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# Texas Coop Power

FOR TRINITY VALLEY EC MEMBERS

MAY 2024

## Behind the Scenes

The real working ranch  
of TV's 'Yellowstone'

**TRINITY  
VALLEY EC  
NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16



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# May 2024



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### Overpass Easels

Michael Ford's larger-than-life art merges traffic and culture along Texas highways.

*Story by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers  
Photos courtesy Michael Ford*

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### Sixes on the Small Screen

The people of the storied Four Sixes Ranch—as seen on 'Yellowstone'—work to preserve its legacy.

*Story by Margaret Buranen  
Photos by R.J. Hinkle*

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#### ON THE COVER

Some of the 700–800 quarter horses at the Four Sixes Ranch.  
*Photo by R.J. Hinkle*

#### ABOVE

Michael Ford with his sculpted panel that celebrates Wichita Falls' Hotter'N Hell Hundred cycling event.  
*Photo courtesy Michael Ford*





*May 16*  
**National Love  
 a Tree Day**

One of Texas' largest and oldest—Big Tree, a live oak at Goose Island State Park near Rockport—is estimated to be up to 1,100 years old.

---

**FINISH THIS  
 SENTENCE**  
 Summer means ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our March prompt: **Music makes me ...**

Forget my troubles for a little while.  
 RENEE TWEED  
 VIA FACEBOOK

Release those wonderful endorphins that make me grab a broom and give a concert for my plants and fish.  
 JAMES D. WILLIAMS  
 VIA FACEBOOK

Reminisce about the time in my life that the song came out.  
 HARRY MACK  
 UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES  
 GRAFORD

Think of the many times I danced with my dad.  
 PATTI FISHER  
 BOWIE-CASS EC  
 TEXARKANA

Connect to yesterday, hope for the future and dance today.  
 MICHELLE WINN  
 PEDERNALES EC  
 KYLE

Visit our website to see more responses.

# Wakeboard Wizardry

**FUN TIMES** for a 6-year-old wakeboarding on Coletto Creek Reservoir outside Victoria turned into a teenager's passion. And for 14 years, Blake Daniel, pictured above, practiced and competed, even as he became a distribution engineer at South Texas Electric Cooperative.

Finally, in September 2023, Daniel reached the pinnacle—capturing a wakeboarding world title in his age group in an international competition in Portugal.

"It was crazy. I can't explain it," he said. "It's something that I feel like we've been working for forever. Finally, to win is an unreal feeling."

Many family members, wearing shirts that read, "I throw Texas-sized tantrums," shared Daniel's joy. In wakeboarding lingo, tantrums are good things—blackflips on a board.

## Contests and More

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**RECOMMENDED READING**  
 On National Paranormal Day, May 3, consider the mysterious musical presence that sometimes intrudes upon a Houston library's stillness. Read *Shh!* from December 2020.



DANIEL: COURTESY BLAKE DANIEL; BABY: JOSE MANUEL GELPI DIAZ | DREAMSTIME.COM



DAVE SHAFER

**MARCH 2024 The Retirement of a Legend**

“Danny Williams and his son, Gordon, used to come to Concho Valley Electric Cooperative for safety meetings. If you didn’t learn something from Danny, you weren’t listening.”

TOMMY EARNEST  
CONCHO VALLEY EC  
SAN ANGELO

**Pier Placement**

*Buoyed by Vice* [March 2024] stated that the Balinese Room “sat atop a pier that jutted into the bay.” I thought it was on the seawall, jutting out over the Gulf of Mexico.

John Eaves  
Pedernales EC  
Leander

**EDITOR’S NOTE** You’re correct. We have fixed the story online.

**Katy’s Spunk**

Gordon Jennings was my husband’s great-great-grandfather [*A Revere of Our Own*, March 2024]. I am writing the story of our family history for our eight grandchildren, and one of them is named Katy. I believe she has as much spunk as the first Katy Jennings!

Judy Jennings  
Wise EC  
Paradise

**Vintage Puzzles**

My grandfather made quite a few wooden puzzles in the 1920s and ’30s and apparently sold them, as some have labels from Vincil Novelty Co. [*Puzzling Times*, February 2024]. My brothers, all my cousins and I still have many of them.

Dorothee Johnson  
Grayson-Collin EC  
Whitesboro

**Adorable Donkeys**

As a former longtime breeder, trainer and exhibitor of donkeys, it warms my heart whenever something positive is written about these wonderful animals [*Touched by an Angel*, January 2024].

The story of Angel riding on a float during a Christmas parade was priceless.

Sandra Osborne Neeley  
United Cooperative Services  
Grandview



KATE GLEYZER

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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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# Sixes ON THE Small Screen

The people of the  
storied Four Sixes  
Ranch—as seen  
on 'Yellowstone'—  
work to preserve  
its legacy



**I**F you watched *Yellowstone* spinoff *1883*, you probably saw Joe Leathers. But you likely didn't know it.

He was on screen for about three seconds, driving cattle on horseback.

"It was a long-distance shot, so you couldn't tell it was me," he says.

It was a bit part, but Leathers is the leading man at the ranch that has become a centerpiece for the *Yellowstone* TV series. He has managed West Texas' Four Sixes Ranch since 2008.

The show and its characters are make-believe, but Leathers' work is quite real. He spends "as many days as possible" working cattle with his colleagues at the ranch, though his job keeps him out of the saddle more than he would like.

*Yellowstone*, created and written by actor Taylor Sheridan, tells the story of a fictional Montana ranch owned by the Dutton family. Four Sixes makes its on-screen debut in the fourth season, when ranch hand Jimmy Hurdstrom is sent away to improve his attitude and cowboy skills. But instead of hating it, Jimmy loves the ranch and wants to stay there.

The real-life Four Sixes covers more than a quarter-million acres, making it one of the 10 largest ranches in Texas.

The main ranch, near Guthrie, east of Lubbock, comprises 142,372 acres and gets its electricity from South Plains Electric Cooperative. In the Panhandle, the Dixon Creek Ranch division in Carson and Hutchison counties spans another 114,455 acres. A third portion, the Frisco Creek Ranch division, covers 9,428 acres in Sherman County and is served by Rita Blanca Electric Cooperative.

There are plenty of outdoor sights to film at the ranch, including sprawling fields and swift, beautiful horses herding cattle. Wildlife includes quail, deer, Barbary sheep, turkeys, wild hogs, coyotes, bobcats, migrating ducks and geese, songbirds, rattlesnakes, and even some antelope. Every year the main ranch house is surrounded by migrating butterflies for two or three days around Halloween. "It's the most beautiful sight," Leathers says.

The Burnett family established Four Sixes more than 150 years ago and passed it down for four generations.



In 1870, Samuel "Burk" Burnett bought some cattle already branded 6666 (contrary to a legend about the ranch being named for a winning poker hand). He kept on buying more land and more cattle, and the four sixes stuck.

Burnett left the ranch to his only surviving grandchild, Anne Valliant Burnett Hall (later Tandy), in trust for her unborn child. Upon the death of "Miss Anne," as she was known, in 1980, her only child, Anne Burnett Windfohr Marion, inherited her grandfather's and great-grandfather's estates, including Four Sixes.

Nowadays, Four Sixes is a whole lot more than a part-time TV set. It's still a working ranch with large herds of high-quality beef cattle and the quarter horses it breeds.

The ranch raised longhorns, shorthorns and Herefords in its earlier years, but for the past 25 years, the cattle herd has been entirely Black Angus. Leathers says this breed has provided the most consistent quality.

One thing that hasn't changed: The cattle have always been cared for the same way—on horseback. Each of the 16–18 cowboys working the ranch has several quarter horses for their work. Vaquero (Spanish for cow herder) is Leathers' favorite horse. He says the sorrel gelding "has a big motor. He's tough, very athletic and has a lot of cow sense. He's a pretty exceptional horse."

The ranch's use of quarter horses is no wonder given that Marion and Four Sixes have a deep connection with the breed. Marion's mother, Miss Anne, co-founded the American Quarter Horse Association in 1940, and Marion displayed a devotion to her animals.

"Anne [Marion] was a strong woman, a very good businessperson. She knew cattle and horses," Leathers says. "Anne was very giving and very demanding. She didn't set you up for failure. She set you up for success."

OPPOSITE The mare pasture at Four Sixes Ranch in West Texas. ABOVE Joe Leathers has managed Four Sixes, which covers more than a quarter-million acres, since 2008.





## 'It's a LOVE AFFAIR with the land of WEST TEXAS.'

During one crisis, the drought of 2010–11, the ranch went to great lengths to keep its herd and its acres healthy.

“There was no water between Guthrie and Nebraska,” Leathers says. “We ended up taking our cattle to nine ranches in five states, leasing land to make sure we didn’t hurt our land. Our herd was not completely back home until 2015.”

After Marion assumed control of Four Sixes in 1980, she hired Dr. Glenn “Doc” Blodgett as the ranch’s resident veterinarian and horse division manager. Together they established a first-class quarter horse breeding program. Adding artificial insemination services for Four Sixes’ stallions allowed mares across the U.S. to be bred to them.

Today, Dr. Nathan Canaday fills Blodgett’s role. He and two associate veterinarians care for the ranch’s herd of 700–800 quarter horses.

Canaday first came to the ranch in 2006 as a college intern at the veterinary hospital. He returned the next summer. The experience “convinced me to become a veterinarian,” he says. “I thought if I could become a veterinarian at a large ranch like Four Sixes, I would have my dream job.” Canaday became a full-time vet at Four Sixes in 2011 and assumed his current role in 2022, after Blodgett died.

The veterinary team works out of a clinic with state-of-the-art imaging and other equipment. The hospital also serves

other residents in the area, including several big ranches. Canaday says he and his team are the only vets within 60 miles. They treat the region’s horses for colic and lameness, do dentistry work, and even provide breeding services.

“We keep the history and culture of ranching, but we operate on the cutting edge of veterinary medicine,” Canaday says.

When Sheridan decided to add the Texas storyline to *Yellowstone*, he secured Marion’s permission to film at Four Sixes. Though shooting the show means bringing a small army of hundreds of cast and crew members to the ranch, it “really doesn’t interfere with ranch work,” Leathers says. “There’s a lot of people, equipment and vehicles, but they get it done and then they’re gone.”

Pandemic restrictions delayed the filming of Season 4 until August 2020, and it began to air in late 2021. Sadly, Marion didn’t live to see her beloved ranch on TV. She died in February 2020 at the age of 81. Her will stipulated that all her ranch holdings be sold.





OPPOSITE Boots O'Neal has been a working cowboy for more than 75 years, including 30-plus years at Four Sixes. LEFT Two of the thousands of Black Angus cattle that make up the ranch's herd.

## As Seen on TV

Before it was a backdrop for *Yellowstone*, Four Sixes was a setting for several Marlboro cigarette commercials during the 1960s. *Yellowstone's* final six episodes are set to premiere in November.

That meant Four Sixes would not be Burnett family-owned for the first time since its founding. Fortunately, a new owner who shared the family's values was interested. Sheridan, who was raised in Fort Worth, put together a group of investors and became the majority owner in 2022.

Sheridan also has a ranch down the road, in Weatherford, and another in Wyoming. But this one is special for him.

"It's a love affair with the land of West Texas," Sheridan told *Fort Worth Magazine* in 2022. "There's a tremendous amount of discipline that it takes to build a ranch like this. It takes strength, excellence, integrity and faith, and that's the main mission statement of the ranch. We're going to live up to that."

Leathers says that having all of Four Sixes under one owner helped the ranch exist for 150 years. Now that the ranch is in Sheridan's hands, "he's determined for it to be here for another 150 years," Leathers says.

"You have to make money for the ranch to be successful,

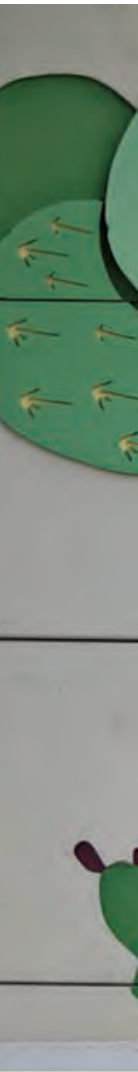
but you can still hold on to the traditions. Taylor has a passion for the cowboy life. Four Sixes will continue it on. We'll continue to be a leader in breeding and ranching."

Protecting that legacy means protecting the animals and the land of Four Sixes through conservation. The ranch works with an environmental firm and employs a variety of best practices.

To prevent soil erosion and save precious water, workers have built dams to create small lakes and ponds. They've cleared 100,000 acres of invasive mesquite and cedar. Composted manure from the barns is the only fertilizer used.

Leathers is proud of how they're caring for the land that has served generations of Texans.

"The cattle and the wildlife are not just coexisting," he says. "They're both thriving." ■



# - O - V - E - R - P - A - S - S - - E -

**Munday Mayor** Robert Bowen still remembers when he showed up at City Hall nearly two decades ago to have his picture taken. More than 350 other residents of the small Knox County town between Abilene and Wichita Falls were also there. Everyone had agreed to pose to help with the creation of a bridge mural—part of a highway project to widen and reroute U.S. 277, which now runs through the east part of town.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Munday residents are depicted in the silhouettes that detail an American flag mural in town. Michael Ford, in front of a cactus wall in San Antonio, with his signature gecko just to his right. Pelicans in Corpus Christi and cotton bolls in Lubbock.

Carvings of the residents' silhouettes now form the textured red stripes of a huge depiction of an American flag that unfurls across an overpass retaining wall where U.S. 277 crosses Texas 222. There's a boy bouncing a basketball, a wife kissing her firefighter husband, two girls holding watermelon slices, a cowboy toting his saddle. Bowen—who's still mayor—stands with two neighbors.

"Like any small town, we were worried when the highway went around us," he recalls. "But we've done OK, and we've enjoyed our mural. It's unique."

Munday's road art is among more than 50 pieces across Texas that Michael Ford designed over the course of about 14 years of working for the Texas Department of Transportation. "I've been retired 10 years, and I still get to talk





# A-S-E-L-S

## Michael Ford's larger-than-life art merges traffic and culture along Texas highways

about my public art," quips Ford, who lives near Wimberley and is a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member. "I like to say my hobby became my job."

Artistic since childhood, he served as a medical illustrator while in the Army and later worked 10 years for a civil engineering firm. In 1994, TxDOT's bridge division in Austin hired Ford as a draftsman. Soon he was helping engineers create graphics for their presentations. In the meantime, his wife, Betsy, signed him up for a stone-carving class.

"During lunch at work, I'd pull out my limestone block and chisel on it," Ford recalls. "When my boss saw my gargoyle sculpture, he said, 'Somehow, someday, we're going to put one on a bridge.'"

A few months later, Ford had his chance. When TxDOT's Lubbock division wanted a whimsical logo to dress up a new east-west freeway, he offered to do the work himself. The project became his. He also acquired a new job title—graphics artist. That was in 1998.

Using his own furrowed brow as a model, Ford sculpted Windy Man as a symbol of Lubbock's infamous gusts and dust. With flowing hair and puffy cheeks, the 3D concrete face blows a dust cloud through pursed lips. However, after the first of a planned 20 went up in 2004—after years of highway design and construction—opponents demanded that the "pagan" Windy Man be removed.

Eventually, TxDOT tried again and installed one Windy Man at the intersection of the Marsha Sharp Freeway and

Avenue L in 2011. He blows dust high above an arts district bridge mural, also designed by Ford. Lubbock overpasses also display red yuccas and a Buddy Holly tribute, courtesy of Ford.

“They all have stories,” Ford says. “Their main purpose has always been to give residents something that’s unique to their community.”

**Town by town,** Ford worked with mayors and residents to design what they desired. About five years before *Windy Man*, Childress debuted Ford’s talents. Just west of the town, on the edge of the Panhandle near the Oklahoma border, a gigantic stagecoach, windmill and wheat heads—set into overpass retaining walls on U.S. 287 at County Road 9—symbolize the town’s strong ties to agriculture.

Similarly, Goree in Knox County and Robstown in Nueces County chose cotton bolls to grace their highway walls.

And, like Munday, Goree showcases an American flag and Texas flag in addition to cotton. Sinton, just north of Corpus Christi, features a cattle drive on all four overpass ramps as U.S. 181 comes into town from the east.

In Wichita Falls, concrete bicyclists in helmets race across retaining walls in celebration of the city’s annual *Hotter’N Hell Hundred* cycling event. Comanche residents chose rolling hills, live oaks and Native Americans on

horseback to honor their natural heritage.

Kemp’s ridley sea turtles adorn concrete pillars of an overhead sign on the John F. Kennedy Memorial Causeway in Corpus Christi. White-tailed bucks and does pose among prickly pear cactuses in Laredo.

During an Interstate 35 expansion project, TxDOT offered cities the chance to have their own bridge art along frontage roads. Jump off the freeway at Salado to see a stagecoach driven by three cowboys and six horses. At Troy, a bird flits from fence post to post in a series of four windmill murals.

Farther north in West, three murals depict twirling Czech dancers and a polka band, reflecting the city’s cultural roots. In Abbott, silhouettes of a farmer on a tractor and a windmill behind a derelict barn stretch across retaining walls.

“I always designed on a dime,” says Ford, who used pencil sketches and computer software to construct his images that, when enlarged, measure up to 100 feet wide and 50 feet high. Instead of expensive rubber, he carved sheets of extruded foam to form molds that precast concrete companies used to make 5-by-10-foot concrete panels. At work sites, construction crews pieced the panels into place like a puzzle.

And like any good puzzle, some of Ford’s artworks contain a secret.





CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE A stagecoach seems to be charging through Salado. Ford with bas-relief troops just east of Copperas Cove on Fort Cavazos. Ford sculpts Windy Man in extruded foam. Czech dancers in West.



“If the design allowed, I’d hide a tiny gecko, like in the oak leaves of a state seal and Windy Man’s hair,” he says. “That became my maker’s mark and the brand name that I continue to use as an artist—Art Gecko.”

Nowadays Ford pours his creativity into crafting sculptures from gourds. Since his retirement from TxDOT, he’s transformed the hard-shelled fruits—kin to pumpkins and melons—into award-winning pieces, such as fairy houses, abstract sculptures, a fanged monster mask and a retro spaceship on the moon.

As Ford and his wife make their way to gourd festivals, they sometimes pass his bridge art. His reaction is what he hopes other travelers have.

“They always bring a smile,” he says. “And I love it when I get messages and photos from people who have spotted one of my walls. Life doesn’t get much better than that.” ■

**TCP** Find this story on our website for a map of Ford’s highway art and direct links to each of the pieces mentioned.



## Ford’s Favorite Five

**U.S. flag wall, Munday** Etched into the U.S. 277 overpass at Texas 222.

**Czech dancers, West** Along the Interstate 35 frontage road, where it crosses West Oak Street/T M W Parkway.

**Windmill, wheat and a covered wagon, Childress** Cast into the north side of Highway 287, where it crosses Farm to Market Road 164/County Road 9.

**Stagecoach walls, Salado** Along the Interstate 35 frontage road near Williams Road/Salado Plaza Road.

**Pilot walls, Kingsville** Where East Caesar Avenue runs under U.S. 77.



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**YES.** Please reserve the *"Spirit of the Southwest" Turquoise Jewelry Collection* for me as described in this announcement, beginning with *Issue One, The Pendant*. I am under no obligation. I understand I may return my item free of charge. I will be billed prior to shipment.

\*Plus a total of \$8.99 shipping and service per issue; see [bradfordexchange.com](http://bradfordexchange.com) Please allow 4-6 weeks after initial payment for shipment. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mrs. Mr. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**923331-E54801**



MESSAGE  
FROM  
GENERAL  
MANAGER/  
CEO

JEFF LANE

## Bringing Power Home

I SAW A STATISTIC THE other day that made me stop and think: More than 700 million people around the world lack access to a benefit that most of us take for granted: reliable electricity.

It seems so simple, doesn't it? Flip a switch, and electricity is there to cool our homes, heat our food and light up the darkness.

But when you think of everything that has to happen to bring this power to us, from the generators that start a flow of electrons through hundreds of miles of wires to a vast array of equipment needed to bring those electrons to our homes and businesses, it seems almost miraculous.

This miracle of modern society is brought to you by the dedication and hard work of thousands of people, including the 200+ employees of Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative.

Electricity has become so commonplace these days that it's easy to forget that only a couple of generations ago, it was a luxury available to few people outside urban areas.

You have electricity today because 86 years ago, the founders of TVEC got together to bring themselves and their neighbors the same power that folks in the city enjoyed. They laid the foundation for this utility, which strives not to make a profit but to offer the best service possible at a reasonable cost. And those of us who followed strive every day to uphold that mission.

Although we can look back at a proud history, the leaders of this co-op do not dwell on the past. We're constantly looking for ways to improve service and keep power affordable.

As a member of TVEC, you play your part. You have a say in the policies of the cooperative, electing fellow members to serve on the board of directors. Your voice is important to us. If you have any comments or concerns about how we do business, just give us a call at (800) 766-9576.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you and bring you a modern miracle that has become an essential part of our lives.

Electricity has come a long way, and we're proud of our progress, but we'll never lose sight of how we can best serve our members today and tomorrow. ■



EYECRAVE PRODUCTIONS | IISTOCK.COM

## May Is National Electrical Safety Month

**FAMILIES SHOULD PRACTICE** electrical safety all year round. But May is National Electrical Safety Month—a good time to pay special attention to cleaning up electrical hazards around the home.

### Here's how to start:

- ▶ Call a licensed electrician to inspect your home's wiring. Wiring wears out and can pose a fire hazard.
- ▶ Unplug appliances that you keep near water—like the blow-dryer and curling iron on the bathroom sink. Find another outlet where it's safer to use them.
- ▶ Replace lightbulbs in lamps and overhead fixtures whose wattage does not match the manufacturer's recommended wattage. If a lightbulb's wattage is higher than the lamp was designed to handle, it can overtax the lamp's wiring and cause a fire.
- ▶ Unclutter power strips. Just because your power strip has room for eight plugs doesn't mean the outlet you plug it into can handle that much load. High-voltage devices, like toaster ovens, shouldn't be plugged into the same strip.
- ▶ Put away extension cords. They're not designed for constant use. Use them only temporarily. ■



# Why Electric Co-ops Replace Utility Poles

**YOU PROBABLY DON'T** pay much attention to the thousands of utility poles found throughout Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative's service territory, but did you know these tall structures are the backbone of our distribution network?

Strong, sturdy utility poles ensure a reliable electric system, which is why we routinely inspect the poles on our lines. Throughout the year, our crews and contractors check poles for decay caused by exposure to the elements. They know which poles are oldest and conduct inspections through a rotational process. Typically, a standard wooden distribution pole is expected to last more than 50 years.

Occasionally, poles need to be replaced for other reasons besides decay and old age. Weather disasters, power line relocation and car crashes are potential causes for immediate replacement. When possible, TVEC communicates when and where pole replacements will take place so that you stay informed of where crews will be working.

Here's a quick breakdown of how crews replace a utility pole:

When a pole needs to be replaced, crews will start the process by digging a hole, typically next to the pole being replaced. The depth of the hole must be at least 15% of the new pole's height.

Next, the new pole must be fitted with bolts, cross arms, insulators, ground wires and arm braces—all of the necessary parts for delivering safe and reliable electricity. Crews then safely detach the power lines from the old pole. The new pole is then raised and guided carefully into position, and the lines are attached, leaving the new pole to do its job.

So the next time you come across a co-op crew inspecting or replacing a pole, use caution and know that this process ensures a more reliable electric system for you, our members. ■



NRECA

## 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](http://tvec.net)

### Board of Directors

Howard Tillison, Chairman, District 6  
Carolyn Minor, Vice Chairwoman, District 1  
Jo Ann Hanstrom, Secretary, District 4  
Jeff Priest, District 2  
Paul Weatherford, District 3  
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Jack Endres, District 7

### General Manager/CEO

Jeff Lane

## 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

#### Lobby Hours

8:15 a.m.–4:45 p.m.

### VISIT US ONLINE

[tvec.net](http://tvec.net)



Check us out at  
[TexasCoopPower.com/tvec](http://TexasCoopPower.com/tvec)



LIUDMILA CHERNETSKA | ISTOCK.COM



TVEC ENERGY  
MANAGEMENT  
SUPERVISOR  
CHRIS WALKER, BAP

## Keep Conditioned Air Inside

**REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF AIR** that leaks into and out of your home is a cost-effective way to cut heating and cooling costs, increase comfort, and create a healthier indoor environment.

Caulking and weatherstripping are two techniques that offer quick returns on investments. Caulk is generally used for cracks and openings around door and window frames, and weatherstripping is used to seal doors and operable windows.

Save on heating and cooling costs by checking for air leaks in common trouble spots in your home.

### Leaks Matter

Air leakage occurs when outside air enters and conditioned air leaves your house uncontrollably through cracks and openings.

During cold or windy weather, too much air may enter the house. When it's warmer and less windy, not enough air may enter, which can result in poor indoor air quality. Air leakage also can contribute to moisture problems that affect your family's health and the structure's durability. Sealing cracks and openings reduces drafts and cold spots, improving comfort.

The goal is to reduce air leakage and to provide controlled ventilation as needed. Before air sealing, you first need to detect air leaks and assess your ventilation needs for indoor air quality. You can then apply air-sealing techniques and materials, including caulk and weatherstripping.

### Sealing Leaks

Hire an energy assessor or other weatherization expert to test your home for air tightness.

Caulk and weatherstrip around doors and windows that leak air. Unfortunately, this chore is not a one and done. You'll need to check your work annually to make sure it's all still in good shape.

Caulk and seal areas where plumbing, ducts or electrical wiring comes through walls, floors, ceilings and soffits over cabinets.

Install foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls.

Inspect dirty spots on any visible insulation for air leaks and mold. Seal leaks with low-expansion spray foam made for this purpose and install house flashing if needed.

Look for dirty spots on your carpet and ceiling paint, which may indicate air leaks at interior wall/ceiling joints and wall/floor joists, and caulk them.

Use foam sealant on larger gaps around windows, baseboards and other places where air may leak out.

Check your dryer vent to be sure it isn't blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire.

Replace exterior door sweeps and thresholds with ones that have pliable sealing gaskets.

Seal air leaks around fireplace chimneys, furnaces and gas-fired water heater vents with fire-resistant materials such as sheet metal or plasterboard and furnace cement caulk.

Keep the fireplace flue damper tightly closed when it's not in use. Fireplace flues are made from metal, and over time repeated heating and cooling can cause the metal to warp or break, creating a channel for air loss.

To seal your flue when not in use, consider an inflatable chimney balloon that fits beneath your fireplace flue. They can be removed easily and reused hundreds of times. If you forget to remove the balloon before making a fire, the balloon will automatically deflate within seconds of coming into contact with heat. 144833001

A reasonably capable do-it-yourselfer can create an inexpensive fireplace flue plug by filling a high quality plastic trash bag with fiberglass batt scraps and jamming it into the flue. Attach a durable cord with a tag that hangs down into the fireplace to remind you the flue is blocked and provide for easy removal. If you want to save money on fireplaces, replace them with an EPA-certified insert, installed by a certified professional. ■



# Lithium-Ion Battery Safety Tips

**LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES** keep many mobile devices ticking, electric bikes rolling and electric vehicles motoring. Under normal circumstances these batteries are safe, but if they get damaged or overheated, they can cause dangerous fires.

May is Electrical Safety Month—a good time to talk about the steps that can be taken to reduce electrical fires, fatalities, injuries and property loss cause by faulty batteries.

Emerging technologies such as electric bikes and vehicles allow you to tap into efficient energy, but these rapid advancements often require expanded electric services to safely meet the increased energy demand.

**Follow these tips to help ensure that the lithium-ion batteries remain safe.**

Only use manufacturer-provided or -authorized batteries and charging equipment. All equipment should be certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.

Remove the battery or charging device from the power source once charging is complete to avoid overheating, and don't leave batteries charging when no one is home or everyone is asleep.

Keep and charge batteries at room temperature. Issues can occur below 32 degrees and above 105 degrees.

Keep batteries and devices from heat sources or anything that can catch fire.

Don't store batteries in vehicles or direct sunlight.

Maintenance on batteries or electric mobility devices should be completed by a qualified professional.

Discontinue using devices or batteries that have an unusual odor, change colors, give off too much heat, change shapes or are leaking, smoking or not keeping a charge. ■



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Cinco de Mayo**  
Sunday, May 5

**Mother's Day**  
Sunday, May 12

**National River Cleanup Day**  
Saturday, May 18

**Memorial Day**  
Monday, May 27

TVEC offices will be closed in observance of the holiday.

ANDREW SEEGMILLER | ISTOCK.COM



## You Can Help Prevent Electric Shock Drowning

**DURING NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK**, May 18–24 this year, it's important to remember that while water safety behaviors such as wearing life jackets and maintaining safe boating speeds have become commonplace, one serious hazard is still often overlooked: electric shock drowning.

Electric shock drowning can occur in fresh water when a low level of alternating current passes through a swimmer's body, causing paralysis and eventually leading to drowning.

While most marina owners maintain their facilities and post signs about potential dangers, issues can arise near any electrical connection. Electricity can “leak” into waters surrounding a marina, creating a dangerous situation that can't be seen by just looking at the water.

Common sense and vigilance are the best ways to protect yourself and your loved ones from the risk of electric shock drowning and common boating and water-related electrical hazards. **Keep these strategies in mind.**

Unless you know it's safe, don't allow yourself or anyone else to swim near docks. Avoid entering the water when launching or loading your boat.

Always maintain at least 20 feet between your boat and nearby power lines.

If you feel a tingle while swimming, the water may be electrified. Get out as soon as possible, avoiding metal objects such as ladders.

Have your boat's electrical system inspected and upgraded, if necessary, by a certified marine electrician.

Have ground-fault circuit interrupters installed on your boat and test them once a month.

Consider having equipment leakage circuit interrupters installed on boats to protect nearby swimmers from potential electricity leakage into water around your boat.

Never stand or swim in water when turning off electrical devices or switches.

Electric shock drowning can also occur in swimming pools, hot tubs and spas. Routinely have an electrician inspect and upgrade your pool, spa or hot tub accordingly to help keep your family safe. ■



# Don't Fuel the Fire

**Wildfires can start unexpectedly and move quickly and unpredictably, destroying everything in their path.**

**If fire is reported nearby:**

**Place** vital records and small items of value in your car and park it facing the direction of escape. Heed evacuation orders.

**Clear** a firebreak around buildings.

**Shut** gas off at the meter and turn off propane tanks.

**Leave** the electricity on, especially if it powers a well.

**Turn on** sprinklers. Wet down the house and shrubs close to structures.

**Prevention:**

**Mow** grass short. Rake leaves. Clear away debris.

**Keep** hay bales and firewood away from structures and electric lines.

**Make** a family evacuation plan. Keep an inventory of home valuables in a fireproof box.

**Trinity Valley EC encourages you to always practice safety.**



## Cool Off Your Garage

**MOST GARAGES HAVE** little or no insulation in the walls or ceiling, but by adding some, you can help keep your whole house cooler.

Most folks don't spend much time out there with the cars, lawn tools and Christmas decorations, so keeping it cool in the summer or warm in the winter might seem like a waste of money.

But an attached garage that's as hot as a furnace in the summer can make your house hot, too. If your garage is heating up to 80, 90 or 100 degrees on sunny afternoons, some of that heat is going to transfer into the house.

That means your home's air conditioning system has to work double time.

It doesn't mean you should put an AC unit in your uninsulated garage. That would be about as efficient as trying to air condition your backyard; the cool air will leak right through the door, ceiling and walls.

The solution is to add insulation to walls and ceilings to block the outdoor heat and keep it out of the garage.

Replacing an old garage door with a new, energy-efficient model can reduce energy loss through the door by up to 71%. ■





## Dillas Primo Quesadillas

Amid all the new restaurants in Forney, Dillas stands out

**THE RAPIDLY GROWING FORNEY AREA** has no lack of choice for hungry lineworkers. As the retail buildout of the intersection of U.S. Highway 80 and FM 548 continues, the food choices have grown to include flavors from around the globe along with many traditional fast-food favorites.

That makes it a little bit surprising that a Tex-Mex flavor has made a big enough impression to stand out in the crowd.

Dillas Primo Quesadillas has focused on that singular dish to really push the limits of what you can fit into a tortilla on the grill.

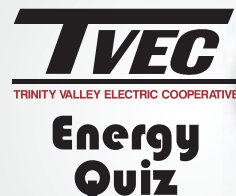
“There are all kinds of signature quesadillas or you can make up your own,” said Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative lineman Brandon Bittinger. “I like the brisket quesadilla, which has a smoky flavor with barbecue sauce and a little jalapeño kick that is really good.”

Traffic may be the biggest concern but line crews tend to eat early.

“It isn’t a real big place, but they get the food out quick and we are able to get in and get back to work without any problem.”

While a drive-thru is available, trying to eat these things on the road is not advised.

Dillas is located in Forney on Marketplace Blvd. in front of Kohls. ■



### How many Texans work in the field of energy transmission, distribution and storage?

[comptroller.texas.gov/economy/economic-data/energy/2023/texas.php](http://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/economic-data/energy/2023/texas.php)

- A • 84,500
- B • 203,777
- C • 1.2 million
- D • 700,252

Win \$100!

Send your answer and contact information to [contest@tvec.coop](mailto:contest@tvec.coop) or contact TVEC Member Services by May 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*.

## April Energy Quiz: Call Before You Dig

**UNDERGROUND UTILITY** lines have a lot of benefits, but being out-of-sight and out-of-mind can lead to a dangerous safety oversight. And even if no one is injured, contact with a buried power line can result in power outages or damaged equipment.

By calling 811, residents and businesses can get free utility locating services so that digging may be done safely. This does require planning ahead, but it is worth the effort.

Congratulations to our March Energy Quiz winner, Nicky Preston of Forney.

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

## Win \$100 Just for Reading

Somewhere, hidden on pages 16–23 is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the member services department by May 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

### Quilters Guild Puts The Pieces Together To Serve

THE HISTORY OF QUILTING CAN BE traced back to early fabric production, and spun thread before that to the very early stages of civilization. It is no wonder then that even with all of our modern industrialization, a handmade quilt is equal parts functional art and treasured keepsake. While craft of quilting starts as a hobby for many, members of the Texas Star Quilters Guild have turned their crafting into a wide-reaching service project.

“The original organization started back in 1984, and then in the early 2000s it became a full nonprofit organization as the focus shifted to the efforts to serve the community,” said Guild President Shari Curran. “We have a very wide range of members, young and old, and all together the main thing we do is making things that can be helpful for others.”

Those projects reach around Van Zandt County and beyond. Curran noted that they were working toward making 300 receiving blankets for the Hope Center in Canton, as



Janet Cole, left, and Cathy Anderson of the Texas Star Quilters Guild receive an Operation Round Up grant from Kari Wilmeth, TVEC public relations representative. They are standing with the guild's 2024 raffle quilt.

well as 150 small quilts for children that visit the Children's Advocacy Center, the ABC Room and other agencies that assist in child neglect cases.

Another outreach involves adapting clothing for bed-bound individuals in nursing homes.

“These bed jackets are great for residents who can just put them on without the need to sit up or get out of bed,” Curran said.

Other community service projects include Quilts of Valor for veterans, Beads of Courage bags for children in medical treatment and place mats for Meals on Wheels recipients.

The guild welcomes quilters of all ages and skill levels, with monthly meetings at the Van Zandt County Library.

The Guild hosts an annual quilt show, scheduled for October 18-19 at the Canton Civic Center. Find out more at [texasstarquiltersguild.org](http://texasstarquiltersguild.org). ■

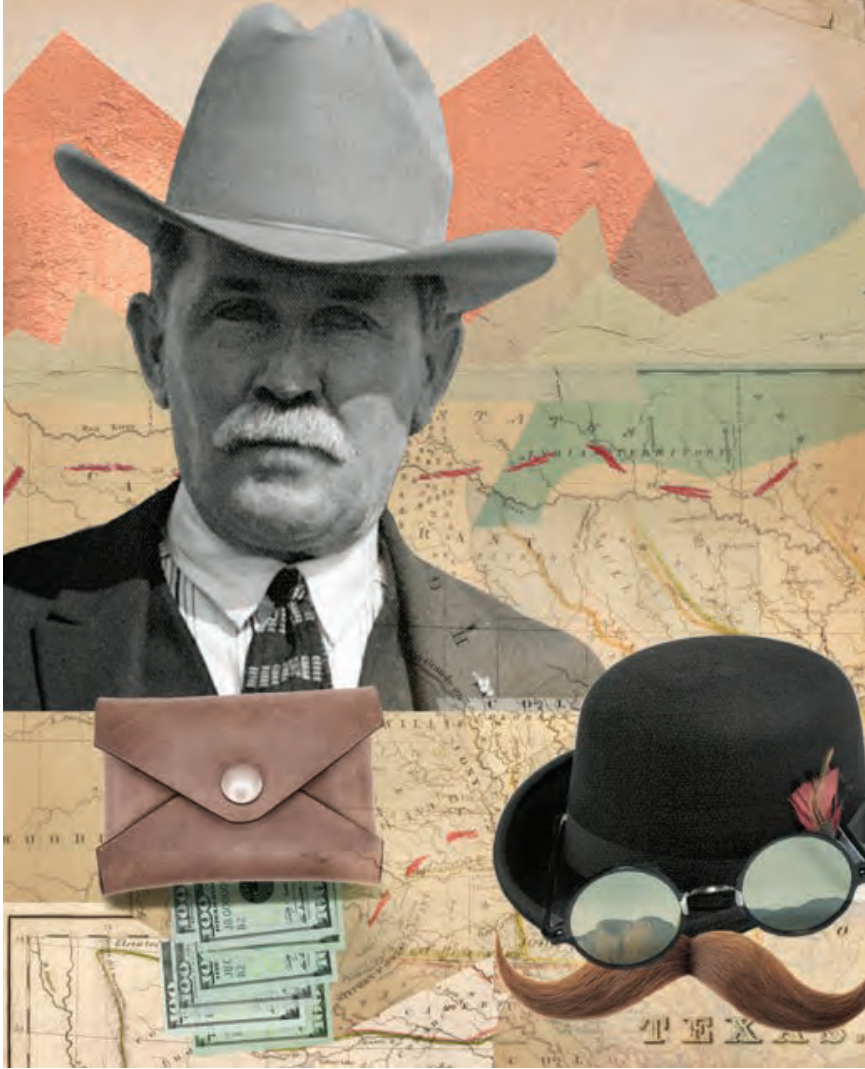
## March 2024 Operation Round Up Grants Awarded

Casey's Place - \$3,000  
Community Care Food Pantry \$5,000  
MLK Celebration of Terrell Inc. \$1,000  
Myrtle Springs Alumni Association \$2,000

Scurry-Rosser Education Foundation - \$3,500  
Texas Star Quilters Guild - \$2,000  
Water of Life Lutheran Church Food Pantry - \$3,000

Tatum Cox

Tucker Brown



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



be interested in his land. That person, Spencer, magically appeared and said they would need to go to the Adolphus Hotel to see another man.

When they sat down in the lobby to wait, Spencer cleverly steered Norfleet so that he'd sit in just the right place to discover a man's pocketbook "lost" in the crevice of the couch. Stetson was the name on an ID card inside. Spencer and Norfleet inquired at the front desk for a Mr. Stetson, got his room number and returned the pocketbook to him.

Stetson (Furey) offered them both \$100 rewards. When Norfleet refused, Stetson told him that he was a stockbroker with the Dallas exchange and said, "Would you mind me placing that money on the market and would you accept what money it might earn?"

Later that day, Stetson gave Norfleet \$800 as the amount his \$100 earned. And that's how the hook was set. From there, Norfleet handed over his own money and eventually cash guarantees, hoping to grow his wealth in the fake exchange. When the con men cleared out on the last round, absconding with all of Norfleet's money, he was left repeating to himself in a stunned haze: "\$45,000 gone, \$90,000 in debt, 54 years old." They stole nearly \$750,000 in today's money.

Norfleet tells the story of his cross-country pursuit of Furey—which took him all the way to Mexico, California, Canada and Florida—in his fast-moving autobiography, *Norfleet*, published in 1924. It's a great adventure and demonstrates an old cowboy's enormous creativity and grit. Or read a more modern version historically contextualized in Amy Reading's *The Mark Inside*.

Whichever you choose, cinch up your saddles nice and snug. It's a wild ride. ■

# Payback Time

When a Texas rancher was conned,  
he spent years tracking down the swindlers

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY DANA SMITH

**THE YEAR WAS 1921.** J. Frank Norfleet, after two years and 30,000 miles of pursuit, finally slapped handcuffs on "Mr. Stetson" in Florida. Stetson—real name Joe Furey—had swindled Norfleet out of \$45,000 in North Texas.

"Well, you old trail hound, I never expected to see you out here," Stetson said. "I thought we left you in Fort Worth, broke."

Norfleet had no experience in law enforcement, city life or sophisticated cons. He was a rancher, a man who had always lived on the edge of the Texas frontier. So when he made up his mind to pursue the band of bunco men who conned him, he used the only tools he had: unfathomable patience, cutting for

sign, camouflage by way of disguises and weaponry. He out-conned the con men.

Norfleet grew up on the Texas plains. He was a trail herder in his early days and eventually managed to buy his own ranch, near Lubbock. By the age of 54, he had finally accumulated some real wealth.

So he went to Dallas with the intent of selling his ranch to buy a bigger one. It was there that con men ensnared him in their sophisticated plot. It went like this.

Norfleet got into a seemingly casual conversation about mules in the lobby of the St. George Hotel in Dallas with a man named Hamlin. Upon hearing Norfleet had a ranch to sell, Hamlin said he just happened to know someone who might



# Spring Cakes

Celebrate every occasion with fresh and fruity flavors of the season

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Spring is here! Bring on the light, fluffy and lemony desserts. My Strawberry Pecan Icebox Cake captures the season in every bite. There's nothing more satisfying than a simple yet elegant dessert you can easily whip up. The best part of this one: It requires no baking.

## Strawberry Pecan Icebox Cake

**8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature**

**1 cup powdered sugar**

**3 cups heavy cream**

**1 tablespoon vanilla extract**

**1 tablespoon lemon zest**

**1 tablespoon lemon juice**

**1 box graham crackers (14.4 ounces)**

**4 cups sliced strawberries**

**½ cup chopped pecans**

1. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese at medium speed until smooth. Gradually add powdered sugar and continue beating until smooth.
2. Add 1 cup heavy cream and beat at low speed until smooth. Add remaining 2 cups heavy cream and mix at medium speed until light and fluffy, increasing the speed as the mixture begins to thicken. Fold in the vanilla, lemon zest and lemon juice.
3. Coat the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray. Line the bottom of the pan with ⅓ of the graham crackers.
4. Spread ⅓ of the mixture over graham crackers followed by ⅓ of the strawberries and pecans. Repeat layers two times using remaining ingredients, ending with strawberries and pecans.
5. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 4 hours or up to overnight.

**SERVES 8-12**

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Concha Icebox Cake.





## Poppy Seed Cake

PATTI CROW  
FANNIN EC

Once I bit into Crow's Poppy Seed Cake, I knew why my *abuelita* (grandma) enjoyed these tiny gems. This light, moist cake boasts a sweet nutty flavor. I love snacking on it with my afternoon tea.

- 1 package yellow cake mix (15.25 ounces)**
- 1 package lemon pudding mix (3.4 ounces)**
- ½ cup orange juice**
- ½ cup vegetable oil**
- ½ cup water**
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds**
- 4 eggs**
- ½ cup lemon juice**
- 2 cups powdered sugar**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a Bundt pan with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, beat the cake mix, pudding mix, orange juice, vegetable oil, water, poppy seeds and eggs at medium speed 5 minutes. Pour into prepared pan.
3. Bake 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
4. In a small saucepan, bring lemon juice and powdered sugar to a boil.
5. Remove cake from pan and poke holes throughout top with a fork. Pour hot glaze over cake. Allow to cool before serving.

**SERVES 10-12**

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

## Mandarin Crush Cake

DEBRA GIFFORD  
PEDERNALES EC



Hello spring ... hello yum!  
This cake is pure happiness. A touch of citrus with a pop of pineapple make Gifford's layered cake simply delightful.

**SERVES 10**



CAKE

- 1 can mandarin oranges (15 ounces), undrained**
- 1 package yellow cake mix (15.25 ounces)**
- ¾ cup vegetable oil**
- 4 eggs**
- 1 teaspoon orange extract**

FROSTING

- 1 package vanilla pudding mix (3.4 ounces)**
- 2 cans crushed pineapple (8 ounces each), undrained**
- 1 container whipped topping (8 ounces)**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

1. **CAKE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat two 8-inch round baking pans with cooking spray.
2. Reserve a few mandarin segments to decorate cake. In a large bowl, beat remaining mandarin oranges and their liquid, cake mix, oil, eggs, and orange extract at medium speed about 3 minutes.
3. Pour batter evenly into cake pans. Bake 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
4. **FROSTING** In another bowl, mix pudding mix, pineapple and its liquid, whipped topping, and vanilla until smooth. Place in fridge to chill at least 1 hour.
5. Once cakes are cooled, place 1 cake layer on a serving plate and spread half the frosting on top. Place the remaining cake layer on top and spread remaining frosting over top and sides of cake, then place reserved mandarin slices on top to decorate.
6. Chill until ready to serve.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**PUMPKIN AND SPICE** DUE MAY 10  
We're looking for something special for our October recipes. Send us your best by May 10 for a chance to win \$500.







## Mary Smith's Coconut Cake

MB WATSON  
FANNIN EC

This cake is a sweet tribute to Watson's friend Mary, who was a world-class hostess. No one turned down an invitation to her home or for any of her baked desserts. This cross between a cake and a macaroon is soft and chewy on the inside, crisp and golden on the outside. It's also the ultimate coconut lover's dream.

**2 cups flour**  
**1½ cups shredded coconut**  
**3 cups sugar, divided use**  
**1 cup solid vegetable shortening**  
**6 eggs**  
**3 teaspoons orange extract, divided use**  
**½ cup water**

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, combine flour with coconut and set aside.
3. In a large bowl, cream 2 cups sugar and shortening together at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Reduce speed to low and alternate adding eggs, one at a time, and flour until all eggs and flour are mixed. Add 1 teaspoon orange extract, beating until well mixed.
4. Spoon batter into prepared pan. Bake 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Remove pan from oven and set aside.

5. In a saucepan over medium-high heat, bring water, remaining 1 cup sugar and remaining 2 teaspoons orange extract to a boil. Continue boiling for 1 minute. Carefully pour over cake.

6. Allow cake to cool completely before serving.

SERVES 16

**TCP** Search "cake" on our website and you'll find dozens of recipes. Whatever you crave this spring, we have you covered.

## SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and snatched it up for our *Sedona Turquoise Collection*. Inspired by the work of ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.

### Jewelry Specifications:

• *Arizona turquoise* • *Silver-finished settings*

### Sedona Turquoise Collection

A. Pendant (26 cts) ~~\$299\*~~ \$99 +s&p **Save \$200**  
B. 18" Bali Naga woven sterling silver chain \$149 +s&p  
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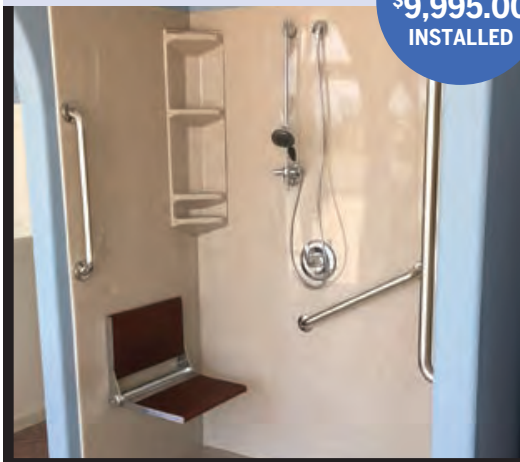
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Breaking News

Take a sledgehammer to a printer in Kyle's 'rage room'

BY CHET GARNER

IF YOU WERE to envision a day trip to the Pie Capital of Texas, you might picture homey cafés, cozy cups of coffee and buttery crusts filled with sugary happiness. And you can certainly find those things in Kyle, south of Austin. But you can also smash pie plates into tiny bits and shatter coffee cups into smithereens—legally (and safely)—at Uncharted Adventures, a unique indoor entertainment center.

I stepped into what looked like an inconspicuous warehouse on the outskirts of town and met owner Damon Fogley. He started a junk removal business after serving in the Army and soon learned about a phenomenon called rage rooms, where folks can pay to break stuff.

Fogley had more than enough junk for the job, and the concept was born in Kyle. But to create a full-on destination, he added two escape rooms, a zombie shooting range, splatter-paint lounge and plenty of Instagram-worthy backdrops. It's unconventional family fun at its finest.

Before letting out my inner Hulk on inanimate objects, I tried the zombie shooting range. Armed with a gun that shot tiny gel balls, I took aim at zombie robots jumping out from an apocalyptic set. I don't think I killed any of them (they are undead, after all), but it felt great.

Finally, it was time to rage. And so, donning full-body coveralls and a face shield, I stepped into a room full of bottles, vases, TVs and printers. I picked up a sledgehammer and, with a Neanderthal's scream, I swung it straight into a coffee maker. It flew across the room, hit the wall and broke into pieces.

It was awesome. I'm not angry by nature, but this was a strange kind of therapy that I think everyone could use. ■

ABOVE Chet poses in an Instagram-worthy setting. (No, that is not videotape of *The Daytripper* show.)

**TCP** Readers know Chet is a smashing success. See for yourself with the video on our website. Find 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.

MAY

07

**Lewisville The Elton Johns with the She**, (972) 219-3401, [cityoflewisville.com](http://cityoflewisville.com)

09

**Corsicana 50 Years of Rock and Roll**, (903) 874-7792, [corsicanapalace.com](http://corsicanapalace.com)

10

**Alamo [10–11] Watermelon Festival & BBQ Cook-Off**, (956) 787-0006, [alamotexas.org](http://alamotexas.org)

**New Braunfels [10–11] Ballet Texas Presents *Peter Pan***, (830) 627-0808, [brauntex.org](http://brauntex.org)

15

**Lakeway Lakeway Photography Club Meeting**, (512) 263-2885, [lakewayphotographyclub.com](http://lakewayphotographyclub.com)

16

**Luling Field Day**, (830) 875-2438, [lulingfoundation.org](http://lulingfoundation.org)

**Giddings [16–18] Lee County Fair**, [leecountyfairtx.com](http://leecountyfairtx.com)

17

**Columbus [17–18] Magnolia Days Festival**, (979) 732-8385, [magnoliadays.org](http://magnoliadays.org)

18

**La Grange Bluff Schuetzen-Fest**, [friendsofkbmh.org](http://friendsofkbmh.org)

23

**Kerrville [23–June 9] Kerrville Folk Festival**, (830) 257-3600, [kerrvillefolkfestival.org](http://kerrvillefolkfestival.org)

24

**Fredericksburg [24–26] Crawfish Festival**, [fbgcrawfishfestival.com](http://fbgcrawfishfestival.com)

25

**Brenham Elvis!** by Vince King and the Vegas Mafia Band, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

**Chappell Hill Art Walk**, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

26

**Lewisville Fiesta Charra**, (972) 219-3401, visitlewisville.com

**New Braunfels Antique Barn Sale and Makers Market**, (830) 629-2943, newbraunfelsconservation.org

31

**Kerrville [31-June 1] The Comedy of Errors**, (830) 896-9393, caillouxperformingarts.com

JUNE

01

**Graham Food Truck Championship of Texas**, (940) 549-0401, foodtruckchampionshipoftexas.com

**Leander Old Town Street Festival**, (512) 259-1907, oldtownstreetfestival.com

**Waxahachie [1-2] Gingerbread Trail Tour of Homes**, (972) 937-0681, elliscountymuseum.org

07

**Fredericksburg [7-8] Craft Beer Festival**, fbcraftbeerfestival.com

**Blanco [7-9] Lavender Festival**, (830) 833-5101, blancolavenderfest.com

**Ingram [7-8, 13-15, 20-22] Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat**, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

### Submit Your Event

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

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Pkg. includes 6' Box Blade and Cutter

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**1 RONALD HAVARD**  
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**2 LINDSAY HUMPHREYS**  
**SOUTH PLAINS EC**  
 "My son, Brazos, and his grandfather, Bobo, run the barrels at the Dickens County 4-H playday."

**3 TONY KRUP**  
**GRAYSON-COLLIN EC**  
 "A lone motocross rider finishing a ride at sunset in the Dallas-Fort Worth area."

**4 MARK MCCLENDON**  
**BANDERA EC**  
 The Poteet Strawberry Festival.



## Upcoming Contests

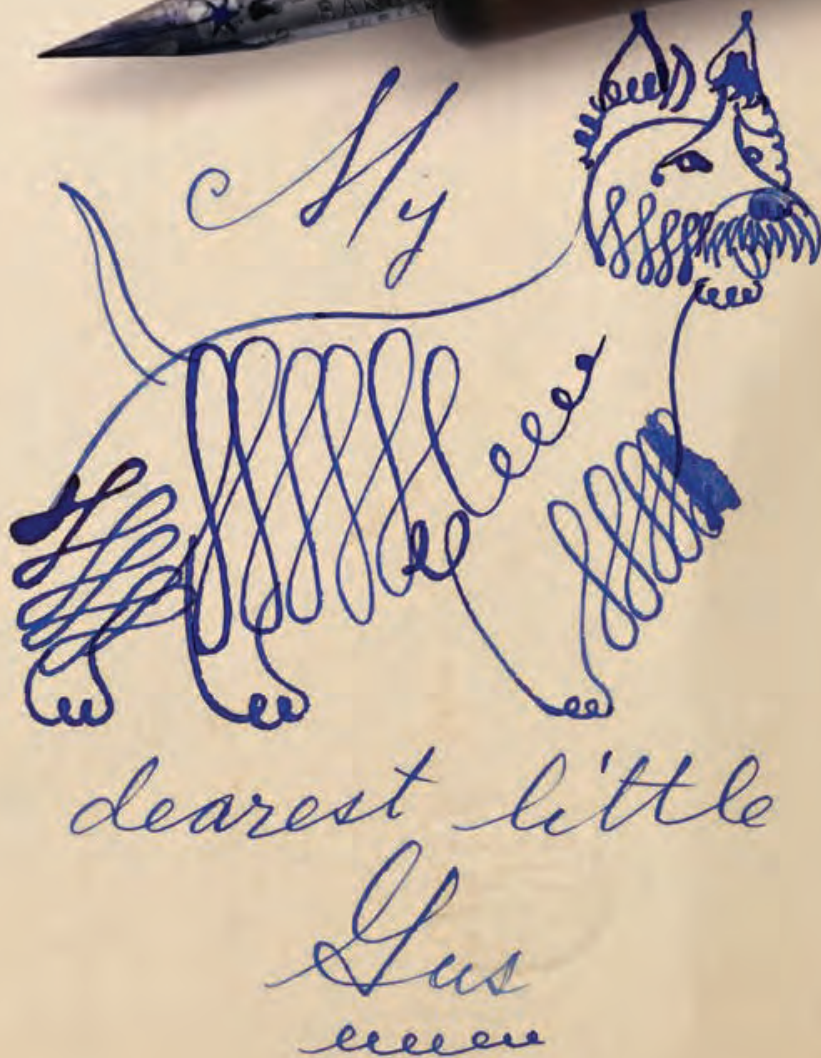
- DUE MAY 10** Parenthood
- DUE JUN 10** Climbing High
- DUE JUL 10** Mascots



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

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Rides photos from readers.





## Grandma's Best Friend

Life is better when people and dogs can age together

BY MARTHA DEERING  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
ELVIS SWIFT

WHEN MY MOTHER finally made the difficult decision to move in with my family in her early 80s, she harbored plenty of misgivings, deciding on the move only when her rheumatoid arthritis and congestive heart failure made it unsafe for her to live alone. Mother brought along her aging West Highland white terrier, Gus, a bone cancer survivor who hopped gamely through the house on his three remaining legs.

Mother left behind a sprawling brick home in town where she had lived for 30 years and took up residence with us in the country in an addition designed to accommodate her needs. Suddenly she was 20 miles from the nearest hub of civilization.

There were plenty of people to take care of her here. Still, she missed her

independence and the opportunity to go out to lunch with friends or run errands on a moment's notice.

Our grandchildren doted on their great-grandma. They drank her Ensure, did somersaults on her couch, fed Gus their cookies and badgered her to read stories. Since her addition was attached to the main house, she had to install a latch on the inside of her door in order to catch uninterrupted naps.

Gus was also unsettled by the move, his lush St. Augustine lawn replaced by spiky Bermuda grass with cows across the fence. He viewed these large animals with deep suspicion and barked ferociously when they approached his empire, a small separate yard he accessed through a doggie door.

Most of Gus' time was spent curled beside the swivel rocker where Mother read biographies and watched our pair of free-ranging peacocks, who chose the porch rail outside her window to preen themselves and admire their reflections in the glass.

For a couple of years after she came to live with us, Mother was able to drive to town for haircuts, church and social occasions, but as her health slipped, she stayed home more. Her friends, also in their 80s, came to visit less often.

But she had Gus, and scientists have known for decades that older adults who own pets reap vast benefits.

In good weather Mother strolled our long driveway with Gus' lead slipped over the handle of her walker. She could talk to Gus about anything. Unlike her great-grandchildren, he never interrupted.

Gus seemed to know the help he provided, and he was always there beside her, sporting a whiskery grin and waving tail.

She celebrated five Mother's Days with us before she died, giving three generations of our family the chance to benefit from her wisdom and to learn to honor and appreciate the life lessons older folks can teach us all.

Gus passed away peacefully a few weeks after she did. ■

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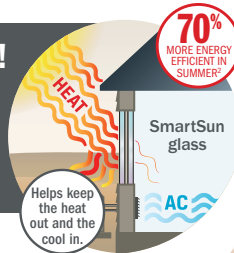
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