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RUNNING LIST

PORT MANSFIELD'S
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January 2023



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A Running List

Jon Walk can't help himself. He runs—all over the state—and keeps lists of his expansive exploits.

*By Carlton Stowers
Illustration by John Kachik*

10 Stable Futures

Texas-based organizations help find homes for needy steeds of different stripes.

*By Margaret Buranen
Photos by Dave Shafer*

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a mustang in her care.
Photo by Dave Shafer

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a mile in every Texas county.
Illustration by John Kachik

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Startling Fact

LEAVE YOUR FRIENDS star-struck with your smarts.

Polaris, the North Star, sits directly above the North Pole along Earth's rotational axis. That's the imaginary line that extends through the planet and out of the North and South poles.

But here's the dazzling part: Polaris hasn't always been the North Star. Because Earth wobbles, that rotational axis sometimes points to a different star. That's why, about 14,000 years ago, Vega was the North Star. And it will be again in about 12,000 years.



“Keep your eyes on the stars but remember to keep your feet on the ground.”

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT



Turning Your Stomach?

Michigan State University researchers say a newly developed material for making wind turbines could later be recycled into objects ranging from car parts to gummy bears.

TCP Contests and More

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FINISH THIS SENTENCE THE GREATEST TEXAN EVER IS ...

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

Below are some of the responses to our November prompt: **It's been so long since I ...**

Listened to the red wolves howl in answer to a sawmill steam whistle.

WAYMON VEST
HOUSTON COUNTY EC
CROCKETT

Caught fireflies in a jar.

WANDA LOVELACE
TRI-COUNTY EC
WEATHERFORD

Hopped across the sun-warmed, deep furrows of a freshly plowed cotton field.

DIANN STOVALL
CECA
ZEPHYR

Dialed a rotary telephone.

REBECCA VANCE
WOOD COUNTY EC
MINEOLA

Drank from a garden hose.

DUWAYNE ALBRECHT
COSERV
MCKINNEY

Visit our website to see more responses.



It Sounded Like a ...

ABILENE HAS A NEW sculpture little more than a buffalo chip's toss away from the eight giant steel bison twisting in the wind 35 feet above Frontier Texas. Singing Ringing Tree, above, installed in July 2022, takes advantage of the West Texas town's bluster, turning 27 tons of pipes into giant flutes that create music audible up to 400 feet away, depending on the prevailing gusts.

The 22-foot-tall stack of pipes is arranged in a way that reminds knowing residents of a tornado and takes advantage of the winds that blow through town at an average of 12 mph.

Guess what?

January 4
is National
Trivia Day.



CHANELLE NIBBELINK

The Arable Twos

“We should be grateful for every 2-year-old out there who loves the land like he does. Thank you, farmers. We don’t say that enough.”

BARBARA MACHA
COSERV
HIGHLAND VILLAGE

Newcomer Nuance?

I’ve noticed a pattern developing of a decrease in articles featuring long-established country folk and an increase in showcasing new arrivals to the state [Connecting With the Land, September 2022].

From the content that’s been featured over the past few years, I can only deduce that our co-op magazine seems to be trying to placate readers with an appetite for citified country life.

Buzz Payne
Wood County EC
Big Sandy

I love her [Watch Grandma Cook, November 2022]. I am addicted to her on TikTok.

KRISTIN SPRINKLE
VIA FACEBOOK

Birds of a Feather

I am a transplanted Minnesotan from the rival Turkey capital, Worthington [Not for the Birds, October 2022]. The article brought me back to the September “turkey days” of my youth. Thank you for highlighting the friendly atmosphere and camaraderie of the festivals.

Marcia Opsata-Sparks
Pedernales EC
Dripping Springs

Summer Pursuit

I was a summer employee for a South Texas power company [Reading Between the Lines, October 2022]. Once a month we had to read meters. One time a smart dog hit his gate, the gate opened, and he escaped. I ran for blocks to capture the dog and return it to its yard.

Ken Steed
Pedernales EC
Georgetown

I have inherited an interest in a farm that belonged to our parents and grandparents. At age 70, I suddenly became the caretaker of the houses and land—as your writer said, a blessing and a curse. I’ve loved learning how to care for it, but I worry who will do this after me.

Patricia Ricks
Fayette EC
Round Top



COURTESY: CUERO TURKEYFEST

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

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

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A Jon Walk can't help himself. He runs—all over the state—and keeps lists of his expansive exploits.

Running List

BY CARLTON STOWERS

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

WHEN JON WALK stared down at the scale that morning in 2003 and saw that his weight had gone several pounds beyond the 300 mark, he determined that it was hardly a good look for someone in the health care consulting business. He vowed to make changes and decided to start running.

Early on, he could jog only a few hundred yards through his neighborhood in Spring, north of Houston, before stopping to catch his breath and massage aching calves.

That was long before he finished a marathon in Austin in a personal best time of four hours and 48 minutes; before he had run the grueling 26-mile race 53 times in 48 states; before he set a goal of running at least 1 mile in every county in Texas; and before he had run the streets and back roads of 375 towns and cities across the nation.

And before the 55-year-old native Pennsylvanian, now a well-conditioned 205 pounds, became a list-making wanderer in pursuit of better health and a unique hobby he can't fully explain.

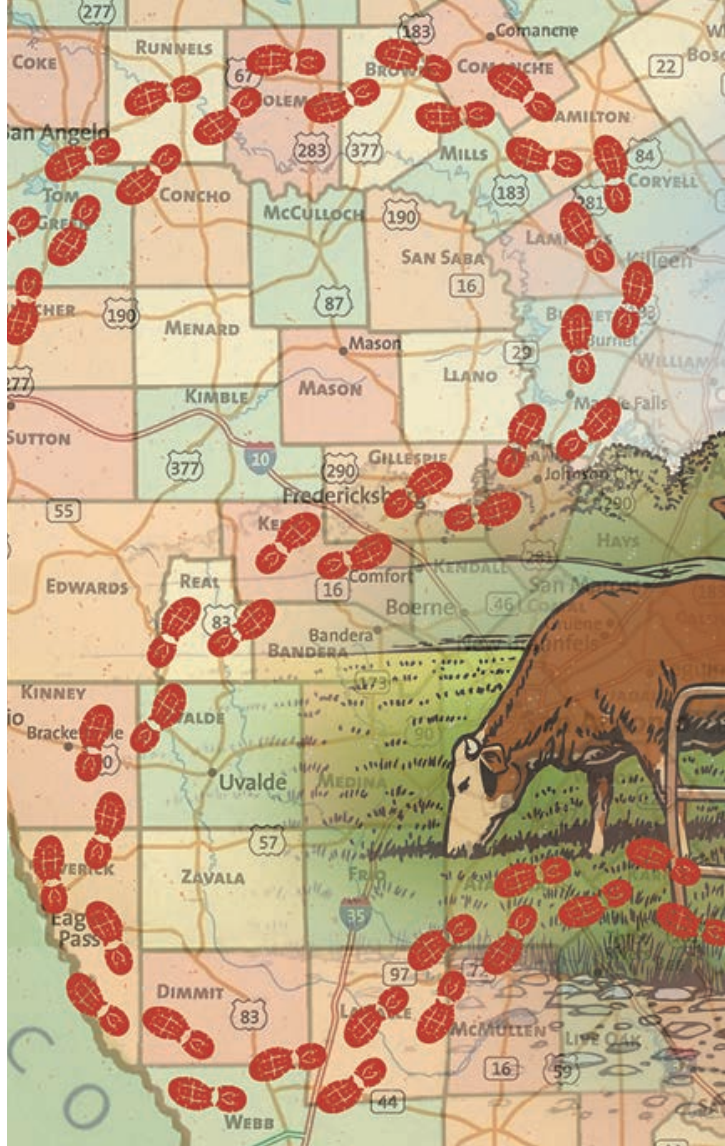
Jon Walk makes lists, many tied to his newfound love for running.

He offers no psychobabble explanation, no Zen-like reasoning. "It just keeps me active and motivated," he says. "I like to think of it as a healthy addiction."

Walk's inspiration came from an old *Runner's World* magazine article about a man who had run at least a mile in every city and township in the state of Massachusetts. Walk borrowed the idea and made all 254 Texas counties his goal. He's getting there, having run in 196 thus far.

"When I'm planning my weekend trips," says the empty-nest parent, "I make an effort to get to as many counties as possible."

Recently he tied his personal record when he flew to Amarillo, rented a car and visited seven Panhandle county seats in a day. He'd achieved the same number in East Texas a year earlier. "I love seeing the architecture of some of the older courthouses, reading the historical markers and meeting new people," he says. Once his downtown sightseeing and local history lessons are recorded in his notebook, he goes on a 15-minute run to assure that he's run at least a mile.



Then it's back in the car and off to the next county.

He's run in triple-digit heat and below-freezing temperatures, pouring rain and West Texas dust storms. Early on, he learned to precheck his route for loose and unfriendly dogs.

On an early evening run in Archer City, a local sheriff's deputy watched him closely as he ran past native son Larry McMurtry's famed bookstore. After flying into the Midland-Odessa airport, he recalls snow and ice making it difficult to keep his rental car on the road.

"The unexpected," he says, "is part of the fun."

Whenever possible, he likes to visit a new locale when an organized race has been scheduled. To date, he has competed in races—10Ks, half-marathons and marathons—in 96 counties. "To do so isn't always possible," he points out. "For instance, Loving County out in West Texas doesn't have but 34 people, so it's a little unreasonable to expect them to organize any kind of race. So, when I went there, I picked a route on a caliche road and waved at the cows as I ran by."

Then, there's the other quests.

Though his own athletic career ended with Little League baseball back in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, Walk has enjoyed sports for as long as he can remember. He's got an impressive collection of back issues of *Sports Illustrated* and *Sporting News* to prove it.

A lifelong basketball fan, Walk has been in high school,



college and professional venues from El Paso to Amarillo to the Gulf Coast. With new arenas and gymnasiums opening regularly throughout the state, it's unrealistic to think he might achieve a onetime goal of visiting them all. "I just want to keep seeing as many places and things as I can until I run out of time or money," he says.

While Walk focuses his travel plans on basketball, baseball and football stadiums, he occasionally finds time for soccer and rugby venues and last spring watched his first Premier Lacrosse League game.

Walk's lists also spawn new lists.

He has stopped for coffee and a quick snack at 20 of the 34 Buc-ee's gas stations in Texas. He need only check his notebook to tell you every bowling alley and movie theater he's visited in the past few decades.

When the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted his travels, Walk turned to reading and, yes, began listing each book he finished. He focuses primarily on—what else?—nonfiction books about sports, recently finishing a biography of Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan.

In addition to his traveling pursuits, he annually serves as an announcer and official at numerous Houston-area running competitions, including The Woodlands Marathon and the Houston Half Marathon.

He's also a storehouse of historical knowledge about run-

ning. "If I need something like a list of everyone who has ever competed in all seven Texas Ironman competitions, I go straight to Jon," says Lance Phegley, a longtime friend and former editor of *Texas Runner and Triathlete* magazine. "In addition to his personal pursuits, he's constantly promoting others and their accomplishments. He's always alerting me to something noteworthy that a young runner in some small Texas town has done or some forgotten but fascinating moment in sports history."

Willie Fowlkes, director of The Woodlands Marathon who has known Walk for over a decade, agrees. "He's a great friend and asset to the local running community," he says. "His hobbies are just another cool part of his personality."

In the summer lull before high school and collegiate teams return to competition, Walk stays busy adding baseball stadiums to his list. On consecutive weekends, he traveled to Birmingham, Alabama, and Pearl, Mississippi, to visit minor-league ballparks. Meanwhile, he was checking schedules to find when and where the upcoming 7-on-7 football tournaments would be held.

As stadiums and gymnasiums begin filling with cheering fans in the fall and winter months, Walk's calendar quickly fills.

And he'll be off and running. ■

STABLE



FUTURES

Texas-based organizations help find homes for needy steeds of different stripes



AN EXCITED SALYE COLES and her husband were driving six hours from their West Texas ranch to a Bureau of Land Management facility in Oklahoma. They were headed north last May to pick up a bay mustang gelding, tag No. 3345—a wild horse that had been collected by the BLM as part of an emergency gathering of the animals in the Jackson Mountains of northern Nevada.

In a random drawing, the horse was assigned to Coles, who lives in Sterling City, northwest of San Angelo. She was to train him and make him fit for adoption.

When Coles saw the horse, she almost cried.

“He was at least 250 pounds underweight, so skinny that his ribs were showing,” she says. “His coat was dull, and his mane was matted in knots.”

The listless mustang’s demeanor worried her even more. “He was so dejected, so withdrawn. He didn’t look at me or show interest in anything.”

Droughts in the 10 Western states where mustangs roam free have caused a shortage of not just water but also the grass that sustains them. As conditions worsen, the BLM gathers horses to be cared for and eventually adopted.

Most of these wild animals have been under the protection of the federal agency since 1971. More than 20,000 wild horses have been adopted since then, but 50,000 under BLM protection still need homes.

The Mustang Heritage Foundation, based in Round Rock, has partnered with the BLM since 2006 to train and home thousands of these animals. The nonprofit works with horse trainers like Coles in 40 states.



ABOVE It took 10 days before Joshua, once a wild mustang, allowed Salye Coles to touch his neck. RIGHT Coles says she almost cried when she first saw the haggard horse.



Coles, a retired schoolteacher, is an experienced horse-woman. She trail rides on her two other mustangs and two quarter horses. Still she wondered if she could give the poor mustang in Oklahoma all the care and training he needed. She had only 100 days to get him ready for a Fort Worth adoption event in August.

After seeing its grim condition, Glenn Coles asked his wife if she still wanted to take the horse home.

Coles had prayed that she would get the right mustang for her. So she told her husband yes, that she felt at peace with the decision.

On their drive home, Ann Souders of the MHF called. She had already found an adopter: Dale Long wanted him as an equine therapy horse at his Western Cross Ranch in Azle.

A biblical name for the horse seemed appropriate to both women. When Souders suggested Joshua, Coles knew that was the right name. The mustang would have a battle to overcome his poor physical and mental state.

Back home, Coles started earning Joshua's trust. It took 10 days before he allowed her to touch his neck. Another week before she could untie the BLM tag around his neck.

Still more days until he let her put on his halter.

Gradually Joshua started nickering to Coles, indicating he was glad to see her. In the third week of July, she was finally able to saddle and ride him.

What does it mean to bond with a horse that once ran wild and free? Salye Coles says that she most enjoys gaining a mustang's trust. "To watch them willingly give up that wildness, to trust you, is amazing," she says.

"A mustang is a clean slate, no pretenses," Coles says. "They're the most honest animals I've ever been around. They're smart, and they analyze every single thing."

What does it mean to bond with a horse that once ran wild and free? Coles says that she most enjoys gaining a mustang's trust. "To watch them willingly give up that wildness, to trust you, is amazing," she says.

When people ask how she can bear to give up this mustang she has nursed back to health and grown to love, Coles tells them she knows Joshua is going to a wonderful home.

"His purpose is to help people who are struggling and fighting back," she says. "He has had to fight a battle too."



SEE FOR YOURSELF

The next **Roses to Ribbons** adoption event will be held in March at Sam Houston Race Park in Houston. The Mustang Heritage Foundation's **Mustang Magic** showcase is January 19–21, during the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo.

OPPOSITE Coles and Joshua at the Extreme Mustang Makeover event in Fort Worth. LEFT Tracy Sheffield and Eliot, a former racehorse, have found success in dressage competitions.

O Beyond the Finish Line

F COURSE, mustangs aren't the only horses in need of homes.

Tracy Sheffield's passion is thoroughbreds—her own and those that need help finding a life outside of racing.

Like the MHF, the Paddock Foundation, a charitable arm of the Texas Thoroughbred Association, advocates for these majestic animals. The nonprofit has placed hundreds of former and failed racehorses since March 2015—whether they raced for several years or didn't go to post even once, so-called off-track thoroughbreds.

"Since our first event, we have helped almost 200 thoroughbreds find new homes," says Sheffield, the Paddock Foundation's president who lives in Wimberley, southwest of Austin.

Some thoroughbreds, even if they descend from top racing bloodlines, don't do well in racing. Others have successful track careers cut short by injury. If the injury takes months to heal, the owner may decide it makes more financial sense to move the horse to a new owner and career.

To help new owners connect with these thoroughbreds, Sheffield, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member who works as a business consultant for veterinary practices,

established horse fairs called **Roses to Ribbons**. The roses represent racing, like those awarded at the Kentucky Derby, and the ribbons represent the awards given at shows and competitions—an analogy for these horses' transitions.

The events are held at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie, Sam Houston Race Park in Houston and Retama Park near San Antonio. Two weeks before a meet ends, Sheffield visits with trainers to get details and photos of horses that need new homes. "Through social media—I belong to over 20 horse groups online—I post photos of the available thoroughbreds," she says.

Each fair is held before the day's racing starts and always draws a crowd. Trainers bring their horses to the paddock and talk directly with prospective adopters. Each adoption fee is a private sale by the trainer to the new owner.

"The horses have been well cared for," she says. "The trainers are very picky about who gets to adopt their horses [and can] refuse any sale. I have heard them tell prospective adopters, 'This horse isn't right for you.'"

Sheffield herself has adopted two thoroughbreds. Eliot, a 12-year-old bay, showed no talent for racing. Now he competes in dressage and does trail riding. Sheffield says that Eliot isn't high-strung, as many thoroughbreds are.

"He is so trustworthy," she says. "He takes such good



care of his rider. I've taught people who have never ridden to ride on Eliot."

Gus is 7 years old, has a dark coat and is like a friendly, curious puppy. He was training well for racing when he fractured a sesamoid bone near one foot. The bone healed after surgery, but because of his height, the trainer decided not to risk a second injury from racing that might have left him unsound for other riding. Now he does trail riding.

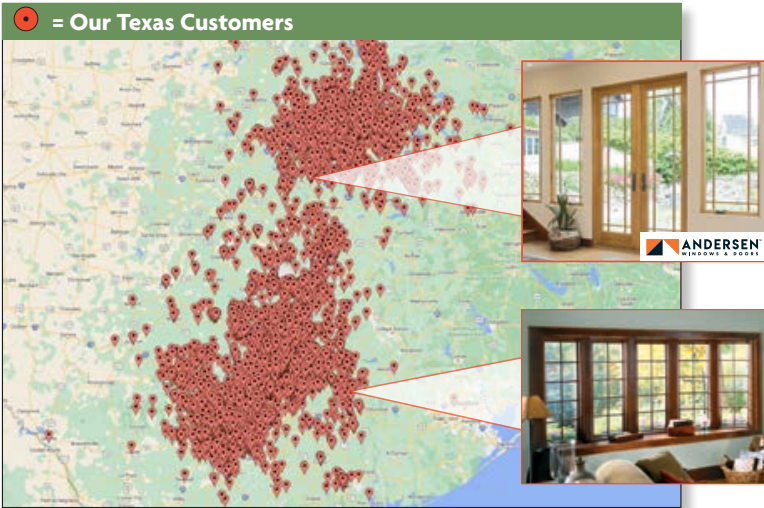
Thoroughbreds' speed makes them suitable for competitions. They do well in jumping, dressage and trail riding. Sheffield advises potential adopters to "think outside of the box with thoroughbreds.

"They can do well in the Western sports world, too, in Western dressage or barrel racing," she says. "The most sure-footed trail horse I've ever had was a thoroughbred." ■

ABOVE Eliot needed little coaxing from Sheffield to perform a bow.
RIGHT Watch Eliot and Sheffield interact in a video with this story online.



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30	8.87	7.69	9.93	8.80	14	11	18	16	58	26.66	21.79	50.12	36.39	89	64	166	118
36	9.05	7.98	10.56	9.43	15	13	22	19	59	29.20	23.39	55.24	39.45	98	70	185	130
37	9.17	8.21	11.07	9.74	15	13	23	20	60	32.20	25.28	61.29	43.07	109	77	207	144
38	9.31	8.48	11.69	10.13	16	14	24	22	61	35.24	28.02	67.54	47.42	120	86	228	159
39	9.46	8.78	12.35	10.53	17	15	26	23	62	38.92	31.35	75.14	52.70	134	97	253	177
40	9.63	9.12	13.13	11.01	18	16	28	25	63	43.48	35.46	84.52	59.23	150	111	284	199
41	10.00	9.27	13.66	11.60	20	17	30	26	64	48.24	39.77	94.35	66.07	168	125	317	223
42	10.44	9.46	14.30	12.31	21	18	33	29	65	53.88	44.87	105.96	74.15	188	142	356	251
43	10.99	9.68	15.09	13.19	24	20	37	31	66	59.39	48.85	116.50	84.59	208	150	392	270
44	11.57	9.92	15.92	14.11	26	22	41	34	67	66.07	53.68	129.30	97.26	232	161	437	293
45	12.25	10.20	16.90	15.20	28	24	46	38	68	74.33	59.65	145.11	112.92	262	174	491	322
46	12.56	10.67	17.87	15.91	30	26	49	40	69	82.98	65.91	161.68	129.33	293	188	548	352
47	12.94	11.23	19.04	16.76	32	27	53	44	70	93.20	73.30	181.25	148.72	330	204	615	387
48	13.40	11.93	20.50	17.82	35	29	58	48	71	102.45	82.71	204.38	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.89	12.66	22.02	18.92	37	31	63	52	72	113.68	94.13	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.46	13.52	23.82	20.23	41	34	69	57	73	127.55	108.24	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.33	14.15	25.81	21.48	44	36	77	62	74	142.08	123.01	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.38	14.92	28.22	22.99	49	39	86	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
53	17.69	15.86	31.20	24.87	54	42	97	74	76	200.03	174.92	418.29	276.67	785	530	1489	982
54	19.05	16.85	34.33	26.83	60	46	108	82	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	956	658	1797	1215
55	20.66	18.02	38.02	29.15	67	50	122	90	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1167	817	2179	1504
56	22.28	19.04	41.28	31.10	73	54	134	98	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1389	983	2578	1807
57	24.24	20.27	45.24	33.46	80	58	148	107	80	450.51	386.48	859.57	596.78	1651	1180	3050	2164

* \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 monthly rates are rounded up to the nearest dollar. Therefore, actual monthly rates at \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 may be slightly less.

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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER/
CEO

JEFF LANE

The Fight Against Outages Never Ends

NO MATTER HOW hard Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative employees work to keep the power flowing and your lights on, some outages are simply unavoidable. Lightning and ice storms that break poles and snap wires are familiar culprits, but animals and car wrecks and even aircraft can knock out the power when the sun is shining.

But your co-op takes many measures to minimize outages. Let me share with you a few of the ways we continually work to keep your lights on.

There are a staggering number of poles on our system. If you look closely at any of the poles, you'll notice small dated aluminum tags. These tags are installed when a section of line is professionally inspected. Often, two or three tags can be seen on the same pole, one for each inspection. The inspectors are trained experts who use visual, ultrasound and boring tools to find issues that can be fixed before they turn into problems.

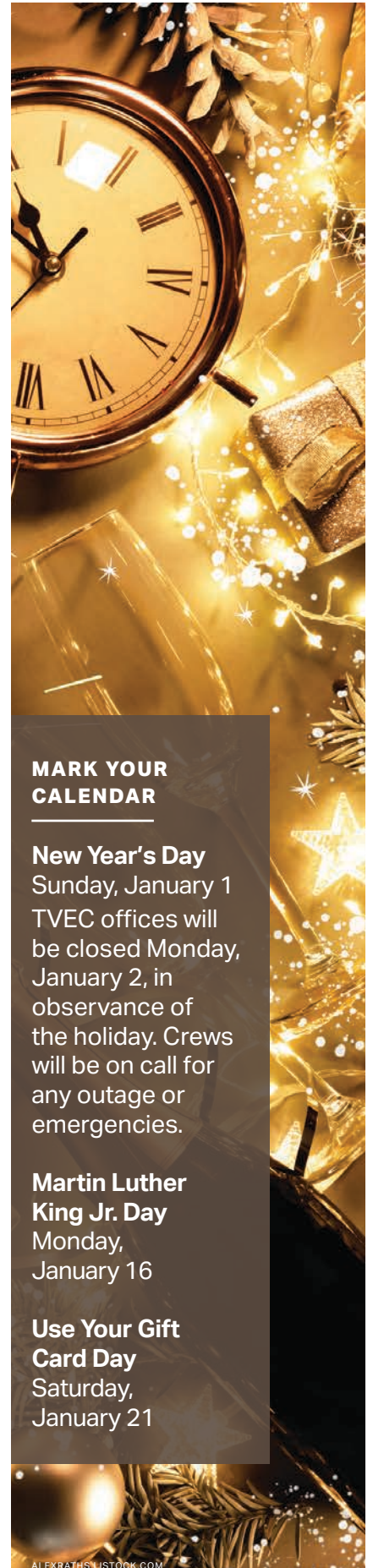
Monthly substation inspections are another measure we take to ensure normal operations. Along with visual inspections, readings are recorded to identify abnormalities such as oil leaks, discoloration and even bird nests. Workers check batteries and change filters, and oil samples are taken and analyzed annually in an effort to stay ahead of issues.

Infrared technology is relatively new to the utility industry, but it has become an important tool. Infrared cameras—on the ground and lifted into the air by drones—detect elevated temperatures and can be used to conduct surveys of substations and regulator banks. This enables us to find hot spots and fix or clean them at minimal cost before they can cause an outage.

Right-of-way management is an ongoing battle. Tree branches that have grown—or blown—into a line can cause your lights to dim or blink, so tree trimming is a critical part of our right-of-way management efforts.

Our crews patrol the lines daily, whether on an outage call or on the way to build new lines. If we can find an issue and fix it before it causes an outage, that's a good day.

All these efforts and more are part of our everyday commitment to provide electricity that you can rely on to keep the lights on. ■



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

New Year's Day
Sunday, January 1
TVEC offices will be closed Monday, January 2, in observance of the holiday. Crews will be on call for any outage or emergencies.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday,
January 16

Use Your Gift Card Day
Saturday,
January 21

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ADOBESTOCK 73635611

New Disconnect/Reconnect Fee Goes Into Effect January 1

Cost-saving efforts continue as inflation and service costs rise

NO AS A NONPROFIT, MEMBER-OWNED CO-OP Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative is doing its best to stretch budget dollars and maintain a high level of service despite rising costs for all of the costs of doing business.

In doing so, we have also taken a look at the cost of different aspects of our service, and we are working to make sure that costs are fairly distributed to members.

Beginning this month, a new fee of \$20 will be charged to accounts for each disconnection or reconnection service. This will help us recover costs of employee time, recordkeeping and technology in performing these tasks.

This charge will affect new connections and disconnections, as well as nonpayment disconnects and reconnects.

In the case of new service installation or connection that requires a visit from a TVEC service technician, the existing \$50 fee will cover the costs of the trip and related expenses.

Other ways you can help:

We continue to ask members to consider helping lower the co-op's costs by reducing the use of credit cards for payment. Credit card processing fees added up to about \$750,000 in 2021 alone. Those costs are ultimately paid by TVEC members and reduce the amount of money that can be eventually returned to members as capital credits.

Bank draft and e-check payments are the most cost-effective, and are also the easiest to use. Through the myTVEC mobile app or TVEC Member Portal on tvec.net, you may pay quickly and easily with these methods and avoid the cost of mailing your bill as well.

The cost of postage also continues to rise. When members choose electronic billing is very helpful to reduce the co-ops printing and postage costs. ■

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative

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Toll-Free 1-800-766-9576
Web tvec.net

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24/7

Outage Hotline Numbers

For information and to report outages, please call us.

TOLL-FREE
1-800-967-9324

AUTOMATED ASSISTANCE
1-800-720-3584

ABOUT TRINITY VALLEY EC

TVEC operates in Anderson, Dallas, Henderson, Hunt, Kaufman and Van Zandt counties.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Kaufman District Headquarters

1800 E. Highway 243, Kaufman

Athens District Office

909 W. Larkin St., Athens

Cedar Creek District Office

1012 W. Main St., Ste. 102
Gun Barrel City

Wills Point District Office

582 N. Fourth St., Wills Point

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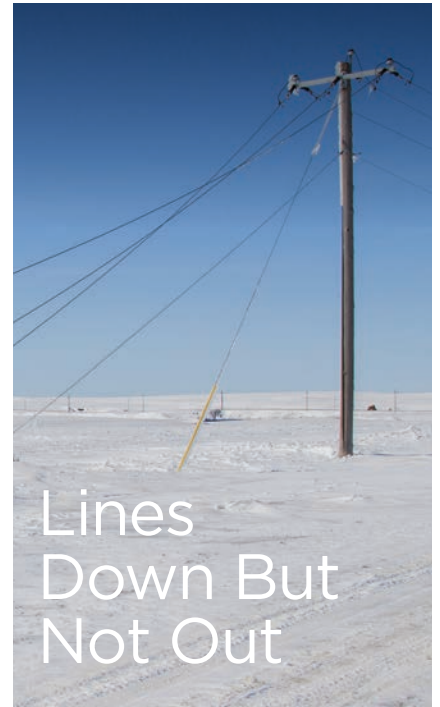
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Lines Down But Not Out

Car accidents and weather are the main causes of downed power lines. But even on the ground, lines can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or death. Here are some rules to follow:

If you see a downed power line, move away from the line and anything touching it.

The proper way to move away from the line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times.

If someone is in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch the person. Call 911 instead.

Don't try to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line.

Don't drive over downed power lines.

If you're in a car and it is in contact with a downed line, stay in the car and call 911.

Trinity Valley EC encourages you to always practice safety.

Still Burning Wood? Do It Safely

WOOD-BURNING FIREPLACES are notoriously energy inefficient and can send your home's heated air right up the chimney. If you choose to use yours, use it safely this winter.

Some tips:

Never burn your Christmas tree, its branches, or any of its needles or foliage in the fireplace. To do so would cause flashing and crackling and put you at high risk for a house fire.

Never burn garbage, charcoal or plastic in your fireplace. Any of those materials could throw off dangerous sparks and embers that could catch your chimney on fire.

Do not coax your flames by squirting charcoal lighter, camp fuel, gasoline or any other liquid accelerant onto the logs.

Before you light your first fire, have the chimney inspected and cleaned by a professional chimney sweep.

Ask the sweep to install a cap on the top of the chimney to keep out debris and wildlife.

Equip each level of your house with smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Test batteries twice a year and replace as needed.

Invest in a couple of fire extinguishers: one for the kitchen and one to keep near the fireplace. Be sure everyone in the house knows how to use them, and replace disposable extinguishers every 10 years.

Move furniture, rugs, draperies, books, newspapers and anything else that could catch fire at least 3 feet away from the fireplace.

Never store fuel near the fireplace or anywhere inside your home.

Keep children and pets away from the fireplace, and install a safety gate or fence around it if necessary.

Extinguish the fire before leaving the house, going to bed or leaving the room where your fireplace is located.

Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a metal container outside your home. ■

High School Students: Apply Now For Your Chance To Visit Washington, D.C.

2022 attendee encourages other students to apply for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

CAYUGA HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE Aidan Gonzalez attended the Government-in-Action Youth Tour in summer 2022. And he offers a strong endorsement of the experience for any student contemplating sending in an application, even if it took a bit of coaxing for him to apply.

“My mom was encouraging me and saying, ‘You should go, what if you never get to go? This is a once in a lifetime experience.’ And it truly was.”

The Youth Tour application can be found at tvec.net/youth-tour, and students have until January 16 to submit them. 60227950001

“To me the application process was pretty easy,” Gonzalez said. “I started pre-writing a little bit early once I figured out the topic. I thought it was overall pretty simple. It just takes a little bit of time but it’s very worth it in the end.”

Going to Washington, D.C., would be an exciting trip for anyone, but it’s even more exciting when you get to experience it with a new group of friends from all over the United States. Gonzalez noted that this trip is a great way for students to step out of their comfort zones and prepare to experience the world before adulthood.

“Before going, I was a little on edge because I had never flown before,” he said. “That was a good experience, too, and getting over my fear of flying.”

One of the biggest perks of the Youth Tour trip is an organized and efficient itinerary that gets participants in and out of the many museums, memorials and events that are available.

“This D.C. trip was easily a 10 out of 10. You get to go to all the monuments, museums, memorials, and hang out with friends,” Gonzalez said. “The amount of money and the value of it all that they will put forth for you to go on this trip is well worth it. You are getting to go to all these places for free and get into most of these places pretty fast. It’s overall quick, efficient, and valuable to yourself.”

Another privilege Gonzalez had was to be one of four Texas Youth Tour delegates to lay a wreath at the Tomb of The Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

“The reason I applied for the wreath laying ceremony is because I wanted to honor my great-great-uncle who fought in World

War II. I was able to witness this beautiful art and just live in history,” explained Gonzalez. “The wreath-laying ceremony was an honor to be a participant in.” ■



Aidan Gonzalez



Aidan Gonzalez (far right) with other youth tour students that participated in the official wreath laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. The group was also allowed to view the barracks of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier guards.

APPLY TODAY

Entry
Deadline

Jan. 16

[tvec.net/
youth-tour](http://tvec.net/youth-tour)






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Energy-Saving Resolutions That Save Money


WITH THE FRESH start that the new year brings, it's a good time to put energy-saving goals on your resolutions list. The responsible use of resources—including fuels and electricity—will benefit the environment and save you money.

Here are 10 tips to keep that resolution in 2023:

1. Seek ways to save money on fuel and increase your vehicle's fuel efficiency. That can be as simple as changing your driving habits, removing weight from the trunk and servicing your vehicle regularly.
2. Upgrade to a programmable thermostat and make sure it's properly set up. Turning back the thermostat overnight and when no one is home can save you 10% or more on heating and cooling costs.
3. Check for air leaks and apply caulk or weatherstripping to seal them. Even if you've done this recently, double-check to make certain no leaks were missed and see if any caulk or weatherstripping needs to be replaced.
4. Make sure the attic is properly insulated. Attics are one of the most important and often one of the easiest places in a house to insulate.
5. Seal and insulate the foundation walls of any unventilated crawl spaces and check for moisture and deterioration problems.
6. Landscape with water conservation in mind and triple-check the sprinkler system schedule to make certain there are no leaks and to optimize water coverage.
7. Keep the water heater at 120 degrees and install a water heater insulating blanket.
8. Ensure any appliances and electronics purchased throughout the year are Energy Star rated. They use less energy, save money and help protect the environment.
9. Kill phantom energy loads (aka "vampire power") by unplugging electronics and appliances when they're not in use.
10. Share how easy it is to save money and energy at home. ■



Energy Quiz



When was the Rural Electrification Act passed, making loans available for electric co-ops to use for building power lines?

- 1936
- 1930
- 1940
- 1938

Win **\$100!**

Send your answer and contact information to contest@tvec.coop or contact TVEC Member Services by January 31. One \$100 bill credit winner will be chosen from all correct replies. Look for the correct answer in a future *Texas Co-op Power*.

December Energy Quiz: Texas Cooperatives

COOPERATIVES COVER a large part of Texas' rural areas, as well as some rapidly growing urban areas. In total, 76 co-ops do the work of delivering the power to a large swath of the state.

Congratulations to the November Energy Quiz winner, Gary Gandy, of Terrell, who correctly answered our question about the distance of electrical distribution lines maintained by TVEC crews.

Look for the winner of this month's contest in the March edition of *Texas Co-op Power*.



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Put Electrical Safety at the Top of Your List

PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY from electric shocks, tripping hazards and house fires is easier than losing 20 pounds or quitting smoking. So make it New Year's resolution No. 1.

Here are 10 simple ways to keep that resolution:

1. Inspect your outlets. Loose-fitting plugs can surprise someone with a shock or start a fire. If your wall plate is broken, replace it so wires won't be exposed. And insert plastic safety caps into unused outlets if your family includes young children.

2. Make peace with plugs. If a plug doesn't comfortably fit into an outlet, don't force it. Try a different outlet. And never remove the grounding pin (third prong) so a three-prong plug will fit into a two-prong outlet.

3. Be careful with cords. They're not designed to last forever. Toss frayed or cracked cords. And never run cords under carpets or rugs, where continual wear and tear from foot traffic could damage them—exposing you to fire from overheated wires.

4. Pack up extension cords. They're fine for connecting strands of holiday lights together and helping decorations reach plugs during December. But come January, pack them up and store them. Extension cords are designed for temporary use.

5. Watch your wattage. The lightbulbs in your lamps and overhead fixtures should match the specifications on those fixtures. A bulb with wattage that's too high can overheat.

6. Find no fault. Ground-fault circuit interrupters are a must in every outlet in the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, garage and outdoors. If water could touch electricity, you need GFCIs on every outlet in the room.

7. Fuss with your breakers. If you don't know whether your breakers are the right size for the circuit they're protecting, call an electrician, who can make that assessment.

8. Adjust appliances. If a circuit trips every time you plug in your hair dryer or if your coffee maker has ever shocked you when you plugged it in, you either have a faulty appliance or an overloaded circuit. An electrician can identify and solve that problem.

9. Watch the wiring. Faulty electrical wires start many house fires. If you hear popping or sizzling sounds behind the walls or if light switches feel hot, do not use those fixtures or switches until a licensed electrician has replaced them.

10. Get what you need. Unless you live in a brand-new house, you're probably using more electricity than the builder intended. Call an electrician to determine whether your home needs more electrical capacity. ■

Win \$100 Just for Reading

Somewhere, hidden on Pages 18–25, is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the member services department by January 31 to receive a \$100 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be our winner.





TVEC ENERGY
MANAGEMENT ADVISOR

CHRIS WALKER, BAP

5 Ways To Fight Winter's Chill and Reduce Bills

WE ALL HAVE OUR favorite seasons. Some people love bundling up under a blanket, while others prefer the warm temperatures summer brings. But there's one thing we can all agree on: High winter bills are never fun. Home heating drives most household energy costs for the winter months, but there are some things you can do to keep winter bills in check.

Mind the thermostat. This is one of the easiest ways to manage your home energy use. Bundle up and set your thermostat to 68 degrees when you are home. For more savings, go even lower when you are sleeping or away for an extended period of time.

Button up your home. The Department of Energy estimates that air leaks account for 24%–40% of the energy used for heating and cooling a home. Caulking and weatherstripping around windows and doors is another simple, cost-effective way to increase comfort and save energy.

Use window coverings wisely. Open blinds, drapes or other window coverings during the day to allow natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to keep the cold, drafty air out.

Consider your approach to appliance use. When combined, appliances and electronics account for a significant chunk of our home energy use, so assess how efficiently you're using them. Adjust your water heater to 120° or lower. Use smaller cooking appliances and microwaves when possible. And look for electronic devices that consume energy when they're not in use—like phone chargers or game consoles—and unplug them to save energy.

5. Think outside the box. If you're still feeling chilly at home, add layers of clothing, wear thick socks and bundle up under blankets. You can even add layers to your home! If you have hard-surface flooring, consider purchasing an area rug.

Winter months can bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. By being proactive about saving energy, you can increase the comfort of your home and reduce monthly bills. ■



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Your Cents Matter!

WHEN TRINITY VALLEY Electric Cooperative announced our Operation Round Up program in 2013, we knew it would make a difference by serving various unmet needs and making a great impact on lives in this area.

Operation Round Up is supported by members who round up their electric bill to the nearest dollar. For example, if your electric bill is \$151.22, your bill would be rounded to \$152, and the change—never any more than 99 cents a month—goes to fund the TVEC Charitable Foundation. Those funds are exclusively marked for distribution to organizations for charitable purposes right here at home, in the counties we serve.

As a participating member, your cents have supported food banks, shelters, health services and rescue organizations, educational projects, and child care programs in our communities. Grant applications are reviewed and presented monthly, and applications are handled with the utmost care and respect.

All these years later, how much difference have your cents made? More than \$3.2 million.

Thank you for your cents—they matter! ■



Charitable Foundation
Your Generosity in Action

Operation Round Up Spotlight: Local Fire Departments



Kaufman Fire Department Chief Ronnie Davis is presented with an Operation Round Up grant from Laura Melton, TVEC public relations supervisor.

TVEC | ELAINE FROSCH

SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE TVEC CHARITABLE FOUNDATION IN 2013, volunteer and municipal fire departments have been recipients of Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative members' generosity through Operation Round Up.

That support has continued this year with the Board of Directors' approval of \$3,000 grants to each of the 57 fire departments serving the TVEC service area.

"Firefighters are one of our greatest examples of servanthood. We are blessed to have so many incredible departments in our TVEC service area," said Bobbi Byford, TVEC director of corporate relations. "The services provided by these men and women ensure a better quality of life for all they serve. They have a purpose that is stronger than an excuse."

Upon receipt of the grants, fire department leaders said that they would be putting the funds toward new equipment and technology to better serve the public.

"We are buying some radio pagers for the fire personnel so that they can be alerted to the calls," said Ronnie Davis, Kaufman Fire Department chief. "The Kaufman Volunteer Fire Department is using their funds to supplement new air packs and masks which aid in fighting the fires."

While extra funds are nice, a bigger challenge is also facing volunteer departments as fewer people are serving.

Departments are looking for fresh faces to step up to volunteer in their communities. According to volunteerfirefighter.org, volunteers usually must be at least 18 years of age, have a clean criminal record, valid driver's license, be in good health and physical condition, and complete required training. Other support positions and volunteer opportunities can also be found within local departments for those who do not want to be firefighters.

For those interested in becoming a volunteer firefighter or know someone that might be, call local fire stations or visit makemeafirefighter.org or volunteerfirefighter.org/district/TX to find volunteer opportunities. ■



Find volunteer opportunities at volunteerfirefighter.org or by contacting your local volunteer fire department.

November 2022 Operation Round Up Awards

Grants:

Lake Area Shared Ministries- \$5,000

One Man's Treasure-\$4,000

Abundant Life Pregnancy Resource

Center-\$3,000

REACH Child Placing Agency-\$3,000

Wills Point Ladies Club-\$3,000

Canton Area Radio Emergency

Services-\$3,000

Open Gates Ministry-\$2,000

Bill Assistance:

Henderson County Help Center-\$3,000

Salvation Army of Kaufman- \$3,000

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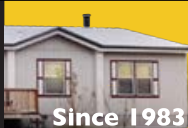
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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



together from Veracruz, Mexico, in 1554 on the way back to Spain. The king had ordered the ships to bring back 100,000 coins of gold and silver from Mexico for the Spanish treasury, smartly dividing the loads among the four vessels.

A tropical storm blew the ships off course, and winds pushed them across the entire Gulf and smashed three of them against the sandbars of Padre Island. Their hulls were pried open and their treasures spilled out onto the sandy bottom. The fourth ship, the San Andrés, was battered in the storm but made it to Havana, Cuba. In the centuries ahead, Padre would be known as the “graveyard of the gulf.”

The three wrecked ships—the San Esteban, Espíritu Santo and Santa María de Yciar—sat undiscovered for four centuries. The former two were found years later a few miles north of the Mansfield cut. Treasure hunters descended on them and had collected quite a fortune before the state of Texas took action and forced them to cease operations and turn over their plunder. The state eventually paid them \$313,000 for their efforts and then placed the coins, anchors, cannons and other artifacts from the wrecks in the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, where you can see them today.

And if you’re wondering if coins can still be found, the channel was dredged to its greatest depth in the past few years, said Ron Mills, executive director of Port Mansfield. “During those operations, there were no reported discoveries of new coins or other artifacts that may have pertained to the shipwrecks,” he said.

Sorry, treasure hunters. ■

Priceless Passage

The Port Mansfield Channel led to the Gulf—
and a 400-year-old Spanish treasure

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY BRAVE UNION

PADRE ISLAND is the longest barrier island in the world, measuring 113 miles from Corpus Christi to Brazos Santiago Pass. Up until the late 1950s, you could drive the length of the island with a decent four-wheel-drive vehicle. That changed in 1957, when the Port Mansfield Channel was dredged. The cut had been a decadeslong dream of the Laguna Madre-locked locals and gave them convenient access to the Gulf of Mexico.

At 4 a.m. on September 23, 1957, a giant dredger dug out the last sand dune, cutting the island in two and creating North and South Padre islands.

A Port Mansfield resident named Bill Rapp was elated. “I was there,” he wrote,

“when the dredge Miami took the final cut out of the old Padre and the waters of the Laguna Madre went rushing into the Gulf of Mexico.”

The Port Mansfield Channel is about 9 miles long, running 7 miles through the bay and through 2 miles of island mud flats and dunes to reach the sea.

During the dredging, the mud and clay being sucked from the channel and spewed onto the banks suddenly brightened with silver coins sparkling in the sunlight. The dredge had crushed an old Spanish galleon buried there for centuries.

The Santa María de Yciar was one of four ill-fated ships that had set sail

Gluten-Free

Try these special treats that stick to specialized dietary needs

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Gluten-free cooking has become more accessible thanks to the spread of products filling grocery shelves. Gluten-free recipes, required by some for health reasons, are a great way to explore new ingredients. While my family craves sweet crepes, I love using nutty buckwheat flour to make savory versions. Ham and cheese are classic fillings, but feel free to experiment.



Gluten-Free Ham and Cheese Crepes

1½ cups milk
1 cup gluten-free buckwheat flour
3 eggs
2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, melted, plus more for the pan
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
10–20 pieces thinly sliced ham

COOK'S TIP Crepes cook quickly, so keep an eye on the heat level and reduce as needed if the crepe is cooking before you can spread the batter around the pan.

1. In a large bowl, whisk together milk, buckwheat flour, eggs, melted butter and salt until smooth. Cover and place in the refrigerator to chill for at least 30 minutes and as long as overnight.
2. When ready to cook, place a nonstick frying pan over medium heat. Add a small amount of butter to the pan.
3. Whisk the crepe batter again and pour a small amount of batter into the pan, just enough to thinly cover the bottom. Quickly swirl the pan to coat the pan with an even layer.
4. Cook 1–2 minutes, then loosen the edge with a thin spatula and carefully flip the crepe over. Cook 1–2 minutes more, then transfer to a plate. Repeat with remaining batter.
5. To fill, return a crepe to the pan. Sprinkle on a small amount of cheese, then place 1–2 slices of ham and sprinkle with more cheese. Cook until warmed through and cheese is melted, then fold over edges toward the middle to form a packet. Serve topped with fresh herbs or a fried egg.

SERVES 10

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Bacon-Wrapped Asparagus.



Flourless Chocolate Cake

CAROL YOUNKIN
SAM HOUSTON EC

With no flour needed, this rich cake is a cinch to prepare. To cut into neat slices, Younkin recommends chilling the cooled cake until firm, then warming in the microwave as desired.

¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces, plus more for greasing the pan

1 cup bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips

½ cup unsweetened natural cocoa powder

¾ cup sugar

4 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Whipped cream or ice cream, for serving

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Generously butter the bottom and sides of an 8-inch springform pan or press a sheet of foil into the bottom and sides of an 8-inch round cake pan, smoothing the sides and buttering the foil.

2. Add a few inches of water to a saucepan and set over medium heat, bringing to a simmer. Set a heatproof bowl over the saucepan to create a double boiler and add the chocolate chips. When the chocolate looks soft and is starting to melt, stir with a spatula until smooth and completely melted.

3. Turn off the heat and add butter to the bowl, stirring until melted. Add cocoa powder and stir again until completely incorporated and smooth. Remove bowl from the saucepan.

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Gluten-Free Baked Spinach Fritters

KATHLEEN RUST
PEDERNALES EC



Perfect for brunch or as an appetizer or side, these tasty fritters are a great way to get more vegetables to the table. Rust came up with the recipe as an alternative to frying. She recommends gluten-free panko (Japanese-style bread-crumbs) as an alternative to cornflakes.

MAKES 15 PIECES

1 package frozen spinach (10 ounces), thawed but not drained

3 eggs

½ cup cassava flour

1 teaspoon adobo seasoning

⅛ teaspoon pepper

2 cups shredded mild cheddar cheese

1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese

¾ cup chopped leeks or onions

½ cup chopped bell pepper

1 large clove garlic, minced

¼ cup avocado oil

¾ cup crushed unsweetened gluten-free cornflakes, plus extra for topping

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

2. In a large bowl, combine spinach, eggs, cassava flour, adobo seasoning and pepper. Add cheeses, onion, bell pepper and garlic and stir until ingredients are evenly mixed.

3. Pour avocado oil onto a 9-by-13-inch sheet pan and tilt to coat the entire bottom and sides. Sprinkle crushed cornflakes over the bottom.

4. Dollop spinach mixture onto sheet pan, pressing gently with a spoon or spatula to spread evenly. Sprinkle additional crushed cornflakes over the top.

5. Bake 35 minutes, until browned. Cool until just warm and cut into squares.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TEXAS SEAFOOD DISHES DUE JANUARY 10

We want a boatload of recipes for all manner of seafood. Submit your recipes on our website by January 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

4. Stir in the sugar until incorporated, then add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the vanilla, then pour batter into prepared pan.

5. Bake 40–50 minutes, until crackly and dry on top. A toothpick inserted 2 inches from the edge should come out clean. Cool cake in the pan on a wire rack, then remove springform side or lift cake out using foil overhang. Serve warm, at room temperature or chilled with whipped cream or ice cream on top.

SERVES 8–10

Pão de Queijo (Brazilian Cheese Bread)

CAROLINE TEIXEIRA
PEDERNALES EC

Tapioca flour, also called tapioca starch, is essential for making chewy Brazilian cheese bread. Note that the dough will be wetter and stickier than a traditional bread, so avoid the temptation to add too much flour.



1¼ cups whole milk
½ cup water
6 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
2 teaspoons salt
4 cups tapioca flour, plus more as needed
2 eggs
1½ cups grated Parmesan cheese
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a saucepan, combine whole milk, water, oil and salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.

3. Add the tapioca flour to the bowl of a stand mixer and pour the boiling liquid over the flour. Mix well on low speed until mixture looks soft, sticky and stringy.

4. With the mixer running, add eggs one at a time, fully incorporating after each. Add cheese a little at a time until all is added and dough is fully mixed.

5. If dough is too moist, add a small amount of tapioca flour until a soft and sticky dough is reached.

6. To shape the bread, wet your hands with cold water. Scoop a small amount of dough out with a spoon or your fingers and roll into a ball slightly smaller than a golf ball. Arrange on a baking sheet and repeat until all dough is shaped, rewetting hands as needed during the process.

7. Bake 15–20 minutes, until puffed and golden.

MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN

TCP You don't have to wait until January 20, National Cheese Lovers Day, to partake of this dairy delight. We have more than 300 recipes that include cheese on our website. Now you can't wait, can you?



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Bad to the Bone

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The very best hunting knives possess a perfect balance of form and function. They're carefully constructed from fine materials, but also have that little something extra to connect the owner with nature. If you're on the hunt for a knife that combines impeccable craftsmanship with a sense of wonder, the **\$79 Huntsman Blade** is the trophy you're looking for.

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

The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Afterlife Sentence

John Wesley Hardin remains behind bars even in an El Paso cemetery

BY CHET GARNER

LIKE MANY TEXANS, I grew up hearing legends of famous gunfighters who roamed the Wild West. They were quick with a pistol and even quicker to gun down anyone who crossed them. Among the most notorious was John Wesley Hardin, who claimed to have killed more than 40 people in his lifetime.

On a trip to El Paso, I stopped by the historic Concordia Cemetery to visit his grave and see if he could still send shivers down my spine like his stories did when I was a kid.

Concordia Cemetery looks like the set of an old Western movie. Tombstones and wooden crosses cover a landscape of dirt and cactuses. It holds more than 60,000 graves dating back to the 1850s, but it didn't take long for me to find Hardin's final resting place, which is protected by a canopy of iron and stone.

Hardin's story is a violent one. Despite numerous arrests and escapes, starting in his teens, the native of Bonham was eventually sentenced to 25 years in prison for killing a deputy sheriff in Comanche County. During his time in prison, Hardin studied law, led Sunday school and attempted to change his nefarious ways.

At the age of 41, he received a full pardon and moved to El Paso to practice law. Sadly, his old ways followed him westward, and he was shot in a saloon. The coroner famously said, "If Hardin was shot in the eye, it was excellent marksmanship. If he was shot in the back, it was excellent judgment."

Hardin's grave was covered with coins and tokens left by visitors and a pair of golden guns. It's a fitting reminder that those who live by the sword die by the sword. Or in Hardin's case—the gun. ■

ABOVE As Chet can see, there will be no more escaping for John Wesley Hardin.

TCP Chet aims to pay a personal visit to one of Texas' shadiest outlaws. Watch the video on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

JANUARY

07

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Western Swing, (830) 896-9393, caillouxperformingarts.com

Valley View Trout Kids Derby, (940) 637-2294, tpwd.texas.gov

09

Uvalde [9-14] San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo Qualifier Event, (210) 985-4748, sarodeo.com

12

Glen Rose [12-14] Somervell County Youth Fair, (817) 964-2752, somervellcountyyouthfair.com

Plano [12-14, 19-21, 26-28] Four Weddings and an Elvis, (972) 849-0358, roverdramawerks.com

13

La Grange Kelly Willis, (979) 968-9944, thebugleboy.org

Lubbock Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan and William Shatner, (806) 792-8339, buddyhollyhall.com

New Braunfels [13-15] Antique Show and Sale, (918) 619-2875, heritageeventcompany.com

14

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

Granbury The Mammoth Ice Age Run, mammothrace.com

Monahans Sandhills Resolution Run, (432) 943-2187, monahans.org

Austin [14-15] Citywide Vintage Sale, (512) 441-2828, citywidevintagesale.com

15

Fredericksburg Take 3,
fredericksburgmusicclub.com

**San Antonio Untamed
With Filipe DeAndrade,**
(210) 223-8624,
tobincenter.org

16

**Houston MLK Grande
Parade,** (713) 560-8328,
mlkgrandeparade.org

20

Lufkin Pink Martini, (936)
633-5454, angelinaarts.org

**Galveston [20-21] Yaga's
Chili Quest and Beer
Fest,** (409) 770-0999,
yagaschiliquest.com

**South Padre Island
[20-22] Market Days,**
spimarketdays@gmail.com,
spimarketdays.com

**Port Aransas [20-29]
Restaurant Week,**
(361) 749-5919,
portaransas.org

21

**Irving Las Colinas
Symphony Orchestra,**
(972) 252-2787,
lascolinassymphony.org

**Kerrville ZuZu African
Acrobats,** (830) 896-9393,
caillouxperformingarts.com

**Lake Jackson Delfeayo
Marsalis With the
Brazosport Jazz Orchestra,**
(979) 285-2501,
brazosport.org

**Victoria Jason Scheff's
Chicago Nights,**
(361) 576-4500,
victoriasymphony.com

MORE EVENTS >

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Pick of the Month

Wild Game and Wine Camofest

Bay City, January 28
(979) 245-8081
baycitycamofest.net

Break out the camouflage and blend into a festival with locally caught samples of wild game, fish and fowl; wine; food inspired by Texas wines; live entertainment; shopping; and activities for the kids.

29

Port Aransas Home Tour, portagardenclub@hotmail.com, [facebook.com/portaransashometour](https://www.facebook.com/portaransashometour)

Surfside Beach Food and Art Festival, (979) 233-1531, surfsidetx.org

Temple Temple Symphony Orchestra, (254) 778-6683, templesymphony.org

Lufkin Marian Anderson Quartet, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Richardson Rhapsodies in Blue, (972) 744-4650, www.eisemanncenter.com

FEBRUARY

02

Orange The Simon and Garfunkel Story, (409) 886-5535, lutcher.org

South Padre Island [2-4] Kite Fest, (956) 761-1248, spikitefest.com

03

Burnet [3-4] Highland Lakes Quilt Festival, hlqguild@gmail.com, hlqq.org

04

Brenham Brenham Heritage Museum Dance at La Bahia, (979) 337-7580, visitbrenhamtexas.com

Corpus Christi Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra: An Interplanetary Experience, (361) 883-6683, ccsymphony.org

North Zulch Chili Cook-Off, (979) 488-9214, [facebook.com/nzvfvd](https://www.facebook.com/nzvfvd)

Rockport [4-5] Clay Expo, (361) 729-5519, rockportartcenter.com

JANUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

21

Fredericksburg [21-22] Rockhounds Gem and Mineral Show, (325) 248-1067, rockngem.com

Plano [21-22] Dallas Area Train Show, chris@railroadmodelers.com, dfwtrainshows.com

24

Tyler The Doo Wop Project, (903) 566-7424, cowancenter.org

26

Schulenburg Turtle Wing Toast, (979) 505-5090, turtlewingfoundation.org

27

San Angelo [27-29] Comic Con, sanangelocomiccon.com

28

Coppell San Jose Taiko Interactive Matinee, (972) 304-7047, coppellartscenter.org

Mathis Kid Fish, (361) 547-2635, tpwd.texas.gov

Nature's Color

"Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour."
—From *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost

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1 REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

"The majestic Frio River offers amazing fall colors in the Texas Hill Country near Concan."

2 JAZZMIN AGUAYO
PEDERNALES EC

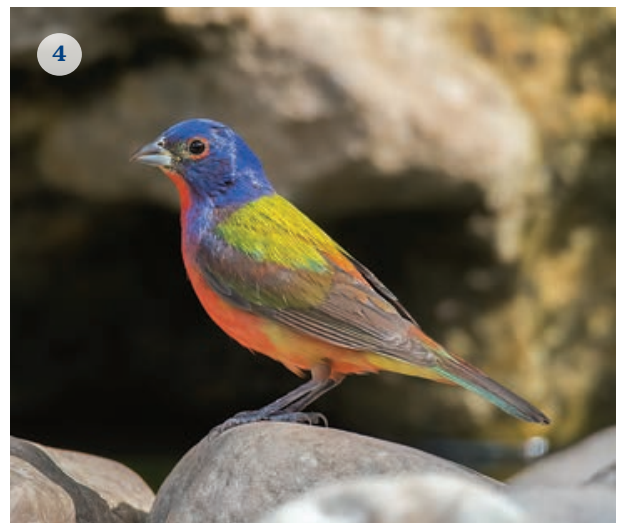
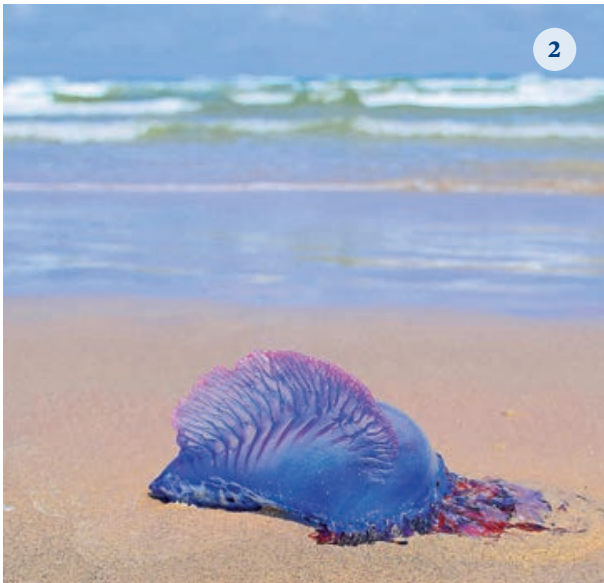
"A Portuguese man-of-war on the shore of Port Aransas provides a vibrant display of brilliant color."

3 GARY IMM
SAM HOUSTON EC

This emission nebula, as seen from the shores of Lake Livingston through a large telescope, is called the Cat's Paw Nebula.

4 MIKE ZARELLA
PEDERNALES EC

This male painted bunting stopped for a drink at the bird blind water feature at Pedernales Falls State Park.



Upcoming Contests

DUE JAN 10 **Taking Flight**

DUE FEB 10 **Dad**

DUE MAR 10 **Waterfalls**



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Nature's Color photos from readers.



Oh! Possum!

Learning to like a late-night neighbor

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY KIRSTEN ULVE

THE FIRST TIME our resident opossum and I met in the dark on a tiny, enclosed back porch was traumatic for both of us. I may have screamed. He may have hissed.

We made hasty retreats in opposite directions—he back through the broken pet door he had rudely entered.

The next night, my husband caught him in a humane trap, took him to the farthest corner of our back pasture and shook his seemingly dead body out of the trap. He was “playing possum.” And he had already developed a taste for the cat food we keep on the back porch.

He was back the next day.

After his return from eviction, I looked up some fascinating facts about him.

In spite of their naked, ratlike tails, opossums are not rodents. They are the

only marsupial—pouched mammal—native to North America and have been around for 70 million years, once coexisting with dinosaurs. Their short life span, one to two years, is due to their many predators—dogs, coyotes and humans.

There are 65 species of opossums, and all are related to kangaroos and koalas. While the only species that populates the U.S. is the Virginia opossum, others reside in Central America, South America, Australia and New Guinea.

Opossums are not aggressive. Their open-mouthed hissing is a bluff—but with 50 teeth, more than any other North American land mammal, it worked on me. If hissing isn’t successful, they feign death, falling on their sides with tongue extended in hopes that predators will lose interest and move on. If the predator decides to call this ultimate bluff, the opossum is a sitting duck.

Opossums have a number of redeeming qualities. They eat cockroaches, ticks, crickets, spiders, beetles and June bugs and find snails and slugs a delightful delicacy. We once had an infestation of slugs, which left their slimy, silvery trails all over the sidewalks, storm doors, back porch and the bowl of cat food. Since our opossum began his nightly visits, the slugs have been vanquished. Eureka!

Opossums, which can hiss and foam at the mouth as defense mechanisms, get a bum rap. They almost never carry rabies because their body temperature is too low to sustain the virus. President Benjamin Harrison kept two pet opossums in the White House. President Herbert Hoover had one too.

Our little visitor doesn’t kill chickens, nor does he tip over the garbage cans. He has learned to coexist with our cats, who are too fat and lazy to stay up for his late-night visits.

So I guess we won’t be installing a new pet door any time soon. He’s welcome to his cat food appetizer. ■

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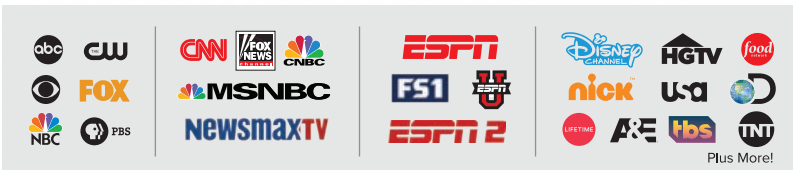
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