

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A white egret is perched on a dark, gnarled branch. The bird is facing right, with its long neck curved slightly. Its feathers are bright white, and its long, pointed beak is a pale yellowish-brown. Below the bird, a nest made of dry twigs and sticks hangs from the branch. The background is a soft-focus blue sky with some green foliage visible at the bottom.

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Detail of a Kiowa drawing of a military officer and two Native Americans in U.S. military dress.

FEATURES

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Texas USA

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By Brenda Kissko

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By Lonni Taylor



NEXT MONTH

We Brake for Queso A belt-busting, cheese-topped tour of the best Tex-Mex dishes in San Antonio—ground zero for the beloved cuisine.



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LEDGER ART: BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART. TEX-MEX: JODY HORTON



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ON THE COVER A great egret at the Stark Foundation's Shangri La Botanical Gardens in Orange. Photo by Julia Robinson

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iViva Conjunto!

Of all the things I miss about Texas, dancing to a live conjunto band is at the top of the list [*Soul Music of South Texas*, March 2020].

BRUCE LAMB | VIA FACEBOOK

Get to the Point

I kept looking for a reference to the “correct” pronunciation, according to my Texas-born and -raised husband, of the words barbed wire—“bob wire” [*Sharpening My Knowledge*, March 2020].

ANITA CARSWELL | GEORGETOWN PEDERNALES EC

Editor’s Note: Check out Chet Garner’s video with the story on our website. He notes the “proper” pronunciation, though it’s a variation on this one.

Masterful Illustration

I enjoyed the article but even much more so the clever illustration of crape murder [*Crape Murder*, February 2020]. Michael Koelsch is pure genius with his depiction of the terrorized housewife with the painting of her beloved crape myrtle tree, while outside, her menacing husband viciously commits the heinous act of crape murder. This illustration could easily be the cover of a midcentury Nancy Drew Mystery Stories I collected as a girl.

ELIZABETH WALTERS | BURNET PEDERNALES EC

Cut off crape myrtles as close to the ground as your saw can get. Then prune off subsequent suckers. Replace with native trees that support butterflies, hummingbirds and other native wildlife.

Squeezebox Cues

The articles about the accordion just took me back to my childhood [*Soul Music of South Texas* and *Texas’ Main Squeeze*, March 2020]. I grew up listening to my dad play the accordion and sing Czech songs. Talk about going down memory lane.

BARB SCHROEDER | SCHULENBURG | FAYETTE EC

Like the tallow tree people seem to love for its hardiness, the cumulative effect of crape myrtles is that of a destructive invasive species.

JOE FLARITY | OAKHURST SAM HOUSTON EC

Around the Clock

I really enjoyed the picture of the Wise County Courthouse in the March Letters. My wife’s grandfather, Daniel Jensen, a jeweler and watchmaker, was hired back in the early years of the 20th century to keep the clock on top of that courthouse running properly. I wonder if anyone sees to the clock’s functioning these days.

DAN TEED | MCKINNEY COSERV

A Mother’s Love

Only a mother’s love could have recognized that the picture of the raising of our American flag

over Iwo Jima included her son [*A Texan at Iwo Jima*, February 2020]. Belle Block recognized her son in that splendid image. Also, most amazing, she recognized him from his back in a crouching position. She must have had a million images stored of him in her memory and heart as he grew up.

FRED SMITH JR. | BUNA JASPER-NEWTON EC

I wonder how many Americans know that the picture taken by Joe Rosenthal was in fact the second flag raised on Mount Suribachi. The first flag raised was a smaller flag.



I write this to bring a little-known fact to the public’s attention and to honor Cpl. Charles W. Lindberg, who passed in 2007 as the last living flag raiser on Mount Suribachi. He was in the squad of Marines responsible for the first flag raised, and I have a picture, autographed by him, of the squad during the first raising.

DONALD GRUBBS | VICTORIA VICTORIA EC

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

   **Texas Co-op Power**

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RURAL LIVING

The Future Looks Bright

THE NATIONAL FFA ORGANIZATION reached a milestone late last year: 700,000 members. The student organization that supports and promotes agricultural education has chapters in all 50 states. Of course, the Texas chapter is the largest, with more than 137,000 members who “believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words but of deeds.”



NATURE



THE FIRST CULTIVATED CARROTS WERE PURPLE OR YELLOW.

TECH KNOWLEDGE

Current Favorite

One year into committing his family to an electric vehicle, John Kent, in a column for *The Dallas Morning News*, called his Tesla “the best thing I’ve ever paid money for.”

Kent said the vehicle has easily handled trips to Oklahoma City, Austin, Houston and Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, with a range that tops out at about 264 miles.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Counting on You

The 2020 U.S. census is well underway. The 2010 census showed that nearly half of all U.S. Latinos lived in two states: 28% in California, 19% in Texas.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

The best part about being a mom is . . .



► **Tell us how** you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or post them on our Facebook page. Please include your city and co-op.

Below are some of the responses to our March prompt: **Why do dogs always ...**

Quickly find a way into your heart?

AL AND JUDY WILSON | NORTHLAKE COSERV

Want to go outside as soon as I sit down to do something?

KAY STRICKLIN | SEGUIN
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

Bark at doorbells on TV even if they've never heard a doorbell in real life?

EMILEE ENSMINGER | FORT WORTH TRI-COUNTY EC

Go to sleep so fast?

ELIZABETH AND GEORGE MORGAN
SAN ANGELO | CONCHO VALLEY EC

Love us when we think there's nobody else who does?

MIKE CATES | BELLS | GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

Hate to have a bath but love to go for a swim in a muddy, algae-covered pond?

DARLA REGNER | BARTLETT | BARTLETT EC

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.

LIFESTYLE

SPLASH ACROSS TEXAS

In search of a Texas-sized photo op this summer? Here are some pools that are Texas-shaped, too.

HOUSTON The Marriott Marquis' 550-foot-long rooftop lazy river opened in 2016.

KERRVILLE The pool at the Holiday Inn Express has a lone star at the bottom that puts the city on the map.

PLANO The Texas Pool, a 168,000-gallon saltwater pool that opened in 1959, boasts a Panhandle diving board and South Texas wading area.



Know of a Texas-shaped pool near you?
Let us know: letters@TexasCoopPower.com.

CO-OP PEOPLE

Badgers Got Your Back



When Taylor Electric Cooperative asked students to submit designs for a billboard contest, one entry stood out from all the others to win the grand prize.

Bailey Casady at Merkel Elementary School drew fellow fifth grader Logan Malone, who is fighting cancer, alongside the school's mascot and "Badgers got your back."

"**This sweet student** showed us that her love of her community comes in their support of the Malone family and Logan as they go through a tough cancer battle," said Elizabeth McVey, Taylor EC public relations and communications manager. "It surprised the contest committee that a student so young would respond in such a way."

SPORTS SECTION

SPORT OF KING

Two Texas-bred horses have won the Kentucky Derby: Assault in 1946 and Middleground in 1950. Both were from the King Ranch.



FIRMLY ROOTED

The Stark family lumber empire
of Orange forged cultural destinations
that offer art, history and nature

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY JULIA ROBINSON



THE STORY OF

the Stark and Lutcher families in Orange mirrors the rise of the East Texas economy after the Civil War. During the last quarter of the 19th century, grain milling, ranching and cotton were the region's top producers. The timberlands remained relatively untouched, and because forests were considered an impediment to arable farmland, timber acreage could be bought cheap.

Henry J. Lutcher, a lumberman from Pennsylvania, visited East Texas with his business partner in 1876 and moved to Orange, on the Sabine River, the following year. He purchased 500,000 acres of timberland across the Sabine in southwest Louisiana and built a state-of-the-art sawmill.

The expansion of railroads in Texas helped fill demand for lumber products ranging from barrel staves to wood siding, and Texas lumbering experienced a boom that continued until the Great Depression. Through this 50-year industry expansion, the Lutcher and Moore Lumber Company became a leader in the quantity and quality of finished lumber products in the state.

William Henry Stark, a native Texan working in the mill, married Lutcher's daughter, Miriam, and moved into management of the family business. That union of families would transform the Orange community over the next several decades.

In 21st-century Orange, the legacy of W.H. and Miriam Lutcher Stark, along with that of their son, H.J. Lutcher Stark, who went by Lutcher throughout his life, continues through



Clockwise from opposite page: The W.H. Stark House is a 14,000-square-foot home built of cypress and longleaf pine in 1894. Henry J. Lutcher; Miriam, his daughter; and William Henry Stark, who married Miriam. The library of the Stark House.

venues managed by the Stark Foundation: the W.H. Stark House, the Stark Museum of Art and the Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center.

"The Lutcher-Stark Family would have been some of the wealthiest in the state before the oil boom and still among the richest even after it," explains Joshua Cole, W.H. Stark House interpretation and programming manager.



The Stark House's dining room is set for a formal evening with one of the many sets of dinnerware the Stark family used.

STARK MUSEUM OF ART

One block away from the Stark House waits the modern architectural contrast of the two-story Stark Museum of Art. Opened in 1978, the white marble building, with its 60,000 square feet of exhibition, storage and museum facility space, was designed to withstand hurricane winds of 200 mph.

The 9,000-piece museum collection emphasizes art of the American West, much of it collected by Lutcher Stark. Iconic sculptures by Frederic Remington and Hermon Atkins MacNeil dominate the entry atrium. Remington's work is of a bucking bronco, and MacNeil's bronze depicts a Native American child learning from an elder. Porcelain sculptures of American birds by Dorothy Doughty line the atrium's walls, and weavings by Navajo women working in the post-reservation period hang from the balcony.

"The theme is exploring America's frontiers through the early 19th-century artists who traveled into the West primarily to

W.H. STARK HOUSE

The W.H. Stark House, a 14,000-square-foot, 15-room Queen Anne revival mansion, is a Texas Historic Landmark and appears on the National Register of Historic Places. Completed in 1894 and inhabited by the family until 1936, the house was an architectural and cultural anchor for the nascent community of Orange and remains one of the few area mansions fully restored and open to the public.

"When this house was built, [there were] dirt streets and cowboys shooting guns in the air," says Cole. "This house, paving the streets, bringing electricity, the churches—all this is about domesticating what was a frontier border lumber boomtown."

The Stark home was not the largest in Orange or even the largest on Green Avenue when it was built. What set the house apart was its exquisite wood finishes. As the only surviving house of its size, it now dominates the neighborhood, with pitched gables and dormers, detailed woodwork, and wraparound porches.

The exterior walls combine two layers of diagonal cypress, Cole points out. "Whichever way the wind blows, this house gets tighter in a storm," he says. In the foyer, cypress and longleaf pine exude a warm glow, and pine panels, intricate moldings and detailed lathe work line most surfaces of the house.

"This home was not only gorgeous; it was completely modern with all the latest modern conveniences," Cole says. "It was fully electrified, with indoor plumbing, making it one of the very first homes in the world to have those core technologies."

At its peak in the early 20th century, the house was staffed by 15 full-time employees, including a cook, butler, maid, nurse, chauffeur, laundress and gardener, some of whom lived on the grounds in the carriage house and servants' quarters.

Visitors can tour three levels of beautifully preserved rooms lined with yellow silk wallpaper, original family furniture and rugs, original ceiling murals painted on canvas, formal porcelain dining sets and Brilliant Period cut glass.



A John James Audubon painting of mockingbirds from his personal copy of *Birds of America*, a signature piece at the Stark Museum of Art.



Above: The Stark Museum houses 9,000 pieces from the 19th- and 20th-century American West. Right: The museum holds the only complete collection of the United States in crystal by Steuben glass, which includes engraved bowls depicting a scene or theme for each state.

record and document what was then unknown,” says museum curator Sarah Boehme.

One of the museum’s signature pieces is John James Audubon’s personal copy of *Birds of America* in enormous double elephant folio, one of only 100 remaining in the world. “Audubon set out to record and document every species of American bird, to show them life-size and in their natural habitat,” Boehme explains. “To disseminate this information, he had to make 435 prints and produce them as a book.” The volume, set under glass, is 39.5 inches tall and 28.5 inches wide, and the book is opened to a bird that complements concurrent exhibitions.

Ron Tyler, retired director of Fort Worth’s Amon Carter Museum of American Art, explains that the Stark’s Audubon collection is important not only because it includes Audubon’s own portfolio but also because of the naturalist’s letters, documents, sketches and paintings.

Tyler also cites the Stark’s John Mix Stanley painting of the treaty scene between the Republic of Texas and Native Americans at Tehuacana Creek near Waco in 1843.

In a nearby, specially lit hall, crystal bowls by the Steuben



glass company glitter as if illuminated from within. They comprise the world’s only complete collection of the United States in crystal, which includes a specific motif for each of the 50 states and one more for the United States.

In another gallery, the work of Native American artists shifts the perspective on the

West from outsider to insider. Clothing, baskets, pottery, carvings and weavings by Navajo, Pueblo and Hopi artists interpret daily life and traditions.

Katrina Nelson Thomas, director of the four Stark Art and History Venues in Orange, explains the Stark Museum’s educational mission. “When students come, they see the work in the galleries, and then they make art inspired by something they see, so they always leave with a piece they made,” she says. “We’re trying to make that connection between the collection and the art that’s made.”



SHANGRI LA BOTANICAL GARDENS AND NATURE CENTER

Less than 2 miles from the museum, visitors can walk through Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, named for the fictional Tibetan paradise described in the 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*. Shangri La is where Lutch Stark cultivated azaleas and camellias in abundance and created a lake where he launched a houseboat for weekend escapes in the 1950s.

A cold winter devastated Shangri La's plants in 1958, and the gardens closed to the public. The land reverted to a wild state, but in 2008, the Stark Foundation reopened the restored gardens to the public. Shangri La now occupies 252 acres of gardens and wetlands, with an eco-boat tour and an egret rookery that includes a viewing blind where 50,000 visitors a year watch great egrets nest and raise their young.

"What Mr. Stark did was paint a picture with plants," says Jen-

nifer Buckner, Shangri La's director of horticulture. "We honor that and our connection to the museum with garden 'rooms.' " Each section combines plantings that demonstrate an artistic character of line, shape, texture, contrast and color. In the shape garden, rows of dwarf yaupon form perfectly rounded bushes. The contrasts garden showcases flowers and leaves exhibiting colors from opposite sides of the color wheel.

The gardens revived Lutch Stark's original obsession with camellias and azaleas. Each spring, the flowers bloom along the shore of Pond of the Blue Moon. Miriam Lutch Stark's original epiphyte house overflows with orchids,

WEB EXTRAS

► Read online for a link to 600-plus artworks in Stark collections. Call or go online to confirm hours of operation.



Clockwise from opposite page: The boardwalk above the cypress-tupelo swamp at Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center; bottle tree sculpture; dwarf palmetto; and Bowring's cattleya orchids.

bromeliads, ferns and lichens. Other areas include an edibles garden, a daylily collection and hanging gardens.

The majority of Shangri La's property lies along Adams Bayou and is most accessible via the boat tour. Elevated wooden walkways take visitors past the Nature Discovery Center toward the dock, which is surrounded by cattails, Texas saw hibiscus, rushes and lily pads as well as bald and pond cypress. "We even have some wild orchids that grow here," says Buckner, who always keeps an eye out for unique flora.

The property along the bayou preserves an untouched section of cypress-tupelo swamp, used as an outdoor classroom for local students. Kathleen Nelligan, an environmental educator, narrates a tour as the boat swings out onto the bayou. As guests motor quietly upriver, they catch sight of turtles sunning on logs or egrets and kingfishers taking flight above the water.

In one classroom, children learn about the swamp ecosystem firsthand. The classroom's A-frame structure rises out of the marsh

like a church, and rows of benches complete the look of a sanctuary.

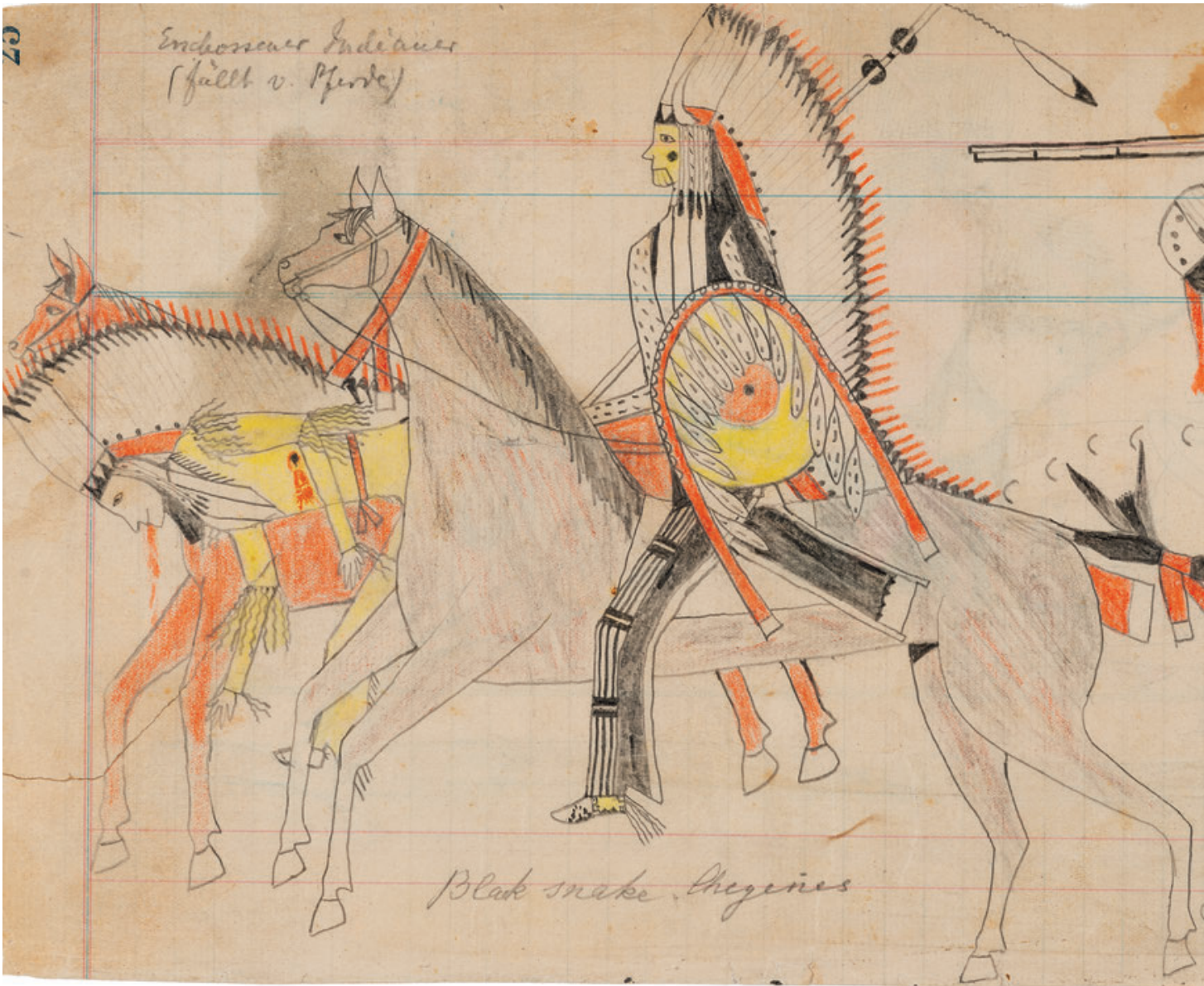
"I really love teaching outside," says Nelligan. "The kids get out here and think, yay, we're out of school. But we are a school; we're just a school without walls."

Not far from the dock stands the Survivor Tree, a 1,200-year-old pond cypress that rises from the water near the edge of Shangri La. The species is not typically found in this area, but this tree was here long before Texas was a shape on the map.

"The story of the Lutchter-Starks is the story of the creation of the city of Orange," Cole explains. To convince his young wife to remain in Texas, W.H. Stark built an elaborate house to make her as comfortable as possible. "This area was always a borderland between empires, between countries, and was very lawless and underdeveloped."

Stark used the family wealth to pave streets, build churches and schools, and bring refinement to the burgeoning East Texas town.

See more of **Julia Robinson's** work at juliarobinsonphoto.com.



Cultural Accounting

19TH-CENTURY DRAWINGS OFFER INSIGHT INTO PLAINS PERSPECTIVE

BY CHARLES LOHRMANN

The nomadic tribes of North America's southern Plains, including the Kiowa, did not traditionally maintain a written history, so a Native American version of events from the mid-19th century is not easy to find.

One rare example can be seen in a series of 58 pencil drawings in the collection of the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin.

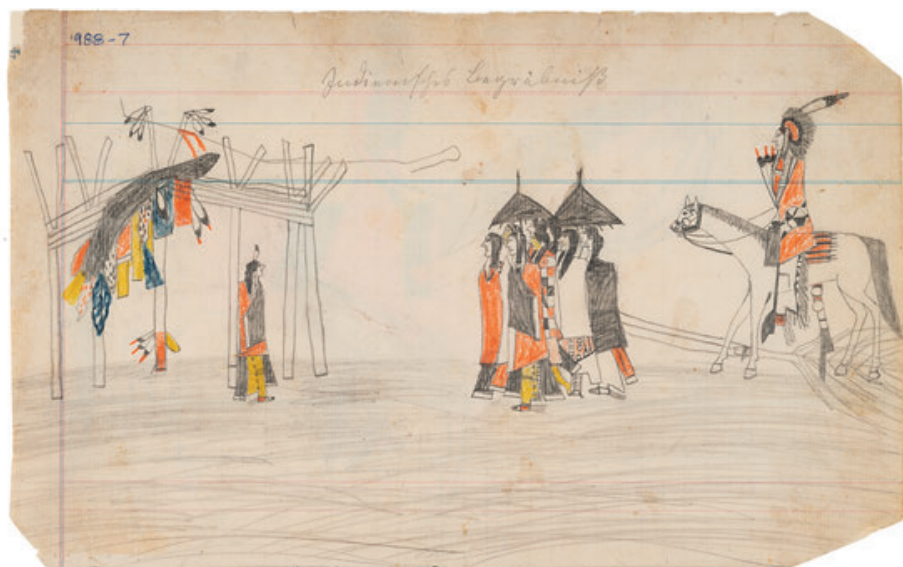
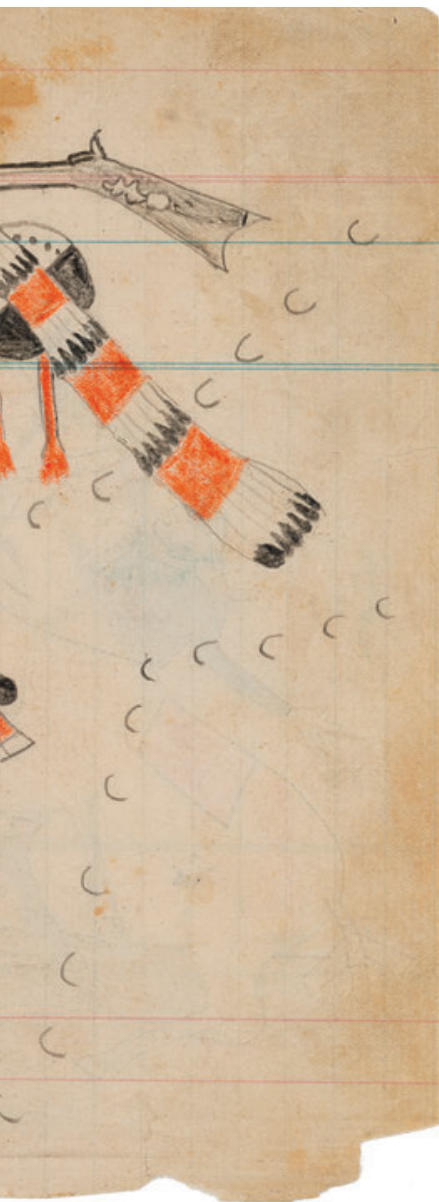
These drawings—many attributed to the Kiowa—were originally bound in an account ledger and dated 1840–1895. It is known as the Schild Ledger because it was purchased in 1895 by Dr. E.H. Tips in Fredericksburg from the estate of Herman Schild, believed to have been a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners.

“Because Kiowas had no written form of their language in

the 19th century, the ledgers are among the most important formats in which we can see things from their perspective,” explains Jennifer Graber, associate director of the Native American and indigenous studies program at UT Austin. “The ledgers, with their emphasis on landscapes, community, animals, family life, significant life events and ritual, point us toward what was important to Kiowas.”

Ledger art is widely known among students and collectors of 19th-century Native American art. As the name suggests, the drawings were made on paper in actual ledgers, and they are described as similar to paintings originally made on animal hides.

Graber points out that Kiowas changed artistic and historic media through the centuries the tribe lived on the Plains. Generations earlier, Graber says, the Plains people would have made carvings and paintings on rock. Later, these people painted on tepees and shields made from buffalo hides. “When paper



became available, they used that too," she says.

Even though an artist with a notebook full of paper can create more complex images than on other media, Graber says that "throughout their history of artistic production, Kiowas evidenced many consistencies, including their depiction of important historical events and their encounters with supernatural powers."

Ledger art history suggests that the drawings continued a Plains artistic tradition of two-dimensional figures populating scenes of battles, ceremonies and native life. The artists capture the essence of the scene in a highly stylized way, including little shading to imply depth. Unique details in the drawings, such as shield designs, are useful for identifying the subjects by tribal affiliation or even by name.

The Schild Ledger was a well-traveled volume. After Tips purchased the ledger in 1895, he traveled with it to Germany, and his son, Carlos, ultimately returned with it to the United States. The Texas Memorial Museum acquired the ledger from Carlos Tips'

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story online for more about ledger art.

Clockwise from opposite page: Drawings from the Schild Ledger show a confrontation between two mounted warriors; two figures in elaborate dress; tribal members bringing boughs to a Sun Dance lodge.

widow in 1964.

When the museum deaccessioned its cultural artifacts to focus on natural history, the ledger moved to the Texas Archeological Research

Laboratory. In 2016, the ledger was transferred from TARL to the Blanton Museum of Art.

Jonathan Jarvis, associate director of TARL, describes the archaeological information these drawings communicate. In one example, a drawing depicts the 1874 Buffalo Wallow battle of the Red River War. "For us it is great art, and we recognize the history there, but we can relate it to actual, in-the-ground archaeology."

Jarvis helped facilitate the transfer of the Schild Ledger to the Blanton because the museum is better able to get the drawings out to the public. Now, the drawings are exhibited occasionally and preserved for further study by tribal members, artists, archaeologists, historians and anthropologists.

Charles Lohmann is the editor of *Texas Co-op Power*.

Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

DEAR DARRYL: My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

Clogged and Smelly – Amarillo, TX

DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY: As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at www.septicleanse.com or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "TXS10", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.

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COVID-19 and Your Cooperative

A look behind the scenes as of April 3



MESSAGE FROM CEO MARK ROLLANS

AS I WRITE THIS, OUR MEMBERS AND STAFF, along with the rest of the nation, are dealing with the new realities brought on by the coronavirus, or COVID-19. I can't say what will be happening when you read this in May. Will we still be restricting our movements and practicing social distancing? It is impossible to know: Things are changing by the hour.

Here is what I do know: Your cooperative has always had an emergency operations plan. We review it each year. The EOP covers various scenarios that could impact our members and our system. It outlines what steps we would need to take in a variety of situations, like hurricanes, ice storms, tornadoes, cyber attacks and, yes, even pandemics. Our staff began reviewing that pandemic plan the first week in March with a special emphasis on ensuring we were prepared to continue to provide the reliable electric service you have come to expect. Keeping power flowing is important to maintain some sense of normalcy as we hunker down in our homes.

OUR FOCUS IS TO DO OUR PART TO KEEP YOUR LIFE AS NORMAL AS POSSIBLE THROUGH THIS SITUATION AND BEYOND.

Our employees recognize the important role they play in that. We worked quickly and made internal changes in early March to keep them healthy and power flowing. These decisions were not made out of fear but out of an abundance of caution for the safety of our members and our employees. All disconnects for nonpayment and late fees were suspended. We understand the financial strain this event is likely to put on many of the families we serve. We want to work with our members and help as best we can.

As I write this, many of our employees are working from home. Member calls are being answered just as they would normally be. However, if you called and noticed some different background noise than usual, that is why.

Our linemen have been divided into shifts and come in at different times, so they can practice social distancing. Trucks

are being taken home so that lineworkers can head to locations without coming into the office, and we are working to limit one staff person per truck as best we are able.

New routines and processes are in place for all contractors and visitors, restricting their access to our facilities.

Key staff is continuing to meet weekly, using technology to hold video conferences. Because the COVID-19 situation has been so fluid, there are new scenarios constantly being discussed and new processes being developed.

So far, it is working well and everyone has adapted to the new norm. I appreciate the flexibility of our employees and their recognition that we owe it to our members to continue with our best work, even in uncertain times. It is nice to see all that we have practiced and planned with the EOP working.

Our entire staff would also like to say thank you to the many people that are on the front lines: the healthcare workers, the grocery store employees, the teachers, the cleaning staff and the truck drivers. I know I am failing to mention groups that have been integral to so many operations, but we want to thank all who have made this event run more smoothly than it would have without them.

We have also seen members step up and begin sewing masks, delivering groceries to the elderly and more. As we always do in times of crisis, we have seen so many people come together, and that is a wonderful thing.

The cooperative way of business has brought us this far over the last 80-plus years, and the cooperative way will help us through this crisis. Our focus here is to do our part to keep your life as normal as possible through this situation and beyond.

As always, we encourage members to watch our Facebook page and website, MedinaEC.org, for the latest information.

Stay healthy, stay home and wash your hands. Follow the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Texas Department of State Health Services. We will all get through this together with cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mark Rollans

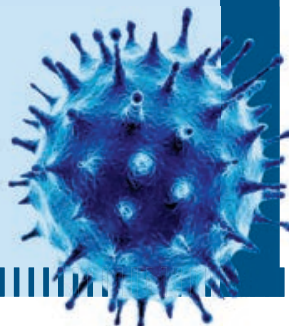
Business Changes

A timeline below shows cooperative business changes that were made as of April 1.

Members are always encouraged to monitor Medina EC's Facebook page and MedinaEC.org for important immediate business updates.

- ▶ **MARCH 12** | Decision made to scale back employee travel between offices. Cancelled all public appearances and volunteer time off for staff. Limited in-person meetings.
- ▶ **MARCH 16** | Decision made to close the office lobbies to the public as of 5 p.m. Drive thru and drop boxes continue to stay open at this time. Encouraging members to take advantage of options to pay their bill on our website or over the phone.
- ▶ **MARCH 19** | Disconnections and late fees are suspended until July 1, at which time staff will reassess. Members will still be responsible for any amounts due on their accounts.
- ▶ **MARCH 20** | Decision made to postpone \$35 minimum for general service rate.
- ▶ **MARCH 23** | Crews begin working in shifts, and other employees begin working from home, as able.
- ▶ **APRIL 3** | Drive-throughs closed to public. Limiting new construction jobs.

MedinaEC.org/COVID



General Service Tariff Changes Postponed

THE MEDINA EC BOARD OF DIRECTORS approved tariff changes that were scheduled to go into effect May 1. Members were informed of those in the March and April magazines.

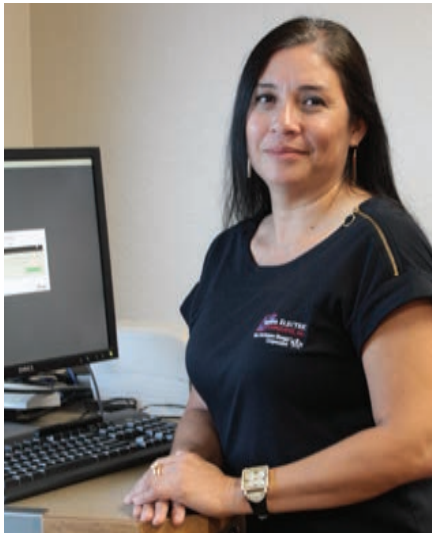
CHANGES ARE POSTPONED TO JULY 1, UNLESS CONDITIONS AT THAT TIME WARRANT FURTHER POSTPONEMENT.

However, following the outbreak of COVID-19, or coronavirus, cooperative staff determined that those tariff changes should be postponed to July 1, unless conditions at that time warrant a further postponement of the change.

Once in place, this change will place a \$35 minimum on the General Service rate class, so any bill that would have been less than \$35 would now be rounded up. Based on members' use in prior years, this change will impact about 4,500 members. Members that are most likely to be impacted by the change will be informed by mail and/or email when the minimum is expected to go into effect.

You can read Medina EC's current tariff and view other important cooperative documents at MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc. Rates for all rate classes can be viewed at MedinaEC.org/Rates.

If you have questions on if these tariff changes could impact you, please contact us at 1-866-MEC-ELEC or Info@MedinaEC.org.



We Want Your Feedback

STARTING THE WEEK OF MAY 4, 350 members will be randomly selected to get a call or email to answer some survey questions about Medina Electric. Your answers will help the cooperative to see how we can improve service to and better communicate with our members.

The survey, email or phone call, should take less than 5 minutes. This feedback is important to the cooperative, and we appreciate members taking time out of their busy schedules to provide it to us.

The surveys are being done by National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Phone calls will come from either an 844 or 507 area code. Emails will show Medina Electric in the "From" line.

Throughout the year, the cooperative will be doing these surveys quarterly, so additional surveys will take place in August and November.

If you do not get a phone call or email to do a survey but would like to share feedback or an idea with the cooperative, email us at MyCoop@MedinaEC.org.

Finger Tips "One-Button Bill-Pay"



SMARTHUB APP:



Grid Updates

What you need to know about summer energy conservation

TEXAS SUMMERS ARE HOT. Typically, energy consumption spikes in summer months partly due to everyone turning their air conditioners down to keep cool. All that energy consumption impacts the grid; when temperatures rise outside and everyone turns their thermostats down, the overall demand and strain on the electric system climbs.

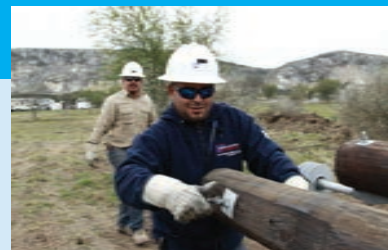
The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which oversees 90% of the state's power grid, is expecting "record electric use this summer and grid conditions similar to summer 2019." The preliminary summer assessment predicts 82,417 megawatts of total generation resource capacity—or electricity available—which includes new supply resources added since last year. The predicted peak demand—the highest amount of electricity needed at a given time—is 76,696 MW based on historic normal summer peak weather conditions.

As in the past, ERCOT will issue alerts and declare energy emergencies if needed. Alerts help consumers, including Medina EC members, know that conservation is needed. Declaring an emergency allows the grid operator to take advantage of additional resources.

To help combat peak demand in summer months—June through September—Medina EC offers a load management program for irrigation-rate members. Through this program, irrigators allow the co-op to shut off power to their irrigation pumps when needed to reduce energy use and the strain on the grid. By shedding irrigation load at critical moments, the cooperative can reduce power costs. More information about the program is available at MedinaEC.org/LM.

Medina EC encourages all members to practice energy conservation, especially on extremely hot days, and the cooperative offers Do Your Part conservation text alerts for those wanting to help conserve energy on crucial days. If you would like to help, text ENERGY to (830) 423-5032. You can find more energy conservation tips at MedinaEC.org/Hot.

As always, Medina EC will monitor ERCOT's grid conditions and recommendations for any conservation requests. If emergency requests are made by ERCOT, Medina EC will send email alerts and post on our Facebook page.



Medina Electric Cooperative

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
Chris Surlis, (830) 965-5538
Kenneth White, (830) 232-6541

VOTING DISTRICT 3

Annette Sorrells, (361) 231-0173
J. L. Gonzalez, (956) 286-1863
Rodolfo H. Rodriguez, (210) 846-1092

CEO

Mark Rollans, 1-866-MEC-ELEC, ext. 1045

COOPERATIVE OFFICES

Headquarters

2308 18th St., Hondo 78861

Area Offices

Hondo Office
237 Hwy. 173 N., Hondo 78861

Dilley Office

1718 W. FM 117, Dilley 78017

Rio Grande City Office

601 N. FM 3167, Rio Grande City 78582

Uvalde Office

2604 Hwy. 90 E., Uvalde 78801

Bruni Office

1300 FM 2050 N., Bruni 78344

CONTACT US

CALL US

1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532)

Option 2: Report an outage

Option 3: Pay bill, get account balance

Option 5: Speak to a representative

EMAIL

Info@MedinaEC.org

FIND US ONLINE AT

MedinaEC.org

[Facebook.com/MedinaEC](https://www.facebook.com/MedinaEC)

[Twitter.com/MedinaECTalks](https://twitter.com/MedinaECTalks)

[Instagram: @OurMEC](https://www.instagram.com/OurMEC)

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.



DO YOUR PART

Conserve electricity from 3 to 7 p.m.
during June - September.

TEXT ENERGY TO (830) 423-5032 TO SIGN UP FOR
CONSERVATION ALERTS.



VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS: WE HAVE A TRUCK FOR YOU!

MEDINA EC IS DONATING A RETIRED
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ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION:
MEDINAEC.ORG/VEHDONATION

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| BROOKS | KINNEY | UVALDE |
| DIMITT | LASALLE | WEBB |
| DUVAL | MCMULLEN | ZAPATA |
| EDWARDS | MEDINA | ZAVALA |
| FRIO | REAL | |

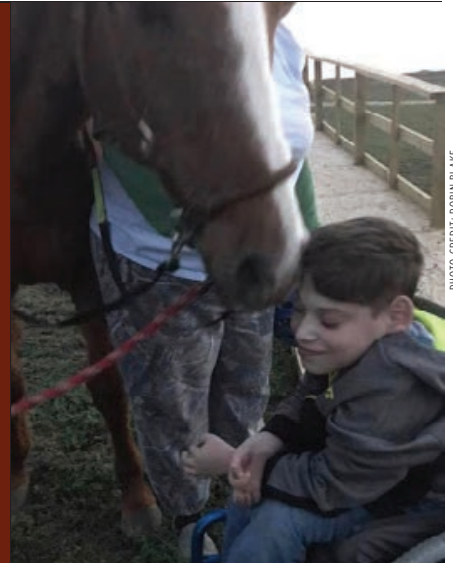


PHOTO CREDIT: ROBIN BLAKE

Blake Robin and Prince, his therapy horse.

Operation Round Up Gives to Equine Therapy

IN MARCH, MEDINA EC'S OPERATION Round Up committee met and awarded \$1,000 to Erin Robin and her son, Blake, to continue equine therapy at Dream Walkers in Uvalde.

Blake has spina bifida and is in a wheelchair. He received funds from ORU in 2019 for the equine therapy, and Robin said the donation was "truly a blessing. [Blake] has enjoyed horse therapy so much." She also said, "getting on a horse each week is a chance to stretch the muscles in his legs that he doesn't use daily."

Operation Round Up donations come from the rounding up of members' monthly bills to the nearest dollar. That extra change is used to help the people in the 17 counties Medina EC serves.

**Please visit
MedinaEC.org/ORU
for more information
or to apply!**

Applications are due August 7.



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BUSINESSES, VISIT
MEDINAEC.ORG/
CONNECTIONS

Medina EC Filling the Bucket Truck

IN FEBRUARY, MEDINA EC ISSUED A CHALLENGE TO MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES to help Fill the Bucket Truck for Food Pantry Month. We asked for members to bring non-perishable items to our offices to be given to local food pantries in an effort to help those in our communities. You did a great job!

Medina EC realizes how important these organizations are to our members and their communities, so we also made monetary donations to the following food pantries:

- **Medina County Food Pantry - \$200**
- **Devine Food Pantry - \$200**
- **Uvalde Food Pantry - \$200**
- **Cotulla FUMC (Amanda's Food Pantry) - \$300**
- **South Texas Food Bank in Laredo - \$400**

Although Food Pantry Month is celebrated in February, you can donate throughout the year. Food items commonly needed by food banks are: canned meat (chicken, fish or ham), canned beans, applesauce, canned vegetables, cooking oils, crackers, canned or dried fruit, meals in a box, pasta, peanut butter, rice and whole grain cereals. Find a food pantry near you at FoodPantries.org.

Employees from Medina EC's Bruni and Laredo offices had 100% participation in addition to member contributions.



Member Service Representatives in Medina EC's Hondo office with employee and member donations.

Repairing vs. Replacing Your Appliances

AS HOMEOWNERS WITH MANY BILLS TO PAY, our tendency is to buy an appliance and keep it running as long as possible—but this may not be the greatest strategy for energy efficiency. A key reason electric bills are so high is because old, inefficient appliances eat up more energy than they are worth.

An appliance's energy efficiency label can help you figure out how much energy your appliances use. The amount of energy typically used per year is listed in kilowatt-hours. If a label is not available, a home inspector can estimate energy use by determining the age of the appliances in the house and assessing their operation by checking for signs of wear and damage.

To translate this energy use into electric expense, check your utility bill to find out the kWh rate, then multiply the rate by the number of kWh your appliance uses per year to figure out the annual cost it takes to operate the appliance. By adding this figure to the initial purchase cost of the appliance and repair costs, you then have a comparison level to decide whether your appliance would cost you more or less to run than a new one.



If your appliance is nearing the end of its life span, it is time to calculate whether repairing it or replacing it will cost more. Here is the typical life span of major appliances:

Range	18 years
Furnace	17 years
Washer/Dryer	16 years
Refrigerator	15 years
Microwave	15 years
Air conditioner	15 years
Dishwasher	13 years
Water heater.	10 years

Consider improvements made on some of the biggest energy-using appliances in the household. For example, a new refrigerator uses about 50% less energy than older models. Newer refrigerators feature CFC-free sealed systems, more storage and easier cleaning.

A new washer/dryer unit uses 30% less energy than older models. Newer units feature larger capacity, better cleaning performance, quieter operation, preprogrammed cycle selections, reduced water usage and automatic dryness sensors to avoid overdrying.

A new air conditioner is 20% more efficient than units 10 years older and can save you roughly \$930 in operation costs over its life span. Newer air conditioners feature automatic temperature adjustments, different air-speed options and increased circulation efficiency for consistent, even cooling.

As a result of constant technological improvements made by appliance manufacturers, newer machines not only use less electricity, but also have more operational features and are made to last longer than counterparts produced within even the last decade. Their efficiency will influence both your lifestyle and your checkbook.

—Energy Efficiency Resource Center



PHOTO CREDIT: MAKENNA LANGE

Energy Star Tax Holiday

IF YOU HAVE DECIDED TO REPLACE your old appliances and are looking to save both money and energy, the Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday is the weekend to do so!

The Energy Star Sales Weekend is Memorial Day weekend, May 23-25. You can buy, rent, or lease the following Energy Star appliances tax free:

- Air conditioners (with a sales price of \$6,000 or less)
- Refrigerators (with a sales price of \$2,000 or less)
- Ceiling fans
- Incandescent and fluorescent light bulbs
- Clothes washers
- Dishwashers
- Dehumidifiers

To learn more visit Comptroller.Texas.Gov.

Medina Electric also offers rebates* for Energy Star-qualified refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers and AC window units.

Learn more and submit your rebate at MedinaEC.org/Rebates.

*Program can be cancelled at any time

Making a Payment?

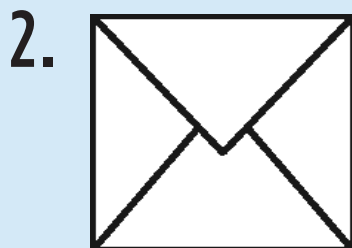
NEED TO MAKE A PAYMENT, BUT DON'T WANT TO LEAVE YOUR HOUSE? Don't have time or too far away to stop by one of our offices? Medina Electric has three options for our members to pay their bills without ever leaving home. Want to stick to a budget or pay your bill without thinking about it? We understand and believe in giving our members options, so we also offer three billing options in addition to traditional billing.



BY PHONE

Credit card and check payments may be made by calling 1-866-MEC-ELEC (1-866-632-3532).

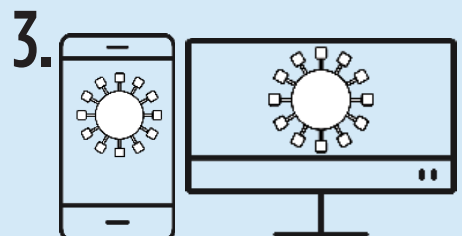
Choose option 3 for the automated payment system.



BY MAIL

Medina Electric Cooperative
P.O. Box 33850
San Antonio, TX 78265-3850

Be sure to include the payment stub from your bill.



VIA SMARTHUB

SmartHub can be accessed by computer using Medina EC's website or using a smartphone.

To download the app, please see the QR codes on page 22.



AUTOMATIC PAYMENTS

Your bill will be automatically withdrawn from your bank account or charged to a credit card each month.

This can be set up by phone or online by logging in to SmartHub.



BUDGET PAYMENTS

There are two options for members who would like to pay a more predictable, budgeted amount on their bill—Levelized and Average Payments.

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



PREPAID ELECTRICITY

If you would prefer to make lump sum payments ahead of time for the electricity you use, try our Prepaid option.

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

Bad to the 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.

Limited Reserves. A deal like this won't last long. We have only 1120 **Huntsman Blades** for this ad only. Don't let this beauty slip through your fingers. Call today!

Huntsman Blade \$249*

Offer Code Price Only **\$79** + S&P **Save \$170**

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Horses' Roundabout Trail

How today's noble steeds follow in the footsteps of their prehistoric ancestors

BY MARTHA DEERINGER

MUCH OF THE MODERN HISTORY OF TEXAS was built on the backs of horses, but where did these equine partners in the settlement of the state originate? The fossil record of the genus *Equus*, according to Live Science, can be traced back some 4 million years in North America.

The predecessors of modern horses spread from North America, probably over the Bering land bridge that once connected Alaska and Siberia, and colonized Asia, Europe and Africa. The last of those prehistoric horses in North America died out 11,000–13,000 years ago, the result of a cooling event that also wiped out woolly mammoths, American camels and other animals.

The Americas remained horseless until Christopher Columbus arrived on his second voyage, in 1493, and introduced domesticated horses to Hispaniola and Cuba. The return of horses to the Western Hemisphere was no small feat. Records from early voyages tell of numerous deaths among valuable horses, which crossed the stormy Atlantic suspended in slings in damp, dark holds to prevent the rolling of the ship from tossing them about.

If the storms didn't get them, the calm winds of the "horse latitudes" might. In this region, about 30 degrees north and 30 degrees south of the equator, ships sailing to the Western Hemisphere from Europe and Asia often became stalled,



sometimes for weeks. If a ship carried horses and the supply of fresh water crept below a critical point, sailors would sometimes be forced to throw horses overboard—earning this region its name.

In 1519, Hernando Cortés landed in what is now Veracruz, where horses left hoofprints on the North American mainland for the first time in more than 10,000 years. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who accompanied Cortés, explained, "The natives had never seen horses up to this time and thought the horse and rider were all one animal."

That same year, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado sailed to North America with 150 horses, followed in 1539 by Hernando de Soto with 237. Eventually, some of the wily beasts emancipated themselves and set up housekeeping on the Great Plains, helped in their expansion by the development of Spanish missions, which kept herds of horses. Some were traded with Native Americans, who learned to ride like the centaurs that had so astonished

them when the Spanish arrived.

The first horses brought to Texas arrived in 1542 with the Moscoso expedition, named for Luis de Moscoso Alvarado, who took charge of the 600-man expedition when de Soto died of fever near the Mississippi River. These original Spanish mustangs were the foundation for later American breeds, including the fabled quarter horse, whose endurance and talent for handling cattle made it the horse of choice for frontiersmen and ranchers in early Texas.

Today, there are an estimated 880,000 horses in Texas, according to Texas A&M University. Artist Frederic Remington paid tribute to the noble animal when he remarked, "Of all the monuments which the Spaniard has left to glorify his reign in America, there will be none more worthy than his horse."

Martha Deeringer, a Heart of Texas EC member, lives in McGregor. Read more of her work at marthadeeringer.com.

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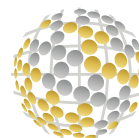
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Spring Celebrations

SPRING IS USUALLY A TIME FOR CELEBRATIONS, including graduations and bridal showers. Of course, gatherings have been on hold and social distancing is in place because of COVID-19. So save these recipes for when we're able to join together and celebrate joyous occasions.

Whenever I go to a party, or host one of my own, I try to bring something that everyone will enjoy. Often I share dishes that are on the healthier side to balance out a buffet spread. I know guests are grateful when only crumbs remain.

This take on a popular dip is portable. You can make the dip in advance and bake the cups just before party time, ensuring they're warm and crisp for serving.

MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Spinach Artichoke Wonton Cups

- 24 wonton wrappers
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen spinach, thawed and drained
- 1 jar (7.5 ounces) marinated artichoke hearts, drained and finely chopped
- 1 cup sour cream
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Arrange the wonton wrappers in two 12-cup muffin pans, then coat lightly with nonstick spray. Bake the wonton cups for 5 minutes, then remove from oven and set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together spinach, artichoke hearts, sour cream, cream cheese, Parmesan, garlic and pepper until thoroughly combined.
3. Divide mixture evenly among the wonton cups. Bake 10–12 minutes until warmed and wonton cups are golden. ▶ Makes 24.

COOK'S TIP This recipe uses a standard muffin tin, but you can also use a minimuffin tin to make the cups bite-size.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com.

MEGAN MYERS

Recipes

Spring Celebrations



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

MILLIE KIRCHOFF | NUECES EC

Banana bars are a hit with kids of all ages. Topped with cream cheese icing, this recipe is baked in a sheet pan, ensuring plenty for eager hands.

Kirchoff suggests topping the bars with pecan halves or decorative sprinkles for an extra-festive touch.

Banana Bars

BARS

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs, room temperature
- 2 cups mashed ripe banana (about 4 large bananas)
- ½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- Pinch of salt

FROSTING

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

- 1. BARS:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease an 18-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheet with butter or nonstick spray and set aside.
 - 2.** In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs one at a time until just incorporated, then stir in banana and vanilla.
 - 3.** In another bowl, combine flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves and salt, then add to banana mixture and mix well.
 - 4.** Pour onto prepared baking sheet and bake 20 minutes or until it springs back slightly when touched in the center. Cool completely.
 - 5. FROSTING:** While bars cool, mix together butter, cream cheese, powdered sugar and vanilla until smooth. Spread over cooled banana bars. Cover and chill at least 1 hour.
- Makes 3 dozen bars.

Soy Brown Sugar-Glazed Salmon

CASSANDRA HUNTER | PEDERNALES EC

This easy yet flavorful salmon dish is excellent for a spring dinner party. "Every time I make this salmon for a special occasion, I have had numerous guests asking me for the recipe," Hunter says. For ease of serving, cut the salmon into individual portions before baking, keeping in mind that cook time may be reduced.

- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 pounds center-cut salmon

- 1.** Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In a mixing bowl, whisk together brown sugar, soy sauce, rice vinegar, ginger and garlic. Set aside.
- 2.** Place salmon skin-side down on a rimmed baking sheet lined with foil. With a small knife, cut ½-inch slits about 1 inch apart across the top of the salmon. Brush the salmon generously with the glaze, reserving the rest. Allow the mixture to seep into the slits.
- 3.** Bake salmon 10 minutes, then baste again with remaining glaze. Return to oven for 5 minutes more, until a baking thermometer inserted in the salmon's center reads 145 degrees. Let salmon rest 5 minutes and serve. ► Serves 8.

Grandma Jewel's Italian Cream Cake

KAITLYN WILLINGHAM | CENTRAL TEXAS EC

This popular cake is often served at birthday parties and other celebrations. This version features nuts in the frosting, but Willingham also loves to incorporate pecans within the cake. For those who enjoy more coconut, press extra coconut flakes to the frosting while it is still tacky.

CAKE

- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup shortening
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 5 eggs, separated
- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup sweetened flaked coconut



New \$500 prize!

\$500 Recipe Contest

We know there's an abundance of **Cobblers, Crisps, Buckles and Betties** made around the state. What makes yours special? Enter our October contest by **May 10**. Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.

FROSTING

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- ¾ cups powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup chopped pecans

1. **CAKE:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease 2 round 9-inch cake pans.
2. In a large bowl, cream sugar, shortening and butter. Add egg yolks one at a time.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together flour and baking soda. Add the flour mixture to the large bowl alternately with the butter-milk and vanilla.
4. In a separate bowl, beat egg whites until stiff. Fold into batter until no streaks remain, then stir in coconut.
5. Divide batter between cake pans and bake 25–30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool in pans 5 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.
6. **FROSTING:** Combine cream cheese and butter. Using an electric mixer, beat in powdered sugar until smooth, taking care to increase speed slowly. Add vanilla and pecans. Place one cake layer on serving plate and top with ¼ of the frosting, spreading evenly to edges. Top with second layer of cake and spread remaining frosting on top and sides. ▶ Serves 12.

WEB EXTRAS ▶ Find more than 800 recipes in our online archive, including this winning punch from November 2015.

Almond Punch

DEBBIE SUGAREK | BLUEBONNET EC

- 2½ cups sugar
- 3 quarts water
- 1 can (46 ounces) pineapple juice
- Juice of 3 lemons (approximately ¾ cup)
- 3 teaspoons almond extract
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1. Combine sugar and water in a large pitcher and stir until sugar is completely dissolved.
2. Add pineapple juice, lemon juice, and almond and vanilla extracts. Stir to blend.
3. Refrigerate 24 hours. Serve cold.
▶ Serves 24.

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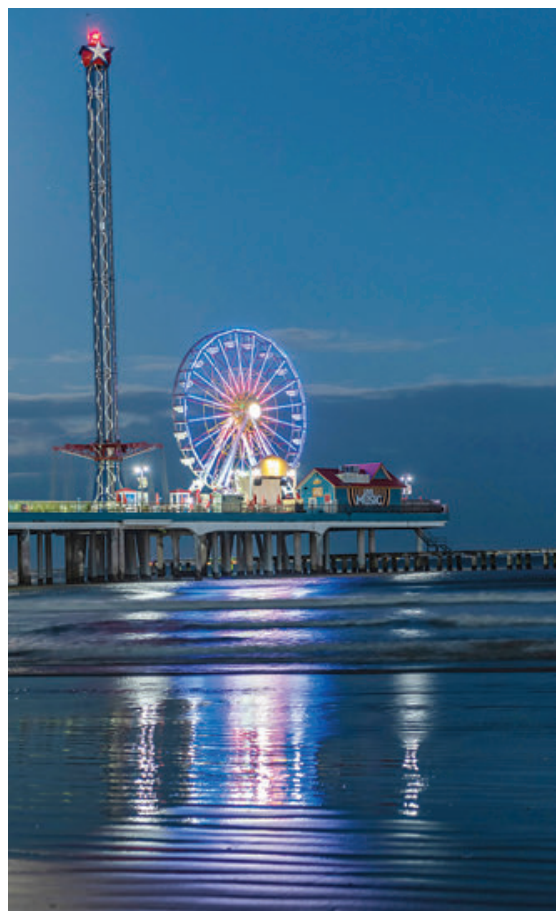
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WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



▲ **RACHELLE GLENN**, Guadalupe Valley EC: "Aurora and Will at the Come and Take It Carnival 2019 on one of their favorite rides."

▼ **TSO DAVIS**, United Cooperative Services: "Close call."



▲ **ANGIE BIRMINGHAM**, Nueces EC: "The Galveston Pleasure Pier is a year-round carnival."

▼ **CHAD PRAHL**, CoServ: "It's not a fair without some cotton candy."





AROUND TEXAS ▶ TCP's monthly list of local events has been suspended due to COVID-19 cancellations. Always call or check an event's website for details.

◀ **THERESA MCKEE**, Fannin County EC: "The icon of the Texas State Fair, Big Tex, after the fatal fire. Now he has a slightly new look."



▲ **REBECCA WARREN**, Heart of Texas EC: "Riot of color offered blessed shade for one patio in the September heat of the State Fair of Texas."



▲ **PAUL LAUDER**, Farmers EC: "The pig and her handler catch up on badly needed sleep after the competition."

◀ **PATRICIA STEHLING**, Central Texas EC: Rainbow Ferris wheel.

UPCOMING CONTESTS

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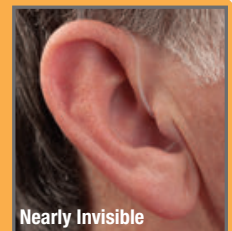
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Spirits of Seguin

Historic Magnolia Hotel features encounters with the supernatural

I'D HEARD THAT SEGUIN'S MAGNOLIA Hotel is one ghostly getaway where eerie encounters are a nightly occurrence, so I decided to see for myself. A block east of the Guadalupe County Courthouse, I found the boxy, two-story frame building and learned that its history dates to the mid-1800s.

Texas Ranger James Campbell built a log cabin on the site in 1840, and Ranger Jack Coffee Hays married the owner's daughter there in 1847. The hotel itself was built in 1853, and current owners Erin and Jim Ghedi saved it from abandonment after it was named to advocacy group Preservation Texas' 2012 Most Endangered Places list.

Erin Ghedi had taken my tour reservation and met me at the door. Knowing she voluntarily lives in a haunted hotel, I was surprised when she greeted me with a calming smile. My first brush with the unexpected occurred on the first floor, which felt anything but haunted: I encountered a warm and welcoming home with bright lighting and antiques in every corner.

The tour started in the front living room, which was decorated with frontier memorabilia and a large portrait of Campbell, the supposed lingering occupant. Ghedi described how guests catch the scent of Campbell's burning cigars or hear his boots walking across the wooden floor. Almost on cue, the rocking chair in the corner moved back and forth. "Oh, and he likes to do that too," Ghedi said.

As we moved from room to room, Ghedi told stories of the 13 ghosts that inhabit the building. In the kitchen, guests encounter the 1850s owner and her chil-



Jim and Erin Ghedi with Chet.

dren. Near the back fireplace, a person who had been enslaved blows out candles. To convince skeptics, Ghedi supports each story with photographs from guests and a binder full of historical research.

Upstairs, the Ghedis have transformed a portion of the second floor into an Airbnb rental, while the rest remains the same as when they bought it. Before we entered the dark rooms, Ghedi paused and said, "Remember, the ghosts cannot hurt you. While you may feel them touch you and you may feel scared, they cannot hurt you." I had never been touched by a ghost and was not sure I wanted to start now.

Ghedi handed me a flashlight and a device with blinking lights to signify when spirits were present. Then she led me into the darkness. My flashlight beam illuminated walls with crumbling wallboard and bathrooms full of broken tiles and fixtures. Even in daylight, this place would be super creepy. Suddenly, the overwhelming scent of rose perfume filled the air. Ghedi spoke:

"Oh, Rosebud is excited that a gentleman is visiting. She was a madam here for many years." I didn't believe my nose and even accused Ghedi of spraying the room with rose scent. She swore she had not.

Ghedi believes all the ghosts are voluntarily present and can leave at any time—all except one, known as the Murderer, who is trapped in an upstairs bedroom. I walked into the room and experienced an overwhelmingly heavy feeling. I decided to walk out before I learned more about this spirit.

I'm certainly a skeptic when it comes to haunted places, but I've got no explanation for the things that happened on my tour. I do know that if you're looking for a rendezvous with the strange, the spooky and the unexpected, you need to check into this historic hotel that's so fascinating some guests never check out.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

 **WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video of Seguin's Magnolia Hotel. Call or go online to plan a visit.

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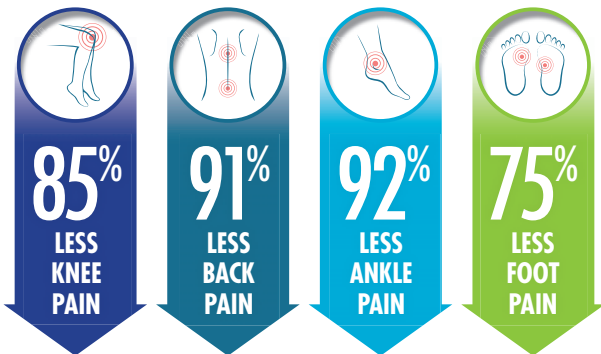
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