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HOW THE PEOPLE OF WEST
HAVE PREVAILED

Texas Coop Power

FOR TRINITY VALLEY EC MEMBERS

APRIL 2023

Brenham Is Smokin'

Here's the scoop:
The barbecue there
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TRINITY
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NEWS

SEE PAGE 18

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April 2023



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Matt Lowery is proud of how the ribs at LJ's BBQ stack up.
Photo by Wyatt McSpadden

ABOVE

The Hallettsville home of Blanche and Roy Cavarretta hoards their gourds.
Photo by Julia Robinson

Rising Stars

WE SALUTE a select group of Texas co-op employees this Lineworker Appreciation Day, April 10. Apprentices from Pedernales Electric Cooperative in Johnson City dominated at two competitions in 2022 that spotlighted and promoted lineworker skills and safe work practices.

PEC's Phillip Stapp finished first among 96 apprentices at the Texas Lineman's Rodeo in July, claiming the top prize for the co-op for the fourth consecutive rodeo. Co-workers Crispen Davis placed third and Cole Compton fifth. Then, at the International Lineman's Rodeo in October in Kansas, PEC's Zackery Gough, below, beat out 365 competitors to claim first place. Davis was close behind in second place, and Stapp was 14th.



“The hardest thing in the world to understand is income taxes.”

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

FINISH THIS SENTENCE I DROVE ALL NIGHT TO ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our February prompt: **Rainy days make me ...**

Get in the kitchen and make soup or dumplings and do some baking.

ELAINE GARNER
VIA FACEBOOK

Want to curl up with a cozy blanket and a good book.

MARGIE HARGROVE
BOWIE-CASS EC
DAINGERFIELD

Glad I'm retired from delivering mail so I can sit on my porch and enjoy it.

TANIS WILLIAMS
WOOD COUNTY EC
FRUITVALE

Want to make oatmeal, hot cocoa, tomato soup and grilled cheese.

KIMBERLEY BAILEY RIGGS
VIA FACEBOOK

Remember when it was dry and I promised not to curse rainy days.

MARK BROWNING
SAN HOUSTON EC
GOODRICH

Visit our website to see more responses.



April 8 National Empanada Day

Writer Vianney Rodriguez shared that empanadas were among her favorite types of pan dulce in *Sweet Memories*, from December 2020.

Funny How Time Slips Away

Willie Nelson, the musical genius from the Hill Country who has won 10 Grammys, written more than 2,500 songs and turned plenty of others' tunes into hits of his own, turns 90 on April 29.

Here are the favorite songs of TCP's writers and editors:

Chris Burrows: *City of New Orleans*

Alex Dal Santo: *On the Road Again*

Travis Hill: *Hello Walls*

Jessica Ridge: *Pancho and Lefty*

Tom Widowski: *Seven Spanish Angels*

TCP Watch Willie perform each of these songs on our website.



Holy Smokes!

SEEMS ONLY FITTING that the world's longest barbecue marathon took place in Texas.

Pitmasters from Panther City BBQ in Fort Worth grilled for 40 hours, 49 minutes and 17 seconds July 13–15, 2022, to set the record. Chris Magallanes, above, and two others cooked 450 pounds of hamburgers, 300 pounds each of tablitras (beef short ribs) and fajitas, and 100 pounds each of onions and peppers.

The food was donated to the community, including to first responders and a hospital.

TCP Contests and More

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DAVE SHAEFER

Caught Cuisine

“I discovered hundreds of sundew plants growing in my backyard in Kountze. Let’s just say I had no problem with ants in my yard!”

EDWARD ROWLAND
CECA
EASTLAND COUNTY

Kitty Hawk’s Mark

My first carrier landing in an A-7 Corsair aboard the USS Kitty Hawk was in November 1968, and my last landing after 130 combat missions in Southeast Asia was August 16, 1969 [*Breaking Up*, February 2023]. There’s nothing like your first carrier deployment, especially if it’s to a combat zone.

Mike Scott
Tri-County EC
Granbury

It’s heartwarming to know that 95% of her will be recycled and that her armor will be incorporated into a new U.S. ship [*Breaking Up*, February 2023].

DAVID HURLEY
VIA FACEBOOK

We just booked a guided trip through the ship channel [at right]. Our guide told us a few things about the retired carrier, but you filled in all the blanks.

Randy Carroll
Wood County EC
Winnaboro



COURTESY RANDY CARROLL

Honoring the 442nd

My parents—U.S. citizens—were among those who lost their assets and possessions when all those of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast were ordered into internment camps without due process and without any evidence of a crime [*Rescue of the Lost Battalion*, February 2023].

Two of my uncles served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Thank you for remembering the loyalty, valor and tremendous sacrifice of the Japanese Americans of the 442nd.

Jeanne Makihara
Guadalupe Valley EC
Cibolo

Indianola Relocated

After the destruction of Indianola by hurricanes and subsequent fires, many of the homes were dismantled and moved to nearby Cuero and Victoria for a safer location [*Important Entry*, February 2023]. A search of the internet reveals addresses where visitors can see these old homes in a restored setting.

Jeri Porter
Pedernales EC
Fischer

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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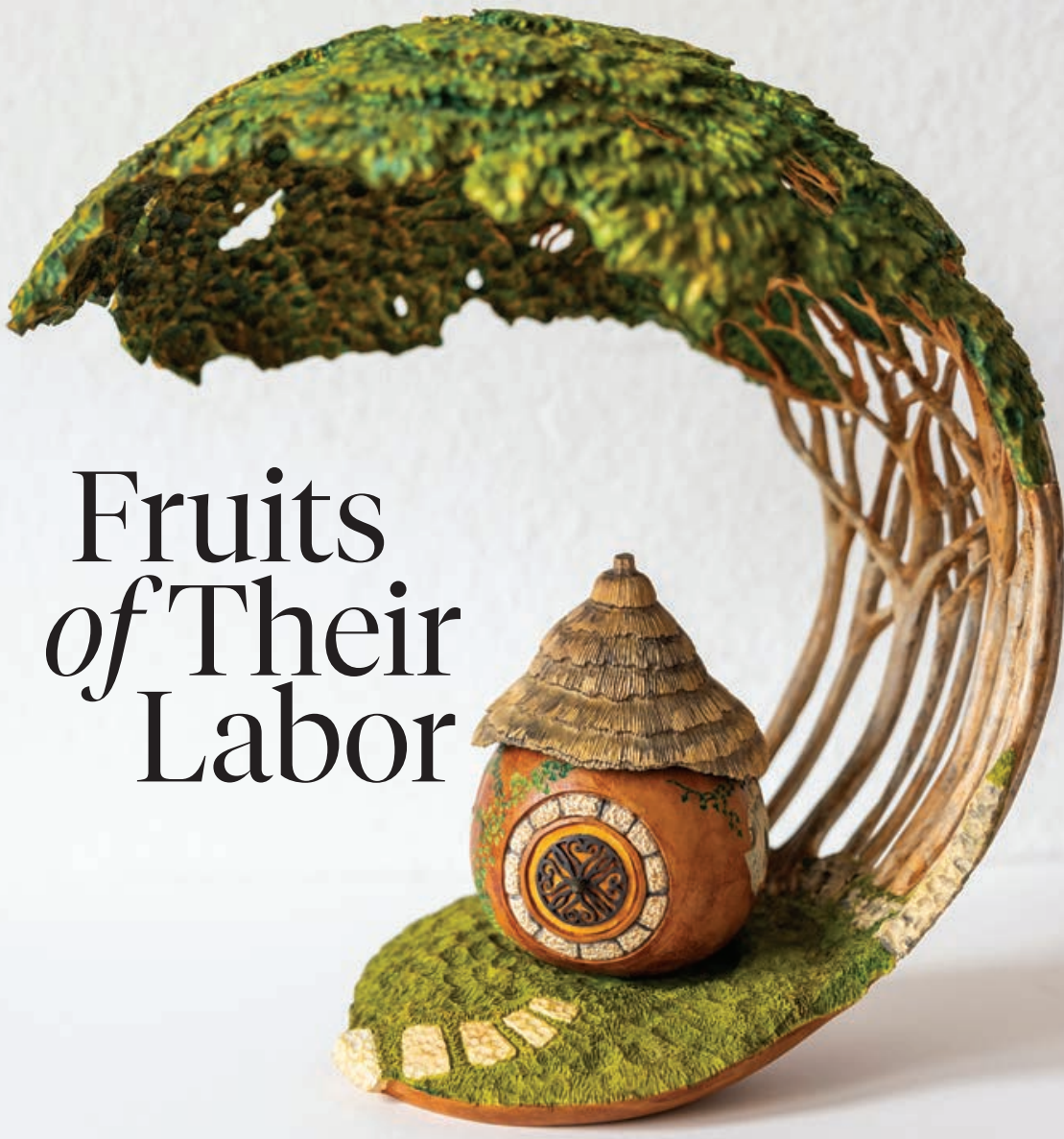
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Fruits of Their Labor

How passionate artists turn gourds into richly embellished works of art

FROM LEFT Michael Ford's pieces sometimes incorporate multiple gourds. Ford, a former graphic artist for the Texas Department of Transportation, has been turning gourds into art since 2013.

With one hand, Wimberley artist Michael Ford grips what looks like a glossy beige birdhouse shaped like an hourglass and etched with black tendrils. Then he gives it a shake. *Boom, boom—BOOM.* The deep rumbles startle passersby at the Lone Star Gourd Festival in Fredericksburg. Like me, they're dumbfounded.

"This is a thunder gourd," says Ford, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member. When shaken, a spring vibrates a drumhead, creating ominous notes that emanate through holes in the gourd.

"It's very functional. If your company stays too long, just duck into a hallway with your gourd," Ford says, grinning, then shakes it again, setting off more thunderous booms. "Then tell your guests, 'Uh-oh, storm's coming. Better leave while you can!'"

Ford's joking, of course. But he's dead serious about the art form that he calls his passion—much like his fellow gourd artists all over Texas. Using an array of techniques, they create bowls, holiday décor, birdhouses, masks, sculptures, jewelry, lamps and miniature hobbit homes, to name



a few examples. There are simple designs, like painted gourds, and richly embellished pieces that can sell for thousands of dollars.

But wait—what is a gourd? Is it just a smooth pumpkin? Well, close. Gourds and pumpkins, along with squash, melons and cucumbers, are members of Cucurbitaceae, a plant family that produces hard-shelled fruits that humans have used for food, ornaments and utensils over thousands of years. Experts believe gourds are the only plants that have been grown around the world since prehistoric days.

Historians in Peru have unearthed ancient gourd fragments associated with early humans. For generations, Peruvian artist Ana Poma and her neighbors in Cochas Chico have passed down the tradition of carving and burning intricate designs onto gourds as a way of storytelling. “Families teach their children,” says Poma, a vendor and teacher at the Fredericksburg festival. “I learned as a child from my mother, uncles and grandparents.”

For some artists, though, not just any gourd will do. Forget using our thin-skinned Texas natives, such as buf-

falo and balsam gourds. Instead, many artists prefer hard-shelled and decorative gourds available in endless shapes, sizes and thicknesses. Thicker shells (three-eighths of an inch thick or more) are sturdier for carving and burning. Standard gourd shapes, designated by the American Gourd Society, include cannonball, basketball, martin house, dipper, club and banana.

Many artists order their gourds from professional growers, such as the Wuertz Gourd Farm in Arizona and the Welburn Gourd Farm in Southern California. Some grow their own. John and Rickie Newell, Central Texas EC members near Llano, grow gourds. At the festival, Rickie—an artist who displays her work at the Llano Art Guild and Gallery—has a bin piled high with gourds for sale, ranging from 50 cents to \$12. Typically, gourds are priced according to their widest diameter. Those that have been cleaned on the outside and/or had their seeds and pulp scraped out cost more.

“We plant our gourds around April 15,” Rickie says. “Then we harvest when they’re dead in the field from October up to Christmas and dry them in a metal cage.”



Get a Gourd Look

See for yourself at Central Texas shows this year.

Southwest Gourd & Fiber Fine Art Show,
May 18–July 1,
Kerrville

Lone Star Gourd Festival,
Sept. 29–30,
Fredericksburg

Hill Country Collectables,
year-round,
Wimberley



Choosing a gourd is just the first step for many artists, and gourd shows are an ideal place to learn about the craft and expand skill sets. This Texas show is one of a handful of annual events held across the U.S. that attract hobbyists and professionals alike. Artists and vendors welcome questions, and many sell basic supplies. The Texas Gourd Society, the nonprofit organization that sponsors and organizes the annual Lone Star Gourd Festival at the Gillespie County Fairgrounds, is also a resource for crafters. Across Texas, the society has regional chapters called “patches.”

“We learn techniques from each other, like leather stitching,” says Sherry Nelson, a member of the Guadalupe Gourd Patch in Kerrville. “In the gourd world, though, you never copy someone’s work. Instead, you can use their technique as an inspiration to create something new.”

On her gourds, Nelson, a Central Texas EC member, uses various methods, such as burning; carving; painting; applying alcohol dyes; and attaching horns, beads and cactus fibers. “Pyrography is my favorite,” she says. “I can draw with my wood burner for hours. It’s very relaxing.”

Like many gourd artists, Roy and Blanche Cavarretta, who live in Hallettsville and are members of San Bernard EC, started out by growing gourds and turning them into bird-houses. Then, while traveling in New Mexico, they viewed a gourd art exhibit at an art festival. “We had no idea so many things could be done with them,” Roy recalls. “It set us on a

CLOCKWISE FROM IMMEDIATELY ABOVE Roy Cavarretta’s Standing Tall, Jill Robinson’s Chasing Dreams and a James Medders spiraling piece. Rickie Newell continues work on her angel with wings. Robinson’s Green Goddess. Blanche and Roy Cavarretta’s hobby has them “on a journey we never could have imagined.”

INDIVIDUAL GOURDS: COURTESY THE ARTISTS



journey we never could have imagined. There's not a day goes by that we're not working on a gourd."

That was 11 years ago. The Cavarrettas still grow gourds. They've also become master gourd artists who've won countless awards. "At art shows, you enter at the novice level," Roy explains. "When you win at that level, you advance to intermediate, then advanced and master."

Together, the couple market their work as Gravel Road Arts. On her urn-style gourds, Blanche primarily uses pyrography, transparent dyes and a weaving stitch called closed coiling. Flowers, hummingbirds, dragonflies and inlaid gemstones adorn many of her pieces. Similarly, Roy uses pyrography and dyes along with chip carving using a gouge. His designs lean toward contemporary and Southwestern themes, such as his Spirit Doll that won Best of Show at the Fredericksburg festival.

The People's Choice award went to Chasing Dreams, a large kettle gourd intricately crafted by Austin's Jill Robinson. "I use a lot of random techniques," she says of her striking designs. "On this one, I used enameling, woodburning, stipple carving and alcohol inks along with real cactus fibers and carved cactus fibers."

Visit with Robinson and other gourd artists, and you'll quickly pick up on their camaraderie and deep love for the craft. When artist James Medders of Morgan Mill lost the use of his left hand, Roy Cavarretta rigged a carving vise

that could hold a gourd in place for his friend. Soon Medders, a United Cooperative Services member, was back to woodburning, carving and painting on his gourds. Using a method called pine needle coiling, he also stitches longleaf pine needles into elaborate designs.

"Once I got started in gourd art eight years ago, I had a passion," says Medders, who has also won awards. "Why? I don't know. I just do. Sometimes my wife tells me, 'Put that gourd down! We've got somewhere to go.'"

Meanwhile, across the exhibit hall at the festival, a hands-on art area called the Imagination Station beckons newbies of any age. From a big pile of gourds, I choose a little one cut open like a bowl. Then I plunk down at a table with metallic paints, rhinestones, a paintbrush and a sponge.

"One of our goals is to pass on gourd art to young people so it won't die out," says Rona Thornton of Austin, who's overseeing the area. "I take the Imagination Station to garden clubs, schools and military bases. It's fun to see people who think they're not artistic create their own piece."

That would be me—I'm definitely no artist. But wait! Before long, my plain gourd has transformed into a sparkly urn. Wow, I *am* an artist.

Thornton smiles. "Anything's possible with a gourd," she says. ■

TCP See more gourds in this story on our website.



Barbecue joints in Brenham, a town famous for ice cream, are attracting crowds of their own



MAKE NO BONES

Leonard Botello IV always wanted to have a roadside barbecue shack. So when a hole-in-the-wall barbecue restaurant 3 miles west of downtown Brenham on U.S. 290 went up for sale, Botello bought the 1,200-square-foot red metal building.

He grew up in a family of restaurateurs in Lake Jackson and initially swore he'd never follow the same path. He graduated from Texas A&M University with a biology degree in 2013. But after a visit to Austin's La Barbecue, Botello was blown away by the simplicity of the barbecue. Right away he started experimenting with his uncle's pit and later drove to Ohio to pick up his first offset smoker, a \$4,000 Craigslist purchase.

"It's like one big science project every single day because everything's completely different," Botello says. "Every cow is different. Every piece of wood is different. The weather is different."

He opened Truth Barbeque in July 2015 and added a covered patio next to his roadside barbecue shack on the outskirts of Brenham.

While Brenham is best known as the home of Blue Bell Creameries, there's more to the city's culinary scene than ice cream. The small town, population 18,000, has a handful of barbecue restaurants that are building impressive résumés. Two of these spots—Truth Barbeque and LJ's BBQ—are just a mile and a half apart, and both made *Texas Monthly's* list of the 50 Best BBQ Joints in 2021.

At either place, the owners and pitmasters could be stationed behind the counter slicing up the Texas trinity—brisket, sausage and ribs—each cooked with their own personal style and accompanied by an array of delectable sides. Brenham's location, halfway between Austin and Houston, makes it an easy day trip or weekend destination for barbecue. Come hungry and be prepared to loosen your belt.



OPPOSITE FROM TOP The staff at LJ's BBQ and a spread at the restaurant. ABOVE Preparing servings of LJ's ketchup-based sauce, which balances sweetness with apple cider and white vinegars.

HONORING MAMAW

LJ'S STARTED in an unlikely place—the backroom of a downtown liquor store, where Matt Lowery, his cousin Leah Cook and her husband, Corey Cook, were selling lunches on a table at a side entrance in 2016. Pitmasters Lowery and Corey Cook were preparing the food at Leah's parents' house.

The trio moved their business to the current brick-and-mortar location, a concrete building with a red metal awning on West Main Street in 2017. Most days the parking lot is full and one of the three pitmasters—Lowery, Cook and Josh Jalomo, who joined the team in 2020—is behind the counter chopping brisket for one of their signature side dishes: brisket mac and cheese.

"It's just mac and cheese with chopped brisket on top," Corey Cook says. "It's no more simple than that. It's one of the most popular items."

The idea for the restaurant was hatched when Lowery began cooking barbecue and doing small catering gigs in 2014, when he was in graduate school at the University of Houston, studying hotel and restaurant management. After graduation, he was visiting the Cooks in Brenham when they began brainstorming an idea for a business. In 2015 they started doing pop-ups before moving to the backroom of the liquor store.

The trio decided to name the restaurant for their grandmother, Laura Jean, who lived in Brenham.

"One day, Leah said, 'How about we call it LJ's after our mamaw?'" Lowery says. "It just seemed like a good way to pay homage to her and had a great story."

LJ's main focus is locally sourced ingredients, from the post oak they burn to the collard greens they serve. "We get our collard greens from a local farmer here that's about 5 miles away from our restaurant," says Lowery about their twice-weekly deliveries from Whitehurst Farm. "The greens you order here at LJ's literally are in the ground no more than 24 to 48 hours before."

The brisket is seasoned with a salt and pepper rub. "It's simple, but it's done well," Lowery says. All the meat is cooked on one of four smokers—one 1,000-gallon and three 500-gallon offsets tucked behind the restaurant. In addition to brisket, sausage and ribs, LJ's also serves up pulled pork and turkey. All the meats pair well with their ketchup-based sauce that Cook calls the "perfect balance" of sweet mixed with apple cider and white vinegars. Peach cobbler and banana pudding are the stars of the dessert menu.

With so many options, deciding what to order can be tough. Lowery suggests starting with a three-meat plate, piled high with brisket, ribs and sausage.

"Obviously, the turkey is the hidden gem," Cook says. "But the first thing that you want to try are those."



to kind of complement the meat,” Botello explains.

His most popular sides are collards, corn pudding and potato tot casserole, a family recipe. But save room for the triple-layer cakes for dessert—each slice weighs a pound. Using another Botello family recipe, head baker Kiki Wilkins makes 12 rotating varieties of cake, including triple-chocolate, carrot, strawberry, tres leches and banana caramel.

Truth debuted on *Texas Monthly*'s list in 2017, earning the No. 10 spot. But getting there wasn't easy.

“I remember cooking three briskets a day and then nobody showing up,” Botello says. He initially chose Brenham to avoid being drowned out in bigger markets like Austin and Houston. Truth gained traction quickly, partially thanks to its photogenic plating that made Botello's barbecue ripe for social media. In 2019 he opened a second location, in Houston.

Success hasn't changed how Botello does business. He's still behind the counter cutting meat, and his dad is often at the register. “I like to be hands-on [and] talk to customers,” explains Botello, who always ensures sauce bottles are clean and facing the correct way. “I like to be approachable.”

Botello enjoys the questions and interactions. “When

they ask you questions, your brain starts to work a lot harder,” he says. “And you realize how much information you have locked up here that you're just doing [by] second nature. So it's good for them, and it's good for me.”

He teaches barbecue classes one Sunday a month, inspired by the openness of Wayne Mueller, a third-generation pitmaster and the owner of Louie Mueller Barbecue in nearby Taylor. One day, while Botello was eating, Mueller sat down beside him and started sharing his knowledge unprompted, including his temperature for cooking meat—often a secret in the barbecue world.

“Even though these are trade secrets, I could give them to you,” explains Botello. “But it's like Jimi Hendrix or Stevie Ray Vaughan teaching somebody how to play a guitar. They're never going to be able to recreate that no matter how many answers you give them.” ■

FROM TOP A sampling from the menu at Truth Barbeque. Owner Leonard Botello IV, left, is often found behind the counter cutting meat as his father works the register.



MOMENT OF TRUTH

AT TRUTH BARBEQUE, Botello's Central Texas-style preparation consists of a simple rub made in-house and post oak to smoke the meat. To expand his skills and menu, Botello also serves up a rotating menu of less conventional dishes—smoked boudin, pastrami brisket and Carolina whole hog, a popular Saturday-only menu item. The meats are accompanied by a choice of three sauces: a traditional tomato base, tangy mustard or white barbecue. The latter two are his tribute to Carolina-style barbecue. “Our sauces are a smidge more vinegary than most sauces, but it's just

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Helenite is produced from the heated volcanic rock of Mount St. Helens and the brilliant green creation has captured the eye of jewelry designers worldwide. Today you can wear this massive 6½-carat stunner for **only \$149!**

Make your emeralds jealous. Our *Helenite Necklace* puts the green stone center stage, with a faceted pear-cut set in .925 sterling silver finished in luxurious gold. The explosive origins of the stone are echoed in the flashes of light that radiate as the piece swings gracefully from its 18" luxurious gold-finished sterling silver chain. Today the volcano sits quiet, but this unique piece of American natural history continues to erupt with gorgeous green fire.

Your satisfaction is guaranteed. Bring home the *Helenite Necklace* and see for yourself. If you are not completely blown away by the rare beauty of this exceptional stone, simply return the necklace within 30 days for a full refund of your purchase price.

JEWELRY SPECS:

- 6 ½ ctw Helenite in gold-finished sterling silver setting
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Limited to the first 2200 orders from this ad only

Helenite Necklace (6 ½ ctw)..... **Only \$149** +S&P
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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER/
CEO

JEFF LANE

Why We Encourage You To Conserve Electricity

YOU MAY WONDER why we encourage you to use electricity more efficiently through conservation. After all, we're in the business of selling kilowatt-hours. Why would we encourage our customers to use *less* electricity?

Well, your cooperative isn't in business to make a profit; it's in business to serve you in the most efficient, reliable and cost-effective way possible. Your co-op is collectively owned by the people it serves and shares its members' interest in keeping costs down.

We strongly encourage energy conservation for a number of reasons. First, it's good common sense. Although fossil fuels are still relatively abundant, they aren't infinite. Depleting these natural resources means there will be less fuel for future generations.

Conserving energy saves you money in two ways: Less electricity used means a lower bill, and when many consumers lower their usage, that saves your cooperative money as well. You see, electric co-ops must keep enough power (capacity) on hand to supply all members' highest usage (demand). If that demand can be managed effectively, new power sources may not have to be tapped as soon as they would otherwise, and the construction of costly new generating plants can be postponed.

As our electric system continues to grow, we must maintain an adequate supply of power. Your conservation efforts, when combined with others', can ensure that the cooperative's growth remains stable.

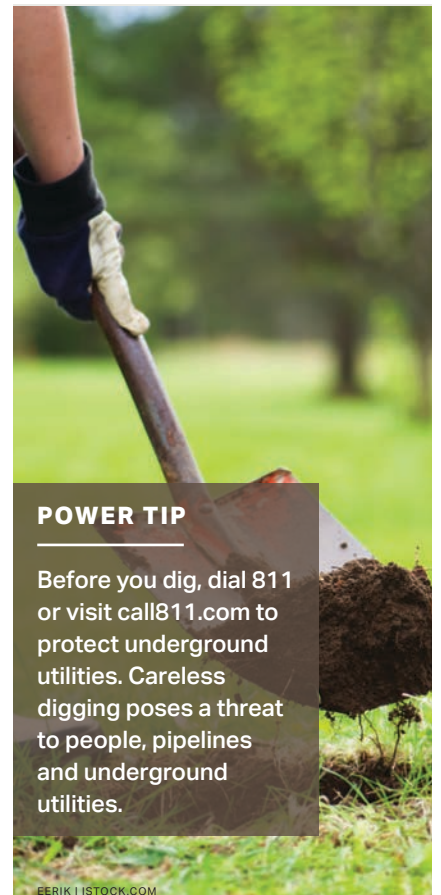
Here at your co-op, we're trying to keep your electricity affordable by automating operations where possible and by setting reasonable budgets that do not sacrifice reliability or service. We have no control, however, over the market price of fuels needed to generate electricity.

We'll continue to offer tips for conserving electricity, even though we're in the business of selling it. You can always count on your co-op to keep looking out for you. ■



DID YOU KNOW?

Becoming a journeyman lineworker can take more than 7,000 hours of training (or about four years).



POWER TIP

Before you dig, dial 811 or visit call811.com to protect underground utilities. Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground utilities.

ERIK | ISTOCK.COM



TVEC | ELAINE FROSCHE

Youth Tour winner Dylan Stinson of Kaufman got the news that he was going to Washington, D.C. from TVEC Director of Corporate Relations Bobbi Byford and Public Relations Representatives Joy Long and Laura Melton.

Youth Tour Winners Announced

THREE TALENTED STUDENTS from Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative area high schools will be headed to Austin and Washington, D.C. this summer with the Government-in-Action Youth Tour.

Ethan Gonzales of Cayuga High School, Caleb Huddleston of Palestine High School and Dylan Stinson of Kaufman High School had their entry essays rated highest to win the trip.

The trip begins in Austin, where attendees from around the state gather and enjoy tours of the Texas State Cemetery, the Texas State Capitol and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum. Students then depart for Washington, D.C., to join about 1,500 representatives from co-ops around country. Trip highlights include meeting elected officials, tours of historic monuments and the Smithsonian Institution. The tour group will travel to Arlington National Cemetery, Washington National Cathedral, the Supreme Court, to the Library of Congress, as well as other special attractions.



Caleb Huddleston
Palestine High School



Ethan Gonzales
Cayuga High School

TVEC's Youth Tour winners submit an essay with their application. Those essays are judged by communications professionals at other electric cooperatives to choose the winners.

Huddleston noted in his essay that, "This gives an opportunity to explore who we are outside of our homes and school."


That sentiment was also noted by Gonzales, who got to hear about the trip's benefits from his twin brother Aidan, a 2022 Youth Tour attendee.

"Through this opportunity, the participants develop bond and connections with newly found friends," he said. "They get

exposed to potential career opportunities, and are provided real-world experiences."

Along with the trip, beginning this year the students will receive a \$1,000 higher education scholarship upon their graduation. ■

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

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TVEC | DON JOHNSON

Tool Transformer Move Marks Substation Milestone

Facility nears completion, adding capacity and reliability in an area seeing steady growth.

IT TAKES YEARS OF PLANNING, engineering, testing and construction to add a power substation to the grid. When done right, though, the payoff is a boost in capacity and reliability for decades to come.

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative members in western Henderson County will see that benefit as a substation in Tool is nearing completion this summer. The substation's first massive power transformer was delivered recently, the last major piece of the project.

Weighing in at more than 40,000 pounds, moving and placing the transformer was a serious undertaking. However, once it is up and running, it should provide decades of service to the area.

The new substation is a joint project with Rayburn Country Electric Cooperative, which serves as TVEC's generation and transmission provider.

"This substation will give us more flexibility to control our substation capacity and adjust coordination more quickly than with another provider," said Tim Craig, TVEC's manager of Engineering.

The new substation has also been built with future growth in mind, with space already allotted for a second power transformer and all of the necessary infrastructure in place.

Along with the substation facility itself, new lines have been constructed to get power out to TVEC members in a way that is more flexible during outage situations.

"We have designed this in a way that gives us maximum ability to move loads around as needed due to seasonal demand, and to keep power on to as many members as possible during any storm response or emergency," Craig said.

As the TVEC service area continues to add population and business growth, your co-op is working to make sure the electrical capacity is in place to meet the need while delivering on the promise of reliable power at a reasonable cost. ■



TVEC linemen Shane Bardin and Coin Pool prepare a new substation transformer for a crane lift to its permanent home in the new Tool substation.



ALEXANDER POTASHEV | ISTOCK.COM

10 Do's and Don'ts for Using Portable Generators

AS MUCH AS Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative plans and prepares to prevent power outages, they can still happen because of circumstances out of our control.

If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, TVEC reminds you to do so safely.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they are extremely dangerous.

Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

- 1. DO:** Install backup carbon monoxide alarms.
- 2. DO:** Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
- 3. DO:** Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home—well away from doors, windows and vents that can allow deadly CO to enter the home.
- 4. DO:** Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground-fault circuit interrupter to prevent electric shock injuries.
- 5. DO:** Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for damage before use.
- 6. DON'T:** Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed or even partially enclosed space. Generators produce high levels of deadly gas.
- 7. DON'T:** Use generators in or near water, in the rain, or while wet. Water and electricity are a deadly combination.
- 8. DON'T:** Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations.
- 9. DON'T:** Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.
- 10. DON'T:** Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute your neighbors or utility lineworkers making repairs. ■

Lineworker Appreciation Day Keeps Going Strong

ELECTRIC LINEMEN don't always receive the recognition they deserve for keeping our electricity flowing. But since 2015, there has been a special day when we can thank them. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Board of Directors passed a resolution to honor these hardworking individuals every second Monday in April:

"Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on; Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure; Whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents; and Whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen; Therefore be it resolved that NRECA recognize the second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day and make available to electric cooperatives, materials and support to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America's electric cooperatives." ■ 60243459001



STEVE DEBENPORT | ISTOCK.COM

Utility Poles Are Not Bulletin Boards

Help us keep our lineworkers safe.

Electric cooperative workers find all kinds of no-nos on utility poles, such as yard sale signs, basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes, lights and birdhouses.

These obstructions are dangerous for employees. Unwelcome clutter on utility poles can compromise lineworkers' safety equipment, leaving them vulnerable to electrocution.

Anyone posting items on utility poles also is at risk of exposure to thousands of volts of electricity pulsing overhead. Always stay at least 10 feet away from utility lines.

Think before you post that sign!

TVEC encourages you to always practice safety.

TVEC

TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Energy Quiz



A standard unit of energy measurement is British Thermal Units or BTU. What is the equivalent of 1 BTU?

- A • 252 Calories**
- B • .3 watt-hour**
- C • 1,055 joules**
- D • all of the above**

Win **\$100!**

Send your answer and contact information to contest@tvec.coop or contact TVEC Member Services by April 30.

One \$100 bill credit winner will be chosen from all correct replies. Look for the correct answer in a future *Texas Co-op Power*.

March Energy Quiz: Average Energy Spending

WITH EVERYONE TRYING TO STAY COOL, RECENT summer electricity demand on the hottest summer days continues to rise. The current demand record of 80,038 megawatts was set on July 20, 2022. As Texas' population and economy continues to grow, energy demand will grow as well. Congratulations to the February Energy Quiz winner, Sandra Mooney, of Tool, who correctly answered our question about Americans' average energy expenses.

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



Don't Fall Victim to Utility Scams

UNFORTUNATELY, IN TODAY'S WORLD, scams are inevitable. Criminals can threaten you with everything from legal action involving the IRS to turning off power to your home.

Utility scams often involve an individual or group posing as an employee of your electric cooperative. The scammer may use threatening language to frighten you into giving your credit card or bank account information. Don't fall victim to these types of scams; understand the threats posed and your best course of action.

If someone calls your home or cellphone demanding you pay your electric bill immediately, gather as much information as you can from that individual, end the call and contact the local authorities and your electric cooperative. Scammers often use threats and urgency to pressure you into giving them your bank account number or loading a prepaid credit or debit card.

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative will never call and ask you to provide personal finance information over the phone. Variations on the scheme are also becoming more common. Rather than making an initial claim that a member owes money, some scammers are now saying an overpayment is the reason for a phone call to a consumer. They make contact and say they are trying to process refund—but their real intent is to take your money.

► If you have any doubts or questions about your utility bill, contact our member service team by calling 1-800-766-9576, email memberrelations@tvec.net or come by one of our offices.

► If someone comes to your home claiming to be a TVEC employee who needs to collect money, inspect parts of your property or sign you up for a new program, call us to verify they are, in fact, an employee. If they're not, call local authorities for assistance and do not let the individual into your home.

There are other types of scams consumers should watch out for:

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

If you receive an email from an unknown sender, an email riddled with spelling errors and typos, or an email threatening action unless a sum of money is paid, do not click any links provided in the email and do not respond to it. Simply delete the email or send it to your spam folder.

High-pressure demands are a common tactic in many of the schemes. Urging quick decisions or actions, like immediate payment, particularly by a specific method like a gift card, wire transfer, cellphone or third-party computer app, should raise serious red flags.

TVEC wants to make sure you avoid any and all types of scams that could put you or your financial information in jeopardy. If you have any questions or would like more information about how you can protect yourself from scammers visit tvec.net/scam-awareness. ■

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 April 28 to receive a \$100 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be our winner.





BROTHERS91 | ISTOCK.COM



Electric Vehicle Questions Answered

TVEC ENERGY
MANAGEMENT ADVISER

CHRIS WALKER, BAP

AS ELECTRIC VEHICLES CONTINUE to gain popularity, we regularly receive inquiries about them from Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative members. So we thought it would be helpful to respond to some of the most frequently asked questions.

Q: Why is TVEC communicating about electric vehicles?

A: It's no secret that consumer interest in EVs is growing, and TVEC is providing information about them so that our members can make informed decisions when considering an EV purchase.

Q: How is TVEC involved in EV infrastructure issues?

A: All electric utilities are planning now to ensure they have the necessary infrastructure in place to meet future EV charging needs without jeopardizing the ability to keep power flowing reliably to homes and businesses. As your local energy provider, TVEC is best suited to advise and help members plan for the likely proliferation of electric vehicles in the future.

Q: Can I charge my electric vehicle using an existing outlet or do I need a special outlet?

A: All EVs come with a 110-volt-compatible (Level 1) charging unit that can be plugged into any standard household outlet as well as faster charging capability that requires special charging devices.

Level 1 charging on a household outlet for eight hours or overnight charge would enable about 36–40 miles of travel depending on the type of car.

Level 2 chargers must be installed by a licensed electrician, but they provide much better charging performance. If you typically drive longer distances or are in a hurry, a Level 2 charger takes about half the time and provides about 180 miles of range over an eight-hour charging period.

Q: Will an EV meet my daily driving needs?

A: For now, it depends on your situation. If you're like most Americans and drive an average of 30 miles a day, an EV can meet your daily needs. ■



THE TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE membership continues to shine as one of the most generous groups in the area. Your continued participation in Operation Round Up adds up to a tremendous impact for local charitable and community service organizations.

2022 marked the highest grant total yet for the program, with more than \$426,000 in awards.

Since the program's inception in 2013, grant totals now stand at more than \$3.4 million.

While the monthly contribution may not seem like much, you are funding a great deal of good work for our community.

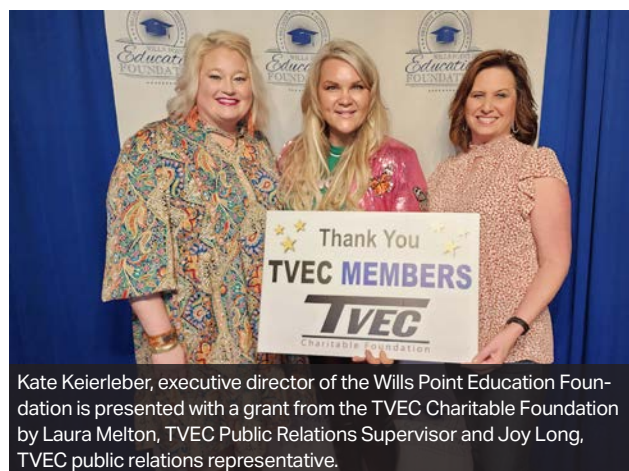
On behalf of the many recipients of these grants that we meet each month, we say **Thank You!**

If you know of an organization doing great work in our area, send them to tvec.net for information and the TVEC Charitable Foundation grant application.

You can also find a full list of grant recipients, FAQs and the organization's bylaws on the site.



Sara Maly, who helps organize the Kaufman Junior High NOW Backpack Program, is presented with a check from the TVEC Charitable Foundation by Laura Melton, TVEC public relations supervisor.



Kate Keierleber, executive director of the Wills Point Education Foundation is presented with a grant from the TVEC Charitable Foundation by Laura Melton, TVEC Public Relations Supervisor and Joy Long, TVEC public relations representative.

TVEC | ELAINE FROSCHE

February 2023 Operation Round Up Awards

Grants:

Wills Point ISD Education Foundation- \$3,000

Van Zandt County Veterans Memorial- \$2,000

The King's Rein- \$2,500

Kaufman NOW Backpack Program- \$2,000

Bill Assistance:

Salvation Army of Kaufman- \$3,000

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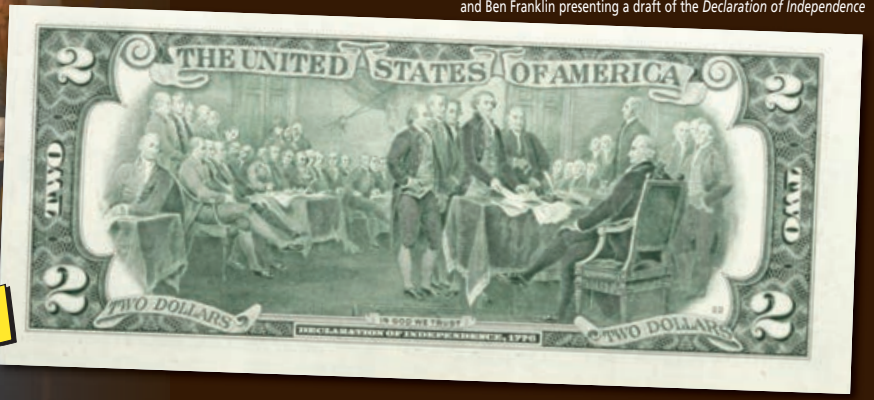
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How to Be Cut Off From Civilization

When it's you against nature, there's only one tool you need:
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You are a man of the wilderness. The only plan you have is to walk up that mountain until you feel like stopping. You tell your friends that it's nothing personal, but this weekend belongs to you.

You've come prepared with your *River Canyon Bowie Knife* sheathed at your side. This hand-forged, unique knife comes shaving sharp with a perfectly fitted hand-tooled sheath. The broad stainless steel blade shines in harmony with the stunning striped horn, wood and bone handle. When you feel the heft of the knife in your hand, you know that you're ready for whatever nature throws at you.

This knife boasts a full tang blade, meaning the blade doesn't stop at the handle, it runs the full length of the knife. According to Gear Patrol, a full tang blade is key, saying "A full tang lends structural strength to the knife, allowing for better leverage ...think one long steel beam versus two."

With our limited edition *River Canyon Bowie Knife* you're getting the best in 21st-century construction with a classic look inspired by legendary American pioneers. What you won't get is the trumped up price tag. We know a thing or two about the hunt—like how to seek out and capture an outstanding, collector's-quality knife that won't cut into your bank account.

This quintessential knife can be yours to use out in the field or to display as the art piece it truly is. But don't wait. A knife of this caliber typically cost hundreds. Priced at an amazing **\$49**, we can't guarantee this knife will stick around for long. So call today!

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the sale price. But we believe that once you wrap your fingers around the *River Canyon's* handle, you'll be ready to carve your own niche into the wild frontier.



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— D., Houston, Texas

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Grounded in Mystery

Some believe Jacob Brodbeck made the first powered flight in history—but there's little proof

BY MARTHA DEERING • ILLUSTRATION BY DANA SMITH

NEARLY 40 YEARS before the Wright brothers made their famous first flight on a North Carolina beach in 1903, a German immigrant named Jacob Brodbeck flew a homemade airship in a field near Luckenbach in 1865.

At least he might have.

Many details have been lost to history, and uncertainty abounds. The Texas State Historical Association Handbook of Texas includes a passage about the feat, though it acknowledges the flight might have occurred in San Antonio—and perhaps even in 1868. An official Texas historical marker in Luckenbach affirms the flight with no mention of the year and somewhat vaguely pins the accomplish-

ment as occurring north of San Antonio.

Iris Brodbeck Macek, who is a great-granddaughter of Brodbeck, self-published *Wings Over Luckenbach*, a partially fictionalized account of the man and his life. In it, she acknowledges the perplexity of that flight: “Good stories never go away. Stories inspired by true events laced with mystery become even more memorable. Jacob Brodbeck’s story is one of these.”

Brodbeck, a professor, inventor and talented musician, was a German immigrant who settled in Fredericksburg, where he became a schoolmaster. He was captivated by the idea of manned flight. In Fredericksburg he made small

models of airships powered by tightly wound springs, an idea that grew out of his attempts to invent a self-winding clock. He took a model to local fairs where it drew attention from other mechanically minded innovators. Their interest prompted Brodbeck to offer shares in his invention.

In an 1865 article in a San Antonio newspaper, he wrote: “For more than 20 years, I have labored to construct a machine which should enable man to use, like a bird, the atmospheric region as the medium of his travels. I have therefore concluded to collect subscriptions ... in order to build a large Air Ship.”

He set the price of one share at \$5 to be repaid with interest when he sold the patent.

The airship featured a cockpit, helicopterlike propeller, compass and barometer. The TSHA writes that the airship rose 12 feet over a Luckenbach field September 20, 1865, and traveled about 100 feet before the spring that powered it completely unwound. A hard landing followed in which the craft was destroyed, but Brodbeck walked away without serious injury. His investors, who had hoped to make a fortune when he sold the patent, were not game for another try.

A photo purports to show the wrecked airship, though what happened to it after that day remains a mystery.

In spite of his failure, Brodbeck contributed much to pioneer Texas, serving as Gillespie County surveyor and later as county commissioner. In 1967, Gov. John Connally declared him the Father of American Aviation. ■

Incredible Eggs

A prized ingredient that's as versatile as it's cracked up to be

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Eggs are such an essential part of our daily kitchen landscape, and yet we often forget how versatile they are. Fruit curds are a wonderful way to celebrate eggs. Here, tart grapefruit is mixed with honey for a luscious spread that can be served for breakfast or on top of angel food cake.

Grapefruit Curd

½ cup grapefruit juice

¼ cup honey

2 eggs

2 egg yolks

5 tablespoons butter, cut into pieces

1. Fill a small saucepan with 2 inches of water and set over medium heat to simmer.
2. In a heatproof bowl that can sit on the saucepan, whisk together grapefruit juice, honey, eggs and egg yolks.
3. Set the bowl over the simmering water and cook, whisking until honey is melted and liquid is a uniform consistency.
4. Add the butter a few pieces at a time, whisking to melt and combine. Once the first pieces are almost completely melted, add the next few pieces. Keep adding butter and whisking until all the butter is incorporated. The curd should be smooth and noticeably thicker, coating the back of a spoon. It will thicken more as it cools; do not overcook. If desired, press the curd through a sieve to remove any lumps.
5. Pour into a jar, cover and chill at least 2 hours to set before serving.

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Cheese Quiche.





Zucchini Crescent Pie

JUDY SEWARD
HAMILTON COUNTY EC

Perfect for brunch or as a dinner side, this veggie-filled dish is a crowd pleaser. Slicing the zucchini thinly helps it bake into the filling along with the cheese.

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter**
- 4 cups thinly sliced zucchini**
- 1 cup chopped onion**
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley**
- ¼ teaspoon dried basil**
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 2 eggs**
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella or Muenster cheese**
- 1 can crescent rolls (8 ounces)**
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard**
- Grated Parmesan cheese, for topping**

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Heat a skillet over medium and add butter to melt. Once melted, add the zucchini and onion and cook until very soft, about 10 minutes. Stir in parsley, basil, oregano, salt and pepper.
2. In a bowl, beat eggs, then stir in cheese. Stir into vegetable filling.
3. Coat a 7-by-11-inch baking dish with nonstick spray. Unroll the crescent roll dough but do not separate. Press the dough into the bottom and partially up the sides of the dish, sealing any holes in the seams. Spread mustard evenly on dough.
4. Pour vegetable filling over the dough. Bake 18–20 minutes, until golden brown and filling is set. Let cool 10 minutes, then sprinkle with Parmesan and serve.

SERVES 6

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



\$500 WINNER

BLT Egg Salad

PAIGE STAFFORD
PEDERNALES EC



Egg salad lovers, this one's for you. Bacon and sun-dried tomatoes add savory flavor to this classic sandwich filling. Any mustard from yellow to grainy Dijon works well for this spread.

SERVES 4–6

- 6 eggs**
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar or lemon juice**
- 6 slices cooked bacon, coarsely chopped**
- ¼ cup sun-dried tomatoes, coarsely chopped**
- 2–3 green onions, diced**
- ¼ cup mayonnaise**
- 1 tablespoon mustard**
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder**
- Salt and ground black pepper, to taste**

1. To hard-boil, place the eggs in a medium pot and fill with water until they are covered. Add vinegar and a dash of salt. Bring the water to a boil, then cover and reduce heat to low. Cook the eggs 8 minutes, drain and place the eggs in an ice bath to cool.

2. Once completely cooled, peel the eggs and chop into bite-size pieces. Place in a bowl along with the remaining ingredients. Stir well to combine, then taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Serve with crackers or vegetables or as a sandwich.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

NO-BAKE DESSERTS DUE APRIL 10

How do you beat the heat and still offer a flourishing finish? Send us your favorite no-bake desserts by April 10 for a chance to win \$500.



Spicy Sausage and Egg Boats

PATRICIA STEHLING
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Egg boats make for a fun presentation at breakfast. Add your favorite vegetables, such as bell pepper, mushrooms or spinach, to the filling.

- 4 demi baguettes or large bolillos
- 8 ounces breakfast sausage
- 8 eggs
- ½ cup heavy cream
- Salt and ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 4 green onions, sliced
- 4 jalapeño peppers, seeded and diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Scoop out the centers of the breads to create a boatlike shape, leaving an edge all around.
2. Cook sausage and set aside. In a bowl, beat eggs, then whisk in cream and salt and pepper. Stir in the sausage, cheese, green onions, jalapeños and garlic.



3. Spoon mixture into bread boats. Bake 25–30 minutes, until eggs are set and no longer runny.

SERVES 4–6

TCP These great dishes just scratch the surface of what you can do with eggs. Check out our website, where you'll find hundreds of reader recipes that feature eggs, many incorporating them in hard-to-resist baked goods.

Egg-zact Replacements

BY MEGAN MYERS

Many recipes default to using large eggs. But what if you don't have any large eggs on hand? Use this handy guide for subbing different sizes of eggs in recipes.

You can replace **one** large egg with **one** egg of any other size.

Replace **two** large eggs with **two** medium, extra-large or jumbo eggs; or **three** small eggs.

Replace **three** large eggs with **two** jumbo eggs, **three** medium or extra-large eggs, or **four** small eggs.

Replace **four** large eggs with **three** jumbo eggs, **four** extra-large eggs, or **five** medium or small eggs.

You can also replace whole eggs with liquid eggs: 1 cup of liquid egg equals about five large eggs.



JASON RISNER PHOTOGRAPHY

Fredericksburg

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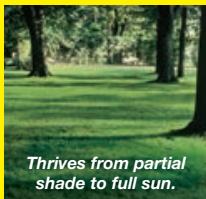
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Meteoric Fall

Odessa crater marks the site of a space rock's collision with Earth

BY CHET GARNER

IT'S NOT OFTEN you can say "it came from outer space" and actually mean it. But that's what happened some 62,000 years ago, when an object fell from the sky and crashed just southwest of what is now Odessa. In search of an extraterrestrial experience, I grabbed my tinfoil hat and headed west.

My pulse quickened as I drove through cactus and mesquite in search of one of the largest meteorite impact craters in the U.S. Once there I stared at an empty field just slightly lower (about 15 feet) than the surrounding desert. "Hmm," I thought. "Where's the massive crater?" I needed some explanation.

Inside the visitor center, I learned how a 25-foot space rock hurtled toward Earth at 27,000 mph. It pierced the atmosphere and shattered into thousands of pieces that crashed into the land with the force of 19,000 tons of dynamite. The impact stretched over 2 square miles, with this largest crater measuring at least 500 feet wide and 100 feet deep. It has perplexed cowboys and scientists alike since it was first documented in 1892.

Over time, the crater became a mere shadow of its former self as dust and silt filled in the hole, leaving a simple depression marked by a rim of jagged rocks. In the 1940s, scientists dug a 165-foot shaft into the center to see if a large meteorite remained. They found fragments—the largest weighing 300 pounds.

While it may not be as impressive as it once was, it's the only crater of its kind in America that visitors can walk through. I set off on foot imagining what it might have been like when the meteorite smashed into this exact location. I would have been pulverized in an instant. It was an appropriately existential thought for such an extraterrestrial place. ■

ABOVE The Odessa crater spreads out behind Chet.

TCP Follow along as Chet walks onto the very site of an extraterrestrial event. See the video on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

APRIL

07

Canton [7-8] Tractor Show and Swap Meet, (214) 837-8861, lonestarihc25.org/canton

Addison [7-9] Dallas Reggae Festival, (832) 277-3874, dallasreggaeifest.com

08

Kerrville EasterFest, (830) 896-1155, kerrvillechamber.biz

San Marcos Easter Egg Hunt and Festival, (512) 392-4295, heritagesanmarcos.org

Stonewall Easter at the Farm, (830) 644-8107, tpwd.texas.gov

15

Burton Cotton Gin Festival, (979) 289-3378, texascottonginmuseum.org

Corpus Christi Explore the Shore, (361) 749-5246, tpwd.texas.gov

Fredericksburg Fredericksburg Volunteer Fire Department Fish Fry, (830) 997-7521, fbgtx.org

Gonzales Spring Plant Sale, (830) 672-8531, gonzalesmastergardeners.org

Grapevine New Vintage Wine and Gallery Trail and Art Show, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

Kerrville Spring Native Plant Sale, (830) 257-4837, riversidenaturecenter.org

Stephenville Wine and Art Walk, (817) 715-1682, facebook.com/stephenville-downtownmerchants

20

Chappell Hill [15-16] Bluebonnet Festival, (979) 836-6033, chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com

Lubbock [15-16] Arts Festival, (806) 744-2787, lubbockartsfestival.org

21

Dale [20-23] Old Settler's Music Festival, oldsettlersmusicfest.org

Henderson [21-22] East Texas Antique Tractor and Engine Club Show, (903) 646-3769

McKinney [21-22] Tom Cotter, (214) 769-0645, thecomedyarena.com

Terrell [21-22] Kaufman Quilt Show, (972) 979-9152, kaufmanquiltguild.org

Fredericksburg [21-23, 28-30] The Play That Goes Wrong, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

Ingram [21-23, 28-30, May 5-7] The Gods of Comedy, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

22

Brenham One Night in Memphis, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Grapevine Spring Into Nash, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

Helotes Fiesta Dachshund Dash, (844) 703-6943, ddrtx.org

The Colony Coach Cox's Kid Chase, (972) 625-1106, visitthecolonytx.com

Tyler Ruthie Foster, (903) 595-7274, libertytyler.com

[MORE EVENTS >](#)

TCP *Submit Your Event*

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

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Pick of the Month

Conroe Crossroads Music Festival

Conroe, April 13-16
conroecrossroads.com

Experience 40 shows across eight venues over four days in one city! A wide variety of musical genres are represented in the lineup, and daytime activities are free and fun for the whole family.

APRIL EVENTS CONTINUED

27

Alvin [27-29] Frontier Days, (832) 868-1478, alvinrotary.org

28

Gun Barrel City [28-29] Quilt Show, (903) 391-3241, gunbarrelquiltersguild.org

McKinney [28-29] James Camacho, (214) 769-0645, thecomedyarena.com

Seguin [28-29] Yellow Rose Fiber Fiesta, (210) 422-0619, yellowrosefiberfiesta.com

Saint Jo [28-30] The Real West Symposium, therealwest.org

29

Hillsboro Wine and Photography Art Walk, (843) 442-7424

Ingram Stonehenge Celtic Festival and Highland Games, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

Johnson City JCTX Jazz and Art Festival, (830) 868-7111, johnsoncitytx.org

Kerrville Hill Country Chorale Spring Concert, (830) 321-0303, hillcountrychorale.org

Nacogdoches [29-30] Sacred Heart Catholic Church Multicultural Festival, (936) 564-7807, sacredheartnac.org

Waco [29-30] Central Texas Comic Con, ctxcomiccon.com

Llano [29-30, May 5-7] The Savannah Sipping Society, facebook.com/llanocommunitytheater

MAY

05

Brenham [5-6] Maifest, (979) 337-7580, brenhammaifest.com

Burnet [5-6] Utopiafest, utopiafest.com

Milam [5-6] Trade Days, (430) 558-7134, milamsettlers.org

Port Aransas [5-6, 12-13] PalmFest, (361) 444-3631, palmfestporta.com

06

Hilltop Lakes Kentucky Derby Gala, (713) 503-0470, hilltoplakes.com

Quitaque Experience Caprock, (806) 455-1492, tpwd.texas.gov

The Colony Up, Up & Away Festival of Flight, (972) 625-1106, visitthecolonytx.com

Willow City Willow City Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department's Fundraiser, (830) 456-3785, willowcityfd.com

Riding the River

Texans love to make a splash. So stock the cooler and grab your river shoes—it's time to dive in and test the waters.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 STEVE COYLE
PEDERNALES EC

"Taking in sunset on Galveston Bay with a squall line approaching from the north."

2 WENDY ALLEY MLADENKA
SAN BERNARD EC

A family day of kayaking on the Colorado River near Beason's Park in Columbus.

3 ANGELA RIED
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

The Frio River in Garner State Park.

4 TAWNI AND MICHAEL WAYNE SOLISE
BANDERA EC

Stopping for a drink at sunset in Bandera.



Upcoming Contests

DUE APR 10 Hoof and Horn

DUE MAY 10 Night Sky

DUE JUN 10 Helping Out



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Riding the River photos from readers.



A memorial created in 2017 stood across the street from where the fertilizer plant exploded in West.

responded to a fire—later determined to be intentionally set—before it triggered the explosion that turned the scene into a war zone. In moments, 350 homes were destroyed or damaged, a nursing home came down like a tornado had roared through, and the emergency medical services building buckled and fell. Tommy Muska, the mayor then and still today, estimated that there was \$200 million in damage to the city and its schools and businesses.

The destruction was so severe that many outsiders projected it would be West's demise. Those outsiders, however, didn't grasp the soul of this town. "The city of West will not be defined by the explosion but by the resilience and the spirit of the citizens to rebuild their community," Muska said last fall. And that is exactly what has happened, in a remarkably short period of time.

Anyone who visits West these days won't find any physical evidence of blast damage. In the 10 years since the disaster, there have been more than 1,000 residential and commercial building permits issued, 82 new homes and three new schools built, 123 remodels completed, and over \$10 million in infrastructure improvements made. Currently, there are five subdivisions being built, in all price ranges.

A person has to wonder: How did this small town pull itself up by its bootstraps in the face of such overwhelming tragedy?

In short, the blast brought people together in unexpected ways. Their resilience and staunch faith made them stronger and more united than ever. They are a people who have proved themselves unshakable, even in the face of profound heartache and grief.

Perhaps Muska said it best when 10 years ago he proclaimed, "This town will not die on my watch." He was not alone in his commitment. The entire town lived it, believed it and made sure West would not only survive but would thrive.

And indeed it has. ■

Rise Up West

10 years after a deadly explosion, the town is stronger than ever

BY JEFFREE WYN ITRICH

AS THE SAYING GOES, I wasn't born here, but I got here as soon as I could. And *here* is the small Czech town of West, north of Waco. I knew about this charming town long before I followed my Texas roots to settle here in the land of my forebears, who go back to the post-Civil War period.

I remember with razor-sharp clarity the night I watched a story on the evening news detailing how 30 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded in a West fertilizer plant on April 17, 2013, at 7:51 in the evening. Five years later, my husband and I settled in West. It was only then that I understood the full scope of the explosion that registered as a 2.1 magnitude tremor and blasted a crater in the ground nearly 100 feet wide and 10 feet deep.

Fifteen people died in the tragedy, 12 of them volunteer firefighters who



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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.