

STUDY: CO-OPS HAD A  
LEG UP DURING FREEZE

THE MANY WAYS  
CHEESES PLEASE

IT'S A GAS FOR READERS  
AT FILLIN' STATIONS

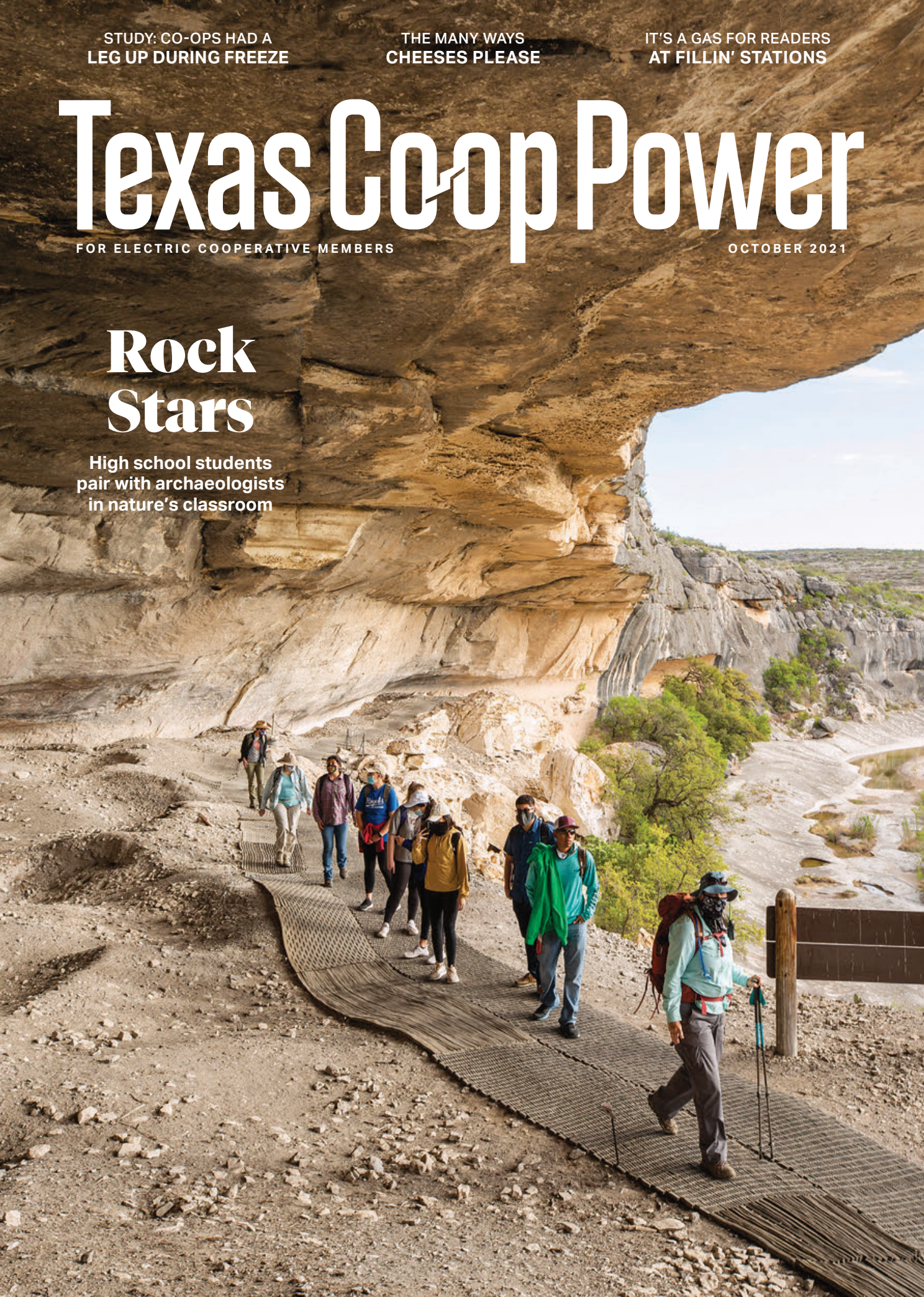
# Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2021

## Rock Stars

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# October 2021



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## 08 Learning Rocks

Comstock high school coursework includes rock art research with Shumla archaeologists.

*By Pam LeBlanc  
Photos by Erich Schlegel*

## Co-ops Shine

When 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power in February, consumers found the co-op response better than that of other power providers.

*By Joe Holley*

ON THE COVER

Karen Steelman of the Shumla archaeological research center leads students through the Fate Bell Shelter.  
*Photo by Erich Schlegel*

ABOVE

A drone's view of Pedernales Electric Cooperative infrastructure.  
*Photo courtesy Pedernales EC*

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# A Stacked Deck

**BRYAN BERG HOLDS THE WORLD RECORD** for tallest free-standing house of cards—25 feet, 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches—which he built October 16, 2007, at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas. A year earlier at the fair, he built the Dallas skyline as fairgoers waited in line for hours to watch.

Berg, who has an architecture degree, used more than 1,000 decks of cards, which weigh about 140 pounds, just for the tallest spire in his world-record tower.



## America's Lifelines

Electric cooperatives, which celebrate National Co-op Month in October, own and maintain 42% of the electric distribution lines that serve American communities. That equates to 2.7 million miles of line, including 340,774 miles in Texas.



*October 1*

### National Homemade Cookie Day

Find the best recipes by searching "cookies" at [TexasCoopPower.com/food](https://www.texascooppower.com/food).

---

## NBA LAUNCHES IN TEXAS

The NBA came to Texas 50 years ago, when the San Diego Rockets migrated to Houston. A vibrant San Diego aerospace industry inspired the team name, and it fit perfectly in Houston, home of the Johnson Space Center.

The Houston Rockets lost their first game, 105-94, to the Philadelphia 76ers on October 14, 1971, at Hofheinz Pavilion.

“If sad, eat cookie. If still sad, talk to doctor. Sounds serious.”

—COOKIE MONSTER



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I WISH I WAS THERE WHEN ...

**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. Below are some of the responses to our August prompt:

**It's so hot ...**

I saw the squirrels picking up nuts with a potholder.

PATSY CHEEK  
VIA FACEBOOK

Lizards are crawling in the fire to get under the shade of the skillet.

GENE OSBORNE  
WOOD COUNTY EC  
HAINESVILLE

I had to get in my hot tub to cool off.

CHARLES BAUCH  
VIA FACEBOOK

Popcorn's poppin' in the field.

LINDA HIGGS  
VIA FACEBOOK

My chickens lay boiled eggs.

KAREN ALLISON  
NUECES EC  
ROBSTOWN

You catch precooked fish.

TERRI HARVEY  
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents online.

# Eggs-pert Students

**LEAVE IT TO FIRST GRADERS** to hatch solutions to a fun challenge: Can you drop eggs without breaking them?

Students at Dillman Elementary School in Muleshoe, with help from employees and a bucket truck from Bailey County Electric Cooperative, proved it's possible.

The kids protected raw eggs with methods that included exoskeletons of straws, boxes with packing, parachutes and even jars of peanut butter—ideas they concocted with their parents, teachers and fellow students. Then technician Matthew Edwards of Bailey County EC went up about 25 feet in the bucket and dropped dozens of them, one at a time. About half of the eggs landed intact.

“Their creativity was amazing,” says Letti Tovar, Dillman principal. “Some of those things I would have never thought of.”



## **TCP** Contests and More

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ERIC W. POHL

Easing Life's Baggage

“Day 1 Bags needs to be in every state. Such an incredible project that has helped so many. I love the idea of supporting high school foster kids.”

MICHELE JAQUISS  
VIA FACEBOOK

Goin' to the Chapel

I want to thank Chet Garner for his Hit the Road articles. One especially intrigued me: *Where Artistry Congregates* [March 2021].

My husband, Humberto, and I decided to visit the painted churches for our 50th wedding anniversary. Following Chet's lead, we grabbed kolache and started our tour in Dubina.

The shrines were glorious. We were so reminded of our visits to Rome in all that splendor.

Nelda Martinez  
Medina EC  
Hebbronville



Hunter is a world changer [*Easing Life's Baggage*, August 2021].

TANYA RENEE  
PANIAGUA  
VIA FACEBOOK



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Sparkling Review

I enjoyed learning about John S. Chase in *An Unlikely Blueprint* [July 2021]. Gems like this make me appreciate *Texas Co-op Power* and keep me looking forward to the next issue.

Les Meads  
Guadalupe Valley EC  
Saint Hedwig

No Stopping McVea

Opposing teams had no solution for Warren McVea's speed and agility [*Ground-breaking Cougar*, Currents, July 2021]. It was a couple of years later that the old Southwest Conference started recruiting Black athletes. Neither McVea nor the University of Houston got their just due for opening the door for Black athletes in Texas.

Phil Dolezal  
Trinity Valley EC  
Sugar Land

Limitless Appreciation

*Parent Imperfect* [June 2021] spoke to me on a personal level. It reaffirmed the feeling of embarrassment most of us have as adolescents that lovingly grows into a limitless appreciation for that “imperfect parent” as we go through adulthood and realize we also are the imperfect parent.

Nadalynn Jenkins  
HILCO EC  
Glenn Heights

**TCP WRITE TO US**  
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Austin, TX 78701

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

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# LEARNING ROCKS

Comstock high school coursework includes rock art research with Shumla archaeologists

BY PAM LEBLANC • PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

The Maker of Peace sculpture stands outside the Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site visitors center.





LEFT Comstock student Sammy Isaac reaches into a hole where grains or paint dust were stored some 2,000 years ago inside the Fate Bell Shelter. ABOVE Students found a projectile point while working with Shumla archaeologists at Seminole Canyon.

**ON A BREEZY APRIL MORNING**, five Comstock high school seniors clamber around boulders and hop across a stream in Seminole Canyon on their way to inspect some of the finest examples of rock art in the world.

After a 20-minute hike, they reach the foot of Fate Bell Shelter, a curved hollow midway up a cliff wall that's big enough for a game of baseball. The students, along with science teacher Kayme Tims and chemist Karen Steelman, scramble up to the rocky amphitheater, where they can see faded red, yellow and black images painted there more than 2,000 years ago.

"This place is so special, and it's not just because of the rock art," says Steelman, science director of the plasma oxidation lab at Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center in Comstock, explaining that ancient fiber mats, sandals and rabbit furs have been found in the rock shelters

that line this canyon in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands. "This is one of the best places to study hunter-gatherers. We can see more than stone tools. We can see how they lived."

The rock shelters—more than 300 have been identified in Val Verde County—also serve as valuable classrooms for students in their final year of high school in Comstock, a tiny, one-school town of fewer than 300 people about 30 miles northwest of Del Rio. Every senior in the Comstock Independent School District—there are seven for the 2020–2021 school year—works alongside archaeologists and chemists as they study the region's renowned rock art.

In the past few years, students from the school have helped build a plasma oxidation instrument that scientists will use to extract organic material from paint flakes so they can date the rock art. Previous classes have labeled rock art murals, measured painted images, entered data into computers and learned how to use imaging software. In short, the program, introduced in 2013 and structured as an interdisciplinary internship, allows the students from a small school in South Texas to learn sophisticated archaeological analysis and physical sciences from the pros.

The class not only helps Shumla, a nonprofit organization founded more than 20 years ago to study and document rock art in the region, but also gives the students hands-on experience in a working laboratory.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, class looks a little different this year. Steelman and Tims meet with the students two or three times a week via Zoom. Besides studying various styles of rock art and learning how ancient people used animal fat and crushed minerals to make paint, the students study plants that were used for food, clothing and shelter. They learned, for example, that cochineal, a type of scale insect that lives on prickly pear cactus, was used to make red and orange dyes.

Science teacher Kayme Tims leaps across a stream in Seminole Canyon.

“I have two goals: first, teach some chemistry using the archaeology of the Lower Pecos as a framework. Second, teach students an appreciation for the amazing cultural archaeology that’s right in our backyard,” Steelman says.

That plan is working. At Fate Bell Shelter, the students use a smartphone app called DStretch to photograph the artwork and then enhance its color so the images are more clearly visible.

“I think it’s pretty cool that it’s right here in our backyard,” says Sammy Isaac, 18, of Comstock as the images jump into focus.

“Can you imagine painting something and it lasting that long?” Steelman says as the students point out features of the Lower Pecos River style artwork—anthropomorphic figures with outstretched arms, holding bundles of what look like darts. “These were master artists; they were good.”

**SCIENTISTS AT SHUMLA** recently helped secure National Historic Landmark status for the rock art in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands, one of the most important archaeological regions in the world, according to French prehistorian Jean Clottes.

And last year they completed comprehensive documentation of 233 rock art sites for the Alexandria Project, their effort to preserve these oldest “books” of painted texts in North America.

Together Steelman and Tims have taught successive groups of Comstock seniors about concepts from pigment analysis to radiocarbon dating. The educators say they hope the basic chemistry knowledge will give students an edge in college and an appreciation of the cultural importance of where they live.

“I hope they realize what we have here, that it’s unique; they grew up somewhere with significance,” Tims says.

Back in the Fate Bell Shelter, the students gather in front of the faint outline of a figure, one hand holding what looks like a bundle of sticks. They note that some of the figures’ hair looks like it’s standing on end—a characteristic known as piloerection that has various interpretations.

At one point, the five students line up in front of one section of the mural, laughing a little as they re-create a scene on the wall depicting five figures, one with its arms reaching

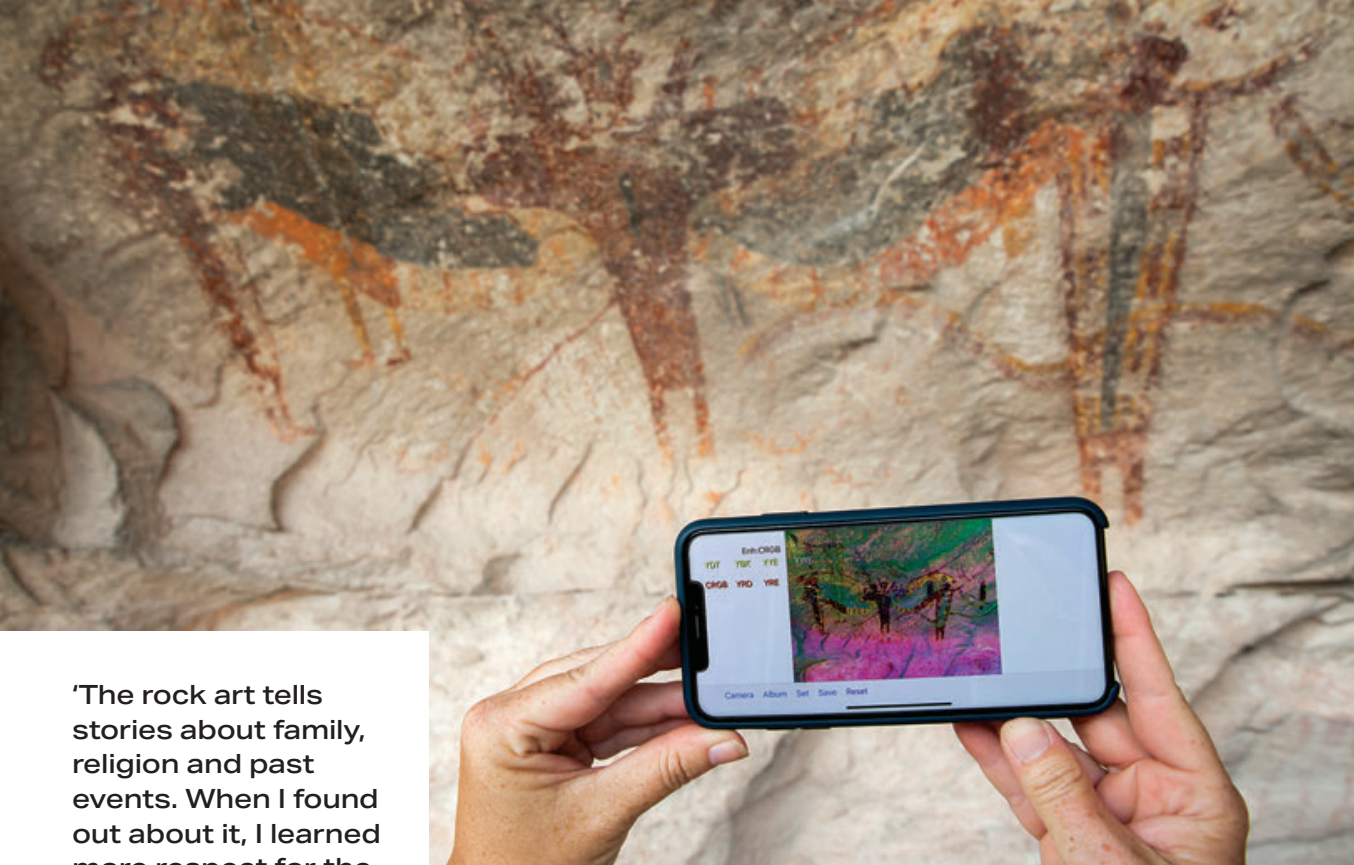


skyward. Experts don’t know for sure, but some believe paintings like this represent spiritual or religious beliefs.

“The rock art tells stories about family, religion and past events,” says Courtney White, 18, of Del Rio. “When I found out about it, I learned more respect for the people who made it. What they painted was heartfelt. What was important to them should be important to me.”

After 45 minutes of exploring the Fate Bell Shelter, the group climbs down and hikes another mile along the rugged creek bed, scrambling through underbrush, hopping over streams and climbing up smooth rock to another shelter, known to scientists as 41VV75. This site, Steelman tells the students, has been used for more than 8,000 years, although the images painted on its walls are half that age, according to radiocarbon testing. The students explore the site, noticing fibers from ancient mats made of plants. A few look down the canyon, talking about what it must have been like to live here.

Only a fraction of the rock art in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands has been radiocarbon-dated. “That’s one thing students are helping me with—developing a labora-



**'The rock art tells stories about family, religion and past events. When I found out about it, I learned more respect for the people who made it. What they painted was heartfelt. What was important to them should be important to me.'**



TOP A student uses the DStretch app to photograph and enhance rock art. ABOVE Students in the Shumla research lab.

story at Shumla so we can do more research and study the ages of different styles of art and how [the style] may have changed through time," Steelman says.

After breaking for lunch next to huge boulders in the canyon, the students load up and head back to Shumla headquarters, housed in what was once a U.S. Border Patrol building in Comstock. There, they file into the lab to check out a plasma oxidation instrument built by the previous year's students. The instrument spans nearly an entire wall, its row of orangey-red lights reminiscent of the heating lamps used to keep fried chicken or pies warm at a fast-food restaurant.

But this \$83,000 piece of equipment, funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation, won't be used to warm lunch; Steelman and Lori Barkwill-Love, a college intern, will use it to extract organic material from dime-sized flakes of paint carefully obtained from rock art murals. That material will be sent to another lab for radio-carbon dating.

"The instrument is custom-built with all these parts, basically like Lego blocks," Steelman says. "It was the perfect opportunity for students to come into the lab and help."

This year's class will build on the work of last year's seniors. Before the school year ends, they will assemble a new electrode array for the plasma oxidation instrument in this world-class lab. The project requires scientific design as well as practical skills such as drilling through PVC pipe, threading copper wire through the piping and measuring twice so you only have to cut once.

And those are lessons that most students never get in high school. ■

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Find more photos with this story online and learn more about cochineal in *The Bugs That Make You See Red* from February 2019.

# Co-ops Shine

When more than 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power in February, consumers found the co-op response better than that of other power providers

Pedernales Electric Cooperative workers endured 165 consecutive hours of subfreezing temperatures.

BY JOE HOLLEY

# Members counted on Texas electric co-ops during the deep freeze

**WE TEXANS CAN TELL TALES** about weather extremes, usually a devastating tornado or a hurricane, a flash flood or a lingering drought. Occasionally we'll recall a bone-chilling West Texas norther or a Panhandle blizzard, but we have less experience with the vicissitudes of winter cold.

Until February 13, 2021. That's when a polar vortex smashed its way into the record books, disrupting lives and livelihoods and laying claim to being one of the worst natural disasters in Texas history. We'll be telling stories about this winter for years to come.

More than 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power during the storm, which was likely the most expensive natural disaster in Texas history, causing more than \$295 billion in damages. The official death toll stands at 210.

So how do Texans feel about their electricity providers' response to the unprecedented crisis? That's the question the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston asked 1,500 Texans served by the electric grid managed by the Electrical Reliability Council of Texas.

The answer? Consumers rated their electric cooperative's response better than did consumers of other power providers.

Survey results were clear. "Overall, electric cooperatives significantly outperformed their rivals in the eyes of their customers during the winter storm of 2021," the Hobby School concluded.

Some 52% of co-op members who lost power agreed that the power cuts in their area were carried out in an equitable manner. That's more than twice the positive response received by customers of investor-owned utilities operating in the state.

"Co-ops tend to be closer to their customers," said Kirk Watson, dean of the Hobby School when the study took place and a former state senator. "Those relationships matter when it comes to trust and even just giving the benefit of the doubt when times get rough. Also, my experience tells me that co-ops tend to communicate more routinely with folks, and of course that makes a world of difference in a crisis."

That valuable communication was noticed by co-op members.

"As a recent transplant to Fannin County, I just wanted to say how impressed I have been with your updates and communication this week," Joyce Buchanan wrote on Facebook. She's a Fannin County Electric Cooperative member who recently moved to McKinney from Ontario, Canada.

"They have been timely, informative and so helpful in letting us know what to expect from day to day, sometimes hour to hour."

The survey found that co-ops performed their

core functions better than the commercial utilities and consumers believed that co-ops were better able to respond to crises like the February storm than were other electric utilities.

Kathi Calvert is pretty sure she knows why. Calvert, general manager of Crockett-based Houston County EC for the past eight years, points out that the co-op's East Texas members were aware that co-op employees were right there with them, experiencing the same misery and hardships they were. They would not have known that about large, anonymous utilities headquartered who-knows-where.

They saw co-op employees leaving their own dark and powerless homes and making their way to work with several inches of snow and ice covering the ground, temperatures near zero. They saw bucket trucks in the community and linemen clambering up ice-encrusted poles.

She also made sure that when customers called in, they got their questions answered by a person—a member of their own community—even if the answer about such things as rotating outages may not have been what they wanted to hear. She had human resources and accounts payable employees—whoever was available—answering phones and keeping customers informed. She also made sure social media was providing the latest information.

"It was a team effort, a community-based effort," Calvert said. "That's why co-ops are trusted."

**EVEN DURING THE STORM**, co-op members expressed agreement with that sentiment. Brittany Brewer, a Fannin County EC member, posted this on the co-op's Facebook page February 18: "We are lucky to have such a transparent power provider."

Cameron Smallwood, CEO of United Cooperative Services, a Burleson-based co-op serving parts of North Texas, told Texas lawmakers a similar story during testimony before legislative committees in February. United not only prepared members in advance for the likelihood of debilitating winter weather, Smallwood explained, but the co-op used every means of communication available to keep its members informed.



**They saw co-op employees leaving their own dark and powerless homes and making their way to work with several inches of snow and ice covering the ground, temperatures near zero. They saw bucket trucks in the community and linemen clambering up ice-encrusted poles.**

Communications is “part of our DNA,” he said. “Our understanding is that customers from other utilities were watching our social media and information because they were lacking information [from their providers].”

State Rep. Shelby Slawson of Stephenville told Smallwood that she is a UCS member. “We’ve heard a lot about the importance of communication with the public. I want to openly commend you and United Co-op for the way you handled that,” she said.

Julie Parsley, CEO of Pedernales EC, reported to her board of directors a few weeks after life had pretty much returned to normal. She recalled that co-op linemen and other workers “were doing dangerous jobs in difficult conditions” during 165 consecutive hours of subfreezing temperatures. They were working 16-hour shifts in temperatures colder than Anchorage, Alaska. Information technology employees who had lost power at home worked out of their cars; member relations agents stayed in hotels close to PEC offices; and the co-op’s urgent team was on the job 24/7, dealing with snow, ice and mud even after the storm subsided.

Systems and equipment occasionally failed, “but the spirit and the resiliency of our employees surpassed that,” Parsley reported. “Our next step is to bring our systems up to the level of our employees, frankly.”

Less than one-fourth of co-op members rated poor or very poor how their co-op handled the rolling outages ERCOT required to reduce power demand. Well more than half of all other power providers’ customers rated their utility’s performance as poor or very poor.

So why did Texas’ 66 electric distribution cooperatives perform better than the municipal and investor-owned utilities? Those who conducted the survey—Watson, senior director and researcher Renée Cross, and Rice University political scientist Mark Jones—suggest that co-ops have built up a reservoir of trust among their members over decades of community-focused service.

“The customers of electric cooperatives are more likely



LEFT The iced lines of Rio Grande EC.  
ABOVE A San Bernard EC crew works to restore power.

to believe their electric utility has their best interests at heart than do the customers of commercial electric utilities,” the report said, “and therefore ... are more likely to rate their electricity utility in a positive manner.” ■

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Find the complete Hobby School report with this story online.

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It took three years of development and \$26 million in advanced Swiss-built watchmaking machinery to create the *Magnificat II*. When we took the watch to renowned watchmaker and watch historian George Thomas, he disassembled it and studied the escapement, balance wheel and the rotor. He remarked on the detailed guilloché face, gilt winding crown, and the crocodile-embossed leather band. He was intrigued by the three interior dials for day, date, and 24-hour moon phases. He estimated that this fine timepiece would cost over \$2,500. We all smiled and told him that the Stauer price was less than \$100. A truly magnificent watch at a truly magnificent price!

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# WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



MESSAGE FROM YOUR GENERAL MANAGER/CEO  
**GARY RAYBON**

## Co-op Month Is Cause for Celebration

**EVERY OCTOBER** for most of the past century, nonprofit cooperatives of all types have recognized National Cooperative Month—and we continue that tradition this year at Wharton County Electric Cooperative.

Although Co-op Month was celebrated for years before a national proclamation, the U.S. officially lauded co-ops in 1964,

controlled, member-owned businesses. Co-ops provide value to their members through highly personal customer service; economic development, conservation and service programs; the retirement of capital credits; and democratic representation in business decisions.

Electric co-ops are owned by those they serve. That’s why those who receive electric service from America’s electric cooperatives are called members, not customers. Co-ops exist to serve their members, and we strive to keep our level of service high even during the toughest times.

From attending an annual meeting to serving on the board, members are encouraged to be actively involved in the business of their cooperatives. Members maintain democratic control of their co-op, which means they elect fellow members to represent them on the board of directors.

The cooperative business model also gives members economic control. Because cooperatives are owned and controlled by the people who use their services, decisions are made with the best interests of co-op members in mind—not to financially benefit corporate stockholders. Instead of issuing stock or paying dividends to outside shareholders, co-ops return margins (“profits”) to their members in the form of capital credits at the end of the year when they’re able.

Another principle that sets co-ops apart from other businesses is their concern for community. Cooperatives have a special responsibility and desire to participate in and support the areas in which their members live and work.

Co-ops are more personal and accessible than other types of businesses because their employees work and live alongside those they serve. Co-ops are dedicated to powering communities and empowering members.

Here at WCEC, we think the cooperative difference is worth celebrating this year and every year. ■



when U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman proclaimed October as National Cooperative Month.

This year, members from more than 29,000 cooperatives nationwide proclaim the advantages of cooperative membership and the benefits and value that co-ops deliver.

Co-ops—including WCEC—are nonprofit, democratically



# Powering Communities. Empowering Members.

## October is National Co-op Month



**A SET OF PRINCIPLES** form Wharton County Electric Cooperative's strong, community-focused foundation. A purpose hewed by history has kept WCEC successful for decades.

October is National Co-op Month, the time of year when cooperatives across the country celebrate the many ways co-ops are unique and, more important, the members they serve. This year we're focusing on our principles.

The timeless values behind co-ops of all stripes have been in place since the late 1840s. They apply to not just electric cooperatives but any organization that follows the co-op form of business. They're concepts that would serve well most any organization.

The Seven Cooperative Principles endure today and are proof that the co-op business model works. They are:

- ▶ Voluntary and Open Membership.
- ▶ Democratic Member Control.
- ▶ Members' Economic Participation.
- ▶ Autonomy and Independence.
- ▶ Education, Training and Information.
- ▶ Cooperation Among Cooperatives.
- ▶ Concern for Community.

In addition to being well run, financially sound and rooted in core values, electric cooperatives embody several distinctive characteristics, as identified by the 21st Century Cooperative Committee. Once again, the themes go beyond good business practices. They are:



- ▶ Purpose guides cooperatives like a compass.
- ▶ Member empowerment is our bottom line.
- ▶ Member engagement is our path to empowerment.
- ▶ Trust and loyalty are fostered by positive engagement.
- ▶ Sustainability of the electric cooperative model is the result.

At WCEC, we recognize that our purpose is to power communities and empower members to improve the quality of their lives.

Our principles make clear that purpose:

**Drives everything.** It drives all major decision-making and becomes the determining factor in how to allocate resources, hire employees, plan for the future and judge success.

**Is a path to high performance.** It fulfills a deep-seated need and earns members' satisfaction.

**Fosters visionary ideas and meaningful innovation.** It provides the direction necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

**Moves mountains.** It can rally the troops to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds.

**Provides stability in a turbulent marketplace.** It carries us through when times get tough and the road seems unclear.

**Injects co-ops with a healthy dose of reality.** It is not something you can fake. It's genuine. It's real. And it's something that you, as members, can honestly appreciate about us.

**Recruits passionate people.** It makes us more attractive to driven people.

**Brings energy and vitality to the work at hand.** It provides meaningful and sustainable motivation for employees.

**Contributes to a life well lived.** Work is no longer a 9-to-5 job to be endured but a meaningful source of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Some values, principles and purposes are timeless and broadly applicable. As a cooperative, we continue to uphold our guiding philosophies as we have since our founding. That is the cooperative difference. ■





BOGDANHOVA / ISTOCK.COM

## Fall Checklist: Address Safety, Maintenance Issues

THE BLISTERING SUMMER heat isn't far behind us, but it won't be long until heating season arrives and the house is full of family for the holidays.

Head off any potential problems now by scheduling maintenance and safety checks for your home's heating and electrical devices now. Here's where to start:

**Furnace.** Before you turn on the heat, make sure your furnace is in good working condition. A qualified technician should do a biannual check of your system—once in the fall for heating and again in the spring for air conditioning. The tech can spot small problems before they become major repairs.

**Thermostats.** If your home doesn't have a programmable thermostat, you could be paying more to heat and cool your home than you need to. Programmable thermostats automatically turn the heat up or down, depending on whether you're sleeping or away for a few hours.

**Ground-fault circuit interrupters.** A licensed electrician can install GFCI outlets in your bathroom, kitchen and laundry room; around hot tubs and pools; and under windows—all areas that have the potential to get wet. A GFCI will shut off the electricity to an appliance that short circuits and circuits that are overcharged—a safety must.

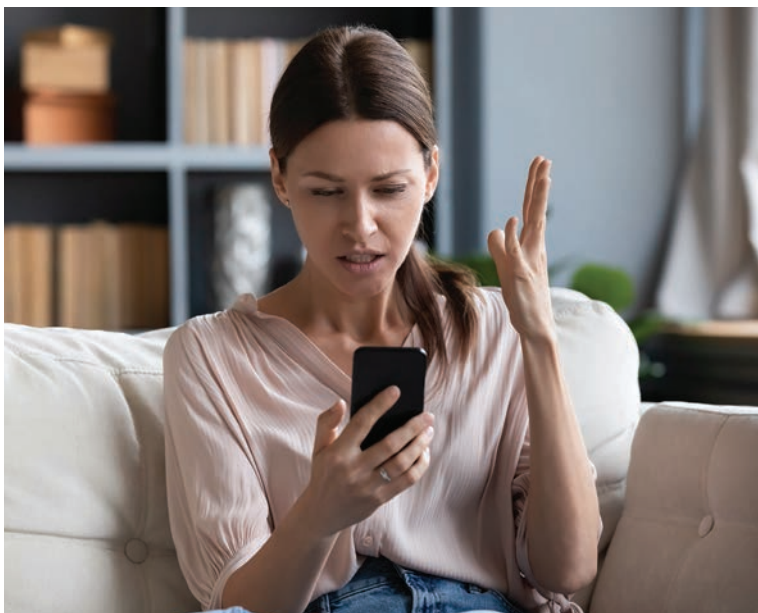
**Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.** If you don't have them near all bedrooms in your home, it's time to

install them. Then check them twice a year to make sure they're still working and that they have fresh batteries.

**Overloaded outlets.** You can overload an electrical circuit by connecting an appliance that draws a lot of electricity—like a range, dishwasher, refrigerator or even some entertainment systems and exercise equipment—to a circuit that is designed for a smaller load. You can also overload a circuit by using a power strip to plug too many appliances into a single outlet. Ask a licensed electrician to inspect your home for potential circuit overloads, which can cause fires.

**Extension cords.** Extension cords can become frayed and damaged with use over time. If you're planning on using them to provide power to holiday decorations, give them a safety check and be sure to use cords that are rated for the outdoors.

**Yard tools.** Winterize and stow away warm weather tools such as lawn mowers and trimmers. Check cold weather tools like leaf blowers and snow blowers, along with their power cords, if they have them. Repair and replace worn tools and components. ■



## Don't Fall Victim to Utility Scams

**EVERY DAY**, millions of Americans are targeted by scammers through phone calls, emails, text messages, websites and in person. Scammers' tactics can change daily, which is why it's important for consumers to stay on top of the latest scam reports.

Electric co-op members have been targeted through a phone scam purporting that power will be shut off unless immediate payment is received. Remember, Wharton County Electric Cooperative will never call you and demand immediate payment without notice.

We want you to be aware of two other trending scam tactics. One is the overpayment trick, in which a scammer contacts you and claims that you have overpaid your utility bill. The scammer will say they need your personal banking information to deposit the extra funds back into your checking account. Don't fall for this scam! If you make an overpayment to us, WCEC will automatically apply the credit to your account, which will carry over to the next billing cycle.

Another trending scam is called smishing (short for Short Message Service, or SMS, phishing). Many consumers know to watch out for suspicious emails, but we tend to trust text messages sent to our smartphones. Always question suspicious texts, especially from someone claiming to represent a utility. WCEC will only send you important updates via text if you've signed up for our text alert service.

**Here are a few reminders on how to take control of the situation when you've been targeted by a scammer:**

**Take your time.** Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so that you'll act fast and hand over personal information without thinking. Take a moment to evaluate the situation before acting.

**Be suspicious.** Scammers typically request immediate payment through prepaid debit cards or third-party smartphone apps. Unusual requests like this should raise red flags. Remember, if the request seems strange and out of the ordinary, you're likely being targeted by a scammer.

**Confirm before you act.** If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent WCEC or another utility but you're unsure, just hang up the phone and call the utility directly. You can reach us at 979-543-6271 to verify the situation. ■

## Stop Pre-rinsing for the Dishwasher

**MODERN DISHWASHERS** are such efficient cleaners that you typically don't need to rinse dishes before stacking them on the racks. That saves water, energy and time.

Here are five tips for helping your dishwasher clean and sanitize your dishes:

- ▶ Scrape leftover food from plates and bowls before placing them in the dishwasher, but avoid pre-rinsing.
- ▶ Place dishes, glasses and flatware in the appropriate compartments in your dishwasher. This helps the machine clean them properly the first time.
- ▶ Don't pack dishes in. Leave adequate space between plates and bowls to allow the water to circulate freely. And don't let a large bowl or lid block the water spray from reaching other dishes.
- ▶ Use a hot water cycle to remove dried-on food, properly dissolve the dish-washing detergent and sanitize the dishes. Using the heated dry function further sanitizes dishes but comes at a cost to your electric bill.
- ▶ If your house has highly mineralized water, fill both of your dishwasher's detergent cups and use a rinsing agent. ■



# Bank Drive Thru Payments Ending October 31

**EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 1**, Wharton County Electric Cooperative will no longer be taking payments through local bank drive thru lanes.

“As more and more of our members move to more convenient payment methods such as paying online, using our mobile app, or signing up for automatic payments, discontinuing the local bank payment option only made sense. The number of payments received through the local banks has dwindled in recent years,” WCEC GM/CEO Gary Raybon says.

WCEC will continue to accept payments in person at our office at 1815 E. Jackson in El Campo during normal business hours. Also available at our office is a covered, drive thru payment drop box that can be accessed 24/7.

“Payments can also be mailed to our post office box as well. However, if members prefer to save the stamp, our online options are really the quickest, easiest ways to keep up with your account,” Raybon says.

WCEC members can register their account through the co-op’s website at MyWCEC.coop directly from the home page. To register, members will need the account number for each account and an email address.

WCEC offers a mobile app for both iOS and Android devices. Download instructions for WCEC’s SmartHub can be found at MyWCEC.coop on the home pages as well.

Once an account is registered (either online or through SmartHub), members can pay their bill, view their daily power use, update contact information, and sign up for billing alerts through email or text.

Automatic payments can be set up online or by calling the WCEC office at 979-543-6271. Our Consumer Service Representatives are available Monday-Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. ■

## Who is Authorized To Access Your Account?

WCEC employees are only allowed to disclose information to or take service requests from individuals listed on the account.

We are a small organization, and we pride ourselves on personal service. We don’t want to be put in the position of not being able to assist someone with billing issues if they are not listed on the account. However, given the litigious society that we live in, we cannot risk divulging information to unauthorized individuals.

For example, if your spouse calls us for a service issue or bill inquiry and is not listed on your account, we cannot disclose any information about the account.

We encourage all members to review who is authorized to access your accounts and keep this information updated. If your spouse is an authorized user, their name will also appear on your monthly bill. If you have any questions or need to make a change to your account, please call us at (979) 543-6271.




LYNNE MITCHELL | ISTOCK.COM

## Butterfinger Crunch Dessert

- 1½ cups milk**
- 1 package (3.4 ounces) instant vanilla pudding mix**
- 2 cartons (8 ounces each) nondairy whipped topping, thawed; divided use**
- 1 large angel food cake, cubed**
- 4 Butterfinger candy bars (2.1 ounces each), crushed**

1. Apply cooking spray to a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together milk and pudding mix 2 minutes. Let stand 2 minutes until soft set. Stir in 2 cups whipped topping until well mixed, then fold in remaining whipped topping.
3. Layer half of the cake cubes in baking dish, then top with pudding mixture and crushed candy bars. Repeat layers.
4. Cover and chill at least 2 hours before serving.

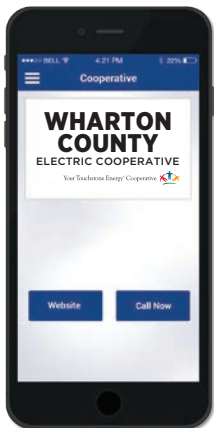
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Gary Raybon

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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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El Campo, TX 77437  
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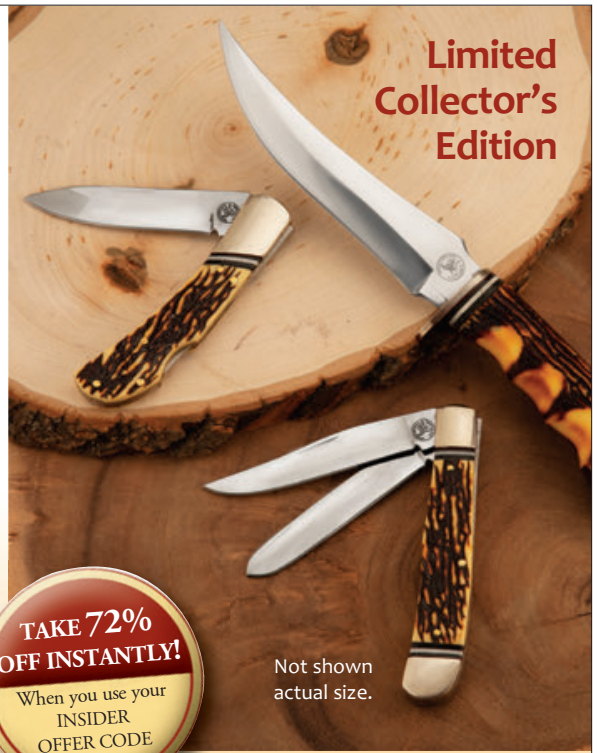
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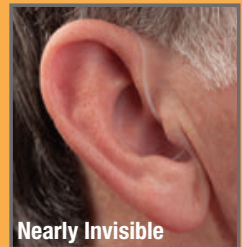
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# Proving Ground

Future presidents crossed the Wild Horse Desert together on a military mission

BY W.F. STRONG

HE WAS 23 YEARS OLD, riding his horse south of Corpus Christi in the region that would later be called the King Ranch. But that now-legendary, sprawling ranch would not be founded for another eight years.

This vast stretch of sandy prairie was then known as the Wild Horse Desert. In some ways it was a spooky place—ghostly. Visitors could see horse tracks everywhere—but no people. There were plenty of well-worn trails, but the population was only four-legged in August 1845.

Folks reckoned that these horses were the descendants of those that arrived with Hernán Cortés more than three centuries earlier, when he came to conquer the Aztecs. Some of his horses escaped,

migrated north and bred like rabbits (if you can say that about horses).

Our young man—a graduate of West Point and a newly minted second lieutenant—rode with a regiment of soldiers under the command of Gen. Zachary Taylor. They were under orders to establish Fort Texas on the Rio Grande and enforce that river as the southern border of the United States. Fort Texas would shortly become Fort Brown, the fort from which Brownsville would take its name.

The young lieutenant, who had excelled as a horseman at West Point, was so impressed with the seemingly infinite herds of wild horses in South Texas that he made a note in his journal. He wrote:

“A few days out from Corpus Christi, the

**TCP WEB EXTRA**

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story.

immense herd of wild horses that ranged at that time between the Nueces and the Rio Grande was directly in front of us. I rode out a ways to see the extent of the herd. The country was a rolling prairie, and from the higher ground, the vision was obstructed only by the curvature of the Earth. As far as the eye could reach to the right, the herd extended. To the left, it extended equally. There was no estimating the number of animals in it; I doubt that they could all have been corralled in the state of Rhode Island or Delaware at one time. If they had been, they would have been so thick that the pasture would have given out the first day.”

Both Taylor and his second lieutenant would distinguish themselves on that journey through South Texas.

Taylor had no idea that his visit to the Wild Horse Desert would lead him on to victories in the Mexican-American War that started the next year with an attack on his troops near the Rio Grande—and to political victory back home. He would become the 12th president of the United States.

Taylor’s dashing second lieutenant would also ascend to the presidency, 20 years after him. The young man on high ground, surveying the astounding scene of wild mustangs grazing by the thousands, would become the hero of many battles.

He would ultimately lead Union forces to victory in the Civil War and become the youngest president of the U.S. His presidential memoirs would become a runaway bestseller published by Mark Twain, who would describe the book as “the most remarkable work of its kind since *Caesar’s Commentaries*.”

It was written by Hiram U. Grant. Well, that was his birth name. But when he entered West Point, a clerical error deleted the name Hiram and his middle name became his first name, and that is the name you know him by: Ulysses. He was Ulysses S. Grant. ■



# Cheese

Four dishes, four ways to present the charm of cheese

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Savory recipes are always a go-to with cheeses, but around here we love sweet too. In her new cookbook, *Southern Sugar*, Belinda Smith-Sullivan features a variety of delectable cheesecakes, including this recipe using sweet cushaw squash. If you can't find this crookneck squash, then butternut squash, pumpkin or white sweet potatoes are suitable substitutes.



**BELINDA  
SMITH-SULLIVAN**

## Sweet Cushaw and Pecan Cheesecake

### CRUST

- 1¾ cups gingersnap crumbs**
- 2 tablespoons sugar**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted**
- ¼ cup finely chopped pecans**

### FILLING

- 3 packages cream cheese (8 ounces each), room temperature**
- 2 cups cooked and puréed cushaw squash**
- 1 cup light brown sugar**
- 3 eggs, room temperature**
- ¼ cup sour cream, room temperature**
- ¼ cup heavy cream, room temperature**

- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger or allspice**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ½ cup chopped pecans**

### TOPPING

- ¾ cup packed brown sugar**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, room temperature**
- ¼ cup heavy cream, room temperature**
- 1 cup coarsely chopped pecans**

**1. CRUST** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a medium bowl, blend crumbs, sugar, butter and pecans and press into the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan. Wrap the bottom and outside of the pan with foil.

**2. FILLING** Using a stand mixer, beat cream cheese and squash until fluffy. Gradually add brown sugar, then add eggs one at a time. Add sour cream and heavy cream and continue to beat. Add cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and vanilla and beat until smooth. Fold in pecans and pour filling into prepared pan.

**3.** Place cheesecake pan in another larger

pan and place in preheated oven. Fill the larger pan halfway with hot water. Bake 60–70 minutes or until slightly firm in the center. Turn off oven, leaving door ajar about 8 inches, and allow cheesecake to cool in oven 1 hour. Remove pans from oven, remove cheesecake pan from water bath and cool completely in pan.

**4. TOPPING** In a small, heavy saucepan, combine brown sugar and butter over low heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and stir in cream and pecans. Let cool slightly. Pour warm topping over cooled cheesecake in pan and refrigerate. When ready to serve, remove the sides of springform pan and place cheesecake on a serving dish.

**SERVES 12**

Reprinted with permission from *Southern Sugar* by Belinda Smith-Sullivan (Gibbs Smith, 2021).

**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 Goat Cheese Crackers With Herbs.



## Cheese Grits

ANNA LOUISE EVANS  
PEDERNALES EC

Evans has been making this dish since 1970, when as a teenager she won a blue ribbon with the recipe at a county fair. It's easy to see why, as these grits are fluffy, creamy and cheesy all at once.

- ¾ cup hominy grits**
- 3 cups water**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 6 tablespoons (¾ stick) butter**
- 8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated**
- ½ teaspoon hot sauce**
- Dash of seasoned salt**
- 2 eggs, beaten**
- Dash of paprika**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease a 2-quart baking dish.
2. Cook grits in water and salt as directed on package. Add butter, cheese, hot sauce and seasoned salt, stirring to melt. Slowly pour in eggs, stirring the entire time to prevent scrambling.
3. Pour into prepared baking dish and sprinkle paprika over the top. Bake 1 hour, until puffed and golden brown.

SERVES 6

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

## Grilled Ham and Cheese Panini With Collard Greens and Tomato

RICKY PATTERSON  
COSERV



Garlicky greens turn this grilled cheese sandwich into a filling, crave-worthy meal. Don't neglect pressing the sandwich, which helps meld the flavors together. If you happen to have an electric panini press at home, the process is a cinch.

SERVES 1-2



- 3 leaves collard greens or kale**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 3 tablespoons water**
- ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter, softened**
- 2 large slices sourdough bread**
- 4 slices provolone cheese**
- 2 slices ham**
- 2 slices (¼ inch each) ripe tomato**
- Salt and pepper**

1. Wash greens and pat dry. Remove stems, then stack leaves and slice into thin ribbons. Set aside.
2. In a large skillet, heat olive oil on medium. Add garlic and sauté until sizzling. Add greens and stir to wilt. Add water, then cover skillet and cook about 5 minutes, until water evaporates. Remove greens from pan, press out excess liquid and set aside. Wipe pan.
3. Butter one side of each bread slice. Place one slice, buttered side down, in skillet. Top with 2 slices provolone, 2 slices ham, cooked greens and tomato slices. Season with salt and pepper. Top with remaining 2 slices provolone and bread, buttered side up.
4. Lay a piece of foil over the sandwich and place a cast iron or other heavy skillet on top of foil to press sandwich down. Cook on medium heat 5-7 minutes, until bottom is golden brown. Remove and reserve foil and flip sandwich. Place foil, buttery side down, over flipped sandwich. Weigh down and continue cooking 5-7 minutes, until other side is golden brown and cheese is melty. Let sit 2-5 minutes before cutting in half.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TEXAS' BEST DUE OCTOBER 10

What stands out in your kitchen as classic Texan cuisine? Enter at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://TexasCoopPower.com/contests) by October 10 for a chance to win \$500.



## Pumpkin, Pepper Jack and Poblano Enchilada Casserole

LINDA STEINHARDT  
PEDERNALES EC

Perfect for a large family, this enchilada casserole features a pumpkin-based sauce and plenty of vegetables for a comforting, hearty dish. You can use flour or corn tortillas, and keep in mind you might need extra tortillas to fit across the casserole dish.

### CASSEROLE

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 red bell peppers, diced
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 2 chicken breasts, cooked, cooled and shredded
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 poblano peppers, roasted, peeled and diced
- 6 tortillas, plus more as needed
- 8 ounces shredded pepper jack cheese

### SAUCE

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup pumpkin purée
- 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup milk
- 2–3 chipotle peppers in adobo, plus a spoonful of the adobo sauce
- 2–3 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin

1. CASSEROLE Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. In a large skillet, heat olive oil on medium-high. Sauté onion, bell peppers

and mushrooms until softened and slightly browned. Add chicken, black beans and poblanos and stir to combine. Remove filling from heat and set aside.

3. SAUCE In a food processor or large blender, purée sauce ingredients until smooth.

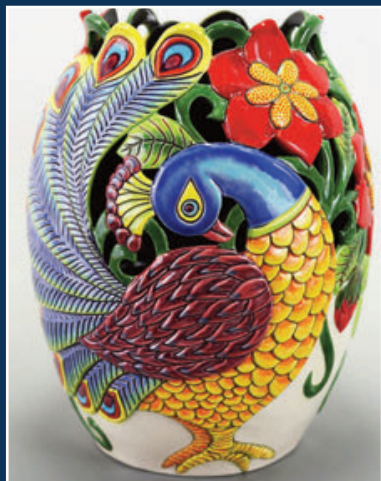
4. In a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, add a thin layer of sauce to coat the bottom. Layer dish with enough tortillas to cover the sauce (breaking if needed), half of the filling,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the sauce and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the cheese, then repeat. Finish with another layer of tortillas, remaining sauce and remaining cheese.

5. Bake 30–35 minutes, broiling for the last 2–3 minutes if you like the cheese a bit browned and crispy.

SERVES 8

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Cheese has long been a staple in Co-op Country kitchens. Visit the Food page at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com) and search "cheese" to find hundreds of recipes featuring the yummy stuff.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## The Grove's Groove

Normal is a matter of perspective at a haunted Jefferson home

BY CHET GARNER

**THE STORY ABOUT** the lady in white was spooky. The tale of a barber who visits regularly was strange. Anecdotes of disembodied noises and unexpected presences left me unsettled. But the scariest part of my visit to the Grove—Jefferson's most haunted home—was my guide: Mitchel Whittington seemed totally normal.

He wasn't wearing a dark robe or making alarming pronouncements. He simply recounted his ghostly encounters as if describing his morning coffee routine. His matter-of-fact presentation left me with the unnerving conclusion that he was telling the truth. I was terrified and intrigued.

Jefferson sits in the northeast corner of Texas and was once a bustling port city from which barges laden with cotton steamed to New Orleans. The downtown retains its historical architecture and charm. Even so, every building seems haunted and underscores Jefferson's reputation as our state's most haunted town.

When I arrived for my tour of the Grove, I expected an ominous Victorian structure covered in spiderwebs. Instead, I found a well-kept, one-story home with Whittington on the front porch to welcome me with a smile. He led me room by room, describing mysterious events he has witnessed.

I asked if it's scary to live in a haunted house. Whittington laughed and said, "No, it isn't. It's a peek into the other side. And when I'm gone, I'm gonna come back and check on it."

I enjoyed the tour but was happy to leave safely on this side of reality. ■

ABOVE Chet found Mitchel Whittington, owner of the Grove, to be totally normal. Chet, not so much.

**TCP WEB EXTRA** See if Chet's video includes anybody from the other side greeting him. Watch all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

## Know Before You Go

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

## OCTOBER

07

**Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: River of Stars**, (830) 792-7469, [symphonyofthehills.org](http://symphonyofthehills.org)

08

**New Braunfels [8-9] Willie Nelson & Family With Special Guest Pat Green**, (830) 964-3800, [whitewaterrocks.com](http://whitewaterrocks.com)

**Fredericksburg [8-10] Texas Mesquite Arts Festival**, (830) 997-8515, [texasmesquiteartfestivals.com](http://texasmesquiteartfestivals.com)

**Ingram [8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30] The Bad Seed**, (830) 367-5121, [ctxlivetheatre.com](http://ctxlivetheatre.com)

09

**Brenham Johnny Cash Tribute by Bennie Wheels**, (979) 337-7240, [thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Fort McKavett Fall Star Party**, (325) 396-2358, [facebook.com/visitfortmckavett](https://facebook.com/visitfortmckavett)

**Ingram Kerr County Celtic Festival**, (830) 367-5121, [kerrcountyceltic.com](http://kerrcountyceltic.com)

**Kyle Founders' Parade**, (512) 262-3939, [cityofkyle.com](http://cityofkyle.com)

**Lago Vista St. Mary, Our Lady of the Lake Oktoberfest**, (512) 267-2644, [stmaryoktoberfest.org](http://stmaryoktoberfest.org)

**Stonewall VFD Fall Fish Fry Drive-Thru**, (830) 644-5571, [visitfredericksburgtx.com](http://visitfredericksburgtx.com)

**Chappell Hill [9-10] Scarecrow Festival**, (979) 836-6033, [chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com](http://chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com)

14

**Edom [9-10] Art Festival,**  
(903) 258-5192,  
visitedom.com

15

**South Padre Island [14-16]  
Hispanic Genealogical  
Conference,** (956) 497-6680,  
rgvhgs.org

**Victoria Project Tickled  
Pink,** (361) 649-6190,  
crossroadsguardiansofhope.com

**Canton [15-16] Texas Star  
Quilters Guild Show,**  
(214) 289-3936, texasstar  
quilters.wixsite.com/tsqg

**La Grange [15-16] Heritage  
Fest & Muziky,** (979) 968-9399,  
czechtexas.org

16

**Canton Van Zandt County  
Veterans Memorial Military  
Show,** (972) 896-0776,  
vzcm.org

**Creedmoor Oktoberfest,**  
(512) 243-6700,  
cityofcreedmoortx.gov

**George West Michael Twitty:  
Memories of Conway Show,**  
(361) 436-1098,  
dobie-westtheatre.com

**Lakehills Medina Lake  
Fire Department BBQ,**  
(830) 751-2525,  
facebook.com/medinalakevfd

**McKinney Halloween at  
the Heard,** (972) 562-5566,  
heardmuseum.org

**Palestine Dogwood Double  
5K/10K,** (903) 723-5100,  
visitpalestine.com

**Ponder Denton County  
Cowboy Church Family Fall  
Festival,** (940) 479-2043,  
dentoncountycowboychurch.org

MORE EVENTS >

**TCP** *Submit Your Event*

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

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# Fredericksburg

## Getaway Contest

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### Pick of the Month

#### Texas Fleece & Fiber Festival

Kerrville, October 28–31  
 (361) 537-0503  
[texasfleeceandfiber.com](http://texasfleeceandfiber.com)

A small group of hand spinners and weavers organized this festival in 1989. It continues to promote natural Texas fibers by educating the public and marketing products of the animals the organizers raise. Read *Serendipity Spinners* from May 2021 on our website to learn more about the craft of spinning wool.

#### OCTOBER EVENTS CONTINUED

16

**Waco Oakwood Cemetery's Walking Tales**, (254) 717-1763, [facebook.com/heartoftexasstorytellingguild](https://facebook.com/heartoftexasstorytellingguild)

**Waxahachie St. Joseph Oktoberfest**, (972) 938-1953, [stjosephwaxahachie.com](http://stjosephwaxahachie.com)

17

**Palacios First Baptist Church of Palacios Homecoming Sunday**, (361) 972-5486, [fbcpalacios.org](http://fbcpalacios.org)

20

**Lufkin Steep Canyon Rangers**, (936) 633-5454, [angelinaarts.org](http://angelinaarts.org)

21

**Fredericksburg [21–23] Food & Wine Fest**, (830) 997-8515, [fbgfoodandwinefest.com](http://fbgfoodandwinefest.com)

**Warrenton [21–30] Renck Hall Antique Show**, (979) 966-7083, [renckhallandfield.com](http://renckhallandfield.com)

22

**Burton [22–30] La Bahia Antique Show**, (979) 289-2684, [labahiaantiques.com](http://labahiaantiques.com)

23

**Brenham Quebe Sisters**, (979) 337-7240, [thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Hearne Sesquicentennial Celebration**, (979) 595-8150, [cityofhearne.org](http://cityofhearne.org)

**Point Venture Holiday Bazaar**, (281) 799-0114, [facebook.com/pvholidaybazaar](https://facebook.com/pvholidaybazaar)

25

**Jacksonville Trunk or Treat**, (903) 586-2217, [jacksonvilletexas.com](http://jacksonvilletexas.com)

30

**Sanger Sellabration**, (940) 458-7702, [sangertexas.com/sellabration](http://sangertexas.com/sellabration)

**Seguin Pecan Fest**, (830) 379-0933, [seguingonuts.com](http://seguingonuts.com)

## NOVEMBER

04

**Sulphur Springs [4–7] The Wall That Heals**, (903) 243-2206, [thewallthatheals-sstx.org](http://thewallthatheals-sstx.org)

06

**George West A Day of Stories**, (361) 436-1098, [dobie-westtheatre.com](http://dobie-westtheatre.com)

**McKinney St. Gabriel Holiday Boutique**, (972) 542-7170, [stgabriel.org](http://stgabriel.org)

**Granbury [6–7] Sesquicentennial Celebration**, (817) 573-5548, [visitgranbury.com](http://visitgranbury.com)

**Huntsville [6–7] Holiday Market**, (936) 661-2545, [huntsvilleantiqueshow.com](http://huntsvilleantiqueshow.com)

# Fillin' Stations

Some are tourist attractions. Others are a bit more off the beaten path. Fillin' stations can transport us to another time and serve as a place to fill up our vehicles and our bellies. Load up the station wagon and drive down for some full-service fun and adventure.

BY GRACE FULTZ

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

KIMBERLY FURNISH  
KARNES EC

"An old pump in historic downtown Llano."

JANICE REAVES  
JACKSON EC

"Thomas Reaves waiting to serve the next customer at an Humble station in Livingston, circa 1930s."

BILLY LAUDERDALE  
PEDERNALES EC

Vintage Gulf full-service fillin' station in Waco, at North 15th Street and Washington Avenue.

THERESA LAGUNA  
PEDERNALES EC

"Old-time gas station in Schulenburg."



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE OCT 10 Public Art
- DUE NOV 10 The Texas Experience
- DUE DEC 10 All Wet

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

**TCP WEB EXTRA** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Fillin' Stations photos.



## Not About To Fixate

We love our old home, even without the wonders a makeover could bring

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

**MY HUSBAND** can watch fixer-upper programs for hours. Not me. I disappear while show hosts transform one outdated house after another into spectacular showcases. Thank you, but I'll keep our home's mostly original look and layout.

Still, sometimes a fixer-upper segment reels me in. I sneak glances at the TV while hosts work their magic on a house that will soon have a fresh design and sophisticated decor. As the reveal unfolds and the homeowners react with unbridled joy, I can't help but wonder ...

*What if?*

What if we remodeled our 1950s kitchen? What if we replaced the laminate countertops with glossy granite? Put in snazzy backsplashes and dramatic lighting? Maybe knock out some pine cabinets and add an island? Take down a dining

room wall for a more open feel? Pull up the vinyl tiles and put in plank flooring?

Years ago we splurged on upgrades to our bathrooms. We bought new sinks and light fixtures. A contractor did some tile work, but the same old vinyl floor tiles stayed. So did a white porcelain gas wall heater.

Guests love that heater. Our built-in ironing board, too. "My grandparents had those in their house," they recall fondly.

They also love our oak flooring in the bedrooms and living room. They don't see the water splotches, ugly scratches and other stains. I rarely do either. Likewise, I neglect to see claw marks on a pocket door. A back doorbell that's never worked. A walk-in closet without a door (so I hung a long curtain).

Oh, but if the kitchen's wooden drawers had rollers. Our utensil drawer sticks the worst. And the cabinets could really use fresh paint. As needed, I touch up worn spots. A few nicks reveal mustard yellow and fire engine red, bygone colors chosen by the couple who built the house in 1956.

She taught first grade in our town and hosted Easter egg hunts for her students in the backyard. He was the ag teacher at the high school. Together they raised their three children and later, both in their 70s, drew their last breaths in the house we've now called home for nearly two decades.

*What if?*

Yes, I wonder. I confess that sometimes fixer-upper shows sway me to think our house isn't good enough. That a remodel and updates would make me happier.

But would they?

Deep down I know the truth. We may not live in a showcase. But, scars and all, this house is where we feel the most content, comfortable and safe. We have everything we need. And, after all, isn't that what makes any house a true home? ■



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All orders ship within 3 business days of payment. Unlike other companies, if we don't have a product in stock, we don't sell it.



### No Order Minimum

Whether buying a small gift or making a large investment, we place no restrictions on order size.



### IRA & 401K Rollovers

Investing in precious metals with a self-directed IRA is easier than you might think. We have the resources necessary to make the process hassle-free.



### Full Transparency

We proudly publish our buy and sell prices online. We have no salespeople, no commissions, no gimmicks, and we will never, ever solicit our clients.

# dish

## Save a Bundle on TV and Internet!

**\$200**  
**Get TV. Get \$100. Add Internet. Get \$200.**  
 Visa® Prepaid Card  
 1234 5678 9012 3456  
 4000  
 Gift Card  
 EXPIRES END 01/25  
 VISA  
Mention code Card100 when you order TV only. Mention code Card200 when you order both TV and internet services. Courtesy of GoDISH.com with activation, certain conditions apply. Free \$200 VISA Gift Card when you order a qualifying service (premium customer qualification only).

# \$64<sup>99</sup> month for TV

### 2-YEAR TV PRICE LOCK!

### Add Internet!

# + Blazing-Fast Internet

## It's All Included!

- ✓ Includes 190 Channels with Locals
- ✓ Includes Hopper Smart HD DVR
- ✓ Includes HD Programming
- ✓ Includes One TV, Add More for \$5/ea.
- ✓ Includes Voice Remote Requires internet connected Hopper.



## FREE Premium Channels

After 3 mos. you will be billed \$30/mo unless you call to cancel.

## NETFLIX

— Fully Integrated —  
 Just Change The Channel And Watch!  
Netflix subscription required.

~~\$59<sup>99</sup> month for Internet~~ **\$40 per month for Internet**

- Speeds from 25Mbps-1 Gbps
- No Matter Where You Live
- Now with Unlimited Data!

### Save up to \$20/month!\*

\*\$ off discount offers vary by service address. TV service not required for Internet. Speeds and prices vary by provider. Call for details or visit godish.com/internet

godish.com/pricelock 🔍

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**1-866-290-7151**  
Mon-Fri: 7am-10pm • Sat: 7am-9pm • Sun: 10am-7pm Central Time

**dish**  
 Authorized Retailer

Offer for new and qualifying former customers only. Important Terms and Conditions:  
 Qualification: Advertised price requires credit qualification and 24-month commitment. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 11/15/21. 2-Year Commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee at \$64.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 programming package, local channels, HD service fees, and Hopper Duo Smart DVR for 1 TV. Included in 2-year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$79.99 for AT120+, \$89.99 for AT200, \$99.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15). Regional Sports: RSN Surcharge up to \$3/mo. applies to AT120+ and higher packages and varies based on location. NOT included in 2-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. Premium Channels: 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$30/mo. for Showtime, Starz, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. Remote: The DISH Voice Remote with the Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey, or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. The Google Assistant Smart Home features require Google account and compatible devices. Google is a trademark of Google LLC. Other: Netflix streaming membership required. All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price lock are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$9.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 2 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Indiana C.P.D Reg. No. - 19-08615. ©2021 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$40 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability of 25 Mbps plan is subject to change without notice. The application of "Unlimited Data with no Hard Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly mean that your access to the internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.