting in 2032, the rules require increasingly stringent carbon dioxide emissions controls at coal and natural gas power plants. Requirements would vary based on the type of unit, how frequently it operates and how long it will operate.

This rule jeopardizes our co-op's ability to provide the reliable and affordable electricity our business and residential members need. It will reduce the amount of electricity our nation produces at a time when we need more electricity than ever.

America's electric cooperatives provide safe, reliable and affordable power to 42 million Americans in 48 states. It's a big job, and it's not getting any easier.

Data centers, like those in Medina EC's northern region, new manufacturing plants, and American households and businesses all require an increasing amount of electricity. In fact, our country's power consumption is expected to hit record highs this year and next. Grid planners have forecast that by 2028, we'll need another 38 gigawatts of electric capacity to meet our needs.

That's like tacking another California onto the electric grid.

At the same time, the amount of electricity we produce is shrinking as always-available plants are shut down.

This growing demand—and shrinking supply—is why the North American Electric Reliability Corp. has warned that 19 states could see rolling outages over the next five years during times of high electrical usage, including during life-threatening cold snaps and heat waves.

The EPA's power plant rule will make things worse. It will force America's electric co-ops to take

more 24/7 electric generation, like Texas lignite and natural gas, off the grid. And we know what that means—higher energy costs for consumers and less electricity to go around.

Beyond that, the rule is unlawful. It exceeds the EPA's authority under the Clean Air Act and disregards Supreme Court rulings. It also requires the use of carbon capture and storage—technology that's simply not ready—under unrealistic timelines.

The goal of the EPA power plant rule is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, something America's electric co-ops already are doing. From 2010 to 2021, co-ops more than tripled our use of renewable energy.

By investing in solar and wind power, developing energy-storage projects, and promoting energy efficiency, America's electric co-ops are leading the way to a cleaner energy future in ways that make sense locally.

Meanwhile, the energy future outlined by the EPA means more outages, greater uncertainty and higher electric bills. That's not the right approach for our co-op members, and it's not the right approach for America, either.

We encourage you to reach out to your senator and member of Congress to express your concerns. Learn more how you can take action at [MedinaEC.org/Government-Relations](https://www.MedinaEC.org/Government-Relations).



# Community Empowerment Grants Available

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Up to \$5,500 will be awarded in 2025.  
Application deadline: April 1, 11:59 p.m.\*  
Emphasis will be placed on projects that:

- >> Encourage economic diversity.
- >> Contribute to community health and development.
- >> Improve the quality or quantity of services essential for the development of viable communities.



*\*Technical support will not be available outside of normal business hours. Encountering technical issues turning in the application on the last day will not be grounds for an extension.*

## COUNTIES WHERE GRANTS CAN BE AWARDED

Atascosa	Frio	Medina	Zapata
Brooks	Jim Hogg	Real	Zavala
Dimmit	Kinney	Starr	
Duval	La Salle	Uvalde	
Edwards	McMullen	Webb	

## LAST YEAR'S RECIPIENTS

### Bluebonnet Children's Advocacy Center, Hondo and Uvalde

\$750 to stock up the Rainbow Room, an emergency resource room, with clothing, baby food, diapers and other items given to women and children while at the center.

### Briscoe Animal Resource Center of Uvalde

\$1,000 to fund a new memorial animal shelter.

### Joe Finger Youth Benefit Fund, D'Hanis

\$750 to purchase a scoreboard for the first of three little league fields.

### Medina Healthcare System

\$750 to enhance patient safety when medications are administered by using a point of care device that scans a patient's armband and the barcode on the medication prior to administration to ensure the right patient receives the right drug.

### Medina Valley Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8134, LaCoste

\$1,500 being added to funds already raised for repairing and leveling the VFW building's foundation. This includes removing and replacing pipes, beams and floor joists.

### Restoring Hope Family Resource Center, Pearsall

\$750 to purchase three polywood glider benches for the center's Hope Garden. The center hopes clients and community members will use the space as an area to interact, reflect, grieve and pray.

**View eligibility information and apply online at [MedinaEC.org/Grant](https://MedinaEC.org/Grant).**

Would your teen enjoy a **FREE** trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2025? The Government-in-Action Youth Tour may be for them. Last chance to

**APPLY NOW!**



**Deadline to apply is January 10.**

*Scan here to apply and learn more!*

**BONUS: Winners will also receive a \$2,000 college scholarship!**



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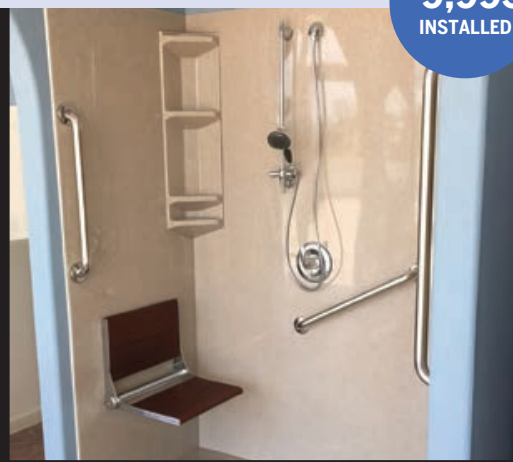
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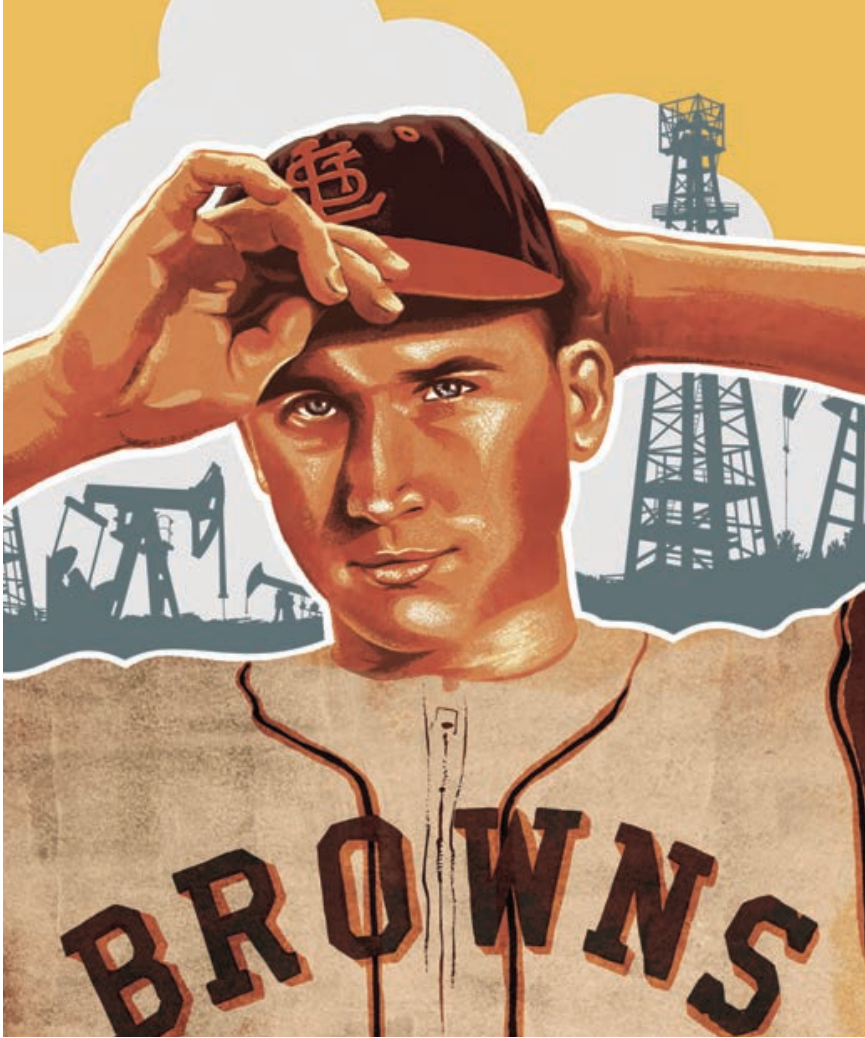


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# Striking It Big

War vet Frank Saucier left behind a big-league career to chase oil

BY ANNE R. KEENE • ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC KITTELBERGER

**IMAGINE GIVING UP** a promising baseball career to become a landman and wildcatter in the oil business. That's what Francis "Frank" Saucier did when he saw more potential in oil than baseball.

At 98, the Amarilloan and former outfielder for the St. Louis Browns (now the Baltimore Orioles) has seen almost a century of booms and busts and war and peace.

Saucier was born in 1926 on a Missouri farm, educated in a one-room schoolhouse and carried water to wheat field workers for 25 cents a day at age 6. By 10, the youngest of six children founded a fur-trapping enterprise with a Remington rifle, earning money for used books.

As a teen, Saucier heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor as he and his cousin

walked home from a movie. "A Model T pulled up with folks who shared the news. I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was," he says with a soft-spoken West Texas drawl in a recent interview at his home, where he displays baseballs signed by Hall of Famers Satchel Paige and Rogers Hornsby. "My family did not own a radio, so I raced home to tell them about the bombing."

The day after his 17th birthday, Saucier enlisted in the Navy, where he enrolled in the V-12 officer training program at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. As an apprentice seaman, Saucier says, "My rank was so low I could crawl under a rattlesnake's belly under a wagon wheel with a stovepipe hat on."

Saucier served on an amphibious

warfare commando team—a forerunner to the Navy SEALs. "President Truman dropped the first atomic bomb when we were about 1,000 miles from Japan," he says. "Though there was no alcohol on board the ship, we had a big party and thought, 'By golly, we made it.'"

Strong farm-boy wrists from swinging an axe and milking cows had helped make Saucier a star hitter in college. After the war, he signed a minor-league contract, won three batting titles and was named player of the year in 1950 by *The Sporting News*.

Still, fame never stopped Saucier from taking offseason roustabout jobs in the oil fields, where he invested his baseball earnings to drill for crude, which was then selling for about \$3 a barrel.

He signed with the Browns in 1951, realizing a childhood dream conjured on the wooden grandstand at Sportsman's Park in St. Louis. He played with or against Ted Williams, Yogi Berra, Minnie Miñoso and Paige along with Texans Dr. Bobby Brown and Eddie Robinson.

But Saucier is most remembered for a wacky public relations stunt engineered by Browns owner Bill Veeck, who brought in 3-foot-7-inch Eddie Gaedel to pinch-hit for Saucier during a game.

In 1952, Saucier was at spring training when he was called back to active duty during the Korean War. He'd already been dealing with chronic problems with his throwing arm, and after his discharge in 1954, he took a job as a district landman for Humble Oil Co. in Tyler.

Saucier never attended another major-league game. He worked in the oil and finance business until he was 85.

Regrets? No way.

"Baseball opened a lot of doors for me," he says. "I just happened to be in the right place at the right time." ■



# Hearty Soups

Enticing ingredients and easy options have you set for the coldest of days

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Pozole verde is one of my favorite soups to make when feeding a crowd. Pozole is a traditional Mexican soup that can be made with chicken or pork. (*Verde* means green.) It's the absolute perfect bowl to enjoy all winter! It comes together quickly and is even tastier the next day for lunch.

## Pozole Verde

### SOUP

- 1 pound tomatillos, husks removed, rinsed**
- 1 large onion, halved**
- 1 jalapeño pepper, halved, seeds removed for less spice**
- 2 cloves garlic**
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano**
- 10 cups water, divided use**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste**
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper, or more to taste**
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro, coarsely chopped**
- 4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts**
- 2 cans white hominy (15 ounces each), drained and rinsed**
- Lime wedges, for serving**
- Salsa, for serving**

### FRIED TORTILLA STRIPS

- 6 corn tortillas**
- ¼ cup vegetable oil**
- 1 teaspoon salt**

- 1. SOUP** Add tomatillos, onion, jalapeño, garlic, oregano, 4 cups water, salt and pepper to a large pot. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes.
- 2.** Using a large slotted spoon, remove tomatillos, onion, jalapeño and garlic from the broth and add to a blender with 1 cup of the cooking water and cilantro. Start blender on low, then work up to high until ingredients are smooth. Taste and add salt as needed.
- 3.** Add blended sauce, chicken and the remaining 6 cups water to a large pot. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 30–45 minutes or until chicken is fork-tender. Remove from pot and shred.
- 4.** Add shredded chicken and hominy to the pot. Simmer 15 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning.
- 5. FRIED TORTILLA STRIPS** Slice tortillas into ½-inch strips. Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add tortilla strips in batches, stirring often, and fry until crispy and lightly browned. Remove from oil, place on a paper towel-lined plate and sprinkle with salt.
- 6.** Serve soup hot with tortilla strips, lime wedges and salsa.

**SERVES 6**

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Creamy Cauliflower Hominy Soup.







## Nonna's Quick Pasta Soup

MARIA MEARS  
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

This is an easy dinner option that can be ready in under 30 minutes. It features orzo, a tiny, rice-shaped pasta that absorbs the flavors of the broth beautifully. It's a versatile dish that can be customized by adding your favorite vegetables, herbs and protein, like chicken or beans.

**5 tablespoons (5/8 stick) butter**  
**5 cloves garlic, minced**  
**4 cups chicken broth**  
**1 1/4 cups orzo**  
**1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, divided use**  
**2 teaspoons salt, or more to taste**  
**1 teaspoon ground black pepper, or more to taste**  
**Fresh parsley, minced (optional)**

1. Melt butter in a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté 1 minute, stirring often to avoid browning.
2. Pour in chicken broth and orzo and stir to combine. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium and simmer. Cook orzo according to package directions, stirring occasionally, until al dente.
3. Remove from heat and stir in half the Parmesan cheese. Add salt and pepper.
4. Ladle into bowls and top with remaining Parmesan cheese and parsley.

SERVES 4



\$500 WINNER

## Shrimp Chowder

AMY BARILE  
MIDSOUTH EC

Barile's chowder is a comforting and flavorful dish that combines the sweetness of corn with the rich, savory taste of shrimp. It's an easy-to-make, satisfying meal that feels indulgent yet light, making it an ideal choice for weeknight dinners or cozy gatherings.

**6 slices fully cooked bacon, diced, reserving 1 tablespoon fat**  
**1 tablespoon (1/2 stick) butter**  
**3 stalks celery, diced**  
**1 small yellow onion, diced**  
**4 cloves garlic, minced**  
**1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste**  
**1 teaspoon ground black pepper, or more to taste**  
**2 tablespoons flour**  
**2 1/2 cups milk**

**1 can whole kernel corn (15 ounces)**  
**1 can cream-style corn (14.75 ounces)**  
**1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper**  
**1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined**  
**1/3 cup half-and-half**  
**Green onions, minced, for serving**

1. Add bacon fat, butter, celery and onion to a Dutch oven or large, deep saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until tender, about 4 minutes. Add garlic, salt and pepper and cook an additional 30 seconds.
2. Sprinkle flour over the vegetable mixture. Stir to coat and allow to cook about a minute more. Slowly add milk to the mixture, stirring to eliminate any lumps.
3. Add both cans of corn and cayenne. Let cook until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes.
4. Add shrimp and cook about 3 minutes. Stir in half-and-half.
5. Remove from heat, taste and add salt and pepper if desired.
6. Serve warm, topped with bacon and green onions.

SERVES 6

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**SUMMER PASTAS** DUE JANUARY 10

It's time to put your garden's fresh vegetables and herbs to good use. Send us your best summer pasta recipe, and our favorite will win \$500. Enter by January 10.

**UPCOMING: MAKE IT SPICY** DUE FEBRUARY 10



CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

## Chicken and White Bean Soup

JENNY HARTSFIELD  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

Hartsfield's soup is another great recipe for a busy week, delivering the rich, slow-cooked flavors of an all-day soup in a fraction of the time. White beans pair with green chiles to complement perfectly poached chicken. Serve with a crusty bread or tortilla chips—so scrumptious.



- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 7 cups water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon (1/8 stick) butter
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

- 4 cans white beans (15 ounces each), undrained
- 2 cans mild chopped green chiles (4 ounces each)
- 8 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese
- Sour cream, for serving
- Tortilla chips, for serving

1. Add chicken, water, salt and bay leaf to a Dutch oven or large saucepan and cook over medium heat. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cover. Simmer until chicken is fork-tender, 15–20 minutes.
2. Remove chicken and shred, reserving broth.
3. In another Dutch oven or large saucepan, add olive oil, butter and onions and cook over medium heat 15 minutes, stirring often.
4. Stir in garlic, cumin, oregano and cayenne and cook an additional 2 minutes. Add white beans, green chiles, shredded chicken and reserved broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes.
5. When ready to serve, stir in cheese. Serve hot with sour cream and tortilla chips.

SERVES 10

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Nuts About Pecans

After Missourians built the world's biggest, Seguin rallied to reclaim the crown

BY CHET GARNER

**HERE IN TEXAS**, we like to have the biggest of everything, whether it's boots, burgers or bulls. So I wasn't surprised to learn that we even claim the original world's biggest pecan, proudly displayed on the lawn of the Guadalupe County Courthouse in Seguin, about 35 miles east of San Antonio. I decided it was a story (and a nut) I needed to crack for myself.

Seguin has a population of about 35,000 and boasts a lively downtown shaded by towering pecan trees. It's appropriate considering pecans are one of the town's most valuable resources and grow plentifully along the Guadalupe River.

So after filling my belly at Burnt Bean Co. with a platter of Tex-Mex barbecue, it was time to fill my head with nutty facts.

I crossed the street and found the original giant pecan in all its glory in front of the courthouse. While not technically a real pecan, this concrete rendition was placed here in 1962 and measures more than 5 feet long and 2½ feet wide. It was impressive for sure but not as dramatic as the battle it spawned.

Twenty years later, in 1982, farmers in Brunswick, Missouri, claimed the title with a 12-foot pecan that weighed over 12,000 pounds. In 2002, Seguin native John Pape set out to make a bigger one but didn't know about the one in Missouri's pecan capital, and so his 11-foot pecan on wheels never wore the crown. But in 2010, the city of Seguin banded together and crafted a 16-foot pecan that brought the title securely back where it belongs.

The current king of pecans is polished up and ready for photos just outside the Pecan Museum of Texas in Seguin. Everything is bigger in Texas, even if it takes a few years. ■

ABOVE A rather large nut. Oh, and that's Chet perched upon it.

**TCP** Watch 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.

## JANUARY

10

**La Grange Dale Watson**, (979) 968-9944, [thebugleboy.org](http://thebugleboy.org)

**Elgin [10–11] Bastrop County Junior Livestock Show**, [bastrop.agrilife.org/bcjl](http://bastrop.agrilife.org/bcjl)

11

**Corsicana Mimosas at the Market**, (903) 654-4852, [facebook.com/corsicanamainstreet](http://facebook.com/corsicanamainstreet)

**Monahans Resolution Run**, (432) 943-2187, [monahans.org](http://monahans.org)

17

**Amarillo [17–18] Beautiful Blue Danube**, (806) 376-8782, [amarillosymphony.org](http://amarillosymphony.org)

**Galveston [17–18] Yaga's Chili Quest & Beer Fest**, (409) 770-0999, [yagaschiliquest.com](http://yagaschiliquest.com)

18

**Copperas Cove Polar Bear Plunge 5K**, (254) 542-2719, [copperascovetx.gov](http://copperascovetx.gov)

**Fredericksburg Book Festival**, (830) 997-6513, [fredericksburgbookfestival.org](http://fredericksburgbookfestival.org)

**Garland MLK Parade & March**, (972) 381-5044, [garlandtxnaacp.org](http://garlandtxnaacp.org)

**Granbury Goosebump Jump**, (817) 573-5548, [visitgranbury.com](http://visitgranbury.com)

**Johnson City Snow Day 2025: Frosty Fun Fest**, (844) 263-6405, [sciencemill.org](http://sciencemill.org)

**Fredericksburg [18–19] Hill Country Gem & Mineral Show**, (325) 248-1067, [visitfredericksburgtx.com](http://visitfredericksburgtx.com)

**Kerrville [18–19, 25–26, Feb. 1–2] Renaissance Festival**, (214) 632-5766, [kerrvillerenfest.com](http://kerrvillerenfest.com)



20

**Fort Worth** **The Music of Sam Cooke**, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

**Port Arthur** **MLK Brunch**, (409) 543-3727, visitportarthurtx.com

21

**Tyler** **Ain't Too Proud: The Life and Times of the Temptations**, (903) 566-7424, cowancenter.org

23

**Abilene** **[23-25] Texas Shuffle Showdown**, (325) 695-4713, skatinplaceabilene.com

24

**Crockett** **Shenandoah**, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

**Tyler** **[24-26] Gem and Mineral Show**, etgms.org

25

**Brenham** **Simon Theatre 100th Birthday Celebration**, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

**Burnet** **Chuck Wagon Chow Down**, hlsl.org

31

**Bastrop** **[31-Feb. 1] Mardi Gras**, (512) 332-8984, bastroptxmardigras.com

## FEBRUARY

1

**Horseshoe Bay** **Boots and BBQ**, (325) 388-3440, highlandlakescasa.com

6

**Kerrville** **ARTrageous**, (830) 896-9393, caillouxperformingarts.com

### TCP Submit Your Event

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

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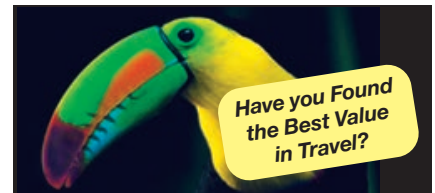
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# Blade Stunner

*Beautifully made, magnificent to look at, this knife is a work of art at only \$99*

It's not often you happen upon a bladesmith who has gem cutting skills. But finding needles in haystacks is what we do best, so when we saw this master craftsman's handiwork, we made certain to procure some of these Southwestern masterpieces to complete our collection.

The stainless steel blade, bolster and pommel are exquisitely etched and would have looked great with a less ambitious handle. But the results of overachieving are stunning here. The turquoise-blue colored handle is ablaze with assorted stones like jasper, marble, sunstone, and coral that have been hand cut and inlaid in a Southwestern motif.

**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 Sedona Knife.

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- 5" etched stainless steel blade; 9-1/2" overall length
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# Parks

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CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1

1 THERESA MCKEE  
FANNIN EC

A golden sunset with a kayaker paddling across Lake Ray Roberts.

2 PEGGY BRYANT  
PEDERNALES EC

Davis Mountains State Park.

3 CHARLES BAXTER  
COSERV

A great blue heron in Caddo Lake State Park.

4 MIKE PRESTIGIACOMO  
BARTLETT EC

“Where is the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang?”



2



3



4

## Upcoming Contests

- DUE JAN 10 **Patterns**
- DUE FEB 10 **Family Vacation**
- DUE MAR 10 **Catch of the Day**



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

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Parks photos from readers.





## Miles of Memories

A North Carolina transplant was shaped by the state she longs for

BY LAUREN SENA  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

**THERE'S A LINE** in the song *Miles and Miles of Texas* popularized by Asleep at the Wheel that goes something like this: I looked into her deep blue (or brown) eyes, and this is what I saw: I saw miles and miles of Texas.

As someone who grew up listening to this song, I have always claimed that this is the greatest compliment I could get, but lately I've started to think more about that.

If that's what you see when you look into my eyes, then you're seeing all of me.

You're seeing my favorite places: the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, hiking trails in Bastrop State Park, Naegelin's Bakery in New Braunfels and the house of my adoptive grandparents, where I learned to make fried chicken and where my brother went hunting for the first time.

You're seeing where I am the happiest: my dance studio in San Marcos; our local pool, where I spent half my summers; the Cabela's by the water tower in Buda that I used to beg my parents to take me to when I was about 5.

You're seeing my home: the kitchen where we made cookies with our mom and where she danced with me before bed. You're seeing the old mulberry tree down the street where we would stuff our faces with berries every summer and the backyard where my brother and I played every day.

You're seeing what makes me me.

But I have been criticized for saying I'm from Texas because I have lived more of my life outside of Texas at this point.

That always stings a bit. Because they weren't there when my dad got off the phone with his boss and told us that we were being transferred. They don't know how it felt when I was being torn away from everything I knew and loved—my miles and miles of Texas.

And now I come back every chance I get.

The memories I made in Texas I will cherish forever. The feeling of being home is something I will miss whenever I'm not in Texas.

The second I cross back over that border, I get the silliest grin on my face and my eyes shine just a little bit more just knowing I'm home again. I will forever refuse to call anywhere else home.

So if someone were to look into my eyes and see miles and miles of Texas, they would be seeing me in a way very few people do. They would be seeing me for exactly who I am. For what makes me *me* is Texas. ■



# The future of hearing aids has arrived

**NEW! HORIZON IX HEARING AIDS**



**Alarming fact: More than 48 million Americans hear so poorly that their quality of life significantly suffers as a result.**

The problem: Most wait too long to act, hoping their hearing will improve on its own. Sadly, it never does. But now, a game-changing device is making waves across the industry, and experts say it's the biggest breakthrough they've seen in over a decade.

## It's the new Horizon IX hearing aid.

Horizon IX is currently the best-selling device at renowned U.S. company, hear.com, developed by top audio engineers from Signia. Their goal was to combine the best possible speech clarity with a comfortable, invisible design using cutting-edge German technology.

"It's a hearing aid people actually want to wear," says hear.com co-founder Dr. Marco Vietor. "It offers amazing speech clarity and smartphone connectivity in a virtually invisible design — and all that for a reasonable price!"



## What makes them so special?

It's one of the world's first hearing aids with dual processing. This is special because it's the first time engineers have been able to pack not one, but two state-of-the-art computer chips into a device this small. And with double the power comes double the clarity.

## What do Horizon IX hearing aids have to offer?

- **Amazing Speech Clarity™**  
Effortlessly understand every word, thanks to dual-processing
- **Bluetooth connectivity**  
Stream music and phone calls directly to your hearing aids
- **Rechargeable lithium-ion batteries**  
28+ hours of battery life and a portable case for on-the-go charging
- **Easy, comfortable fit**  
All-day wearing comfort, easy to combine with glasses
- **Free smartphone app**  
Adjust settings for every listening situation easily via smartphone

This means that Horizon IX hearing aids offer all of the usual benefits of modern hearing aids with the added bonus of something completely new: they can process speech and background noise independently, then combine them for unparalleled, crystal clear sound.

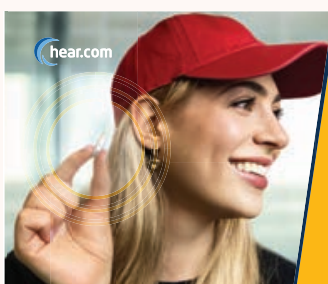
## Where can I get Horizon IX?

As of December 2024, hear.com has partnered with over 1,200 specialists nationwide, ensuring Horizon IX devices are available across the U.S.

Now, you can join 425,000 Americans who are already enjoying effortless hearing with Horizon IX. Simply text "HEAR" to (786) 618-2573 or visit [hear.com/tx](https://hear.com/tx) to **check if you qualify for a 45-day no-risk trial:**

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