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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 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.



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

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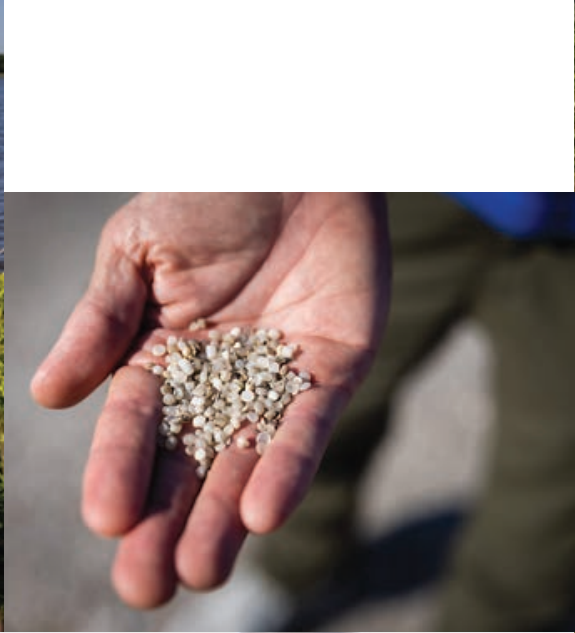
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Channel Your



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.

At 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

The 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 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

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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

happens, watch out! No one can predict the future value of silver, but many Americans are rushing to stock up, for themselves, and their loved ones.

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— Don W., Sherman, TX

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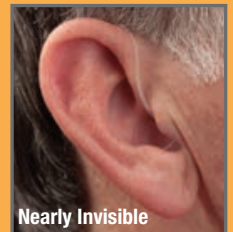
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Unclaimed Patronage Refunds



Wharton County Electric Cooperative is attempting to locate the following people (or their heirs) who received patronage refund checks in August of 2020. These checks were mailed to those listed below, but were never cashed.

The cooperative is aware that some of the members listed may be deceased. However, we are looking for surviving family members who are eligible to receive the patronage refund check. If you are on the list below or are the surviving spouse or legally-documented trustee/executor of a member listed, please contact [WCEC's Manager of Accounting](mailto:WCEC@wcec.com) at 979-543-6271.

Kandice N Alcalais
Amec Foster Wheeler Envi
Alice B Arrambide
Angela Y Arroyo
Alice Avendano
Lois Barosh
H T Beeson
Patrick J Bodungen
Ryan M Boedeker
Wayne Bustamante II
Manuel Casarez
Julie S Davis
Josephine Dusek
Virgil Dyer
Elco Machine Inc
Sigifredo Faktor
Eddie L Farthing
Bobby Galvan
Cecilia Garcia
Sylvia Garcia
Monica J Garza
GCR Tire Center
Stephanie A Gil
Reetinder Gill
Clara A Gold
Max Gonzales Jr

Robert Gonzales
Raynaldo Guerrero
Isidro Hernandez
Deborah Ingram
C Weston Jackson
Ashlee R Jochech
Declan L King-Williams
Brian C Kruppa
Laporte Interests LLC
Frances Leal
Amy Lezak
Johnny T Lindley
Amanda Llanos
Loomis Intl
Leticia Loredo
Mary M Lozano
Derrick Lutringer
Gloria M Manciaz
Wayne Martinez
Julie Matthews
Miraj Communications
Mike Mobley
Jose Montoya
Jose R Montoya
Juan Moreno
Carl G Morrison III

Dolores S Munoz
O B Ranch Company
Priscilla Perez
Shawn Peters
Amado R Pineda Jr
Joyce Rennoldson
Meriam F Riha
James J Robertson
Gustaveo Rodriguez
Paul E Ryan
Tim Ryan
Lawrence C Shimek
Larry Sinmacher
Mildred D Spanihel
Ashley N Tegeler
Henry Thornton
Amanda J Torres
Martha C Urbie
Joshua A Valentine
Miranda R Vasquez
Edith H Vera
Roderich L Williams
Lashamiqua S Wilson
Grace Wuthrich
Jonathan C Zimmerman

What is a Patronage Refund?

One of the major benefits of being a cooperative member is receiving a patronage refund, which is like money back from your power company.

Money remaining after WCEC's bills are paid each year is known as margins (it is the margin between income and expenses). This money is used for capital expenditures, such as building or replacing lines, and is not paid back immediately. This becomes your investment or equity in the company. In a for-profit company, this money would be called profit. In a cooperative, we call it capital credits because this money belongs to you not to the cooperative. To be a true nonprofit cooperative, this money is returned to you as a patronage refund.

Patronage Refunds are usually issued once every two years. The amount refunded is determined by our Board and is a percent of the total in your capital credit account. If you are a current member, you will see this as a credit on your electric bill. If you are a past member who is owed a patronage refund, you will receive it in the form of a check.



WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



MESSAGE FROM YOUR GENERAL MANAGER/CEO
GARY RAYBON

Rate Change Necessary in 2021



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AT WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC

Cooperative we are very mindful that every dollar of revenue that we generate comes from you, the member-owners. The Board, myself and every employee recognize the fact that we are dealing with OPM (Other People’s Money). A prominent part of our WCEC Mission Statement includes “...to provide economical and reliable electric energy service...”.

While we are a not-for-profit entity, we must charge enough for your power to cover operations, maintain and expand our electric system, and to satisfy the debt that has been incurred to build our system. The last WCEC rate increase was in 2010 and as you can well imagine, the cost of virtually everything that we do has increased since that time.

After much discussion, analysis, and consideration, the Board of Directors approved a 1% (one-percent) rate increase for all rate classes to become effective on the bills that you will receive on or about September 1, 2021. Although the decision to increase rates is never easy, the Board and I feel that this 1.0% increase is necessary to continue to provide the members of WCEC with reliable power as we have since 1938.

It is worth noting that this rate increase has nothing to do with February’s Winter Storm Uri. The rate increase was initially approved to go into effect in April, but the Board opted to delay the implementation due to the uncertainty surrounding the aftereffects of the storm.

For residential accounts this rate increase will average \$1.57 per month and the average barn or stock water well will increase \$0.31 per month. Please see the Official Notice of Rate Change on page 20.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at 979-543-6271. Thank you for your continued patronage and support of Wharton County Electric Cooperative. ■



NOTICE OF RATE CHANGE

Notice is hereby given that Wharton County Electric Cooperative, Inc. (the "Cooperative") intends to change rates for electric service. Pursuant to Texas Utilities Code Section 41.061 the Cooperative has adopted a resolution approving the rate changes. The rate changes are effective September 1, 2021 or as soon thereafter as may be allowed by law.

The proposed rate changes are described as follows: Increase in all rate classes served by the Cooperative.

It is anticipated that the proposed rate change will increase revenue by \$213,509.11 or 1.0% based on a test year ending November 2020.

You may obtain further information concerning the proposed rate changes and/or a copy of the proposed rate changes by calling Gary Raybon, General Manager/CEO of the Cooperative, at 979-543-6271.

WHARTON COUNTY
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

RATE CHANGE Q&A

How much will rates increase?

For an average household, the rate change would mean an average increase of \$1.57 per month.

Why are rates increasing?

According to a recent rate study, WCEC's return on invested capital has been slowly decreasing since the last rate change in 2010. The new rates seek to increase the rate structure on a pro-rata share across all rate categories.

Is this increase because of Winter Storm Uri?

Not at all. The rate increase was initially approved to go into effect April 1, 2021, but the Board opted to delay the implementation due to the uncertainty surrounding the aftereffects of the storm.

When will my bill change?

The change will appear on your monthly statements effective September 1, 2021.

How will this rate increase affect the co-op's profits?

We are a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative. We exist to serve our members with reliable, affordable power and any margins (profits) we receive are invested into the electric system or refunded to you, the member-owner of WCEC, in the form of capital credits.

What can I do to reduce my bill?

There are many ways to reduce your energy use. Learn ways to save energy at: MyWCEC.coop/save.

You can also contact us to learn more about energy efficiency, residential energy audits, and our load management program.



Another Record-Breaking Annual Meeting

FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, Wharton County Electric Cooperative members broke the voting record at the 2021 Annual Meeting of Members.

“A total of 784 members drove through to cast their ballot for the 2021 Board of Directors,” WCEC GM/CEO Gary Raybon reports. “Changing the location to the El Campo Middle School campus seemed to do the trick to alleviate any traffic problems. The campus also allowed for more registration lines to be set up so wait times were dramatically reduced as well.

“We are still amazed by the number of members who came out. Having so many members participate in the annual meeting has been a silver lining during this pandemic.”

As a member-owned electric cooperative, WCEC is governed by a Board of Directors representing and elected by the membership. Each year, the Annual Meeting of Members is held to present business reports to the membership and elect members to the board. Traditionally, a sit-down meal is served, and the business meeting and election are conducted in person. However, due to COVID-19 precautions, the meeting was held as a non-traditional, drive-thru meeting again this year.



2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The WCEC 2021 Board of Directors are: (l-r) Patrick Kubala, Gus Wessels Jr. (Asst. Secretary/Treasurer), Calvin Pfeil Jr., Samuel Craig Hardin, Paul Phillips Jr., Judy Peter, Rick Graff (President), Jim W. Harton (Secretary/Treasurer), John Roach (Vice President) and WCEC GM/CEO Gary Raybon.



◀ Darrell Hoffer, a member of the Balloting Committee (a group of WCEC members appointed to oversee the collection and counting of ballots) collects a ballot from a member.

▼ WCEC Customer Service Representatives Miriam Piloto and Ashley Wells register a member. They are assisted by Board Member Jim W. Harton.



Last year's annual meeting shattered the previous record of 498 voting members recorded in 2009 with 760 members voting.

"For the first drive thru meeting, we didn't know what to expect," Raybon says. "This year we were better prepared. We had plenty of ballots and attendance gifts – no IOUs were necessary!"

After the ballots were totaled, WCEC members voted to re-elect Gus Wessels Jr. in District 6 over Brent Cerny. In District 3, Judy Peter defeated Richard L. Clark. In District 9, Calvin Pfeil Jr. was elected over Chris Barbee and Pamela R. Hunt. Peter and Pfeil will replace Frankie Peter and Peggy Glaze, respectively. Both had reached their term limits.

In addition, the Minutes of the 2020 WCEC Annual Meeting, the WCEC Financial Report, and the President's & Manager's Report were approved by those submitting ballots.

Although an official presentation was not held, WCEC recognized the following Employee Service Milestones in the Annual Report: Patsy Metting for 45 years of service; Luz-Maria Arredondo for 40 years; Jody Domel for 10 years; and Ricky Garza Jr, Daniel Gutierrez, Brayden Payne, and Andrew Rothbauer for 5 years of service. The annual report also honored three retirees from the previous year. Service Lineman Pat Cerny retired in January after 32 years of service, H.R. Administrator Diane Barger retired in March after 41 years of service, and Manager of Engineering Richard Jalowy retired in early June after 44 years of service.

Also due to COVID-19 precautions, the 2021 Government-in-Action Youth Tour was canceled. In lieu of the trip, \$2,500 scholarships were awarded to



▲ Grand Prize Winners (l-r): Donald Capak, Addrina Budaus, and Milton Johnson each received a \$100 Electricity Credit. Yajaira Pedroza received a \$300 Electricity Credit, but was not available for a photo.

▲ A member casts his ballot with Albert Rucka, a member of the Balloting Committee.



▶ WCEC Billing Specialist Janice Kulcak registers a member at one of the four registration stations.



▲ Outgoing Board Member Peggy Glaze (seated) poses with a group of employees and fellow board members during a break in traffic at a registration station.

▼ WCEC Engineering Supervisor Richard Arnett directs traffic as members drive through each of the meeting stations.

three graduating high school seniors from the WCEC membership. The scholarship winners were Kayla Bolfing of El Campo High School, Cale Chambers of El Campo High School, and Trent Villarreal of Rice High School.

As is tradition, all voting members were included in a drawing for door prizes which was held on Facebook Live the morning after the meeting.

The grand prize winners were Donald Capak, Addrina Budaus, and Milton Johnson each receiving a \$100 Electricity Credit as well as Yajaira Pedroza who won a \$300 Electricity Credit.

“Overall, the meeting was very successful with so many of our members participating,” Raybon says. “We want to thank everyone who came out. We are especially grateful to the El Campo Middle School for allowing us to use the campus. As always, we look forward to seeing you all next year.” ■



DIY Energy Efficiency: Water Heating Tips



ROSSELLA DE BERTI | ISTOCK.COM

Here are six tips for saving energy and money on water heating:

1. Fix leaks. Even a slowly dripping faucet can waste hundreds of gallons of hot water over time.
2. Wash in cold water. Your clothes can get just as clean in cold water as in hot. Buy a liquid laundry detergent for cold-water washes.
3. If you're ready to buy a new dishwasher, choose an energy-efficient model. It's guaranteed to use less hot water than an inefficient one.
4. Install low-flow showerheads, toilets and faucets when you're ready to replace your old ones.
5. Don't let the hot water run while you're hand-washing the dishes.
6. Limit your time in the shower. An invigorating, quick warm shower can be a great way to start the day. ■



JENIFOTO | ISTOCK.COM

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

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at TexasCoopPower.com.

Smart Management. Smart Life. SmartHub.

Life can be hectic, but it doesn't all have to be complicated. Paying your WCEC bill shouldn't be a complex task, and with our SmartHub web and mobile app, it won't be.

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You will be able to see your current bill, your billing history, and view your actual energy use. This can help you see how your use is trending over time, which will allow you to take steps to lower your bill.

Find out more at MyWCEC.coop/SmartHub.



JOHNNYGREIG | ISTOCK.COM

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. ■



Wharton County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Gary Raybon

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1: Paul Phillips Jr.

DISTRICT 2: Patrick Kubala

DISTRICT 3: Judy Peter

DISTRICT 4: Rick Graff, President

DISTRICT 5: Samuel Craig Hardin

DISTRICT 6: Gus Wessels Jr., Asst. Sec./Treas.

DISTRICT 7: John Roach, Vice President

DISTRICT 8: Jim W. Harton, Secretary/Treasurer

DISTRICT 9: Calvin Pfeil Jr.

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According to NBC news.com there are five scientifically-proven benefits of travel: improves health, relieves stress, enhances creativity, boosts happiness and lowers the likelihood of depression. When traveling, don't risk these great benefits worrying about losing or breaking expensive jewelry or messing with the hassles and costs of insurance. You're supposed to be destressing right?

Sure you could wear a \$6,000 bracelet, and cry for days when it goes missing after a particularly festive mamba line at the resort swimming pool. Or, you could wear something equally as stunning that puts a lot less pressure on you to stay on your toes.

The **Stress-Free Glamour Bracelet Collection** features dressed up sterling silver tennis bracelets that sparkle with all the beauty

of emeralds, rubies and sapphires, but without the steep price. The Ultimate Diamond Alternative™, DiamondAura® has all the fire, clarity and glamour of the world's best mined gemstones. In fact, because these stones are created in pristine conditions, you have the scientific advantage of achieving near perfection.

An 11 carat emerald and diamond bracelet that looks this good would set you back over \$6,000. The **Stress-Free Glamour Bracelet** has a much more relaxing price of \$79.

So, whether you're celebrating on the road or in your home town, arm yourself with over eleven carats of worry-free elegance and live life to its fullest without emptying your wallet.

Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. Enjoy the incomparable sparkle of the **Stress-Free Glamour Bracelet Collection** for 30 days. If you aren't perfectly happy, send it back for a full refund of the item price.

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It's not often you happen upon a blade smith who has gem cutting skills. In fact, you stand a better chance finding a needle in a haystack. But finding needles in haystacks is what we do best, so when we saw this master craftsman's handiwork, we made certain to procure some of these Southwestern masterpieces to complete our collection.

The stainless steel blade, bolster and pommel are exquisitely etched and would have looked great with a less ambitious handle. But the results of overachieving are stunning here. The turquoise-blue colored handle is ablaze with assorted stones like jasper, marble, sunstone, and coral that have been hand cut and inlaid in a Southwestern motif that conjures images of intricately beaded belts and moccasins.

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"...Native American knives have since taken on a more artistic meaning in the modern era...these decorative style knives have become a must-have for any Southwestern home." — PRWeb, 2017

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What customers are saying about Stauer knives...



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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.

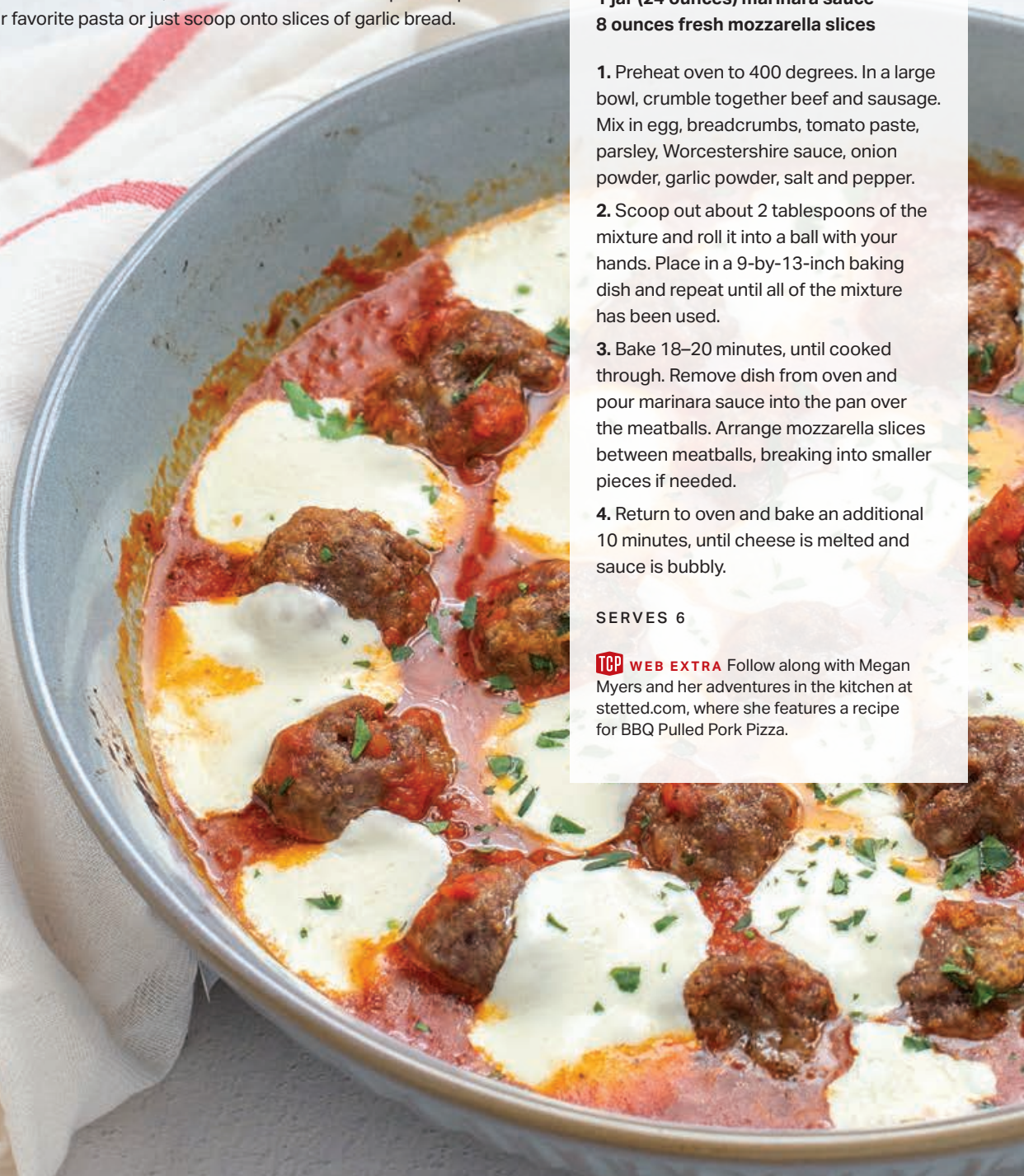
Cheesy Baked Meatballs

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, 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 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. 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, malletteventcenter.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, tobincenr.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

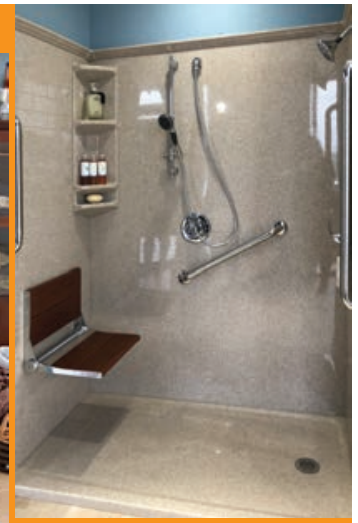
Leming Battle of Medina Symposium, (830) 480-2741, facebook.com/atascosahistory

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your October event online by August 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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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

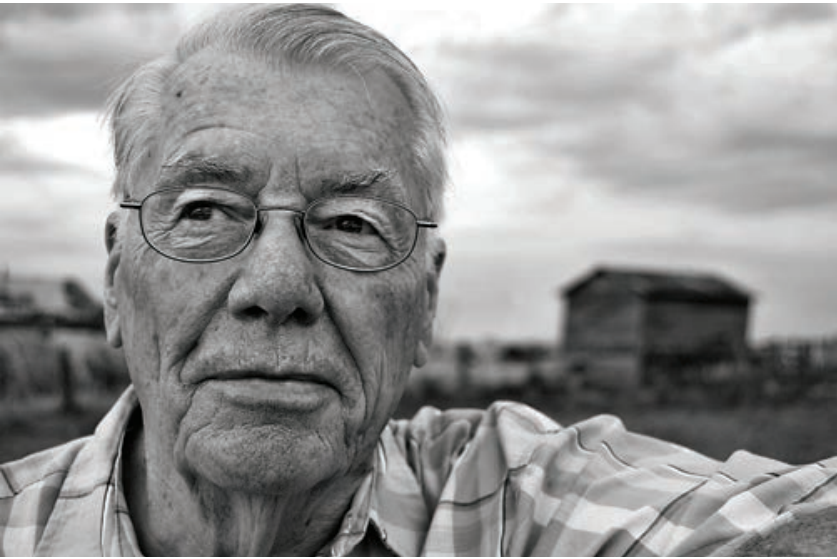
05

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

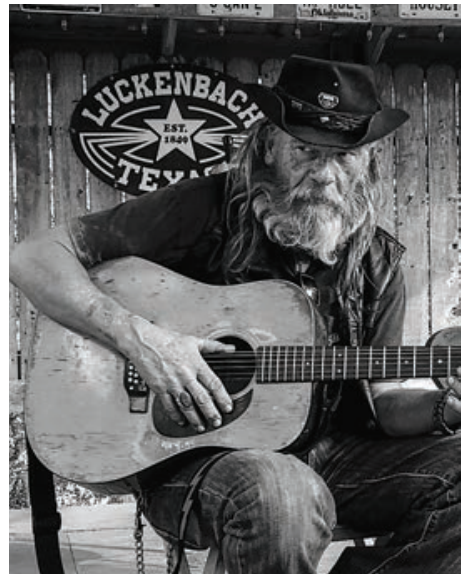
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- DUE SEP 10** Fired Up!
- DUE OCT 10** Public Art

Enter online at 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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