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SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

The Baby is Born heralds the debut of this magazine in July 1944.

FEATURE

Reliable as Electricity  
Texas Co-op Power, trusted voice of co-ops across the state, turns 75.

NEXT MONTH
Which Big Bend? Visitors to this rugged region have state and national parks as options.

ON THE COVER
For 75 years, Texas Co-op Power has committed to improving co-op members’ quality of life. Illustration by David Vogin

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Texas USA
Caddo’s Gems
By Martha Deeringer

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No Concept of Electricity
Reading about your 75th anniversary made me think of a story my father told me when I was a kid.

Just before World War II, when they were electrifying rural western Louisiana, my father was a foreman for Brown & Root Construction. One day, he was in a small town near the Louisiana-Texas border, finishing up checking out a new substation. A group of the townspeople approached him, and one man stepped forward and said, “We hear we are going to get electric lights soon.”

Dad responded with, “That’s right. As soon as I am finished here, I will radio the crew over in the next town and they will turn on the power.”

With that, the man asked, “How long will it take to get here?”

Dad said, “It will be here as soon as they turn it on.”

Without another word, they all turned and walked away, thinking my father was making fun of them. He said he never forgot the look on the man’s face as he turned away.

Today, we take electricity for granted. It’s hard to imagine a time when there were those who had no concept of it.

JACK L. TYLER | ARINGTON
PEDERNALES EC

Hungry Mockingbirds
Feedin’ Time ([Focus on Texas, June 2019]) has a photograph of a nest of unidentified baby birds. Fittingly, they are the Texas state bird—northern mockingbird (Mimus polyglottos).

RAY C. TELFAIR II, CERTIFIED WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST | WHITESTONE
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

Drive-In Dating
I dated during the late ’40s and early ’50s. The drive-in theater was where, on Saturday night, they only charged $5 for a carload of people [Drive In, Chill Out, June 2019]. Saw many a movie there over the years.

HELEN PERRY | VIA FACEBOOK

This Little Piggy
Those working on the pig rescue program [This Little Piggy, May 2019] seem like caring, compassionate people. Perhaps all of us, however, need to look farther out our kitchen windows today and see something else—like Katy Hamner and Avery Graves [below, left to right] helping kids with diabetes [A Butterfly’s Touch, May 2019].

RUTH HENSON | GOLDFIELD
HAMILTON COUNTY EC

Flight of a Lifetime
I really enjoyed your article about ex-Navy pilot Trey Hayden taking clients over the USS Lexington in Corpus Christi [What Moves You?, April 2019]. I was stationed aboard the USS Bennington aircraft carrier 1962–1966. I spent my time seven decks below in the engine room. In March, Hayden took me on the flight of a lifetime.

BERNIE PHILLIP | DEVINE
MEDINA EC

Great Reading
For such a little magazine, Texas Co-op Power has a lot of good articles. In May, you had three that were of special interest to me—the one on Tom Lea [Tom Lea’s War], the one on R.E.B. Baylor [Baylor, the Man] and the one on Sul Ross State University [Higher Education].

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TexasCoopPower.com August 2019 Texas Co-op Power 5
Fayette County Fair

Josh Turner and Casey Donahew are the headliners August 31 at the FAYETTE COUNTY FAIR, which runs AUGUST 29–SEPTEMBER 1 in La Grange.

“If you have never seen our River View music venue, for our top entertainment, you’re missing some of the best sunset views of Central Texas,” says Michael Zuhn, a Fayette Electric Cooperative member and president of the fair, which calls itself “The Best Little Fair in Texas.”

The first Fayette County fair was in 1927. Last year, about 9,000 fairgoers came through the gates. The theme for 2019 is For the Kid in All of Us. Indeed, youths are a top priority: The fair awards 20 academic scholarships of $1,000 each and another $5,000 in scholarships to contestants in the fair queen pageant.

INFO ➤ fayettecountyfair.org, (979) 968-3911

1945
An estimated 3.2 million pecan trees make Texas one of the nation’s leading pecan producers.

1945
The farm-to-market road system comes into being.

1948
A Colorado farmer invents the center pivot irrigation machine, which revolutionizes irrigation farming.

1950
Stihl unveils the first one-person, gasoline-powered chain saw.

1950
Texas’ rural population falls below 50% for the first time—to 37.3%.

1954
Social Security coverage is extended to farm operators.

1957
Texas’ historic seven-year drought ends; the state loses nearly 100,000 farms and ranches in the 1950s.

1960
International Harvester launches the Cub Cadet as the first lawn and garden tractor produced by a major tractor manufacturer.

1965
Mohair output in Texas reaches a peak when ranchers clip 31.6 million pounds from 4.6 million Angora goats.

175 years ago, in 1844, President John Tyler, who made Texas statehood a focus of his time in office, celebrated with more than 400 guests aboard the USS Princeton after a milestone annexation treaty. The newly built boat’s “peacemaker” gun—at the time the largest naval gun in the world—was showing off its power when a misfire killed six and injured several others.

Among the dead were Abel P. Upshur, secretary of state, and Thomas Walker Gilmer, secretary of the navy—well-known names in northeast Texas—who worked alongside Tyler to admit Texas as a slave state. All three were outspoken supporters of slavery.

Incredibly, two of Tyler’s grandsons, Lyon Gardiner Tyler Jr., born in 1924, and Harrison Ruffin Tyler, born in 1928, are still alive today.
MUSICAL NOTES

Texans Rock Woodstock

FIFTY YEARS AGO, 31 bands and more than 400,000 people turned a dairy farm in upstate New York into the site of the legendary Woodstock music festival. At least four of the musicians to play during the concert, August 15-18, 1969, were Texans: Janis Joplin of Port Arthur; Johnny Winter, with his brother Edgar, both of Beaumont; and Sly Stone of Denton from Sly and the Family Stone.

Two weeks later, the same Texas artists were among some two dozen bands at the Texas International Pop Festival, which drew upward of 150,000 to Lewisville, where CoServ, an electric cooperative in Corinth, has many members. That concert, August 30-September 1, was at the Dallas International Motor Speedway, which was demolished in 1973.

WORTH REPEATING

“If men can run the world, why can’t they stop wearing neckties? How intelligent is it to start the day by tying a little noose around your neck?”

—LINDA ELLERBEE, an American TV journalist most known for her work at NBC News and Nickelodeon, who turns 75. She was born August 15, 1944, in Bryan.

1970s

1970 Geneticist Norman Borlaug receives a Nobel Peace Prize for developing high-yielding, disease-resistant wheat.

1977 Members and supporters of the Texas Farm Workers Union march 420 miles from San Juan, in the Rio Grande Valley, to Austin in support of fieldworkers’ right to vote on union representation.

1980s

1980 John Deere produces a four-row cotton picker, the first in the industry, and estimates the unit will increase operators’ productivity 85%-95%.

1984 Texas researcher Richard Hensz develops the Rio Red grapefruit.

1989 The Native American Seed Company is founded in Argyle. It moved to Junction in 1995.

1990s

1993 The Legislature designates Texas red grapefruit as the official state fruit.

1994 Farmers begin using GPS to aid use of water, fertilizer and pesticides.

1995 Texas voters approve Proposition 11, which allows land used to manage wildlife to qualify for tax appraisals in the same manner as agricultural land.

2000s

2012 Texas leads the nation with 248,800 farms and ranches—far fewer than the 420,000 that existed in 1940.

2017 The Hill Country ranks second in wine tourism after Napa Valley. Texas’ wine industry boosts the state’s economy by $13.1 billion and supports more than 104,000 jobs.

2019 Texas leads the nation with 248,800 farms and ranches—far fewer than the 420,000 that existed in 1940.

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Since July 1944, Texas Co-op Power has been a trusted voice for Texas electric cooperatives, bolstering a movement to light up rural areas and tell the stories of people who live there. The magazine’s mission to empower rural communities has been the constant behind the headlines.

Following World War II, Texas Co-op Power fought for the very existence of electric cooperatives and the Rural Electrification Administration. The headlines reflected the intensity of the battle: *Phony Campaign Aimed at Co-ops or Utility Lobby Unveils Its Power Grab Plan.*

In the ’40s and ’50s, the magazine amplified the voices of farm families disenfranchised from electric power, countering outlandish charges that co-op members were communists or that nonmembers were taxed to support rural electricity.

The co-ops’ life-or-death struggle with investor-owned utilities evolved into community building through shared information. The magazine’s focus shifted to optimizing the opportunities offered by electricity and answering questions about new appliances for the recently electrified farm.

The magazine set its sights on identifying challenges and outlining solutions, whether it was describing the home of the future or simply explaining how to use a waffle iron. And not all policy talk was about power. One 1982 article outlined a tough forecast for agriculture, noting that, in 1981, a bushel of corn that sold for $2.40 cost a farmer $3.11 to produce.

Rural Texans are not as isolated now as they were in the days before electricity. Yet, Texas Co-op Power remains a valued resource for understanding the fundamental changes technology brings.

For our 75th anniversary, we reflect on the magazine’s work to educate readers on the benefits the cooperative model affords—to shine a light on the fruits of cooperation. Whether it was the glow of a homestead’s first lightbulb or the gentle hum of a modern family’s new electric vehicle, Texas Co-op Power explained these advances. And when the next mystifying technology inserts itself into your life, we’ll be there, too.

BY CHARLES LOHRMANN | EDITOR
In the 1930s and 1940s, power lines newly installed across the countryside didn’t just deliver light. As the once-quixotic prospect of an electrified rural home became a reality, the electricity the lines carried ultimately delivered families from the drudgery of onerous, time-consuming chores that many urban residents had already dispensed with. Quotidian routines could be accomplished faster and with less tedium, and tasks that once were tethered to the sun’s schedule could now be completed under a lightbulb’s glow.

Amid this development, Texas Co-op Power consistently advocated readers’ parity with urban dwellers. As the November 1944 issue asserted, “New or old, the farm home that has high-line electric service easily can and should have as modern a kitchen as any found in the most up-to-date city residence.” That story detailed the timesaving benefits of an electric range, refrigerator and dishwasher while also cautioning readers to proceed sensibly. Noting that the expense of a modern kitchen could be financed, the magazine offered an alternative for readers loath to take on consumer debt: “You can install it piece by piece as your income permits.”

The Cranek family, members of Wharton County Electric Cooperative, took advantage of this convenience. Before getting an electric range in 1943, Mrs. L.V. Cranek cooked on a wood stove, and in July 1951, she told Texas Co-op Power that the range was “just like a dream in comparison.” The homemaker didn’t mince words when she summed up the difference electric light and appliances made: “Before rural electrification the farm was no pleasant place to live.”

From its earliest days, Texas Co-op Power has provided safety tips and practical guidance to help readers derive the greatest value from the life-changing innovations rural Americans had for so long gone without. In particular, thrift achieved through timely maintenance has been a refrain. “Major repairs, or replacements, can often be avoided by proper care of your appliances and by making minor repairs,” the August 1950 issue advised. “By these preventative measures, you can realize the fullest efficiency, value, and longevity from household tools.”

It’s advice that has stood the test of time—just like this magazine.

BY JESSICA RIDGE | COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
Let’s face it. The digital age has been hard slogging for those of us raised during the typewriter age. I am happy to say that Texas Co-op Power has been helping educate us about digital technology since the ‘70s.

The earliest tech reports dealt mainly with the billing process. Readers later learned of electronic meter-reading technology, cooperative-provided satellite TV, computer programs designed to simplify and quantify farm and ranch operations, and software that could digitally monitor entire electrical systems. I particularly enjoyed a 1986 column titled Memo From Mary explaining how new “cellular telephones” allowed you to “make a telephone call from anywhere, your car, the beach, or from a picnic table.” What a wonder.

Co-ops worked hard in the ‘90s to help rural areas keep up. For example, Fayette Electric Cooperative helped organize a Texas Rural Internet Conference. Many co-ops developed internet services and created their own digital homepages with practical advice about all things electrical. Co-ops pushed to get rural school libraries and hospitals wired.

A handy new column named Dot.com Corner was born in 2000, the year I went to work for the magazine. In 2001, I wrote a story called Cyberspace Country, for which I visited co-op members Don and Diane Harmeier, who had been able to get a dedicated T1 phone line, enabling them to operate a software company on their ranch 8 miles outside Kerrville. It was 50 times faster than the commonly available dial-up service.

Texas Co-op Power and local cooperatives vigorously advocated and frequently provided greater communications services for co-op members such as the Harmeiers. Today, most members speed confidently along the information highway. But many rural Texans still can’t get fast fiber-optic internet like I have in Austin because it requires digging underground and laying cable at great expense. Google just offered my neighborhood Fiber 1000, which can download a high-definition movie in 43 seconds. But, co-op folks, be consoled by how far service has come. In 2001, when I was checking what rural areas could get, it took many long hours to download just a short video on a dial-up connection. Stream on.

BY KAYE NORTHCOTT | EDITOR 2001–2010
A few miles west of Marfa, along state Highway 90, is a delightful art installation celebrating the iconic movie *Giant*, a larger-than-life celebration of the mythic Texas oil industry. The ’50s classic, starring Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson and James Dean, was filmed on a nearby ranch.

What we don’t have, but should, is a movie celebrating the unsung efforts of those scientists, engineers, technicians and, yes, electric co-op professionals who have been working to harness the wind, sun and other renewables. Flip through the past 40 years of *Texas Co-op Power*, and you won’t find material for a modern-day Taylor-Hudson love story—though when I was editor, we staged a James Dean look-alike cover—but you will find articles chronicling efforts to find alternatives to fossil fuels. It’s an ongoing story of the exotic becoming the everyday.

In 1971, the talk was of electric tractors. In 1978, it was a solar satellite that would beam electricity back to earth by microwave. *Texas Co-op Power* reported in 1980 that Sen. James McClure of Idaho foresaw electric cars dominating American highways by 2000. The senator’s prediction was a bit optimistic, and yet other “experimental” efforts the magazine explored have gone mainstream.

Near Tulia, in 1979, a wind turbine located on a Swisher Electric Cooperative member’s farm was helping irrigate corn and grain sorghum fields. In 1980, Lighthouse Electric Cooperative was involved in a solar “power tower” project to help meet the power needs of Crosbyton. The power tower used the sun’s energy to produce steam, which drove a conventional turbine.

Also in 1980, Elton McGinnes, manager of Southwest Texas Electric Cooperative in Eldorado, told *TCP* about a geothermal resources committee that was overseeing probes into the earth in search of temperatures high enough to generate electricity.

In 2004, *Texas Co-op Power* proclaimed the West Texas town of McCamey the “wind energy capital of Texas.” The magazine reported that hundreds of “monolithic metal giants with three-pronged blades” had brought renewed prosperity. “The wind power source will never be capped. There will always be potential,” Walt Hornaday of Cielo Wind Power enthused.

The magazine also quoted a United Nations study concluding that Texas had more renewable energy in wind, solar and biomass than any other state.

Can’t you just see it? Today’s Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor—George Clooney maybe? Jennifer Lopez?—standing on the porch of their rambling solar-powered ranch house and staring contentedly into the distance at giant, white windmills, blades turning in the West Texas breeze, producing energy forever renewed. And the new James Dean to play Jett Rink? Maybe he plays a poultry farmer, relying on the West Texas sun to keep his birds warm and healthy.

*BY JOE HOLLEY | EDITOR 1998–2000*
The future, it seems, is a fickle friend. It always gets here faster than expected, yet it ever lingers as some distant dream. Our high-tech way of life has changed more radically than we could have imagined 25 years ago—but we still are not zipping around through time and space like the folks on The Jetsons.

Back in 1893, the Abilene Reporter noted distant rumblings of “an important change in the method of municipal transport.” Stages or carriages, the paper observed, might soon move London’s populace about by means of electric power. “Storage batteries are to be used. No one … will deny that the perfection of the storage battery will make this possible.”

By the time Texas Co-op Power came along, the internal combustion engine had long displaced such electro-transport visions as the German Elektrowagen. More recently, as scientists warn of the dangers of climate change, the electric vehicle has returned as an alternative. And the magazine has been riding shotgun to report the news.

In 1998, the magazine reported on the development of the Toyota Prius, “the world’s first mass-produced hybrid-electric passenger car that doubles the efficiency and halves the emissions of a comparable conventional car.” The following year, then-editor Joe Holley explained that the Prius used both electric power and a gasoline engine, with an onboard computer that “automatically switches” between them or utilizes a combination of the two.

Today, drivers can choose from dozens of hybrid and all-electric vehicles. As Texas Co-op Power noted in 2010, “By 2040, 75 percent of the light-duty vehicle miles traveled in the U.S. should be electrically powered.”

Another futuristic gizmo, the drone, has acquired the problematic reputation of being flown dangerously close to commercial airliners. Yet as the magazine reported in 2017, Pedernales Electric Cooperative linemen deployed the remote control quadcopters to repair lines after the Blanco River flooded in 2015, restoring power in hours instead of days.

George and Jane Jetson, we’re catchin’ up at Texas Co-op Power.

BY GENE FOWLER | TEXAS CO-OP POWER CONTRIBUTOR
I am a technophobe. I’m doing well to operate a cellphone and a laptop. So I wondered, how did I end up writing about high-tech “smart life” for this 75th anniversary issue of Texas Co-op Power? Then I remembered a story I wrote for the magazine back in 2011: High-Tech Co-ops Changing Energy Realities. I visited five co-ops across the state where the introduction of new technology made a significant difference to co-op members. Some were seeing the benefits of the “smart grid,” while others were enjoying making their own energy with the help of the wind, and still others were monitoring their energy consumption at home from their personal computers.

The story was not an abstract, speculative treatise on technology. This was real life with real people. The co-op staff and members I met showed me how technology, rather than being intimidating, was something that could make life easier by saving time and money.

Looking back over 75 years, it is clear that co-ops were on the forefront of high-tech developments such as the “smart house,” a concept introduced back in 1987 in Texas Co-op Power and actually constructed with co-op sponsorship in 1993.

Remember when there was no internet? No tweets? No electronic meter reading? All of which are taken for granted now. The internet alone has altered life with its seemingly infinite capability to deliver information, from the price of hog bellies on the stock exchange to how to make the perfect mac ‘n’ cheese. You’ve already heard about the “internet of things” in the pages of Texas Co-op Power, and you’re sure to hear more as cloud-based apps further enable communication between your smartphone and appliances and electronic systems in your home.

Not only does Texas Co-op Power inform readers about new technologies on the horizon, it helps you understand how they work and what the benefits will be. The magazine can fill that role because it’s a trusted voice and echoes the sentiments of a general manager who once said, “Before we adopt any technology, we look at how it will make us more efficient and benefit our members.”

So maybe I’m really not afraid of high tech, after all. I just need a little TCP TLC.

BY CAROL MOCZYGEMBA | LONGTIME STAFF MEMBER AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR 2007–2013
The robotic assistants and flying cars promised by the golden age of science fiction still haven’t materialized in Texas’ homes and garages, but plenty of seemingly sci-fi technologies have. This next generation of tech—the culmination of decades of advances in biotechnology, computer sciences, nanotechnology and engineering—exists mostly in labs and in the cloud (or clouds). But some of it is already starting to show its potential for our everyday lives. The future is now.

For decades, farmers have envisioned a time when automation could put some of their workload in the hands of machines—Willie Wiredhand instead of Willie farmhand. In January 1971, Dick Pence, Texas Co-op Power’s Washington correspondent, wrote about such visions: “The research quest for new machines and instruments has produced some exotic-sounding ideas ... electric-powered laser beams to control the depth of laying drainage pipe; computer-controlled feeding; electrostatic separation of seeds during cleaning processes; portable sensors to measure how much water plants lose during growth; and dozens of other devices.”

But even Pence likely couldn’t have imagined how drones equipped with powerful infrared cameras, automation software and GPS tracking could be used to monitor crops from the air without the farmer ever having to get up from his desk. In April 2017, Texas Co-op Power wrote about that technology, which Juan Landivar, Corpus Christi director for the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center, told us was still a few years away from commercial viability.

Such technologies have the power to revolutionize agribusiness. Other tech promises to change the way Texans do business, travel, interact and, well, live. That’s why we’ve got our eye on advancements such as 5G wireless technology, which may one day make broadband obsolete with its superior wireless connection speeds. And artificial intelligence promises to one day drive our cars for us, produce works of art and defend our skies.

Then there’s wireless electricity. Long dreamed about, it already exists today in the form of wireless pads that charge cellphones, for example. Researchers are looking to apply that concept on a much larger scale. An oddly shaped tower with a metal ball at its peak, along Interstate 35 East in Ellis County, is part of one such study, run by scientists at Viziv. Their goal is the wireless transmission of electricity over large distances.

“The Viziv surface wave systems will improve the quality of life for people everywhere by enabling the delivery of affordable electricity throughout the world,” the company’s website reads. If they’re ever successful, rest assured, we’ll let you know.

BY CHRIS BURROWS | SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
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— J. Fitzgerald, VA

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MESSAGE FROM CEO MARK ROLLANS

IF YOU HAVE READ MY COLUMN over the last few years, then you are already aware that cooperatives operate under seven principles. I speak about them fairly frequently and for good reason. These seven principles guide all our business decisions at Medina EC, just as they do for all businesses operating under the cooperative model.

I truly believe that these principles make our business better. Having democratic member control, members’ economic participation—which includes capital credits and operating as a not-for-profit—supporting education and cooperating with other cooperatives make our business model and communities stronger.

One of the ways our communities are made stronger is through one of my favorite of the seven cooperative principles, Concern for Community. With a name like that, it is fairly self-explanatory, and how could it not make our community stronger? This principle guides our long-standing and ongoing business decision to make donations and offer support to the communities we serve. It guided the implementation of our Volunteer-Time-Off program a few years ago, in which employees can use up to 8 hours a year of paid time to volunteer with an approved organization or cause. And it guides two other programs: Operation Round Up, which was established in 2006 at Medina EC, and the Community Empowerment Program, which we have had since 2015.

In the early summer months, we made several donations through these programs.

ORU, which is fully funded by members who have chosen to round up their monthly bill to the next whole dollar, made donations to two families. Frank Hooker of Devine received $2,500 to help cover an air-life bill that was denied by insurance. Jesus Ibarra of Uvalde was awarded $500 to pay medical expenses associated with a stroke he suffered. If you don’t currently donate to ORU and would like to, sign up by visiting MedinaEC.org/ORU.

CEP made donations totaling $10,000 to various organizations, including the West Alice Youth Center, Medina County Meals on Wheels, the Children’s Advocacy Center of Laredo, Medina Regional Hospital, Alexander Memorial Library in Cotulla and the Castro Colonies Heritage Association in Castroville. This program is funded by unclaimed capital credits, money that members have not claimed and has been escheated to the state.

It’s truly a pleasure to be part of a cooperative that focuses on safely delivering reliable, affordable electricity while also focusing on making the communities that our members live in better.

Sincerely,

Mark Rollans

Janice Simmons, center, Medina Regional Hospital CEO, and Carrie Lyssy, left, accept a check from Medina EC board member Wayne Scholtz and employee Katie Haby.
As part of our commitment to community involvement, Medina EC donates bottled water to community events and organizations.

You could win $250 by showing us where you drink Medina EC water by posting to Instagram using #DondeH2O.

To enter:
1. Instagram a photo with bottled water featuring a Medina EC logo and tag it with #DondeH2O.
2. Tag @ourMEC in the description or on the photo.
3. Follow @ourMEC on Instagram.

For more information and to see entries, visit MedinaEC.org/DondeH2O. Learn more about our community involvement at MedinaEC.org/Involvement.
The **BUZZ** on Pollinators

**BY RYAN MCCLINTOCK, NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST**

**NEXT TIME YOU EAT AN APPLE,** consider cutting it in half first across the middle.

You'll see a compartment resembling a star that contains the seeds of the apple. If there are two seeds in each of the five compartments for a total of 10 seeds, then that apple was fully pollinated. Flowers of an apple that are not fully pollinated may reduce their overall productivity, and a flower that gets no pollination will never develop into an apple for you to enjoy.

It is estimated that approximately 75% of the world’s flowering plants require pollination, including the plants that provide us food, by insects and animals such as bees, butterflies, moths, birds, beetles, wasps, bats and more! These pollinators move pollen from one plant to the next for that plant to produce the seed necessary for reproduction. Pollinators play a vital role in our everyday lives and are often under-appreciated or overlooked.

Pollinating insects and animals are facing many challenges today such as habitat loss from fragmentation, pesticide use and invasive species to name a few. Pollinators require a diverse landscape with a variety of flowering plants. These plants must have many different colors, shapes, and sizes of flowers to accommodate the specific needs of the many different types of pollinating insects and animals. The flowers act almost as landing pads for these pollinators to access the nectar or food source that is provided by the plant. In turn, the pollen is transferred to the pollinators and then moved to the next plant for the reproduction process to be successful.

So what can we do to help pollinators despite the threats they face every day?

No matter how small or large of an area you are working with, a plan can be developed to encourage a healthy and productive pollinator habitat. Consider planting a diverse native seed mix of locally adapted plants to the area for best results of plant establishment. Plant in late winter or early spring for ideal results. Within this seed mix, it is recommended to provide three or more flowering plants per bloom period that should overlap spring, summer and fall time frames.

It is also recommended that you include native grass species in pollinator seed mixes. These grasses can be host plants for some butterflies, provide wintering sites for many insects and protect the soil from erosion. Some bare ground interspersed within your pollinator planting area is not a bad thing as many species of native bees are solitary ground nesters that utilize these sparsely vegetated areas to nest.

Also consider the spacing of your pollinator areas. Bees and other pollinating animals vary in size and can only travel certain distances to find food. These ranges can vary from just a couple hundred feet up to a mile.

For more information or to develop a plan for pollinator habitat creation contact your local NRCS office or visit tx.nrcs.usda.gov.
We hope to see you at our

81ST

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & FELLOWSHIP

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
GRAFF 7A DANCE BARN | HONDO

JOIN US TO:
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» WIN DOOR PRIZES
» GET UPDATES ON YOUR COOPERATIVE
» MEET WITH MEDINA EC STAFF
» MINGLE WITH OTHER MEMBERS
» ENJOY BREAKFAST ON US
» ACCESS THE ICONIC GRAFF 7A RANCH GROUNDS AND MAZE*

OR RECEIVE A MEDINA EC UMBRELLA**

REGISTRATION GIFTS WILL BE LIMITED BY MEMBERSHIP. MEMBERS MAY CHOOSE THE TICKET OPTION OR UMBRELLA, BUT CANNOT HAVE BOTH.
*MAX 2 TICKETS PER MEMBERSHIP; ADDITIONAL TICKETS AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT A DISCOUNTED RATE
**MAX 1 UMBRELLA PER MEMBERSHIP

More details will be available in the September issue of Texas Co-op Power or visit MedinaEC.org/AnnualMeeting2019.
This feature was submitted by member John Ward, who contacted Medina EC and told us about this wonderful program a little over a year ago. We want to help other members and organizations who are supporting students in their communities, or doing other community service projects. Send your community do-good information and story ideas to MyCoop@MedinaEC.org.

Devine Dollars for Scholars

**TEN YEARS IS A MILESTONE** for any organization but especially when it is an organization giving back to area students. In May 2019, Devine Dollars for Scholars celebrated its 10th anniversary. This organization was organized in 2009 by a local group of Devine community volunteers.

Devine Dollars for Scholars is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to mobilize local resources to fund scholarships for Devine High School students. The organization does this by investing all donations in dividend-paying stocks and using the dividends to fund scholarships. Donations are not spent on scholarships but form a fund whose earnings fund scholarships.

Devine Dollars for Scholars operates under the umbrella of Scholarship America, located in Saint Peter, Minnesota. Scholarship America has 475 local Dollars for Scholars chapters in the United States, but Devine Dollars for Scholars is the only chapter in Texas.

In May 2010, Devine Dollars for Scholars awarded its first two scholarships to Devine High School seniors totaling $1,500. In May 2019, Devine Dollars for Scholars awarded 24 scholarships totaling $28,000.

Ten years of giving now total 174 scholarships and amount to $277,400—proof of what’s possible when local people organize together! According to one of the founding members, John Ward, “We are very proud of this accomplishment and express our sincere and deep appreciation to our community for supporting the young people of Devine High School.”

Devine Dollars for Scholars is managed by a volunteer board of directors consisting of Bob Bendele, Harold Conrad, Bill Bain, Brenda Gardner, Ronnie Harrell, Richard Ramirez, Michelle Spivey and John Ward. Each year, they proudly participate in the much larger Devine High School scholarship program, which helps graduating seniors further their education at trade schools and at two- and four-year colleges.

If you want additional information on Devine Dollars for Scholars or to learn how they got started, email johnanddorothyward@gmail.com.
Medina EC Staff Graduate from Management Internship Program

SEVERAL MEDINA EC EMPLOYEES have completed an intensive program in electric utility management. Beginning in 2016, Medina EC supported staff development through this training, and as of June 2019, five employees have graduated from the program. Congratulations to:

- Emily Tankersley, accounting supervisor.
- Doug Kindred, manager of information technology.
- Leonard Geyer, north region line superintendent.
- Joel Gonzales, engineering equipment supervisor.
- Katie Haby, member relations and communications supervisor.

The Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program is offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin. The program guides participants through all facets of the electric utility industry, including the many changes occurring around the nation.

MIP participants go through three 10-day sessions designed to challenge and educate them with new, innovative management techniques. By covering the unique principles that govern the operations of electric cooperatives like Medina EC, the program helps the co-op analyze other business initiatives it may want to enter as well as enhance the core organization.

“Medina Electric Cooperative is invested in our staff and the future of the cooperative,” said Mark Rollans, Medina EC CEO. “Completing MIP allows greater emphasis of study on management challenges and the aspects of consumer-ownership that cooperatives enjoy. I am extremely proud of our employees who have completed this challenging program and continue to focus on member value as part of day-to-day decision making.”

Rural electric cooperative CEOs, top-level management and emerging leaders participate in the program. The most recent graduates join other Medina EC employees who have also graduated from MIP: Mark Rollans, CEO; Patti Taylor, manager of human resources; and Bobby Waid, manager of special projects.

Board Approves Tariff Changes

AT RECENT MEETINGS, the board approved changes to the Medina EC tariff that go into effect this fall. Below is a summary of the changes.

Changes were also approved for the Cotton Gin rate, but those changes were directly delivered to the two members that operate under that rate.

You can read Medina EC’s current tariff and view other important cooperative documents at MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc. Rates can be viewed at MedinaEC.org/Rates. If you have questions on if or how these tariff changes could impact you, please reach out to our staff by calling 1-866-MEC-ELEC or Info@MedinaEC.org.

LIGHTING TARIFF CHANGES - EFFECTIVE 9/1

The lighting tariff is being changed to eliminate some rates that were offered, and to upgrade the technology available to our members. Beginning September 1, Medina EC will only install light-emitting diode lamps, or LED lighting, for new service requests. The high-pressure sodium—HPS—and metal halide—MH—lamps that used to be offered will still be serviced, but new lamps of that kind will not be installed. As those lamps go out, they will be replaced by LEDs. Below are the rates in place for the existing HPS and MH lights and the rates that will be charged for LED lights installed for new service going forward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 watt 40 kWh</td>
<td>$10.90 Standard</td>
<td>100-watt HPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>250 watt 95 kWh</td>
<td>$17.20</td>
<td>400-watt HPS</td>
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<td>300 kWh/HP/Mo.: $0.055000</td>
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<td>0.060293</td>
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<td></td>
<td>400 kWh/HP/Mo.: $0.005500</td>
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</tbody>
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LUCK OF THE DRAW

You have FIVE chances to win a $100 credit on your electric bill.

**CHANCE 1** Register your account on SmartHub.
Sign up at MedinaEC.SmartHub.coop or download the app and register your account there. SmartHub allows you to report outages with one click, view past electric use and see your use before you get your monthly bill.

**CHANCE 2** Sign up for automated payments.
Have your bill automatically charged to your credit card or bank account each month. Set it up online through SmartHub or by calling 1-866-MEC-ELEC.

**CHANCE 3** Choose paperless billing.
Opt out of receiving a paper bill every month and have your bill emailed to you instead. Change your account settings in SmartHub or call us at 1-866-MEC-ELEC, and staff will change it for you.

**CHANCE 4** Join Operation Round Up.
Sign up your account for Operation Round Up and have your monthly electric bill rounded up to the next whole dollar. That spare change is used to make donations to community members and families in need. Sign up at MedinaEC.org/ORU or by calling 1-866-MEC-ELEC.

**CHANCE 5** BONUS drawing for all four programs!
If you are signed up for all four programs, you will be entered into an additional drawing for a $100 bill credit.

All members signed up for any of the programs listed above as of 5 p.m. on September 16 will be entered. This includes members who are already signed up for these options and any new sign-ups between now and September 16.

There will be five separate drawings, and five $100 bill credits will be awarded.

Winners in each category will be randomly selected and announced at the 81st Annual Membership Meeting at Graff 7A Ranch/South Texas Maize in Hondo on September 28. You do not need to be present at the meeting to win.
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- Chuck, one of our 500+ Outdoor Access Landowners

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Texas Co-op Power

Our Fearless Forefather

G.W. Haggard was founding editor of this magazine and a stalwart champion of electric co-ops

BY ELLEN STADER

He began life a farm boy. He grew into a staunch journalist and rural advocate. After his death, a prestigious journalism award was named for him. The man was George Wilford Haggard, and he created this magazine.

Haggard devoted himself to a life of defending responsible journalism and the rights of rural people who received electricity from cooperatives. Texan political reporter Liz Carpenter described him as a man for whom “rural electrification is his religion.”

Born in 1908 on a farm in Comanche County, Haggard went to study in 1926 at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, where he took a job with the Abilene Reporter-News.

Haggard graduated in 1930 and embarked on a career that advanced steadily. He was city editor at the Sherman Democrat and later taught journalism at Abilene High School, leading the school’s student newspaper to international honors.

Eventually, the Texas Farm Bureau hired him to edit its monthly publication. Haggard proved an adept reporter and fearless fighter. After helping quash bills in the Legislature that would’ve crippled public power, he became executive secretary of the bureau.

Haggard’s next venture set the stage for his life’s work: In 1944, he became executive secretary of the Texas Power Reserve Electric Cooperative and editor of its newspaper, Texas Cooperative Electric Power. (Today, we call the association Texas Electric Cooperatives and its magazine Texas Co-op Power.)

Haggard’s dedication to truth was auspicious, as his new position routinely required him to set the record straight. Distortions and manipulations leveled at electric co-ops by the for-profit power industry (and politicians in its pockets) kept Haggard’s rhetoric at prime fighting weight.

He answered preposterous allegations with fundamental cornerstones of the electric co-op message such as: “Co-ops are not tax-exempt. They pay local, school, county and state taxes,” and “For 50 years, private power refused to serve rural areas, claiming it was not practical or feasible. But the farmers themselves are successfully performing the task that the power people said was impossible.”

Haggard’s honest, outspoken integrity was noticed at the national level. In 1948, he joined the Rural Electrification Administration in Washington, D.C., stating his objectives by saying, “We want very much for every co-op member to realize fully that he owns the co-op. He’ll fight for what he owns.” A year later, Haggard was promoted to deputy administrator, the REA’s No. 2 leader.

Sadly, in June 1951, Haggard and five fellow REA employees died in a plane crash outside Fort Collins, Colorado. The tragedy left a gaping hole in the REA roster and morale. U.S. Sen. Tom Connally of Texas summed up the feelings of many national officials with his condolences: “I’m grieved and shocked at the tragedy. I knew and esteemed George Haggard. ... His death will be a great loss to the state and the nation.”

In 1958, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association issued its first George W. Haggard Memorial Journalism Awards recognizing statewide publications that present “lucid, forthright contributions to electric cooperative objectives.” Texas Co-op Power in 2007 took home its most recent award named after its indomitable founder.

Ellen Stader is a writer in Austin. For more on Haggard’s feuds with politicians, read the June 2019 Texas History story The Nylon Campaign on our website.
Big, bold and full of life. That’s the dream American sculptor James Earle Fraser had for his new U.S. five-cent piece—and boy, did he deliver.

The classic American Buffalo Nickel is incredibly brave in its use of space, taking up nearly the entire face of both sides of the coin. It showcases two icons of the American spirit—an American bison and a composite profile of three Native American chiefs.

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Struck between 1920 and 1938, these coins circulated heavily throughout the United States, especially during the Great Depression. Many were worn down until they were unrecognizable, while others have disappeared into private collections. But you’re in luck—the coins offered here have stood the test of time for more than 80 years with their full date and main details intact.

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You can secure a 20-coin half-roll of authentic Buffalo Nickels for less than $2.50 per coin, or buy a full 40-coin roll for just $2.00 per coin and SAVE $19.95. Each set comes in a numismatic tube accompanied by a custom storybook and certificate of authenticity. Dates vary.

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Here’s the Beef

When it came to home cooking, the 1970s had a split personality. On one hand, it was the decade of sunflower seeds (not widely available until then) and healthy eating. This magazine offered instructions for making a gingerbread house with granola bars in December 1978. On the other hand, Julia Child had become a household name, and popular beef dishes ranged from Hungarian goulash to French ragoût de boeuf and spicy bowls of red.

The following recipe, which appeared in Texas Co-op Power’s 60 Years of Home Cooking, won Gay Dixson (then a member of Pedernales EC) the Texas State Fair El Chico Chili Contest in 1973. A few adjustments for modern tastes (using pure ground chile and olive oil instead of shortening) make the results more vibrant and just as satisfying.

**PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR**

### Texas State Fair Chili

- 3–4 pounds chuck, cubed
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon ground black pepper
- ⅓ cup flour
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (or vegetable shortening or bacon fat)
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2–3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 quarts water, heated
- 3 tablespoons hot paprika
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons pure ground chile powder (such as ancho or New Mexico)
- 2 cans (8 ounces each) tomato sauce
- Hot sauce, as desired

1. Place the beef in a mixing bowl, sprinkle with the salt, pepper and flour and use your hands to combine until the meat is well-coated.
2. Heat the oil (or shortening) in a large, heavy Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the beef (in batches as necessary) and brown on all sides; use a slotted spoon to...
January’s recipe contest topic is New Year’s Resolution. After holiday excess, you might be trying to eat healthier. Share the soups, smoothies and other dishes that get you back in balance. The deadline is August 10.

Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special Texas Co-op Power apron.

ENTER ONLINE at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-5401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

1. Place the steak in a resealable plastic bag and add the red wine vinegar, soy sauce, balsamic vinegar and Worcestershire sauce. Let steak marinate 6 hours in a refrigerator.

2. In a bowl, combine the strawberries, pineapple, cilantro, jalapeño, and lime and lemon juices.

3. In a nonstick skillet, add the olive oil and red onion. Sauté until onion is tender and translucent. Drain onion on a paper towel and add to bowl, tossing all ingredients thoroughly.

4. Remove steak from marinade. Place on a grill at medium heat. Grill 7 minutes on each side or until steak reaches desired level of doneness. Slice steak into thin strips.

5. Heat tortillas up by placing them individually on a hot skillet briefly. Fill tortillas with the steak, salsa and feta to make tacos. Garnish with additional cilantro, if desired.

Makes 6 tacos.

COOK’S TIP If you don’t mind the bite of fresh red onion, add it in raw in step 3.

Here’s the Beef

This month’s recipe contest winner

KITTIELE POTTS | BOWIE-CASS EC

This light and fresh take on beef is great for August heat. The steak cooks quickly on the grill, so you won’t overheat (and neither will your kitchen). A versatile recipe, it easily doubles to serve more, and you can use other fruits besides strawberries, depending on your tastes and what’s in season. Try peach, mango or kiwi for a different twist.

Steak Tacos With Pineapple Salsa

1 pound flank steak
¼ cup red wine vinegar
¼ cup soy sauce
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
5 large strawberries, chopped
2 fresh pineapple rings, chopped
½ teaspoon finely chopped cilantro
½ jalapeño pepper, finely chopped
½ teaspoon lime juice
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon finely chopped red onion
6 flour tortillas
3 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
Cilantro for garnish (optional)

1. Add the onions and garlic and cook, stirring, until the vegetables have softened. Add the cooked beef back into the Dutch oven along with 2 quarts of hot water and simmer 1 hour.

2. Stir in the paprika, cumin, chile powder and tomato sauce and simmer an additional hour, stirring often, until the meat is very tender. Taste for seasonings and add additional salt and hot sauce, to taste. Serves 6–8.

Korean Lettuce Wraps

Make this spicy, tangy dish for a quick weeknight meal. Keep it simple or add other garnishes like cilantro, chopped peanuts or onion. For a heartier version, stir in a cup of cooked rice before serving.

1 pound ground beef
2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
3 sliced green onions, green part reserved
¼ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
⅓ cup gochujang (Korean chili sauce)
2 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon rice vinegar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
1 carrot, shredded
Iceberg or butter lettuce leaves
Sesame seeds (optional)

1. Add ground beef, mushrooms and white parts of onions to a large frying pan over medium heat. Add salt and pepper, then stir and cook until browned, 5–10 minutes. Drain beef, if desired.

2. Add gochujang, sugar, soy sauce, rice vinegar, sesame oil, garlic and ginger; cook 5 minutes. Taste for seasoning and add salt, if needed.

3. Add carrot and cook 1 minute. (Add a little water if sauce is too thick.)


COOK’S TIP I found gochujang at my local H-E-B, but it is also available online and at Asian markets.
This month, Food Editor **PAULA DISBROWE** offers a favorite beef recipe from her new cookbook, *Thank You for Smoking*.

**Togarashi Porterhouse**

You might think of a porterhouse as the T-bone’s luxurious cousin. Both steaks have the iconic T-shaped bone that imparts flavor and divides the sirloin and tenderloin—the most premium cuts of beef available. But a porterhouse is cut from the rear end of the short loin, so it has a bigger section of luscious tenderloin. The meat is so extraordinary that you don’t want to do too much to it. Here subtle heat is added with shichimi togarashi, a peppery Japanese condiment, and a quick turn in a garlic-soy marinade that enhances the beef’s umami.

1. In a small bowl, combine the soy sauce, olive oil, togarashi and garlic. Pour ¾ of the marinade into a baking dish and reserve the rest. Lay the steaks in the marinade and flip them a few times to generously coat. Set aside to marinate 10 minutes.
2. Prepare a charcoal grill for two-zone cooking and build a medium-high fire, or heat a gas grill to high.
3. When the coals are glowing red and covered with a fine gray ash, add your smoke source (chips, chunks or log). Carefully wipe the preheated grill grates with a lightly oiled paper towel. Using a grill brush, scrape the grill grates clean, then carefully wipe with a lightly oiled towel again.
4. When the fire begins to produce a steady stream of smoke, place the steaks over direct heat, close the grill, vent the grill for smoking and smoke 2 minutes. Move the steaks to indirect heat, close the grill and smoke 4–5 minutes. When juices appear on top of the meat, flip the steaks and repeat the process, starting on direct heat 2 minutes, then moving to indirect heat 4–5 minutes, until the meat is nicely charred and glossy and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of each steak reads 125 degrees, 15–20 minutes total; carryover heat will take it to 130 degrees for medium-rare as it rests. Transfer the meat to a cutting board to rest 10 minutes.
5. Using a sharp knife, cut the meat off the bone, then cut the sections into thin slices. Serve with the remaining marinade on the side. Serves 6–8 (or 4 steak lovers).

Reprinted with permission from *Thank You for Smoking: Fun and Fearless Recipes Cooked with a Whiff of Wood Fire on Your Grill or Smoker* by Paula Disbrowe (Ten Speed Press, 2019).

**CORRECTION** A recipe in the June issue misidentified the reader who submitted it. Pecan Potato Salad was submitted by Allison Loesch of Pedernales EC. Please find it and the other Standout Summer Sides recipes from June at TexasCoopPower.com.
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Focus on Texas

Family Ties

Related by blood, marriage, adoption or friendship, the families in our lives shape us and the state of Texas in ways big and small. Family shows up when it counts, and above all, family ties us together. **Grace Fultz**

WEB EXTRAS ➤ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.

**Gina Huck**, United Cooperative Services: “Our grandson was born overseas, so my husband had to wait 3½ months for this joy-filled first meeting in Houston.”

**Paul Garcia**, Medina EC: “This is part of my Canary Islands descendant family. The Canary Islanders first came to San Antonio on March 9, 1731. We are celebrating the feast day of Our Lady of Candelaria at Mission Concepción in San Antonio.”

**M.J. Tykoski**, Farmers EC: “There is a special bond between a little sister and the big brother she adores.”

**Jennifer Storm Nuckels**, Pedernales EC: Landon Nuckels, 9, took this photo of his great-grandmother, Sylva Lee Adams Storm, 95, creating family ties over a game of Connect 4.

**Tina Webb**, Bluebonnet EC: Picnicking with family on a Sunday afternoon beside St. James Lutheran Church of New Wehdem in Austin County.

UPCOMING CONTESTS

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<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
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All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

**Online**: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests. **Mail**: Focus on Texas, 1022 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We do not accept entries via email. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.
**Event Calendar**

**August**

7


**Athens** The Bulb Hunter, (903) 675-6130, txmg.org

**Alpine** [9–10] Big Bend Ranch Rodeo, (432) 364-2696, bigbendranchrodeo.com

**Fort Davis** [9–11] Open Weekend at Davis Mountains Preserve, (432) 426-2390, nature.org

**Jacksonville** [9–11] Luau Golf Tournament, (903) 541-4700, jacksonvilletexas.com

8

**Levelland** S.P.O.T.C. Dog Agility Trials, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

9

**Fort Davis** Open Weekend at Davis Mountains Preserve, (432) 426-2390, nature.org

**Boerne** Kuhlmann-King Museum Tour, (830) 331-1033, visitboerne.org

**Brenham** Lavender & Wine Fest, (979) 251-8114, chappellhilllavender.com

9

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**Brenham** Lavender & Wine Fest, (979) 251-8114, chappellhilllavender.com

**Pick of the Month**

**Sausage Festival**

New Berlin September 1

(210) 343-9570

In addition to sausage plates, the festival includes an auction, bingo, raffle, rides, kids games, country store and music by Clint Taft and the Buckwild Band. Proceeds benefit the New Berlin Volunteer Fire Department and Community Club. More info available on Facebook.

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**Texas Co-op Power** August 2019
Submit Your Event!
We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event online for October by August 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

August 29–September 1
Grapeland Labor Day Bluegrass Music Festival, (936) 687-2594, salmonlakepark.com

September 6
Bryan [6-7] Brazos Bluebonnet Quilt Guild Show, (979) 204-4737, bbqg.org

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Nominate someone today!
Tell us about somebody who improves the quality of life in your community. Email your nomination to people@texascooppower.com. Include the person’s name, co-op affiliation and a short description of his or her work in the community. Featured nominees will receive a $100 donation for their cause.
What do a two-headed goat, a stuffed mountain lion and a ventriloquist doll named Gino R Tree have in common? They’re part of the weird and wonderful collection of artifacts at the Frontier Times Museum in Bandera. If you find yourself tripping through the Texas Hill Country with an appetite for the abnormal, this is a must stop.

Bandera sits about 50 miles northwest of San Antonio and calls itself the Cowboy Capital of the World. Stephenville also claims that title, but that’s a debate for a whole other article. What’s indisputable is that cowboy culture is alive and well in Bandera. The scenic hills are full of dude ranches, the visitor center hosts weekly gunfights, and there are plenty of places to eat a cowboy-sized chicken-fried steak. The Old Spanish Trail Restaurant even has saddles instead of stools at its bar. But something you might not expect are the bizarre relics inside the town’s eclectic museum.

Few probably remember Frontier Times, but for 31 years, the magazine published stories of the Wild West, replete with train robberies, outlaws and gold prospecting. It was started in 1923 by J. Marvin Hunter, a newspaperman and amateur historian. Very soon after Hunter launched the monthly publication, his readers began sending him their own tales along with strange family heirlooms. Hunter believed that if an item was important to its donor, it should be important to everyone, so he never turned down a gift. He filled his office with curiosities from around the globe. And if he didn’t know an artifact’s story, he would make one up.

Once the collection outgrew the room, Hunter tore down a wall and built a bigger room. Before long, he was running a full-on museum and entertaining his visitors with strange stories and circuslike curiosities, which earned him a reputation as the “P.T. Barnum of Bandera County.”

Small-town museums can be strange. Some hold nothing more than rusted farming tools, while others hold treasures worthy of the Smithsonian Institution. The Frontier Times Museum is somewhere between those extremes.

The first thing that caught my attention was the building itself. Constructed in 1933 by J. Marvin Hunter, a newspaperman and amateur historian. Very soon after Hunter launched the monthly publication, his readers began sending him their own tales along with strange family heirlooms. Hunter believed that if an item was important to its donor, it should be important to everyone, so he never turned down a gift. He filled his office with curiosities from around the globe. And if he didn’t know an artifact’s story, he would make one up.

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Small-town museums can be strange. Some hold nothing more than rusted farming tools, while others hold treasures worthy of the Smithsonian Institution. The Frontier Times Museum is somewhere between those extremes.

The first thing that caught my attention was the building itself. Constructed in 1933, the exterior walls are made up of stone, petrified wood, quartz crystals and brain coral—a fitting allusion to the mixture of items I found inside. It seemed as though every inch of wall was covered: an old photograph, old clock or old taxidermied animal. I began by browsing the stories of Texas settlers but quickly found myself drawn to the stranger side of the museum.

There was a mummified squirrel found in someone’s attic and presented in a glass case. There was a shrunken human head from South America, a sculpture made of rattlesnake rattles and a two-headed goat that was born on a local ranch and donated after it died. Most fascinating was the story of a stuffed mountain lion named Sally that a man from Pearsall had kept as a house pet and that rode shotgun in his truck.

In the back was the Texas Heroes Hall of Honor recognizing rodeo cowboys and others who have made a lasting contribution to Texan culture. I learned about Bandera native “Mighty Mite” Ray Wharton, who was short in stature but could rope a calf like no other and won a world championship at Madison Square Garden.

That day, I gained a lot of knowledge about Bandera’s history and a lot of new mental images to feed my nightmares. As I walked out, I asked the manager if the museum was still taking donations.

“Of course,” she said. “What do you have?”

“Nothing yet,” I replied. “But I’m sure I can find you something.”

And after I find the artifact, I can work on finding the sort of accompanying story that would make Mr. Hunter proud.

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