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Medina EC lineman Taylor Stacy cuts an 8-foot pizza with an old plow disc.

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ON THE COVER Sam and Shelbie Gaddy get cozy in a 1960s pickup at Brazos Drive-In Theatre in Granbury. Photo by Dave Shafer

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Another Lone Star Flag

The letter *Texas' First Flag* [April 2019] reminded me of the Lone Star flag flown in 1810 over the Republic of West Florida, the short-lived republic (78 days) with St. Francisville, now a city in Louisiana, as its capital.

The single, large white or yellow star in the center of a sky blue field was a symbol of rebellion after the settlers in West Florida rebelled against Spain to set up their own nation before being absorbed into Louisiana and the United States. History is interesting and does repeat, at least occasionally.

JOE WEBB | MARBLE FALLS
PEDERNALES EC

Safety Gear Evolution

Thank you for the article *Gearing Up* [March 2019]. Our grandson Mason Harper especially enjoyed seeing these pictures. He is employed by Primoris and wears lots of safety equipment.

LOREAN PULLEY | RIESEL
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

Blues History

I met Lightnin' Hopkins in 1957 at the age of 15 [*Texas: A Blues State*, March 2019]. We would sit on the porch, and by watching his hands, I learned the three chords he used all the time. I was more of a novelty then, but I did play solo at times with the drummer, Joseph Kilpatrick, better known as the Black Spider. Luke "Long Gone" Miles played with us once, and Cleveland Chenier, Clifton's brother, played a washboard with us several times.

Those days are sadly gone,

Chet Garner Hits the Road

Seen other Texas travel shows, but *Daytripper's* the best one. Chet's awesome. ... There's still so much to discover in the greatest state in the country.

JAIME GARZA | VIA FACEBOOK

You have been on the road for years, uncovering gems ... and having fun across our great state—and you do it all with fun and knowledge!

MARTHA HOLLOWAY LANDRY | VIA FACEBOOK



but back then, playing blues with Lightnin' was everything to me.

ROBERT R. COOK | NEW ULM

Back in 1966, a friend of mine found Lightnin' Hopkins playing at a backwoods bar outside Navasota. Later in the year, he was in Austin. He had a gig at a coffeehouse in an alley off 24th Street. He played the blues, quite often fretting with a whiskey bottle. I got to meet him that evening, and the next day I went out and bought an album with his music.

HAROLD LIECK | DEL VALLE
BLUEBONNET EC



As much as we in Bowie County, particularly De Kalb, would love to claim the blues and folk singer and writer Lead Belly as our own, he was actually born in Mooringsport, Louisiana. Lead Belly did reside in our area for a few years in the 1920s.

Lead Belly wrote many songs during his lifetime. Some are quite familiar, such as *Good Night, Irene*; *Cotton Fields Back Home*; and *Midnight Special*. One that was not so well-known was called *De Kalb Blues*, and that may well have depicted his life in our area.

CAROLYN MCCRARY | DE KALB
BOWIE-CASS EC

A Hispanic Hero

I am a fifth-generation Mexican American. I was very encouraged and inspired by the Marcelino Serna story and made to feel

proud of my Hispanic heritage [*A Hero in Any Language*, March 2019]. This story is one that will go into my scrapbook of many Hispanic heroes that have influenced me in my life.

ANTHONY BARRON | TERRELL
TRINITY VALLEY EC

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   Texas Co-op Power

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HAPPENINGS

A Day of Czech Treats

Join folks in **EAST BERNARD** on **JUNE 8** as they embrace their Czech heritage with the annual **KOLACHE-KLOBASE FESTIVAL**. *Kolache* are traditional Czech pastries—you might remember our feature story, *The Kolach Trail*, from January 2014—and *klobase* is the Czech word for sausage.

Obviously, food is the central theme of the festival, which includes a kolache-eating contest, but so is music—especially polka—and dancing. Part of the festival is indoors, at Riverside Hall, one of Texas’ historic dance halls, which were featured in February’s cover story, *Hail the Halls*.

INFO ▶ (979) 335-7907, kkfest.com



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▶ Find more happenings online.

BY THE NUMBERS



Texline, in the far northwest corner of the Texas Panhandle, is 899 miles from Brownsville, in the southern tip of the Rio Grande Valley.

The folks in Texline, members of Rita Blanca EC, are closer to residents in 21 other states—Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah and Wyoming—than they are to fellow Texans in Brownsville.

◀ LOOKING BACK AT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY THIS MONTH



SINCE 1944, the year *Texas Co-op Power* debuted, Americans have taken Polaroids, walked on the moon and come to rely on Velcro. These are just a few of the science and technology milestones we remember this month.



1940s

1945 Grand Rapids, Michigan, becomes the first city in the world to fluoridate its drinking water.

1948 The Polaroid Land camera, invented by Edwin Land and the first to produce finished prints instantly, goes on sale.

1948 WBAP in Fort Worth becomes the first TV station in Texas.

1950s

1954 The first pocket transistor radio, the Regency TR-1 from Texas Instruments, goes on sale.

1955 The hook-and-loop fastener, or Velcro, is patented by a Swiss engineer.

1957 The Soviet Union inaugurates the Space Age with its launch of Sputnik 1, the world’s first artificial satellite.

1960s

1965 San Antonio native Ed White becomes the first American to walk in space—during the Gemini 4 mission.



1967 Texas Instruments creates the first handheld calculator.

1968 Chemist Spencer Silver of San Antonio invents the low-tack adhesive that changes the world when it’s used to create Post-It notes in 1980.

WORTH REPEATING “Texas is big, and Texans are proud of it. Proudful boasts can be made about the countless facets of our greatness without the slightest sacrifice of honesty.”

—JAMES EARL RUDDER, Texan and leader during the Allied invasion of France on D-Day, 75 years ago

TECH KNOWLEDGE

Get Over It

IMAGINE HOPPING INTO a personal flying machine and zipping over traffic to your favorite coffee shop. Seems pretty far-fetched, right?

It might not be. A team from Texas A&M University is working on a vehicle that looks a little like a flying egg with rotor blades mounted near the base and is among the final 10 in a competition called GoFly that drew scientists from 95 countries. The winner of the competition will be announced this fall.

GoFly contest rules stipulate that the personal flying device must be safe, quiet, ultracompact and capable of vertical takeoff and landing. It also must be able to carry a single person for a distance of 20 miles without refueling or recharging.

Moble Benedict, a Bryan Texas Utilities customer, is an aerospace engineering assistant professor and A&M’s team captain. “We want a regular person to be able to fly this thing with minimum flight training,” he told *The New York Times*.

Benedict says he can see personal flying machines becoming a reality within the next 10 years. Great! Will they have cup holders?



FLASHBACK

CINE ON THE SEA

While drive-in theaters evoke nostalgia, they’re still around and drawing moviegoers in Texas, as you’ll learn in our cover story, *Drive In, Chill Out*.

The first American drive-in opened 86 years ago this month in Camden, New Jersey. A year later, on July 5, 1934, the Drive-In Short Reel Theater in Galveston became the third U.S. drive-in. The theater was built for \$1,500 right on the beach, with cars facing out to sea over the Gulf of Mexico.

Admission for a car and all its occupants was 25 cents. For 10 cents, an adult walk-in could sit in the bench seats at the front—5 cents for kids.

It operated for 20 days before a hurricane destroyed it and was never rebuilt.

LOOKING BACK AT COMMERCE NEXT MONTH ►

1970s

1972 The first digital electronic watch, a Pulsar LED prototype built by Texas engineer George Thiess, debuts. Thiess is a director at HILCO EC in Itasca.



1974 A universal product code, or bar code, is used for the first time—at a supermarket in Troy, Ohio.

1980s

1983 The Motorola DynaTAC 8000x becomes the first commercial handheld cellphone.

1984 Apple kicks off a media campaign for its Macintosh computer during Super Bowl XVIII with a commercial invoking George Orwell’s *1984*.

1984 Michael Dell starts his computer company, then called PC’s Limited, in his dorm room at the University of Texas.

1990s

1991 Multipurpose internet mail extension allows emails to be sent with attachments.

1997 The first usable-by-anyone portable defibrillator debuts. It instructs the operator on how to use the paddles, automatically applies the correct voltage and sells for \$4,000.



2000s

2007 The iPhone is released, revolutionizing cellphones and popularizing touchscreens.



2018 The University of Texas’ McDonald Observatory in Fort Davis is chosen by NASA as one of three sites nationally to host a facility for its Space Geodesy Project, which aims to help scientists counter the effects of earthquakes, volcanoes, sea level changes and landslides.



DRIVE IN, CHILL OUT

Drive-in theaters, long past their heyday, remain as beacons of nostalgia that offer cinema under a boundless sky

PERHAPS ANY MOVIE could have marked the watershed moment of Ryan Smith's young adulthood, but on that midsummer evening in 2002, it was M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs* that colored the mood at the Sky-Vue Drive-In Theatre on the dusty outskirts of Lamesa.

Smith, in his early 20s and fresh out of his first year of law school at SMU, was in West Texas to learn from his grandfather about the family businesses—bits about farming, real estate, oil and gas, and, most notably, the movie theater business. Smith's grandparents, R.A. "Skeet" and Sarah Noret, opened the Sky-Vue in 1948, and he grew up hearing stories about the iconic drive-in, like the time a then-unknown Buddy Holly played atop the projection room or when Albert Noret, Smith's great-grandfather, invented the now-legendary Chihuahua Sandwich, a quintessentially Tex-Mex concoction of homemade chili meat and pimento cheese, shredded cabbage and diced onions between two tostada shells with a side of jalapeño. Yet, despite his family's long history with the theater, Smith had never seen a movie at the drive-in before that evening 17 years ago.

He had just finished helping out with a rush on the concession stand when he grabbed some food for himself and went outside to catch a bit of the movie. Sitting in his car and crunching away on a Chihuahua Sandwich, he felt enchanted by the whole scenario—the collective energy of the moviegoers that surrounded him in lawn chairs and truck beds, the sound of their laughter at the film's tension breakers—and thought, "Man, this has to be preserved and shared."

He gazed through his open sunroof at the stars glowing over the Llano Estacado and waited for the aliens to invade Mel Gibson's on-screen world.

"It was a communal experience, and yet, I was sitting in the privacy of my own vehicle, enjoying dinner," he says today. "It was an experience that I had never had before but had heard about. And I now understand why the experience was so beloved."

Smith never made it back to law

school. He instead felt a calling to deliver the drive-in experience to others. Just over a year after that night at the Sky-Vue, aided by investments from his family, he opened his first theater, Stars & Stripes Drive-In Theatre in Lubbock.

"So that began the journey," he says, "to try to draw inspiration from what my granddad did and share it with [more] people."

Smith, who also owns land in Lyntegar Electric Cooperative's service territory, has since expanded the Stars & Stripes brand with a second location, in New Braunfels, south of Austin, and today his operation accounts for two of fewer than 20 drive-ins open for business in the Lone Star State. Some of these theaters stand as paint-chipped remnants of a bygone era, when the outdoor double feature dominated the cinema experience and some 400 drive-ins dotted the Texas landscape. Others, like Fort



Lala Watkins prepares for hungry moviegoers at Coyote Drive-In in Fort Worth.

Worth's Coyote Drive-In, inject a twist of modernity into that paradigmatic pastime of the mid-20th century. But all of Texas' surviving

drive-in theaters share at least one quality: the promise of a singular form of entertainment served with a healthy dose of nostalgia—bolstered by the dedication of theater owners to preserving the pastime.

THE FIRST DRIVE-IN theater in the United States opened in Camden, New Jersey, in 1933, and by the late 1950s, there were more than 4,000 drive-ins throughout the country. They were so widespread and popular that to some degree, says D. Vogel, administrative secretary of the United Drive-In Theatre Owners Association, "drive-in movie theaters built Hollywood."

But by 1980, the number of drive-ins had dropped to about 2,400, and a steady decline continued over the ensuing decade,

Opposite: As the sun sets in Granbury, Cowboy Fred awaits the next vehicle at Brazos Drive-In.

Whether it's a night out for the whole family or a romantic evening for two under the stars, there's still a drive-in theater in Texas to meet the occasion.



Coyote Drive-In's big screen set against the vast Texas sky at twilight.

operators, retirements of aging owners and increased competition from entertainment options like home video and multiplexes.

Hollywood's digital revolution—a shift from 35 mm film prints to digital projection that began in the early 2000s—put the nail in the coffin for some drive-ins. A digital projector with a bulb strong enough to project across a field can cost upward of \$70,000, a prohibitive expense for the mom and pop operations these theaters tend to be. But drive-ins that didn't make the switch would be left without new movies to show.

TODAY, THERE ARE FEWER than 400 drive-ins in the U.S. Though their numbers are small, these theaters continue to offer an engrossing experience wholly distinct from their indoor counterparts. A ticket to the drive-in typically provides double-feature entertainment for a lower price than one movie at an indoor theater. The food, also at a reasonable price point, tends to go beyond the standard fare of popcorn, soda and candy. And then there's the freedom granted by the outdoor environment.

"Your options are wide open," Vogel says. "You could just get up and look at the night sky. Or you could just take a quiet stroll around the field and watch families laughing and having a good time together. Or, you could get through the movie simply by taking a little nap until the next one came on."

It's the privilege of providing that experience that keeps many drive-in owners in the game. The defining trait of those who remain,

the result of a combination of factors, including land value increases that made it financially attractive for owners to sell their properties to devel-

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see a map of drive-ins operating in Texas and additional photos.

Vogel says, is "a genuine love for this business. That's what it takes."

And that's a love that Jennifer Miller knows well. She's the owner of Brazos Drive-In Theatre in Granbury, one of the oldest drive-ins in Texas. First opened in 1952, Brazos has welcomed moviegoers every year since, closing only for the winter

offseason. Miller is responsible for more than half of that track record.

She's poured her heart and wallet into the theater since she bought it in 1985. She runs the single-screen operation with just a handful of employees and works the concession stand every night it's open. She shelled out the money for the expensive equipment when digital conversion became necessary and set up a minimuseum featuring the drive-in's old film projector and other memorabilia in the vintage snack bar. The 67-year-old has even donned a bunny suit to entertain kids around Easter.

For Miller, the theater isn't about making money. It's about preserving a piece of history and providing family-friendly fun for her patrons. "I just want to be able to make enough money to keep improving it, so everyone can enjoy it. I guess that's my passion, my focus," she says. "If all I do is save the drive-in, then it's been very, very rewarding for me."

The sense of nostalgia is intrinsic to the historic grounds of the Brazos theater. Newer drive-ins, like the Blue Starlite Mini Urban Drive-In in Austin, must work to evoke the feeling. For Blue Starlite owner Josh Frank, that requires more than showing a movie outdoors. "The movie is a part of the experience, but it's maybe 30%," he says.

Nestled in a partially paved clearing behind a Moose Lodge, the Blue Starlite consists of two mobile screens and a scattering of vintage and aging trailers—some of which can be rented for parties—and signage fonts that scream midcentury diner.

“I love nostalgia,” says Frank, who likens his theater more to an interactive show than a simple venue to catch a flick. “It’s about the classic culture, the nostalgia, the ’50s mentality. I would probably open a malt shop before I opened an indoor movie theater.”

The quest to revive a fading era is also what got Sam Kirkland, South Plains Electric Cooperative member, into the theater business. Kirkland grew up working for the Norets at the Sky-Vue in Lamesa, starting in 1957 and into the 1960s. In those years, he says, the theater was “the pride and joy of the town.”

Things had changed, though, by the late ’70s, when Kirkland was driving by the theater one day to find it closed and overgrown with weeds. He decided to clean it up and help the Norets reopen. Within a year, he bought the theater, which he and his wife kept alive until a fire destroyed the snack bar in 2015.

The demise of the Sky-Vue meant

Right: Cowboy Fred works the box office at Brazos Drive-In. Below: The expansive concession stand at New Braunfels’ Stars & Stripes Drive-In is a main attraction.

more than the loss of an entertainment attraction for the Lamesa community. It also represented the passing of a place where generations of memories were made, Kirkland says.

“It was a big deal,” he says. “We had a wonderful playground. I kept all of the original toys repaired. Parents would bring their kids to the Sky-Vue and say, ‘These are the same toys I played on when I was your age.’”



Though the Sky-Vue is no more, Kirkland and others are keeping the tradition alive. Hungry theatergoers can still find the famous Chihuahua Sandwich at Midland’s Big Sky Drive-In, where Kirkland is part owner, as well as at the Stars & Stripes in Lubbock. For those who favor libations with their movies, the Coyote Drive-In in Fort Worth serves up beer and wine, often paired with live music before the show, at its canteen—the sort of appurtenances audiences have come to expect from modern theaters.

Whether it’s a night out for the whole family or a romantic evening for two under the stars, there’s still a drive-in theater in Texas to meet the occasion. And it’s sure to outshine a stuffy night at the mall multiplex.

“The drive-in can give you something that the indoors can’t,” Kirkland says, “and that’s freedom.”

Travis P. Hill is a TEC communications specialist. He lives in Austin.





**MAKE
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LARGE

**SOMETIMES YOUR EYES—LIKE THE
OVERSIZED FOOD ON TEXAS MENUS—
ARE BIGGER THAN YOUR STOMACH**

BY JEFF SIEGEL | PHOTOS BY TOM HUSSEY

On a stage in front of the open kitchen at the Big Texan Steak Ranch and Brewery in Amarillo, an empty table looms above restaurant patrons enjoying warm meals on a rainy fall afternoon. At any moment, the table could become the center of attention—if only someone were to approach the kitchen and announce, “I want to eat the 72-ounce steak.” Once the steak is served, the digital clock on the wall behind the stage will start a 60-minute countdown. Spotlights

will click on. Webcams will broadcast the challenge around the world. And diners in the 500-seat restaurant will look up from their beef and beer to watch and shout encouragement.

At the Big Texan, visitors from around the world attempt to eat the restaurant’s legendary steak dinner—4½ pounds of beef plus a salad, dinner roll, baked potato, side of beans and shrimp cocktail. If they can devour everything in an hour, it’s free. During an eight-week period that included Labor Day weekend in 2018, 150 travelers from as far away as Ukraine and Australia took the challenge. Just 14 succeeded.

“Disneyland has Mickey Mouse,” says Big Texan’s Bobby Lee,



whose family has owned the Amarillo landmark for almost 60 years. “And we have the 72-ounce steak.”

Welcome to big food, Texas style. How about a pizza that’s 8 feet across? Or a 3-pound cinnamon roll? Or an eight-decker deli sandwich? Or a hamburger that includes a pound of bacon and a half-pound of cheese? If someone’s going to make such a colossus, you can bet someone will try to eat it.

“It was like, ‘Men of America, all the eyes are upon you,’” says Ed Montana of Amarillo, who finished the Big Texan steak dinner in 38 minutes during filming for the Travel Channel. “I didn’t want to let the side down. I had to finish it because macho men are meat

eaters, right?”

“It’s the wiry little guys you need to worry about when you’re watching someone try to finish the dinner,” Montana says. “The big guys, the 6-8 [tall] ones who look like offensive linemen, they don’t seem to do as well.”

High school and college students seem particularly fond of challenging the specialty of the house. But at Big Texan, more women finish the steak than men, even though more men attempt it.

At Mel’s Country Cafe in Tomball, north of Houston, the Mega

Kurt Oefinger of Hondo’s Dirt Road Cookers prepares an 8-foot pizza, above, then, with help from Medina Electric Cooperative employees, eases the hot pie onto a stand for slicing.



Mel Burger, which starts with 1½ pounds of beef, has been on the menu in one form or another since 1994. “I honestly think that when people see how big it is, they feel a need to try and conquer it,” manager Sherry Pierce says. “And it’s just not the people who try to eat it—it’s the people who get excited about seeing people try to eat it.”

Big food, the larger-than-life dishes like the Big Texan’s steak, is not uniquely Texan. It’s not even uniquely American. A decade ago, a group of Spanish chefs combined 32 tons of rice, sausage and seafood to create a monster version of paella, Spain’s national dish.

But many Americans embrace big food enthusiastically. We watch TV shows about it. We visit restaurants to see it—as well as to eat it. Our enthusiasm for big food is not necessarily about gluttony. Rather, it’s about what Texas Tech sociologist Carol Lindquist calls “our culture of abundance.”

“Big food in particular is part of that,” she says, “the idea that bigger is better, a hypermanifestation of our American-ness.”

Our culture of abundance is unique in world history. We are, with a few notable exceptions, the only culture that has never endured famine, which Europeans have suffered through as recently as the 20th century and still occurs in some parts of the world.

“We think that our abundance—that we always have had enough food to eat—is normal,” Lindquist says. “But it’s not. The early European settlers, when they arrived, couldn’t believe what they found, all the wildlife and the forests and the food. It was remarkable coming from the old country, where that hadn’t been seen in centuries. So that’s one reason how our enthusiasm for ‘bigger is better’ started.”

The Mega Mel Burger is seven times taller than the average



A Dirt Road pizza can feed up to 150 people. Will Schneider, left, a staking technician at Medina EC, digs in.

mouth can open. The Big Texan steak contains almost three times more calories than the federal government’s

recommended daily allowance. The 20-scoop ice cream sundae at Dallas’ Hypnotic Emporium contains significantly more than the recommended daily allowance of fat.

Wallets take a hit just as diets do. The Mega Mel costs \$24.95. The Mt. Hypnotic sundae costs \$38, which can be refunded if you finish it in less than 30 minutes. The Big Texan steak is \$72, and that’s only refunded if you meet the hour deadline.

But none of that seems to matter.

“I honestly think it’s about the spectacle,” says Kurt Oefinger of Hondo’s Dirt Road Cookers, whose specialty is an 8-foot pizza that starts with 25 pounds of flour and takes two hours to mix. Oefinger travels around the state, pizza oven in tow, creating his giant pies that include 3 pounds of pepperoni, 8 pounds of brisket, 6 pounds of sausage and 30 pounds of cheese. They cost \$800–\$1,500 and can feed as many as 150 people.

“As soon as they see that 8-foot pizza, everyone wants to dive in. But no one ever seems to be able to finish it, and there is always a lot left,” says Kassie Cox, Oefinger’s sister-in-law and an accountant for Medina Electric Cooperative in Hondo, west of San Antonio. “I’m not sure anyone knows exactly how big an 8-foot pizza is. It’s not like many people have seen one before.”

Learn more about writer **Jeff Siegel** at winecurmudgeon.com.

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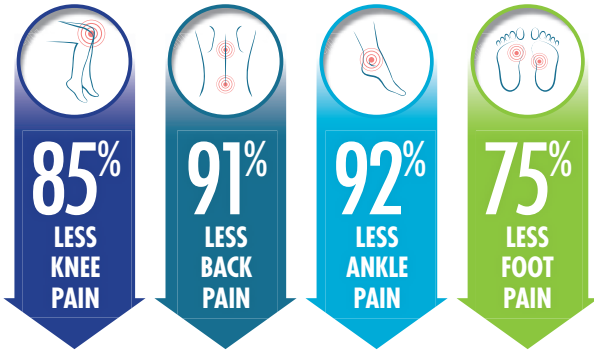
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"I have had five pairs of expensive hearing aids and MDHearingAids are just as good," adds retired neurosurgeon Dr. Brian L.

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SAVE 90% COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL HEARING AIDS

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MDHearingAids were created by a board-certified otolaryngologist frustrated that patients couldn't afford the high price of hearing aids. So, he did the only logical thing...he created a low-cost, feature-packed hearing aid that costs over 90% less than a comparable hearing aid.

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Preparing For Hurricane Season



MESSAGE FROM **CEO MARK ROLLANS**

EVEN WITH THE 2017 HURRICANE SEASON TWO years behind us, I don't think it is one we will forget anytime soon.

Hurricane Harvey devastated many of our cooperative neighbors and fellow Texans. Our service area was spared from the heavy rain and flooding that often makes its way inland, but we know that may not be the case next time. That is the reason we spend so much time preparing and planning on sunny days for the day when heavy rains and hurricane-force winds do impact our members and our electric system.

Each May, key cooperative staff members gather for an emergency operations plan review and drill. The EOP documents roles, responsibilities and mission-critical tasks that need to be addressed in times of emergency, and the meeting includes running through an emergency scenario. It's different every year—from attacks on our technology systems to storms. Staff works through the scenario so we can find as many issues or needed improvements as possible before an actual event.

For hurricanes and storms that we see coming, staff put the EOP in action before the storm is set to hit. Emails are sent and meetings held days before storms are predicted to make landfall. After the event, staff members sit down and make note of lessons learned: what went well and what we could have done better. We incorporate those back into the EOP so that next time, we can do a better job.

I hope our members approach preparing for storms in the same manner. You will be better able to cope without power or access to resources for a few days if you have certain things done ahead of time. Register your account for outage notifications, sign up for SmartHub, and have an emergency kit ready to go and your batteries and phone fully charged.

Hopefully, none of us ever need to use all our preparation work.

Sincerely,
Mark Rollans

To-Do List

Download the SmartHub app and make sure your account is registered. Set up your account for outage alerts via text or email.

Check to be sure the correct phone number—the one that you are most likely to call from if you need to report an outage—is listed on your account. It will make it easier and faster if you call to report an outage.

Be sure you have flashlights handy and fresh batteries available.

Visit MedinaEC.org and get comfortable with where things are. Check out our outage map, which updates every few minutes.

Reporting Outages

Online: MedinaEC.org and select SmartHub.

Smartphone: SmartHub application available for download on Android and iPhones.

Call it in: 1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532)

If the phone number you're reporting the outage from isn't associated with the account where the outage is, you will have to have your meter or account number or the phone number associated with the account.

Account Information



Meter:

Account No.:

Phone number listed on account:

^ Cut this out and keep it in a handy spot so you are ready if you have an outage.

Member Spotlight

Congratulations to Our Schlitterbahn Prizewinner



You may have noticed a special giveaway Medina Electric Cooperative promoted recently in honor of *Texas Co-op Power's* 75th anniversary. We'd like to congratulate the winner of FIVE season passes to Schlitterbahn: Kathy Riff from Hondo.

The Riffs are third-generation members of Medina EC and are now even more popular with their grandchildren, if that is possible.

Thank you to all the members who entered this contest. Each of you will receive something special in the mail as a small thank-you.

For our members who didn't win or didn't enter this contest, don't worry, there are still plenty of opportunities to try your luck. We have more prizes up our sleeves. Every month, members will have a chance to win a uniquely Texan treasure so be on the look-out for information!

Congratulations to *Texas Co-op Power* magazine on 75 years—and counting!



Medina Electric Cooperative

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

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[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.

Updating Your Cool Factor? There's a Rebate for That.

MEDINA EC OFFERS MEMBERS rebates for certain energy efficiency upgrades. This time of year, many people are getting HVAC systems tuned up or replaced, often out of necessity. If you are doing anything to up the cool factor in your house, keep Medina EC's rebates in mind!

Rebates of \$60 are offered for HVAC tuneups, and rebates of \$35 are available for Energy Star-certified window units. If you are replacing an existing HVAC system with a 15-SEER central AC or heat pump, that may also qualify for a \$200 or \$400 rebate. Check if your purchase or service qualifies for a rebate at MedinaEC.org/Rebates.

The list of items that qualify for rebates also includes water heater blankets, programmable thermostats and Energy Star-certified appliances like refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers and clothes washers.

Do You Have a Medical Need for Electricity?

UNINTERRUPTED ELECTRICITY IS IMPORTANT TO EVERYONE, but for some people, it is a medical necessity.

If someone in your home depends on an electrically operated health aid, your account needs to be listed on Medina EC's Life Support Registry. To be added to the Life Support Registry, fill out the form at MedinaEC.org/Registry and attach a physician's directive or prescription.

Accounts on this list are notified before planned outages and are a priority for restoration during unplanned outages. Being on this list will not keep your account from being disconnected for nonpayment and does not guarantee uninterrupted electrical service. Outages are unavoidable and occur for reasons outside the cooperative's control.

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

Medina EC offers GenerLink, a device installed by our employees, as an option for members to safely operate their generators. Learn more at MedinaEC.org/Generlink.

Protecting Your Privacy

MANAGING YOUR ELECTRIC ACCOUNT gives us access to personal and confidential information, and protecting that information is an integral part of the service we provide. We use your name and Social Security number to verify your identity when you sign up for service and when you call with questions on your account.

Your information is kept in encrypted files behind protected firewalls. Only qualified Medina EC employees who have a need to know can access the information. Our IT department ensures that firewalls and antivirus applications prevent unauthorized access.

Printed documents containing member information are kept in locked shredding containers and destroyed.

Your information is never sold or given to anyone for the purpose of selling you something. Some information might be provided to third parties acting on behalf of Medina EC and can be disclosed as required by law.

We take the responsibility to protect your personal and confidential information very seriously. Failure of an employee to comply with Medina EC's privacy policy results in punishment and can include termination.

You can also take steps to ensure that your private information stays private and that you don't unknowingly fall victim to a utility scam.

If you get an email that you aren't expecting, don't click on links or reply to it. Never reply to an unexpected email with personal information (name, Social Security number, etc.). If the email appears to come from your bank or credit card company, call them to verify.

Never allow anyone into your home to check electrical wiring, natural gas pipes or appliances unless you scheduled the appointment or reported a problem. Don't be afraid to ask a utility employee for proper identification. If they are on your property, you have every right to verify that they are who they say they are.

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MONDAY, JULY 1

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MEDINAEC.ORG/VEHDONATION

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JIM HOGG	ZAPATA
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LASALLE	



Lightning Safety Enlightenment

NATIONAL LIGHTNING SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK was launched in 2001 to call attention to this often underestimated killer.

Since then, U.S. lightning fatalities have dropped from about 50 per year to about 30. This decrease in deaths is largely due to greater awareness of the danger lightning poses and to more people seeking safety when thunderstorms threaten the area.

This year, Lightning Safety Awareness week is June 23–29, and we encourage you to heed these tips and raise your awareness of the dangers of lightning.

Protect Yourself

Use the 30/30 rule: When you see lightning, count the seconds until you hear thunder. If fewer than 30 seconds pass, the thunderstorm is within 6 miles of you and is dangerous. Immediately seek shelter indoors or in a hard-top vehicle and remain until you have not heard thunder for 30 minutes.

Don't touch concrete surfaces, including those in a garage. Lightning can travel through the metal wires in concrete walls and flooring. Stay off corded phones and plugged in electronics.

Avoid plumbing and water, including bathing or doing laundry.

Never seek shelter under trees, poles or other tall structures as they are more likely to be struck by lightning.

Protect Your Property

Unplug appliances and other electrical items, such as computers and TVs to prevent damage from surges caused by lightning strikes.

Surge protection can help prevent damage to your electronics. There are two types of surge protection:

► **Point-of-use:** Protects devices that are directly plugged into the surge protector from most electrical surges.

► **Whole house:** Located at your main electrical panel or the base of the electric meter, this device provides protection for your entire electrical system.

However, neither type can safeguard against a direct lightning strike. If you live in an area prone to lightning, consider a lightning protection system.

MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH: If it's not raining or cloudy, you're safe from lightning.

FACT: If you can hear thunder, lightning is nearby. Lightning often strikes more than 10 miles from the center of a thunderstorm.

MYTH: A lightning strike victim carries a charge and should not be touched.

FACT: Lightning travels at about 220 million miles per hour and will have exited the body by the time you approach. Check for a pulse and render first aid if possible. Call 911 immediately.



Medina EC hosted a Youth Tour Day on March 15 for the 2019 winners, from left, Angela Miranda, Jose Rodriguez and Hannah Faith Smith, so they were able to meet and get to know each other before going on their trip this month. They also met with CEO Mark Rollans and witnessed a safety demonstration.

South Texas Students Head to DC

THIS MONTH, THREE STUDENTS FROM MEDINA EC'S service area will travel on what is often referred to as the trip of a lifetime! The 10-day trip, which starts in Austin on June 12, will not only be educational but most definitely fun! After visiting the state Capitol with more than 150 other Texas students, Medina EC winners will head to Washington, D.C., where more than 1,900 kids from across the nation will experience unforgettable moments. Youth Tour students will visit major landmarks, meet their elected officials, and learn about US and cooperative history.

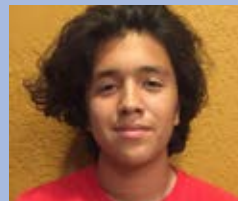
To be eligible for the trip, this year's applicants competed in an essay contest. The topic was "If you had a chance to sit down with a legislator (either at the state or federal level), what questions would you ask them and why?" Medina EC had an impressive response in applicants and we are happy to announce our winners: Angela Miranda from Rio Grande City, Jose Rodriguez from Castroville and Hannah Faith Smith from Batesville. You can see some of their essay responses to the right.

In addition to their trip, the winners will each receive a \$1,000 scholarship when they head off to college or trade school after graduating high school. To learn more about Youth Tour, visit MedinaEC.org/YouthTour or follow their trip on social media using #YouthTourTexas.

If you had a chance to sit down with a legislator (either at the state or federal level), what questions would you ask them and why?



"What are your thoughts about suicide prevention? An estimate of 123 people commit suicide daily."



"I would ask if they are aware of where their campaign donations came from ... [and] how those donations changed the way they view and vote on multiple issues."



"How would you define integrity? Do you find it difficult to act with integrity while fulfilling promises you have made to your constituents?"



Medina EC's Load Management Program begins this month and runs through September. Load Management is a program for irrigators who choose to let Medina EC shut off their pivots during hot summer days, which helps reduce the strain on the energy grid and helps the co-op save on power costs.

But irrigators aren't the only ones who can help!

You can opt-in to receive a text alert on days the energy grid could benefit from extra conservation. The only difference between you and members on the irrigation program is that we won't shut your power off: You're responsible for doing your part to conserve energy when we share conservation tips.

The Do Your Part program is free and easy.

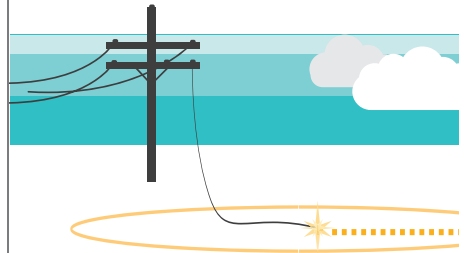
Text ENERGY to 830-423-5032 to sign up!

Learn more about Load Management and Do Your Part at MedinaEC.org/LM.

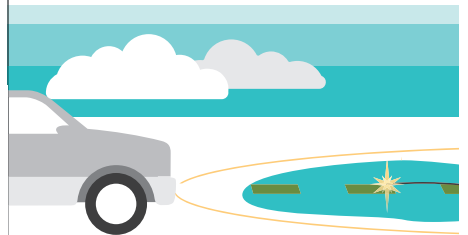


Downed & Dangerous

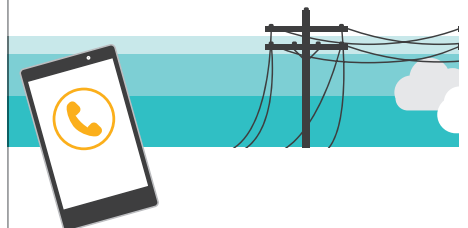
If you see a downed power line, always assume it is energized and dangerous. Avoid going near it or anything in contact with the power line.



Downed power lines can energize the ground up to 35 ft. away—so keep your distance.



Never drive over a downed line or through water that is touching the line.



If you see a downed line, notify local authorities immediately.



Never try to move a downed line, even if you think the line is deenergized or if you're using a nonconductive item—this will not prevent injury or death!

SOURCE: ESFI.ORG

\$25,000 in Scholarships Awarded

TWENTY-FIVE AREA STUDENTS have an extra \$1,000 to help with their education expenses next school year.

Since Medina EC's scholarship program first began in 2000, the co-op has awarded more than \$582,000 to 398 students from our service area.

The scholarship program is funded by unclaimed capital credits. When capital credits remain unclaimed for three years, they are escheated to the state of Texas. The state can

then give a portion of that money back to the cooperative. This money is used to offer scholarships, promote energy efficiency and encourage local economic development.

Learn more about the scholarship program at MedinaEC.org/Scholarship. If you have applied in the past and not won, watch for information on next year's scholarship program in January or February 2020.



KENDALL ARCHE
DEVINE



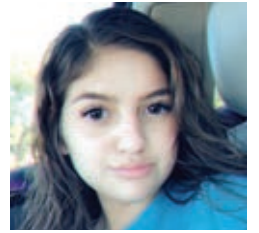
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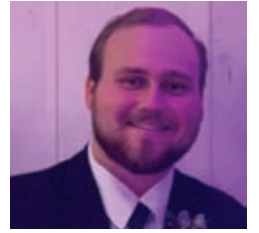
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MOORE



SARA HECKER
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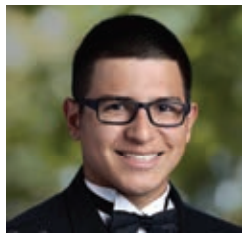
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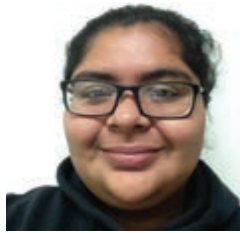
EMILY RODRIGUEZ
D'HANIS



JACOBO SAENZ
SANTA ELENA



CODY SELF
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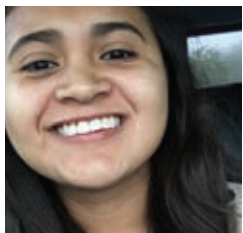
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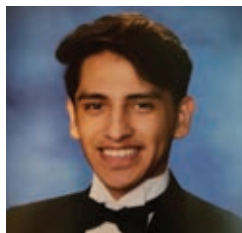
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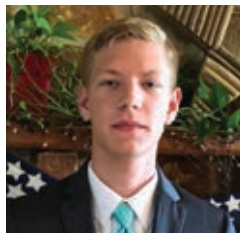
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DEREK WEINSTROM
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Capital Credits Allocation: What It Means For You

THIS MONTH, Medina EC members will receive your capital credits allocation statement mailed separately from your bill. This statement shows the 2018 margins that are being assigned to you, and you may be wondering exactly what it means.

The allocation statement is not a bill nor does it represent cash owed to you at this time. At the end of each fiscal year, funds remaining after expenses have been paid—or net margins—are allocated to members' accounts based on the amount of electricity they used in that year. So, why can't you have the money that is allocated to your account?

The money allocated to your account is money that the cooperative is using for operating capital: to repay long-term debt; make system improvements, repairs and maintenance; and for other capital needs—basically, it's still being used to maintain the electric system that provides members, including you, with power.

At the end of each year, the board of directors evaluates the financial condition of the cooperative to determine if any portion of capital credits can be retired. That retirement decision is based, in part, on if that money is still needed for operations. If it is not, a portion of the capital credits are retired. The amount retired changes from year to year based on the financial needs of the cooperative, and the board could determine that no money can be retired, although that has not historically been the case. Once capital credits are retired, members receive them back as a refund; current members see it as a credit on their bill and former members are mailed a check. Each retirement is a portion of the total allocation that has been assigned to your account.

To learn more about capital credits and see a list of unclaimed credits, visit MedinaEC.org/CapitalCredits. It's important to keep your address up to date, even after you're no longer a member, so we can return capital credits to you. You can update your account by calling 1-866-MEC-ELEC or logging in to your SmartHub account.

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- 3 Point Quick Hitch
- Insulated Canopy Top
- 6' Box Blade with Scarifiers
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- No DPF Filter
- Choose Ag. or Ind. Tires



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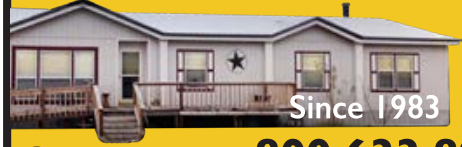
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The Nylon Campaign

Texas Co-op Power has defended electric cooperatives against gossip and graft since 1944

BY ELLEN STADER

A NEFARIOUS FIGURE STROLLED INTO Washington, D.C., toting a suspicious satchel filled to overflowing with contraband. In black top hat and tails, he swaggered toward the U.S. Capitol, a stogie clenched in his teeth. At least, that's how a cartoon, titled *A New March on Washington*, portrayed him in the May 1946 issue of *Texas Co-op Power*.

And when this cad arrived in the Capitol, what happened?

He doled out nylon stockings to lawmakers' wives.

The cad was Ham Moses, president of Arkansas Power and Light, an investor-owned utility. He offered the contraband to the wives of congressmen who would vote for an amendment—one prohibiting the Rural Electrification Administration from making loans to help generation and transmission cooperatives.

The scene was depicted as a cartoon, but it actually happened. Why was this payoff made of nylon? At the time, nylon stockings made a better bribe than a briefcase full of gold. In 1942, manufacturer DuPont had diverted its production to support the war effort. World War II robbed women of their cherished nylons, and the moment they began to sell again in 1946, stores were overwhelmed in nationwide riots. The payola was well-received, but the amendment failed.

"It's almost unbelievable what the power companies will stoop to in their effort to kill us off," responded Clyde Ellis, executive manager of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

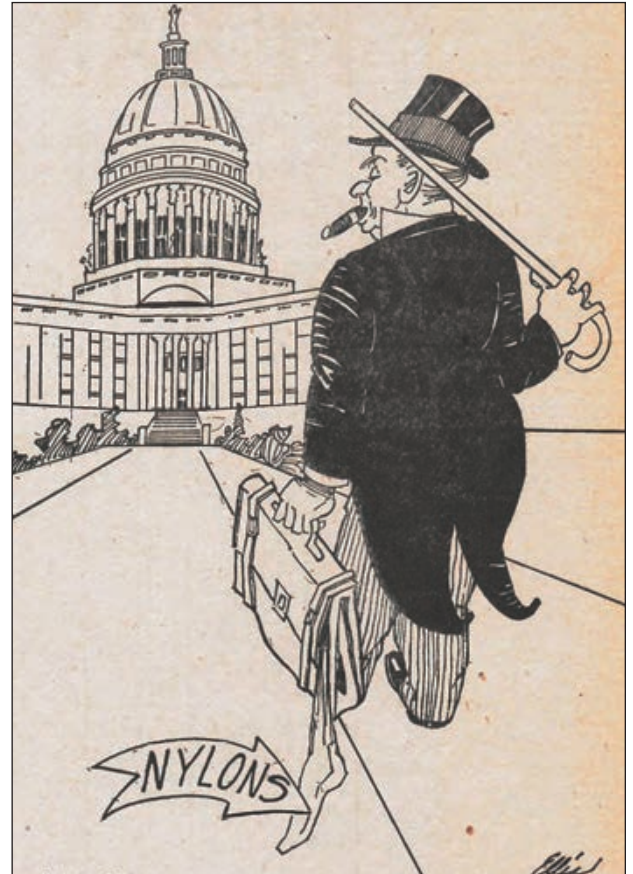
Long before this nylon campaign, the investor-owned utilities lobby already had thrown propaganda, bribery and legislative attacks at electric co-ops, with land grabs

and lawsuits to come. *Texas Co-op Power* articles from 1951 to 1991 document attacks from investor-owned utilities, lobbyists, legislators and even journalists from *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Associated Press*. After realizing its mistake in refusing to electrify rural America in the 1930s, private power spent decades taking swings at the co-ops that met the challenge instead. The resulting David-and-Goliath scenario has played out repeatedly, making for strange stories.

Take, for example, the brief and brutal feud between U.S. Sen. W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel of Texas and George W. Haggard, the first editor of *Texas Co-op Power* and then manager of the statewide electric cooperative association.

O'Daniel was something of a Goliath, himself. Years of radio popularity, a stint as governor of Texas and six years in the Senate had accustomed him to saying whatever he wanted—and in 1947 he called the co-op system "communistic."

Haggard fired back an indignant stone from his sling that flew to newspapers around the country via an Associated Press story: "This false and vicious charge ... is a studied insult to the 160,000 patriotic, substantial tax-paying farm and ranch families of this state who receive electricity through the REA cooperatives."



He attributed O'Daniel's smear to three motives: "profound and abysmal ignorance" of the way co-ops operated; the tendency of O'Daniel's congressional allies "to denounce everything that is for the general welfare of the American people as 'communistic'"; and O'Daniel's impending reelection bid.

Haggard then dealt the final blow, saying, "This looks like an effort to persuade the private utility interests, which hate the rural electrification program, to make a sizeable contribution to his campaign chest."

And though O'Daniel would later level the communist charge at other targets, including many of his own Senate colleagues, Texas electric co-ops never heard from him again.

Ellen Stader, a former *Texas Co-op Power* communications specialist, is a writer in Austin.

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2019 HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST

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One \$500 Best Sweet Winner
Two \$250 Honorable Mention Winners

Share your best original recipes!

Show us how you add your personal touch to every part of a meal – from savory beginnings to sweet endings – for fun and festive holiday gatherings.

Send us your best ORIGINAL holiday recipes—ones you've developed, not copied from a friend or found in a book or magazine. Winners will be featured in our November 2019 issue. Enter by June 10 at TexasCoopPower.com.

Go to TexasCoopPower.com for details and official rules.

TEXAS COOP POWER

Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com. Each entry MUST include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your Texas electric cooperative, or it will be disqualified. Specify which category you are entering, Sweet or Savory, on each recipe. Mail entries to: *Texas Co-op Power/Holiday Recipe Contest*, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You can also fax entries to (512) 763-3401. Up to three total entries are allowed per co-op membership. Each should be submitted on a separate piece of paper if mailed or faxed. Mailed entries all can be sent in one envelope. No email entries will be accepted. For official rules, visit TexasCoopPower.com. **Entry deadline: June 10, 2019.**



**LAST CHANCE
ENTER BY
JUNE 10**

2018 GRAND PRIZEWINNER
Sherry's Shrimp Clemenceau
Sherry Zawadzki | Heart of Texas EC
Get the recipe at TexasCoopPower.com.

Standout Summer Sides

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A POTLUCK, backyard barbecue or any summer cookout without a big roasting pan of baked beans. This recipe, which appeared in this magazine in July 1955, shows that the old-world combination of sweet add-ins (molasses, brown sugar and ketchup), salty pork fat and beans is pretty timeless. Feel free to double this recipe (you'll need a large roasting pan) if you're feeding a team or want leftovers. Regardless, consider the contributor's suggestion for a quick lunch: Spread leftover beans on buttered bread, top with a slice of cheese, and broil until warm and bubbly.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

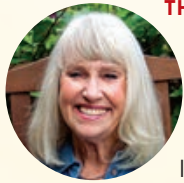
Old-World Baked Beans

- 2½ cups navy beans
- 1 quart water
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- ¼ pound salt pork or bacon (cut into ½-inch slices)
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- ⅓ cup molasses
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- ¼ cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard (or 1 teaspoon ground dry mustard)
- 2 tablespoons hot sauce
- 1 tablespoon salt
- ½ tablespoon ground ginger

- 1.** Rinse beans and place them in a large roasting pan or Dutch oven. Cover with water and soak overnight.
- 2.** Drain beans, add 1 quart water and simmer over medium-low heat, covered, until skins are easily pierced (do not boil). Bury the onion, salt pork or bacon, and garlic in beans.
- 3.** Stir together the molasses, brown sugar, ketchup, mustard, hot sauce, salt and ginger, then stir the mixture into the beans. Continue

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Standout Summer Sides



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

SHARON BROWN | PENTEX ENERGY

"This is my signature dish, and I never serve it without multiple recipe requests," Brown says. She makes it a day early to allow flavors to blend. It keeps in the refrigerator a week. Feel free to adjust the lime juice and cilantro to taste. "For large groups, I triple the recipe and serve it in a big bowl," she says. "People flip out!"

Southwest Couscous Salad

- 1½ cups water
- 1 cup uncooked couscous
- 2 cups canned corn with red and green peppers, drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained
- ¼ cup chopped tomato (or 6-8 cherry tomatoes, halved)
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced green onions
- ½ bunch cilantro, chopped
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- ¾ cup fresh lime juice
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ⅓ teaspoon cayenne
- Salt, to taste
- Lettuce leaves, for serving (optional)
- Cilantro sprigs and lime slices, for garnish (optional)

1. Bring water to boil in a medium saucepan, remove from heat and stir in the couscous. Let the couscous stand 5 minutes, then fluff with fork and let cool.

2. In a large bowl, combine the corn, black beans, tomato, green onions and cilantro. Use a rubber spatula to fold in the couscous.

3. In a small jar with a lid, combine the olive oil, lime juice, garlic powder, cumin, cayenne and salt, and shake well to combine. Pour the dressing over the couscous and toss to coat.

4. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour or longer to allow flavors to blend. Line serving platter with lettuce leaves, spoon couscous mixture over leaves and garnish with cilantro and lime slices, if desired. ▶ Serves 12.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

to simmer the beans, covered, until they're very tender, about 2–2½ hours, or bake them in a 250-degree oven.

▶ Serves 12–14.

COOK'S TIP For added flavor, add bay leaves (fresh or dried), 1 teaspoon ground coriander or 2 teaspoons fresh chopped thyme or rosemary to the mix. Feel free to substitute Great Northern or cannellini beans for navy beans.

Crazy Stupid Corn

GAIL PATTERSON | PENTEX ENERGY

When you're looking for a warm, creamy comfort side, this mix of fresh vegetables, corn, hominy and bacon is a perfect partner for grilled sausages or burgers, or a fresh salad with grilled bread. Patterson suggests adjusting the seasonings to suit your preferences. For added heat, consider adding fresh chopped jalapeño or serrano peppers, or a pinch of cayenne.

- 6 slices thick-cut bacon, cut crosswise into thin strips
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 1 orange bell pepper, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 12 ounces cream cheese
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) yellow corn, drained
- 2 cans (14 ounces each) creamed corn
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) white hominy, drained
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic
- Heavy cream, as needed

1. Cook the bacon in a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven over medium-high heat until crisp.

2. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the bacon to a paper towel-lined plate and set aside, reserving bacon fat in the pan.

3. Add the butter to bacon drippings and stir until melted. Add the peppers, onion and garlic and stir until softened. Add the cream cheese, reduce heat and cook until almost melted and smooth. Add the corn, creamed corn and hominy and stir to combine. Season with salt, pepper and



IF YOUR RECIPE IS FEATURED,
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\$2,500 Holiday Recipe Contest

November's issue will feature winners of the 15th annual **Holiday Recipe Contest**. Share the dishes that make your holiday gatherings so special. Send us your best ORIGINAL recipes in the Savory Dish or Sweet Dish category, and your recipe could appear in *Texas Co-op Power* and win you a cash prize. The deadline is **June 10**. See complete rules at TexasCoopPower.com.

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.



granulated garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, until cream cheese is fully melted and mixture is smooth. Stir in reserved bacon. Thin the mixture with cream if it seems too thick. Adjust seasonings as desired and serve warm.

► Serves 8.

Pecan Potato Salad

JANE MORGAN | UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Cooking potatoes in broth and combining them with bacon, sautéed onions, sour cream and pecans creates a rich, German-style salad with a Texas flair. This salad (served warm or at room temperature) would be right at home with grilled brats and cold beer.

- 2 pounds small red potatoes (about 2 inches in diameter)
 - 3 cups beef or chicken broth
 - 5 slices bacon, cut crosswise into ¼-inch strips (about ¼ pound)
 - 2 tablespoons butter, divided use
 - 1 medium onion, chopped
 - ½ teaspoon sugar
 - 1½ tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves, plus extra for garnish
 - ½ cup chopped pecans
 - ½ cup sour cream
- Salt and pepper, as desired

1. In a large saucepan, combine potatoes with broth and simmer until just tender, about 20 minutes, then drain and cool briefly.
2. While the potatoes are cooking, cook the bacon in a medium-sized heavy skillet over medium heat until crisp. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the bacon to a paper towel-lined plate, reserving bacon drippings in the pan.
3. Add a tablespoon of butter to the bacon fat, then add the onion and cook, stirring, until tender. Transfer onion to a mixing bowl.
4. When the potatoes are cool enough to handle, thinly slice them and combine with onions. Add the sugar, parsley, pecans, sour cream and remaining butter to the warm potatoes and toss gently to combine. Season with salt and pepper, top with reserved bacon, and garnish with parsley or dill. ► Serves 6–8.

COOK'S TIP To perk up the flavor of this salad a bit, add a tablespoon or two of white vinegar to

the potato and onion mixture before tossing it with the dressing. For a nuttier flavor, lightly toast the pecans (and allow them to cool) before adding them to the salad.

Cucumbers and Sour Cream

JANE MORGAN | UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

When made with care, this cool, creamy and crunchy combination elevates just about anything (especially lamb burgers). “My mom would make this side dish in the summer to serve with grilled meat,” Morgan says. “It was always a delicious contrast that tasted like summer.” Note that the cucumbers need to drain for an hour, so plan accordingly.

- 4 small, firm cucumbers
 - 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- Salt (about ½ teaspoon for each cucumber)
- ¾ cup sour cream
 - 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
 - 1 teaspoon sugar
 - 3 tablespoons fresh minced dill (or 1 tablespoon dried)

1. Peel the cucumbers, halve lengthwise, scoop out the seeds and cut them into thin slices.

2. Combine the cucumber slices, onion and salt in a large bowl and toss to combine; transfer mixture to a colander and drain 1 hour.

3. In a separate bowl, combine the sour cream, vinegar, sugar and dill.

4. Rinse the cucumber mixture to remove salt, then drain and pat dry with paper towels to remove excess moisture. Fold the cucumbers and onions into the sour cream mixture, taste and adjust seasonings as desired, and refrigerate at least 30 minutes before serving.

► Serves 3–4.

COOK'S TIP Feel free to substitute an equal amount of fresh mint or tarragon for the dill.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read these recipes on our website to see the original Old-World Baked Beans recipe from July 1955.

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

▼ **JENNY BOYD**, Cherokee County EC: "Donkey feedin' time."



▲ **DUB AND JODY MCLAUCLIN**, Farmers EC: "This filly is enjoying some deer corn, quick to not let any of the pasture calves share."



▲ **CHARLES ASCHENBECK**, Jackson EC: A squirrel hangs from a bird feeder before indulging in a meal of tasty sunflower seeds.



▲ **LORI RUTHERFORD**, Deep East Texas EC: "I took this photo after finding this nest full of babies in our grapefruit tree."



▲ **LINDA WOODS**, Bluebonnet EC: Arwen feeds from Aaronn. Both are gray gypsy vanners.

UPCOMING CONTESTS

OCTOBER	GIVING BACK	DUE JUNE 10
NOVEMBER	UP THE CREEK	DUE JULY 10
DECEMBER	DESERTS	DUE AUGUST 10

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

ONLINE: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.
MAIL: Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We do not accept entries via email. We regret that *Texas Co-op Power* cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.



Pick of the Month Garden Tour

Celina June 8
(214) 957-3655, celinagardenclub.org

The tour offers a showcase of at least eight private gardens, farms and wineries in Celina and Weston in North Texas. Food will be available at most venues, including freshly prepared appetizers, shaved ice, fruit, ice cream and jarred items to take home.

June 7

Jacksonville Tomato Fest Classic 4-Man Scramble, (903) 541-4700, jacksonvilletexas.com/tomato-fest

Abilene [7-8] Stars Over Abilene 25th Annual Quilt Show, (325) 665-2724

Bonham [7-8] Highway 82 Yard Sales, (903) 583-9830, visitbonham.com

Kerrville [7-8] Shakespeare in the Park, (830) 896-9393, playhouse2000.com

San Antonio [7-9] Texas Folklife Festival, (210) 458-2224, texasfolklifeFestival.org

8

Bandera Bandera Rodeo Club Youth Summer Series Rodeo, (830) 431-1030, banderarodeoclub.com

La Grange Art Stroll, (979) 968-3017, visitlagrangetx.com

14

Boerne [14-16] Berges Fest, (830) 249-7277, bergesfest.com

15

Brenham Summer Sip Wine Walk, (979) 337-7580, downtownbrenham.com

Fredericksburg Meusebach Creek Historic School Open House, (830) 997-7896, historicsschools.org

June 20-22
Stonewall
Annual Peach JAMBoree



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Palestine Dogwood Jamboree:
Star Spangled Country, (903) 729-7080,
dogwoodjamboree.com

20

Stonewall [20-22] Annual Peach JAM-boree, (830) 644-2735, stonewalltexas.com

21

Bremond [21-22] Polish Festival Days, (254) 883-7279, bremondtxas.org

22

Hillsboro Elm Street Rod Run Classic Car Show, (972) 291-2958,
roadsideamericatx.com

25

Seguin Taste of Seguin, (830) 303-6612,
silvercenterseguin.com

29

Columbus Country Market, (979) 732-8385,
columbusfmtx.org

Wylie Bluegrass on Ballard, (972) 516-6016,
wylitexas.gov

Belton [29-July 7] 4th of July Celebration, (254) 939-3551, rodeobelton.com



July 4-6
Fort Davis
Coolest Fourth of July

July

3

Spring Branch Hill Country Fun Fest, (210) 488-8063, springbranchtennis.com

Waxahachie [3-4] Crape Myrtle Festival and Parade, (469) 309-4045,
waxahachiecvb.com

4

Aubrey Freedom Fest, (940) 390-9184,
peaceoftherock.org

Boerne Fourth of July Fireworks, (830) 249-3644, visitboerne.org

Kerrville Robert Earl Keen's Fourth on the River, (830) 257-8233, kerrvilles4th.org

Lakehills American Legion Post 410 Fourth of July Parade, (830) 751-3711, alpost410.com

Stephenville Fourth of July Celebration, (254) 918-1295, recipro.stephenvilletx.gov

Fort Davis [4-6] Coolest Fourth of July, (432) 426-3015, fortDavis.com

6

Tye Independence Day Celebration, (325) 695-8253, cityoftyeedc.org

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We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event online for August by June 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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Lowly Activities in Arlington

Top O' Hill Terrace was a tearoom atop an underground gambling hideout

GANGSTERS, GAMBLING, PROSTITUTION and illicit liquor. These things spark images of Chicago or New York in the 1920s. However, right here in the Lone Star State, deeds involving such salacious elements were part of the day-to-day operations of an unassuming tearoom on an unassuming hill halfway between Dallas and Fort Worth. While the location looks different today, visitors can still step back in time to when Top O' Hill Terrace was "Vegas before Vegas."

In 1926, Arlington residents Fred and Mary Browning decided that Fred's plumbing career lacked the excitement they desperately wanted. Amid the growing success of horse racing at Arlington Downs, the Brownings decided to get in on the action.

When they purchased a tearoom along the old Bankhead Highway, authorities had no idea the couple had plans beyond the teacup. The Brownings immediately began renovations, moving the tearoom to construct a network of underground rooms and tunnels. The additions included a casino, restaurant, an office and five doors at which every patron had to use passwords to gain access. There were two-way mirrors, secret staircases and fake doors, all designed to make Top O' Hill raidproof. With the front gate a quarter-mile down the drive, patrons had ample time to hide the evidence and run into the garden to sip tea if police showed up. It was a cover so believable that many folks visited the tea garden without any knowledge of the illegal activities just beneath their feet.

The Brownings' reputation grew as quickly as their bank account. The casino took in \$50,000-\$100,000 every night and attracted countless celebrities, including



"Officer" Chet Garner and associates revisit Top O' Hill Terrace's shady past.

Bonnie and Clyde and John Wayne. The couple invested their cash

into a swimming pool and air conditioning, two luxuries that were extremely rare at the time. Fred's newfound connections led him into horse racing, most notably with his horse Royal Ford, whose foal Heelfly beat the legendary thoroughbred Seabiscuit in 1940. He also stepped into professional boxing, employing his facilities to manage and train boxers like Lou Brouillard and "Slapsie Maxie" Rosenbloom. Yet the Brownings' very success would soon become a curse.

Top O' Hill gained an influential enemy in J. Frank Norris, pastor of Fort Worth's First Baptist Church and an ardent supporter of Prohibition. Norris vowed to shut down the establishment and return it to the realm of respectability. His prophecy became a reality in 1947 when Texas Rangers led a successful raid on Top O' Hill. In 1956, Bible Baptist Seminary bought the property and transformed it into a Baptist college.

On my first guided tour, I expected to walk dark hallways and feel the breath of

notorious Texas gangster Benny Binion on my neck. Instead I found the bright and bustling Arlington Baptist University with few remnants of the former days of Top O' Hill. Soon after buying the property, the new owners tore down the tearoom and replaced the casino with a cafeteria. The stable and pool have been incorporated into daily student life, and unless you know the stories, you could miss the stable and pool completely. What does remain is the tea garden and one 50-foot escape tunnel, where creative visitors can imagine men in pinstriped suits and women in flapper dresses stuffing gambling chips into their pockets to the muted sounds of a jazz band.

While visitors can no longer throw \$20 down on the roulette table, the cost of a tour is well worth the money. And while almost every Texas town has its stories of forbidden back alleys or underground operations, no Prohibition-era story is as Texas-sized as that of Top O' Hill Terrace.

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 his visit to Top O' Hill Terrace.



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