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IN COMFORT

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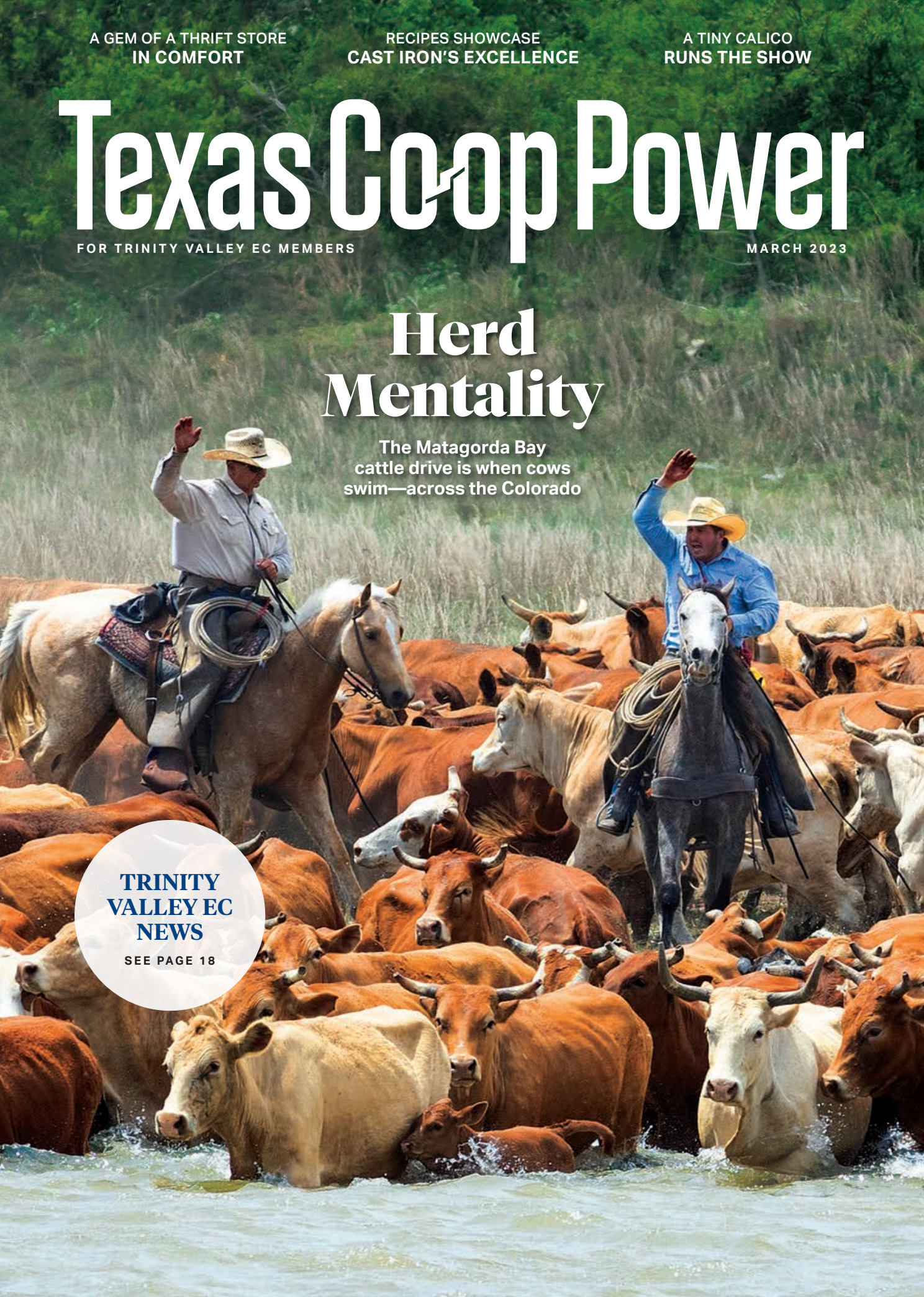
MARCH 2023

## Herd Mentality

The Matagorda Bay  
cattle drive is when cows  
swim—across the Colorado

TRINITY  
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NEWS

SEE PAGE 18



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# March 2023



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### Gently Used, Generously Shared

A small thrift shop in the Hill Country funds scholarships for local students.

*By Kristen Pettineo  
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

### 10 Until the Cows Swim Home

The Matagorda cattle drive runs right through a river—as it has for 106 years.

*Story and photos by Erich Schlegel*

ON THE COVER  
Randy Duncan, left, and Riley Rodriguez drive cattle into the Colorado River.  
*Photo by Erich Schlegel*

ABOVE  
Sally Clogston, left, founder, with April Langston, manager, of Pass It On.  
*Photo by Scott Van Osdol*

# Antsy Onslaught

**SCIENTISTS LAST YEAR** came up with a global ant census, and it's unfathomable: 20 quadrillion. That's 20 followed by 15 zeroes. Think of it this way: Ants outnumber humans at least 2.5 million to 1.

And, no, most of them don't live in Texas, though more than 250 of the 14,000-plus species worldwide are native to our state.

The dreaded fire ant isn't one. They're invasive in Texas.



## Bragging Rights

Sam Bennett of Madisonville became the first Texas A&M University golfer to win the U.S. Amateur Championship, last year. The title earns him a spot at the Masters Tournament; watch for him April 6–9.

The All-American's family are members of MidSouth Electric Cooperative.

### **TCP** *Contests and More*

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March 6

## National Dentist's Day

Did you know Texas has four dental schools? There's Texas A&M in Dallas, Texas Tech in El Paso, and University of Texas branches in Houston and San Antonio.

---

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

IF I COULD FLY,  
I WOULD ...

**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.

Below are some of the responses to our January prompt: **The greatest Texan ever is ...**

Willie Nelson. Seriously, how is that even a question?

SHELLI CONWAY  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC  
ANNA

Quanah Parker, who tried to do the best for his people in war and in peace.

MIKE DENEHY  
PEDERNALES EC  
LAGO VISTA

Lyndon B. Johnson, because he brought electricity to the rural Hill Country.

AARON DENMAN  
TRINITY VALLEY EC  
KEMP

George Strait.

JACKSON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
VIA FACEBOOK

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez, who received a Medal of Honor for a series of daring and extremely valorous actions during the Vietnam War in 1968.

MATTHEW D. KONOPA  
PEDERNALES EC  
SPRING BRANCH

Visit our website to see more responses.

TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM



# Women's History Month

**MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO**, Katherine Anne Porter survived a pandemic. At 28, she was hospitalized for months with influenza, and her hair turned white. Porter's harrowing experience informed the title story in her trilogy, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.

Known for her precise, lyrical prose, Porter won a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award in 1966 for her *Collected Stories*.

The author's childhood home in Kyle, now the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center, hosts readings by visiting writers and was designated a national literary landmark in 2002 with a benediction from Laura Bush. "This house now stands as a living memorial to one of our most beloved, and best, storytellers," Bush said.



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Afterlife Sentence

“Does anyone else think that’s carrying a grudge a little far? Really?”

LORENA BOREN  
BAILEY COUNTY EC

Distant Relative?

According to the late El Paso historian Leon Metz, John Wesley Hardin’s father was a Methodist minister named James Hardin and moved from Virginia to Tennessee to Texas [*Afterlife Sentence*, January 2023].

Perhaps I am related to John. My great-grandfather was a Methodist minister named James Hardin and moved from Virginia to Tennessee to Texas. I wish to make three things clear: I do not own a gun; I am not a lawyer; and I want to believe that I am not a sociopath.

Vincent C. Kemendo  
Pedernales EC  
Canyon Lake

Thoroughbreds can do anything [*Stable Futures*, January 2023]. I’ve had 50 years working with them. I love them.

NANCY KEIM  
VIA FACEBOOK

Welcoming an Opossum

I have always loved nature and try to read, read, read [*Oh! Possum!*, January 2023]. You gave me a wonder person, Martha Deeringer, who introduced me to an opossum. What a wonder that couple is, taking such care of this animal. She describes it in such fun ways.

Brenna Quebbemann  
CECA  
Comanche

I, too, have an opossum for a pet—one of God’s gentle creatures that unfortunately was given a very short life span. Ours is named Jones, and he travels with us when we visit state parks and other places in Texas. We rescued Jones from a county road where his momma met her fate. Thank you for letting readers know that North America’s only marsupial is actually a pretty cool critter.

Rick Martin  
Coleman County EC  
Santa Anna



KIRSTEN ULVE

**TCP WRITE TO US**  
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

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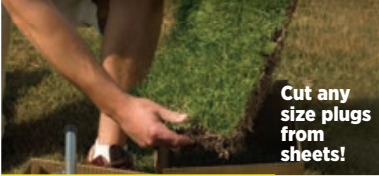


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## POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

# Gently Used, Generously Shared

A small thrift shop in Comfort gives local students a boost for schooling

**ASK MERCEDES ELLIS** about her favorite place to shop, and her answer may surprise you.

You might expect the Texas State University student to rattle off well-known fashion brands or influencer-approved Instagram boutiques. Instead, she'll name a teeny, tiny secondhand shop in the small town of Comfort: the aptly named Pass It On.

It's not just that Ellis, 20, enjoys sifting through racks of other people's castoffs—though she does enjoy that. (In fact, she once found a pair of Gucci shoes for under \$10.) It's that more than anything, Ellis loves Pass It On because the store provides for its Hill Country community.

The shop offers a little bit of everything—clothing, furniture, books, appliances and seemingly everything between—at rock bottom prices. There's not much they won't sell. The inventory is unpredictable and priced to move. Recently there was an old leather dentist's chair for sale on the shop floor.

But here's what really makes Pass It On unique and why Ellis says she'll always be a customer: Nearly every cent of the store's proceeds funds college scholarships for students in the Comfort school district. Ellis herself received one of them.

"This shop has made so much possible for me," she says. "Being a college student, every dollar really helps. This scholarship makes a big difference for me and my family. It's a cycle of generosity, and I feel so grateful to be a small part of it."

April Langston is also part of that cycle of generosity.

Langston, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative, never expected to run the 25-year-old nonprofit thrift shop. She spent her career working in public education, advocating for students with special needs in the Northside and Boerne school districts. But in 2014, not long after retiring, Langston's husband died in a plane crash. They were married 37 years. Her world fell apart.

"That's when all of my plans changed," Langston says. "I was retired and widowed. Suddenly I had all this time. I had to learn a different life. And it led me to Pass It On."

In processing her grief, Langston felt drawn to volunteer work and community outreach. At Pass It On, she does both.

Langston leads a small army of volunteers who do pretty much everything—process donations, organize displays, help customers—whatever it takes to keep the doors open and the lights on.

The store is only open for eight hours each week—Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m. Despite the limited hours, Pass It On has raised big money for Comfort students seeking education beyond high school. Langston says the store provided \$65,000 in scholarships last year, up from \$50,000 the year before. In all, 191 students have received \$760,000 in aid.

"I guess it's really not that different from what I've done all my career," Langston says. "I've always worked in education, and I've always helped kids. The opportunity to go to college can change a child's life. I don't want anyone to miss out on that chance because they couldn't afford it.

"And that's why we're all here at Pass It On."

Langston doesn't like to turn anyone down. For the past two years, Pass It On provided scholarships to every student who applied—all powered by people's donations and, according to Langston, "a whole lot of Windex."

But the store isn't just a source of scholarship money. It's a legitimate shopping destination in Comfort, a town of about 3,000. Langston says there's always a line of shoppers waiting outside the door when she opens.

"When I tell you we've got something for everyone, we've *really* got something for everyone here," she says, laughing. "If you come to Pass It On and leave empty-handed, you aren't looking hard enough."

And that's one thing Langston makes clear. She isn't in the business of selling junk. Of course, they get offerings that don't make it to the shop floor, and those get donated elsewhere. But she's seen Prada purses, Coach bags, delicate glassware and fine china all come through her door. Sometimes, even she's a customer. Sure enough, Langston checks the tag on her shirt. She got it from—where else?—Pass It On.

Despite the tens of thousands of dollars in scholarship money provided over the years, Langston will tell you *she's* the one who's grateful. After the tragedy of her husband's death, she found meaning and purpose at the storefront on Front Street. And for her, that's priceless.

"I consider this my responsibility now," Langston says. "I feel God's hand over this work. And as long as I can keep up, I'll be here doing it." ■

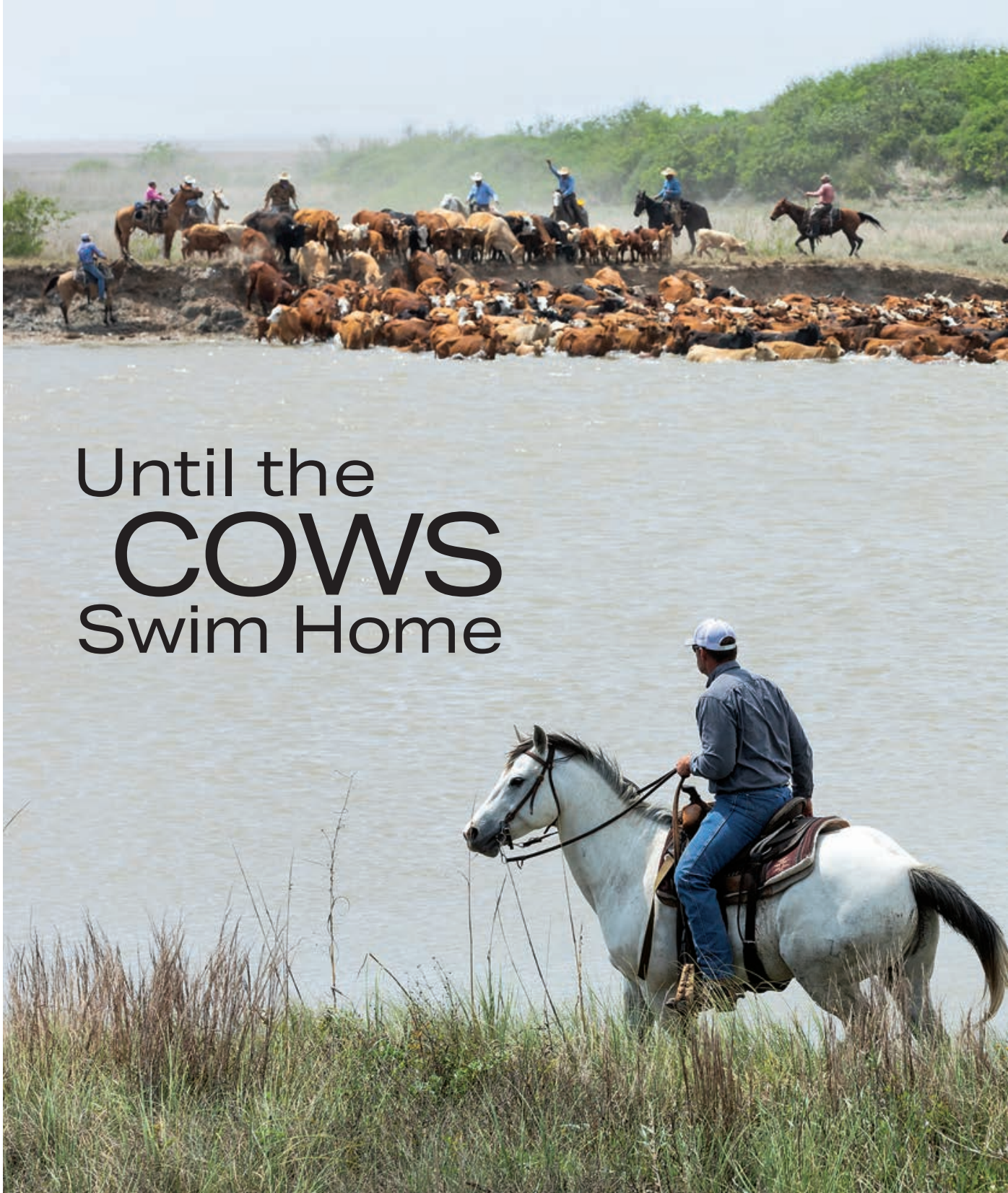
**TCP** Visit Pass It On via video on our website.

**YOU CAN HELP** Pass It On accepts gently used items to support its scholarships. Make donations at 716 Front St., Comfort 78013.

OPPOSITE April Langston at Pass It On in Comfort.







# Until the **COWS** Swim Home

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

Huebner Bros. Cattle Co. cowhands drive their cattle off Matagorda Peninsula and across the Colorado River for summer grazing near Bay City.

**T'S A SCENE STRAIGHT** out of a campy old Western.

After a long day of driving cattle—from 5 a.m. until dark—that ends with pushing the herd to a cattle trap by an old Army air base, full-time cowboy Stephen Weathers rendezvous with fellow cowboys finally relieved of their saddles.

“Then we’d sit around the campfire, cooking cans of pork and beans and have a great time joking around,” he says. “When we’d finally get to sleep in the bunkhouse, anyone snoring would get a cowboy boot thrown at him.”



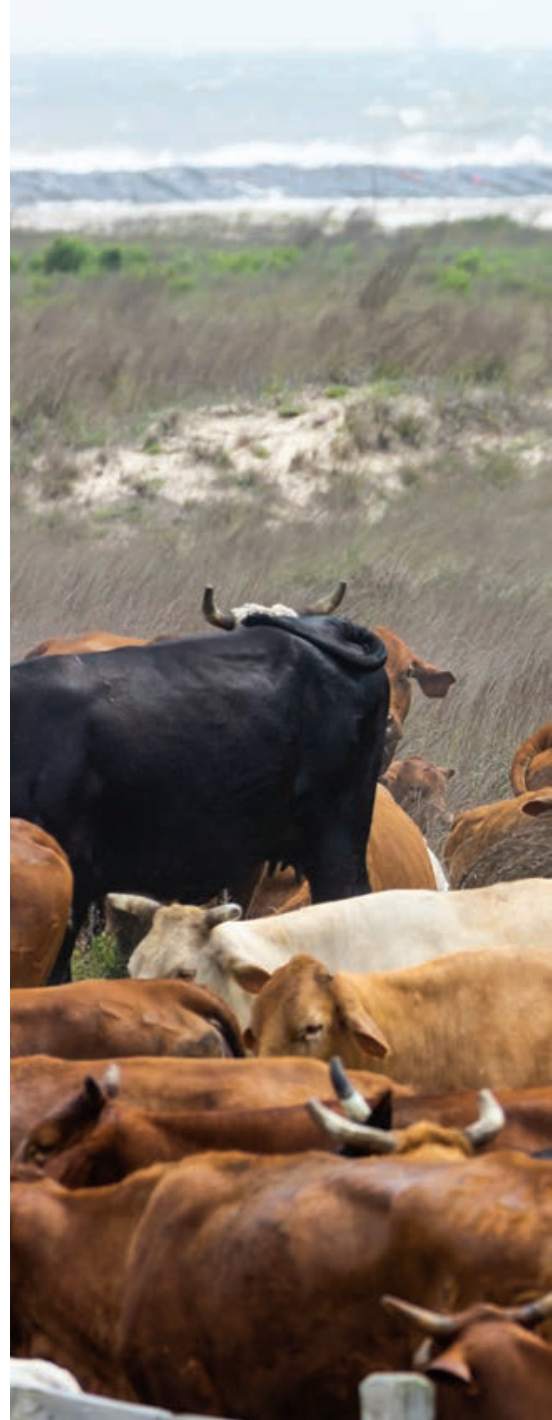
## The Matagorda cattle drive runs right through a river—as it has for 106 years

Except this isn't a dusty trail to Abilene, Kansas, but a Gulf beach in Matagorda County. And instead of a marathon drive, it's more of a bovine biathlon.

The biannual Matagorda Bay cattle drive is one of the most historic and unique drives in the U.S. For more than 100 years, the Huebner Bros. Cattle Co. has been moving its herd back and forth between winter grazing pastures on the 30-mile-long Matagorda Peninsula and the summer pastures on the family's ranch south of Bay City. The operation involves

swimming the cattle across the 15-foot-deep Colorado River close to where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

Keith Meyer, Huebner Bros. ranch manager, is the fifth generation of cattlemen in his family to organize and run these drives. "Our family has been moving and swimming cattle on and off Matagorda Peninsula consecutively since 1917," says Meyer, who's been involved since he was 6 or 7. "I've grown up working this cattle drive alongside my father and grandfather."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Logan Meyer, 14, awaits the cattle as they reach Matagorda Bay Nature Park. Lauren Spanihel-Wahlberg and Randy Duncan keep watch over the spring herd of some 800 cattle.

**T**he drives move the cattle to the peninsula for the winter months, then move them inland in the spring, just before hurricane season begins and storms threaten their safety. The cowboys time the crossings to occur during periods of slack current, when tidal motion is minimal.

Every November, just before Thanksgiving, about 550 head of cattle are moved in two-story 18-wheeler cattle trucks from the Huebner ranch to a holding pen near the beach. This area is part of the Lower Colorado River Authority's 1,333-acre Matagorda Bay Nature Park. After passing the coastal fishing town of Matagorda, the cattle are hauled down FM 2031, past homes on stilts along the Colorado River to the west and past 934 acres of protected Matagorda Bay wetlands to the east.

Once the cattle have been delivered to the holding pen and the road is blocked, Meyer and his team of 10–12 drovers lead



**“Our family has been moving and swimming cattle on and off Matagorda Peninsula consecutively since 1917. I’ve grown up working this cattle drive alongside my father and grandfather.”**

the herd toward the water. Some of them are local youngsters on horseback who are learning from the more seasoned veterans.

At Matagorda Bay Nature Park, the cattle drive takes a right-hand turn at the miniature golf course to the river’s edge, and the 100-yard swim to the peninsula begins. A small flotilla of cowboys on motorboats ensures the cattle don’t stray, and in about 15 minutes, all are across.

By the return trip in spring, the herd of 550 grows to about 800 bulls, cows and calves.

“I used to love the cattle drive,” says Weathers, a member of Jackson Electric Cooperative, which serves this corner of Matagorda County. He worked the drive for about 15 years. “We’d get on the peninsula early the first morning and start riding west down the beach. We’d split up our team. Some riders picking up cattle along the beach, some in the dunes covered in salt grass.”

Even though this Beefmaster breed of cattle is known for hardiness in harsh, humid coastal climates, the mosquitoes and biting flies on Matagorda Peninsula can be too much



## "It's straight out of the Old West but with a 21st-century spin."

for the herd to handle as the weather warms. The seasonal change challenges the cowboys too.

"The warmer temperatures have brought the rattlesnakes out of hibernation," Weathers says. "You'll find rattlesnakes sunning themselves on top of the salt grass, perched about leg high as we ride. The snakes and the biting flies are enough to force some cattle to swim across the river on their own."

Thus begins the trek back to the Huebner ranch.

"Our ranch pastures have had time to rest over the winter, and the cattle and calves are ready to get going inland," Meyer says.

Jeralyn Novak, communications coordinator for Beefmaster Breeders United, calls the Matagorda Bay cattle drive a modern-day *Lonesome Dove*. It's "straight out of the Old West but with a 21st-century spin," she writes.

Jeff Crosby, executive director of the Colorado River Land Trust, a nonprofit that works to protect land and water in the Colorado River watershed, witnessed a spring cattle swim firsthand. "This is an important part of our historical Texas heritage," he says.

The cowboys don't set or share dates for the spring or fall drives, so lucky onlookers have only the weather and tides to go by. After more than a century of trial and error, these efficient workers have the drive down to a science.

"Cattle drives are still done the same way," Crosby says, "because moving cattle from one location to another was perfected long ago." ■



TOP The Matagorda drive includes moving the Beefmaster cattle along sidewalks. ABOVE Jacie Wahlberg, 7, helps with the roundup.

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## Rising To The Ice Storm Challenge

MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

JEFF LANE

**DAMAGING WEATHER IS THE NEMESIS** of all who provide electricity to homes and businesses. Thunderstorms and tornadoes may be the first thing that come to mind, but it is ice buildup that causes the biggest challenge, as we all saw in early February.

For a large swath of Texas—from the Austin area and up through East Texas—repeated rounds of icy freezing rain and days of below-freezing temperatures coated trees and power lines with heavy ice. The result was thousands of outages and a lot of property damage.

It was the southern part of the Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative service territory that took the brunt of the storm, and in the context of Henderson and Anderson counties, this is the worst ice storm we've had in 40 years.

With our emergency action plan in place, the preparations for a long-term restoration process were already in motion as the freezing rain began to fall. As it became clear that we would have significant accumulation, the call went out for additional resources and as rain and limbs continued to fall, our team was in place keeping as much power flowing to members as possible.

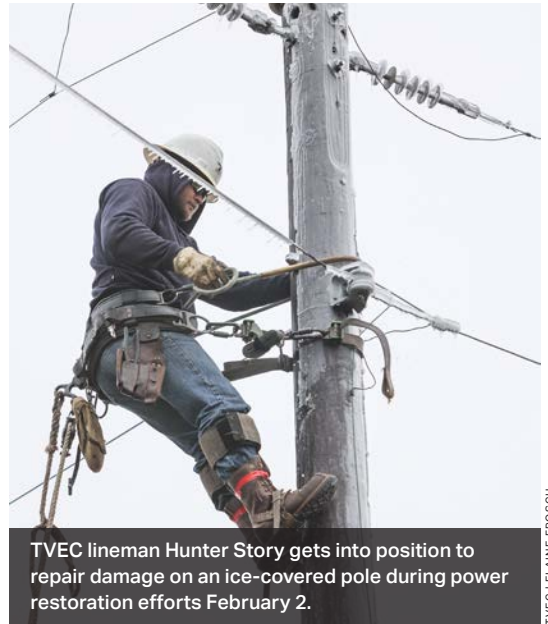
It takes an enormous amount of coordination behind the scenes to plan and manage the response to an event like this, and I am extremely proud of everyone that took part in the process.

From our member services group taking shifts to answer member calls 24-hours-a-day throughout the event to the engineers and system operators who carefully managed the ongoing power restoration, it was truly a team effort.

And in the field, more than 300 lineworkers

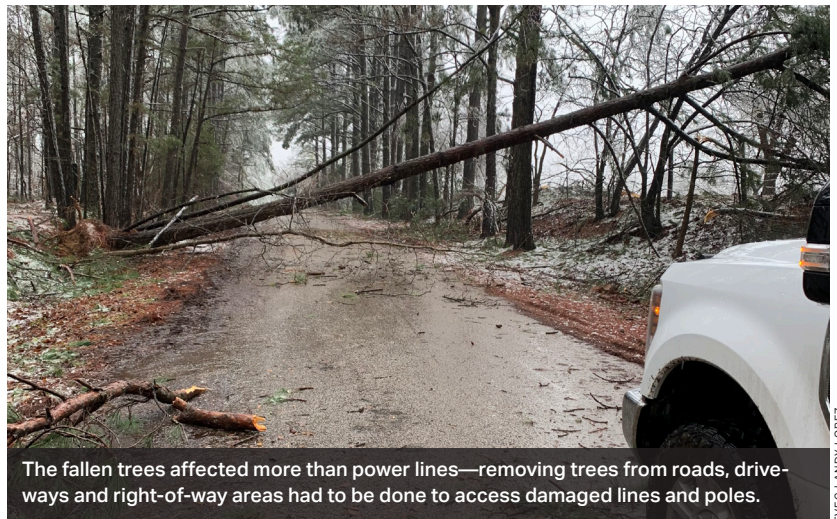
and tree trimmers joined our linemen in a nonstop effort to put our system back together.

As always, there will be lessons learned and improvements to be made. This storm showed how our technology enhancements over the last few years, including a complete system audit, is paying dividends by speeding up our restoration work.



TVEC lineman Hunter Story gets into position to repair damage on an ice-covered pole during power restoration efforts February 2.

TVEC | TELAINE FROSCH



The fallen trees affected more than power lines—removing trees from roads, driveways and right-of-way areas had to be done to access damaged lines and poles.

TVEC | LINDY LOPEZ



Ice-laden trees surround TVEC line crews as they repair lines damaged by falling limbs during the ice storm in early February.

Now we are looking at cutting-edge tools that monitor tree growth to help us optimize our right-of-way clearing operations.

One of the things I am most proud of is that the restoration work was handled with no major safety incidents or injuries. That is a testament to the quality of our people and the culture of safe work practices that has been built here over time.

I would like to express my gratitude to you, our members, for your patience and encouraging words through the lengthy restoration process. That meant a lot to our employees while they were battling through the conditions and fatigue with trees continuing to fall.

We are a co-op. Built by members to serve a need in our community. As we mark 85 years since our founding, storms like these are a reminder that the electric service we provide is more than a product. The lines we maintain connect us and make modern life possible in so many ways, and no storm will keep us from doing everything we can to serve you well. ■



Line crews and tree trimmers worked in overlapping 16-hour shifts ensuring the power restoration work never stopped.



TVEC lineman Mauricio Robles pulls a fallen line back into place near Moore Station during power restoration efforts February 2.

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### 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  
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TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



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# Saving Together Helps Us All

**ENERGY CONSUMERS, INCLUDING CO-OP MEMBERS,** buy the final product in the electric energy market. That means all of the costs—from buying the fuel for the generation plants to the wire that leads to your home—are eventually paid for by you, the consumer.

As a nonprofit co-op, however, we do have a big advantage in knowing that, for our distribution lines to all of our nearly 60,000 TVEC members, this is an at-cost service. No profits are sent to investors and our local employees are here to serve you as neighbors and friends.

One way we are trying to help save money for members is in reducing the cost of payment transactions. For those of you who have already changed to bank draft or e-check payments, thank you! If you haven't taken that step, please consider doing so and help us all save together.

Thank you from all of us here at TVEC. ■

## Average Transaction Expense by Payment Type

Payment Method	Average Cost per Payment
Auto Bank Draft	\$.15
Electronic Check	\$.50
Mailed Check	\$.67
Phone/In-Person Payments	\$1.48
Credit Card Payments	\$1.63

## Window Films Block Radiant Heat

**NOW THAT THE TEMPERATURES** are rising, the sunshine that peeked through your windows to warm your home in winter might not be so welcome.

You can block ultraviolet rays and solar heat from your home by using temperature control films on your windows. Window films block radiant heat and make it easier for your air conditioner to do its job. This easy do-it-yourself project could save you money on your electricity bill.

Window films might be a good choice for older homes with windows that are less efficient at blocking the sun's rays. They could also help inexpensive windows perform better.

When choosing a window film, be sure to select one that suits your purpose.

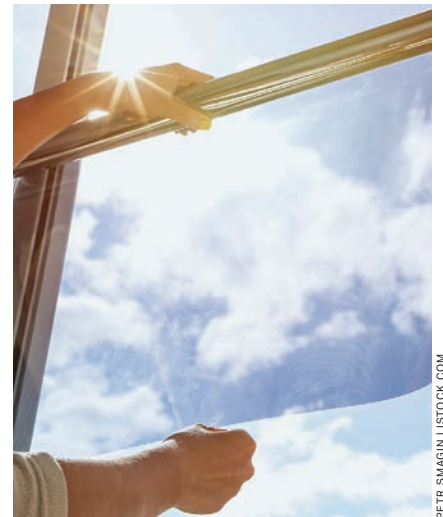
Some window films are built more for privacy or decoration, so they might not be as effective as blocking radiant heat.

For curved windows, look for a window film that's designed to bend.

If you're planning to remove the film come winter to take advantage of the sun's rays, find a film that's removable and reusable.

For windows made of something other than glass, seek window films that feature multisurface adhesion.

Security films provide privacy and shatter resistance. ■



PETR SMAGIN | ISTOCK.COM

# Don't Go Out on a Limb

Safety for you and your children is a top priority at your electric co-op.

Kids don't always know—or remember—what can be dangerous, so it's up to all of us to watch out for them. Safety rules for power lines:

**Don't plant** trees or install tall playground equipment under or near power lines.

**Don't build** treehouses in trees near electric lines.

**Don't allow** children to climb trees near power lines.

**Teach your** children to always look up to check for power lines before climbing trees or any tall objects.

**Keep children** away from ladders and equipment that may be near power lines.

**And the No. 1** safety rule for everyone to remember: Never touch a power line or anything that's touching a power line. Look up and live!

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.

ARTMARE | ISTOCK.COM

**TVEC**

TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

**Energy Quiz**



**What is the peak demand record for electric power in Texas?** (hint, it was in July, 2022. One MegaWatt powers about 200 homes.)

**A • 120,502 MW**

**B • 80,038 MW**

**C • 23,525 MW**

**D • 95,364 MW**

Win **\$100!**

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

## February Energy Quiz: Average Energy Spending

ACCORDING TO THE MOST RECENT statistic on energy.gov, the average U.S. household spends about \$1,945 for a year's energy expenses, including electricity, gas and other energy sources.

Congratulations to the January Energy Quiz winner, Jose Galvan, of Dallas, who correctly answered our question about the Rural Electrification Act.

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



NAPA74 | ISTOCK.COM

## Heat Pumps Are Back and Worth a Look

**AMID THE ENERGY CRISIS** of the 1970s, heat pumps were all the rage. The devices use electricity to efficiently transfer heat from a cool space to a warm space, making the cool space cooler and the warm space warmer. Because they transfer heat rather than generate it, heat pumps can efficiently create comfortable temperatures for a home.

They were largely cast aside after the energy crisis, but now they're coming back and even more efficient than they were 50 years ago. Some 40% of new homes in the U.S. are built with heat pumps, according to *Fortune*.

With heating and cooling costs making up most of the average home's electricity bill, maybe it's time you considered the mighty heat pump for your home. There are three main types, as described by the Department of Energy and *Consumer Reports*.

### Ductless Air-Source Heat Pumps

For homes without ducts, air-source heat pumps are also available in a ductless version called a mini-split heat pump. In addition, a special type of air-source heat pump called a reverse cycle chiller generates hot and cold water rather than air, allowing it to be used with radiant floor heating systems in heating mode.

- ▶ These systems are easier to install, quiet and small in size.
- ▶ They're flexible for heating and cooling individual rooms and smaller spaces.
- ▶ There's no energy loss through ductwork, which accounts for more than 30% of a home's energy use for heating and cooling.
- ▶ Installation can be pricey, but federal incentives may be available.

### Ducted Air-Source Heat Pumps

The most common type of heat pump is the air-source heat pump, which transfers heat between your house and the outside

air. Modern heat pumps can reduce your electricity use for heating by about 50% compared to electric resistance heating such as furnaces and baseboard heaters.

- ▶ These systems move heat rather than converting it from a fuel like combustion heating systems do.
- ▶ Newer, more efficient systems now represent a legitimate space heating alternative in colder regions like the Northeast and Midwest.

### Geothermal Heat Pumps

Geothermal (ground-source or water-source) heat pumps achieve higher efficiencies by transferring heat between your house and the ground or a nearby water source. They can reduce energy use, control humidity, are sturdy and reliable, and fit in a wide variety of homes.

- ▶ These systems tend to be more expensive to install but provide more energy savings for heating and cooling.
- ▶ They move heat through pipes buried underground.
- ▶ Compared to a conventional heating system, geothermal heat pumps can reduce energy use by 25%–50%.
- ▶ They're effective in extreme climates but not ideal for smaller lots and certain soil conditions. ■

## 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 March 31 to receive a \$100 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be our winner.





TVEC ENERGY  
MANAGEMENT ADVISOR  
**CHRIS WALKER, BAP**

## Breaking Down Energy-Saving Claims

**WHEN IT COMES TO** saving energy, it can be confusing to figure out what works and what doesn't. There are many wild claims out there, like adding devices to your meter, that are pure science fiction. But some claims have been repeated so many times that they start to ring true—even though they



aren't. Let's set the record straight on a few of those.

**Q: Is it true that turning lights off and on uses more energy than just leaving them on?**

**A:** Not true. Turning off lights definitely reduces energy use. Turn off LED and incandescent bulbs every time you leave the room. The situation is a little different with compact fluorescent bulbs. Turning them off does

save energy but can shorten the life of the bulb. The rule of thumb for CFLs is to turn them off any time they won't be used for 15 minutes or more.

**Q: Would replacing my old windows with new, more efficient ones really cut my energy use in half?**

**A:** No. While replacing inefficient windows with new, energy-efficient windows can cut heat loss through windows in half (or more), windows typically account for only about 25%–30% of your home's heating costs. The amount of energy you use for heating and cooling is likely one-third to one-half of your total energy use, so replacing your old windows might only reduce your total energy costs by about 10%. 60223546001

**Q: My kids claim using the dishwasher is just as efficient as washing dishes by hand. Are they right?**

**A:** Yes—in fact, it's usually more efficient. Properly used dishwashers actually use less water while doing a better job, and they will save you more than 200 hours a year. For maximum savings, make sure your water heater is set to about 120 degrees and use the most efficient dishwasher settings like turning off the heated drying options.

**Q: Should I close the vents in rooms that aren't being used?**

**A:** Most experts advise against this because closing supply registers forces your heater or air conditioner to work harder. If your system supplies too much cold or heat to some rooms and too little to others, talk to a professional about modifying your ductwork.

**Q: Does the age of my home determine how energy efficient it is?**

**A:** Newer homes tend to be more efficient because energy codes have improved, but any home can have hidden energy issues, no matter its age. Initial construction quality, regular maintenance and efficiency upgrades over the life of a home can really pay off. ■

## Tune Up Your Air Conditioner

**REALLY HOT WEATHER** is still a couple of months away, but it's never too early to think about whether your central air conditioning system can make it through one more summer. Spring is the perfect time to call a qualified service technician to give your system a once-over.

**Giving your AC system an annual tune up can:**

**Reduce unexpected repairs.** Even if your service tech recommends a repair during the process, it's still a repair you can make on your terms, rather than when it becomes necessary in the middle of summer.

**Lower utility bills.** A clean AC system is going to run more efficiently than a dirty one.

**Extend the life of your system.** AC systems that are regularly maintained can last 15 years or more. Systems that aren't maintained won't last longer than 10.

**Provide greater comfort during the summer.** Just one tuneup a year is enough to ensure your AC system can provide reliable cooling throughout the entire home.

**Keep parts warranties valid.** Most AC manufacturers void your warranty if system maintenance isn't performed annually by a professional. ■



JANICERICHARD | ISTOCK.COM





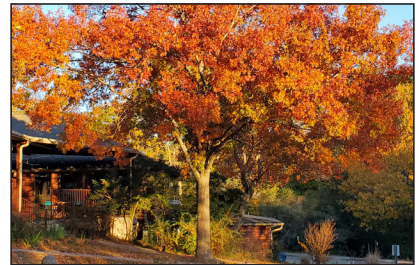
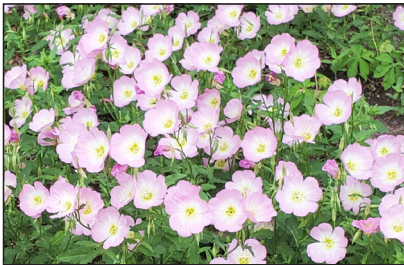
## Your Generosity in Action

# Operation Round Up Spotlight: Blooms of Beauty and Knowledge



The East Texas Arboretum boasts a mix of beautiful plants and landscaping and touches of history for visitors to enjoy.

TVEC | EAST TEXAS ARBORETUM & BOTANICAL GARDEN



**FORMER FIRST LADY LADY BIRD JOHNSON NOTED THAT,** “Where flowers bloom, so does hope.” That spirit holds true at The East Texas Arboretum & Botanical Garden in Athens, a beautifully kept garden for all area residents to enjoy. The arboretum was formally established in 1993 on 100 acres property is on U.S. Highway 175 on the west side of the city.

“The mission of the East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society is to display, research, and interpret the natural environment of the plant communities of East Texas,” explained Jane Bailey, Secretary of the East Texas Arboretum & Botanical Garden board. “We work to introduce species and create collections of various plants that can be displayed within the arboretum grounds and provide educational activities for children and adults. And we exhibit formal gardens while maintaining the natural attributes of the site.”

Along with the landscaped gardens, you can also experience other natural beauty and horticulture including bee-keeping, a discovery barn, the little red school house, two miles of hiking trails, artifacts and the Veterans Memorial Park. A central historic attraction is the Wofford House, a fully furnished home from the 1800s that sits on the property representing authentic 1800s living.

The Arboretum hosts a variety of events including painting and craft classes, field trips for area schools, plant sales, weddings, club meetings, gardening workshops, children’s camps, musical events and more.

“We encourage everyone to join us and we are always looking to add to our membership list,” Bailey said. “We have volunteers that come, but we are always looking for more.”

There is an entry fee for membership, but the membership lasts a full year and there are different membership levels to choose from. For more information visit [easttexasarboretum.org](http://easttexasarboretum.org) or call 903-675-5630.

## January 2023 Operation Round Up Awards

### Grants:

- East Texas Arboretum- \$4,000
- East Texas Crisis Center- \$4,500
- Eustace Intermediate
- School-\$4,858.97

### Bill Assistance:

St. Charles Borromeo Church- \$3,000

### Food Assistance:

- St. Charles Borromeo Church- \$2,000
- Payne Springs Methodist Church Food Pantry- \$2,000



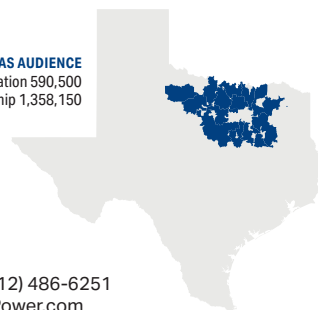
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Quinta Mazatlan is an urban sanctuary for pollinators and native plants.

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



hill that overlooked the vast and sunny Rio Grande delta to the south. The 10,000-square-foot mansion was believed to be the largest adobe house in Texas at that time, 1935. It was built in a Spanish Revival style with imported Talavera tile, red clay tiles for the roof, wrought-iron gates and huge carved doors. The couple wanted their home to look like the elegantly appointed homes they had seen in the finer districts of Mexico.

After the Matthews died, the house was sold to a grapefruit millionaire, Frank Schultz, who added features like stone balustrades. Eventually the home was sold again and began to suffer from neglect.

The city of McAllen stepped in and saved it in 1998, and today Quinta Mazatlan and its 20 acres are a crown jewel of the city, described as a “mansion with a mission.” The world-class educational facility located in a Tamaulipan thorn forest is part of the World Birding Center and hosts the annual Monarch Fest to support the struggling monarch butterfly population.

Quinta Mazatlan’s grounds are teeming with native plants and serve as a rejuvenating garden for migrating exotic birds and pollinators. The property’s magical ambiance has made it a sought-after venue for couples wanting to say “I do” in a place they’ll always treasure remembering.

The Matthews were honored to know that the dream they had for their beloved home has been magnificently surpassed. ■

# Of Birds, Butterflies and Brides

Quinta Mazatlan and its massive adobe mansion remain a McAllen jewel

BY W. F. STRONG

**THE ROMAN PHILOSOPHER** Cicero said, “If you have a library and a garden, you have all that you need.” Enter the gates of Quinta Mazatlan, and you’ll understand that wisdom.

This inviting refuge is seemingly a world away from the hustle and bustle of McAllen right outside the gates. Jason Chilton Matthews, who built the mansion in the 1930s, wanted it that way.

In every corner, there are Old World influences. There’s a tiled Roman bathtub, 9 feet long and 3 feet deep, and a tiled mural that has the words “*Labor Omnia Vincit*,” Latin for “work conquers

all,” which is Virgil’s praise for the life of the farmer in his poem *Georgics*.

Matthews was a renaissance man—a publisher, writer, composer, poet, scientist, soldier and pilot. He fought in 11 battles in World War I.

After Matthews traveled the world extensively, involved in various business enterprises with Marcia, his oil heiress wife from Pennsylvania, they settled in McAllen because he said it was the “crossroads of the Western Hemisphere.” He wanted to build a home that would be a showplace to entertain friends, and he found the highest point in McAllen: a

# Cast Iron

Trusted cookware provides timeless value, indoors and out

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

There's no tool more cherished in a home kitchen than a well-seasoned cast-iron pan. Whether your skillet has been passed down for generations or is just starting to see its full potential, it's a go-to for many dishes. This tart lemon pie, from Fredericksburg Cast Iron Co., uses your pan in a somewhat unexpected way.

## Lemon Skillet Pie

### PIE

**½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted,  
plus more for the pan**  
**1½ cups crushed graham crackers**  
**½ cup sugar**  
**3 cups sweetened condensed milk**  
**3 egg yolks**  
**¾ cup lemon juice**  
**Pinch salt**

### TOPPING

**1 cup heavy cream**  
**3 tablespoons powdered sugar**  
**½ teaspoon vanilla extract**

### GARNISH

**Sliced lemons**  
**Lemon zest**  
**Fresh mint leaves**

- 1. PIE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and lightly coat a 12-inch cast-iron skillet with butter.
- 2.** In a bowl, combine graham crackers and sugar. Stir in melted butter until well blended. Press the crumb mixture into the bottom and sides of the prepared pan. Bake until firm, about 8 minutes.
- 3.** Meanwhile, combine the sweetened condensed milk, egg yolks, lemon juice and salt and beat with a mixer for 4 minutes.
- 4.** Pour mixture into baked pie crust and return the pan to the oven. Bake until the center is set, about 10 minutes.
- 5.** Let the pie cool at room temperature for 30 minutes. Cover and then transfer to the refrigerator to chill until set, at least 1 hour.
- 6. TOPPING** When ready to serve, make the topping. In a large bowl or using a stand mixer, beat the cream, powdered sugar and vanilla until fluffy. Spread onto pie and garnish as desired.

**SERVES 8-10**

**TCP** Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com), where she features a recipe for Texas Tater Tot Casserole.





## Creamy Salsa Verde Pasta

JAZMIN ROMO  
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

Creamy and herbal with just the right amount of heat, this salsa verde pasta features an easy-to-make sauce. Romo recommends using the extra sauce as a dip or spread on a toasted bagel.

- 3 teaspoons salt, divided use**
- 8 ounces linguine**
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened**
- 1 cup cilantro**
- ½ cup sour cream**
- ½ cup water**
- 3 green tomatoes, quartered**
- ¼ cup basil leaves**
- 2 serrano peppers, deseeded**
- 3 cloves garlic**
- 1 cube chicken bouillon**
- ¼ teaspoon pepper**
- 1 onion, divided use**
- 3 tablespoons butter**
- 1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese**

**1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add 2 teaspoons salt and linguine. Cook pasta to al dente according to package directions.

**2.** Meanwhile, in a blender combine cream cheese, cilantro, sour cream, water, tomatoes, basil, serranos, garlic, bouillon cube, pepper and remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Quarter the onion and add 1 quarter to the blender. Dice the remaining onion to yield ¾ cup and set aside. Blend sauce until smooth, taste, and add more salt or pepper to taste.

**3.** Heat a 9- or 10-inch cast-iron pan over medium. Add butter. Once melted, add reserved diced onions and sauté until soft. Pour in blended sauce (you might

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

## Henry's Heavenly Chili

HELEN SANDERS  
UNITED COOPERATIVE  
SERVICES



Sanders' late husband, Henry, above, created this chili for the annual family reunion, where he would cook it over an open flame in a cast-iron wash kettle. If you prefer, leave out the alcohol.

SERVES 4-6

- 2 tablespoons bacon grease or vegetable oil**
- 1 pound ground beef**
- 1 pound ground pork**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- 2 jalapeño peppers, deseeded and chopped**
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped**
- 1 can diced tomatoes (14.5 ounces)**
- 1 can diced Hatch chiles (4 ounces)**
- 2 tablespoons diced chipotle in adobo sauce**
- ¼ cup chili powder**
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves**
- 2 teaspoons cumin**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 1-2 teaspoons pepper**
- 2 cups beef stock**
- 2 ounces beer**
- 1 ounce reposado tequila**

**1.** Heat a cast-iron Dutch oven over medium-high and add bacon grease. Once melted, add beef and pork and cook about 10 minutes, until no pink remains.

**2.** Add the onion, jalapeños and garlic and cook until vegetables are soft. Stir in tomatoes, chiles and chipotle. Add chili powder, oregano, cumin, salt and pepper and mix well, then add beef stock, beer and tequila and stir again. Reduce heat to medium. Cook 20 minutes, stirring often.

**3.** Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**SHEET PAN MEALS** DUE MARCH 10

Sheet pans are perfect for preparing meals in a snap. What do you whip up, whether it's for breakfast, lunch or dinner? Submit your recipes on our website by March 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

not use it all) and stir slowly to mix. Bring to a boil for 1 minute, then remove from heat.

4. Drain pasta and add to the cast-iron pan, carefully tossing with tongs to coat with sauce. Sprinkle with cheese and bake 15 minutes. Broil 2 minutes to brown the cheese. Garnish with more cilantro and basil, if desired.

SERVES 2-3

### Dutch Apple Pancakes

GWEN JONES  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

Oven-baked pancakes are impressive with their highly puffed sides. This Dutch apple version is wonderfully spiced and makes for a great breakfast or dessert.

4 eggs

½ cup flour

½ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar,  
divided use



- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch salt
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg, divided use
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 large tart apple, peeled, cored and thinly sliced

1. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, flour, 1 tablespoon sugar, baking powder

and salt. Gradually whisk in milk until smooth, then whisk in melted butter, vanilla and ½ teaspoon nutmeg. Let batter rest at least 30 minutes and up to overnight.

2. When ready to bake, preheat oven to 425 degrees.

3. Heat a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium and add 4 tablespoons butter. Once melted, brush butter up sides of pan and remove from heat.

4. In a small bowl, combine ¼ cup sugar, cinnamon and remaining ½ teaspoon nutmeg, then sprinkle evenly over the melted butter. Arrange the apple slices over the sugar mixture, then sprinkle the remaining ¼ cup sugar over the apples.

5. Place the pan over medium-high heat and cook just until the liquid starts to bubble. Remove from heat and evenly pour the batter over the apples.

6. Bake 15 minutes, then reduce heat to 375 and bake 10 minutes more. Serve immediately.

SERVES 4



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C.



B.



A.



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*"Stunning pieces"*

— Marilyn W.

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— Linda K.

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## GAMBLING DEBT REVEALS STUNNING TURQUOISE JEWELRY

*Own the diamond of the desert!*

Old Pete was a retired stuntman bursting with stories. There was the time he stared down a grizzly bear. There was the time he won a competition and got to kiss a Hollywood starlet as the prize. And there was the time he got into a fistfight with the Duke. Many stories. Some were probably even true. I know two things for sure: that he had an excellent collection of turquoise and that he owed me for a poker game he lost. The last time I saw him, he opened a drawer and pulled out a collection of beautiful Navajo turquoise jewelry to repay his debt. Pete's jewelry inspired our Tucson Sun Turquoise Collection.

This jewelry set features turquoise that's been gently enhanced to bring out its finest shades in a Southwestern motif. Finished with oxidized silver, this jewelry set captures the beauty and mystery of the Arizona desert. The rarest and most valuable turquoise is found right here in the American Southwest, but the future of the blue beauty is unclear. I recently spoke with turquoise traders who explained that less than 5% of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry. Once thriving, many Southwest mines have closed.

But Stauer saw this coming and is now one of the largest owners of gem-grade turquoise in the U.S. Don't miss your chance to own the diamond of the desert. Act now. This is one of our fastest sellers, and we only have a limited supply of Arizona turquoise available for this ad. See why Stauer remains the best bang for your buck!

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## 'Lonesome' in a Library

Texas State University houses memorabilia from the TV miniseries

BY CHET GARNER

**WHEN I THINK OF** the Wild West and the grit it took to be a cowboy, I don't think of yodeling Roy Rogers or Hollywood-perfect John Wayne. I think of Woodrow Call and Gus McCrae, covered in sweat and driving cattle in *Lonesome Dove*. I remember watching the 1989 miniseries with my parents and thinking, "Now these are real cowboys."

Every year thousands of faithful fans like me make a pilgrimage to San Marcos to visit a permanent exhibit dedicated to the classic production.

I rolled onto the campus of Texas State University and wandered past students to the seventh floor of the Alkek Library, which houses the Wittliff Collections. Screenwriter Bill Wittliff and his wife, Sally, collected writers' papers for years and decided to open them to the public. There are priceless papers from writers like Cormac McCarthy and Sam Shepard, but most come to see the work of Wittliff himself. He was the screenwriter who adapted Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* novel into the award-winning miniseries.

Inside the exhibit, you'll find the cowboy outfits worn by Robert Duvall (McCrae) and Tommy Lee Jones (Call). There are arrows shot by Comanches as well as hats, guns and the wooden sign for the Hat Creek Cattle Co. that hung outside the fictional headquarters. They even have the deceased body of Gus that Call dragged back to Texas as a final act of friendship. Most amazing to me was the script used by Wittliff on set, with his tweaks and changes to lines to tell the best story possible.

I left inspired to tell more stories about the West—but only after I had properly binge-watched all six-plus hours of *Lonesome Dove* one more time. ■

ABOVE Chet alongside the cowboy garb worn by Tommy Lee Jones as the character Woodrow Call.

**TCP** Chet visits the mementos of real TV cowboys. Check out 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.

## MARCH

08

**Elgin S.H.E.: Women in Business**, (512) 285-4515, [elgintxchamber.com](http://elgintxchamber.com)

09

**Abilene All That Jazz**, (325) 676-9620, [paramountabilene.com](http://paramountabilene.com)

**Denton [9–12] Texas Storytelling Festival**, (940) 380-9320, [tejasstorytelling.com](http://tejasstorytelling.com)

**Irving [9–12] Texas Steel Guitar Association Jamboree**, (817) 558-3481, [texassteelguitar.org](http://texassteelguitar.org)

10

**Lindale Keeton Coffman**, (430) 235-2100, [outhousetickets.com](http://outhousetickets.com)

**Round Rock Destination: Hope**, (512) 868-2822, [casawilco.org](http://casawilco.org)

**Amarillo [10–12] Western Antiques and Collectibles Show**, (806) 378-3096, [amarillociviccenter.com](http://amarillociviccenter.com)

**Mansfield [10–13] Arts Week**, (817) 728-3383, [visitmansfieldtexas.com](http://visitmansfieldtexas.com)

**Bastrop [10–12, 17–19, 24–26] The Addams Family: A New Musical Comedy**, (512) 200-3826, [bastropoperahouse.org](http://bastropoperahouse.org)

11

**Beaumont Bee Gees Gold: The Tribute**, (409) 838-3435, [beaumonteventstx.com](http://beaumonteventstx.com)

**Burton Texas Ranger Day**, (979) 803-0393, [burtonheritagesociety.org](http://burtonheritagesociety.org)

**Corpus Christi Wine Festival**, (361) 779-7326, [corpuschristiwinefestival.com](http://corpuschristiwinefestival.com)

**Livingston Pioneer and Settler Day**, (936) 365-2201, [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**Lufkin Gene Watson**, (936) 633-5454, [angelinaarts.org](http://angelinaarts.org)

13

**Fredericksburg [13-18] Spring Break at the Pioneer Museum**, (830) 990-8441, [pioneermuseum.org](http://pioneermuseum.org)

16

**Canton [16-18] Van Zandt County Bluegrass Festival**, (214) 802-5999, [krlivemusic.com](http://krlivemusic.com)

17

**Bryan [17-18] Watercolor Batik Workshop**, (979) 704-3090, [degallery.us](http://degallery.us)

**Denton [17-18] The Muse Invitational Motorcycle Show**, (512) 522-5445, [ridetexas.com](http://ridetexas.com)

**Tolar [17-18] Ceramic Expo and Handcrafted Items**, (254) 716-5227, [westceramicshow.com](http://westceramicshow.com)

**Fredericksburg [17-19] Trade Days**, (210) 846-4094, [fbgtradedays.com](http://fbgtradedays.com)

**Tyler [17-19] Vintage Market Days of East Texas**, [vintagemarketchdays.com](http://vintagemarketchdays.com)

18

**Brenham The Celtic Angels**, (979) 337-7240, [thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Del Rio Texas State Parks Centennial Dark Skies Celebration**, (830) 395-2133, [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**Fredericksburg Hill Country Indian Artifact Show**, (830) 329-2636, [hillcountryindianartifacts.com](http://hillcountryindianartifacts.com)

[MORE EVENTS >](#)

### **Submit Your Event**


We pick events for the magazine directly from [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com). Submit your June event by April 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.



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*Pick of the Month*

**Herb Festival at the Wynne Home**  
Huntsville, March 25  
(936) 891-5024  
[texasthymeunit.org](http://texasthymeunit.org)

Jump-start your spring by celebrating fragrant herbs and healthy veggies. Expect vendors, speakers, music, children's activities and plenty of plants at this free festival.

MARCH EVENTS CONTINUED

18 **Lewisville St. Paddy's Texas Style**, (972) 219-3401, [cityoflewisville.com](http://cityoflewisville.com)

**Angleton [18-19] Market Days**, (979) 849-4364, [angleton.tx.us](http://angleton.tx.us)

19 **The Colony Luck of the Irish Triathlon**, (214) 370-9010, [playtri.com](http://playtri.com)

24 **Georgetown [24-25] Quilt Show**, (512) 869-1812, [handcraftsunlimited.com](http://handcraftsunlimited.com)

**Hallettsville [24-26] South Texas Polka and Sausage Fest**, (361) 798-2311, [hallettsville.com](http://hallettsville.com)

**Burton [24-April 1] LaBahia Antiques Show**, (979) 289-2684, [labahiaantiques.com](http://labahiaantiques.com)

25 **Bandera Ranching Heritage Day**, (830) 796-4413, [banderatex.com](http://banderatex.com)

**The Colony Mother and Son Adventure Day**, (972) 625-1106, [visitthecolonytx.com](http://visitthecolonytx.com)

**Sabinal [25-26] Wild Hog Festival and Craft Fair**, [sabinalwildhogfestival.com](http://sabinalwildhogfestival.com)

28

**College Station [28-29] Anastasia**, (979) 845-1234, [opastickets.org](http://opastickets.org)

31

**Kerrville Napoleon Dynamite: A Conversation With Jon Heder, Efrén Ramirez and Jon Gries**; (830) 315-5483; [thearcadialive.org](http://thearcadialive.org)

**Abilene [31-April 1] Outlaws and Legends Music Festival**, [outlawsandlegends.com](http://outlawsandlegends.com)

**Victoria [31-April 1] Friends of Flint Rifle Invitational Scholarship Shoot and State Cookoff**, (210) 439-4191, [friendsofflint.com](http://friendsofflint.com)

APRIL

01

**Brenham Southern Raised**, (979) 337-7240, [thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Bryan Starlight Affair**, (979) 485-5473, [rmhc-ctx.org](http://rmhc-ctx.org)

**Mason Spring Art & Wine Fest**, (325) 347-5758, [masontxcoc.com](http://masontxcoc.com)

**Port Arthur Cajun Heritage Fest**, (409) 985-7822, [cajunheritagefest.com](http://cajunheritagefest.com)

**Bellville [1-2] Texas Select Custom Cutlery Event**, (713) 724-6813, [texasselectevent.com](http://texasselectevent.com)

**San Antonio [1-2] Fiesta of Gems**, (830) 387-1766, [swgms.org](http://swgms.org)

# Land, Sea or Sky

By land, by sea and by air, these Texans take the world by storm. Come along as we visit the scenic parts of Texas. When it comes to natural beauty, the sky's the limit.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

**1 MARK HOLLY**  
BANDERA EC

"Little did we know that a major hurricane was about to impact Port Aransas. It was so sad to see the city devastated shortly after we left."

**2 CASEY BRUNO**  
PEDERNALES EC

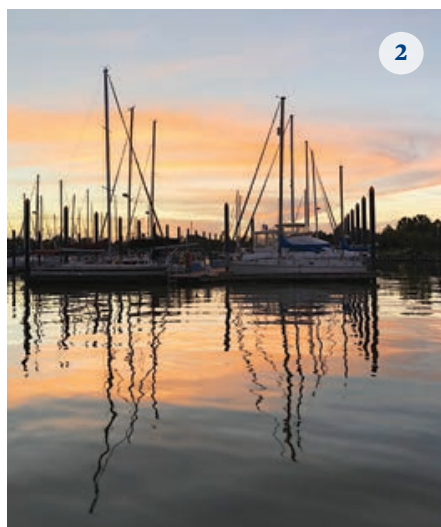
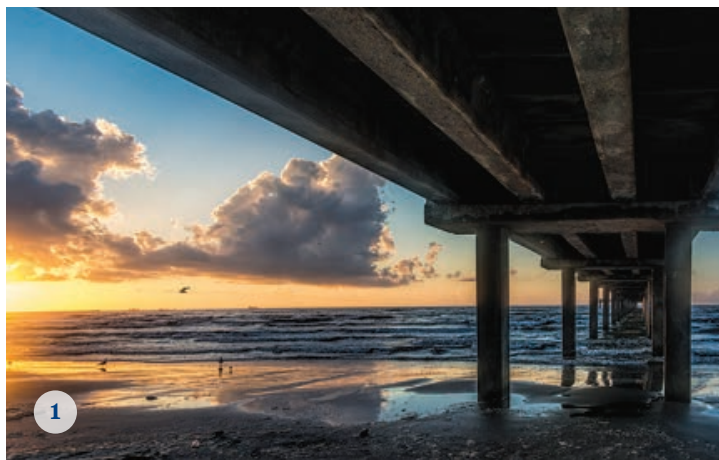
Sunset over Waterford Harbor Marina in Kemah.

**3 PAIGE KILLIAN**  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

"Please don't touch me!"

**4 LARRY SELMAN**  
TRI-COUNTY EC

"This was taken by my wife, Gigi Selman. While driving down the road, she saw this hidden scene."



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE MAR 10** Waterfalls
- DUE APR 10** Hoof and Horn
- DUE MAY 10** Night Sky



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

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Land, Sea or Sky photos from readers.



## A Pet Project

An ailing feline finds her place at the head of the table

BY JESSICA RIDGE  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
STEPHANIE SINGLETON

I SET THE DELICATE china saucer before her, a tiny calico queen curled up on a quilt. On the dish is a dainty portion of cat food, heated to make it more enticing. The plate was a wedding gift a decade ago, shortly before my husband and I brought our little feline gourmand home.

Only the best for miss priss. She gives this morning's delicacy, whitefish and tuna, an imperious sniff, then looks up at me. *Is that the best you can do, lady?* Next up, canned salmon.

Isobel is 12 now, and she is dying.

Her green eyes gaze with the same peaceful focus, and she still flops over for belly rubs and purrs contentedly, but her decline, which had been happening in fits and starts, has gained momentum. And my husband, Jon, and I find ourselves vested with the worst, most

painful power—deciding when to let her go. It's a desperate sort of daily divination. *How much has she eaten today? Three bites earlier? Fantastic.* As she grows thinner.

And yet as best we can tell, she isn't suffering. So with our vet's blessing, we persist. I imagine Isobel as a discerning diner at a Michelin-starred restaurant for which I'm the hapless chef, subject to the mercy of her palate's whims. No thank you to tuna in oil today; yes please to catnip-laced crunchy treats.

Her haughtiness has hung on in other ways, too. She still emits an irritated squeak when our dog, Brienne, gets too close for her liking. She's never been a big fan of our coltish pup. Too friendly, too in her face.

But Isobel warmed up to us quickly. The day we brought her home, a volunteer at the animal shelter had asked if we'd like to meet the sweetest kitty in the whole place. Sure, we said. Almost as soon as Isobel emerged from her little metal crate, she settled into my arms. More like a puppy than a 2-year-old cat, really. The sad din of the shelter faded into the background as she stared up at me. Sold.

That night, she hid under the sofa in our apartment until I got home from work, when she finally ventured out from beneath her chenille hideout, to our soft-spoken jubilation.

We go back to the vet tomorrow, where I know the news won't be good. I've begun the steps to volunteer at the shelter where we found Isobel; I hope to guide another family to a cat as sweet as ours.

Until then, I've got plenty to keep me busy—a finicky, affectionate Isobel, as likely to snuggle up close as she is to turn up her nose. ■



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Offer for new and qualifying former customers only. Important Terms and Conditions: Requires credit qualification and 2-year commitment. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 4/12/23. Offer requires 2-year commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo, remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 3-year price guarantee at \$79.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 programming package, local channels, HD service fees, and Hopper Duo Smart DVR for 1 TV. Included in 3-year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$94.99 for AT120+, \$99.99 for AT200, \$109.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15), NOT included in 3-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. Premium Channels 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$20/mo. for Showtime, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. Remote: The DISH Voice Remote with Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. Other: All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price guarantee are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$10.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 3 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Reliability Guarantee: limited time offer, subject to change. Available only to new or returning former customers. Guarantee covers signal loss outages due to normal weather and/or technical issues. Does not cover signal loss outages due to user error. Does not cover changes in programming content. To receive outage credits, you must contact DISH customer service by phone or chat within 72 hours of the outage. Upon verifying the outage, DISH will issue bill credits in daily increments from the time of the outage until the outage is restored. Not available to DISH Outdoors customers. 99% signal reliability based on data from set-top boxes. Not a guarantee of signal in all weather conditions. Watching live and recorded TV on DISH Anywhere requires internet-connected Hopper and compatible mobile device. Miscellaneous: Taxes or surcharges may apply. All packages and offer subject to change without notice. Additional restrictions may apply. Netflix, Prime Video, HBO Max and Discovery Plus streaming memberships required. Indiana C.P.D Reg. No. - 19-08615. ©2023 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$50 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability is subject to change without notice. The application of "No Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly means that your access to the Internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.