

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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Trinity Valley EC  
Local News  
SEE PAGE 18






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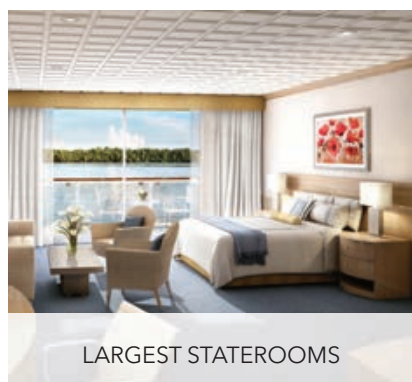


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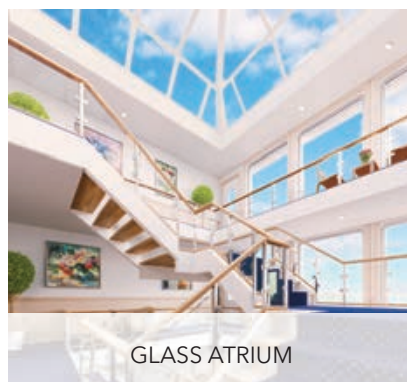
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Liz Cox pours a Mexican lager at Bandera Ale Project.

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BANDERA ALE PROJECT: DAVE SHAFER. CRAWFISH: BONCHAN | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



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**ON THE COVER** Nearly 300 craft breweries operate in Texas, representing a \$5.3 billion industry. Photo by Dave Shafer

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— Sherri H., Granville, NY



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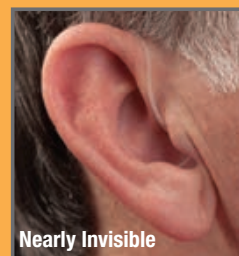
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## Not 10 and 2?

Great nostalgic writing [*Ranch Hands on the Wheel*, October 2019]. I can go further back when there were NO seatbelts and hands on steering wheel position was 3 and 9.

VIVIAN WILLIS | VIA FACEBOOK

## Honor Our Vets

*Wreaths Across America* [November 2018] prompted me to donate wreaths for this nationwide organization. This is a fantastic opportunity to honor our vets, and I will be donating again this year. I am hoping the follow-up article [*Leader of Kind Strangers*, November 2019] about Ellen Fuller, co-chair of this state-wide effort in Texas, will encourage more people to donate.

JOYCE HISER | CRANDALL TRINITY VALLEY EC

## Stagecoach Secrets

I was once afforded access to areas off-limits to the general public, including the rooms and attic of the original Stagecoach Inn building [*Stopping by the Stagecoach*, November 2019]. That was neat enough, but the real treat was a hidden cave that was originally used for vegetable storage back in the 1800s. It was where Sam Bass hid out before leaving the next day for Round Rock, where he met his demise.

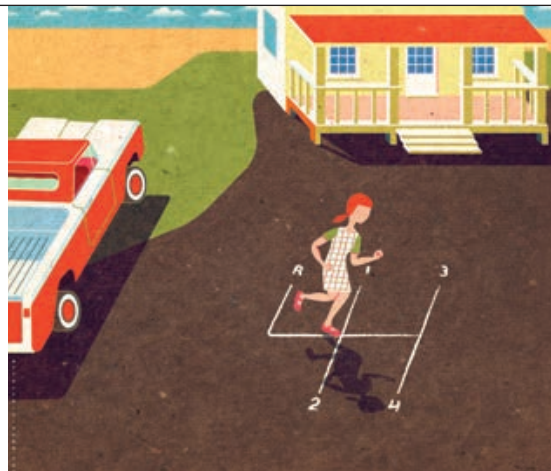
I treated myself to a scrumptious meal of fried catfish, which included the wonderful cornbread fingers that the inn is still famous for serving. Looks like a trip down Interstate 35 is in order.

BILL PEAKE | FRISCO COSERV

## Fair Is Fair

Not only did my dad teach me how to drive a standard pickup but also to change a flat tire before I took driver's ed [*Ranch Hands on the Wheel*, October 2019]. But when the high school instructor said only us girls had to change one, I stated I knew how and felt the boys should also. I wasn't giving in (it was a requisite to take the written test), so in the end all the boys had to also. Even my cousin was mad at me, but I felt fair was fair.

PAMELA JONES MAASS | VIA FACEBOOK



## Banner Day for Co-ops

Last year, I lost my husband, Bill Casey, and have been learning how to do so many things on my own. We had a strong windstorm last spring, and my flagpole got dislodged from its concrete mooring. Pedernales EC decided to take this on as a public service, and on October 8, workers came out in their trucks and reset and welded the flagpole back into position.

Before they left, we put up the Texas flag, and it was won-

derful to see it flying in front of the house again.

KAREN CASEY | CYPRESS MILL PEDERNALES EC

## Value of VFDs

My wife and I own our home and a 5-acre horse farm in rural Collin County. We also own a small cabin in Arkansas. Both houses are served by electric co-ops. Fire protection for both dwellings is provided by volunteer fire departments [*Putting Others First*, October 2019].

Each property owner in Arkansas served by a VFD is a member of the VFD and is assessed dues annually by state law. Payment of the dues is not mandatory, but if not paid by the member and a fire occurs, the member will be billed for the cost of responding to the fire.

I have contacted our state

representative about having a similar dues requirement in Texas for VFDs but have not seen or heard of any action being taken on this matter.

JAMES TRUEMPER | FARMERSVILLE FANNIN COUNTY 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

**TEXAS CO-OP POWER VOLUME 76, NUMBER 7** (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 75 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com. **SUBSCRIPTION PRICE** is \$4.20 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues are available for \$3 each. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Texas Co-op Power* (USPS 540-560), 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. Please enclose label from this copy of *Texas Co-op Power* showing old address and key numbers. **ADVERTISING:** Advertisers interested in buying display ad space in *Texas Co-op Power* and/or in our 30 sister publications in other states, contact Elaine Sproull at (512) 486-6251. Advertisements in *Texas Co-op Power* are paid solicitations. The publisher neither endorses nor guarantees in any manner any product or company included in this publication. Product satisfaction and delivery responsibility lie solely with the advertiser.

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# Dinner With the Arts

Since 1980, the Greater New Braunfels Arts Council has supported artists in New Braunfels and Comal County with events like last month's Caroling on the Plaza and annual Cinco de Mayo presentations in area schools. Another of the organization's signature events is Dinner With the Arts, which in recent years has become a fundraiser.

**DINNER WITH THE ARTS**, on **JANUARY 18** at the McKenna Events Center in **NEW BRAUNFELS**, will include a live band, visual arts, interactive exhibits and opportunities for patrons to sustain the organization through silent auctions, raffles and art sales.

Lisa Heymann, president of the council, says as many as 400 people attend the dinner each year in support of programs such as the Fall Into Art Festival and art and poetry contests.

**INFO** ► (830) 358-3480, [gnbac.org](http://gnbac.org)



**WEB EXTRAS**  
► Find more happenings online.

*“Courage, after all, is not being unafraid but doing what needs to be done in spite of fear.”*

— **JAMES L. FARMER JR.**, civil rights leader born January 12, 1920, in Marshall

## 2020 VISION



**2020 doesn't look exactly like some people predicted it would many years ago.**

**Prediction:** In 1967, *The Futurist*, then a newsletter, said humans would breed apes to be chauffeurs and perform other household chores.

**Reality:** Apes are struggling just to be apes. Close to 60% of the world's 504 primate species are threatened with extinction, and 75% of those species are in severe population decline, according to [earthday.org](http://earthday.org).

**Prediction:** In 2020, humans arrive on Mars. So said *Wired* magazine in 1997.

**Reality:** NASA says it hopes to send astronauts to Mars, which is an average of 140 million miles from Earth, in the 2030s.

**Prediction:** “There will be no C, X, or Q in our everyday alphabet. They will be abandoned because unnecessary.” That's what engineer John Elfreth Watkins Jr. wrote in *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1900.

**Reality:** An exciting idea but quite incorrect.





## POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

# A Close-Knit Couple

**ALTHEA AND JOHN CONRADO**, Pedernales Electric Cooperative members since 1975, are in their seventh decade of marriage, have seven children and have together explored all seven continents. But Althea's luck seemed less certain in 1944, when the then 11-year-old raised the eyebrows and ire of a Red Cross worker.

The relief agency was at that time distributing yarn to volunteers to knit specialized gloves—with an open trigger finger—for Allied machine gunners overseas. Althea, who began knitting at age 5, wanted to contribute. But the aid worker she encountered pronounced her too young, to Althea's deep disappointment. A phone call from her mother to the agency sorted it, and she returned. "I can still see her face," Althea said. "She was so mad. And I came home with two big bags full of yarn!" She knitted the gloves, turned them in, then got some more yarn and kept knitting.

Though the product of Althea's knitting has today changed to blankets for Austin hospice patients, her pace hasn't slackened. She averages 1½ to two blankets

per week, each taking about 40 hours to make. Again last year, Althea was recognized by Travis County with a Spirit of Service Award, which honors volunteers for 2,000 hours of work—though she racks up more than 3,000 hours knitting annually.

John marvels at his wife's prolific output. "Some days it seems like they crank out of there faster, she's doing pink and next thing you know it's purple. What happened to the pink? It's purple!"

**POWER OF OUR PEOPLE** recognizes co-op members who improve their community's quality of life. Nominate someone by emailing [people@texascooppower.com](mailto:people@texascooppower.com).

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

*I knew I was grown up when . . .*

**We think it will be fun** to show a little bit of our readers' personalities by asking you to finish a sentence that we start. As we collect your thoughts, we'll share them in the magazine and online.

**We tried this ourselves**, and here's what the writers and editors on our staff came up with:

**Chris Burrows:** ...I got socks for Christmas and was glad for it.

**Travis Hill:** ...my student loan servicer told me I'd be 60 before I paid off my debt.

**Jessica Ridge:** ...I couldn't move away from my college apartment without taking the heavily pregnant community cat with me.

**Tom Widlowski:** ...I bought my parents dinner for the first time.



### ► Now it's your turn.

How would you finish that sentence? Post your responses on the *Texas Co-op Power* Facebook page or email them to [letters@texas-ec.org](mailto:letters@texas-ec.org). Please include your city and co-op. We'll share what you send us.

## MILESTONE BIRTHDAY

# Everybody Look What's Going Down

**For what it's worth**, musician Stephen Stills of Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills & Nash turns 75 this month. He wrote three hit songs decades ago that can still get stuck in your head today: *For What It's Worth*, *Suite: Judy Blue Eyes* and *Love the One You're With*.

**He was born** January 3, 1945, in Dallas.



*Texas*  
= FEELS A =  
*Draft*



STORY BY MELISSA GASKILL  
PHOTOS BY DAVE SHAFER

# Craft Breweries

BRING ENTERTAINMENT AND ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNITIES

**O**n a sunny fall afternoon, large overhead fans supplement a light breeze blowing through open doors. Several couples perch at a long bar, dogs sprawled on the concrete floor nearby. People group around tables, deep into spirited board games. Out the back door, others dig into plates of barbecue at shaded picnic tables.

Bandera Ale Project is one of a new breed of community gathering spots. All around Texas, craft breweries have become destinations where folks bring the family and the dog, and play games or listen to music or comedy acts. The adults taste new flavors and types of beers, observe the brewing process and even meet the brewmaster.

Nearly 300 craft breweries now operate in Texas, representing a \$5.3 billion slice of the state's economy. Texas produces more craft beer than all but seven other states but ranks 46th in breweries per capita.

Josh Hare of Hops & Grain Brewing in Austin and chairman of the Texas Craft Brewers Guild board says several challenges have hampered the Texas industry. "When we opened Hops & Grain in 2011, it was not legal to operate a tasting room," he says. "The beer you poured had to be free." Brewers got around that by selling the glasses into which they poured beer. Then legislation passed in 2013 allowed brewers to sell beer on-site.

"From 2013 forward, we went from a dozen or so breweries to more than 70 just in Austin," Hare says.

The 2019 Legislature allowed manufacturing breweries to sell beer to go. Before that, Texas had been the only state that prohibited sales of six-packs or growlers (reusable bottles) for customers to take home. Other limits remain, though, in-

**Opposite: John Oliver, brewmaster at Bandera Ale Project. Above: After a day of preparing their hunting camp, Jezire and Brent Akin treat themselves to Bandera Ale Project beers.**



cluding how much product a brewery can distribute, Hare explains.

The Texas brewing industry comprises three tiers—manufacturing, distribution and retail—with specific rules for each. A manufacturing brewery that produces fewer than 225,000 barrels annually can operate a tasting room and sell on-site only. A brewpub, considered retail, can make and sell beer for

consumption on-site or off-site but only up to 10,000 barrels per year. Hops & Grain is about to reach that size, Hare says. "Do we give up the ability to sell beer to go in order to make more?"

Meanwhile, beer tourism has grown across the state, Hare points out, and that growth means more manufacturing jobs. "This is a manufacturing industry that employs a lot of folks," he says. "The retail components of craft breweries, from live entertainment to food trucks and tour groups, create additional jobs."

Bandera Ale Project, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative, stages music every Saturday and prefers to hire local artists, says co-owner and brewmaster John Oliver. "We have music, comedy, open mic, karaoke. And we're family friendly," he says. "We cultivate that atmosphere; we're not your typical bar."

The brewery, about 50 miles northwest of San Antonio, offers free Wi-Fi, too, using Bandera EC's high-speed fiber internet. Communication specialist Samantha Gleason says BEC Fiber launched about the time the brewery opened. "Bandera Brewery added more of a community space to the area," she says. "And they contribute to support of local businesses, instead of buying from a bar that gets its product from outside the community."

Some craft breweries also play a role in revitalization efforts by restoring old, abandoned buildings. In downtown Lockhart, Caracara Brewing Company occupies a formerly empty historic building. In the North Texas town of Nocona, Nocona Beer & Brewery took over a former boot factory.





Craft brewing could bring jobs to the agriculture industry in Texas as well. Four basic ingredients go into making beer: hops, barley, water and yeast. Craft brewers use more hops than mass-produced beers, according to Neil Reid, the “beer professor” at the University of Toledo. For example, an imperial India pale ale style of beer uses 4 pounds of hops per keg, while a traditional pilsner uses less than half a pound. Small brewers also use hops to create unique flavors, while mass-produced beers focus on hop varieties that provide consistency of taste.

Even though most barley comes from outside Texas, Quentin Hart of the National Agricultural Statistics Service says that between 2012 and 2017, the number of acres of barley harvested in Texas increased nearly 93%.

Barley used in beer is malted, which involves steeping the grain in water under controlled conditions, allowing it to sprout, then drying it.

#### WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see a map of small-town craft breweries in Texas.

Cory Artho is co-owner of Maverick Malt House, 20 miles west of Amarillo, one of several malting houses operating in the state. Price is his biggest challenge. Malt from Canada, which produces millions of tons, sells for 40 or 50 cents a pound. “We have a 5-ton

**Above: The old Nocona Boots factory is now home to Nocona Beer & Brewery. Right: Jody Jones serves conviviality by the pint at Nocona.**







*“We have music, comedy,  
open mic, karaoke.  
And we’re family-friendly.”*

**WE CULTIVATE THAT ATMOSPHERE;  
WE’RE NOT YOUR TYPICAL BAR.”**

machine, and if we ran it year-round, we might make 400,000 pounds,” he says. That smaller volume means Maverick must charge 80 cents a pound.

Still, the idea of local ingredients appeals to Texas brewers. Southerleigh Fine Food and Brewery in San Antonio makes the only all-Texas beer, Artho says. Texas Born and Bred, a pale ale, contains his barley, hops from Hank’s Hops in San Antonio, which grows the flowers hydroponically in a greenhouse, and yeast from Texas Yeast Lab in New Braunfels.

Beyond hops and barley, going local becomes easier. Oliver says that for its honey brown ale, Bandera Ale Project uses Doyle’s Honey, produced by Kent Doyle, a member of Medina Electric Cooperative. Its coffee porter uses coffee beans from Texas.

Jim and Carly Baroffio opened the Bandera brewery in November 2017, and Oliver joined shortly thereafter. “This location was the perfect place to put a brewery because we had access to the property behind for a beer garden,” Oliver says. “You couldn’t find a property big enough for the garden in San Antonio or even on Main Street in Bandera.”

Bandera Ale Project offers barbecue from Busbee’s Bar-B-Que on Main Street. “We wanted someone from Bandera, to make it like a small second location,” Oliver says. “They cook all the food at the main location and bring it here.”

All the fun aside, craft brewing is, bottom line, about the beer. Texas beers snapped up 29—including 11 gold—of the more than 400 medals awarded at the 2019 U.S. Open Beer Championship, where Fredericksburg’s Altstadt Brewery ranked as one of the top 10 breweries overall.

Bandera Ale Project attended its first competition, the Great American Beer Festival, in Denver in October. “Back when we started, we had just two beers on tap, a blonde ale and a honey brown ale, and sometimes we ran out of one because we only had one fermenter,” Oliver says. “After a few months, we got two more fermenters and had four beers on tap, then eight. We bought two more and now have 14 beers on tap. It’s been a learning process. People still come by just for those first two beers, though.”

That hard work has made beer a good reason for people to visit craft brewing establishments across the state. But certainly not the only one.

See more of **Melissa Gaskill’s** work at [melissagaskill.blogspot.com](http://melissagaskill.blogspot.com).

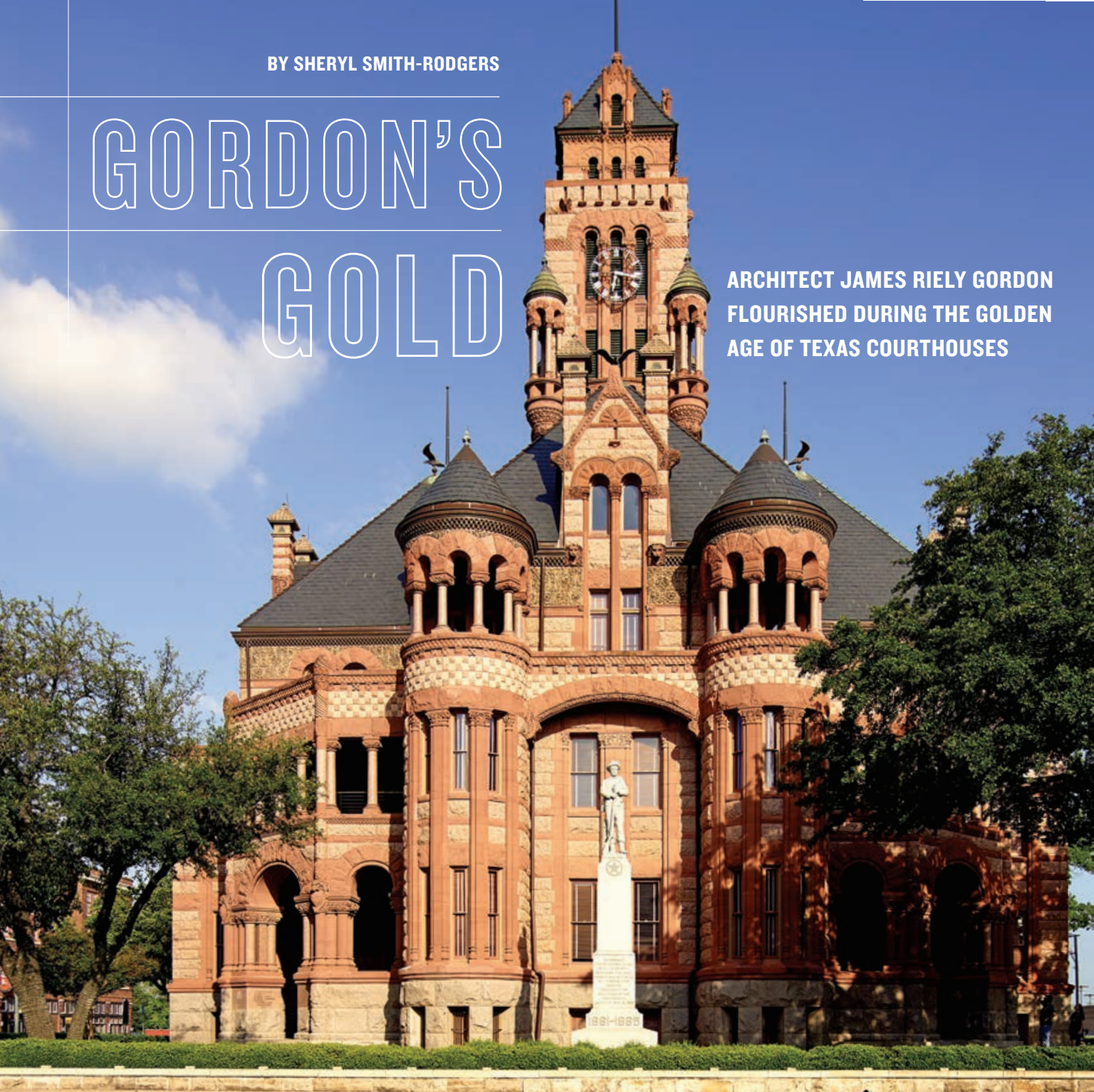
**From top: Bandera Ale Project’s beer garden. Dave Young, Nocona’s head brewer, keeps a watchful eye on his 6,100-gallon tanks. Cans await beer at Fredonia Brewery in Nogadoches.**



BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

# GORDON'S GOLD

ARCHITECT JAMES RIELY GORDON  
FLOURISHED DURING THE GOLDEN  
AGE OF TEXAS COURTHOUSES



**C**ramped and outdated, the 1892 Victoria County Courthouse faced demolition in 1961 to make way for a new building in downtown Victoria. When historical preservationists got wind of the plan, they rallied support and presented a 13-foot-long petition to county commissioners. Unfurling the scroll, they read aloud the names of 661 county residents who wanted the courthouse's exterior to remain intact. Following this citizens' directive, commissioners voted to make no outside changes to the three-story edifice, adorned with turrets, arched windows and a clock tower.

Today, the former Victoria County Courthouse houses county offices and stands among 12 surviving Texas courthouses designed

and built by James Riely Gordon. From 1889 to 1902, the prolific architect designed 18 "temples of justice"—plus commercial, religious, residential and other civic buildings—across the state.

Ranked among Gordon's outstanding work is the Ellis County Courthouse, heralded as a "masterpiece" by author James Michener. In his 1985 historical novel *Texas*, Michener likens the pink-and-gray granite building in Waxahachie to a "... fairy-tale palace 10 stories high, replete with battlements and turrets and spires and soaring clock towers and miniature castles high in the air. It was a bejeweled treasure,

**Clockwise from above: The Ellis County Courthouse in Waxahachie and exterior details; the Gonzales County Courthouse in Gonzales; architect James Riely Gordon.**





**ASIDE FROM THEIR RESPLENDENT FACADES, GORDON'S COURTHOUSES HAD ANOTHER MAJOR SELLING POINT: IN BROILING SUMMER MONTHS, THEY FELT COOLER INSIDE.**



structures that he adapted to the specific needs of anyone he could interest,” writes Chris Meister in *James Riely Gordon: His Courthouses and Other Public Architecture*. “A study of the architect’s known work finds most of his early structures in communities along rail lines connecting with San Antonio.”

Gordon’s start as an architect couldn’t have had better timing. In 1881, the 17th Texas Legislature passed a bill that allowed counties to borrow funds to build public buildings. The earliest courthouses in Texas were tents, dugouts or simple log structures, according to *The Courthouses of Texas*, by Mavis P. Kelsey Sr. and Donald H. Dyal. Because these primitive affairs were often unsafe, the 1881 bill empowered county commissioners to build spacious, fireproof buildings that inspired awe and attracted commerce.

The golden age of grandiose Texas courthouses had begun.

In those days, counties often staged competitions to attract designs for courthouse projects. In 1888, Gordon entered an Aransas County contest in Rockport. His exotic Moorish concept, graced with horseshoe arches and onion domes, stood out among plans submitted by other architects, including the esteemed Alfred Giles and Otto Kramer. Gordon’s first courthouse served citizens for 65 years before it was torn down.

For the next decade, Gordon embraced an architectural trend called Richardsonian Romanesque. The massive, masonry style—developed by Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson—features short columns; wide, rounded arches; conical or pyramidal towers; and sculpted ornaments. Gordon melded those elements to create customized courthouses for Fayette, Bexar, Erath and Victoria counties.

Gordon’s professional reputation soared in 1893, when his Texas State Building wowed visitors at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. One newspaper writer proclaimed the building as “one of the most attractive at the Fair,” and it would

yet it was also a sturdy, massive court of judgments, one of the finest buildings in Texas.”

Born August 2, 1863, in Winchester, Virginia, Gordon moved with his mother and civil engineer father to San Antonio in the early 1870s. He joined the civil engineer corps of the International-Great Northern Railroad at age 14. In 1881, Gordon worked under architect William K. Dobson and then as a draftsman with J.N. Preston & Son. In late 1884, he opened his own San Antonio office with established architect Frederick Shelton. In the coming years, Gordon would go in and out of partnerships and would also run an office in Dallas.

Gordon traveled the state by train and buggy in search of clients. “On these trips, he carried generic plans for a variety of





#### WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see vintage postcards of Gordon's Texas courthouses.

become the most widely publicized design of Gordon's lifetime. By fall 1896, the fair's buildings had been razed or burned.

Aside from their resplendent facades, Gordon's courthouses had another major selling point: In broiling summer months, they felt cooler inside. To maximize comfort, the architect created a cross-shaped layout with a center atrium, a combined shaft and tower, and corner entrance porches. The plan, which Gordon copyrighted and improved with subsequent projects, worked like a chimney, drawing cool air from the porches while venting hot air upward through the tower. Eleven courthouses followed Gordon's "Signature Plan," according to a list in Meister's book.

After the 1893 fair, Gordon continued his work in Texas, designing 13 more courthouses. Brazoria (demolished), Hopkins, Gon-

**Clockwise from left: The McLennan County Courthouse dome in Waco and window detail; an archive photo of the Bexar County Courthouse in San Antonio.**

zales, San Patricio (demolished), Ellis, Van Zandt (demolished), Wise, Comal and Lee reflect his Richardsonian Romanesque style. With Harrison (now a museum), McLennan and Angelina (demolished), Gordon transitioned to the Beaux-

Arts style that uses grand entrances and towering pillars. A low budget kept Callahan (demolished) sparse in architectural detail.

In June 1902, Gordon moved his practice and family to New York. Shortly before his 1937 death, he designed a building for the 1939 New York World's Fair. The honor ended the 53-year career of the architect who signed his work J. Riely Gordon and got his start in Texas.

**Sheryl Smith-Rodgers** of Blanco blogs about her gardening adventures at [sherylsmithrodders.blogspot.com](http://sherylsmithrodders.blogspot.com).



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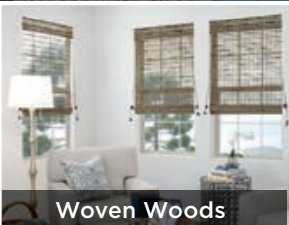
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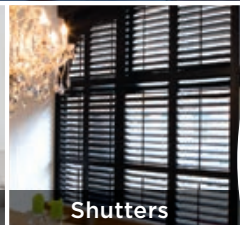
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# A Fresh Start



MESSAGE FROM  
**GENERAL MANAGER/CEO JEFF LANE**

**THERE'S A CERTAIN POETRY TO OPENING A PRISTINE** calendar each January. The clean slate, absent scribbled-in appointments and obligations, encourages reflection and a bit of personal accounting. Rather than lack, the calendar's empty grid represents promise—the potential for a fresh start in a new year.

Of course, this month, that sense of possibility is accentuated as we embark on not just a new year but a new decade. It's an especially opportune moment to think about habits and practices that we may want to change, maintain or cultivate.

At Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative, we like to take stock in the same way. Each year presents 365 (or 366 this leap year) new opportunities to earn our members' trust and business, and January 1 is a good time for all of us here to think about the best ways to do that. 60135040001

As you know, the co-op's most fundamental mission is to deliver safe and reliable electric power at a competitive price. That's what our staff members—from employees at the front desk to the men and women in the field, and from the engineering department to our human resources team and everyone in between—dedicate themselves to, year in and year out. For their dedication, I'd like to express my gratitude. All of them come to work each day with the safe provision of service to our members foremost in mind.

Our board of directors deserves a big thank-you, too. The members of TVEC's board have taken

on the weighty responsibility of running a multimillion-dollar utility. The commitment they display in keeping up with the changing regulatory, technological and legislative landscapes that affect our industry is laudable. Decisions made by the board aren't undertaken lightly, as directors know that the outcomes of those choices affect thousands of their fellow members. Their diligence is appreciated, and I strive every day to emulate their conscientiousness.

A final thank-you goes to you, our members, who make all our jobs possible. Your support and understanding when things don't go right, and your input, whether via suggestion, compliment or complaint, helps us do a better job for you.

Without you, there would be no cooperative. For you, for this co-op and for ourselves, you can count on us at TVEC to do our best every day to fulfill the co-op's mission. Happy new year to you and your family.



TVEC | DON JOHNSON

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Provide you with the most reliable electric service possible.

Keep our rates as low as possible.

Provide friendly and efficient customer service at all times.

Never forget that you are a member-owner of this cooperative.

**Happy new year from the directors and employees of Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative.**

Our offices will be closed Wednesday, January 1, for the holiday.



TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



# Transmission Line Changes Will Require Two Large Temporary Outages

**TWO PLANNED TRANSMISSION LINE CHANGES WILL** affect a large number of Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative members in early January with a short outage scheduled for 10 a.m. each day January 6 and 7.

Each outage should be no longer than 30 minutes as crews from TVEC, Rayburn Country Electric Cooperative and contractors work together to change the routing of transmission lines that feed TVEC substations in the eastern part of the service territory.

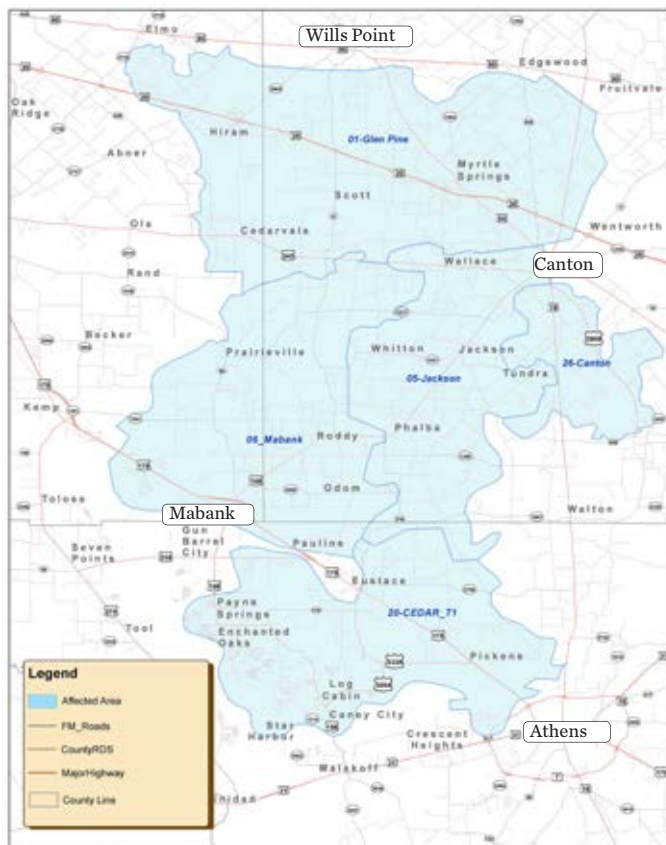
Weather or grid conditions could change the schedule, and

members are encouraged to watch for updates on [tvec.net](http://tvec.net) and on TVEC's social media channels.

The changes are part of an overall plan to bring all of the TVEC service area into the Electric Reliability Council of Texas power grid, with the goal of increasing system reliability and simplifying system operations.

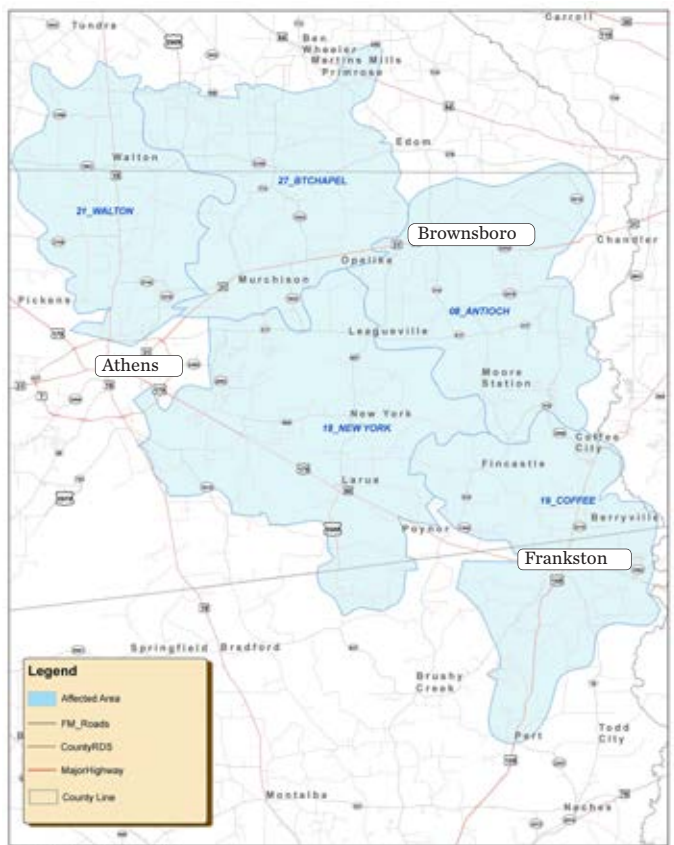
This area has previously been part of Southwest Power Pool, a power grid operator that serves an area stretching from Arkansas and the Texas Panhandle north to the Canadian border.

**Scheduled dates and times are subject to change. Please check [tvec.net](http://tvec.net) and TVEC social media channels or contact TVEC Member Services for updates on these planned outages.**



## 10 a.m. January 6

This outage will affect areas northwest of Athens to Mabank, going north to an area along Highway 80 south of Wills Point and including Jackson, Log Cabin, Payne Springs, Prarieville and Whitton.



## 10 a.m. January 7

This outage will affect areas north and east of Athens, extending to areas around Brownsboro and Frankston and including Berryville, Coffee City, Larue, Murchison, New York and Walton.

# TVEC Department in Focus: Facilities and Purchasing Keeps Member Service a Priority

## IN THE ELECTRICITY BUSINESS, IT IS EASY TO FOCUS

on the power lines, transformers and poles as the key components for serving Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative members. But buildings, offices and vehicles are essential, too.

“From the dirt up and property line to property line, it is our job to keep the facilities safe, comfortable and productive for employees to serve the members as well as possible,” said Greg Starek, director of purchasing and facilities. “For members coming in the door, we want a feeling that is inviting, and we take pride in making sure that our members, who are also owners, can be proud that we take good care of what we have and make the best use of what we have.”

That is a pretty tall order for a staff of seven Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative employees covering multiple buildings, office space, vehicles and the land around 26 substations. But a can-do attitude and diverse set of skills among the group keeps everything in good order.

“Safety comes first in all we do, both for employees and anyone who comes through the door,” Starek said. “Structurally, with several large buildings there is a lot to keep up with and of course a lot goes into keeping vehicles in good shape to get our linemen and service employees where they need to be to serve members.”

Vehicle fleet management is a major part of the team’s focus, with more than 150 vehicles and motorized equipment that is important for maintaining the power lines, installing new service and responding to members’ needs.

“Our maintenance program ensures that we can keep these guys on the road and ready to go all the time because that is what it takes,” Starek said. As a former lineman himself, he knows the demands on both the personnel and the equipment when members are waiting for the power to come back on. “It isn’t uncommon for us to have 250,000 miles on these bucket trucks over about a five-year period. That takes a lot of effort and attention to detail to get the maximum life out of them.”

Providing “other duties as required” is a big part of the job as well, from assisting in setting up the TVEC Annual Membership Meeting to taking care of the occasional wild animal problem.

“I’ve pulled skunks out of ceilings and snakes out from under buildings,” Starek said. “It will keep you on your toes, but we have some really good people working here and I think members should be proud to know the effort and attitude that this group has to really help the co-op get the most out of the facilities we have.”



Working from the Kaufman office, Shane Braddock, Nancy Carrillo, Greg Starek, Shawn Schoenle and mechanic Mark Neal (not pictured) cover TVEC’s facilities around the service area.



Lidia Velazquez and mechanic Stevie Splawn at TVEC’s Athens district office.

## Win \$25 Just for Reading

Somewhere, hidden on Pages 18-23, is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the Member Services Department by January 31 to receive a \$25 credit on your electric bill. Don’t miss out—you could be a winner!





# Understanding the EnergyGuide Label

**ENERGYGUIDE LABELS HAVE BEEN** around for four decades and are just as important today to help you buy energy-efficient appliances as they were when they were first introduced. You'll find these useful tags on air conditioners, clothes washers, dishwashers, freezers, furnaces, heat pumps, pool heaters, refrigerators, TVs, water heaters and window AC units.

You'll also often see a second, blue-and-white Energy Star label applied to a much broader range of products that identifies its bearer as being more efficient than most of its peers. For appliances, the standard a product must reach varies. An Energy Star dishwasher, for example, must be 10% more efficient than the least efficient unit, while washing machines must be 37% more efficient.

When you're shopping for appliances, consider items as having two price tags. The first one covers the purchase price—think of it as a down payment. The second price tag is the cost of operating the appliance during its lifetime. You'll be paying the second price every month with your utility bill for the next 10–20 years, depending on the appliance. Refrigerators last an average of 12 years; clothes washers last about 11 years; and room air conditioners last about nine years.

When shopping, consider labels and features that can help ensure that you purchase appliances with a low operating cost.

The EnergyGuide label is a great tool that helps consumers compare the energy use and costs of new appliances. Use this guide to better understand how to interpret the information found on the label.

► Key features of the appliance and the similar models that make up the cost range below the top section of the label.

► The cost range helps you compare the energy use of different models by showing you the range of operating costs for models with similar features.

► An estimate of how much electricity the appliance uses in a year based on typical use. Multiply this by the electricity rate on your utility bill to better judge what your actual operating cost might be.

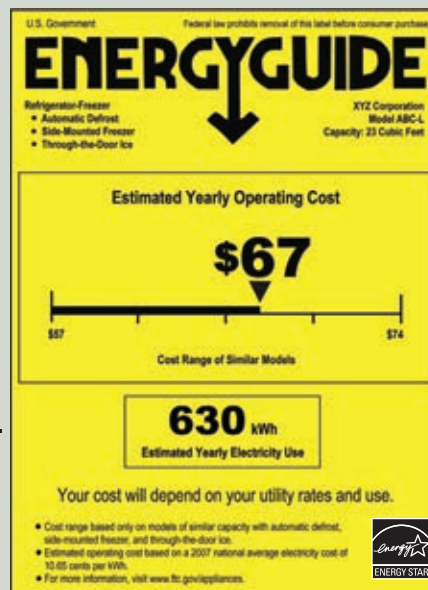


The **ENERGYGUIDE** label is a great tool that helps consumers compare the energy use and costs of new appliances. Use the sample below to better understand how to use the information found on the label.

Lists key features of the appliance and the similar models that make up the cost range below.

The cost range helps you compare the energy use of different models by showing you the range of operating costs for models with similar features.

An estimate of how much electricity the appliance uses in a year based on typical use. Multiply this by your local electricity rate on your utility bill to better judge what your actual operating cost might be.



The make, model and size tell you exactly what product this label describes.

What you might pay to run the appliance for one year, based on its electricity use and the national average cost of energy. The cost appears on labels for all models and brands so you can compare energy use.

If you see the ENERGY STAR logo, it means the product is better for the environment because it uses less electricity than standard models.

Source: Federal Trade Commission

APPLIANCES: GEORGE TSARTSIANIDIS | IISTOCK.COM

► The make, model and size tell you exactly what product this label describes.

► What you might pay to run the appliance for one year, based on its electricity use and the national average cost of energy. The cost appears on labels for all models and brands so you can compare energy use.

► If you see the Energy Star logo, it means the product is better for the environment because it uses less electricity than standard models.



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## Simple Steps for Winter Safety

**ELECTRICITY HAS AN IMPORTANT, EVERYDAY ROLE IN OUR LIVES. BUT IT'S EQUALLY** important to never get complacent around this powerful force. Keep the following safety tips in mind as winter's chill enters your home.

**Space heaters should be used sparingly and safely.** Always follow the manufacturer's operating recommendations and keep them several feet away from all flammable objects. Heaters may require occasional cleaning, which can be done by first unplugging the heater and simply vacuuming to remove dust. Do not dismantle the heater for cleaning.

**Electric blankets should be checked for damage before use.** Look for kinks, worn wires, scorch marks or breaks in the heating element. Remember, electric blankets have a limited life, and if there is any doubt about the safety of yours, replace it.

**Don't tangle with tingles.** If you receive electric shocks or tingles from an appliance, turn it off, unplug it, do not use it, and discard it or get it checked out immediately.

**If a switch or plug plate is warm to the touch or discolored, don't use it.** Have it—and your entire home's electric system—checked out by a qualified electrician and make necessary repairs. Flickering lights and buzzing sounds can also indicate issues that need to be addressed.

**Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors should be tested and the batteries replaced at least twice a year to make sure they are working properly.**

**Surge protectors should be used for all valuable electronics.** And if the holidays brought additional computers, TVs and other electrical devices into your home, be sure not to overload electrical circuits.

**If winter storms bring down power lines, stay far away from them and notify Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative immediately.** Keep others away until help arrives.

**Home fires are far more common in winter months due to drier air and other conditions.** Exercise extra caution around anything flammable and make sure you have appropriate working fire extinguishers in the kitchen, garage and other areas where fire risk is higher. You should also have an escape plan for your family in the event of a fire.



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# Member Donations Making a Difference

THE TVEC CHARITABLE FOUNDATION recently awarded four grants totaling \$16,000. Recipients of the grants include:



**Mabank Area Good Samaritans**  
\$5,000



**Kaufman Christian Help Center, 5,000**



**The Share Center - Terrell**  
\$2,000



**Manna Food Bank**  
\$4,000

Founded in 2013, the TVEC Charitable Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization. The foundation was created to serve the community and help improve the quality of life for residents in our service area. **The foundation is funded entirely by donations from TVEC members who participate in Operation Round Up.** For more information, please call 1-800-766-9576 or visit [tvec.net](http://tvec.net).

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# Four Walls and the Truth

How do we define our possessions, and what do they say about us?

BY RHONDA REINHART

IN THE FALL OF 1998, LYLE LOVETT released a double album of cover songs written by fellow Texas musicians. The title track, Guy Clark's *Step Inside This House*, was one of my favorites, and I played it on repeat. In the song, Clark's narrator leads a woman—a love interest, presumably—through his house, pointing out treasures and giving brief but poignant explanations of how he acquired each one.

I listened to the song so many times that autumn that I had the man's house memorized, and even though I'd heard the tune a hundred times, I felt the same sting each time Lovett sang about the painting a down-on-his-luck friend had given the homeowner. "It doesn't look like much, I guess/But it's all that's left of him" still gets me.

Back then, I had just graduated from journalism school at Texas A&M University—Lovett's alma mater—and I had no idea where my career would take me. As it turns out, many years later, I would become an editor for one shelter magazine, then another, then a freelance writer focusing on interior design and architecture.

Maybe all those spins of *Step Inside This House* were job training because, somehow, I now make a living listening as people tell me stories about the treasures in their homes. While it's true that no homeowner has given me a quote as forthcoming as the one Clark wrote about a book of poems a young woman gave our dear narrator—"It's funny how I love that book/And I never loved that girl"—the stories I hear often stick with me.

From artworks purchased on trips to far-flung locales to heirloom furnishings passed down through generations, the items that populate people's homes are windows into their personalities, values and histories. They're so personal and intimate that I'm honestly surprised every time someone opens the door to me (a stranger with a tape recorder) and proceeds to release the secrets of his or her belongings.

As die-hard Aggies like to say, "From the outside looking in, you can't understand it." That's true of Texas A&M culture, but it's also true of houses. On the outside, they're a mystery, but once inside those four walls, little—and sometimes big—truths are revealed.

The minimalists among us may argue that material things are a distraction and will never lead to happiness, but I'm not sure about that. When a homeowner on Long Island told me about the 12-foot-long cabinet she dragged out of a barn in pieces, painstakingly refinished and placed in her kitchen, her voice filled with pride. From that short aside, I could tell that the cabinet, once a fixture in a local ice cream parlor, never failed to spark joy.

And when a homeowner in Dallas showed me a series of black-and-white photos she had framed and displayed prominently in her family room, it was clear she cherished each and every one. The images depicted work her grandfather had done for NASA, where he was employed as an engineer. When he retired, NASA gave him the photos, and they were handed down to his granddaughter.





Looking around my house, I realize it's the stacks of books that reveal the most about me. Most of my shelves teem with bulky volumes on architecture and interior design—they're tools of the trade, sure, but they're also glimpses into how other people live. On other shelves in the house, you can trace my reading preferences from elementary school.

Over the years, there was a memoir phase, a true crime phase and a thriller phase. There was also a Stephen King phase that started around 1988 and hasn't ended yet. Some books I keep around for sentimental reasons, such as my 1958 set of Collier's *The Junior Classics*. The 10-volume collection belonged to my mother when she was a girl, and she passed

it on to me. With titles such as *Fairy Tales and Fables*, *Myths and Legends*, and *Stories of Wonder and Magic*, the rainbow-colored hardcovers enthralled this small-town kid whose books were windows to worlds far beyond the city limits of Livingston, Texas. From my most tattered paperback to my heaviest coffee-table tome—and especially that set of children's stories—these books are among my most prized possessions.

When I scan the shelves, I think of Lovett's voice and Clark's words: "I'll show you all the things that I own / My treasures, you might say / It couldn't be more than 10 dollars' worth / That brighten up my day."

Writer **Rhonda Reinhart** covers interior design and architecture.

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# Ghost Dogs of Orozimbo

The tale of a trio of dogs ‘guarding’ Santa Anna continues long past turning point in history

BY MARTHA DEERINGER

OROZIMBO PLANTATION, A SPRAWLING cotton farm in west central Brazoria County, was home to Dr. James Aeneas Phelps and his wife, who both arrived in Texas with Stephen F. Austin’s original colonists in 1822. In 1836, their mansion would serve as a prison for Antonio López de Santa Anna.

Phelps had served as a surgeon for the Texian Army at San Jacinto and observed the capture of Santa Anna, whose ruthless executions of Texans at the Alamo and Goliad prompted demands for the Mexican general’s death. But Sam Houston recognized that the notorious prisoner was worth more to Texas alive, so Santa Anna was taken to Orozimbo, where Phelps managed his care after an attempted suicide.

One wintry night, an officer of the Mexican military organized a group of riders to free Santa Anna. Everyone at the plantation was asleep, except the general, who had ostensibly received word of the plan. Just before dawn, as the riders approached the plantation, a frantic baying of hounds disrupted the early morning silence and roused the guards. The riders withdrew, abandoning the rescue.

But Orozimbo Plantation kept no dogs, and for miles around, there were no neighbors who had dogs. A servant had purportedly seen the creatures and described them as strange, wild-looking animals with frightening eyes. There were three of them, all a dingy white. Two had shaggy coats and one appeared hairless.

Months later, a passing traveler was



told the description of the canines and claimed that the dogs had been the much-loved companions of a man who lived near Washington-on-the-Brazos. When the dogs’ owner left to join the fight for independence, his dogs refused to eat or return to the house. When the animals disappeared, neighbors told the story that they were looking for their master, who had been killed at Goliad.

For the next decade, settlers occasionally spotted the dogs in the forest near Orozimbo. Except for the night of Santa Anna’s attempted escape, they were always silent. The legend of the ghost dogs and their desperate search for their master added an aura of mystery to the story of Santa Anna’s imprisonment.

Residents of West Columbia caught

glimpses of the dogs as they wandered silently in the woods near Orozimbo. Three ghostly dogs fitting the same description reportedly were seen by a man and his wife as recently as 1974 near the cemetery and ancient oak tree that are the last remnants of the fabled plantation.

Nearly 150 years after the event, Catherine Munson Foster wrote of the canine apparitions in the spring 1984 edition of *Texas Heritage* magazine. “There are those who believe, or say they believe, that the ghost dogs of Orozimbo are the same animals still standing guard, alert to give the alarm should the specter of a long-dead Santa Anna make another attempt to escape.”

Read more of Martha Deeringer’s writing at [marthadeeringer.com](http://marthadeeringer.com).

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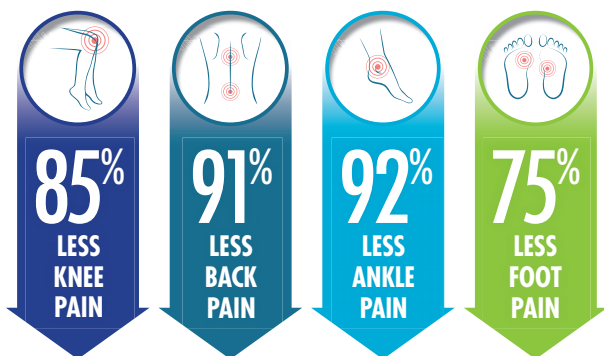
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# New Year's Resolution

A NEW YEAR BRINGS PROMISES FROM most of our lips to make healthier choices. Food is an obvious place to start, and it can be an easy place, too, if you make just a few small changes. One of those can be simply adding more fresh vegetables to every meal.

Megan Myers, a Texas foodie who will take over as *Texas Co-op Power* food editor next month, writes Stetted (stetted.com), a food blog. "I focus on fresh ingredients and uncomplicated flavors, with spins that keep mealtime interesting," Myers says. "Real food is possible, even for busy moms like me."

For her, learning to cook healthier meals "was the evolution of figuring out the best flavors from the ingredients we have here in Texas. I also want to make sure my kids are experiencing a wide range of foods, and cooking healthier at home helps balance out those post-soccer and party meals."

Myers' Roasted Sweet Potato Salad With Chickpeas and Kale, served warm, makes a light, healthy meal or a flavorful side for a lean protein. Her Spicy Glazed Brussels Sprouts are another great way to add more fresh winter vegetables to your diet.

SHANNON OELRICH, FOOD EDITOR

## Roasted Sweet Potato Salad With Chickpeas and Kale

- 2 medium sweet potatoes, diced
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon olive oil, divided use
- ¼ teaspoon salt, divided use
- ⅛ teaspoon paprika
- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas
- 2 cups packed torn kale
- 2 tablespoons minced red onion
- 2 teaspoons Champagne vinegar or white wine vinegar

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



# Recipes

## New Year's Resolutions



### THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

HALEY FEUERBACHER | COSERV

Spiralized noodles have been all the rage lately. If you haven't tried them, you can use this month's winning recipe as a great starting point. If you already use them, you can add this recipe to your repertoire. Easy and quick, this veggie noodle bowl is great for a healthy weeknight meal and especially satisfying when topped with your choice of protein.

### Quick & Healthy Garlic-Parmesan Veggie Noodle Bowl

- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided use
- 1 white onion, diced
- 2 packages (10.7 ounces each) spiralized butternut squash noodles
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-2 teaspoons salt, divided use
- 1½-2 cups chopped kale
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1. In an extra-large nonstick pan or wok, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Cook the diced onion in oil until it starts to brown.
2. Add noodles, garlic, ½ teaspoon salt

and remainder of olive oil. Cook, stirring occasionally, for approximately 6 minutes or until noodles are thoroughly cooked. The texture should be soft with some crispy browned noodles.

3. In the last 2-3 minutes of cooking, add kale, basil and another ½ teaspoon salt, stirring thoroughly for even cooking. Taste for seasoning and add more salt if desired.

4. Once the noodles are thoroughly sautéed, remove pan from heat and stir in Parmesan.

► Serves 4.

**COOK'S TIP** You can make your own butternut squash noodles by using a spiralizer.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon coarse mustard
- 1 teaspoon honey
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Toss diced sweet potatoes in 1 teaspoon olive oil, then spread on a rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle with ⅛ teaspoon salt and paprika. Roast 18 minutes, stirring halfway through.
3. Meanwhile, pour chickpeas into a colander over the sink and let drain. Put the kale into a large bowl and set aside.
4. In a small saucepan, combine red onion, vinegar, lemon juice, mustard, honey, black pepper and remaining ⅛ teaspoon salt, and heat over low. Once warmed, slowly whisk in remaining olive oil until dressing is emulsified. Keep over very low heat until potatoes are done.
5. Pour cooked potatoes on top of kale, then add drained chickpeas. Whisk dressing one more time, then pour over the chickpeas.
6. Stir salad to coat evenly, taking care to not mash the potatoes. Serve once the kale has softened a bit. ► Serves 2-4.

### Spicy Glazed Brussels Sprouts

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons gochujang (red chile paste)
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Trim ends from Brussels sprouts and halve or quarter.
  2. Toss Brussels sprouts with olive oil and spread on a baking sheet. Roast 20 minutes, stirring halfway through.
  3. In a small bowl, whisk together gochujang, honey and soy sauce. Pour over roasted sprouts and stir to coat. Return pan to the oven 5 more minutes, until sauce is sticky and caramelized.
- Serves 4.

**COOK'S TIP** You can find gochujang in the Asian foods section of most grocery stores, and it can be easily ordered online.

**IF YOUR RECIPE IS FEATURED,  
YOU'LL WIN A TCP APRON!**

### \$100 Recipe Contest

June's recipe contest topic is **Texas Wine Harvest**. Send us your best pairings or dishes cooked with wine. The deadline is **January 10**.

**ENTER ONLINE** at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://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.




## My Favorite Carrot Soup

MOIRA CAHILL | CENTRAL TEXAS EC

- 3-4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 pounds carrots, peeled and chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 7 cups chicken or vegetable stock, divided use
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Greek yogurt (optional)

1. Heat olive oil in a stockpot over medium heat. Add onion and cook until soft. Add carrots and cook another 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 minute.
2. Add 6 cups of stock and the thyme, salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes or until carrots are soft.
3. Purée the soup in a blender. Add additional stock for desired consistency. Simmer an additional 30 minutes. Serve hot with a dollop of Greek yogurt.

► Serves 8-10.



### Top Tips for a Healthy New Year

**Resolve to make small changes**, which are easier to maintain than sweeping changes. For example, if you're not already a runner, don't sign up for a marathon, but do resolve to go for a walk three times a week.

**It's easier to add things** than take them away. Want to make your diet healthier? Resolve to have at least two types of vegetables at lunch and dinner.

**Reward yourself for progress.** If you get to the end of January and have kept

your resolution 90% of the time, make your reward something related to it. Healthier diet? Get yourself a cool new piece of cooking equipment. Went on more walks? Buy new athletic shoes.

**Don't beat yourself up if you stumble.** If you break your resolution, try to start it again as soon as you can. If you slip up on a weekend, start again on Monday. If your blunder is midweek, use the weekend as your reset.

SHANNON OELRICH

## TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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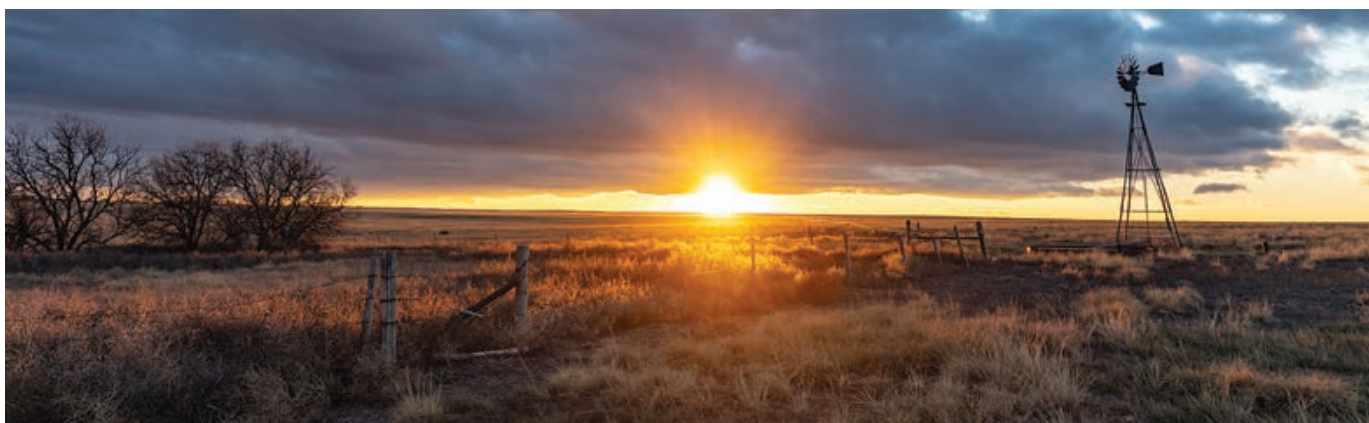
# Fences

WHETHER YOU'RE BUSY SWINGING for the fences or mending them, one thing's for sure—the grass is greener on the Texas side. **GRACE FULTZ**

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

◀ **JESSIKA MORRIS**, Navasota Valley EC: "This photo was captured while my daughter Dixie was leaning over a barbed wire fence so that she could get to know one of the newest horses on the farm."

▼ **TRAVIS LACOSS**, Peder-nales EC: The Rita Blanca National Grasslands in the Panhandle.



▼ **ASHLEY ZIMMERMAN**, Trinity Valley EC: "I go for many walks on our property and I always take my camera. This bobcat came out to pose for me one lucky afternoon."

▶ **TERRI CARTER**, Rita Blanca EC: "The sunrise colors are really multiplied by the ice that coated this fence. It melted some and slid down a bit, then it froze again."



◀ **RICK ROBERSON**, United Cooperative Services: "The setting summer sun in Big Bend casts its warm glow on this old gate that, in spite of some hard knocks, is still getting the job done."

## UPCOMING CONTESTS

MAY	FAIRS AND CARNIVALS	DUE JANUARY 10
JUNE	STATE PARKS	DUE FEBRUARY 10
JULY	EXPLORATION	DUE MARCH 10

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





## Pick of the Month

### Hill Country Gem & Mineral Show

**Fredericksburg** January 18-19  
(325) 248-1067, fredericksburgrockhounds.org

This annual show by the Fredericksburg Rockhounds, at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park, features dealers, demonstrations, rock cutting and activities for children. The Rockhounds' monthly meetings include rock swaps and field trips for rock hunting and to museums.

## January

**11** **Kerrville** Out of This World: Music of the Cosmos, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

**San Angelo** Family Day Mystery at the Museum, (325) 653-3333, samfa.org

## 16

**Corsicana** Reflections of Patsy Cline, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

**Tyler** An Evening With Rita Moreno, Legend of Stage and Screen; (903) 566-7424; cowancenter.org

## 17

**Lubbock** [17-18] Symphony Masterworks Series: Grieg's Beloved Piano Concerto, (806) 762-1688, visitlubbock.org

## 18

**Brenham** Uptown Swirl in Downtown Brenham, (979) 337-7582, downtownbrenham.com

**Luckenbach** Blues Festival, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

**Surfside Beach Dunes Day**, (979) 864-1152, brazosport.org

## 21

**Lufkin** Ladysmith Black Mambazo, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

## 23

**Richardson** Todd Mosby and the New Horizons Ensemble, (972) 744-4650, eisemanncenter.com



January 24-25  
Jefferson  
Quilt Show

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24

**Marshall** Farewell Angelina,  
(903) 934-7992, memorialcityhall.com

**Jefferson** [24-25] Quilt Show,  
(903) 935-2235, jeffersonquiltshow.com

**New Braunfels** [24-25] Patty Griffin,  
(830) 606-1281, gruenehall.thundertix.com

25

**Bandera** Grace Lutheran Church  
Wild Game Dinner, (830) 796-3091,  
gracebandera.weebly.com

**Edna** Brackenridge Winter Carnival  
and Snow Day, (361) 782-5456,  
brackenridgepark.com

**Fredericksburg** Hill Country Indian  
Artifact Show, (830) 626-5561,  
hillcountryindianartifacts.com

**Ozona** Permian Basin Square and  
Round Dance Association Winterfest,  
(432) 685-3266, squaredancetx.com

30

**Boerne** Voctave, (830) 331-9079,  
boerneperformingarts.com

**Galveston** *We the People*, 1-800-821-1894,  
thegrand.com



January 25  
Edna  
Brackenridge Winter  
Carnival and Snow Day

31

**Canton** [31-Feb. 2] Battle on the Mountain,  
(318) 455-4489, facebook.com/9thtexas canton

## February

1

**Crockett** Asleep at the Wheel,  
(936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

**San Antonio** Asian Festival,  
(210) 458-2224, texancultures.com

4

**College Station** Steep Canyon Rangers,  
(979) 845-1234, mscopas.org

5

**Laredo** [5-8] Birding Festival,  
(956) 718-1063, laredobirdingfestival.org

7

**Grand Prairie** [7-9] *Trolls Live!*,  
(972) 854-5050, theatregp.com

**Ennis** [7-8, 14-15, 21-23] *Forever*,  
(972) 878-5126, theaterocks.com

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# Must See Sequel

Hill Country Arts Foundation makes Ingram's Stonehenge II accessible

I'VE FOUND THAT THE SEQUEL IS RARELY better than the original. Movies like *Jaws: The Revenge* support this conclusion. But sometimes a second act surpasses the first, and this happened when two Texans used a truckload of plaster to construct Stonehenge II, a monument that's better than the original because it's here in Texas.

On a sweltering summer day, I tripped out to the Texas Hill Country, 5 miles west of Kerrville, to visit Ingram. Most visitors come to splash in the Guadalupe River or to relax on its cypress-lined banks. But I was on a mission to see a Texas version of one of the world's iconic stone structures.

The original Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, England, was built around 2500 B.C. It fascinates Americans, and there are two dozen Stonehenge replicas in the United States. I wanted to know what separates Stonehenge II from the rest.

I followed the Guadalupe and arrived at the Hill Country Arts Foundation. There, in a crunchy field of dry grass, stood 30 interlocking arches encircling five free-standing ones. All were between 8 and 12 feet tall.

My first question was "Why in the world is this here?" The answer begins with Al Shepperd, who received a large limestone slab from his buddy Doug Hill. Rather than use the stone as landscaping, Shepperd dug a hole and stood the slab upright as a monolith. Every day



**Chet checks out Stonehenge II in Ingram.**

he looked at it and thought, "Wow, that looks like Stonehenge." Hill agreed, and soon they constructed the first arch out of plaster and chicken wire. It looked so good that they didn't want to stop. Within a few years, the men had built Stonehenge II, and visitors came from all over the world. The hit TV show *Friday Night Lights* even filmed an episode on-site.

Standing near the arches, I was amazed by how much work went into building these incredible structures. Even though it's only 90% as wide as the original Stonehenge and 60% as tall, all the arches are intact. And unlike the original Stonehenge, there are no barriers restricting access. Anyone can walk among the behemoth "stones" and imagine the real Stonehenge when its builders established it millennia ago.

Stonehenge II was originally constructed on Shepperd's property in Hunt. After his death, the family decided to sell the property and feared that the new owners might not appreciate this quirky art.

The Hill Country Arts Foundation purchased the entire installation and moved it to its present location on the river. To make the site even more curious, it also moved Shepperd's replicas of the Easter Island stone heads, which now stand like guardians protecting Stonehenge II.

Stonehenge I and II remain shrouded in mystery. With England's Stonehenge, we wonder how and why the ancient people built it. With Ingram's Stonehenge II, we know the how but could still spend hours pondering why a couple of buddies would dedicate endless hours toward this project.

It may seem complicated, but for those of us who've spent enough time in Texas, we know the reason. It's simply the Texas heat, which can make our brains do some mighty crazy things. And that's enough explanation for me.

**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 Stonehenge II in Ingram.



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