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FOR WILDFIRES

SOLID GROUND
20 YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Texas Coop Power

FOR KARNES EC MEMBERS

AUGUST 2025

Give It a Whirl

Why so many people
are flipping out
over disc golf



State of Texas

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August 2025



10

06 Disc Jockeys

Texas has become a destination for a sport that just about anybody can play.

*By Margaret Buranen
Photos by Kenny Braun*

'Every Part of Texas Is at Risk'

Prepare now for wildfires that can strike anywhere and almost anytime.

By Chris Burrows

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ON THE COVER
Marty Ford tees off at the Flying Armadillo Disc Golf Club in San Marcos as Kenny Roycroft looks on.
Photo by Kenny Braun

ABOVE
A firefighter works the 2024 Smokehouse Creek Fire in the Panhandle.
Photo by Sam Craft | Courtesy Texas A&M AgriLife Marketing and Communications

Kaufman: The Next Frontier



Maybe you've noticed all the moving vans east of Dallas, heading into Co-op Country?

Many are drawn to Kaufman County, the second-fastest-growing county in the country between July 1, 2023, and July 1, 2024, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative is headquartered in Kaufman, the county seat.

"I do think a lot of people are attracted to that small-town vibe," Mayor Jeff Jordan said.

"It's really the next frontier," said Anne Glasscock, Kaufman Chamber of Commerce CEO.

"Education is what remains after you have forgotten everything you learned in school."

—ANONYMOUS



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Country Life

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FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Another day, another ...

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: **It's summer, and I'm ready for ...**

Homemade peach ice cream.

HARRY POWER
FARMERS EC
FORNEY

Sleeping in—I'm a teacher.

STU BERKOWITZ
PEDERNALES EC
MANCHACA

Garden-fresh tomatoes.

JAMES SELF
DEAF SMITH EC
HEREFORD

Watermelon, corn on the cob and potato salad.

STACEY MCINTOSH
TRINITY VALLEY EC
FORNEY

Cheves (beer), trips and vacation.

SYLVIA ARMENDARIZ
MAGIC VALLEY EC
EDINBURG

Visit our website to see more responses.

JUNE 2025 Gorging a Path

“We came from Massachusetts, where we had a dairy goat farm. What a blast these little guys are!”

PAT HOFFMAN
CENTRAL TEXAS EC
LLANO



Goats Galore

I found it ironic to read about goats “buzz sawing their way through a thicket of brambles” in the cover story [*Gorging a Path*, June 2025], followed by the last piece describing a man using a chain saw to cut through thorns and brush on his newly purchased property [*Cutting Through*, June 2025].

Seems that goats for hire may have been the perfect helpers for his situation.

Peggy Rhea
Pedernales EC
Austin

My dad moved his wife and four young daughters in 1959 from Chicago for a new job at LSS as a mining engineer working on the open pit mines. I remember the Saturday mornings when I would ride with my dad while he drove around the mines. I had my own hard hat.

I also remember the fun we had at the lake playing on the enormous inner tubes from the huge tires off the mining equipment.

Jane Sykes
CoServ
Denton

Memories From the Mill

My daddy, James W. Rich Jr., worked as a millwright at Lone Star Steel [*Steel to the Stars*, June 2025]. He was part of the crew shown in the picture in front of the large piece of equipment.

We lost him six years ago, so to see him in this picture gave us such joy.

Stephanie Lowe
Pedernales EC
Liberty Hill

Slivers of Ice

When Mr. Hessee would deliver ice for the icebox, I remember what a big, muscular man he was [*Texas Chilly*, June 2025]. While he was putting the 50-pound block of ice in the icebox, all the neighborhood kids would wait and then lift the tarp to get a sliver of ice because it was 100-plus degrees outside.

Sterling Hartman
Pedernales EC
Cedar Park

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
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Austin, TX 78701

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

 Texas Co-op Power

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COURTESY LADIES OF LONE STAR



DISC

*Texas has become
a destination for a
sport that just about
anybody can play*



JOCKEYS

BY MARGARET BURANEN • PHOTOS BY KENNY BRAUN

A downturn in the oil industry in 2018 made for slow days at Lone Star Molding, a family-owned business in Conroe. But as injection molding orders for gaskets and seals from oil field companies dried up, brothers Travis and Synjin Dillard and their sister, Britney Ochoa, had an idea.

They begged their father, Terry, to try making some golf discs, thinking that would be fun, if nothing else. The brothers had been playing disc golf since they were in middle school.

"Things were slow, so my dad said, 'We'll try it,'" Ochoa says. It soon soared.

Ochoa, who started playing the sport two years ago, says Lone Star Disc now uses about 60 molds and nine types of plastic to make discs in just about every color combination that range from "stiffer to softer, more flexible and heavier to lighter." LSD says it's the only company supplying the world with discs made, stamped and shipped in Texas—selling thousands annually.

The family had tapped into something big. Even decades after it first came to Texas, disc golf—one of the most inexpensive and easiest sports to learn—is still landing new players, from kids to older adults.

Among more than 16,200 disc golf courses in 91 countries, Texas has more than any other state—720—according to UDisc, a mobile scoring app popular among players. The

courses are in state and city parks and on private land. Some are owned by churches, breweries and universities. Worldwide, 89% of disc golf courses are free to play.

The sport is a great way to get outdoors, move around and get those steps. That's one of the appeals for pro player Emily Weatherman of Abilene.

"Disc golf is for everyone," she says. "It's a good source of exercise. Get outside, grab a disc, and have fun and always believe in yourself."

Weatherman has good reason to believe in herself. She won her first Disc Golf Pro Tour event at age 18 and was named the tour's female rookie of the year in 2024. She says that honor "means so much to me, to be recognized like that."

Now in her second year as a touring pro, one of the sport's brightest young stars has played in tournaments all over the U.S. and in New Zealand.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The Flying Armadillo Disc Golf Club in San Marcos features an observation tower and shaded picnic tables. Micah Caldwell, front, and Derek Forrest mimic Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* drawing. Discs made by Lone Star Disc in Conroe. Synjin Dillard takes a shot on the company's private nine-hole course. An obstacle on the minicourse at Flying Armadillo. Craig Foster rests with a new disc.

She got started when her parents put a disc in her hand when she was about 5. By 2018, when she was 12, she started playing competitively.

“My dad had played for a long time. He started teaching my brother, my mother and me to play. It was a family activity we did together,” Weatherman says. “I like the competitive aspect of it. I’ve always been competitive. It’s not a team sport, so I didn’t have to depend on anyone else.”

Like the other golf, disc golf involves players moving from hole to hole on a course. But instead of hitting a ball with various clubs, advancing it closer to and into a hole, players throw discs. And the hole is actually an elevated basket of hanging chains. The player with the fewest total throws in a round, generally nine or 18 holes, wins.

Putting—throwing the disc into the basket from about 10 yards or less—is the most challenging part for Weatherman. Even expert players can be challenged by the wind, she says. “You can never stop learning in disc golf.”



One of Weatherman’s favorite courses is at Will Hair Park in her hometown. She says she enjoys encountering kids on the course and helping them or giving them some encouragement. “I love watching kids get excited about learning a new skill,” she says.

Disc golf has relatively little history, much of which can be traced to the Frisbee, a toy patented by “Steady” Ed Headrick in 1967. He opened the first official disc golf course, in Pasadena, California, in 1975 and patented the “pole hole,” which has become a course standard, in 1977. Texas’ oldest known surviving course, at Bartholomew Park in East Austin, was built in 1982.

LEFT Kenny Roycroft with his cart and array of discs needed to navigate a course’s obstacles and challenges.

ABOVE At Flying Armadillo, Marty Ford goes for the opening in a grain hopper on a hole.



GIVE IT A SPIN

Among the most popular and picturesque Texas courses are:

- **Rocky Hills Disc Golf Course** in Ovalo, one of the top 100 courses in the world, boasts 21 holes for advanced players.
- **The Hideaway Disc Golf Ranch** in Terrell has a 19-hole course around a scenic lake.
- **Will Hair Park** in Abilene and **Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park** in Austin offer fun, technical courses in city parks.
- **Dino Hills Disc Golf Farm** in Glen Rose has three courses.
- **Sprinkle Valley Disc Golf Course** in Austin is a new course with a taproom.
- **The Zip Disc Golf Course** in Helotes is in a valley with zip lines running overhead.
- **Shawshank Disc Golf Penitentiary** in Huntsville, **Tom McCutcheon Disc Golf Course** in Lewisville, **Brushy Creek Municipal Utility District** in Round Rock and **Brazos Park East** in Waco are among the most scenic.
- **Lindsey Park** and **South Springs Disc Golf Course**, both in Tyler, offer courses tucked in among beautiful East Texas pines.

UDisc says its 1.26 million global users logged more than 20 million rounds in 2024—a tally that can't account for untold numbers of casual players. College students are a big part of the sport's growth.

Texas A&M University's men's and women's disc golf teams consistently rank among the top 25 U.S. collegiate teams, 285 of which compete through College Disc Golf, founded in 2007. There are 13 other Texas schools with disc golf teams or club programs, including the universities of Texas and North Texas, and Texas Tech and Texas State universities.

But almost no one is too young or old or far from a course to give it a throw.

Michael Lambert and his family, members of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, own the Flying Armadillo Disc Golf Club in San Marcos. The club has an 18-hole course and a shorter minicourse for kids and beginners that was once ranked No. 34 in the world on UDisc.

On a regular course, the holes are 100 yards apart, he says. The shorter course is a third of that distance.

"There's an obstacle or a whimsical something on every hole, so the course is shorter and more engaging," he says. "It's huge with youth and kids."

Lambert started playing disc golf with family as a teenager, about 20 years ago. About 11 years ago, he bought 25 acres flush with woods, cactuses and three plywood deer stands. The family spent two years turning the property into the disc golf club.

His favorite part of owning Flying Armadillo is seeing kids having fun. He says church groups, scout troops and other youth groups come to play. For many kids, such outings are their introduction to the game.

UDisc reports 1,165 disc golf courses were built in 2024—the fifth straight year with more than 1,000 new courses, perhaps helped along by the pandemic, when a lot of folks were looking for more socially distanced outdoor activities.

Lambert says the challenging parts of disc golf are "getting your form correct and learning to throw

the different types of discs." There are three main types—drivers, midrange and putters. An experienced player might carry 15–20 discs.

He thinks that people who've never played a round of disc golf would be surprised "at how beneficial it can be, physically and mentally." And really, all you need to start is one disc, but as the family in Conroe has learned over the years, golfers like to have options.

"We learned that everyone is different," Ochoa says. "People like different colors or different pictures or designs. That was our biggest hurdle."

The family business' discs run \$8–\$30, but any disc will do if you're just looking for a relaxing round on the links.

"I don't typically enjoy lifting weights or jogging, but I can go all day playing disc golf," Lambert says. "It's a great leisure exercise. You can enjoy spending time with friends and family. It's a mental break if you're playing by yourself." ■



‘Every Part of

Prepare now for wildfires that can strike anywhere and almost anytime

BY CHRIS BURROWS

The National Weather Service’s Central Texas office didn’t mince words: “Dangerous, potentially historic, extreme fire weather conditions are forecast Tuesday across our area. Very strong winds and low humidity will support the rapid spread and difficult suppression of any wildfires that may ignite.”

Responding to that warning, earlier this year, an Austin meteorologist quickly posted on Facebook an evacuation checklist.

Keyboard cranks came for her in the comments.

“Quick everyone panic!”

“Talk about causing unnecessary panic.”

“It was raining this morning, so, thanks.”

And it did rain. A frontal system swept across Central Texas early that next morning, March 4, bringing with it 40–50 mph gusts. The wind facilitated a rapid drop in humidity and the wicking of moisture from vegetation—creating ideal conditions for wildfires.

“Those critical jokers must not have been here during the 2011 fires,” one commenter countered on Facebook. “Wildfires are not a joke, something to be laughed at.”

By 7:30 p.m. that day—despite the brief rains—there were nine active wildfires across Texas and four in the Austin-San Antonio area, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service.

In a state as big and geographically diverse as Texas, it’s always wildfire season. And no area of the state is immune. Fires can happen anywhere and almost anytime.

One of the first wildfires of 2025 scorched nearly 4,000 acres in Moore County in the Panhandle. The fire was detected February 1 and burned for four days.



ANDREW MCGUIRE | COURTESY TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE



Texas Is at Risk'



SAM CRAFT | COURTESY TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Firefighters battle the Smokehouse Creek Fire in March 2024. The blaze, the largest wildfire in Texas history, raged for nearly three weeks and burned more than 1 million acres in the Panhandle.

In a state as big and geographically diverse as Texas, it's always wildfire season.

“Under certain weather conditions and fuel conditions, every part of Texas is at risk for wildfires,” says Heather Gonzales, a fire information and education program specialist with the forest service. “Any region that’s had a period of extended drying or little precipitation and then also has increased winds or low relative humidity values has increased wildfire risk.

“The region with the greatest risk can vary week to week or even day to day.”

Over the past 10 years, more than 84,000 wildfires across the state have scorched more than 4.5 million acres. They’re no longer strictly a concern for rural folks. About 85% of wildfires, on average, ignite within 2 miles of a community—a rising trend as Texas continues to grow and more people live in what the forest service calls the wildland urban interface.

The WUI is where developed and undeveloped land come together—where lives and structures are at greater risk from fires. That’s where the forest service focuses its community outreach and support.

Since its inception in 1915, the forest service has been tasked with wildfire suppression, defending the property and lives of Texans through a network of strategically placed firefighters and equipment supported by the state’s more than 1,800 municipal and volunteer fire departments.

But more and more, as Smokey Bear will tell you, the forest service depends on everyday Texans to prevent wildfires from starting in the first place and protect themselves when fires spread.

10 Tips To Stay Ready

1. Clear your roof, gutters and eaves of leaves and pine needles.
2. Space out trees and plants, and plant away from structures.
3. Install or repair metal screens on attic and foundation vents.
4. Check fire extinguishers and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them.
5. Create and discuss an evacuation plan with your family.
6. Talk to your children about fire safety and not playing with matches.
7. Compost leaves and organic waste instead of burning.
8. Clear dead wood and dense flammable vegetation from around your home.
9. Clear vegetation around the base of trees, and prune trees away from your home.
10. Stay informed of weather conditions, area wildfires and burn bans.

Source: Texas A&M Forest Service



SMOKEY BEAR: COURTESY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

“The best way to mitigate your wildfire risk is to prepare for it well before a wildfire happens,” Gonzales says. “Now is a good time to address any vulnerabilities you might have around your home or any structures on your property, reducing excessive vegetation and removing dead vegetation from the little nooks and crannies around your house and gutters.”

Wildfires can move quickly, up to 14 mph, depending on the wind. That means they can jump from the horizon to your home within minutes.

“A lot of times, it’s not the flame front itself coming directly to your property, it’s embers created from the wildfire that can blow 1–2 miles away,” Gonzales says. “If enough of those embers collect, or if whatever they’re collecting on is dry enough, it could potentially ignite a fire on your home.”

Over the past several years, new technologies have been helping in the battle against wildfires.

In Austin, for example, the city has deployed an artificial intelligence-driven wildfire detection system that employs 13 high-definition, 360-degree cameras.

Texas A&M University researchers partnered with Mid-South Electric Cooperative in 2017 to test special sensors, which the university spent more than a decade developing. While 90% of wildfires are human-caused, these sensors have helped to lessen the risk of fire sparked by electric infrastructure.

Worldwide, a consortium of engineers competed in 2024 for a \$750,000 prize by developing plans for the next generation in AI detection and autonomous wildfire response.

But for homeowners and landowners across Texas, the guidance hasn’t changed: Be aware of the dangers, mitigate the risks to your property and avoid sparking a fire.

“The biggest thing is just to be very situationally aware,” Gonzales says.

That part is easier than ever.

The Texas A&M Forest Service website offers several resources—including a live wildfire risk map and a live map of known fires—at texaswildfirerisk.com. There’s also the free Watch Duty mobile app, launched in 2021, which draws on various data sources to provide live updates on wildfires nationwide. Your local emergency management office also is a great resource and can fill you in on local burn bans and restrictions.

For large plots of land, prescribed burns can be a great tool for mitigating risk, and the forest service awards grants every year to support these efforts—\$951,000 this year alone for 168 landowners to burn 35,138 acres.

When it comes to mitigating the risk to smaller plots, homes and businesses, start with your landscaping. (Don’t set it on fire; prescribed burns are for professionals only.) Keep grass short, but don’t mow during the heat of the day or anytime wildfire risks are high, and check for spark risks, like rocks or metal objects, lurking in your yard.

“Keep the lawn lean, clean and green,” Gonzales says.

Prepare Your Farm or Ranch

Help wildfire first responders by staying ready.

- Maintain a 30-foot barrier free of burnable materials around fields and structures.
- Inform your local fire department about access roads, water sources, fence lines and preferred wildfire suppression tactics.
- Establish contingency plans for feeding livestock, and create a plan to relocate livestock if fire is imminent and time permits.
- Plan evacuation routes, as fire may make your usual routes unsafe.
- Create wide fuel breaks along roads: Prune large trees to 10 feet from the ground, remove ladder fuels such as tall brush and small trees, thin trees to create crown spacing of 25–30 feet, and break up thick brush.
- Maintain fuel breaks with regular maintenance.

Source: Texas A&M Forest Service



COURTESY TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Prune trees at least 6 feet up, and remove taller bushes or anything underneath trees that can serve as ladder fuel, allowing fire to climb into the tree canopy. Clear flammable materials from the immediate area around your home, storing firewood at least 30 feet away. Finally, create an evacuation kit and have a plan and route ready for quick escapes.

While Texas doesn’t have fire seasons but rather a “fire year,” Gonzales says August can be a particularly risky time.

“You have high temperatures, low relative humidity values, lack of precipitation and winds also come together to increase fire potential,” she says.

Start planning now. ■




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36	8.77	7.93	10.35	9.44	14	13	22	18	59	30.37	23.51	55.50	38.76	98	67	186	126
37	8.77	8.15	10.52	9.81	15	13	22	20	60	33.49	24.28	60.76	41.71	109	73	206	136
38	8.77	8.16	11.19	10.18	16	14	24	21	61	36.49	25.09	66.43	47.10	122	83	236	154
39	9.13	8.31	11.62	10.55	17	15	25	22	62	39.88	27.91	73.90	51.32	136	92	262	166
40	9.55	8.48	12.04	10.98	18	16	27	24	63	43.69	34.01	81.54	57.25	153	102	287	187
41	10.05	8.72	13.10	11.58	20	17	30	26	64	47.91	38.28	90.20	62.32	170	112	323	200
42	10.48	9.01	14.21	12.30	22	19	33	29	65	52.81	40.88	100.33	68.23	191	125	361	223
43	10.98	9.36	14.72	13.18	23	20	38	31	66	58.71	44.61	114.29	75.40	211	135	392	242
44	11.58	9.73	15.67	14.10	25	22	41	34	67	64.59	49.08	125.27	83.64	234	146	436	261
45	12.17	10.15	16.86	15.16	28	24	45	38	68	72.24	59.65	143.07	105.55	254	173	485	322
46	12.84	10.64	17.85	15.83	30	25	49	40	69	79.34	64.22	158.23	129.28	288	188	547	352
47	13.43	11.16	19.03	16.68	32	27	54	44	70	86.85	68.11	177.24	147.66	318	203	595	375
48	13.48	11.88	20.27	17.37	35	29	58	47	71	102.45	82.60	203.10	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.69	12.33	21.73	18.32	37	31	63	52	72	113.68	93.16	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.36	12.98	23.00	19.82	40	33	69	57	73	127.55	106.68	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.37	13.75	25.30	20.65	45	35	78	62	74	142.08	119.36	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.36	14.87	27.63	22.13	49	38	87	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
53	17.46	15.88	30.95	24.81	54	42	98	73	76	200.03	168.51	418.29	276.67	785	530	1489	982
54	18.68	16.72	33.99	26.20	60	46	110	81	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	956	658	1797	1215
55	20.70	17.50	37.13	27.85	67	50	121	90	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1167	817	2179	1504
56	22.69	19.48	42.01	31.07	74	53	138	96	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1389	983	2578	1807
57	24.69	20.63	45.81	33.43	81	58	150	107	80	450.50	386.47	816.15	596.78	1625	1180	3050	2164

* \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 monthly rates are rounded up to the nearest dollar. Therefore, actual monthly rates at \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 may be slightly less.

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GENERAL
MANAGERERIC
HALFMANN

Who Owns What?

Untangling electrical equipment responsibilities

AS SUMMER CONTINUES with long days and high temperatures, the potential for severe weather persists. Storms can arrive quickly and hit hard, sometimes causing significant damage to essential electrical equipment throughout our community.

Karnes Electric Cooperative is always prepared to respond swiftly to outages and restore power safely. To get the power back on as quickly as possible, it's also essential for our members to understand which parts of the electrical system are their responsibility and which are maintained by the co-op. Understanding these key differences can help speed up repairs and ensure everyone stays safe when the weather turns rough.

Your co-op is responsible for maintaining and repairing the equipment and lines that run to your home, including utility poles, distribution power lines, electric meters and padmount transformers.

Our members are responsible for the equipment located downstream of the electric meter, including any underground service lines that lead into the structure and the service panel or breaker box. Members also are responsible for the weatherhead and service mast, equipment located outside that keeps things safe and dry as power enters your home or business.

In the unfortunate circumstance that any equipment owned by you, the homeowner, is damaged, contact a licensed electrician to conduct repairs.

A professional has the experience and know-how to assess and manage these types of repairs safely and correctly.

When severe weather damages electrical equipment, completing any necessary repairs to your equipment is an important first step before our crews can restore power to your home or business.

Another way Karnes EC ensures reliable electric service and minimizes damage from severe weather is by regular tree trimming. Our community takes great pride in the beautiful trees and landscaping that contribute to the natural beauty where we live, but with regular trimming throughout our service territory, we improve service reliability.

You can help us maintain reliable service by reporting any tree limbs that obstruct power lines outside your home.

If there are overgrown limbs or vegetation around the service line on your property, please call a professional tree trimming service to assist.

I know there's never a good time to be without electricity. But by working together to understand the equipment that powers daily life, we can be better prepared to start the repair and restoration process when severe weather impacts our community.

If you have any questions about your electrical equipment, we're here to help. ■



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Use Caution Near Co-op Equipment

AS YOU OR your children find yourself spending more time outdoors this summer, Karnes Electric Cooperative reminds you to exercise caution near electrical equipment maintained by the co-op.

Substations and power lines carry extremely high voltages, and if contact is made, the results can be disastrous—even deadly. Follow these guidelines to keep you and your family safe.

Never climb trees near power lines. If you make contact with a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become the path of electricity from the line to the ground. If you encounter an animal trapped in a tree near power lines or inside a substation, do not attempt to remove it—no matter how furry and cute! Call your co-op or 911 for assistance.

These days, we're seeing more remote-controlled toys, like drones and airplanes, which can be a great way to have fun outdoors. But these gadgets also bring new safety concerns.

Remember these safety tips when flying a drone:

- ▶ Keep a safe distance from power lines, substations and other electrical equipment when you fly. If contact is made with power infrastructure, many members of your community could be left without electricity.
- ▶ Keep the drone in sight at all times.
- ▶ Avoid flying if weather conditions are unfavorable. High winds could cause you to lose control of the drone.

Your safety is important to us. We hope you'll share the message of electrical safety so that you and others can enjoy plenty of summer days filled with fun. ■

Karnes Electric Cooperative

CONTACT US

P.O. Box 7, Karnes City, TX 78118

Toll-Free 1-888-807-3952

Web karnesec.org

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Please be prepared to provide your account number and meter number.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

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- Mail
- In person
- Night drop
- Kiosk

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Open Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Karnes City Headquarters

1800 N. U.S. Highway 181, Karnes City

Pleasanton Member Service Center

1824 W. Goodwin St., Pleasanton

MISSION STATEMENT

Providing quality service to empower communities and improve lives.



Check us out at
TexasCoopPower.com/karnes



KEC Members Gather for 87th Annual Meeting

DESPITE THREATS OF flash floods and heavy rains, 331 Karnes Electric Cooperative members and guests gathered June 12 at the Karnes City Independent School District Performing Arts Center for the co-op's 87th annual meeting.

Longtime members John and Melinda Franklin were in the crowd. John, a volunteer firefighter, said he had heard of a power pole that caught on fire after being struck by lightning earlier that day. Another member said he and his mother were redirected by first responders multiple times on their way to the meeting and had to cross a flooded road before they arrived.

But sunshine broke through the clouds just in time. Members trickled into the auditorium, where they received goodie bags and watched a prerecorded video detailing 2024 in review. KEC had promised a \$25 bill credit to the first 350 members to arrive, meaning all 221 registered members received it.

During the business portion of the meeting, Melissa Sykes, the co-op's attorney, announced the director election results. Larry R. Schendel of District 1 and L. Scott McClaugherty IV of District 4 ran unopposed and were reelected to three-year terms.

In a prerecorded video, Schendel, board secretary-treasurer, gave the financial report for 2024. The cooperative sold 1.5 billion kilowatt-hours, up 10.5% from the previous year. Operating revenues were \$121.5 million compared to \$119.4 million in 2023. After operating expenses were paid, the operating mar-

gins for 2024 were \$1.3 million. Schendel also reported that KEC returned \$1 million to members in the form of capital credits.

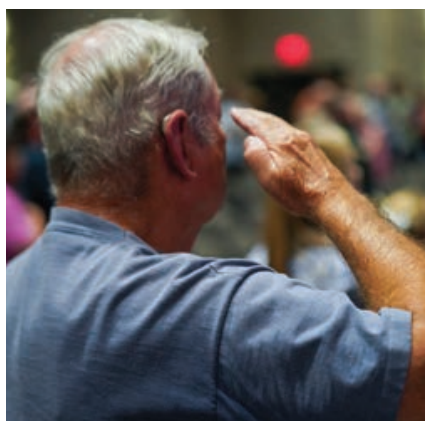
General Manager Eric Halfmann, in his second year at the co-op, told members that getting to know everyone was his personal 2024 highlight, noting it was a year of transitions for himself and KEC. "The management transition opens up a unique opportunity to gain a fresh perspective," he said. "The team did a great job with embracing those opportunities."

In his update, Halfmann said the cost of doing business has increased significantly in the past five years, citing price increases that ranged from 17% up to 100% for materials the co-op uses every day.

He said KEC has held steady members' electric base rate for 16 years. However, to maintain healthy operating margins as well as a safe and reliable system, KEC is conducting a cost-of-service study to determine how much of a rate increase is needed and when it will need to be implemented.

"Our entire team and the board of directors is fully aware of our financial stewardship responsibilities," Halfmann said. "We will continue to work diligently to safeguard that fiduciary duty and stretch every dollar spent."

Kimberly Sanchez, member communications coordinator, informed members about other important updates in 2024 in a prerecorded video, such as KEC's increased use of intelligent devices like reclosers and smart meters.



“This will result in an outage management system that we can utilize for operational analytics, reducing outage response time, reducing the cost of system analysis and improving reliability,” Sanchez said.

Additionally, KEC completed a \$10.5 million work plan in 2024 that included the construction of 536 new connections, 2,297 new poles, 689 pole replacements, and 369 miles of right-of-way clearing and tree trimming.

As communities in the KEC service territory grow, the demand for power is increasing as well. The new Loxley substation, located in the northern part of Atascosa County, is scheduled to be energized in the fourth quarter of 2025.

“This substation is a priority project that will enable us to meet the load demand in that portion of our territory while also improving reliability and creating additional capacity for future growth,” Halfmann said in a video.

Cooperatives are guided by the same set of seven principles. When two co-ops reached out for mutual aid in 2024, KEC was able to practice principle No. 6: Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

“By participating in mutual aid efforts, we not only help people in need but also grow our network of support and gain knowledge and experience that improves our own operations and preparedness,” Halfmann said.

KEC participated in the 2024 American Consumer Satisfaction Index survey, a national cross-industry measurement of customer satisfaction. With a score of 89, KEC scored well above the average electric utility, which ranges between 74 and 78 out of 100 for customer satisfaction. “This score reflects our team’s

passion to deliver quality service and continuously improve,” Halfmann said.

KEC celebrated another achievement when the team surpassed 1 million working hours without a lost-time incident. Despite the transitions around them, Halfmann said, “The team did a great job focusing on our purpose, mission and deliverance.”

Another purpose the co-op pursues is a commitment to supporting its community. Sanchez reported that this year, the co-op awarded 20 scholarships of \$2,500 each to high school seniors across KEC’s service area. She also announced the two students selected to attend the Government-in-Action Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.: Alyssa Pawelek from Falls City Independent School District and Savanna Schuchart from Jourdanton ISD.

After the business portion ended, members stuck around to hear if their names would be called to win a door prize, and 61 lucky members went home with gifts like a 65-inch TV, a grill, Igloo coolers and gift cards. The grand-prize winner, Gary Butschek, won a \$250 bill credit.

Tammy Labus, finance and accounting manager, was celebrating a different prize: her 40th anniversary with the co-op. She began as a general office worker in 1985 and worked her way up. She appreciates her KEC family and all that it does for the local community.

“This is a great place to work,” she said. “I don’t think it can be beaten.” ■



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Signs Your HVAC Is in Trouble

YOUR HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR conditioning system is one of your home's most important and expensive systems. Detecting issues early can help you plan for repairs or equipment replacement.

Equipment functionality issues can affect electricity use, which may result in higher energy bills. The age of your equipment can be a major factor in how it functions. The lifespan of a heating and cooling system is typically 15–20 years.

Proper maintenance and lower use can increase the life of the equipment. To find out the age of your system, look for the manufacture date printed on the nameplate. If you can't find it, search online using the model number or call the manufacturer.

Being thrifty by nature, many of us subscribe to the notion of, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." That said, we need to be prepared for the inevitable. If your system is approaching or past the 20-year mark, start saving for a new system and get replacement estimates.

There are a few warning signs to watch out for if your heating and cooling system needs to be repaired or replaced.

Air conditioning is not cooling as usual. If the air from your AC is warm or not as cool as it usually feels, there's an issue. It could be a problem with the compressor or a refriger-

ant leak. Many refrigerants, especially those used in older systems, are harmful to the environment.

Fix leaks before adding more refrigerant. Special certifications are required for handling refrigerants, so hire a professional to ensure the work is done properly.

Low airflow. If you aren't getting good airflow, it could be an easy fix, such as filter replacement or opening closed dampers. If you've made these fixes and airflow is still below normal levels, contact a professional. There could be a bigger problem with a motor, fan or something else.

Bad odors. Heating and cooling systems sometimes smell when you first start them up for the season. Those smells should be minor and dissipate quickly. Any serious smells—such as burning metal, melting plastic or noxious odors—are a sign that your system is in trouble. If you smell those odors, turn your system off immediately and contact a professional.

Strange noises. There is typically noise associated with the fans and motors in heating and cooling sys-

tems. Take note of any excessive or new noises. If your system is making any clunking, clanging or whistling noises, turn it off and check the filter. If that doesn't solve it, reach out to a pro.

Running frequently. Your system needs to run more to keep up on extreme weather days, but there might be an issue if it runs too often. Short cycling is when a system cycles on and off before completing the heating or cooling process. Contact a professional to diagnose this issue.

Several factors come into play when deciding to fix existing equipment or invest in new equipment. Consider the severity of the issue, repair costs, the likelihood of additional repairs, equipment lifespan and your budget.

The efficiency of your existing system is also a consideration. Heating and cooling technology improvements have come a long way in the past 20 years. Lower operation costs can offset the cost of a new system over time.

Consider your options before you're in desperate need. Get estimates from at least three contractors. Ask the contractor, "If this was your home, what type of system would you install and why?" The best solution for your home might be a different type of equipment. ■

Recent Review of EPA Rules Signals Reliability Wins

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE applauding a recent series of actions announced by the Environmental Protection Agency. These actions would alleviate reliability and cost challenges for electric co-ops across the U.S.

The EPA said it will review and reconsider the Biden administration’s power plant greenhouse gas rule. The agency also plans to reconsider other rules hindering America’s energy dominance, including the mercury and air rule, ozone transport rule, and power plant wastewater rule. The agency also will address a number of fundamental problems with the coal ash program and take other actions to unleash American energy while protecting the environment.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association that represents electric cooperatives in Washington, D.C., flagged concerns with these rules in a letter to Lee Zeldin, EPA administrator, in January. NRECA CEO Jim Matheson met with Zeldin at EPA’s headquarters to discuss these issues.

The letter served as a policy road map recommending ways the EPA could address harmful regulations for electric co-ops while ensuring reliable and affordable power and promoting a healthy environment.

The recent EPA announcements are another critical step that puts our nation on a path toward a more reliable and resilient electric grid—and not a moment too soon. The demand for electricity is skyrocketing, yet unrealistic public policy decisions are forcing always-available generation resources to retire faster than they can be reliably replaced.

Karnes Electric Cooperative appreciates the EPA’s recent actions that bolster American energy dominance with sound policies that protect our environment—without leaving American families in the dark. ■



KARINSASAKI | ISTOCK.COM

Quick Sweet Chili Shrimp

- ¼ cup sweet chili sauce**
- ¼ cup mayonnaise**
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced**
- 14 jumbo shrimp (or 1½–2 pounds medium shrimp), peeled and deveined**
- Olive oil**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**

1. Whisk together the chili sauce, mayonnaise and garlic and set aside.
2. Lightly brush the shrimp with a little olive oil and season with salt and pepper.
3. Cook the shrimp in a preheated grill pan, cast-iron skillet or frying pan until just cooked, about 2 minutes per side. When the shrimp are almost finished cooking, add the chili sauce mixture, stir to combine and warm through.

SERVES 4

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascooppower.com).

Making a Stink

Settlers may have been on to something when they brought asafetida to Texas

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

IF YOU'RE LUCKY, you don't remember the asafetida bags of days gone by. If you're one of the unfortunate few who had firsthand experience with the "assifity" bags, as they were sometimes pronounced, the first thing you remember is the smell—and not in a good way.

Well-meaning mothers used to put asafetida, a pungent root product, in a sachet and tie it around their children's necks, thus ensuring social distancing more than a century before the term was in use. The bags were rumored to ward off everything from the sniffles to spinal meningitis.

Asafetida, unlike many of the early settlers' cures that came from the land, came from drug stores.

The resin is extracted from an herb called asafetida that grows primarily in Iran and Afghanistan and belongs to the same general family as carrots, parsnips, parsley and anise. The resin's common nickname—devil's dung—doesn't help its reputation. The scientific name, *Ferula assa-foetida*, translates to stinking resin. That doesn't help either.

Before there was a market for asafetida, there was silphium, an ancient spice that was so popular people couldn't get enough of it. As a result, it went extinct. Alexander the Great apparently mistook asafetida for silphium during his invasion of Asia in 334 B.C., and this new herb caught on as a substitute and eventually made its odorous way to Africa and Europe.

Asafetida most likely came to America with enslaved Africans who had multiple medicinal, magical and apotropaic uses for it. They developed a tradition of wearing a red flannel bag containing the plant's roots and additives like red pepper, sassafras and snakeroot. That became the preferred use for asafetida in this country, where the asafetida bag became a staple of health care in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Lewis and Clark even took along a pound of asafetida on their expedition of discovery in 1803. We don't know why and there's no record of them using it during the journey, but receipts show Lewis bought a pound for \$1.

By the early 20th century, Americans would turn to the asafetida bag whenever a new health scare hit the news.

In Texas, the January 11, 1912, edition of the *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported that locals "have

resorted to the use of asafetida bags as a precaution against Spinal Meningitis. They are wearing little bags of it around their necks, and hope to thus destroy any germs that come near them. Mothers for the past 50 years have made their children wear an asafetida bag when an epidemic of any sort of sickness prevailed."

Dallas columnist Paul Crume, who grew up in the Panhandle, wrote in 1970 that he had no direct experience with asafetida bags because his family "leaned instead to the mustard plaster school of advanced family medicine. We preferred to hurt rather than stink." But Crume expressed sympathy for those forced to wear the foul-smelling bags around their necks. "They felt," he wrote, tongue slightly in cheek, "that humanity generally was turning up its noses at them."

In 1918, the United States Pharmacopeia recommended asafetida to stave off the Spanish flu pandemic.

Today, it's "used in modern herbalism in the treatment of hysteria, some nervous conditions, bronchitis, asthma and whooping cough," the National Library of Medicine notes. "The volatile oil in the gum is eliminated through the lungs, making this an excellent treatment for asthma."

According to the NLM, it's also used as a sedative, thins the blood and lowers blood pressure.

What's more, rumor has it that asafetida is, or at least used to be, the secret ingredient in Worcestershire sauce. Heinz, which owns Lea & Perrins, doesn't confirm this, but they don't exactly deny it either.

Just before the ferula plants flower, in March and April, producers lay bare the upper part of the roots and cut off the stem close to the ground. They make a dome-shaped structure of twigs and dirt to cover the exposed surface and let it simmer that way for a month or so. Then they slice it and let the juice bleed out of the cut surfaces. This juice is then condensed into asafetida and shipped primarily to India, where it's a staple of Indian cuisine and called hing.

We have turned up our collective noses at asafetida for centuries and saddled it with all manner of unflattering nicknames, but the plant continues to make itself useful (and even tasty) in a number of ways. Best of all, none of those ways include an asafetida bag. ■

Peucedaneae.



Ferula Asa foetida, L.
Stinkasant.

The future of hearing aids has arrived

NEW! HORIZON IX HEARING AIDS

FOX NEWS

NEWSMAX

BUSINESS INSIDER

Forbes

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

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

It's the new Horizon IX hearing aid.

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

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



What makes them so special?

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

What do Horizon IX hearing aids have to offer?

- **Amazing Speech Clarity™**
Effortlessly understand every word, thanks to dual-processing
- **Bluetooth connectivity**
Stream music and phone calls directly to your hearing aids
- **Rechargeable lithium-ion batteries**
28+ hours of battery life and a portable case for on-the-go charging
- **Easy, comfortable fit**
All-day wearing comfort, easy to combine with glasses
- **Free smartphone app**
Adjust settings for every listening situation easily via smartphone

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

Where can I get Horizon IX?

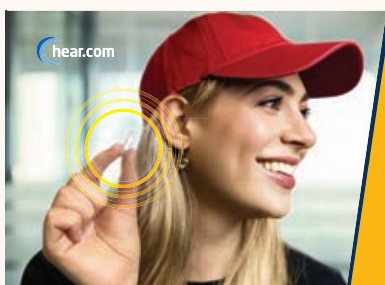
So far, hear.com has helped more than 540,000 Americans enjoy life with better hearing, thanks to Horizon IX. **Now, it's your turn!**

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

START HERE!



Scan the QR code or visit **hear.com/tx** to check if you qualify for a 45-day no-risk trial.





TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



History in a Box

Before it housed kittens, it was packed with a tea you may have heard about

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES WESTON LEWIS

THE GOODMAN KIDS in Laredo pulled out an old wooden box anytime they had show-and-tell at school. It was always sure to gather interest. The box, they claimed—with some good evidence backing them up—played an important role in the American Revolution.

Of course there were skeptics.

How could a box make it thousands of miles and two centuries from 18th century New England to 20th century South Texas? And how could a simple, old box have played a role in the Revolution?

The Goodmans brought the receipts, as is often said today.

Helen Ford Waring, the Goodman children's great-aunt, had tracked the box across generations of her family tree to determine who willed it to whom,

where, when and how—even what they used it for.

It once was a nursery for a litter of kittens and was a cat box for some years. In another family, the box was used by a young girl as a doll house of sorts. The Goodmans had stored it under the dining room table for the primary purpose of being at the ready for show-and-tell.

The box had traveled across Texas, by inheritance, from Corpus Christi to San Antonio to Laredo.

Ford Waring did such a good job proving provenance that in 1976, the U.S. bi-centennial, the Smithsonian Institution came calling. It sought artifacts to display during that significant anniversary of the Revolution and had heard about the box. Experts there did their own research,

of course, decided the claims were legitimate and put it on display at the museum that year. They called it the Robinson Half Chest.

What is this box's backstory? Ford Waring was able to prove that a great-great-great-ancestor of hers was up early one morning in December 1773, walking along the shore near Boston. His name was John Robinson.

He found a nice box made of half-inch-thick wood. Robinson had the reaction we all have, even in modern times, when we come across a well-made sturdy box: a shame to let that box go to waste. Ought to be good for something.

Besides, he knew it was a remnant from the night before, when patriots had sneaked aboard three ships and dumped some 340 boxes of tea from Britain's East India Tea Company into the harbor—the Boston Tea Party. So he stashed it.

Many of the boxes floated out to sea or were destroyed on purpose. But this box survived and was passed down from generation to generation, state to state, until it resided for years near another shore, the Rio Grande.

In 2004, Andre Goodman heard that a Tea Party museum was being built in Boston. He felt that the Robinson Half Chest should have a proper home where more people could see it. He approached them and a deal was struck.

Today the box—the only one known from that famous tea party—has a place of honor in the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum. It has made a round-trip journey of thousands of miles over 250 years. It is now on the same docks where it was tossed into the sea so long ago—the place its journey began. ■

Beefy Burgers

Flavorful ingredients and fun twists are sure to add sizzle

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Burger night is about to get *mucho más* tastier. I whipped up the most mouthwatering burgers packed with chiles and seasonings. No need to fire up the grill—these babies are made indoors. Tonight we're spicing up our burgers while staying out of that Texas summer heat.

Green Chile Burger

1 pound ground beef
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
½ teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 can diced green chiles (4 ounces), drained
8 slices uncooked bacon
4 slices Monterey Jack cheese
Mayonnaise
4 hamburger buns
8 leaves romaine lettuce
1 large tomato, sliced

1. In a bowl, combine ground beef, garlic powder, onion powder, cumin, salt, pepper and chiles.
2. Divide the mixture into 4 equal portions, and form into 4 patties. Place patties on a baking sheet, cover with plastic wrap and chill in fridge 15 minutes.
3. In a skillet over medium-high heat, cook bacon until fully cooked. Set aside.
4. In the same skillet, cook patties 3–5 minutes on each side or until the burgers are browned and cooked through. Top each patty with a slice of cheese.
5. Spread mayonnaise on the bottom buns. Add 2 lettuce leaves and tomato slice to each.
6. Place patty on top, add 2 slices bacon and top with bun.

MAKES 4 BURGERS

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for a Poblano Gordita Burger.



Italian Stallion Burgers

BEVERLY NUBER
COSERV

Imagine the cheesy goodness of pizza sandwiched in a burger bun, creating a mouthwatering combination that satisfies both pizza and burger cravings.

- 1 pound 80/20 ground chuck**
- 3 teaspoons ground oregano**
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder**
- 3 tablespoons tomato purée**
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise**
- 2 hamburger buns**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 4 slices mozzarella cheese**
- 16 slices pepperoni**
- 4 tablespoons pizza sauce**
- 1 bunch fresh basil**

1. Combine ground chuck, oregano, garlic powder and tomato purée. Form into 4 patties, about 5–6 inches across.
2. Spread mayonnaise evenly on buns.
3. Heat a griddle or cast-iron skillet on medium-high heat. Place buns on griddle and lightly toast. Remove from griddle and set aside. Reduce heat to medium.
4. Lightly grease griddle with cooking spray, place patties on griddle and season with salt and pepper.
5. Cook 3–4 minutes, flip over and place mozzarella slice and 4 pepperoni slices on top of each patty. Cook an additional 3–4 minutes.
6. Spread 1 tablespoon pizza sauce on each bottom bun. Stack 2 patties on each bun and spread additional 1 tablespoon pizza sauce over top patty. Add a handful fresh basil leaves and top with bun.

MAKES 2 BURGERS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

\$500 WINNER

Juicy Stuffed Grilled Beef Burgers

MONICA ANDREWS
PEDERNALES EC



Get ready to sink your teeth into the juiciest stuffed burger. Not your average cheeseburger, this burger is stuffed with bacon, jalapeños and plenty of buttery Swiss cheese.



COOK'S TIP We kept the toppings simple with a bit of lettuce for crunch, but Andrews says grilled onions, avocado slices, mushrooms and coleslaw can all be excellent additions.

- 4 slices uncooked bacon, diced**
- 1 medium jalapeño pepper, seeds removed, diced**
- 2 pounds 80/20 ground beef**
- 1 small onion, diced**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- 1 tablespoon Dash garlic and herb seasoning blend**
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper**
- 4 slices Swiss cheese, diced**
- 4 slices cheddar cheese**
- 4 onion hamburger buns, toasted**
- Additional toppings and condiments, as desired**

1. In a skillet over medium-high heat, cook bacon and jalapeño until bacon is cooked but not crispy. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine ground beef, onion, garlic, olive oil, Worcestershire sauce, herb seasoning and black pepper. Try not to overwork the meat.
3. Divide ground beef mixture into 8 equal portions and form into 8 patties, each a little larger than the bun. Top 4 patties with equal amounts of bacon and jalapeño mix and diced Swiss cheese. Top each of those with remaining 4 patties, pinching the edges to seal patty. With a small spoon, make an indentation on the top of each burger so that juices will puddle.
4. Cover and chill in fridge 30 minutes. Preheat grill to medium-high.
5. Grill burgers about 7–8 minutes on each side. Internal temperature should be at least 160 degrees. Top each patty with a slice of cheddar about 1 minute before removing from grill.
6. Allow burgers to rest 5 minutes before serving. Assemble the burgers with toppings of your choice.

MAKES 4 BURGERS

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

OODLES OF NOODLES DUE AUGUST 10

Twirl, toss and slurp your way to some major dough with your best noodle recipe. Our favorites will noodle their way into the January issue, and the best will win \$500. Enter by August 10.

UPCOMING: CHEESECAKE DUE SEPTEMBER 10





Mediterranean Mushroom Burger

GAIL NUBER
COSERV

Color me surprised—this meatless burger was a delight! It's big and juicy with earthy umami flavor that even my meat-loving husband enjoyed. The grilled portobellos are meaty and delicious and cook quickly.

- 4 portobello mushrooms, stems removed
 - 4 ciabatta rolls, sliced in half
 - 1 tablespoon olive oil, divided use
 - 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
 - 1 small red bell pepper, diced
 - ½ cup tzatziki
 - 1 cup shredded lettuce
 - 1 large tomato, sliced
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
 - 1 small bunch fresh dill, chopped
1. Preheat grill to high.
 2. Gently wipe portobellos with a damp paper towel to clean.
 3. Brush the rolls with olive oil. Grill rolls 1 minute, then move them to the warming rack. Brush the grates with the remaining oil. Grill mushrooms, gills down, 3 minutes.
 4. Flip mushrooms and evenly fill each with ¼ cup feta and ¼ of the bell pepper. Grill an additional 3 minutes and remove from grill.
 5. Spread 2 tablespoons tzatziki over each bottom bun. Top with lettuce and

Pro Burger Moves

Don't overwork the meat. This leads to dry and tough burgers.

Chill the patties before they hit the grill. This helps them hold their shape and prevents them from falling apart.

Toast those buns. They taste better crispy and are less likely to turn soggy.



Top to your heart's delight. Pile on, be creative, experiment—have fun!

—Vianney Rodriguez

sliced tomato. Season each mushroom with salt and pepper. Place mushroom on top of tomato, add chopped dill and top with bun.

MAKES 4 BURGERS

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SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our **Sedona Turquoise Collection**. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you



could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Ale as Old as Time

A relic of Austin's distant past still serves up brews and camaraderie

BY CHET GARNER

IF YOU COULD travel back in time to 1866 Austin, our capital city would be almost unrecognizable. There would be just 4,000 residents, no bridges across the Colorado River and a Capitol the size of a county courthouse. The only familiar comfort would be a small boardinghouse at the edge of downtown where a German immigrant named August Scholz could serve you a schnitzel and a pint of beer.

To this day, Austinites still gather at this beloved establishment: Scholz Garten—Texas' oldest restaurant and the oldest beer garden in America.

I love stopping in because it feels like stepping back in time. The walls are covered in old mementos and paintings of bearded German gentlemen, recounting 160 years of history. It isn't hard to imagine cowboys or fellows in lederhosen standing at the wooden bar, which looks like it came over on an old ship from the fatherland.

While the beer is abundant, the food is equally plentiful, with classics like sausage and spaetzle. On a sunny day, it doesn't get much better than sitting outside under the giant oaks with a cold beer, a huge pretzel and good friends.

Downtown Austin wouldn't be the same without Scholz Garten. Given its proximity to the Capitol and the University of Texas, it's been a popular place for politicians and students alike to kick back and enjoy a bit of *gemütlichkeit* (warmth and friendliness). Gov. Ann Richards was known for saying that more legislating went on at Scholz than at the Capitol. The Legislature even recognized the establishment with an official resolution in 1966, calling it a place for Texans of "discernment, taste, culture [and] erudition."

In a changing town like Austin, where nostalgia is getting harder to find, Scholz Garten feels like slipping on a worn-in pair of boots. Nothing new can match it. ■

ABOVE Chet at Scholz Garten, which serves up German food and nostalgia that spans 160 years.

TCP Watch the video on our website and see all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

AUGUST

8

Anna Carried Miranda: Carrie & Miranda Tribute Duo, (972) 560-4101, barnhillvineyards.com

Alpine [8-9] Big Bend Ranch Rodeo, (432) 294-1640, bigbendranchrodeo.com

Fort Worth [8-10] The Book of Mormon, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

9

Chappell Hill Wine & Cheese Stroll, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

Henderson [9-10] East Texas Sacred Harp Convention, (903) 392-8232, easttexasfasola.weebly.com

14

Corsicana [14-17, 19, 21-24] A Monster Calls, (903) 872-5421, thewllac.com

15

Rowlett Luau on the Lawn, (972) 412-6100, rowletttx.gov

El Campo [15-17] Texas Chrome Hero's Foundation BBQ Cook-Off, (979) 275-1600, eclostlagoon.com

Winnsboro [15-17, 22-24] Romeo and Juliet, (903) 342-0686, winnsborocenterforthearts.com

16

Brenham Bee Gees Gold, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

21

Fredericksburg [21-24] Gillespie County Fair, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

McKinney [22-23] Mark
Clearview, (214) 769-0645,
 thecomedyarena.com

Lufkin Balloon Fest,
(936) 632-0490, facebook
.com/jaangelinacounty

Perryton Pioneer Day,
(806) 435-6400,
museumoftheplains.com

Castroville [23-24] St. Louis
Day, (830) 931-2826,
saintlouisday.com

Granbury [29–Sept. 1]
Granbury Square Labor Day
Festival, (682) 936-4550,
granburysquare.com

Winnsboro Texas Song-
writers Showcase,
(903) 342-0686, winnsboro
centerforthearts.com

Brenham First Fridays
Farmer & Artisan Market,
 (979) 337-7239, facebook
 .com/brenhamfarmersmarket

Fort Worth [5-6] Erica Rhodes, (512) 817-9535, fortworth.blcomedy.com

**El Campo [5-7] Freedom
Fest, (979) 275-1600,
eclostlagoon.com**

Fairfield Show of Wheels,
(903) 389-5792,
fairfieldtexaschamber.com

Grapevine ItalianCarFest,
(817) 410-3185,
grapevinetexasusa.com

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

Yorktown Historical Museum
144 W. Main, Yorktown, Texas

Friday 11:00–2:00 • Saturday 1:00–4:00
And by Appointment

361-935-5243 (please leave a message)
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Event Calendar

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Spirituality Meets Artistry

"I never expected it to be so beautiful that it takes your breath away."

— Kaya C., on Stauer Opals



In a quaint village, nestled between rolling hills, lived a young woman with a deep appreciation for gemstones. Her grandmother gifted her a delicate cross pendant adorned with opals. The opals shimmered with a mesmerizing play of colors, reflecting hues of blues, greens, and fiery oranges. Her grandmother shared the legend of the opals, believed to bring hope, purity, and luck to those who wore them.

Using this story as inspiration, Stauer brings you the **Opal Spirit Cross Pendant**. With over 2 total carats of Kyocera lab-created opals set in .925 sterling silver encased in yellow gold, this pendant is a radiant celebration of beauty and craftsmanship. Each opal captivates with a kaleidoscopic dance of fiery oranges blending into oceanic blues, streaked with flashes of vibrant green that seem to come alive with every movement. The shimmering opals are skillfully arranged to create an enchanting, otherworldly glow, embodying the spirit of hope and harmony.

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only 930 pieces, making it a rare and treasured addition to your jewelry collection. Plus, when you order today, you'll receive the gold-finished sterling silver chain—a \$69 value—absolutely free!

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College Life

Not to tell tales out of school, but these readers give it the old college try and move to the head of the class. School's in session, and there's no place in Texas they'd rather be.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 CASSIE RAPPOLEE
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

"Freshmen don't get the best seats, but they have the most spirit. Gig 'em Aggies!"

2 MARY BORDEN
VICTORIA EC

The University of Texas marching band heads to the stadium in Austin.

3 NANCY JANE MCMILLAN
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

"Five-year-old Charlie visits his daddy's alma mater and gets in the spirit of cheering on the Texas Longhorns."

4 KATY JAMESON
LAMAR EC

"Caleb Jameson's first win on the mound with Baylor. Living out his childhood dreams."



Upcoming Contests

DUE AUG 10 Country Life
DUE SEP 10 Snakes Alive!
DUE OCT 10 From the Oil Fields



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more College Life photos from readers.



A Muddy Path to Texas

20 years ago, Hurricane Katrina sent Louisianans into the open arms of Texans

BY PAIGE EATON
ILLUSTRATION BY TARA JACOBY

STANDING INSIDE OUR Slidell, Louisiana, house, feet buried in slick gray bottom mud from the marshy waters of the Pontchartrain Basin, my husband, Jim, and I agreed to head for Texas. We knew Vicki, Jim's sister, would welcome us if we could get there.

A few days before, on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina had devastated coastal Mississippi and Louisiana, with us in the midst. It had been hard, yet we knew we were lucky. We eventually learned that 1,833 people died in the storm.

Uninhabitable, except by the minnows swimming in the bathtub, our house was sludgy. But it was still standing, and so were we. A tree had smashed our truck, but it worked. Gas, distressfully, was scarce. The 482-mile journey to Alba, Texas, 80 miles east of Dallas, would be

iffy if we couldn't find more fuel. We chanced it.

After tense highway miles, Lady Luck met us at fume level, and we refilled. Once in Alba, Vicki offered electricity, hot food, warm showers and clean sheets—luxuries I've never taken for granted since. Her home became our command center to rally insurance adjusters and source supplies.

Our truck entered an East Texas body shop. Meanwhile, Vicki loaned us hers for our drive back to Slidell to rebuild. Galahad, our German shepherd, stayed behind. We lived in limbo for months, back and forth, rebuilding in Louisiana and resupplying in Texas.

In St. Tammany Parish, it was disheartening. Goods and services were absent, and friends and neighbors were scattered across the country. Whenever we crossed the Texas threshold, peace and calm enfolded us. On the trips home, we bolstered for hardship.

We burned our candles low as we managed subsistence living along with our jobs and house rebuilding. As able, we'd roll west to visit Vicki and Galahad, and contentment would settle us. That was the balm we needed.

Before Katrina, I was a Louisiana-Mississippi hybrid and glad for it. Living in Texas was never part of my plan. But subtly, Texas burrows under a person's skin to build a cozy den.

In September 2006, we claimed citizenship. Our house is just a pasture away from Vicki's place.

That first night in our new home, I stood in the backyard, listening to crickets and stargazing. I saw lights shimmering at Vicki's, so I phoned her. She grabbed a flashlight and went to her front yard as we talked. There, she winked her light on and off. In turn, I grabbed a flashlight and signaled back. We both giggled.

At that moment, the red Texas dirt felt like solid ground upon which to build a new life. Twenty years later, I wholly confirm that it has been. ■

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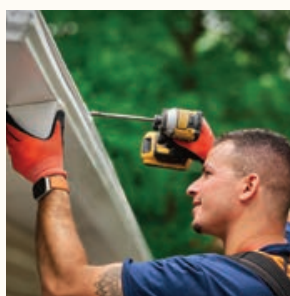
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