

THE COWBOY ON THE  
CAPITOL GROUNDS

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BUFFALO SOLIDERS

FINDING SERENITY  
DESPITE ALZHEIMER'S

# Texas Coop Power

FOR TRINITY VALLEY EC MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2025

## Calling All Dancers

The lifelong bond  
of square dancing

TRINITY  
VALLEY EC  
NEWS

SEE PAGE 16

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Bill and Dolores Rowland prepare for the next dance.

*Photo by Dave Shafer*

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The Texas Cowboy Monument on the grounds of the Capitol.

*Photo by Caytlyn Calhoun*



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**RECOMMENDED READING**

Ten years ago we also looked at sculptures. Download our February 2015 issue and read about Daddy-O Wade's curious creations. Find it at [TexasCoopPower.com/magazine-archives](http://TexasCoopPower.com/magazine-archives).

# Houston Air Show

**BESSIE COLEMAN**, an exhibition flyer and Waxahachie native, performed in her home state for the first time nearly 100 years ago—June 19, 1925, in Houston.

Her greatest accomplishment came in 1921 in France when she became the first Black licensed pilot in the world. Check out *Queen Bess Soared* on our website to learn more about this aviation pioneer.

“True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.”

—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

## Valentine's Cards

Lovers love Valentine's Day. So do creditors.

One study found that 1 in 3 people in relationships say they may take on credit card debt when shopping for their significant others this month. Among this group, about half won't tell their partners about the debt.



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

### My first car was ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our December prompt: **My favorite holiday lights are ...**

The stars.  
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In Johnson City at Pedernales Electric Cooperative and the courthouse.

SHELIA BETZEL  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES  
VENUS

Ones I don't have to put up or take down.

ED ROWLAND  
CECA  
CISCO

The ones reflected in my children's eyes.

JESSICA PAXTOR  
PEDERNALES EC  
LEANDER

Visit our website to see more responses.

DECEMBER 2024 Field of Beams

“After seeing the magnificent, illuminated pecan in Bartonville, I had to share another illuminated beauty, on Montclair Drive in Colleyville.”

JOHN GRAEVE  
TRI-COUNTY EC  
FORT WORTH



COURTESY JOHN GRAEVE

Sweet Memories

My grandfather (Erwin Kresta) had a farm in El Campo with an orchard of orange and tangerine trees that were so productive he let people come and pick fresh fruits [Everybody’s Beeswax, December 2024].

Next to that he had over 50 beehives, and the bees would visit the fruit trees daily—fruit-infused natural honey.

What I’d give to have some of Grandpa Kresta’s honey.

Ron Faldik  
Bryan Texas Utilities  
Bryan

A Step in the Right Direction

I’m new to going to a lease with my husband, and after reading this, I will be sure to pack a compass [The Lease of Our Concerns, November 2024].

Rosie Strode  
Tri-County EC  
Cresson



TARA JACOBY

Y2K in Hindsight

I remember very well in 1999 the news media blowing the whole Y2K issue completely out of proportion [Black-Eyed Peace, December 2024]. This was nothing less than fearmongering brought on by the computer industry to get everyone to purchase billions of dollars’ worth of new computers.

Glenn Arthur Rebber  
Heart of Texas EC  
Valley Mills

You’ve given people like myself a huge compliment, and I’m glad you are so blissfully unknowing. I was one of thousands of software engineers working obscene hours ahead of the new year to keep the world running smoothly when the calendar flipped to the year 2000.

It was not a “supposed” glitch but very, very real.

Cindy Nichols  
Magic Valley EC  
Weslaco

**TCP WRITE TO US**  
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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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# IT'S HIP TO BE A SQUARE

BY SAMANTHA BRYANT  
PHOTOS BY DAVE SHAFER

**IT'S MID-JUNE**, and the dance floor is hopping. Groups of eight dancers—two on each side of an imaginary square—turn, twirl, walk in time, and move in and out of a kaleidoscope of formations, skirts swirling and boots shuffling. A booming voice gives instructions over a loudspeaker: “Do-si-do, now promenade.”

One pair moves faster than the others in their square. Michael and Caroline Knight turn together and then Caroline takes an extra twirl before they start interweaving with the other three pairs.

“It’s style,” Caroline says. “It just makes it more fun. Like you can do dry, just do the moves as they are, but when you get really confident and you kind of have a muscle memory of what the moves feel like, then you start adding more spins and flair, and it just makes it fun.”

Among 272 dancers at the Brazos County Expo Complex in Bryan, Caroline, 26, and Michael, 33,



## The passionate square dance community makes room for new ideas to grow a grand tradition

are among the youngest on the floor one night at the Texas State Federation Square and Round Dance Festival. The couple, customers of Bryan Texas Utilities, met while square dancing and, after attending the same club for six years, dated then eventually married in December 2024. They say the social aspect of square dancing—the state folk dance of Texas—is one reason they do it.

“It’s like two-stepping in that you kind of have a community and that you find friends doing it,” Caroline says, “but it’s more of a community because you’re not dancing with one person, you’re dancing with seven other people.”

Square dancing is not a spectator sport nor is it a competition—it’s about having fun and developing friendships, all in time to music. And as some dancers are aging out, a

passionate corps—and even some younger folks—are getting the word out about the physical, mental and social benefits of a pastime that’s still finding its rhythm.

The 450 attendees at the four-day state festival are just some of the 2,500 square dancers who belong to more than 100 clubs across the state. That’s a lot of dancers—but a lot fewer than there used to be.

OPPOSITE The swirl of skirts and smiles that is square dancing at the Brazos County Expo Complex in Bryan.

ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Portraits of lifelong friends Mary Whitaker, Lewis Chumbley and Janet Arnold. Andrew and Elizabeth Chu. Jeff and Karen Nelson go for a spin.



“You have to leave your troubles at the door because there’s not room for your troubles and concentrating on the dance.”

“Back in the ’70s and ’80s, the state dances would have 7,000 or 8,000 people at them, and the national dances would have 30,000 to 40,000,” says Matthew Whiteacre, former president of the statewide square dance organization. “It’s down to 10% of that now.

“So in 50 years, we’ve lost 90% of our dancers.”

Whiteacre, a BTU customer, set the theme of the state festival in June: To Boldly Dance ... Into the Future, which allowed for an element of science fiction and some conversation about the trajectory of square dancing.

The clubs sustain a tradition of modern Western square dancing, which has its roots in dances, like the French quadrille, that came over with European settlers to the American colonies but has evolved over the years as it





spread and mixed with other dance traditions, according to *Smithsonian Magazine*.

A component of square dancing that sets it apart from most other forms is the caller, a person who says, sings or chants the set of moves, known as calls, for dancers to follow. Callers can sing along with the song lyrics and sometimes use humor and rhymes as they guide the dancers. It can take years to master.

“I have to interweave the calls in with the lyrics, which that’s a skill all in itself,” says Scott Bennett, who has been a caller for over 40 years. “That’s the thing that keeps me attracted to square dancing all these years—it forces me to use lots of different aspects of entertainment.”

Historically, square dancing is done to traditional country songs that feature fiddles and banjos. And while folks still dance to that music, some callers, like Bennett, call to a mix of genres—classic rock, jazz and pop—anything with the right beat. Bennett says one of the more popular songs in recent years was *Call Me Maybe* by Carly Rae Jepsen.

“I’d put that on, and young folks would just be jumping through the ceiling they were so excited,” Bennett says.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Portraits of Dolores and Bill Rowland, Karen and Jeff Nelson, 14-year-olds Arianna and Ezra, Ramona and Billy Grimsley, Gary and Claudia Lester, and Karen Gatherer.

ABOVE Caller Vernon Jones of Springtown.

## SQUARE DANCE 101

**ANGEL:** A higher-level dancer who helps beginners.

**CALL:** A set of moves that dancers perform when the announcer—the caller—says its name.

**CALLER:** The person who guides the dance by speaking or singing out the moves.

**CORNER:** The person on the other side of you who is not your partner (on your right if dancing the woman’s part, left if dancing the man’s).

**CUER:** The person guiding a round dance by telling dancers what steps to do.

**PATTER:** Calls that are spoken or chanted instead of sung.

**ROUND DANCE:** A choreographed ballroom dance for couples in which dancers follow a cuer and rotate around the dance floor.

**TIP:** A set of two square dances, generally consisting of a patter call followed by a singing call.

**YELLOW ROCK:** A hug between square dancers, particularly corners.

Dozens of calls are standardized through an international organization known as Callerlab. While some calls are fairly intuitive for dancers—such as circle left or forward and back—others have to be taught, such as flutterwheel, slip the clutch and box the gnat.

Most dancers take lessons and go through Callerlab's Mainstream program, says John Kephart, president of the Texas State Callers' Association. At this level, dancers learn 68 calls, but some have variations, equating to more than 130 total moves.

It sounds intimidating and may well stop some prospective participants, but any dancer will tell you to try it anyway, even if you have two left feet.

"If you can walk, you can square dance," says Caroline Knight, who lives in Bryan and is a member of the Brazos Barn Dancers. "I've seen young kids—6, 7—that know how to dance really well. And then there's people that are in their 90s that still dance."

The activity provides exercise—a two-hour dance can equate to more than 5,000 steps and burns potentially hundreds of calories. Studies even show the dancing may stave off dementia. Jimette Smith started dancing around 1975, and she said another mental benefit is stress relief.

"In square dance, a caller can call anything to any music," Smith says. "You have to listen—you can't anticipate—because he can call anything. So you have to leave your troubles at the door because there's not room for your troubles and concentrating on the dance."

For 30 years, Smith owned a square dance apparel shop, Rhythm Creations, in Houston. She designed and sold the multicolored dresses, skirts, blouses and frilly petticoats that are worn during dances. Men typically wear long-sleeved Western shirts and bolo ties.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- There are square dance clubs in other countries, including Japan and Germany, but all the calls are done in English.
- The 75th National Square Dance Convention will be held in Waco in 2026, 20 years after the convention was last held in Texas—in San Antonio in 2006.
- There are camping square dance clubs.
- Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, hosted square dances on the White House lawn while he was in office.
- You can find a square dance club that offers classes in your area by visiting [squaredancetx.com](http://squaredancetx.com).



ABOVE Sue Blanchard twirls.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Portraits of Nora Creed-McClaskey, 11-year-old Lexi LeBlanc and grandmother Lea Ann McGee, 12-year-old best friends Caroline Einkauf and Meg Rhinehart, Tim and Tam Austin, Jan Albers, and Linda and Don Prendercast.

In recent years, some clubs have relaxed the dress code requirements—one of several ways square dance clubs are trying to attract more participants, including updating music and programs, while preserving the traditions and community that have attracted so many.

Square dancing in clubs became popular after World War II, according to the International Encyclopedia of Dance, but participation has declined in recent years as dancers age out and young people enjoy a plethora of options for socializing and burning calories. The pandemic also dealt a blow as dancers dropped out while clubs paused their activities.

Some clubs have incorporated a Callerlab program called Social Square Dancing, released in 2021. It has a shorter training period to appeal to new dancers. The organization also is pushing to streamline some of its other programs.

In an age when people can feel more isolated than ever, the community and connection square dancing provides are enticing new participants. The family-friendly nature of the activity—there's no drinking or smoking allowed—enables multigenerational participation.

"Everybody here is part of what we call our square dance family," says Claudia Lester. She and her husband, Gary, found a community of unmatched camaraderie when they started dancing 15 years ago.

Some clubs are seeing an increase in numbers. Audrey Mansell, former president of the North Texas Square and Round Dance Association and a Tri-County Electric Cooperative member, said they've seen growth in their 26 clubs for the first time in 13 years, which she attributes to members intentionally inviting friends to join and adopting a relaxed dress code.

Ben Vinson, a freshman at Texas A&M University, danced in high school with the H-Town Squares, a club for teens and young adults in Houston geared toward homeschooled students. The club boasts 110 dancers, making it one of the largest in the state.

Vinson says the friendships he forged made the challenge



of learning the complicated moves worth his while.

“I do it mainly for the fellowship,” he says, “but it’s still a cool skill to have.”

Caroline Knight also got into square dancing as a teenager when friends invited her to join them, though at first she was skeptical.


“I thought it was going to be super folky and corny, and I was like, ‘I don’t know if I’ll like it, but I want to hang out with you so I’ll give it a try,’” Knight says. “And it is so much fun, especially when you’re dancing with people that are really excited about it.”

Once a dancer is hooked, they may be in for life. Charles Spoon, president of the Lubbock Area Square and Round Dance Federation, encourages anyone who’s curious about

square dancing to try it. The 81-year-old is on the dance floor about 150 nights out of the year and went to his first dance when his then-girlfriend Ellen, now his wife, asked him to give it a shot.

“She said, ‘Just try it one time. If you don’t like it, you don’t have to go,’ and I said, ‘OK,’” says Spoon, a member of South Plains Electric Cooperative. “So I tried it. That was back in 1968.

“And I’m still doing it.” ■

 Watch the video on our website and discover how square dancing is great exercise and an easy way to make new friends.



A New Yorker in Paris captured Texas  
and the West in an iconic statue

# A Cowboy's Distinctive Trail

BY CHRIS BURROWS

**T**here's a 15-foot-tall, 100-year-old mystery on the campus of the University of North Texas in Denton. In a tree-shaded area near the general academic building, a regal bronze sculpture of artist Diego Velázquez on horseback overlooks students and staff as they go about their days.

New Yorker Constance Whitney Warren sculpted Velázquez, a 17th-century painter, when she was living in Paris after World War I. The family of billionaire Harlan Crow donated the piece to UNT in 1994.

Nobody seems to know why.

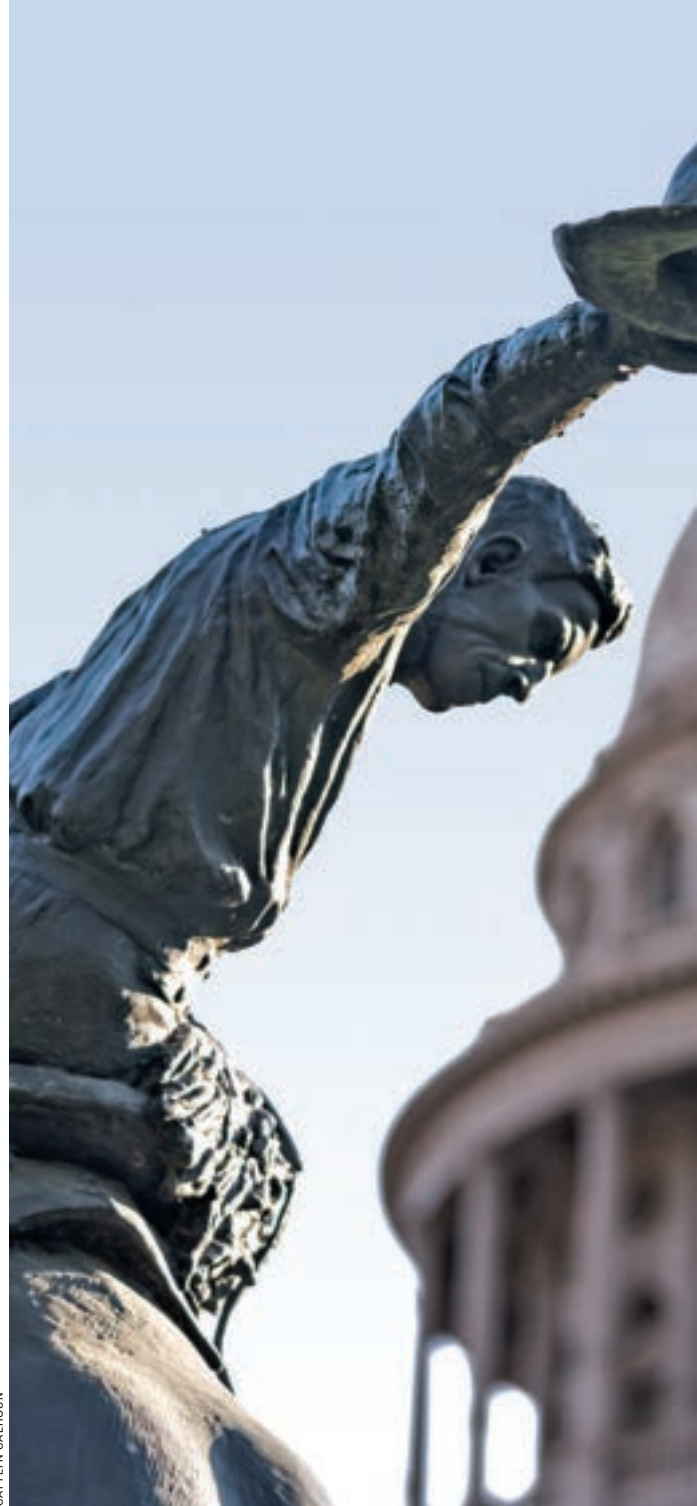
"I do not have the answers," says Holly Hutzell, art registrar for the university. "We do not have a record as to why the donor gifted it to UNT. Nor do we know why the artist depicted the Spanish master on horseback."

But 200 miles north and south of Denton, up and down Interstate 35, iconic Western statues by Warren on the grounds of the capitols of Texas and Oklahoma need no explaining. Both bronzes depict life-size wooly-chapped cowboys astride broncos rearing back over cactuses. Along the path of the former Chisholm Trail, these century-old works could not be more at home. Right?

It was 100 years ago—January 19, 1925—that *The Austin Statesman* reported several thousand Austinites, visitors and lawmakers gathered at the Capitol and watched as two men dressed in cowboy garb pulled a white sheet from the newly christened Texas Cowboy Monument—a "tribute to the rough and romantic riders of the range," reads a weather-worn plaque at its base.

It was the day before Texas' first female governor, Miriam A. "Ma" Ferguson, was sworn into office, and crowds were swarming in anticipation.

"There is not another place where the statue of a cowboy can with such fitness and such propriety be placed," said a representative of the sculptor's family, Charles Cason, at the unveiling. "Texas was the cowboy's home, and the very name



CAVLYN CALHOUN

'cowboy' brings to every American's mind the name of Texas with all her glorious traditions and romance of the endless ranges."

Warren was born in 1888 to an affluent New York family, and despite a weeklong honeymoon through the American West after her marriage to a French count, in 1912, there's no evidence that she ever set foot in Texas.

"At an early age, she gained a fascination for the West from stories told by her father of his experiences as a mining engineer on the frontier," writes *An Encyclopedia of Women Artists of the American West*. Warren moved to France after the honeymoon, and when World War I broke out, she chauffeured English officers.

After the war, she poured herself into sculpture, executing



COURTESY CATTLE RAISERS MUSEUM

LEFT The Texas Cowboy Monument has overlooked the southwest corner of the Capitol grounds for 100 years.

ABOVE The dedication of Constance Whitney Warren's bronze statue January 19, 1925.

No one has done more to unravel the mystery of Warren than Sullivan, former professor of art history at UNT and later dean of Texas Christian University's College of Fine Arts.

Cowboy No. 2 was shipped to New York from Paris several months before the dedication in Austin.

It wasn't long before Oklahoma decided it needed a Warren bronco. Its Tribute to Range Riders, installed in 1928, was that capitol's first art piece.

Warren and the count divorced in 1922, she returned to the U.S. a few years later and in 1930, she committed herself to Craig House, a discreet asylum in upstate New York. Almost nothing is known of Warren's later years. She died in 1948.

After UNT received the Velázquez piece in the 1990s, Sullivan went to work solving its mysteries.

He made contact with some members of Warren's family in Massachusetts, and during the course of his research that formed the basis of a 3,000-word article published by the *Gilcrease Journal* in 2015, he discovered that a sculpture of Velázquez by French artist Emmanuel Frémiet was installed at the Louvre from 1893 to 1933, likely inspiring Warren's Velázquez in Denton.

Sullivan's research brought much-deserved detail to Warren's life. She was among few female sculptors of the early 20th century with the skills, means or ambition to produce art that typified the American frontier. She was a pioneer accepted by pioneers of another sort.

"Warren deserves greater recognition for her work," Sullivan wrote, "and for her willingness to follow her imagination into a male-oriented and male-dominated arena largely unexplored at the time by female artists." ■

some 100 pieces—mostly horses—between 1920 and 1930.

"A sharp observer of anatomy and a vigorous modeler, she was at her best with figures in violent action," Stuart Preston of *The New York Times* wrote in 1953.

Among those works was Warren's Cowboy No. 2, sculpted in 1921. It was exhibited at the 1923 Paris Salon, a premier annual art exhibition, and missed a bronze medal by two votes, instead claiming an honorable mention.

"This was prestigious recognition for an American woman artist," wrote the late Scott Sullivan. "The Cowboy was praised in the French press and highly popular in Paris. Cason told Gov. [Pat] Neff that the artist wished to donate the bronze to a western state. The governor agreed to accept it on behalf of Texas."



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MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER/CEO JEFF LANE

## How We Balance Electricity Supply and Demand

**ELECTRICITY IS ESSENTIAL** for nearly every aspect of daily life—so essential that we rarely think about how it’s produced and delivered to our homes. You might be surprised to learn that, behind the scenes, a network of experts is working daily (and by the minute) to anticipate how much electricity you need before you even use it.

We’re all connected to the electric grid, so ensuring the right amount of electricity is available for everyone involves a complex process of forecasting energy demand, planning for capacity and securing enough supply to meet everyone’s needs.

### Powerful Sources

Electricity must be generated at a power plant using either traditional sources, such as coal, natural gas or nuclear energy, or from renewable sources, such as solar, wind or hydropower.



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Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative works closely with our generation and transmission provider, Rayburn Electric Cooperative, to secure enough electricity for our communities, using a diverse mix of energy sources to generate the power we deliver to your home or business. By maintaining a diverse energy mix, we have options to ensure reliable power at a competitive cost.

On a larger scale, across the country, electricity supply and demand are managed through a market

that includes long-term planning agreements, where electricity is bought and sold just like other common goods and services. Because your co-op works with our wholesale power partner, we’re able to pool resources and expertise to deliver affordable power to our local communities.

Electricity supply changes throughout the day because demand fluctuates based on consumers’ needs. For example, we know that we need to ensure more electricity is available in the mornings when you start your day and in the evenings when you cook dinner, run appliances and watch TV. And of course we plan for seasonal demand changes for winter heating and summer cooling.

### Looking Ahead

As the energy sector undergoes rapid change, it’s important for consumers to understand the basics of electricity supply and demand.

Electricity use in the U.S. is expected to rise to record highs this year and next, with the demand for electricity expected to at least double by 2050. At the same time, energy policies are pushing the early retirement of always-available generation sources, which will undoubtedly compromise reliable electricity.

TVEC remains committed to providing affordable, reliable energy to the members we serve. That’s why we’re preparing now for increased demand and other chal-

lenges that could compromise our local electricity supply.

Managing electricity supply and demand is a complex job, which is why we have a network of utilities, power plant operators and energy traffic managers in place to secure and manage the power we need and keep the grid balanced. ■





Ongoing training keeps employees' skills sharp. Members of the TVEC operations team including Josh Lathem, Hayley Warman, Victor Hart, Rodney Wesley and Trevor Moeller, work to resolve issues during an Incident Command System training exercise that simulated a large-scale storm response last December.

## TVEC February Updates: Office Closure, Scholarships, Rate Changes and More

• **TVEC Office Closure February 17**—All Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative offices will be closed February 17, Presidents Day, for an all-employee training event.

Line crews and system operators will be available for any emergencies or outages.

• **Rate Change Reminder**—As announced in last month's edition of *Texas Co-op Power*, TVEC's electricity rates are going up slightly on April bills. Those billing cycles will include usage starting after February 20. You can find the full rate schedule and a handy bill calculator to see how this change will affect your bills at [tvec.net/rates](http://tvec.net/rates).

• **Get Co-op News and Updates On-The-Go**—Now you can catch up with the co-op in your car, while you exercise, or anytime really. The Consider it Hot podcast is available on all major podcast platforms and YouTube.

Give it a listen and let us know what you think.

• **Are You on SmartHub?**—Both online and on your mobile device, SmartHub offers the easiest way to manage your TVEC account, pay bills and more. Find out more at [tvec.net/smarthub](http://tvec.net/smarthub).

• **Scholarships for High School Seniors**—Applications are open for 2025 TVEC High School Scholarships. Seniors whose families receive power from TVEC are eligible, including home school and private school students.

Scholarships are funded by escheat money, which is unclaimed capital credits returned to the co-op by the State of Texas. Those funds may only be used for education, economic development, scholarships and efficiency programs. 160370003

Find out more and apply online at [tvec.net/scholarship](http://tvec.net/scholarship). ■



Find out more and listen online at [tvec.net/podcast](http://tvec.net/podcast).

## Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

### CONTACT US

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

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## Outage Hotline Numbers

For information and to report outages, please call us.

**TOLL-FREE**  
1-800-967-9324

**AUTOMATED ASSISTANCE**  
1-800-720-3584

### ABOUT TRINITY VALLEY EC

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

### OFFICE LOCATIONS

#### Kaufman District Headquarters

1800 E. Highway 243, Kaufman

#### Athens District Office

909 W. Larkin St., Athens

#### Cedar Creek District Office

1012 W. Main St., Ste. 102  
Gun Barrel City

#### Wills Point District Office

582 N. Fourth St., Wills Point

#### Lobby Hours

8:15 a.m.–4:45 p.m.

### VISIT US ONLINE

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





J. MICHAEL JONES | ISTOCK.COM

## Why Electric Co-ops Replace Utility Poles

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

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

Occasionally, poles need to be replaced for reasons other than decay and old age. Weather disasters, power line relocation and car crashes are potential causes for immediate replacement.

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

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

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

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



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



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## 5 Low-Cost Ways To Save Money on Heating

**DOES LOWERING THE** thermostat save money? Sure, but it isn't the only way to slash your heating bill. Here are some other simple changes you can make around the house.

**Insulate windows with bubble wrap.** About 30% of a home's heating energy is lost through older and single-pane glass windows since they allow cold air to pass through, wasting as much as \$600 per year, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. While installing energy-efficient, double-pane windows that block cold air can cost thousands of dollars, and applying insulating window film with tape or a hair dryer is a hassle, there's a far easier solution: bubble wrap.

Simply cut bubble wrap to the size of the window, lightly spray the glass with water to help the plastic stick to it, then apply. The plastic bubbles act as insulation, keeping out frosty air. Have gaps on the sides or bottom of the window where drafts are coming in? Cut the bubble wrap a little bigger to block them.

**Roll up towels to stop drafts.** Drafts coming in from gaps around your home account for 10%–20% of heating costs. One of the biggest gaps you'll find? The bottoms of doors leading to the outside or garage. That's because doors tend to shrink in winter, potentially letting in chilly air.

To block drafts, roll up towels and place them at the bottoms of doors you don't open often, such as a side door. And for doors you use daily, consider a draft stopper, which is a set of two rollers that block drafts from both sides of the door. It slips on the bottom of the door. To caulk other gaps

temporarily—such as around an attic or crawl space door—try using a removable caulk that lets you seal gaps in winter, then peels off when you want to use the door again in spring.

**Block hidden gusts with socket sealers.** Electrical outlets and light switches are tiny parts of a room, yet they can have a big impact on your heating bill. The reason? Cold air that gets into the walls escapes through open crevices in their cover plate. Those small drafts throughout your home will add up to a large draft. Use a socket sealer, especially on exterior walls. The inserts fit between the wall and outlet or light switch plate and block small drafts.

**Turn on a humidifier to feel warmer.** Ever turn up the heat but still feel chilly? The problem is that low humidity in winter makes you feel colder despite the thermostat going up. That's because water vapor is needed to hold on to warm air. Simply adding moisture to the air with a portable room humidifier—raising the humidity level to 30% or as high as 50%—will make you feel warmer and let you turn down the heat.

**Get cozy.** Wearing your coziest outfit under a chunky throw blanket can make a difference when it comes to lowering your heating bill. By putting on more layers, you can turn down the heat a few extra degrees and still feel comfortable. Make your favorite soup or sip a hot cup of tea to keep you warm on the inside too. ■



ABDULLAH DURMAZ | ISTOCK.COM



TVEC ENERGY  
MANAGEMENT  
SUPERVISOR  
**CHRIS WALKER**

## Too Good To Be True

How to avoid energy savings scams

**WHEN IT COMES TO** saving energy, buyer beware is an adage alive and well. We're all bombarded by claims that border on outright falsehoods, so it pays to view savings claims from third parties cautiously.

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it typically is.

Take electric space heaters for example. They drain energy savings from your home if used incorrectly, but companies make elaborate claims about the amount of money you can save and charge excessive sums for their products. Advertisements frequently target those on a fixed income, presenting false hope while extracting precious dollars.

Many of these space heaters appear to be well made, but they typically offer no better economy than any other 1,500-watt electric heater despite costing substantially more. Bottom line, electric space heaters should only be used to heat small spaces—not your entire home.

Black boxes that claim to clean up power, protect appliances and reduce energy use come and go. These often require an electrician to install and claim to improve power quality, smooth out power fluctuations and store energy so you can reduce your bills.

Save your money. The technologies they promote are already in use by Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative and require utility-size equipment to deliver them.

Something that can fit in a shoebox is not going to deliver

any value in improving power quality. If you're concerned about protecting your sensitive appliances and electronics, affordable and effective surge protectors are readily available.

When you see the ad that reads, "The power companies don't want you to know ...," skip it. These are typically claims about building your own renewable energy source from parts easily obtained at the local hardware store or a motor that produces limitless "free" electricity.

These claims have as much validity as the emails telling you that you can receive millions of dollars by simply replying with all your banking information.

Scammers love to call or stop by claiming they represent the local power company. Never give personal or financial information to anyone who claims to be a TVEC employee without confirming their identity. Ask for a callback number from the phone solicitor; they are often very hesitant to provide a number—a big red flag.

The best option is to call us directly at 800-766-9576 to verify. Ask the door-to-door person for a valid TVEC ID. If they really are a co-op employee, they'll be able to prove it. If you're ever in doubt, call us and we will be happy to help.

Most of us want to save energy and keep our bills manageable. Technology can help do this, but be careful before making any investments in technology that seem too good to be true.

Take time to do your own independent research. You'll be glad you did. ■

# Helping Others Means Safety First

**IN AN EMERGENCY**, people wanting to help can rush to the rescue without considering safety. Knowing how best to help in an emergency can be the difference between life and death—for the victim and the rescuer.

Electricity can be an unforeseen hazard, particularly when overhead power lines have fallen. Always assume a power line is energized, and never touch or approach it.

If you come upon an accident scene involving a vehicle and downed lines, stay back and warn others to stay away. Make sure the occupants of the car stay inside the vehicle until the utility has de-energized the lines.

In a rare circumstance, the vehicle may catch fire. The only way the occupants can safely exit is to jump free and clear without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time. Advise them to jump and land with feet together, then shuffle away to safety.

If you encounter any other accident situation in which you believe someone is in contact with electricity or has just suffered an electrical shock, keep in mind these additional tips.

- ▶ Look first. Do NOT touch. The person may still be in contact with the electrical source and be energized.
- ▶ Call or have someone nearby call 911 and the electric utility.
- ▶ Turn off the source of electricity (i.e., circuit breaker or box)—if you can safely do so. If you aren't sure, wait for the emergency responders.
- ▶ Only once the source of electricity is off, check for signs of circulation (breathing, coughing or movement). Provide any necessary first aid.
- ▶ Prevent shock. Lay the person down and, if possible, position the head slightly lower than the trunk of the body with the legs elevated.
- ▶ Do not move a person with an electrical injury unless the person is in immediate danger.

Anyone who has come into contact with electricity should see a doctor to check for internal injuries, even if he or she has no obvious signs or symptoms. ■



SAMUEL HOWELL | ISTOCK.COM



## In Memoriam Ruth Benson 1967-2024

The Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative family lost a dear friend and colleague at the end of 2024 with the passing of Ruth Benson.

She served TVEC members for 19 years as part of our member services team.

"Ruth was a very caring, very loving and very dedicated part of our group," said Matthew Kulwicki, manager of member services. "She was always willing to take the time to understand whatever issue a member might be dealing with, and then do whatever she could to help."

Along with always providing excellent service to TVEC members, Ruth was also a joy to work with, always ready to listen and share.

"Ruth had a joy and love for life, particularly when it came to her husband, daughter and grandchildren," said Jeff Lane, General Manager/CEO. "She loved being at the Co-op and we considered her family. She really enjoyed deer hunting and just about every conversation I had with her inevitably led to discussions about her latest hunting adventure. She was a good friend and will truly be missed."

# Lineman Lunch



DON JOHNSON | TVEC

## The Cotton Gin

Crandall restaurant revives a landmark name

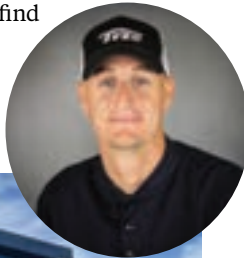
**NEWER RESIDENTS MAY NOT KNOW THE NAME** but anyone living in the area for a while will remember the Cotton Gin in Crandall. Housed in the shell of the former working gin, the large restaurant brought in patrons with good food and a touch of the area's agricultural history. A fire in 2014 put that restaurant out of business and the site was vacant for years.

Now, the corner of U.S. Highway 175 and Farm-to-Market Road 148 is buzzing with a much more modern incarnation of The Cotton Gin Restaurant and Bar, tucked into a bustling gas station.

The menu ventures beyond what you might expect given the convenience store entrance. With choices of pizza, salads and burgers everyone can find a favorite, but more adventurous eaters will find some new flavors to try with items like a hot honey fried chicken sandwich or fried cheese ravioli.

"It is less fast food and more like a home cooked burger if you ask me," said Josh Lathem, operations superintendent. "And with the patio area, when the weather is nice it feels more relaxed. A lot of our guys have mentioned how nice that can be just to enjoy the outdoor area."

The Crandall Cotton Gin is located at 1500 Hwy. 175 in Crandall and online at [cottongincrandall.com](http://cottongincrandall.com). ■



## Win \$100 Just for Reading

Somewhere hidden on pages 16–23 is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the member services department by February 28 to receive a \$100 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be our winner.



## Energy Quiz

**As of 2023, what was the average rotor diameter of a wind turbine in the U.S.?**  
[energy.gov/eere/articles/wind-turbines-bigger-better](https://energy.gov/eere/articles/wind-turbines-bigger-better)

- A** • About 438 feet
- B** • 25-30 feet
- C** • 125 feet

Win **\$100!**

Send your answer and contact information to [contest@tvec.coop](mailto:contest@tvec.coop) or contact TVEC Member Services by February 28. One \$100 bill credit winner will be chosen from all correct replies. Look for the correct answer in a future *Texas Co-op Power*.

## January Energy Quiz: Solar Cells

**CLEVER SCIENTISTS** worked to convert solar energy into usable electricity starting as early as 1839, with French physicists observing a photovoltaic effect, with electrical currents generated when some metals were exposed to light.

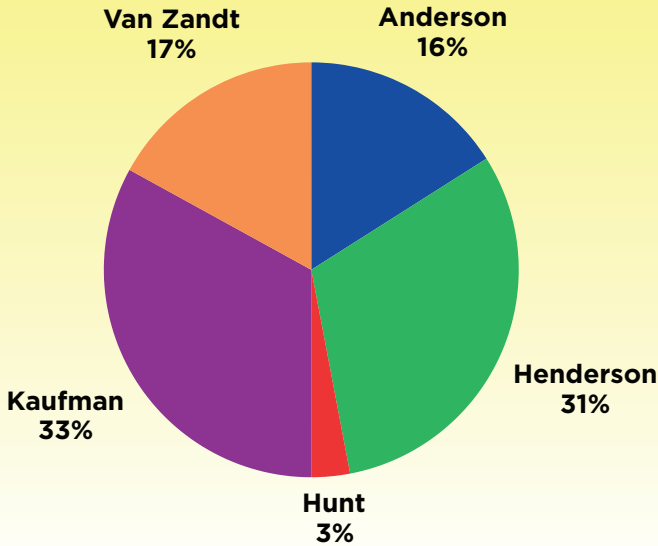
A major breakthrough came in 1954 with the announcement of silicon-based solar cells, which were much more efficient and made modern solar generation possible.

Congratulations to our December Energy Quiz winner, Judy Covin of Mabank.

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



## 2024 Percentage Of Grant Totals By County



## December 2024 Food Bank & Bill Assistance

Community Food Pantry in Tool  
 Helping Hands Mabank  
 Lake Area Shared Ministries  
 St. Charles Borromeo Food Pantry  
 Payne Springs Methodist Church Food Pantry  
**\$5,000 Each**

## December 2024 Operation Round Up Grants

Canton Area Radio Emerg. Serv.	<b>\$5,000</b>
Forney Education Foundation	<b>\$3,000</b>
Hidden Acres, INC.	<b>\$3,000</b>

## Year-To-Date Grant Totals By Purpose

Animal Rescue	<b>\$11,250</b>	2%
Children's Advocacy	<b>\$30,500</b>	6%
Community Outreach	<b>\$28,500</b>	6%
Community Projects	<b>\$7,500</b>	2%
Continuing Education	<b>\$4,000</b>	1%
Emergency Services	<b>\$11,750</b>	2%
Environmental/Beautification	<b>\$5,000</b>	1%
Family Resource	<b>\$57,500</b>	12%
Fine Arts	<b>\$6,500</b>	1%
Fire Departments	<b>\$168,000</b>	35%
Food Pantry	<b>\$46,000</b>	10%
Health Resources	<b>\$20,500</b>	4%
Mental Health	<b>\$9,000</b>	2%
Public Library	<b>\$7,500</b>	2%
Public School Education	<b>\$26,500</b>	6%
School Supplies/Lunch	<b>\$7,000</b>	1%
Special Needs	<b>\$16,000</b>	3%
Veterans	<b>\$9,500</b>	2%
Youth Programs	<b>\$6,000</b>	1%
<hr/>		
<b>2024 Total</b>	<b>\$478,500</b>	<b>100%</b>

## What is Operation Round Up?

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program. Participating members have their electric bills rounded up each month to the next whole dollar amount. The portion that is rounded up goes to the TVEC Charitable Foundation.

For example, a bill of \$75.68 would be rounded up to \$76. Then a 32 cent contribution is made to the TVEC Charitable Foundation.

**Thank you to all of our members who rounded up!**



# Unshakable

New book tells of the man who spent more years than anyone fighting fires—and life's other challenges

BY JAN ADAMSON • ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC KITTELBERGER

**BILLY GENE "SHAKEY"** Holder can't help but smile when he thinks about the more than 50 years he worked as a firefighter. "I loved that job," he says. "You were helping people, and they were always glad to see you when you showed up."

When Holder retired in 2011, at age 77, he still passed the Irving Fire Department's agility test even though he was six years into a battle with Stage 4 cancer. He was the country's oldest active full-time firefighter when he hung up his boots after 56 years with the department.

Holder is the subject of a 2024 book written by his friend and fellow fireman Clif Clifton. Holder and his wife, Ginger, who live in McKinney, contacted Clifton about putting to paper Holder's story when they discovered Clifton had written poetry, journals and stories about his own career.

Turns out, Holder was one of Clifton's heroes. They had worked at different stations in the same fire department.

Holder was born in 1934, during the Great Depression, in Grayson County in North Texas. He was one of seven children and a scrapper almost from birth. With his family, he picked cotton as a child while they moved repeatedly to chase work. He had dyslexia, making learning difficult, and was picked on by other children.

That's when he learned to fight.

The family moved to Cartwright, Oklahoma, just over the Texas border, where Holder earned a reputation for settling matters with his fists, especially when defending an underdog or going up against a bully.

"I used to like to box, and everybody at work, I used to test. I used to tell them not to hit me in the face and then I'd hit them," he says with a laugh. "Then they boxed pretty good. I was a good ducker."

After a series of low-paying jobs throughout his youth, Holder's sister encouraged him to apply to become an Irving firefighter. After a long period of waiting anxiously for some positive word, Holder finally got the call and went to work as a fireman.

When he first joined the department in 1955, he was paid \$265 a month. He went on to join the swift-water rescue and hazardous materials teams.

Telling the story of how he got his nickname—Shakey—makes his eyes twinkle.

On his third day as a firefighter, some of his colleagues were preparing lunch, and Holder was trying to stay out of the way in the tiny kitchen they used. He bumped into the refrigerator and an electrical cord slipped down, touching his neck and startling him into knocking cooking utensils, pans and appliances to the floor.

The other firemen rushed to try to catch the falling items, but Holder believed they were trying to escape whatever danger had snaked around his neck. He took off at a run, knocking one of the men down.

When things calmed, he apologized. "I'm sorry guys, I've always been a little shaky about stuff," he told them. One of the firemen painted the accidentally misspelled word on the nervous fireman's car. And thus, Shakey was born.

At a recent signing for Clifton's self-published book, *The Legendary Story of Shakey*, a few of his fellow firefighters dropped by. Their admiration for Holder was clear as they exchanged stories about their service.

"I really liked working with those guys back then," Shakey says. "We had to learn to get along with each other."

Holder's long life has been full of adventure. At age 70, he went to Pamplona, Spain, and ran with the bulls. He says he has made and lost millions of dollars through assorted business deals but pretty much came out ahead.

At 91, he remains bright and amusing, though his cancer returned in 2023.

Holder's biographer, Clifton, is retired himself, having served for 34 years with the Irving department.

Clifton, who lives in Lewisville in North Texas, has been doing periodic mission work in Montenegro since 2007, and it was a mission friend who encouraged him to write more real stories of real heroes. He's been writing other books about firefighters as well as an autobiographical novel.

"I never thought I could be a writer," says Clifton, a Farmers Electric Cooperative member.

For the biography of Holder, he spoke with many friends of the legendary firefighter. He remains awed by the man and the life he has led.

"Every once in a while, you get a gift," Clifton says. "We got a gift in Shakey." ■





IRVING  
FIRE  
FD  
1925



# History to a Tea

Reenactors go to great lengths to share the important story of buffalo soldiers

BY MARTHA DEERING • PHOTO BY KENNY BRAUN

IT WAS A tight squeeze for Michael Brown, wedging his large frame into a small picnic table for a children's tea party at Mother Neff State Park, outside Waco. Donning a plastic necklace over his uniform and handling tiny cups, dainty canapés and tea cakes, he charmed the socks off the children and parents clustered around the tables at an annual park event.

As a buffalo soldier reenactor, these experiences bring him joy.

About 150 years earlier, in 1866, Congress created six all-Black Army regiments—later consolidated to four—that became known as the buffalo soldiers. Their main charge was to support the nation's westward expansion, build roads and other infrastructure, protect settlers,

and guard postal routes throughout the Southwest and Great Plains.

That expansion often put the soldiers, some posted at forts in Texas, in direct violent conflict with the Native American tribes whose lands were being seized.

Originally commanded by white officers, the buffalo soldiers, numbering more than 40,000 in total, often faced extreme racism over 85 years of service. The last Black regiment was disbanded in 1951.

Differing accounts explain the buffalo soldier name. One is that Native Americans called the soldiers that because of their fierce fighting. Another is that Native people thought the soldiers' dark hair resembled buffalo fur. Still another says the name came from the buffalo-hide

coats the troops wore in cold weather.

The buffalo soldiers persevered through extreme weather; infectious diseases with little access to treatment; and rough, unfamiliar terrain. But in many cases, it was the first opportunity for formerly enslaved men (and at least one woman) to work as professional soldiers and be paid the same \$13 monthly salary that white soldiers received.

All these years later, reenactors like Brown keep the important story of the buffalo soldiers alive. The all-volunteer Bexar County Buffalo Soldiers Association in San Antonio to which he belongs provides speakers for youth groups, schools, churches, trail rides and other historical events.

"Each of our 40 active members portrays one of the original soldiers from the 19th century," Brown says. "All are Army and Air Force veterans."

Brown was deployed with the Army 2005–06 in Afghanistan. As a buffalo soldier, he represents Sgt. Thomas Boyne, who received the Medal of Honor—the U.S. armed forces' highest distinction—in 1882. All told, 18 African American soldiers earned a Medal of Honor during the American Indian Wars.

Brown, pictured left, who serves on the board for the group of reenactors, wears an 1874 Army field campaign uniform with a dark blue wool sack coat and sky-blue woolen pants, heavy enough to make a brave man melt into a puddle in the heat of a Texas summer.

It's worth the work for him.

"I especially love the educational portion of the program," Brown says. "We explain to the audience how the soldiers' past was tied into slavery and the honor of becoming the first professional soldiers. And for me, it's all about the kids."

The reenactors tell a broader story of what life was like on the frontier in Texas. While theirs is a serious mission, they make learning fun, including occasionally sitting down with a group of children to share tiny cups of tea. ■

# Easy Breads

Making cowboys and firefighters right at home (dessert lovers too)

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

*Pan de campo*, aka camp bread or cowboy bread, originated with the vaqueros of South Texas. My abuelita made it in a cast-iron skillet and enjoyed it with a steaming cup of coffee. It's a flatbread that resembles a thicker, flatter biscuit with a crispy outside and soft, chewy interior.



## Pan de Campo With Strawberry Butter

### STRAWBERRY BUTTER

**1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened**  
**2 tablespoons powdered sugar**  
**½ cup diced strawberries**

### PAN DE CAMPO

**2 cups flour, plus more for dusting**  
**2 teaspoons baking powder**  
**2 teaspoons salt**  
**10 tablespoons solid vegetable shortening, divided use**  
**¾ cup milk**

- 1. STRAWBERRY BUTTER** In a medium bowl, beat butter with an electric mixer on medium speed until smooth and creamy.
- 2.** Add powdered sugar and mix until well combined. Stir in strawberries. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour or overnight before serving.
- 3. PAN DE CAMPO** Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and salt.
- 4.** Add 8 tablespoons shortening and use a pastry cutter or two forks to cut the shortening into the flour until the mixture resembles pea-sized coarse crumbs. Add milk, stirring just until dough forms.
- 5.** Turn dough onto lightly floured surface. Knead gently until dough comes together to form a ball. Using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll dough into a ½-inch-thick circle.
- 6.** Grease a 10-inch skillet with remaining 2 tablespoons shortening, then place in oven for 5 minutes to heat through. Remove from oven, carefully place dough into skillet and return to oven. Bake 10 minutes, then flip bread and bake an additional 5 minutes.
- 7.** Slice and serve topped with strawberry butter.

SERVES 8

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Banana Bread with Cajeta Cream Cheese Frosting.



## Firehouse Rolls

DENNIS BAUM  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

When Baum was a cook at a fire station, he made these soft, fluffy rolls, which have a rich, buttery taste, daily for the crew. This easy recipe comes together quickly, delivering rolls baked to golden perfection that pair well with any dish.

**1 packet active dry yeast (0.25 ounces)**  
**1 cup warm water, roughly 110 degrees**  
**2½ tablespoons sugar**  
**2½ cups flour, plus more for dusting**  
**½ teaspoon salt**  
**1½ tablespoons solid vegetable shortening**

1. Coat an 8-inch round pan with cooking spray or butter.
2. In a large bowl, whisk yeast in warm water. Let the mixture stand 5 minutes. Add sugar, flour, salt and shortening, stirring until well combined.
3. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead about 1 minute. Divide and form into 12 balls. Place into prepared pan and cover with a towel.
4. Place in a warm area and allow to rise about 1 hour. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
5. Bake 20 minutes or until tops are lightly browned.

MAKES 1 DOZEN ROLLS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



\$500 WINNER

## Crusty No-Yeast Bread

CINDY HANDY  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC



This is perfect for new bakers. It's quick and easy, requiring no rising time or fancy techniques. Made with simple ingredients, this bread delivers a satisfying, golden crust with a soft, flavorful interior. Whether you're short on time or just starting out, this no-yeast option ensures delicious, homemade bread in no time!

**1½ cups water**  
**2 teaspoons distilled white vinegar**  
**4 cups flour, plus more for dusting**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**1 teaspoon sugar**  
**2 teaspoons baking powder**  
**2 teaspoons baking soda**  
**1 tablespoon (⅓ stick) butter, softened**

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a small bowl, stir together water and vinegar. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, salt, sugar, baking powder and baking soda. Add vinegar mixture to dry ingredients and stir to mix well.
3. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead about 1 minute, sprinkling additional flour on the surface as needed to prevent sticking.
4. Shape the dough into an oval loaf. Place it on the prepared baking sheet and cut 3 diagonal slits across the top of loaf.
5. Bake 30–35 minutes. Remove from oven and brush with butter. Allow to cool 5 minutes, then slice and serve warm.

SERVES 4

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**MAKE IT SPICY** DUE FEBRUARY 10

We're turning up the heat in our July issue, and we need your help. Send us your tastiest spicy recipes for a chance to win \$500. Enter by February 10.

**UPCOMING: BEEFY BURGERS** DUE MARCH 10



## Chocolate Orange Butter Bread

RITA HUIE  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

This delightful treat brings together the rich, velvety taste of chocolate with the bright, citrusy notes of orange. The buttery texture makes each bite soft and indulgent, perfect for breakfast or dessert. This is a must-try for those who love the classic combination of chocolate and citrus.

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened, plus more for greasing the pan
- 2½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- ¼ cup dark cocoa powder
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- ¾ cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon orange extract



- 2 tablespoons orange juice concentrate, undiluted
- 2 tablespoons orange liqueur or 2 additional tablespoons orange juice concentrate
- Orange marmalade, for serving

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a loaf pan with butter.
2. In a large bowl, stir together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, orange zest, cocoa powder and brown sugar.
3. In a medium bowl, stir together egg, buttermilk, orange extract, orange juice concentrate, liqueur and ½ cup butter until smooth.
4. Make a well in dry ingredients, add wet ingredients and stir well. The batter will be thick.
5. Spread the batter into prepared loaf pan. Bake 35–40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
6. Remove pan from oven and allow to cool 15 minutes. Run a knife around edges of bread, and carefully remove from pan.
7. Slice and serve with orange marmalade.

SERVES 8

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## Morgan Silver Dollars Are Among the Most Iconic Coins in U.S. History

What makes them iconic? The Morgan Silver Dollar is the legendary coin that built the Wild West. It exemplifies the American spirit like few other coins, and was created using silver mined from the famous Comstock Lode in Nevada. In fact, when travelers approached the mountains around the boomtown of Virginia City, Nevada in the 1850s, they were startled to see the hills shining in the sunlight like a mirror. A mirage caused by weary eyes?

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Tripping Through Time

Travel through the decades at the Jack Sisemore RV Museum

BY CHET GARNER

THE FIRST CROSS-COUNTRY “road trip” by car happened in 1903, and since then, Americans have been obsessed with the freedom and adventure of the open road. Near the center of America’s Mother Road (aka Route 66) is a museum that captures many of the ways we’ve traveled that road in style.

I pulled up to the drab aluminum building on the south side of Amarillo and had no idea I was about to enter a time portal. Inside the 18,000-square-foot Jack Sisemore RV Museum sit dozens of vintage recreational vehicles and trailers looking like they just rolled off the showroom floor. Classic motorcycles, cars and even boats add to the intrigue.

RV dealer Jack Sisemore and his son Trent, who loved hunting down and restoring old trailers, started the collection over 25 years ago. When they ran out of room in their driveways, they decided to open a museum. Each vehicle is displayed with memorabilia, old advertisements and an explanation of what makes each model unique, such as the 1935 Torpedo—the first Airstream.

I roamed through 30-foot-long coaches and peeked inside chrome pods that looked more like spaceships than RVs. Every trailer offered a look at the technology and style of the era, with plenty of linoleum and shag carpet to spare.

The museum, closed for the season but reopening in March, boasts rare specimens of the first Fleetwood and Itasca motor homes, and every turn revealed more treasures, such as the 1948 Flxible bus driven by Robin Williams in the 2006 movie *RV*.

While wandering through the museum, part of me yearned for the days before phones or GPS, when the road ahead was truly a mystery yet to unfold. But then I remembered that I would never have found a hidden gem like this one without the help of the all-knowing internet. ■

ABOVE Period clothing helps give Chet a feel for a camping experience from decades ago.

**TCP** Watch the video on our website as Chet turns back the clock on hitting the road. And find all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



## Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event’s website for scheduling details, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

## FEBRUARY

8

**Texas City Mainland Mardi Gras**, (409) 457-8080, [mardigrasmainland.com](http://mardigrasmainland.com)

11

**Lubbock [11–16] Les Misérables**, (806) 792-8339, [buddyhollyhall.org](http://buddyhollyhall.org)

13

**Bellville Chocolate Walk**, (979) 865-3407, [bellville.com](http://bellville.com)

14

**Brenham Sweet Dreams: Mandy Barnett Sings Patsy Cline**, (979) 337-7240, [thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Fredericksburg [14–16, 21–23, 28–March 2] Peter and the Starcatcher**, (830) 997-3588, [fbgtc.org](http://fbgtc.org)

15

**Ennis Czech Music Festival**, (972) 878-4748, [ennisczechmusicfestival.com](http://ennisczechmusicfestival.com)

**Lampasas Wild West Casino Night**, (512) 556-5172, [lampasaschamber.org](http://lampasaschamber.org)

16

**Fredericksburg Sabrina Adrian**, [fredericksburgmusicclub.com](http://fredericksburgmusicclub.com)

**Pearland Lunar New Year Festival**, (832) 788-8776, [facebook.com/pearlandchinese](http://facebook.com/pearlandchinese)

20

**Bandera [20–22] Cowboy Mardi Gras**, (830) 796-4849, [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com)

**Port Aransas [20–23] Whooping Crane Festival**, (361) 749-5919, [portaransas.org](http://portaransas.org)

21

**Laredo [21-22] Jalapeño Festival**, (956) 722-0589, jalapenofestival.org

22

**Granbury Jazz Fest**, (817) 578-5585, granburyjazzfest.com

**Port Arthur Rotary Taste of Gumbo & More**, (409) 985-7822, visitportarthurtx.com

27

**Corsicana The Barricade Boys: London's West End**, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

**San Marcos Mardi Gras Martinis**, (512) 392-4295, heritagesanmarcos.org

**Weatherford [27-28] Cheese 101**, (940) 682-4856, clarkgardens.org

**Brownsville [27-March 1] Charro Days**, (956) 542-4245, charrodaysfiesta.com

## MARCH

3

**Bandera [3-9] Texas Wool Week**, texaswoolweek.com

4

**Beaumont Taste of the Triangle**, (409) 782-5514, thetastebmt.com

6

**Fulton [6-9] Oysterfest**, (361) 463-9955, fultonoysterfest.org

7

**Corpus Christi Camo & Country**, (361) 883-5500, amissionofmercy.org

**Brackettville [7-8] Fort Clark Days**, fortclarkdays.org

### TCP *Submit Your Event*

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

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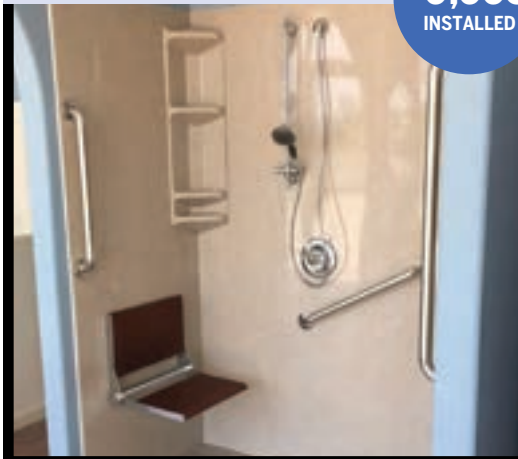


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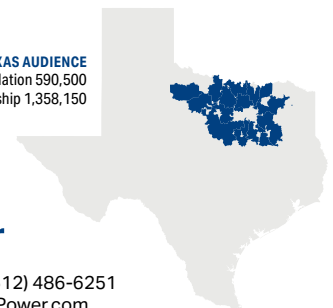
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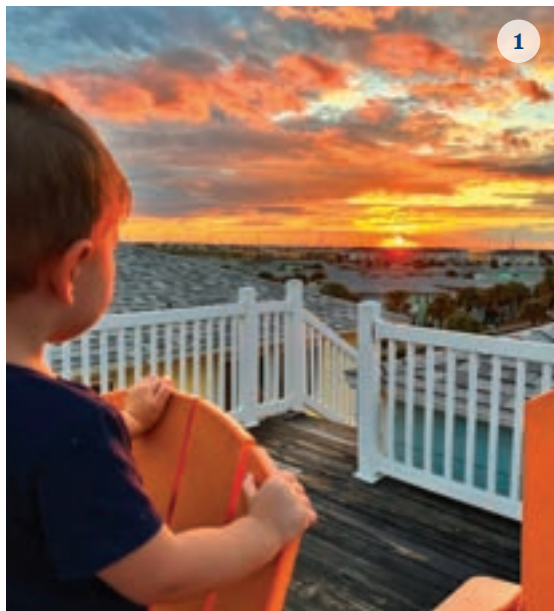
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Contact Elaine Sproull at (512) 486-6251  
or [advertising@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:advertising@TexasCoopPower.com)

# I Love

There's a lot to love about Texas. From the diverse landscape to the fascinating wildlife, one can find beauty all around. But what makes it really special are the folks who call it home.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1

1 SHARON BURNS  
VICTORIA EC

A Texas sky captures the heart of a young boy.

2 ANGIE MANTOR  
BANDERA EC

"Weston, my grandson, and his sweet friend loving the beautiful weather at his home in Comfort."

3 SHEILA HOWARD  
WHARTON COUNTY EC

"Love was definitely in the air at the Tejas Ranch Horse Show, not only between the friends participating but also the horses."

4 PEGGY KUJAWA  
PEDERNALES EC

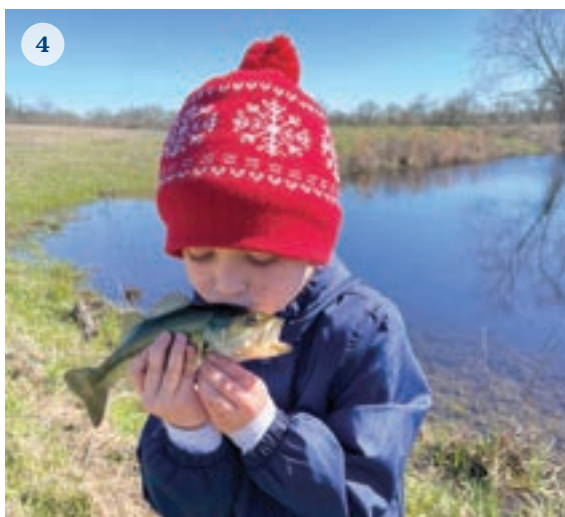
"When he found out it was too small to keep, he gave it a kiss before he released it."



2



3



4

## Upcoming Contests

DUE FEB 10 Family Vacation

DUE MAR 10 Catch of the Day

DUE APR 10 College Life



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

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



## Peace of Mind

Setting a course for hope and serenity amid Alzheimer's anguish

BY MARK TROTH  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
ROCCO BAVIERA

**THERE WAS NO** doubt that my friends, colleagues and family members had noticed a marked difference in me—yet they remained mostly silent, perhaps out of courtesy.

Repeating myself frequently in conversations, asking questions that had already been answered just minutes prior, frustrations with recalling people's names and number sequences (phone, addresses, passwords)—all signals of early-onset dementia. Regardless of what was noticeable or not to others, I knew I was not the same.

I was referred to a neurologist who specializes in cognitive disorders and went through myriad memory-related tests in addition to MRI diagnostics. I'm 69 and over three years into the initial diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment,

confirmed as Alzheimer's disease.

There have recently been exciting research breakthroughs on the Alzheimer's front. Among them is a new drug being administered via infusion therapy. It has been proven in clinical trials to slow the disease's decline by breaking up the protein amyloid plaque build-up in the nerve cells. That build-up is responsible for brain dysfunction.

It isn't a cure but could add precious months of mental clarity to affected patients.

I was fortunate to qualify for the treatment after genetic testing and other requirements. My physicians, nurses and patient support group are a blessing to me and my wife.

Of course, as hopeful as I am for the potential to slow my cognitive decline and enjoy more quality time with my family, it is difficult to ignore the challenges they will soon endure.

I recently engaged a psychologist to help me cope better with the future. The initial sessions have proven highly educational and gratifying. I am positively in a better place now.

My doctor's advice is both simple and profound. His leading and listening skills allow me to reach deeper within and come to a quiet peace with regards to my future.

My prior mindset had been: It's the elephant in the room—heavy and ever present. But my doctor has me laser focused now on living for life and not for death.

Yes, I must surely take care of my family affairs so as to not place additional burden on my spouse and children. But most importantly my doctor implores me to strive for hope and peace of mind for whatever future I have.

Acceptance of this diagnosis and a renewed "living for life" mentality is my new North Star, guiding me home. Not so much for personal gratification but for serenity with my faith, family and friends. I have been blessed. ■

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- **Free smartphone app**  
Adjust settings for every listening situation easily via smartphone

\*Bluetooth connectivity only available in Behind-the-Ear (BTE) models



**A**larming fact: More than **48 million Americans** hear so poorly that their quality of life significantly suffers as a result.

The problem: Most wait too long to act, hoping their hearing will improve on its own. Sadly, it never does. But now, a game-changing device is making waves across the industry, and experts say it's the biggest breakthrough they've seen in over a decade. It's the new Horizon IX hearing aids.



Horizon IX is currently the best-selling device at renowned U.S. company, hear.com, developed by top audio engineers from Signia. Their goal was to combine the best possible speech clarity with a comfortable, invisible design using cutting-edge German technology.



"It's a hearing aid people actually want to wear," says hear.com co-founder Dr. Marco Viotor. "It offers amazing speech clarity and smartphone connectivity in a virtually invisible design – and all that for a reasonable price!"

### What makes Horizon IX so special?

It's one of the world's first hearing aids with dual processing. This is special because it's the first time engineers have been able to pack not one, but two state-of-the-art computer chips into a device this small. And with double the power comes double the clarity.



This means that Horizon IX hearing aids offer all of the usual benefits of modern hearing aids with the added bonus of something completely new: they can process speech and background noise independently, then combine them for unparalleled, crystal clear sound.

### Where can I get Horizon IX?

As of January 2025, hear.com has helped more than **540,000 Americans** enjoy life with better hearing, thanks to Horizon IX. Now, it's your turn!

Check if you qualify for a **45-day no-risk trial today**, and you could have a brand new pair of Horizon IX hearing aids on your doorstep in as little as 48 hours.

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