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NEWS

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Making History

For more than 50 years, artists have been drawn to a quiet, tucked-away studio row in Edom.

*Story by Patti Pfeiffer
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12 Dreaming Big

Students and community leaders collaborate to build tiny homes that help veterans become whole again.

Story and photos by Laura Jenkins

ON THE COVER
TJ Phillips at a tiny home at Langetree Retreat and Eco Center near Liberty.
Photo by Laura Jenkins

ABOVE
Joe Hopps works on a bird-house at his studio in Edom.
Photo by R.J. Hinkle



Brimming With Wisdom

NATIONAL HAT DAY is January 15, as if Texans ever needed another reason to don a cowboy hat.

Certainly, everyday wearers know this truism, shared with us by Alice M. Wolf, a member of Navasota Valley Electric Cooperative, as she “finished this sentence” back in November 2021:

“A Texan would never ... set his hat down brim down.”

Read more about hats in *Cowboy Hatters*, April 2016, on our website.

Class Is Not Dismissed

In honor of National Classy Day—January 17—*Texas Co-op Power* writers and editors note these esteemed Texans:

Luke Savage, a former Texas Christian University pitcher, started the nonprofit Blessed Feet, which has collected thousands of pairs of used baseball cleats for budding baseballers in the U.S. and Dominican Republic.

—Chris Burrows

Simone Biles, who owns the most gymnastics medals, exhibits poise in her willingness to speak out against sexual abuse and advocate for mental health awareness.

—Jéden Clark

The late singer **Selena Quintanilla Pérez**'s career was brief but impactful, redefining Latin music for a new generation and an expanded audience. Even at her young age, she was involved with charities and humanitarian causes, especially those benefiting Texas children.

—Alex Dal Santo

Mary Kay Ash said about her cosmetics company's beauty consultants: “Here's a woman who's never had any praise at all for anything she's ever done. Maybe the only applause she's ever had was when she graduated from high school.

She wants recognition. So we praise her for everything good that she does.” The company does good, too—supporting cancer research and survivors of violence.

—Jessica Ridge

Ima Hogg, born in the 19th century, turned her family's oil money to philanthropy, including the arts and mental health programs.

—Tom Widlowski

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

If I could turn back the clock ...

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.

Here are some of the responses to our November prompt: **Why doesn't somebody invent ... ?**

A washing machine that dries the clothes, folds them and puts them up.

NANCY BECKER
CONCHO VALLEY EC
PAINT ROCK

A canoe-shaped hotdog bun to hold all the condiments and chili.

MIKE WEBER
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

A key fob that could roll up the windows on your vehicle when it starts raining and you are inside at work.

LARENDA BRADSHAW
JASPER-NEWTON EC
JASPER

A smoke alarm that can be serviced at ground level or without a ladder.

FRANK M. WAGNON
FORT BELKNAP EC
SOUTHLAKE

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RECOMMENDED RECIPES

You'll need something special for National Pie Day, January 23. Pick a pie recipe from among the dozens on our website. It's as easy as (searching) "pie."

Too Much Latitude?

Look at a map too long and weird details emerge.

For example, Portland, Texas, is nearly equidistant from Portland, Maine (1,852 miles), and Portland, Oregon (1,845 miles).

And this: A giant triangle of these Portlands captures more than 30 other states.



A Passing Notion

AS DRIVERS faced gas shortages and long lines at the pump 50 years ago, President Richard M. Nixon signed an act January 2, 1974, lowering the national speed limit to 55 mph.

That went off the books in 1995, and today Texas boasts the highest speed limit in the country: 85 mph on a stretch of State Highway 130, a toll road between San Antonio and Austin.



JULIA ROBINSON

OCTOBER 2023 Still in the Saddle Again

“After reading about the senior rodeo, my husband and I went to an event. It was wonderful seeing performers from 40 to 80-plus still enjoying what they love to do.”

CARLANNE HICKMAN
TRI-COUNTY EC
HASLET

A Signature Moment

On the reading list for a Texas literature class at Tarleton State University was *The Time It Never Rained [It Still Reigns, October 2023]*. We were told there would be a guest speaker to discuss writing—none other than Elmer Kelton himself.

He was soft-spoken, generous, patient and happy to be with us. I walked away with fond memories and his signature in my own copy, which I still have to this day.

Cole Hooper
Pedernales EC
Wimberley

I don't recognize Elmer Kelton without his hat [*It Still Reigns, October 2023!*] Have read many of his books, including this gem. He had a way of capturing a time and place and bringing it to life through many characters. An excellent writer and storyteller.

ERNIE BATTLE
VIA FACEBOOK



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A Stunning Memory

I was an elementary student near Austin [*A School Day Like No Other, November 2023*]. I think most schools were getting out early so parents could take children to see the motorcade. My mother was coming to get me.

Someone came to our room and whispered something to our teacher. Mrs. Griffin put her head down on the desk and began to cry. When she looked up, she said, “President Kennedy has been shot, and he won’t be coming to Austin.” We were stunned.

When my mother came to pick me up, she was crying too. I will never forget that day.

Susie McCalla
Central Texas EC
Kerrville

Family Ties

Frederick Law Olmsted is an ancestor on my mother’s side [*Appraising the Texas Landscape, November 2023*]. I am from Connecticut and worked my entire career at Hartford Hospital. In nice weather we would often go for walks on its approximately 10-acre beautiful campus, which was designed by Olmsted.

Virginia W. Smith
Nueces EC
Corpus Christi

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

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Making History

For more than 50 years, artists have been drawn to this quiet, tucked-away studio row

BY PATTI PFEIFFER • PHOTOS BY R.J. HINKLE

THE SIGN SAYS Arbor Castle Birdhouses, but within lies an array of fanciful castles that seem perfectly inviting to gnomes and pixies if not birds. Crafted from hollow cedar logs; topped with tall, curvy conical roofs; and adorned in whimsical metal touches, these are more pieces of art than avian abodes.

Creator Joe Hopps has been carving birdhouses for 25 years and started quite simply.

“I saw a hollow log, had an idea, created one, entered it into a birdhouse competition in Oklahoma where I was living, and it won first place,” he explains.

Hopps recently added brushes to his repertoire, returning to another of his passions, acrylic abstract painting. “I began painting in the early ’70s and began again recently because of a saw accident, which nearly cut off several fingers.”

His canvases were showcased at the grand opening of a new art gallery, O3 Collective, just down the road from his shop in the small community of Edom, west of Tyler.



With a population of fewer than 400, what Edom (pronounced “E-dum”) lacks in size, it more than makes up for in gifted artists. From one-of-a-kind jewelry to high-end art and unique pottery, the small town’s main drag, FM 279, is a treasure trove of rare items and artisans eager to share their stories.

It all started a couple of doors down from Arbor Castle, at Potters Brown Collective. Once a grocery store, the wooden structure was for five decades the studio of Doug Brown, a California transplant who moved to Edom in 1970 and founded this artisan community.

A cluster of artists' studios continues Brown's vision. His widow, Beth Brown, a potter herself, lives next door to the studio today.

“Doug was a very humble man and wanted somewhere he and his friends could create and sell their goods and felt if he opened a place, others would follow,” Beth says. “Immedi-

ately upon seeing Edom, he knew this was where he wanted to set up shop, start an artists' community—and he wanted it to be a true community.”

Brown wasted no time turning his dream into reality—buying buildings, setting up his pottery studio and pitching his vision to artisan friends. And they did follow.

In 1972, Brown organized the first Edom Art Festival, which drew more than 3,000 attendees. Since then, every second weekend in October, a sprawling meadow behind studio row is transformed into a bustling venue. Crafters, musicians and festivalgoers from near and far gather to enjoy the sights, sounds, food and festivities of the two-day

OPPOSITE Beth Brown is the director of the Edom Art Festival. ABOVE Arbor Castle Birdhouses along the main drag.



Zeke Zewick, right, creates jewelry using uncommon materials, above. "Not all jewelry has to be gold, diamonds and sparkly," he says.



event that includes a wine-tasting garden featuring local vineyards, musicians and crafting for kids. The festival has grown in content and count, attracting some 15,000 visitors in 2023.

After Brown's death in 2020, his building was eventually sold, but it still bears his name and remains a pottery center that sells ceramics from local makers.

And the community is still going strong.

Stepping outside, my eyes were drawn to a jewelry store of a different sort: Zeke & Marty. Even the door handles are distinctive, custom-made from sika deer antlers from Japan and carved by the owner, Zeke Zewick.

I marveled at the array of custom jewelry of every material, size and sort—even dyed bone pieces inlaid with unique gems, dispelling the adage that diamonds are a girl's best friend.

Using woolly mammoth teeth from Siberia, Turkish agates, shells from the Sea of Cortez, antlers and bones, Zewick prides himself in creating one-of-a-kind pieces.

"Not all jewelry has to be gold, diamonds and sparkly," he says. "Different material provides for different thoughts for pieces. Oxide steel is what some throw away as trash,

but I like the contrast of it with sterling."

He especially likes working with bone, which is malleable and easy to grind and polish, dyeing it with alcohol inks. The materials are uncommon, and so are his pieces.

Zewick, one of the original Edom artists, has been creating since 1969, first with leather but spending the past half-century as a jeweler. He knew Brown and received one of his original invites.

"He knew I was looking for a place to move after graduating art school," Zewick says. "This place had trees and water, and being from Lubbock, I felt we were in heaven."

Prompted by a desire to "get out of the city and move back home to a simpler, less stressful way of life," Shanna Wiggins relocated here from Austin three years ago.



She used to own a succulents shop on FM 279, and like other residents, she was eager to share her story.

“Originally, the locals were hesitant, feeling hippies didn’t belong here,” she says, “but we all love each other, so it doesn’t matter.”

For the traveler looking for a slower slice of life, Edom has a couple of restaurants serving home-cooked meals. Sips offers hand-crafted coffees, sodas and other nonalcoholic drinks.

Edom is eccentric and inviting and a true “poke-n-plumb” place: By the time you poke your head out of the vehicle, you’re plumb outta town, which adds to its charm. It’s a place where strangers don’t exist. ■

ABOVE Whimsy is a dominant feature of Joe Hopps’ birdhouses. RIGHT A signpost helps visitors to the East Texas town find their way.

East of Edom

Other attractions along FM 279.

Green Goat Winery A cozy tasting room and covered patio overlook 7 acres of vines.

Blue Moon Gardens This 6-acre gardener’s paradise sells plants, tools and supplies.

Coltharp-Beall House The 175-year-old home has housed itinerant preachers and stagecoach travelers.



DREAMING

BIG

Students and community leaders collaborate to build tiny homes that help veterans become whole again





What the heck are you doing?"

The sharp sound of his girlfriend's voice jolted TJ Phillips awake. But the bigger shock came when he opened his eyes.

"I had my knee on her neck," says Phillips, shaking his head. "And I was going through the motions of putting flex cuffs on her. She laughed it off after I explained that I'd been dreaming about being on active duty again. But I wasn't laughing. I knew I needed help."

Phillips, an Army sergeant who served 1991–99 and was honorably discharged, says he made an appointment with Veterans Affairs to address his post-traumatic stress disorder. But he felt like he was too young to be on all the medications they prescribed.

Instead, as many do, he turned to alcohol. And he eventually decided to live in his truck so he could save money. Ten years and five DWIs later, he was in the Montgomery County jail, awaiting a trial that was certain to yield an extended prison sentence, when he got the news that his arresting officer had suddenly died. He was free to go.

"And that's when Miss Barbara took me in," he says after an emotional pause. "Now I'm safe. I'm sober. And everything I need to get healthy again is right here."

OPPOSITE Langetree Retreat and Eco Center's community of tiny homes and assistance has helped change TJ Phillips' life. "Everything I need to get healthy again is right here." ABOVE Instructor James Gaylord and his Humble students in front of a tiny home they built.

Barbara Lange gave Phillips, 54, the key to a tiny home at the Langetree Retreat and Eco Center near Liberty, between Houston and Beaumont. But she'll be the first to tell you that she's only one of many who are making Phillips' recovery possible.

"Somehow we all got the memo independently of one another," Lange says. "And then somehow we all found each other. What are the odds?"

There was no actual memo, of course. But indeed, several people in the same corner of Texas had a similar idea around the same time.

At the outset, none of them knew each other—or even about each other. They were simply focused on the same goal: to support veterans by providing them with tiny homes. Their collaboration has no name. There's no one in charge. But it has yielded something much greater than the sum of its parts.

Allen Segura, who recently retired as assistant principal and director of career and technology education for Summer Creek High School, says the idea to integrate building tiny homes into the Humble school district's curriculum came from a bout of insomnia in 2018.

"Late one night I was scrolling through Facebook and saw some people in St. Louis who were building tiny homes for homeless veterans," Segura remembers. "And the simple thought came: 'I wonder if our students could do that?'"

He bounced the idea off James Gaylord and Missi Taylor, who teach CTE classes in construction, architecture and design at high schools in Humble, a Houston suburb whose name is pronounced "Umble." They were in.

"We had been teaching these classes for years, but it was mostly theoretical," Segura says. "Actually building houses would not only let them put what they're learning into practice, it would also help them understand the importance of serving others."

Under the supervision of the three educators, the students developed a presentation and pitched it to Superintendent Elizabeth Fagen, who took it to the school board for approval. Thus, in 2018, Humble ISD's Big Heroes, Tiny Homes program was born.

Meanwhile, about 40 minutes east of Humble, Lange, a retired social worker, was teaching leadership and environmental sustainability at the retreat center she and her husband built in 2004.

Their doors have always been open to people in crisis. They housed numerous people after Hurricane Katrina's devastation in 2005. They took in referrals from Tri-County Behavioral Healthcare, a community-based nonprofit serving those living with mental illness and intellectual disabilities. More recently, Lange had begun working with



Kingwood Park High School students work on a tiny home.

several Veterans of Foreign Wars chapters in an effort to address the crisis of homelessness among veterans.

“I had already started converting a shipping container into a tiny home for one of the veterans I was assisting when I came across a newspaper article about Missi,” Lange remembers. “A VFW volunteer named Mark Bowen said, ‘Barbara, why don’t you go to Kingwood Park and tell those people that they can give us the houses?’”

Never one to leave a stone unturned, Lange went to visit the teachers in Humble. Once they saw her vast experience and her devotion to veterans, the district agreed to donate their tiny homes to Lange’s effort.

Since 2005, Operation Finally Home has been improving and constructing mortgage-free homes for wounded veterans, first responders and their families. But it wasn’t until spring 2020 that Lee Kirgan, vice president of project management for OFH, learned about Humble ISD’s big idea and suggested to President Rusty Carroll that they consider getting involved.

Six months later, Carroll surprised Segura with the news that OFH, based in New Braunfels, had secured a grant from big-box retailer Lowe’s, which would provide all the building materials for Big Heroes, Tiny Homes for the foreseeable future.

“Humble ISD had a vision to build tiny homes for home-

less veterans, but they didn’t have a sustainable way to source the materials,” Carroll says. “By partnering them with Lowe’s, we were able to lengthen their runway.

“People have been telling me for years that they wanted to build tiny homes for homeless veterans, but if they’re transitional, there has to be some sort of infrastructure to support those living in them. Barbara supplied that missing piece.”

Lange’s infrastructure is deeply rooted in community. There are currently 10 tiny homes on her property and 27 agencies providing residents with such services as job coaching, counseling, legal aid and palliative care.

But creating a communal environment is one of her highest priorities. When she conveyed that to the people at OFH—who are helping her clear and prepare her land to receive 20 more houses over the next five to seven years—they recommended putting them in pods of six, which will serve as micro communities.

“We now know from a scientific point of view that loneliness can be as harmful to the body as cigarette smoking,” Lange says. “When you’re in a community of people who’ve been where you’ve been, when you’re living with others who are going through what you’re going through, you’re less likely to feel like a freak.

“It advances the healing process.”

Humble ISD is expanding Big Heroes, Tiny Homes to five high schools. The program offers students a hands-on building experience with mentoring by professionals—architects, plumbers, electricians, general contractors—giving the teens invaluable work experience and the opportunity to explore various career paths.

Due to its resounding success, other school districts and universities have reached out to Humble ISD to find out how the project works.

“Our instructors are willing to talk to your instructors,” Segura says. “We are happy to connect your principals to our principals, your superintendent to our superintendent. Let us tell you how we did this.”

Lange estimates that most residents will transition into permanent housing within two years. Phillips, who is approaching that milestone, may stay longer because he’s become a strong leader in the community. Though he now has a job as a heating and air conditioning tech, he serves as a liaison and an advocate for the other veterans. He also assists with some of the property’s maintenance and administrative needs.

“Veterans aren’t homeless because they’re not gifted, intelligent or experienced,” Lange says. “They are broken. When you connect them with the resources they need and provide a safe place to heal, many will find their way back to the person they were before the trauma. All veterans deserve that chance.” ■



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A close-up photograph of a dog's head and front paws resting on a textured, light-colored rug. The dog has black, white, and tan fur. To the right, a white space heater with a glowing orange mesh is visible, casting a warm light on the dog and the rug. The background is dark, making the dog and the heater stand out.

Be Cool With Space Heaters

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As technologies evolve and expand, so do criminals

IN TODAY'S TECH-DRIVEN world, scams seem to be around every corner. Criminals will try just about anything—from purporting legal action involving the IRS to turning off power to your home—to separate you from your money.

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative wants to make you aware of the current wave of utility scams, which often involve an individual posing as an employee of your cooperative. The scammer may use threatening language to frighten you into offering your credit card or bank account information.

Don't fall victim to utility scams. Understand the threats and know what to do.

If someone calls you demanding that you pay your electric bill immediately, hang up. Scammers

If they aren't, call 911 and do not allow the individual access to your home. It's not uncommon for a scammer to steal things from your home while you're distracted with the phone.

Look out for these other types of scams.

Government agencies like the IRS will never call to inform you that you have unpaid taxes or other liens against you. You will always receive this type of information in the mail. If someone calls claiming to be the IRS, hang up.

If you receive an email from an unknown sender, an email riddled with spelling errors and typos, or an email threatening action unless a sum of money is paid, do not click any links provided within the email and don't respond to the email. Sometimes

these phishing emails will look legit—like they're from a company or someone you know. But if it seems fishy, delete the email and move on. One wrong click could give a scammer access to all the information on your computer, including your private financial data.

If someone calls you and claims your grandchild is in jail and needs bail money, the best option is to hang up. If you have concerns that this could be true, ask the caller for the name of the facility reportedly holding them, then hang up. Look up the facility yourself and call that number or check their website. This is a sadly common scam that plays to the heartstrings of grandparents.

If someone calls your home claiming to have discovered a virus on your computer, hang up.

This caller's intent is to gain access to personal information on your computer.

It's unfortunate that such constant suspicion is necessary, but it's important to be vigilant. Scammers are determined, creative and always working on their next ploy.

If you ever have any concerns about someone claiming to be with TVEC, please call us directly. We want to make sure you avoid any and all types of scams that could put you or your financial information in jeopardy. ■



INSIDE CREATIVE HOUSE | ISTOCK.COM

often use threats and urgency to pressure you into giving them your bank information or loading a prepaid credit or debit card. Your electric cooperative will never ask you to offer up personal finance information over the phone. If you have any doubts about the status of your electric bill, contact TVEC at 1-800-766-9576.

If someone comes to your home claiming to be an employee of TVEC who needs to collect money or inspect parts of your property, call us to verify they are, in fact, an employee before letting them into your home.



IZAHABUR | ISTOCK.COM

A New Year's Resolution for Each Month of the Year

MAKING A RESOLUTION to go on a diet this January? Open a savings account? Here's another idea: Do one thing a month that'll make your home more energy-efficient.

January: Get into the habit of turning your thermostat down by about 10 degrees before your family turns in for the night or leaves home in the morning. You can save as much as 1% on heating for every degree you lower the heat for eight consecutive hours.

February: Pull your refrigerator away from the wall and vacuum or dust its condenser and coils. Clean coils prevent your fridge's working parts from overheating.

March: Wash your windows—inside and out—and open the drapes. The sun can't warm and brighten your rooms if it can't find its way through grimy windowpanes.

April: Spring for an annual inspection of your air conditioning system. It can keep your central AC running smoothly and efficiently all summer.

May: Seal air leaks around windows, doors and other openings—like the place where cables and wires come into the wall from the outside—with caulk and weatherstripping.

June: Hire a licensed electrician to inspect your home's electrical wiring system—not every year but at least once a decade.

July: Give your AC a break by grilling your dinner outside and serving fresh, cold salads as side dishes.

August: Run your clothes washer and dryer and your dishwasher after dark. That will reduce the heat and humidity in the air, and it helps your electric cooperative by lowering peak use.

September: Get that heating and AC tech back to your house for a heating inspection. A tune-up can save you as much as 5% on your heating bill.

October: Set the thermostat on your water heater to no more than 120 degrees to prevent scalding and save energy.

November: Keep draperies and shades on south-facing windows open during the day to allow the sunlight in and closed at night to reduce the chill from cold windows.

December: Replace your old holiday lights with LED options, which last years longer and use far less energy. ■

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

CONTACT US

1800 E. Highway 243
Kaufman, Texas
Local (972) 932-2214
Toll-Free 1-800-766-9576
Web tvec.net

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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

Lobby Hours

8:15 a.m.–4:45 p.m.

VISIT US ONLINE

tvec.net





JODI JACOBSON | ISTOCK.COM



TVEC ENERGY
MANAGEMENT ADVISER
CHRIS WALKER, BAP

Time for a New Water Heater?

WITH AN AVERAGE annual cost of \$400–\$600 for a household to heat water, choosing the best replacement is important. When selecting a new water heater for your home, the two key factors are capacity and energy efficiency.

There are five types of water heaters in most areas.

Conventional storage water heaters offer a ready reservoir of hot water that, when sized correctly, is adequate for everyday use most of the time. These are typically lower in cost and have a life expectancy of 10–15 years. The major disadvantages of this type are potentially running out of hot water and standby heat loss. Sizing the tank correctly for your home and insulating the tank can help mitigate these issues.

Tankless or demand-type water heaters heat water directly without the use of a storage tank. This type of water heater is designed to provide an adequate supply of hot water without running out when adequately sized. This type of system is more expensive, but the life expectancy is 20-plus years. They're more energy-efficient than storage-type heaters, and, depending on the amount of hot water your home uses, you could save \$100 or more a year in energy bills. However, sometimes the energy savings don't pay for the cost of purchase and installation. The limited flow rate of hot water means simultaneous, multiple uses of hot water can push a tankless system to its limit.

Heat pump water heaters move heat from one place to

another instead of generating heat directly for providing hot water, resulting in high efficiencies and significant cost savings. Their purchase price is a higher as well, and the life expectancy is 10–15 years. They're two to three times more energy-efficient than a storage tank heater, with an Energy Star-rated system saving almost \$300 a year on electric bills. Performance is dependent on installation location, and heat pump systems exhaust cold air, increasing the load on home heating systems during cold months.

Solar water heaters use the sun's heat to provide hot water, but they are the most expensive type of water heater and have a 20-year life expectancy. They're 50% more efficient than gas or electric water heaters but may require a backup system for cloudy days or times of high demand.

Tankless coil and indirect water heaters use a home's space heating system to heat water. Comparable in price to a tankless system, they have the shortest life expectancy at 10–11 years. They offer lower installation and maintenance costs but are typically an inefficient choice for homes in warmer climates.

When selecting a replacement water heater for your home, it's important to not only look at the purchase cost but also the installation, operating and maintenance costs to determine if it's worth investing in a more efficient system.

About 27 million households in the U.S. have a water heater that's more than 10 years old, so it's a good idea to do your research early to know which replacement will best fit your needs. ■

Unexpected Ways To Make Your House Feel Warmer

YOU DON'T HAVE to crank up the thermostat to stay warm indoors this winter. **Try these simple strategies to stay warm without sending your energy bill through the roof.**

Add rugs to uncarpeted rooms. Rugs help insulate floors by trapping cool air underneath and keeping it from wafting into the room. Rugs will keep your feet warm, too.

Install a filter whistle on your furnace. This inexpensive device will alert you when it's time to change the filter. Dirty filters prevent air from easily flowing through your heating system, which means your furnace has to work harder—and use more energy—to keep you warm.

Move furniture away from air vents. The air return vents on the walls or floor of your home might be an eyesore, but hiding them under carpets and couches can render your heating and cooling system inefficient.

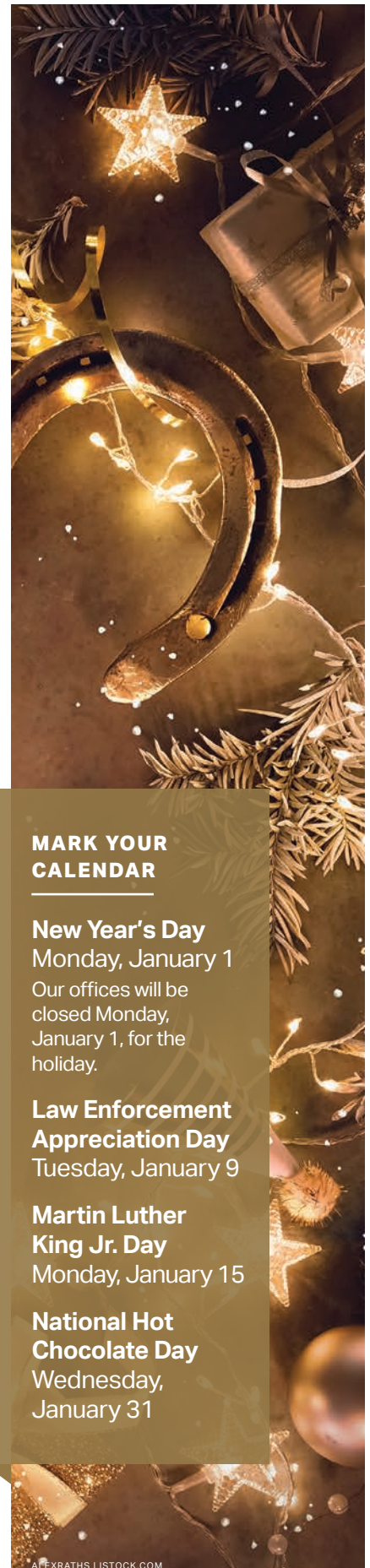
Add a humidifier. When the air in your home is too dry, it will feel cooler. Keeping the humidity in the home between 30% and 50% will make the air feel warmer—and stave off the dry skin that winter usually causes.

Insulate the door leading from the house to the attic. It's an often-overlooked energy-waster that can let the unheated attic air seep into your home and allow the warm air from the house into the cold attic.

Get moving. Just moving around to get your blood circulating is often enough to make you feel warm. Do a short workout inside or take a walk outside even if the weather is chilly. When you finish, you'll not only feel warmer but also be healthier. ■



NICKY LLOYD | ISTOCK.COM



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

New Year's Day
Monday, January 1

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

Law Enforcement Appreciation Day
Tuesday, January 9

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, January 15

National Hot Chocolate Day
Wednesday, January 31

ALEXRATHS | ISTOCK.COM



WATTANAPHOB | ISTOCK.COM

Hire the Pros

IT'S TEMPTING to ask your handyman or your brother-in-law to fix an electrical problem in your home, but some jobs are better left to professionals.

A home that's improperly wired; has overloaded circuits; or has exposed or defective wiring, receptacles and switches can be downright dangerous. If that's not reason enough to hire a professional, here are a few more:

Licensed electricians have many hours of on-the-job training under the supervision of a more experienced electrician and have passed an exam.

Electricians have specialized tools that a do-it-yourselfer typically doesn't have.

The pros are insured if there is an accident or someone gets hurt on the jobsite.

Electricians know and adhere to local and national electrical codes, which protects their license and keeps you safe.

Using a professional electrician could save you money in the long run because the job will likely be done right the first time and prevent destructive risks such as home electrical fires.

Even if the job seems simple, it's better to call an experienced, licensed electrician to do it. 5544001

The money you spend hiring a professional will more than pay off in peace of mind and a safe home. ■



STURTI | ISTOCK.COM

Electrical Safety Checklist

NEARLY HALF OF ALL home fires occur during winter months. Take a few minutes to identify and correct any potential electrical hazards to ensure the safety of your home.

Switches and Outlets

Are any switches or outlets warm to the touch? YES NO

Warm switches or outlets indicate an unsafe wiring condition.

Are any outlets or switches discolored? YES NO

Discoloration indicates dangerous heat buildup at these connections.

Do plugs fit snugly into outlets? YES NO

Loose-fitting plugs can cause overheating and fires.

Cords

Are any cords cracked, frayed or damaged? YES NO

Damaged cords can expose wires, creating shock or fire hazards.

Are any cords pinched by furniture or windows or attached to anything with staples or nails? YES NO

Pinching or stapling cords can damage the cord's insulation, creating shock or fire hazards.

Do you use extension cords on a permanent basis? YES NO

Extension cords should only be used temporarily.

Electric Panel

Do you have recurring tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses? YES NO

If yes, this could indicate you're exceeding a safe level of electrical current.

Do you have arc-fault circuit interrupters? YES NO

AFCIs provide greater fire protection. Check your circuit breakers for the AFCI label.

If your answers raised any concerns about the electrical safety of your home, address the problem immediately. ■



YOUTH TOUR 2024

SCAN ME



Do you know a student who is enrolled as a freshman, sophomore, or junior in the current school year?

Does this student reside in an area that is serviced by Trinity Valley Electric Co-op?

Applications close on January 15, 2024 @ 5:00 PM!

From museums and memorials to the majestic U.S. Capitol and Supreme Court, there's a little bit of something for everyone on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour 2024! Join more than 1,800 youth delegates & chaperones from around the nation on this 9-day summer adventure jam-packed with splendid sights and memories in the making. Did we mention that it is **FREE?**

That's right! All current freshmen, sophomores and juniors from the TVEC service area are eligible to enter and two applicants will win an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C.!





The Roost Cafe, Eustace

All day home cooking and service with a smile

POWER LINE WORK TAKES A LOT OF ENERGY, so it may come as no surprise that this series starts off with some good home cooking that doesn't hold back on the good stuff.

The Roost Cafe in Eustace offers a menu full of everything you'd expect, from burgers and fries to chicken-fried steak and some generous salads if that is what you are looking for. And there are a few items for adventurous eaters as well, like the Hawaiian burger and fried jalapeños.

Several Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative crewmen mentioned the consistently great food and lunch specials that keep them coming back, but Cody Barnes, TVEC apprentice lineman, said The Roost was his favorite earlier in the day.

"I normally eat breakfast there, but really everything is just killer," he said. "I haven't had anything I didn't like."

The Roost is located in old downtown Eustace at 103 Edgar St. and online at theroostcafetx.com. ■



TVEC
TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Energy Quiz



What device raises or lowers voltage in the electric grid and in home devices?

- A • Circuit Breaker**
- B • Transistor**
- C • Capacitor**
- D • Transformer**

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: Alternating Current?

THE EARLY DAYS OF electrical distribution research and development were full of interesting personalities and competing theories regarding how to make large-scale electrical power work. Alternating current, which is the system we use today, was championed by Nikola Tesla.

AC has the advantage of being able to transmit over long distances at very high voltage with low loss of energy.

Congratulations to November Energy Quiz winner, Jana McRorey of Kaufman.

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

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.





Charitable Foundation

Your Generosity in Action

Operation Round Up Spotlight: The Ark at TVCC



THE BIBLICAL ARK SERVED AS A LIFEBOAT FOR NOAH, and that inspiration drives a longstanding service organization that serves as a safe landing zone for young college students at Trinity Valley Community College.

The Ark at TVCC was started in 1970 as a way to support students’ practical needs as well as bolstering their faith. As the college has grown and changed, The Ark has been a constant presence for thousands of Cardinal undergrads getting away from home for the first time.

“The Ark exists to serve the TVCC campus,” said The Rev. Chris Harrison of the First United Methodist Church of Athens, who serves as chairman of The Ark’s board of directors. “Since its inception, this was several churches coming together to say that we want the college community here to be loved and hear that the people are willing to support them, help them and offer the love of Jesus Christ.”

The Ark still operates with the support of multiple

churches across the Athens area with each contributing as they are able and giving opportunities for churches of all sizes to take part in campus ministry.

On a practical level, that means a lot of food, fun and building relationships with students who may be from around the corner or around the world.

“As you would expect, there are a lot of local area students,” Harrison said. “But with the large and successful athletics teams that TVCC has, you also have a lot of students from around the country and even internationally. We know this is a time that students are asking a lot of questions, and we want to help them navigate these years while they get out on their own.”

For anyone who would like to assist, The Ark is always looking for assistance with community meals, financial support and more. Visit thearktvcc.org for more information. ■

November 2023 Operation Round Up Grants Awarded

Grants

- Abundant Life Pregnancy Resource Center - \$3,000
- Crandall ISD Education Foundation - \$3,000
- Forney Education Foundation - \$3,000
- Jake E’s Riding Round Up - \$3,000
- LaPoynor Elementary Backpack Club - \$3,000

- One Man’s Treasure - \$3,000
- The Ark Campus Ministry - \$3,000
- Fifty-seven Local City and Volunteer Fire Departments - \$3,000 each

Food and Bill Assistance

- Lake Area Shared Ministries - \$3,000
- Kaufman Christian Help Center - \$3,000

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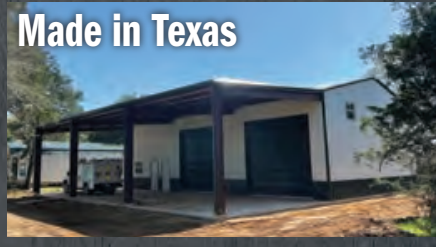
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Throw Yourself a Bone

Full tang stainless steel blade with natural bone handle —now **ONLY \$79!**

The very best hunting knives possess a perfect balance of form and function. They're carefully constructed from fine materials, but also have that little something extra to connect the owner with nature.

If you're on the hunt for a knife that combines impeccable craftsmanship with a sense of wonder, the **\$79 Huntsman Blade** is the trophy you're looking for.

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

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

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

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the *Huntsman Blade*.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

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★★★★★

"The feel of this knife is unbelievable...this is an incredibly fine instrument."

— H., Arvada, CO





The Green Carpet

The grand opening of Houston's lavish and large—
but short-lived—Shamrock Hotel

BY W.F. STRONG

THERE'S A SCENE in the 1956 movie *Giant* when Jett Rink, played by James Dean, tells the characters played by Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor that he's struck oil. And not only that, he insinuates, it's payback time.

Rink is a hard-drinkin', fierce-brawlin', tough-talkin', uncultured Texas oil well driller who strikes it rich. But everybody in Texas knew that Dean was really playing Glenn McCarthy, a Houston wildcatter who struck it rich—cover of *Time* magazine rich.

The fictional Rink spent millions of dollars building the Emperor, the biggest hotel in Texas. The real-life McCarthy did the same. But McCarthy

called his the Shamrock Hotel.

The Shamrock, nicknamed the Houston Riviera, was the grandest hotel in Texas when it was built in 1947 and the largest outside of New York or Los Angeles.

It was 20 stories tall, counting the two-story emerald Shamrock sign on top, and it towered over southwest Houston. The hotel cost \$21 million to build in the 1940s—or about \$300 million in today's money. It had the biggest hotel pool on the planet—so large that people water-skied in it. There were 1,100 rooms, all air-conditioned and each with a TV and radio, which was remarkably high-tech luxury back then.

McCarthy planned a grand opening for

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



St. Patrick's Day 1949 for his monolithic hotel. He wanted Hollywood stars but was told that the only way Hollywood would come was if there was a movie opening to attend. But no big studio would launch a film in Texas in those days.

So McCarthy decided to fund his own film—*The Green Promise*, starring Walter Brennan and a young Natalie Wood. In so doing, he had the premiere and hotel grand opening at the same time. Brilliant.

And Hollywood came. Howard Hughes gave McCarthy a good deal on one of his planes so he could fly stars to Houston. McCarthy also chartered a party train that brought in hundreds of celebrities for the opening.

The evening was regarded as the most prestigious event in Houston's social history. And it likely remains so. Everyone who was anyone was there. Ginger Rogers was there. So was Errol Flynn. It was partially broadcast live on national radio by NBC and hosted by actress, singer and World War II pinup girl Dorothy Lamour—until the hotel crowd got out of hand.

Many loved the Shamrock for its sheer size and art deco style: the Emerald Room, where Frank Sinatra sang; the Cork Club that overlooked Houston; and the hotel's grand devotion to its Irish theme.

But not everyone was impressed. Renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright called the Shamrock's 63 shades of Irish green an "architectural venereal disease."

The Shamrock was sold to Conrad Hilton in 1955 and was known as the Shamrock Hilton until it was demolished in 1987. Today, the Texas A&M Health Science Center sits on the site.

I think McCarthy would like that. He was, after all, an Aggie. ■

Texas Citrus

A variety of dishes come alive with the state's prized produce

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

South Texas is home to the delicious ruby red grapefruit. From marinades and salads to cocktails and cakes, ruby reds are so versatile. This grapefruit loaf cake, one of my favorite ways to bake with them, is brimming with the fruit's tart and sweet goodness.



Grapefruit Loaf Cake

CAKE

- 3 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain yogurt
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon grapefruit zest
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grapefruit juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

GLAZE

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons grapefruit juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Thinly sliced grapefruit, for garnish

1. **CAKE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 5-by-9-inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a bowl, whisk together eggs, yogurt, brown sugar, oil, grapefruit zest, grapefruit juice, cinnamon and vanilla.
3. In another bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and salt.
4. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix until just combined. Avoid overmixing.
5. Pour batter into prepared loaf pan. Bake 30–35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
6. Remove from oven, allow to cool for 10 minutes, and carefully remove cake from pan.
7. **GLAZE** Whisk together powdered sugar, grapefruit juice and vanilla.
8. Place grapefruit slices on cake and drizzle with glaze.

SERVES 8

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Ruby Red Grapefruit Salsa.



Texas Citrus Ceviche

TANNER FULLMER
BANDERA EC

Fullmer's ceviche is a refreshing no-cook appetizer that will wow your guests. Citrus juices cure the shrimp while jalapeño lends spice and avocado adds a touch of creaminess. Serve this bright and flavorful ceviche chilled and with tortilla chips for a beautiful presentation.

- 1 pound wild-caught Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- 1 cup lime juice**
- ¼ cup lemon juice**
- 1-inch ginger piece, peeled and minced**
- 1 red onion, diced**
- 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1½ oranges, peeled and diced**
- 1 grapefruit, peeled and diced**
- 1 cucumber, peeled and diced**
- 1 large avocado, pitted and diced**
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped**
- 1 jalapeño, seeds removed and diced**
- 1½ teaspoons salt**
- Tortilla chips**

1. Cut shrimp into desired size and place into a large, nonreactive bowl. Add lime juice, lemon juice and minced ginger. Stir to combine. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate 45 minutes.
2. Remove bowl from fridge. Stir in red onion, garlic, oranges, grapefruit, cucumber, avocado, cilantro, jalapeño and salt.
3. Return ceviche to the fridge to chill an additional 15 minutes.
4. Serve with tortilla chips.

SERVES 6

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Moroccan Chicken Skewers

CARRIE RAY
HEART OF TEXAS EC



Marinated in a blend of citrus juice and spices and broiled to perfection, Ray's Moroccan chicken skewers are a tender, mouthwatering dish that's perfect for a weeknight meal or entertaining. Couscous and yogurt complement the skewers and round out the dish.

SERVES 6



- Zest and juice of 1 lemon**
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons honey, plus more for drizzling**
- 1 tablespoon finely grated fresh ginger**
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander**
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs or breasts, cut into large pieces**
- 2 lemons, halved**
- Fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped**
- Couscous (optional)**
- Yogurt (optional)**

1. In a bowl, stir together lemon zest and juice, olive oil, honey, ginger, coriander, cumin, salt, and pepper for the marinade. Set aside 2 tablespoons.
2. Add chicken to marinade, turning to coat evenly.
3. Preheat broiler.
4. Place chicken onto wooden or metal skewers, then place skewers onto a foil-lined sheet pan. Add one lemon half to each corner of the sheet pan.
5. Place baking sheet in oven 4 inches from heating element. Broil until charred, about 12 minutes, turning skewers over halfway through.
6. Remove from oven, spoon the reserved marinade onto the chicken and sprinkle with parsley. Drizzle the lemon halves with honey and serve alongside for squeezing over the chicken.
7. Serve with couscous and yogurt, if desired.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

SIMPLY SALADS DUE JANUARY 10

Come summer, we'll all be looking to escape the heat of the kitchen. Your best salad recipe could win a cool \$500. Go online and submit your favorite by January 10.





Texas Meyer Lemon Pie

RHAE BROWN
SAM HOUSTON EC

Lemon lovers, this easy pie is for y'all! It's jam-packed with heavenly tartness and bakes in a store-bought pie crust. Simple and sublime, Brown's lemon pie is sure to impress.

3 eggs, room temperature
1¼ cups sugar
½ cup Meyer lemon juice
4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, melted
1 deep-dish frozen pie crust, unbaked
Whipped topping (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Whisk eggs, sugar and lemon juice until smooth. Add melted butter and whisk to combine.
3. Pour mixture into pie crust and place on sheet pan. Bake 30–35 minutes.
4. Cool completely before serving. Serve with whipped topping if desired.

SERVES 8

TCP Find hundreds more recipes that feature citrus fruits and juices in our bountiful archive online.

Citrus With the Assist

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Use fresh citrus in marinades for grilling or in dressings for salads.

Brighten baked goods by adding a touch of lemon or orange zest.

Fold orange segments into pancakes, waffles or warm oatmeal.

Add lime zest to salt for a festive salt rim for margaritas.

Add a splash of fresh citrus juice to your water for a refreshing twist.

Tuck lemon slices into the cavity of a chicken for a juicy roast chicken.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Moment's Notice

A history museum in Laredo marks a short-lived republic's capital

BY CHET GARNER

TRAVELING TO DOWNTOWN Laredo feels like visiting a different country. Maybe that's because it was at one point in history! I'm not talking about the fact that Laredo was once part of Mexico (all of Texas was). I'm talking about the lesser-known Republic of the Rio Grande that existed for 11 short months in 1840 with Laredo as its capital.

It's a story that reads more like a movie and is best explored at its former capitol-turned-museum.

I started my travels in the San Agustin de Laredo Historic District with a chile relleno smothered in queso from El Mesón de San Agustin, a local favorite, and then set out to explore the 269-year-old neighborhood's adobe buildings surrounding a Spanish-style plaza.

One of the most significant buildings is a simple, single-story structure that was once the capitol of a new nation. Today it's the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum. I ducked my head as I stepped through the low wooden door frame and was immediately transported back in time.

The story of this short-lived nation starts in 1836, after Texas won its independence from Mexico. Residents between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande sought to quell instability along the border and decided to form their own country made up of the Mexican states of Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. The armies of the new nation tried to fend off Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna's forces, but after a betrayal, a beheading and 283 days, the republic ended.

The museum showcases memorabilia from that time with displays, pictures, books and furniture. There are three restored rooms: an office and sitting area, a bedroom, and kitchen. The republic is gone, but I could still feel a spirit of independence permeating the museum and entire town. ■

ABOVE Chet waves the Republic of the Rio Grande flag.

TCP Follow along as Chet learns about the nation that was centered in Laredo. See 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, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

JANUARY

09

Orange On Your Feet: The Story of Emilio & Gloria Estefan, (409) 886-5535, lutchter.org

11

Harlingen Sounds of Silence Tribute, (956) 392-9757, harlingenconcert.com

Bandera [11-13] Bandera County Junior Livestock Show, (210) 260-8224, bcjlsa.com

Sweetwater [11-13] Nolan County Stock Show, (325) 235-3484, nolancc.com

12

Fort Worth [12-13] Carter Anderson, (512) 817-9535, blcomedy.com

La Grange [12-13] Ray Wylie Hubbard, (979) 968-9944, thebugleboy.org

Kerrville [12-14] Star Crossed, (210) 492-9519, cameratasora.org

Fort Worth [12-Feb. 3] Stock Show and Rodeo, (817) 877-2400, fwssr.com

13

Abilene Don Juan by the Sea, (325) 677-6710, abiphil.com

Brenham Uptown Swirl Downtown Brenham, (979) 337-7580, cityofbrenham.org

Fredericksburg Hill Country Indian Artifact Show, (830) 329-2636, hillcountryindianartifacts.com

Galveston Yaga's Chili Quest and Beer Fest,
(409) 770-0999,
yagaschiliquest.com

Marfa Star Party in the Badlands, (432) 424-3327,
tpwd.texas.gov

Mesquite Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration,
(972) 216-8132,
mesquiteartscenter.org

Round Top Houston Jazz Orchestra, (979) 249-3129,
festivalhill.org

Houston MLK Grande Parade, mlkgrandeparade.org

New Caney [19-20] Hold 'Em & Hit 'Em Barbecue Cook-Off, hhclub.org

Fredericksburg [19-21] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094,
fbgtradedays.com

Bastrop [19-21, 26-28, Feb. 2-4] Freaky Friday,
(512) 200-3826,
bastropoperahouse.org

Victoria Lyle Lovett and His Large Band, (361) 576-4500,
victoriasymphony.com

Plano [20-21] Dallas Area Train Show, (972) 941-5840,
dfwtrainshows.com

Amarillo Bert Kreischer,
1-800-692-1338,
amarillotheater.com

Richards Guthrie Jones,
(936) 436-9050,
wscwinery.com

Raymondville [24-27] Willacy County Livestock Show & Fair, wclsf.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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



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Pick of the Month

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Granbury, January 20
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visitgranbury.com

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30

Harlingen Barbara Padilla, (956) 392-9757
harlingenconcert.com

FEBRUARY

01

Frisco East-West Shrine Bowl, (813) 281-8686,
shrinebowl.com

Bandera [1-3] Cowboy Mardi Gras, (830) 796-4849,
11thstcowboybar.com

02

Fredericksburg First Friday Art Walk, (830) 990-8160,
visitfredericksburgtx.com

Granbury Aquatic Wild Workshop, (650) 471-3285,
tpwd.texas.gov

Lake Jackson Colbie Caillat, (979) 230-3658,
brazospport.edu

JANUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

26

La Grange Marcia Ball, (979) 968-9944,
thebugleboy.org

Fulton [26-27] Cruising the Coast Quilt Show,
piecemakersbythebay.org

South Padre Island [26-28] Market Days,
spimarketdays.com

27

Jefferson Mardi Gras Queen Mab Ball, (903) 665-3733,
mardigrasupriver.com

Port Aransas Garden Club Home Tour, (361) 834-4130,
portaransasgardenclub.org

Round Top Asleep at the Wheel, (979) 249-3129,
festivalhill.org

29

Johnson City [29-Feb. 23] Wine Lovers Celebration, (872) 216-9463,
texashillcountrywineries.org

03

North Zulch Volunteer Fire Department Chili Cookoff, (979) 488-9214,
facebook.com/nzvf

Sweetwater Lift Every Voice,
sweetwaterauditorium.org

Local Landmarks

They define our landscapes, become guideposts when giving directions, and are a point of pride in communities large and small. Texas landmarks are as full of character and charm as the Texans who create them.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 CASE RAMIREZ-MELTON
LAMAR ELECTRIC
 Sunset at the Eiffel Tower in Texas' Paris.

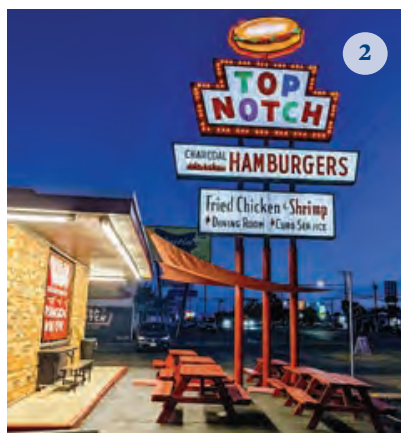


2 CARL BURNHAM
PEDERNALES EC
 A longtime Austin favorite, Top Notch has been grilling up burgers and other fare since 1971.

3 MARK BONAME
JACKSON EC
 You can see these Easter Island statue replicas on the loop in Victoria.



4 DENNIS MURPHY
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
 The blueprints mistakenly had inches instead of feet, and the builder in Wichita Falls made it as it was written.



Upcoming Contests

- DUE JAN 10** Rides
- DUE FEB 10** Food and Cooking
- DUE MAR 10** Shells and Scales



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Local Landmarks photos from readers.



Touched by an Angel

An unflappable donkey imparts peace on a farm

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN TOMAC

GROWING UP, my family lived on a tree-lined street in Waco but longed for the country life, so my parents bought land in nearby Rosenthal. It was only 24 acres, but we called it “the farm.”

Excitement at the farm escalated when our next-door neighbor—who owned a real farm—came home one day with a trailer load of donkeys. They were a sight to behold—all those impossibly long ears sticking up above the sides of the trailer.

I was smitten. My grandmother had just read Marguerite Henry’s *Brighty of the Grand Canyon* (about a burro that lived in the gorge) aloud to me, and this load of donkeys made my heart ache. I begged my parents to buy one.

Unloaded into a pen, the donkeys were a mixed bag—fat, thin, gentle,

grumpy, young and ancient—but one little brown jenny with shaggy hair and a white nose poked her head through the fence. Her kind brown eyes gazed right into mine. My parents, imagining the word “babysitter” printed in large letters on her forehead, cheerfully handed over \$25. I named her Bright Angel, after the donkey in Henry’s book.

Bright Angel was no Secretariat. She had one speed, a slow walk. She was kind-hearted and quiet and held no animosity toward any living thing. Eventually, she became my best friend.

If I rode her down the gravel road to the little gas station on the corner, she waited patiently outside while I went in to get a Grapette and a Zero candy bar. She won best supporting actress for many a flickery homemade Western after my older brother got an 8 mm movie camera for his birthday.

When Christmas approached, my school, St. Alban’s in Waco, decided to enter a float in the citywide parade. My parents volunteered Angel to ride on the float and carry the Virgin Mary to Bethlehem.

When we loaded her onto the flatbed trailer, she didn’t twitch an ear. I was the Virgin Mary, a most exalted role for a 6-year-old. A large man dressed as the angel Gabriel stood near the front of the float with a tinfoil trumpet in case of unanticipated excitement, but even the bands and the firetruck’s siren left Angel unperturbed.

She got a cinnamon roll for her fine performance.

Eventually my brothers and I graduated to horses and our parents to larger farms, but Angel lived a long and peaceful life as a cherished member of the family, proving that even the most unlikely of best friends can be a lifelong treasure. ■



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