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AUGUST 2021

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# August 2021



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Opportunities abound for Texans to augment impactful research.

*By Melissa Gaskill  
Photos by Julia Robinson*

### Easing Life's Baggage

Flush with bags, a college student finds new ways to support foster youths through life transitions.

*By Chris Burrows  
Photos by Eric Pohl*

ON THE COVER

Diane Wilson shows nurdles—plastic pellets—she has collected at the Texas coast.  
*Photo by Julia Robinson*

ABOVE

One of the thousands of bags Hunter Beaton has prepared for foster youths.  
*Photo courtesy NRECA*

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# Chess Royalty

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS** Rio Grande Valley chess team won its third consecutive national championship, defeating Webster University in April for the President's Cup.

Our June 2012 story *The Kings and Queens of Brownsville* told how young students made all the right moves to turn the U.S.'s southernmost border town into a chess powerhouse.



Members of the UTRGV chess team often mentor K-12 students in Brownsville schools.



## **TCP** Contests and More

[ON TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM](http://ONTEXASCOOPPOWER.COM)

### \$500 RECIPE CONTEST

Soups and Stews

### FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Bridges

### POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

Know anybody as inspired and exceptional as Hunter Beaton, featured on Page 12? Let us know so we can shine the spotlight on them.

## August 22

### National Tooth Fairy Day

The tooth fairy forks over an average of \$4.70 per visit in the U.S., a recent poll shows. That's a far cry from the nickel recommended more than a century ago.

The *Chicago Tribune* carried the first published mention of the tooth fairy—in 1908. Writer Lillian Brown advised that parents might have an easier time persuading children to have loose teeth pulled if a "tooth fairy" left a small gift of 5 cents under youngsters' pillows for each tooth lost.





## SCORE ONE FOR THE CO-OP

When Hereford Sports & Wellness took delivery of two digital scoreboards for its soccer field in the Panhandle town, the non-profit community center realized it didn't have the means to install them.

Deaf Smith Electric Cooperative did. The co-op sent a bucket truck outfitted with an auger and a crew of linemen, who drilled a half-dozen 6-foot-deep holes to securely mount the new displays.



## Cool Coat

**ENGINEERS HAVE CREATED** the whitest paint ever—a paint so white that building surfaces coated in it are 8 degrees cooler than the air on a sunny day. The innovation could reduce air conditioning demands and mitigate the effects of climate change, Vice reports.

The new paint, developed by a team at Purdue University, reflects 98.1% of sunlight. Researchers used barium sulfate, a powder that's reflective across all wavelengths of sunlight, to pigment the new paint—unlike most white paints, which tend to use titanium dioxide as pigment.



“Books are a uniquely portable magic.”

—STEPHEN KING

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE IT'S SO HOT ...

**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 June prompt: **I always laugh when my dad ...**

Says rain sounds like a cow peeing on a flat rock.

SUE BIGAY  
SAM HOUSTON EC  
LIVINGSTON

Read the comics to me—in different voices to match the character.

BETTY BILLINGSLEY  
VIA FACEBOOK

Couldn't pronounce a word, so he made up a new one that sounded similar.

CRAIG MASSOUH  
PEDERNALES EC  
SATTLER

To see more responses, read Currents online.

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COURTESY PEDERNALES ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

**'That's What Co-ops Are For'**

“We are blessed to have co-op employees who persevere in all types of weather to restore electricity and risk their lives to do so.”

JANE PATTERSON  
BOWIE-CASS EC  
TEXARKANA

**Wheel Fact**

*Texas Talk Man* [June 2021] describes a trip that some of the cast of the movie *Giant* took to the state fairgrounds in Dallas in 1955, mentioning they “boarded the soaring Texas Star” Ferris wheel. That particular wheel was shipped over from Europe and set up in Dallas in 1985.

William F. Culver III  
Farmers EC  
Collin County

Jessica Ridge wrote a great story. Also, the photo by Wyatt McSpadden of Hinkle leaning on the tree branch with the horse in the background was perfect.

Larry Reese  
Bluebonnet EC  
Brenham



The most glorious sight in Aransas County after Hurricane Harvey hit was the arrival of the line-men from all over [*'That's What Co-ops Are For,'* June 2021]. Heroes all.

KAREN BEVERLY  
VIA FACEBOOK

**Fruitful Adventure**

Armed with our April issue, we went in search of Alphonse and Martha Dotson on a recent trip to the Hill Country [*The Seed Flourishes,* April 2021]. What we thought would be a short wine tasting turned into an afternoon of great memories. We left with extraordinary stories, exquisite wine, an auto-graphed cover, new friends and a promise to return.

Traveling is really about the people you encounter along the way.

Patti and Larry Terrell  
Bowie-Cass EC  
Red Lick

**Fleeing Thought**

I never realized that while the armies of Texians and Mexicans fought, many civilians found it necessary to abandon everything they owned and relocate in a hurry [*The Runaway Scrape,* April 2021]. This makes me wonder what I would do if that situation arose in my lifetime.

B. Jason Epps  
Trinity Valley EC  
Heartland



COURTESY PATTI TERRELL

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

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1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

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

Texas Co-op Power

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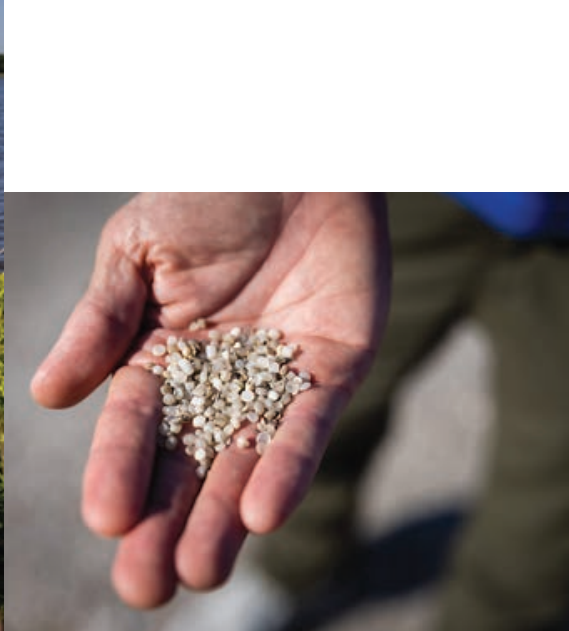
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# Channel Your



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Diane Wilson has gathered millions of nurdles—like the handful shown—in her decades as a citizen scientist. Jace Tunnell collects nurdles near a Port Lavaca estuary. Tania Homayoun, an urban conservation biologist, uploads a picture of a turtle using the iNaturalist app.





BY MELISSA GASKILL  
PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON

# Inner Scientist

Opportunities abound for Texans to augment impactful research

Victoria resident and shrimp boat captain Diane Wilson often walks along the shoreline. She keeps a sharp eye out, not for seashells but for small pellets of plastic. Called nurdles, these lentil-sized bits are raw material used for manufacturing plastics. She has found as many as 21,000 nurdles at one time.

“They’re like little peas, or lentils, with different shapes,” says Wilson, who reports her finds to Nurdle Patrol at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas. This work makes her a citizen scientist—one of thousands of people who lend their eyes, ears, hands and time to professional scientists conducting all kinds of research around the world.

“To date, we’ve had more than 2,000 volunteers remove more than 1.5 million nurdles from beaches spanning from Brazil to Canada,” says Jace Tunnell, director of the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve at the institute, which runs Nurdle Patrol. After a spill left nurdles all over coastlines around Corpus Christi in September 2018, Tunnell started a Facebook group for people to report the pellets. Within a few weeks, posts had poured in from every U.S. state along the Gulf of Mexico; a university in Veracruz, Mexico; and a nonprofit on the Yucatán Peninsula. That led him to create the full-blown citizen science project.

“If this was just a university project, three or four of us going out and trying to figure out where nurdles are com-

ing from, we would never be able to do it,” Tunnell says. “It is really the citizen scientists who are making this project a success.”

Early Nurdle Patrol volunteers reported high concentrations of pellets in bay systems along the Texas coast, where many plastic manufacturers are located. A map created from these reports uses warmer colors to depict higher concentrations of pellets. “Texas and Louisiana are purple, indicating more than 1,000 pellets found in 10 minutes,” Tunnell says, adding that the project hopes to stop plastic from entering the environment and to give volunteers the opportunity to be involved in impactful work.

“You just collect a sample and estimate the count from what you can pick up in 10 minutes,” Wilson explains. “You don’t remove all the pellets or you’d go nuts. It’s very easy and is a way to protect your own health as well as the bays and wildlife.”

Nurdle Patrol, like most citizen science projects, requires no special skill or knowledge. Some citizen science even can be done sitting on your couch with a computer or smartphone. The FISHstory project asks people to identify and count fish in historical fishing photos, helping to estimate what kinds of and how many fish people caught in the South Atlantic during the 1940s through the 1970s. That information supports current management of those waters. Other couch-bound projects include transcribing historical



documents, playing video games to show how people solve problems and completing a survey about your dog.

Other tasks can be done just outside your door. For Globe at Night, a worldwide map of artificial light pollution, simply go outside after dark, use a night sky phone app to find a designated constellation and then use a star chart to identify the faintest star you can see nearby.

Still other projects provide the perfect excuse to go exploring. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's dozen Texas Nature Trackers projects ask people to report sightings anywhere in Texas of specific plants and animals using the iNaturalist app. The information helps the department understand the distribution and seasonality of species and how they change over time.

"Every county in Texas has one assigned wildlife biologist, and it's impossible for one individual in any given county to keep track of all the flora and fauna," says the program's Craig Hensley. "Through citizen science, we gain information that leads to better conservation decisions." The projects focus on species with the greatest conservation need, such as the Texas horned lizard, whooping cranes, monarch butterflies and milkweed, and freshwater mussels, which are threatened by invasive species.

Lee County resident and Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member Linda Jo Conn, a Texas master naturalist, participates in Nature Trackers projects on milkweed and mammals. "I call myself an iNaturalist addict," Conn says. "I learn a lot. That's one of the reasons I'm involved. I go places just to see what I can find and am known to stop on highways. My friends know that if I'm not waving my arms, I'm OK."

Elaine Cowley, a Guadalupe Valley EC member who lives in Luling, helps Nature Trackers refine data on mammals in Texas, specifically the swamp rabbit. "I was already using iNaturalist for some other projects, so I said yes to this curation project," she says. "There is so much data out there,

LEFT TO RIGHT Biologist Craig Hensley examines a wing banding to find the age of a loggerhead shrike. Hensley helps train citizen scientists to monitor target species all over the state. He and Homayoun attach leg bands to a loggerhead.

**TCP WEB EXTRA** See what links we have to help you contribute to citizen science projects.

but unless it is in the right category, TPWD can't use it.

"There are so many ways to get involved in citizen science that don't take a lot of time," she adds. "It's enjoyable at the same time. You're outside, looking for things. It's an opportunity to understand what's out there and what we need to do to protect it or what we're already doing but maybe didn't realize."

Weather watchers can turn their interest into citizen science as well. For six years Chris Keating of Mason has collected data for the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network, known as CoCoRaHS. At the most basic level, volunteers report the amount of rain in their gauges daily. Keating also submits a weekly report summarizing conditions in his Hill Country town, the number of thunderclaps when there is a storm and extreme weather details when something unusual happens, such as hail.

"I have read scientific papers that refer to CoCoRaHS, so it is a productive project, with the data put to scientific use," Keating says. "You can do it on a phone app or a computer. It's designed for the layperson. You just have to be able to read a rain gauge."

A related project, the Global Learning and Observations



'You're outside, looking for things. It's an opportunity to understand what's out there and what we need to do to protect it or what we're already doing but maybe didn't realize.'



photographers and eventually want to know what they're taking pictures of," Tjelmeland says. "Others are more like me and want to know what's in their backyard or favorite natural area. You can just grab a camera and start snapping pictures, even without knowing a lot initially."

Insects can seem overwhelming in terms of sheer numbers of species and the difficulty of identifying them. Tjelmeland advises starting with things you are interested in, perhaps moths or grasshoppers, and expanding from there. On the plus side, you do not have to go far to find insects.

Volunteers at the preserve have tallied almost 2,000 species of plants and animals, including insects. "Almost anywhere you go, biodiversity is weighted toward those smaller things that are often overlooked but really important in terms of ecology," he says.

Citizen scientists contribute information needed by scientists and project managers, providing much more than those professionals could obtain on their own. These contributions are equally if not more important in rural communities, Hensley says, especially when information is collected on private land. He notes that iNaturalist allows users to protect the location of their reports, sharing it only with the project and not the public.

"The more we know, the better we can be at managing things," Hensley says. "An animal may be more common than we know it to be because there is good habitat on private land holdings but no one is sharing the information. As a result, we may be making decisions without all the facts. Citizen science is vital to conservation efforts going forward." ■


to Benefit the Environment Observer Program, asks citizen scientists to submit photographs of cloud cover.

People who live near or visit the Texas coast can use the iSeaTurtle app to report sightings of these endangered reptiles. The data helps scientists at Texas A&M University map and understand their distribution.

**A**t the Nature Conservancy's Texas City Prairie Preserve, outside Houston, volunteers can photograph and report plants and animals observed on its 2,300 acres using iNaturalist. Aaron Tjelmeland, preserve manager, has tallied almost 600 species of moths there. The project grew from his participation in the 2019 City Nature Challenge, an annual international event that mobilizes citizen scientists to record urban biodiversity on iNaturalist.

"That interested me in the depth and breadth of biodiversity here at the preserve, things other than the more obvious birds and reptiles," Tjelmeland says. "From moths, it grew into the broader insect community—anything I could take a picture of, basically."

People come into the project in different ways. "Some are



POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

# Easing Life's Baggage

Flush with bags, a college student finds new ways to support foster youths through difficult transitions

Hunter Beaton has delivered some 45,000 bags since he started his project in 2016.

## Serenity Packs

With bags supplied by Hunter Beaton and donations from Houston County businesses, Allen created packs of snacks, activities and other items designed to comfort children caught up in police incidents—especially in rural areas, where family members or Child Protective Services may be miles away.

“It could be 30, 40 minutes, and they don’t know what’s going on; there’s lights flashing, and the officer has to take care of an accident scene or an arrest,” said Allen, who is president of the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards, in which capacity he met Beaton in 2017, and a member of Houston County EC.

To equip police vehicles with bags for children, Allen worked with nearby departments, who were enthusiastic about the A Serenity Activity Packs, or ASAP bags, as he called them. Beaton was too, and his bags, sourced from Boerne-based Flying Circle Gear, were a perfect match.

“It seems odd maybe to have a bag full of toys and trinkets in a patrol car, but from what I’ve heard, the police officers love it,” Beaton said. “It’s something that can build a little bit of trust.”

Since January, ASAP bags have spread from Houston County to more than 30 police agencies in Texas—a total of 2,500 bags.

“It just kind of took off,” Allen said. “One county after the next—about every week or two we’ll hear about a new county implementing it.”

## Adopt a Senior

Allie Grace Graves knows how life can be different for foster children because she was one before she was adopted as a 6-year-old.

“I had to grow up a lot faster than the average child,” said the native of Lone Star, in northeast Texas. “I was doing the dishes, getting on the church bus, roaming around town by myself before I was 4 years old.”

That was on Graves’ mind in 2020 as she was set to graduate from high school. She had her family to celebrate with but knew that more than 500 graduating high school students still in foster care in Texas would not.

She wanted to help and reached out to someone she knew could bring her idea to life: Hunter Beaton.

“Most high school students have someone to celebrate their graduation with,” Graves said. “We want that to be the case for every foster youth in Texas.”

Graves and Beaton teamed up to send duffel bags full of goodies, including personalized letters, to each graduate still in foster care. Donors “adopt” a senior through the program.

About 1,200 foster youths in Texas turn 18 each year without being reunited with their birth family or adopted. More than a quarter of them exit the system without a high school diploma or stable housing, and nearly half are unemployed, according to Texas CASA.

“When I first started, I was so focused on the younger side of

BY CHRIS BURROWS • PHOTOS BY ERIC POHL

**T**he police cruiser barely registered with Tim Allen when it moved past the porch where he was meeting with a child in the foster care system.

But the 11-year-old girl from rural Houston County noticed. “She just started shaking,” said Allen, a volunteer for Court Appointed Special Advocates, which assists children in the foster care system. “And I realized that the only context she’s ever had for a police officer was when her mother was pulled over with her in the car, for a drug violation.”

Stirred by the young girl’s response, Allen wanted to do something to help other children in her position, who may be entering the foster care system after a traumatic police encounter.

He knew who could bring his idea to life.

Hunter Beaton started Day 1 Bags in 2016, after his own foster siblings arrived at the Beaton house in Boerne with their belongings in trash bags. “How awful is that?” Beaton told *Texas Co-op Power* in July 2018. “No kid deserves this.”

In the five years since, what started as an Eagle Scout project with \$10,000 in community donations for 15-year-old Beaton has become a full-fledged independent nonprofit that has delivered some 45,000 locally made duffel bags to children in foster care in 22 states. The premise is simple: Give those kids a reason to smile and something to call their own. Beaton, 20, now serves as CEO of the organization while he studies at the University of Texas at Austin, even spending his spring break meeting with police agencies and donors, looking over the finances, and crafting social media strategy.

“We are continuing to do our main mission: providing backpacks and luggage for foster children and at-risk youth who are moving from home to home,” Beaton said. “So many youth have been moved around so much—so to have something they can keep, that is really nice and to put any belongings inside really means so much to them.”

But now Day 1 Bags is expanding its reach, partnering with advocates like Allen to help more children and shine a light on lesser-known issues faced by youths in the foster system.

“I never envisioned it taking off like it did,” said Paula Beaton, Hunter’s mom and a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative. “And it’s overwhelming at times. I mean, we’ll have boxes arrive, and my husband’s like, ‘Ugh, another set of boxes’—and we never intended for our house to be a warehouse.

“But honestly, every quarter I ask Hunter, ‘Do you want to keep doing this?’ And he says, ‘Absolutely.’”



LEFT Comal County sheriff's deputies carry ASAP bags in their cruisers. BELOW Beaton loads boxes from Flying Circle Gear, the Boerne company that makes the bags, into his family's van for delivery.

**TCP HOW TO HELP** Visit [day1bags.org/donate](http://day1bags.org/donate) to help Hunter Beaton further his mission.

the board. The Beatons' Hill Country neighbors also have kept up their support.

"People think it's the corporate donors who do all the heavy lifting, but it's really all the \$10, \$20, \$50 donations here and there that really build it up," Beaton said. "People are just so generous."

He said he plans to continue his nonprofit work after college, where he's studying communications and leadership. And while he accomplished more than most on spring break this year, Beaton still made time for the former

foster children in his life—his own siblings, who started it all.

They played board games, basketball and tennis. "It's fun to come back home and be around kids," he said. "They aren't so serious and make you laugh a lot." ■

things, toddlers and children, that I completely overlooked high school," Beaton said. "So now we're doing our best to help."

Beaton expanded the program this year, outfitting all 562 graduates in the class of 2021 with a vital documents bag, gift cards, reusable water bottles and other items.

"Just so they have something to celebrate their graduation with," he said.

## Riding to the Challenge

A few years ago, when Beaton was preparing to get his driver's license, he didn't want to drive a vehicle with an automatic transmission. That would be too easy.

"I wanted to test in a stick shift," he said. "So I practiced a lot, burned out my dad's clutch but ended up being able to pass the driver's test. I like big challenges like that."

That same ethic is visible in Beaton's commitment to foster children. Being named the Texas Veterans of Foreign Wars Scout of the Year and winning a Congressional Gold Medal for his work was just the start.

"There's always going to be a need," Beaton said. "I want to continue to grow and do new things and make Day 1 Bags incredibly influential for these youth."

It's still a family effort behind him with Paula (his "top pusher and supporter," he said) as treasurer; his sister Hailey as social media guru; and his dad, Kevin, serving on



## TCP POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

To nominate a co-op member who makes a difference in your community, email details to [people@texascooppower.com](mailto:people@texascooppower.com).



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Just Released!



Actual size is 40.6 mm

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## Collectors Crave Firsts

Collectors covet coins with Key Dates. Key Dates mark significance in a coin's history...firsts, lasts, lowest mintage,

new finishes and new designs. Now, for the first time in over three-and-a-half decades, the Silver Eagle is getting a new design, leading to a historic "first" unlike anything we've seen. The iconic Heraldic Eagle reverse is being replaced by a beautiful new "Eagle Landing" design. This is arguably a bigger deal than even the actual introduction of the coin because there's so much more interest now than in 1986, with investors and collectors!

## If You Knew Then What You Know Now...

If you'd had a crystal ball in 1986, you undoubtedly would have grabbed every Silver Eagle you could get. Those coins in uncirculated condition continue to be sought-after. Now you're getting another chance to land a big Silver Eagle first, a Key Date. Additionally, since these newly designed Silver Eagles are only being released during the second half of 2021, it's quite possible this will be one of the lowest mintages we've seen. That's significant because it could make 2021 a DOUBLE Key Date, with both a new design and a low mintage. Demand for these coins is already sky-high, but if that

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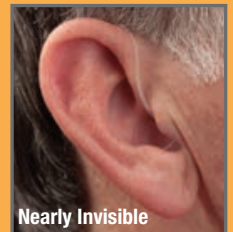
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# Meet the Management team!

As the general manager, I am fortunate to be supported by great leaders who are truly committed to serving Houston County Electric Cooperative. I value the diversity of experience and strengths among our management team, which creates a

better co-op for our members. I wholeheartedly thank each of them for their effort and sacrifice to serve our members, and I hope you enjoy learning more about your co-op leaders.

— GENERAL MANAGER **KATHI CALVERT**

Member Service Manager **Sarah Goolsby**



**Our top priority is and will continue to be improving the level of service we provide to our members. Our motto is we're a family, serving families. Whether you need assistance with a bill, payment or service request, or additional information through our website and social media, HCEC member services is here to help. We love our members!**

I have three fundamental priorities in my role: Keep the lights on, keep everyone safe and respond. One priority I have is to always answer the call. You never know what may happen in this line of work, and I do my best to be available anytime, day or night. Whether it is a member or one of our linemen, I am here to support our co-op. There are many people that make our organization what it is, and I am honored to work with a great team, from the fleet department maintaining our equipment and dispatchers working with me through storms to our right-of-way crews clearing trees and the linemen who restore power and maintain our system.

Chief Operating Officer-Distribution **Mike Lane**



Human Resources Manager **Lynne Erickson**



I have spent more than half my life working for Houston County EC, and my duties as human resources manager have evolved through the years. I have the opportunity to work with an assorted and diverse group, including our board of directors and our members as well as cooperative personnel. One of my favorite duties is working with area youth through HCEC's Dorothy Goodrum Scholarship and the co-op's participation in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour. The youth in our counties are inspiring. It is a privilege to work with such knowledgeable people in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration.



Staking-Field Services Manager **Charlie Gardner**



During my 41 years at Houston County EC, I have held many titles, the most recent being the staking and field services manager. Duties of the staking and field services department include designing line for new construction and system improvements, purchasing materials for our crews to build and maintain our system, and managing the cooperative's materials and inventory. Our staking technicians do an excellent job of assisting our members with the options for new service that best meet their needs. The warehouseman, operations clerk and purchasing agent each play an integral role in making sure we have the supplies necessary to continue day-to-day operations and that we are prepared to handle any emergency that may arise.

Network Administrator **Shelby Vance**



As the systems administrator, my job is to support all the systems and people that keep HCEC up and running on a day-to-day basis. I am responsible for the computers, phones, printers and electronic devices employees use to work. I maintain the networks that connect us and the applications that run on them while keeping our resources secure from cybersecurity threats. I like to say, "If it has a plug, I'm the guy to call." I plan and implement large-scale technology projects. One example is the recent year-long network redesign and disaster recovery project to ensure HCEC information technology systems have future capabilities and our infrastructure is protected from cyber criminals.

Chief Operating Officer - Transmission **Stacy Freeman**



I am honored to have a job that puts me in contact with so many different people. For many years I was the serviceman in Leon, Freestone and Madison counties. Many members I served turned into friends. As a serviceman, I received daily gratification from restoring power or connecting a new member. Now I oversee much larger projects with transmission projects and substations that take many years to plan and execute. It is always satisfying to see the project from its beginning stages to its end. In everything, I hope that I am able to help our members and my fellow employees with any task that may arise.

Controller **Sonia Key**



As the financial controller for HCEC, I am responsible for providing financial and accounting leadership to ensure that HCEC achieves its strategic and financial goals. Overall my responsibilities include general ledger and plant accounting, budgeting, financial analysis, and tax and compliance reporting functions. Every year, I'm excited to be part of HCEC's annual meeting, which celebrates our members. At the meeting on October 28, members will be provided an annual report that contains a summary of HCEC's financial statements. This is your cooperative, and as a member, I hope you are as proud as I am of the financial strength and stability of your business.



# 2021 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: Annual Meeting & Director Election

**IN OCTOBER**, every Houston County Electric Cooperative member will receive a meeting notice and proxy card. The meeting notice will be your official notification that HCEC will hold its annual meeting of members October 28 in Crockett. The notice will also contain the schedule of events for that evening.

If you do not plan to attend the annual membership meeting, please sign and return the proxy card. Signing the proxy will allow your vote to be counted in the quorum for the purpose of conducting business on all matters coming before the meeting. The deadline for returning the signed proxy card is 2 p.m. October 28.

The annual meeting is one of the many benefits of being a member of an electric cooperative. During the annual meeting, members have the opportunity to meet the board of directors and the cooperative's employees and hear an update from the board president and the general manager.

## How many seats on the board of directors are up for election?

Three director positions are up for election in 2021. The positions and incumbent candidates are:

- Houston County District 2, Mitchell Huff
- Houston County District 4, Kennon Kellum
- Trinity County District, David Whittlesey

## How do I vote in the election?

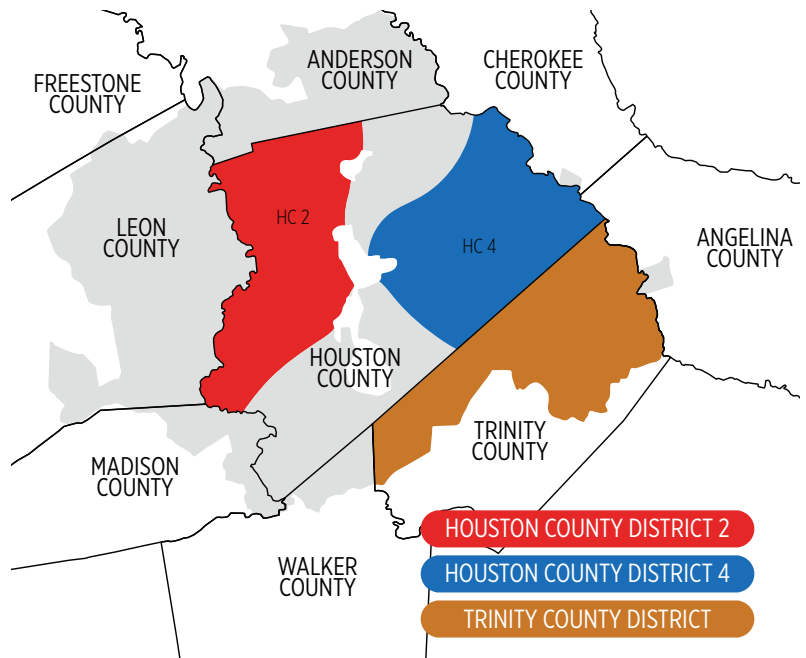
Should there be multiple candidates for a district, the members in that district will receive ballots that will be mailed August 30. The deadline for returning the election ballot is October 1.

## How does proxy voting work?

Proxy voting allows members that are unable to attend the annual meeting to authorize the board of directors to vote on a member's behalf. Proxies are counted together with attendees of the meeting to ensure that at least 10% of the membership is represented to constitute a quorum. Director elections are not handled via proxy voting.

## How do I return my proxy card?

There will be a dust cover on the October issue of *Texas Co-op Power*. That dust cover will include a removable proxy card. Sign the card and drop it in your mailbox or return it to the office no later than 2 p.m. on October 28.



## 2020 - 2021 Board of Directors

Mary Pearl Adams

Mitchell Huff, *secretary*

Chuck Siems

Daniel Courmier, *president*

Kennon Kellum, *vice president*

Grady Wakefield

William Emmons

Larry Nelms

David Whittlesey

# Welcome Back!

82<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28  
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# Annual Meeting

2021

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**Web** houstoncountyelec.com

### General Manager

Kathi Calvert

### Board of Directors

Dan Courmier, President  
Kennon Kellum, Vice President  
Mitchell Huff, Secretary-Treasurer  
Mary L. Pearl Adams  
William Emmons  
Larry Nelms  
Charles "Chuck" Siems  
Grady Wakefield  
David Whittlesey

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Number**

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HCEC owns and maintains more than 5,100 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 15,000 members in Anderson, Angelina, Cherokee, Freestone, Houston, Leon, Madison, Trinity and Walker counties.

### BUSINESS HOURS

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

### MEMBER SERVICE

For general information during business hours:  
(936) 544-5641 local, 1-800-657-2445 toll-free  
To report an outage, press 1.  
To update your contact information, press 2.  
To check your account balance or make a payment using the automated system, press 3.  
To speak to a member services representative regarding your account, press 4.  
Para hablar con un representante de habla español, presione 5.  
To connect, disconnect or transfer service, press 6.  
To report outdoor lighting issues or other nonemergencies regarding your electric service, press 7.

### VISIT US ONLINE

houstoncountyelec.com





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## Beware of Solar Scams

**IN SOME AREAS** in the U.S., authorities are warning against impostor scams taking advantage of consumer interest in the solar power industry.

The scheme goes like this: A solar power company falsely claims to be some kind of state agency for clean energy or a government-affiliated entity. They use this fraudulent identity to falsely convince consumers that their business' services are being performed on behalf of a state, county or city.

In a recently reported scam, solar sales representatives provided a company name that appeared to be connected with a state government to gain access to a resident's home. Once inside, the scammers took pictures of the residents' appliances and energy meters and aggressively marketed vague solar products to them. These scammers disparaged other legitimate solar companies in an attempt to persuade the residents to purchase would-be solar power systems from them.

Consumers may be more likely to believe these sales representatives because they present themselves as employees of official government offices. However, these scammers are simply misleading victims to gain entry to homes.

Government impostor scams are prevalent and may increase during the hot summer months.

Always think twice and do your homework to check references and reviews before inviting someone into your home or purchasing any services. A government entity will not go door to door to sell you solar power equipment.

Always verify the legitimacy of the company that a sales representative says he or she is affiliated with.

Ask for proper verification before letting any sales representative into your home. If you are suspicious of their identity or the sales representative refuses to provide it to you, do not hesitate to ask them to leave.

Remember, you can always consult with an attorney and your electric co-op before signing a contract. ■


### Mama's Watermelon Salad

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- ½ medium watermelon, diced**
- 1½ cups baby greens**
- 1 cup diced cucumber**
- ½ cup chopped mint leaves**
- ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese**
- ¼ red onion, sliced very thin**

1. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, vinegar, and salt and pepper. Set aside.

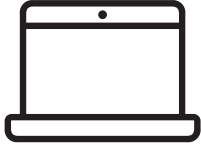
2. In a large bowl, combine watermelon, greens, cucumber, mint, feta and onion. Drizzle the salad with the vinaigrette and toss gently to coat evenly.

**SERVES 6**

 Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).

# Remote Payment Options

We've created several options for your on-the-go lifestyle.



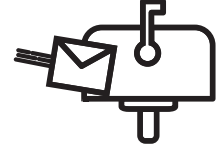
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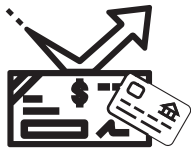
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# A School Was Here

Memory lane leads to an abandoned Piney Woods schoolyard created by the Rosenwald Fund

BY CYNTHIA MATLOCK • ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID VOGIN

**WHEN I WAS A CHILD** in 1968, my father and I visited the abandoned schoolyard of our Cherokee County community of Green Chapel. Near the collapsing schoolhouse, we found a timeworn and rusty iron swingset laying on its side. Even now, I can imagine children running across the playground, safely insulated from the cares of the world.

That schoolhouse, tucked into the East Texas Piney Woods off Cary Lake Road, had been the beneficiary of funds from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, a foundation that helped schools in African American communities.

The school sat about 9 miles west of Jacksonville in a community of impoverished African American farming families who lived more or less self-sufficiently.

Cherokee County records indicate the Green Chapel community's church, Brisby Chapel, was founded December 11, 1881. As was true in many rural African American communities, the church building was where the community met for worship on Sunday and held school Monday through Friday. Eventually they built a one-room schoolhouse.

Times were hard, and these farming families—usually with several children—did not have money to repair the school's leaking roof, holes in the floor and broken windowpanes. It was a challenge just to purchase books for the students. In the early 1920s, the community decided one possible solution was to seek funding for a school. They targeted the Julius Rosenwald Fund, established in 1917 by the philanthropist and businessman of the same name who was one of the owners of Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Rosenwald partnered with African American educator and activist Booker T. Washington to create the fund for the chief purpose of improving education for Black people. Between 1910 and 1930, the fund contributed to more than 5,000 buildings for Black students across 15 Southern states. Local school boards had to approve the new schools first, then the communities had to raise matching funds and assist with the construction labor.

The schools created memories for those who attended. Clara Brown, 96, a former Green Chapel student, says, "We'd pack our lunch of biscuit and ribbon cane syrup. Or cornbread dressing in a jar. Put it in a syrup bucket or shoebox and head off to school. Then we'd cut through the woods, around our neigh-

bor's fields, being real careful not to step on his crop."

When I complained about my own school, my father often reminded me "to jus' be thankful" because he had to walk 2 miles to Green Chapel school, even when it snowed.

We confirmed that distance when we found a cluster of sagging houses, one of which belonged to his family, about 2 miles northwest of the school.

The then-crumbling schoolhouse that Clara Brown attended at Green Chapel was a white, two-room building. The lower grades were on the left and the upper grades on the right, and each room had a wood-burning stove for heat. When the children completed the eight grades taught in the country school, they faced the dilemma of deciding which Black high school they would attend.

"My ninth grade year, I went to Jacksonville ISD. Then the next year, I went to Neches ISD," says Ollie Chandler, a former Green Chapel student.

"The teachers either stayed with a family in the community, or they rented themselves a house in the area. Keep teachers from driving back and forth," Brown said. "Lots of days, we missed school because we had to gather the crops, then you'd get behind in ya classwork."

After farming families moved away from the community in the 1950s, the Green Chapel school was consolidated with Jacksonville ISD.

When my husband and I visited the schoolyard with our son in 2020, untrammelled foliage and small trees covered everything. The chia-chia calls of birds interrupted the quiet of the woods. My heart shrank because I couldn't see that anything remained of the building. But as I turned to leave, I stumbled upon a piece of concrete. Kicking the leaves off, I discovered it was the school's old well cover. And there was still one leg of the swingset. I quickly yanked out my phone and snapped pictures.

After leaving the peaceful countryside that day, I recalled how my older relatives often reminisced about the "village feeling" they had in those Rosenwald community schools.

I left smiling, thinking of how those brave school-age children and their families persevered in receiving an education at Green Chapel—even way out there. ■



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**Final Issue**



Common obverse shown actual size

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Nelson Algren  
circa 1949.

# Stolen Words

While in Texas, author Nelson Algren was a man with a thieving arm

BY CHRISTOPHER ADAMS

**THE AWARD-WINNING** author who would go on to write the classic novel *The Man With the Golden Arm* entered a building at Sul Ross State Teachers College in Alpine in early 1934 and made off with one of the institution's typewriters. The next morning, the thief hopped a train out of town.

Nelson Algren won the National Book Award in 1950 for the aforementioned novel and earned three O. Henry Awards for his short stories, but the "poet of the Chicago slums" found trouble in Texas before achieving national literary acclaim.

Algren couldn't find work in his hometown of Chicago or anywhere else in the greater Midwest during the Great Depression and eventually traveled to Texas to pack black-eyed peas and run a Sinclair gas station between Rio Hondo

and Harlingen. But neither venture provided Algren satisfactory income, and he sought other opportunities in the Rio Grande Valley.

"He crossed the border to Matamoros and came back again, ate in missions, slept in hobo jungles, lost in crap games, rode in cattle or refrigerated boxcars," wrote author Bettina Drew in the introduction to the book *The Texas Stories of Nelson Algren*.

An exhausted Algren returned to Chicago at the end of 1932 and, having written a well-received short story, decided that creative writing was his path to fulfillment. He persuaded a New York publisher to give him an advance for a novel that was to be about the illusion of the American dream and based on

his experiences in Texas.

"He saw a lot of poverty and contradictions, such as poor whites who were oppressed by the rich but took out their anger on Mexicans and Blacks who were even poorer and more oppressed," Mary Wisniewski, author of a 2016 Algren biography called *Algren: A Life*, explained in an email.

Algren returned to Texas in September 1933 and made his way to Alpine to create his crucial work. He convinced the president of Sul Ross State Teachers College (now Sul Ross State University) that he was "a big-time New York writer," granting him access to the college's typewriters to draft his novel. However, his advance hadn't amounted to much, and by January 1934, he was broke, with an unfinished manuscript. He had no choice but to return home, where accessing a typewriter would be a real challenge. So he stole one from Sul Ross.

"I think he just figured he needed the typewriter more than the college did, so he had a right to it," Wisniewski said.

Algren fled Alpine on a freight train but was subsequently caught and locked up in the Brewster County jail. It proved to be a temporary setback. He returned to Chicago after his release and completed his first novel, *Somebody in Boots*, about his experiences living in Texas.

And the typewriter? Algren left it at an Alpine freight depot where it was to be shipped to Chicago.

"The typewriter was not sent to Chicago," Wisniewski said. Its whereabouts seem to be unknown. "Algren had used it to write *Somebody in Boots* while he was working at Alpine—but didn't finish it on that typewriter. He had to finish it back in Chicago on another machine." ■

# Kids Cooking

Youngsters in the kitchen help make family meals truly rewarding

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

I've encouraged my children to join me in the kitchen ever since they were little. Cooking with kids requires extra patience but reaps rewards down the line. Small children can practice mixing and measuring ingredients and kneading dough, and older kids can learn how to chop and take charge of the stove. Encouraging their efforts makes all the difference in kids' kitchen success. My son adores meatballs, and this baked version keeps it simple. Serve with your favorite pasta or just scoop onto slices of garlic bread.

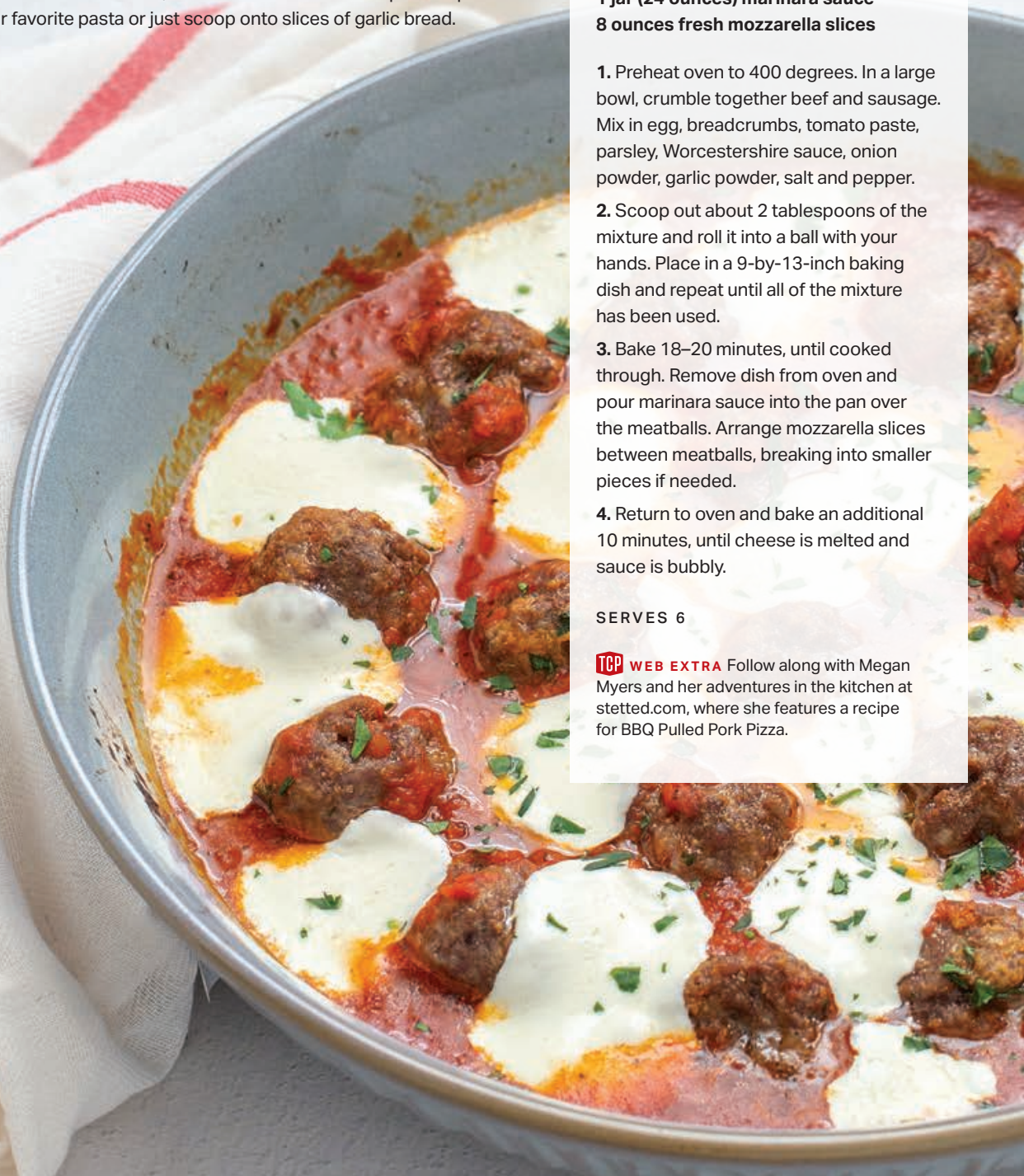
## Cheesy Baked Meatballs

**1 pound ground beef**  
**½ pound pork sausage**  
**1 egg**  
**¼ cup breadcrumbs**  
**1 tablespoon tomato paste**  
**1 tablespoon chopped parsley**  
**1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce**  
**1 teaspoon onion powder**  
**1 teaspoon garlic powder**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**¼ teaspoon pepper**  
**1 jar (24 ounces) marinara sauce**  
**8 ounces fresh mozzarella slices**

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a large bowl, crumble together beef and sausage. Mix in egg, breadcrumbs, tomato paste, parsley, Worcestershire sauce, onion powder, garlic powder, salt and pepper.
2. Scoop out about 2 tablespoons of the mixture and roll it into a ball with your hands. Place in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish and repeat until all of the mixture has been used.
3. Bake 18–20 minutes, until cooked through. Remove dish from oven and pour marinara sauce into the pan over the meatballs. Arrange mozzarella slices between meatballs, breaking into smaller pieces if needed.
4. Return to oven and bake an additional 10 minutes, until cheese is melted and sauce is bubbly.

SERVES 6

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com), where she features a recipe for BBQ Pulled Pork Pizza.







## Guacamole

IVAN REMLEY  
BLUEBONNET EC

Adults can take care of the chopping while little hands do the mashing and mixing of this fresh guacamole. Don't limit yourself to eating it with just chips or tacos—Ivan, 14, recommends serving with fresh veggies such as sliced radishes, carrots and cucumbers or even kale chips.

**½ onion, diced**

**2 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced**

**½ jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced**

**1 clove garlic, minced**

**Juice of 1–2 limes, divided use**

**½ teaspoon salt, plus more to taste**

**3 avocados, divided use**

1. In a large bowl, stir together the onion, tomatoes, jalapeño, garlic, 1 tablespoon lime juice and salt.

2. Slice two avocados in half lengthwise, making one long cut around the pit. Separate the halves and remove the pits. With a spoon, scoop out the flesh and add to the mixture in the bowl.

3. Mash and stir everything together, until the ingredients are well combined.

4. Slice the third avocado lengthwise, separate the halves and remove the pit. With a small knife, cut the flesh into small cubes. Scoop out the cubes and add them to the bowl with the avocado mixture. Add 1 tablespoon of lime juice and fold the avocado cubes in just enough for a slightly chunky texture.

5. Taste and adjust seasoning with lime juice and salt as needed.

**MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS**

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



**\$500 WINNER**

## Cooper's Bacon Cheddar Chicken Pasta

COOPER JOHNSON  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES



This family-friendly pasta recipe is a great way to teach older kids a variety of skills, such as sautéing and creating a simple cheese sauce. Cooper, 12, recommends adding chopped green onions to serve along with the extra bacon.

**SERVES 6–8**

**1 pound pasta, any type**

**6 strips bacon, diced; divided use**

**1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts; cut into 1-inch chunks**

**Salt and pepper, to taste**

**1 tablespoon butter**

**2 tablespoons flour**

**1 packet ranch dip mix**

**2 cups milk**

**1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese**

1. Cook pasta according to package directions, drain and keep warm.

2. While pasta is cooking, cook bacon in a large, deep-sided skillet over medium heat until crisp, then remove and drain on a paper towel. Drain all but one tablespoon of bacon drippings from pan.

3. Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Add butter to the skillet with the bacon drippings, stirring to melt, then add chicken. Cook until tender and no longer pink, 8–10 minutes.

4. Mix together flour and ranch dip mix, then sprinkle evenly over the chicken and stir to coat. Stir in the milk and cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened and bubbly.

5. Stir in cheddar and half of the reserved bacon, stirring to melt the cheese completely. Add the pasta and stir to mix well. Serve with remaining bacon sprinkled on top.

## **TCP** \$500 Recipe Contest

**SOUPS AND STEWS** DUE AUGUST 10

Winter is the ideal time to cozy up to a warm bowl, so we want your best soup and stew recipes.

The best reader recipe wins \$500. Enter at [TexasCooPower.com/contests](http://TexasCooPower.com/contests) by August 10.



### Texas-Style Chorizo Frittata

MATTHEW PEÑA  
PEDERNALES EC

Breakfast for dinner is always a great way to get kids involved in the kitchen. Matthew, 16, came up with this recipe to help out his parents on a busy day using ingredients they already had in the fridge.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ onion, chopped

- 1½ cups chopped bell pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound Mexican chorizo
- 9 eggs
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup chopped parsley
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 8 ounces Oaxaca cheese, sliced

OPTIONAL GARNISHES

- Chopped parsley
- Sour cream or Mexican crema
- Sliced avocado
- Pico de gallo

**COOK'S TIP** For a spicier frittata, add sliced jalapeños or hot sauce to the egg mixture before baking.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Heat a 10-inch ovenproof skillet over medium heat and add olive oil. Stir in onion and bell pepper and sauté until tender. Add garlic and cook an additional 3 minutes, stirring often to prevent garlic from burning. Remove vegetables to a bowl and set aside.

3. Crumble the chorizo into the skillet and sauté until fully cooked, breaking up any large chunks. Remove from heat and drain excess oil if needed.

4. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, cheddar, parsley, salt and pepper. Add egg mixture and sautéed vegetables to the cooked chorizo in the skillet. Stir to combine and distribute ingredients evenly. Add Oaxaca cheese evenly on top of frittata.

5. Place skillet in oven and bake 20 minutes, making sure the frittata has fully set. Garnish with parsley, sour cream or Mexican crema, sliced avocado, and pico de gallo.

SERVES 6

**TCP WEB EXTRA** We have more than 900 searchable recipes at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com). You're sure to find others with which children can lend a helping hand.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Head Honcho

The barbacoa at Vera's in Brownsville rises to the occasion

BY CHET GARNER

**TO MANY TEXANS**, Cabeza de Vaca was a Spanish explorer who shipwrecked near Galveston Island centuries ago. For folks in Brownsville, *cabeza de vaca* (head of the cow) has a much tastier meaning. And you won't find a more authentic version of real-deal cow head *barbacoa* than at Vera's Backyard Bar-B-Que.

Before lunch, I asked owner Armando Vera for a look at his pit because you can learn a lot about pit bosses by seeing the tools they use. Vera's pit was unlike anything I've seen. It's literally a pit in the ground, about 4 feet deep and full of blazing logs. It looked like a gateway to Hades.

Vera explained that an open pit is the traditional way to cook Mexican-style barbacoa. An entire cow head is wrapped in foil, placed in a hole and covered with burning logs for 10–12 hours. Vera's is the only place in Texas that still cooks barbacoa underground, the traditional way that Vera's father used when he started the business in 1955.

Even though I found the sight of the head to be less than appetizing, I decided to judge the barbacoa with my mouth instead of my eyes. The menu included almost every part of the head: *lengua* (tongue), *ojos* (eyes), *jeta* (jaw) and *cachete* (cheek). I ordered a bit of everything, along with homemade tortillas and salsa.

With each bite, the image of the full head faded, replaced by savory flavors of perfectly smoked meat, tangy salsa and pillow tortillas. The barbacoa offers flavor, smoke and texture that you can't get cooking it in an oven or over a stove. The experience at Vera's prompted me to do something I never expected to do in my lifetime: I ordered a second helping of *lengua*. ■

ABOVE Chet isn't sure he sees eye to eye with the cow head in front of him.

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Chet finds that barbacoa, much like his musings, is tongue in cheek in his latest video. See all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

## Know Before You Go

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

## AUGUST

04

**South Padre Island [4–7]**  
**U.S. Lifesaving Association National Championship**, (956) 761-3000, sopadre.com

05

**Levelland [5–8] SPOTC Dog Agility Trials**, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

**Palestine [5, 7, 19–21, 26–28]**  
**Palestine Diesel Roundtrip**, 1-855-632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net

06

**South Padre Island [6–8]**  
**Ladies Kingfish Tournament**, (956) 761-4412, sopadre.com

07

**Bellville Farmers Market**, (979) 865-3407, discoverbellville.com

**Corpus Christi Summer PolkaFest**, (361) 215-9163, facebook.com/chssouthtexas

**Frankston Neches River Wilderness Race**, (903) 245-9490, necheswildernessrace.com

**Graham Cars & Stars Car Show**, (940) 550-8468, grahamcarsandstars.org

**McKinney Sips of Summer**, (318) 527-9221, mckinneysipandstroll.com

**Palestine Dogwood Jamboree: If That Ain't Country**, (903) 723-6291, dogwoodjamboree.com

**Temple Dig It Family Day**, (254) 298-5378, downtowntemple.com

**Bandera [7, 14, 21, 28]**  
**Cowboys On Main**, (830) 796-3045, banderacowboycapital.com

**Allen [7, 21, Sept. 4] Radha Krishna Temple Chess Club Tournaments,** (860) 605-3683, radhakrishnatemple.net/chess-tournament

**Palestine [7, 14, 21, 28, Sept. 4] Market Day,** (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

**Palestine [7, Sept. 4] Saturdays on Main,** (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

09

**Palestine [9, 16, 23, 30, Sept. 6] Trivia Night at the Pint,** (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

12

**Palestine [12-14] Palestine Steam Roundtrip,** 1-855-632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net

**Addison [12, 26] Vitruvian Nights Live,** (972) 590-8866, udr.com/vitruvian-park

13

**San Antonio Iliza Shlesinger,** (210) 223-8624, tobincntr.org

**South Padre Island [13-14] Shallow Sport Owners Tournament,** (956) 761-3000, shallowstournament.com

**Fredericksburg [13-15, 20-22] Always ... Patsy Cline,** 1-888-669-7114, fredericksburgtheater.org

14

**Lake Jackson Farmers Market,** (281) 924-0596, lakejacksonfarmersmarket.com

**Leming Battle of Medina Symposium,** (830) 480-2741, facebook.com/atascosahistory

MORE EVENTS >

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#### AUGUST EVENTS CONTINUED

14

**Temple Farmers Market**, (254) 298-5378, downtowntemple.com

**New Braunfels [14-15] Hill Country Comicon**, (830) 221-4011, hillcountrycomicon.com

**McKinney [14, 22] Zip Line Day**, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org/ropescourse

**Boerne [14, 28] Bluegrass Jam**, (210) 445-1080, theagricultural.org/bluegrass-jams

20

**Crockett Exile**, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

**Fredericksburg [20-22] Trade Days**, (210) 846-4094, fbgradedays.com

**Ingram [20-22, 27-29; Sept. 3-4] Nobody's Perfect**, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

21

**Arlington Chris Stapleton's All-American Road Show**, (817) 533-1972, arlington.org

**Boerne Moondance Outdoor Concerts: Big Cedar Fever**, (830) 249-4616, cibolo.org

**Palestine Summer Concert Series: Carson Jeffrey**, (903) 724-4385, visitpalestine.com

**Castroville [21-22] St. Louis Day**, (830) 931-2826, saintlouisday.com

26

**Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Homecoming**, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

**Fredericksburg [26-29] Gillespie County Fair**, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

27

**Stonewall Commemoration of Lyndon Johnson's Birthday**, (830) 868-7128, nps.gov/lyjo

**Tyler [27-29] Texas Rose Breed Horse Show**, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

28

**Austin Bat Fest**, (512) 441-9015, roadwayevents.com/event/bat-fest

**Brenham Lee Greenwood**, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com/events

**Bryan BCS Library Friends Book Sale for Young Readers**, (979) 209-5600, friendsbcs.org

**Columbus Country Market**, (979) 732-8385, columbusfmtx.org

**Lakehills Last Saturday Market**, (254) 979-1073, lakehillssaturdaymarket.com

**Waco Karem Classics Car Show**, (254) 855-3722, karemshriners.com

## SEPTEMBER

02

**La Grange Fayette County Fair**, (979) 968-3911, fayettecountyfair.org

04

**Driftwood Sip & Stroll**, (713) 299-1728, sunrisebeachvfd.org

**Bulverde [4, 11, 18, 25, Oct. 2] Saturday Night Rodeo**, (830) 980-2226, tejasrodeo.com

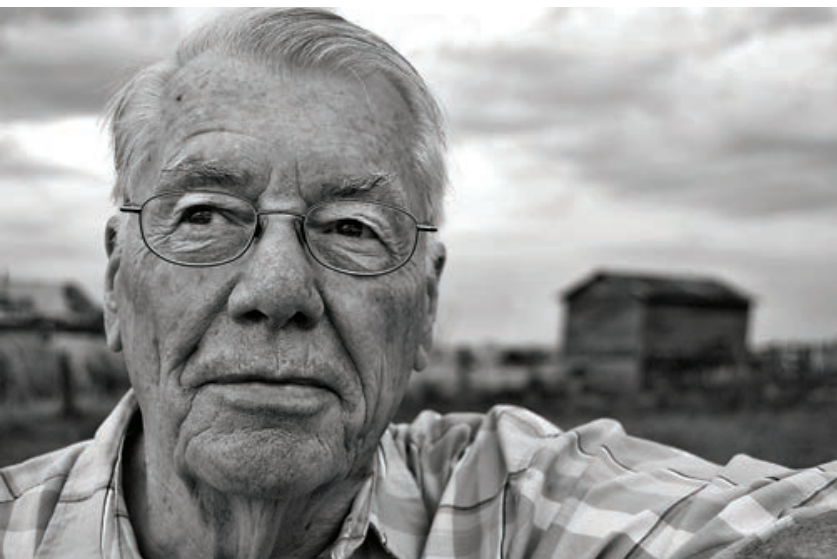
05

**New Berlin Sausage Festival**, (210) 343-9570, facebook.com/nbtxsausagefest

# Portraits

Deep lines and wrinkles tell a person's story, but a twinkle of the eye or sly smile makes us wonder what more there is to tell. Whether carefully posed or caught spontaneously, these Texans have great heads on their shoulders.

BY GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

**PAUL HOLLAND**  
PEDERNALES EC

James Hinkley, an artist and longtime resident of the Panhandle who now lives in Leander.

**PATSI TINDEL**  
LAMAR ELECTRIC

"This gentle giant is known for his outstanding barbecue."

**MICHELE TECH**  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

"We never miss a chance to stop in Luckenbach. Life is good there."

**JANA SIMMONS**  
JASPER-NEWTON EC

"Hayes Knudsen loves his chickens and finally got one."



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE AUG 10** Bridges
- DUE SEP 10** Fired Up!
- DUE OCT 10** Public Art

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

**TCP WEB EXTRA** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Portraits photos from readers.



## Pools in the Pasture

Summers on a ranch promise swimming in stock tanks

BY BRENDA KISSKO

**WHEN YOU GROW UP** on a ranch in West Texas, you learn early about the finer things in life. You eat oysters (of the mountain variety), you hire a full-time lawn service to maintain every acre of your spread (some call it grazing cattle), and you even get your own pair of jeans with free designer rips. And of course, *dahling*, we always had a pool.

Granted, the cows thought those live-stock tanks were for them, but I believed my dad put those tanks all over the ranch just so us girls could take our pick of swimming locations for the day. The water was always ice cold and as pure as it comes, straight from the ground. If we were thirsty, we'd just stick our tongue under the fill pipe for a gulp of goodness straight from God to our mouths. I swear it was better than Fiji Water or Topo Chico.

That's how we spent our summers, my mom, sister and I—with the pickup backed up to a stock tank, pulp fiction in hand, George Strait serenading us from the stereo speakers. No sunscreen allowed because cows don't really like drinking oxybenzone. Any time we had a slumber party, swimming was on the agenda, followed by rolling in a huge pile of cottonseed.

If the tank hadn't been cleaned out in a while, we'd just grab chunks of the moss (picture the Grinch's snot) and throw it to the ground below. Totally cool. But not if you tried to do a handstand and came up with it all over your face. Gross.

My favorite tank—I mean pool—was at my grandparents' ranch. My aunt freed her pet goldfish in it before going off to college at Texas Tech, and—no kidding—those suckers grew to be a foot long and multiplied like rabbits. All us grandkids loved learning to swim there, racing from side to side and seeing who could catch the most fish with our hands. I'm sure their great-great-great-grand-fishes are still swimming around in the tank today.

I think Kevin Bacon did his part to bring tank swimming back in style. In *I Love Dick*, an Amazon series set in Marfa (another one of my favorite places), he ends the pilot episode with a skinny-dip in a tank with a gorgeous view of the mountains. That's some good living right there.

As I'm writing this, I'm trying to remember the last time I swam in a live-stock tank. Sure, I've done rooftop pools, lazy rivers and hot tubs right off the ski slope, but it's been far too long since that good old-fashioned, back-to-my-roots dunk in a redneck infinity pool. Good thing summer's not quite over. ■



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