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RUNNING LIST

PORT MANSFIELD'S
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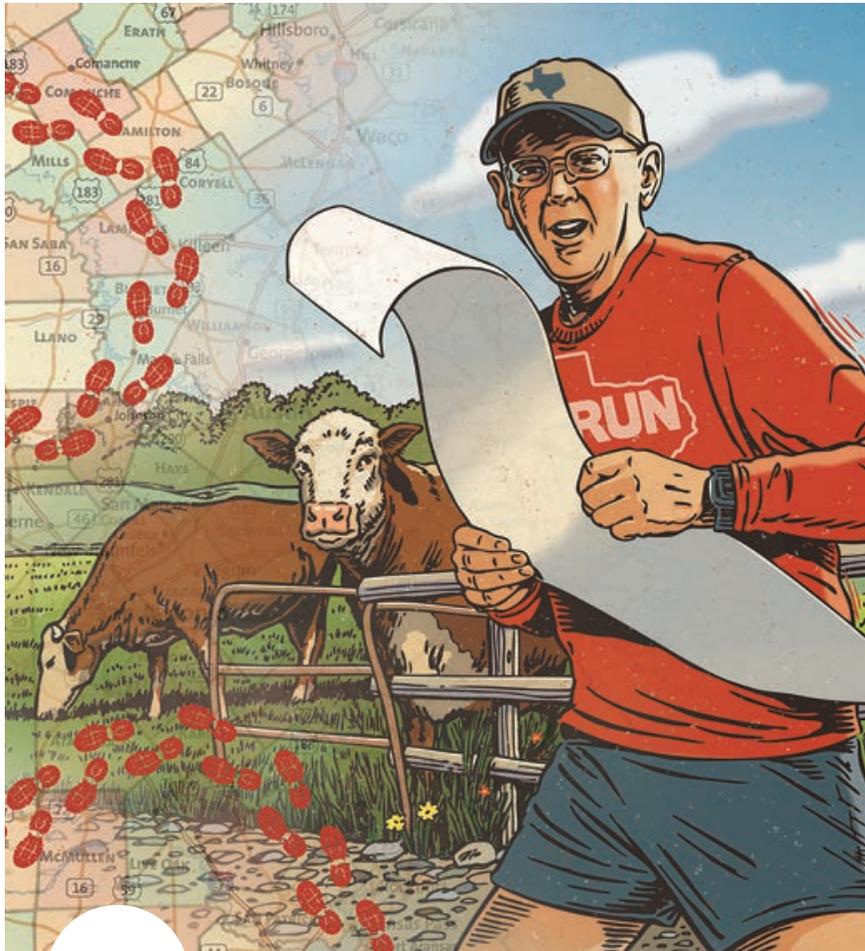
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January 2023



08

A Running List

Jon Walk can't help himself. He runs—all over the state—and keeps lists of his expansive exploits.

*By Carlton Stowers
Illustration by John Kachik*

10 Stable Futures

Texas-based organizations help find homes for needy steeds of different stripes.

*By Margaret Buranen
Photos by Dave Shafer*

04

Currents
The latest buzz

06

TCP Talk
Readers respond

18

Co-op News
Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative

29

Footnotes in Texas History
Priceless Passage
By W.F. Strong

30

TCP Kitchen
Gluten-Free
By Megan Myers

34

Hit the Road
Afterlife Sentence
By Chet Garner

37

Focus on Texas
Photo Contest: Nature's Color

38

Observations
Oh! Possum!
By Martha Deeringer

ON THE COVER
Salye Coles and Joshua,
a mustang in her care.
Photo by Dave Shafer

ABOVE
Jon Walk is on a quest to run
a mile in every Texas county.
Illustration by John Kachik

Startling Fact

LEAVE YOUR FRIENDS star-struck with your smarts.

Polaris, the North Star, sits directly above the North Pole along Earth's rotational axis. That's the imaginary line that extends through the planet and out of the North and South poles.

But here's the dazzling part: Polaris hasn't always been the North Star. Because Earth wobbles, that rotational axis sometimes points to a different star. That's why, about 14,000 years ago, Vega was the North Star. And it will be again in about 12,000 years.



“Keep your eyes on the stars but remember to keep your feet on the ground.”

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT



Turning Your Stomach?

Michigan State University researchers say a newly developed material for making wind turbines could later be recycled into objects ranging from car parts to gummy bears.

TCP Contests and More

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FINISH THIS SENTENCE THE GREATEST TEXAN EVER IS ...

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.

Below are some of the responses to our November prompt: **It's been so long since I ...**

Listened to the red wolves howl in answer to a sawmill steam whistle.

WAYMON VEST
HOUSTON COUNTY EC
CROCKETT

Caught fireflies in a jar.

WANDA LOVELACE
TRI-COUNTY EC
WEATHERFORD

Hopped across the sun-warmed, deep furrows of a freshly plowed cotton field.

DIANN STOVALL
CECA
ZEPHYR

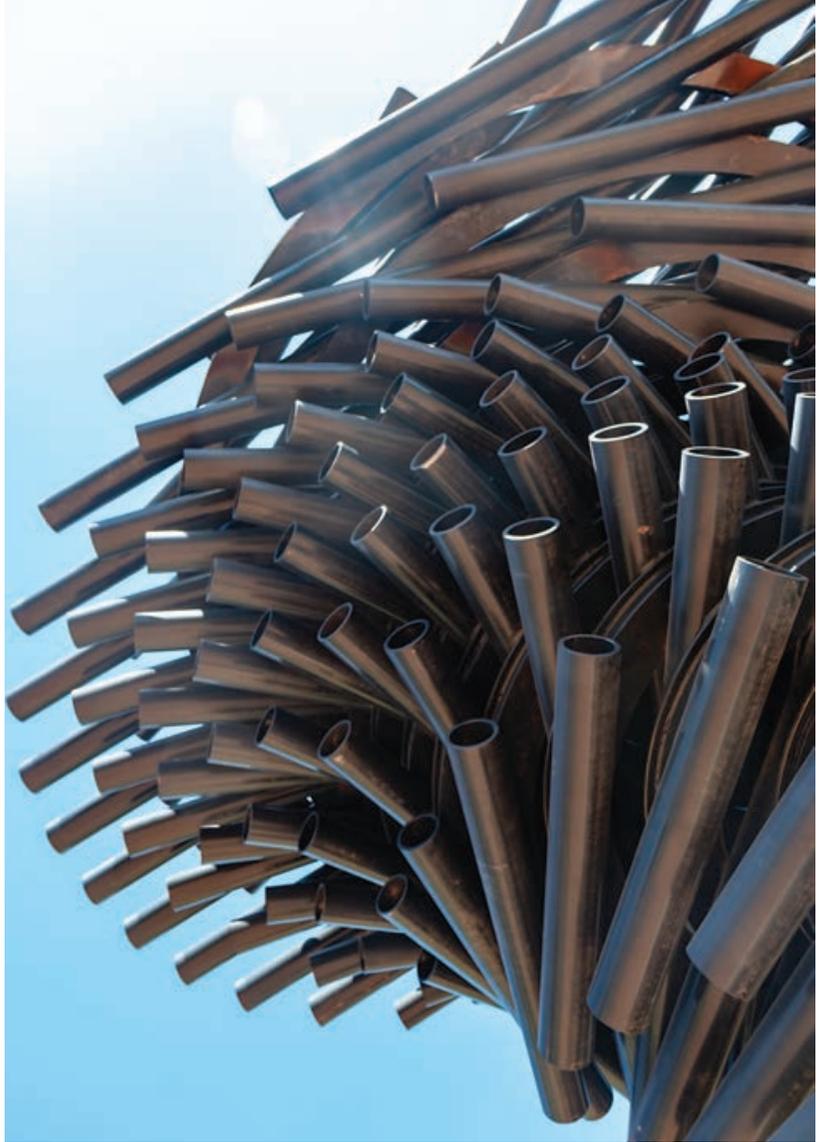
Dialed a rotary telephone.

REBECCA VANCE
WOOD COUNTY EC
MINEOLA

Drank from a garden hose.

DUWAYNE ALBRECHT
COSERV
MCKINNEY

Visit our website to see more responses.



It Sounded Like a ...

ABILENE HAS A NEW sculpture little more than a buffalo chip's toss away from the eight giant steel bison twisting in the wind 35 feet above Frontier Texas. Singing Ringing Tree, above, installed in July 2022, takes advantage of the West Texas town's bluster, turning 27 tons of pipes into giant flutes that create music audible up to 400 feet away, depending on the prevailing gusts.

The 22-foot-tall stack of pipes is arranged in a way that reminds knowing residents of a tornado and takes advantage of the winds that blow through town at an average of 12 mph.

Guess what?

January 4
is National
Trivia Day.



CHANELLE NIBBELINK

The Arable Twos

“We should be grateful for every 2-year-old out there who loves the land like he does. Thank you, farmers. We don’t say that enough.”

BARBARA MACHA
COSERV
HIGHLAND VILLAGE

Newcomer Nuance?

I’ve noticed a pattern developing of a decrease in articles featuring long-established country folk and an increase in showcasing new arrivals to the state [Connecting With the Land, September 2022].

From the content that’s been featured over the past few years, I can only deduce that our co-op magazine seems to be trying to placate readers with an appetite for citified country life.

Buzz Payne
Wood County EC
Big Sandy

I love her [Watch Grandma Cook, November 2022]. I am addicted to her on TikTok.

KRISTIN SPRINKLE
VIA FACEBOOK

I have inherited an interest in a farm that belonged to our parents and grandparents. At age 70, I suddenly became the caretaker of the houses and land—as your writer said, a blessing and a curse. I’ve loved learning how to care for it, but I worry who will do this after me.

Patricia Ricks
Fayette EC
Round Top

Birds of a Feather

I am a transplanted Minnesotan from the rival Turkey capital, Worthington [Not for the Birds, October 2022]. The article brought me back to the September “turkey days” of my youth. Thank you for highlighting the friendly atmosphere and camaraderie of the festivals.

Marcia Opsata-Sparks
Pedernales EC
Dripping Springs

Summer Pursuit

I was a summer employee for a South Texas power company [Reading Between the Lines, October 2022]. Once a month we had to read meters. One time a smart dog hit his gate, the gate opened, and he escaped. I ran for blocks to capture the dog and return it to its yard.

Ken Steed
Pedernales EC
Georgetown



COURTESY: CUIERO TURKEYFEST

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Editor, Texas Co-op Power
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

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

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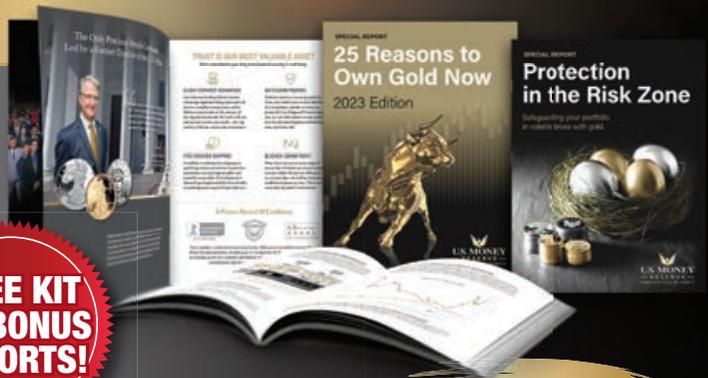
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A Jon Walk can't help himself. He runs—all over the state—and keeps lists of his expansive exploits.

Running List

BY CARLTON STOWERS

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

WHEN JON WALK stared down at the scale that morning in 2003 and saw that his weight had gone several pounds beyond the 300 mark, he determined that it was hardly a good look for someone in the health care consulting business. He vowed to make changes and decided to start running.

Early on, he could jog only a few hundred yards through his neighborhood in Spring, north of Houston, before stopping to catch his breath and massage aching calves.

That was long before he finished a marathon in Austin in a personal best time of four hours and 48 minutes; before he had run the grueling 26-mile race 53 times in 48 states; before he set a goal of running at least 1 mile in every county in Texas; and before he had run the streets and back roads of 375 towns and cities across the nation.

And before the 55-year-old native Pennsylvanian, now a well-conditioned 205 pounds, became a list-making wanderer in pursuit of better health and a unique hobby he can't fully explain.

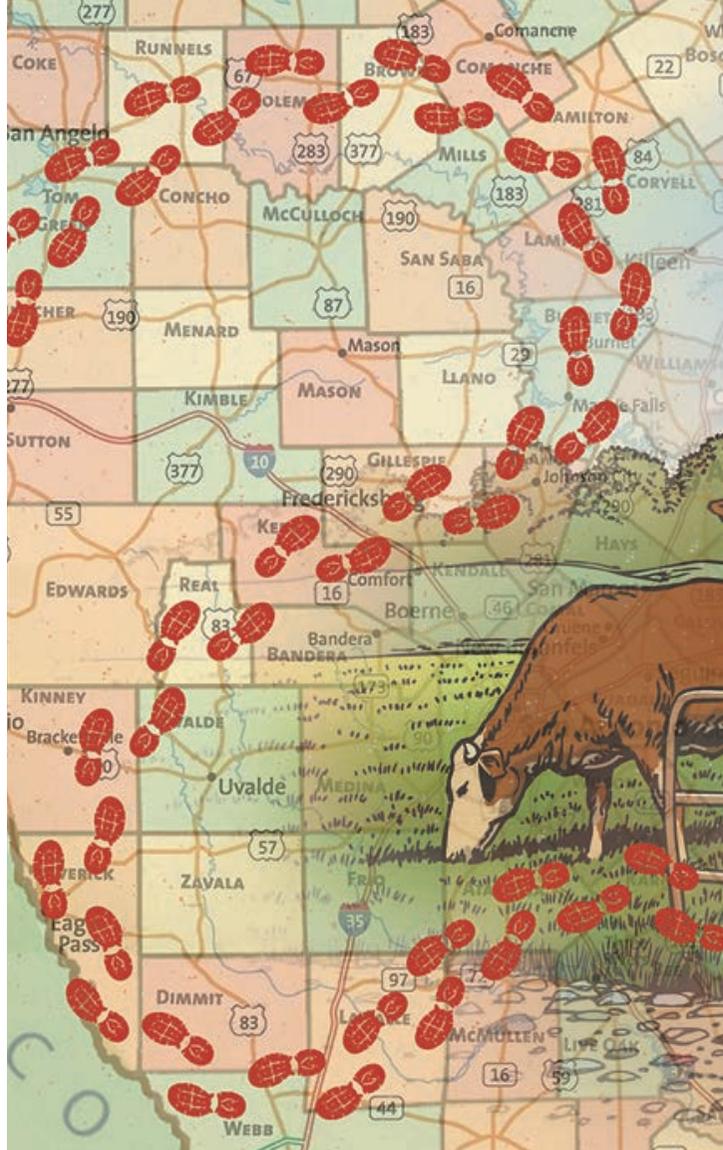
Jon Walk makes lists, many tied to his newfound love for running.

He offers no psychobabble explanation, no Zen-like reasoning. "It just keeps me active and motivated," he says. "I like to think of it as a healthy addiction."

Walk's inspiration came from an old *Runner's World* magazine article about a man who had run at least a mile in every city and township in the state of Massachusetts. Walk borrowed the idea and made all 254 Texas counties his goal. He's getting there, having run in 196 thus far.

"When I'm planning my weekend trips," says the empty-nest parent, "I make an effort to get to as many counties as possible."

Recently he tied his personal record when he flew to Amarillo, rented a car and visited seven Panhandle county seats in a day. He'd achieved the same number in East Texas a year earlier. "I love seeing the architecture of some of the older courthouses, reading the historical markers and meeting new people," he says. Once his downtown sightseeing and local history lessons are recorded in his notebook, he goes on a 15-minute run to assure that he's run at least a mile.



Then it's back in the car and off to the next county.

He's run in triple-digit heat and below-freezing temperatures, pouring rain and West Texas dust storms. Early on, he learned to precheck his route for loose and unfriendly dogs.

On an early evening run in Archer City, a local sheriff's deputy watched him closely as he ran past native son Larry McMurtry's famed bookstore. After flying into the Midland-Odessa airport, he recalls snow and ice making it difficult to keep his rental car on the road.

"The unexpected," he says, "is part of the fun."

Whenever possible, he likes to visit a new locale when an organized race has been scheduled. To date, he has competed in races—10Ks, half-marathons and marathons—in 96 counties. "To do so isn't always possible," he points out. "For instance, Loving County out in West Texas doesn't have but 34 people, so it's a little unreasonable to expect them to organize any kind of race. So, when I went there, I picked a route on a caliche road and waved at the cows as I ran by."

Then, there's the other quests.

Though his own athletic career ended with Little League baseball back in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, Walk has enjoyed sports for as long as he can remember. He's got an impressive collection of back issues of *Sports Illustrated* and *Sporting News* to prove it.

A lifelong basketball fan, Walk has been in high school,



college and professional venues from El Paso to Amarillo to the Gulf Coast. With new arenas and gymnasiums opening regularly throughout the state, it's unrealistic to think he might achieve a onetime goal of visiting them all. "I just want to keep seeing as many places and things as I can until I run out of time or money," he says.

While Walk focuses his travel plans on basketball, baseball and football stadiums, he occasionally finds time for soccer and rugby venues and last spring watched his first Premier Lacrosse League game.

Walk's lists also spawn new lists.

He has stopped for coffee and a quick snack at 20 of the 34 Buc-ee's gas stations in Texas. He need only check his notebook to tell you every bowling alley and movie theater he's visited in the past few decades.

When the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted his travels, Walk turned to reading and, yes, began listing each book he finished. He focuses primarily on—what else?—nonfiction books about sports, recently finishing a biography of Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan.

In addition to his traveling pursuits, he annually serves as an announcer and official at numerous Houston-area running competitions, including The Woodlands Marathon and the Houston Half Marathon.

He's also a storehouse of historical knowledge about run-

ning. "If I need something like a list of everyone who has ever competed in all seven Texas Ironman competitions, I go straight to Jon," says Lance Phegley, a longtime friend and former editor of *Texas Runner and Triathlete* magazine. "In addition to his personal pursuits, he's constantly promoting others and their accomplishments. He's always alerting me to something noteworthy that a young runner in some small Texas town has done or some forgotten but fascinating moment in sports history."

Willie Fowlkes, director of The Woodlands Marathon who has known Walk for over a decade, agrees. "He's a great friend and asset to the local running community," he says. "His hobbies are just another cool part of his personality."

In the summer lull before high school and collegiate teams return to competition, Walk stays busy adding baseball stadiums to his list. On consecutive weekends, he traveled to Birmingham, Alabama, and Pearl, Mississippi, to visit minor-league ballparks. Meanwhile, he was checking schedules to find when and where the upcoming 7-on-7 football tournaments would be held.

As stadiums and gymnasiums begin filling with cheering fans in the fall and winter months, Walk's calendar quickly fills.

And he'll be off and running. ■

STABLE



FUTURES

Texas-based organizations help find homes for needy steeds of different stripes



AN EXCITED SALYE COLES and her husband were driving six hours from their West Texas ranch to a Bureau of Land Management facility in Oklahoma. They were headed north last May to pick up a bay mustang gelding, tag No. 3345—a wild horse that had been collected by the BLM as part of an emergency gathering of the animals in the Jackson Mountains of northern Nevada.

In a random drawing, the horse was assigned to Coles, who lives in Sterling City, northwest of San Angelo. She was to train him and make him fit for adoption.

When Coles saw the horse, she almost cried.

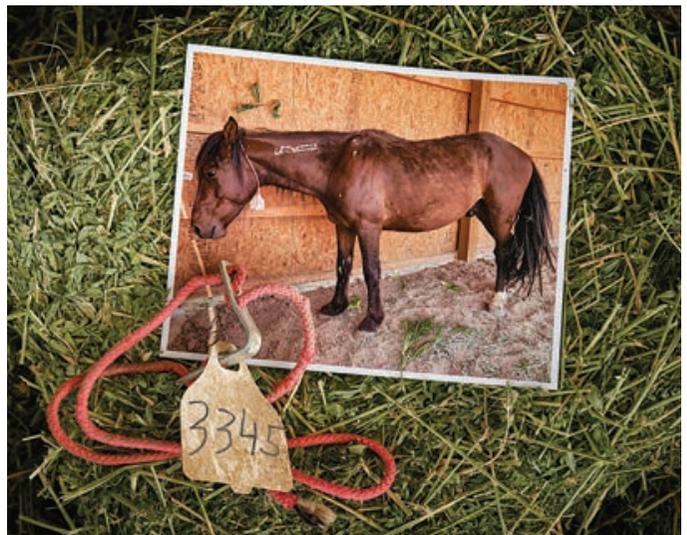
“He was at least 250 pounds underweight, so skinny that his ribs were showing,” she says. “His coat was dull, and his mane was matted in knots.”

The listless mustang’s demeanor worried her even more. “He was so dejected, so withdrawn. He didn’t look at me or show interest in anything.”

Droughts in the 10 Western states where mustangs roam free have caused a shortage of not just water but also the grass that sustains them. As conditions worsen, the BLM gathers horses to be cared for and eventually adopted.

Most of these wild animals have been under the protection of the federal agency since 1971. More than 20,000 wild horses have been adopted since then, but 50,000 under BLM protection still need homes.

The Mustang Heritage Foundation, based in Round Rock, has partnered with the BLM since 2006 to train and home thousands of these animals. The nonprofit works with horse trainers like Coles in 40 states.



ABOVE It took 10 days before Joshua, once a wild mustang, allowed Salye Coles to touch his neck. RIGHT Coles says she almost cried when she first saw the haggard horse.



Coles, a retired schoolteacher, is an experienced horse-woman. She trail rides on her two other mustangs and two quarter horses. Still she wondered if she could give the poor mustang in Oklahoma all the care and training he needed. She had only 100 days to get him ready for a Fort Worth adoption event in August.

After seeing its grim condition, Glenn Coles asked his wife if she still wanted to take the horse home.

Coles had prayed that she would get the right mustang for her. So she told her husband yes, that she felt at peace with the decision.

On their drive home, Ann Souders of the MHF called. She had already found an adopter: Dale Long wanted him as an equine therapy horse at his Western Cross Ranch in Azle.

A biblical name for the horse seemed appropriate to both women. When Souders suggested Joshua, Coles knew that was the right name. The mustang would have a battle to overcome his poor physical and mental state.

Back home, Coles started earning Joshua's trust. It took 10 days before he allowed her to touch his neck. Another week before she could untie the BLM tag around his neck.

Still more days until he let her put on his halter.

Gradually Joshua started nickering to Coles, indicating he was glad to see her. In the third week of July, she was finally able to saddle and ride him.

What does it mean to bond with a horse that once ran wild and free? Salye Coles says that she most enjoys gaining a mustang's trust. "To watch them willingly give up that wildness, to trust you, is amazing," she says.

"A mustang is a clean slate, no pretenses," Coles says. "They're the most honest animals I've ever been around. They're smart, and they analyze every single thing."

What does it mean to bond with a horse that once ran wild and free? Coles says that she most enjoys gaining a mustang's trust. "To watch them willingly give up that wildness, to trust you, is amazing," she says.

When people ask how she can bear to give up this mustang she has nursed back to health and grown to love, Coles tells them she knows Joshua is going to a wonderful home.

"His purpose is to help people who are struggling and fighting back," she says. "He has had to fight a battle too."



SEE FOR YOURSELF

The next **Roses to Ribbons** adoption event will be held in March at Sam Houston Race Park in Houston. The Mustang Heritage Foundation's **Mustang Magic** showcase is January 19–21, during the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo.

OPPOSITE Coles and Joshua at the Extreme Mustang Makeover event in Fort Worth. LEFT Tracy Sheffield and Eliot, a former racehorse, have found success in dressage competitions.

O Beyond the Finish Line

F COURSE, mustangs aren't the only horses in need of homes.

Tracy Sheffield's passion is thoroughbreds—her own and those that need help finding a life outside of racing.

Like the MHF, the Paddock Foundation, a charitable arm of the Texas Thoroughbred Association, advocates for these majestic animals. The nonprofit has placed hundreds of former and failed racehorses since March 2015—whether they raced for several years or didn't go to post even once, so-called off-track thoroughbreds.

"Since our first event, we have helped almost 200 thoroughbreds find new homes," says Sheffield, the Paddock Foundation's president who lives in Wimberley, southwest of Austin.

Some thoroughbreds, even if they descend from top racing bloodlines, don't do well in racing. Others have successful track careers cut short by injury. If the injury takes months to heal, the owner may decide it makes more financial sense to move the horse to a new owner and career.

To help new owners connect with these thoroughbreds, Sheffield, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member who works as a business consultant for veterinary practices,

established horse fairs called **Roses to Ribbons**. The roses represent racing, like those awarded at the Kentucky Derby, and the ribbons represent the awards given at shows and competitions—an analogy for these horses' transitions.

The events are held at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie, Sam Houston Race Park in Houston and Retama Park near San Antonio. Two weeks before a meet ends, Sheffield visits with trainers to get details and photos of horses that need new homes. "Through social media—I belong to over 20 horse groups online—I post photos of the available thoroughbreds," she says.

Each fair is held before the day's racing starts and always draws a crowd. Trainers bring their horses to the paddock and talk directly with prospective adopters. Each adoption fee is a private sale by the trainer to the new owner.

"The horses have been well cared for," she says. "The trainers are very picky about who gets to adopt their horses [and can] refuse any sale. I have heard them tell prospective adopters, 'This horse isn't right for you.'"

Sheffield herself has adopted two thoroughbreds. Eliot, a 12-year-old bay, showed no talent for racing. Now he competes in dressage and does trail riding. Sheffield says that Eliot isn't high-strung, as many thoroughbreds are.

"He is so trustworthy," she says. "He takes such good



care of his rider. I've taught people who have never ridden to ride on Eliot."

Gus is 7 years old, has a dark coat and is like a friendly, curious puppy. He was training well for racing when he fractured a sesamoid bone near one foot. The bone healed after surgery, but because of his height, the trainer decided not to risk a second injury from racing that might have left him unsound for other riding. Now he does trail riding.

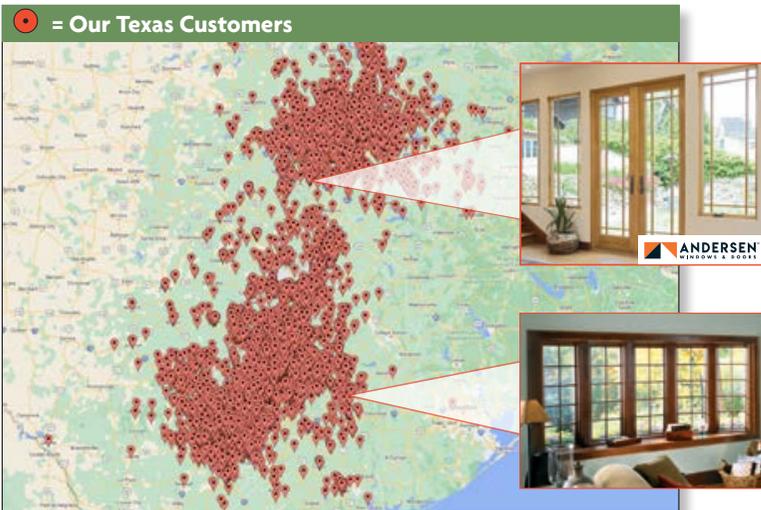
Thoroughbreds' speed makes them suitable for competitions. They do well in jumping, dressage and trail riding. Sheffield advises potential adopters to "think outside of the box with thoroughbreds.

"They can do well in the Western sports world, too, in Western dressage or barrel racing," she says. "The most sure-footed trail horse I've ever had was a thoroughbred." ■

ABOVE Eliot needed little coaxing from Sheffield to perform a bow.
RIGHT Watch Eliot and Sheffield interact in a video with this story online.



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	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
30	8.87	7.69	9.93	8.80	14	11	18	16	58	26.66	21.79	50.12	36.39	89	64	166	118
36	9.05	7.98	10.56	9.43	15	13	22	19	59	29.20	23.39	55.24	39.45	98	70	185	130
37	9.17	8.21	11.07	9.74	15	13	23	20	60	32.20	25.28	61.29	43.07	109	77	207	144
38	9.31	8.48	11.69	10.13	16	14	24	22	61	35.24	28.02	67.54	47.42	120	86	228	159
39	9.46	8.78	12.35	10.53	17	15	26	23	62	38.92	31.35	75.14	52.70	134	97	253	177
40	9.63	9.12	13.13	11.01	18	16	28	25	63	43.48	35.46	84.52	59.23	150	111	284	199
41	10.00	9.27	13.66	11.60	20	17	30	26	64	48.24	39.77	94.35	66.07	168	125	317	223
42	10.44	9.46	14.30	12.31	21	18	33	29	65	53.88	44.87	105.96	74.15	188	142	356	251
43	10.99	9.68	15.09	13.19	24	20	37	31	66	59.39	48.85	116.50	84.59	208	150	392	270
44	11.57	9.92	15.92	14.11	26	22	41	34	67	66.07	53.68	129.30	97.26	232	161	437	293
45	12.25	10.20	16.90	15.20	28	24	46	38	68	74.33	59.65	145.11	112.92	262	174	491	322
46	12.56	10.67	17.87	15.91	30	26	49	40	69	82.98	65.91	161.68	129.33	293	188	548	352
47	12.94	11.23	19.04	16.76	32	27	53	44	70	93.20	73.30	181.25	148.72	330	204	615	387
48	13.40	11.93	20.50	17.82	35	29	58	48	71	102.45	82.71	204.38	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.89	12.66	22.02	18.92	37	31	63	52	72	113.68	94.13	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.46	13.52	23.82	20.23	41	34	69	57	73	127.55	108.24	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.33	14.15	25.81	21.48	44	36	77	62	74	142.08	123.01	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.38	14.92	28.22	22.99	49	39	86	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
53	17.69	15.86	31.20	24.87	54	42	97	74	76	200.03	174.92	418.29	276.67	785	530	1489	982
54	19.05	16.85	34.33	26.83	60	46	108	82	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	956	658	1797	1215
55	20.66	18.02	38.02	29.15	67	50	122	90	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1167	817	2179	1504
56	22.28	19.04	41.28	31.10	73	54	134	98	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1389	983	2578	1807
57	24.24	20.27	45.24	33.46	80	58	148	107	80	450.51	386.48	859.57	596.78	1651	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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WORKING DOGS

All across the Bluebonnet service area are remarkable examples of partnership with our best friends

Stories by Clayton Stromberger • Photos by Sarah Beal

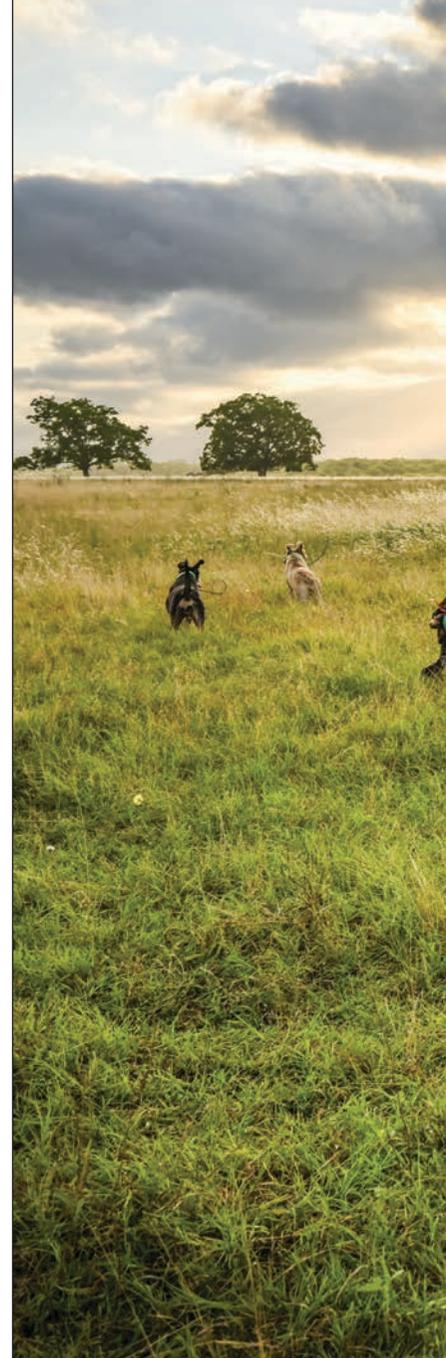
MANY MILLENNIA ago, somewhere in Asia, a gray wolf — hungry, curious, wary — cautiously inched its way toward a human campfire. Eye contact was made, perhaps a scrap of food was tossed over. In an ancient world where survival was elemental, a new partnership was forged.

Ever since that moment, our two species have been intertwined in a complex evolutionary dance, seeking a mutually beneficial relationship. When humans first came to this part of the world, dogs came with them.

We all know the dog's status today as humankind's best friend. We have closer connections with canines than any other species on the planet. It only makes sense that they have evolved into work partners. But what kind of co-workers do they make?

Pretty great ones, say the owners and handlers of the working dogs of the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative service area. "These working dogs are amazing," says Giddings Police Officer Jack Nickell, whose canine partner Bery, can detect drugs. "I learn something new every day."

All across the Bluebonnet service area are remarkable examples of these unique partnerships. In these pages, we take a look at the many ways amazing canines contribute to the quality of life in our area and share stories from their human partners.



DRUG DETECTION DOG, Bery

Lee County

Bery means business. Like many trained police dogs, the 2½-year-old Belgian Malinois is driven and focused while on the job, to the point of being a bit impatient with his partner.

"When we're training, if Bery alerts on something and I don't reward him quickly enough, he'll look back at me and smack the vehicle with his paw," says Giddings Police Officer Jack Nickell, the dog's handler and owner. Bery and Nickell, at right, have been a dynamic duo on the drug-detection beat in Giddings since March 2022. Bery had 160 hours of training, and his nose has led to several arrests.

Nickell bought Bery with his own money while working in 2021 for a different police department that didn't have funding for a K-9 patrol.

"I like getting narcotics off the street, and I love dogs," Nickell says, "so K-9 work is something I've always wanted to get into."





CATTLE-HERDING DOGS

Bastrop County

The dogs whirl and wheel around the herd of cattle, barking and closing their circle, working in close tandem with two men on horseback. The object is to move these recalcitrant cattle from the pasture into their pen.

This team of black-mouth curs, most of them siblings, will keep a tight rein on these cattle until the job is done. They belong to one of the riders, Thres Jarosek, 20, who was given the dogs by family friend and Smithville resident Troy Tiner, who helped raise Jarosek after the young man's father died. Jarosek and Tiner still work cattle together, as they have for most of Jarosek's life.

"I grew up with these dogs' grandpas, and great-grandpas," says Jarosek, who was helping herd on horseback when he was just 4.

Jarosek and his dogs live near Smithville and travel

around Bastrop County and outlying areas, herding cattle that decide not to budge.

"It's pretty cool," Jarosek says of his day job. "There aren't many people around that still own cowdogs and have the skills to pen even the wildest of cattle."

Rugged and resilient, the black-mouth cur (shown herding, above) has long been valued in the southern United States as a tireless herding dog, a courageous hunter of hogs and other wild game, and a loyal and trusty companion back at the homestead.

The title character of "Old Yeller," the classic 1956 children's novel by Texan Fred Gipson, is thought by many to have been based on a black-mouth cur — despite any breed confusion caused by the Disney film version, where Old Yeller was played by a Labrador retriever.

Jarosek, who works with these dogs as cattle wranglers, is a fan of the breed. "These dogs," he says, "are more valuable to us than having 10 cowboys behind the herd trying to control them."

"These dogs are more valuable to us than having 10 cowboys behind the herd trying to control them."

— **THRES JAROSEK,**
Bastrop County
cowboy

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THERAPY DOG, Griswold

Hays County

It's finals week at Texas State University in San Marcos, and everyone's feeling the stress — which makes the appearance of therapy dogs on two floors of the busy Alkek Library especially welcome.

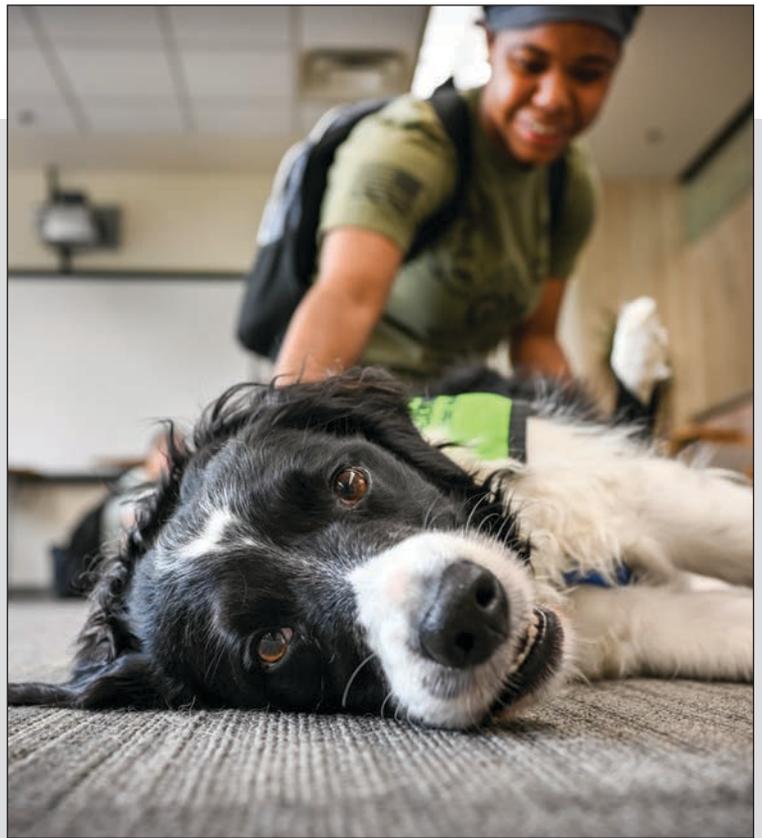
Dog-owner teams from Divine Canines, an Austin-based nonprofit, have been visiting the Texas State campus during finals week since spring 2013. Students line up to take a 15-minute break to chill out and pet dogs such as Griswold, at right.

The Brittany spaniel-border collie mix is hard at work in a characteristically blissful sprawl on the library floor.

"I hear so many students say, 'Oh, you don't know how much I needed this today,'" says Michele Evans, Griswold's owner. The pair have been working together for five years.

"Studies show that just having a dog and having that interaction helps lower blood pressure and calm people's nerves," Evans says.

Being friendly isn't enough to get this job: After six weeks of training the dogs must pass the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen test before helping soothe folks in Hays, Travis and Williamson counties.



ACCELERANT DETECTION DOG,

Ember

Travis County

For centuries, the Dalmatian was considered the classic firehouse dog — a tradition that began in New York City in the 1870s, when the gifted runners would trot ahead of the horses pulling the fire carriage and help clear the street of pedestrians.

Today, there's a new type of job description for four-legged helpers in firehouses: accelerant detection K-9. At Travis County Emergency Services District No. 12 in Manor, Ember — a 1½-year-old Belgian Malinois — rides on every call with Fire Chief Ryan Smith, at left, and is ready to sniff her way through the ashes of a burned-out house or car to determine if an accelerant was used to start the fire.

"She's an amazing addition to our toolkit," Smith says. "These dogs can find one-thousandth of a teaspoon of an accelerant in a 100-by-100-foot field in 5 seconds." Ember's arrival in fall of 2022 was thanks to a grant from K9s4COPs, a College Station-based nonprofit. She was trained at Pacesetter K9 in Liberty Hill, where she learned to detect traces of 14 different accelerants used to deliberately start fires.



PTSD SERVICE DOG, Patton

Washington County

Life is better for Robert Kilpatrick since General George S. Patton arrived on the scene. Patton, a 5-year-old Great Dane, is Kilpatrick's post-traumatic stress disorder — or PTSD — service dog. Kilpatrick served his country on nine tours of duty in the U.S. Army, from Operation Desert Storm in Kuwait through missions in Iraq.

The memories of what he saw and experienced are like a “Pandora’s box,” he says, which he attempts to keep shut. But a loud noise, a sudden movement or an overcrowded store can bring

back the trauma of combat. That’s when Patton steps in.

“If Robert’s had a bad day,” says his wife, Amy, “Patton will come up and Robert will start rubbing and petting Patton, and you can see everything melt away.”

Patton is trained to serve as a buffer between his owner and crowds and to lead Kilpatrick away from stressful settings.

The dog was trained by a family friend who specializes in training Great Danes to be veterans’ PTSD dogs. Patton has been with the couple for five years. With Patton by his side, Kilpatrick can more easily go shopping and speak to strangers in public.

“He mellows me out,” the Brenham resident says. Patton’s vest is made from one of Kilpatrick’s uniforms.

FIELD CHAMPION SETTER, Melt’n

Lee County

Sometimes a dog just has a gift. Melt’n, at right, a 7-year-old American Kennel Club field champion Irish setter, was sent as a youngster with two siblings to a professional agility-competition trainer in North Dakota, and came out “head of the class,” says his owner, Bill Rhodes of Lee County.

“He completed his training three months early. The trainer sent him back and said, ‘He knows everything I can teach him, so just run him now.’” Setters are named for their instinct for finding birds by scent and then “set” in a statue-like position to indicate the bird’s location. “Bird dogs want to please you,” Rhodes says.

In field competitions, the dogs are judged on how well they perform in a simulated bird hunt, guided at key points by their owner. Rhodes is a fan of Irish setters and calls his property “Setter Downs” — part of Melt’n’s official AKC competition name: Field Champion Setter Downs Hot Stuff.



Continued on next page



SENIOR LIVING FACILITY THERAPY DOG, Skye

Washington County

When Skye and her owner, Liane Pomfret, walk through the doors of Silversage Assisted Living and Memory Care in Brenham, faces light up and hands reach out.

Skye — a 9-year-old rescued terrier spaniel mix — has a knack for connecting with people. She often reminds Silversage residents of their own beloved pets from long ago. As the years fall away, a conversation begins and happy memories are shared.

“It’s a very strong emotional reaction sometimes,” Pomfret says. “I’ve had Alzheimer’s patients speak when they haven’t talked in weeks.” Pomfret and Skye — who live in Burton in Washington County — are part of Pets With a Mission, a nonprofit based in The Woodlands township north of Houston. The two also visit Brenham Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, as well as area schools and libraries. The duo have worked as a volunteer team for six years.

The key to a great human-canine team starts with the owner, Pomfret says. “If the human is making sure that the dog is happy and comfortable, that’s when things work. That’s when the magic happens.”

“In my opinion, (Doberman pinschers) are the best breed out there — they’re loyal, they’re intuitive, they’re loving and they’re totally committed to you.”

— **ASLYNN ROSE**,
Professional dog handler



CHAMPION SHOW DOG, JLo

Bastrop County

Herr Dobermann, the tax collector for Apolda, Germany, had a problem. When making his rounds back in the 1880s, scofflaws often greeted him not with payment but with a pummeling.

Fortunately, Louis Dobermann also ran the Apolda dog pound. So he decided to breed the perfect personal protection dog. The result was a canine that was alert, smart, fiercely loyal, and both tough and nimble — and eventually the breed came to be named after him. The American version is known as the Doberman pinscher.

Professional dog handler Aslynn Rose of Cedar Creek has long loved Dobermans, and currently owns five of them, including JLo, who is named for the singer. Rose shows her own dogs when she can and JLo — whose registered AKC name is Champion Whiskey Mac’s Lush Life — has appeared at many American Kennel Club show competitions and earned a breed championship.

“They’re unlike any other breed,” Rose says. “In my opinion, they’re the best breed out there — they’re loyal, they’re intuitive, they’re loving and they’re totally committed to you.”

One heads-up: They’re not outside dogs and will always want to be at your side. “You’ll never go to the bathroom alone again,” Rose says.



TREEING HOUNDS, Annie (right) and Slick Burlison County

When English settlers arrived in Virginia in the Colonial era, they encountered a new animal to hunt for its fur and meat — the raccoon, native only to North America. The settlers imported foxhounds, which excelled at giving chase, but they would lose raccoons once the animals shimmed high up a tree.

Careful breeding eventually led to the treeing Walker hound, first recognized as an official breed by the American Kennel Club

in 2012.

The hound is known for its ability to “tree” a raccoon and keep it there. Treeing raccoons with dogs has a long history in Burlison County, where Robert Campbell and his dog, Slick (above, left) and fellow Walker hound Annie, can be found keeping the tradition going most weekends on rural family land near Caldwell.

Today, competitive raccoon hunting is for sport, not income or food. The animals are treed and then left alone, or caught and released. The key to a winning Walker? Good bloodlines and practice, Campbell says. “You’ve got to put in time in the woods.”

IRS EXPLOSIVE-DETECTION DOG, Cane

Travis County

Cane, a 7-year-old yellow Labrador, is the first line of defense for Internal Revenue Service employees at the Austin tax-return processing office in south Austin. Under the guidance of handler David Newell, an Air Force veteran, former Taylor police officer and Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member, Cane gives a good sniffing-over to every package that is mailed, shipped or delivered to the IRS facility.

The Lab is trained to detect the odors of as many as 20 different ingredients used to make explosives — a feat that neither humans nor machines can replicate.

“When you walk into a hamburger place, you smell a burger,” explains Newell. “But a dog can smell the meat, the ketchup, the bread, the yeast, the sugar, the lettuce — they can break it down into every ingredient.”

Cane, at right, and Newell also spend time in Washington, D.C., where they help keep other federal facilities safe from explosives.



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AIRPORT EXPLOSIVE DETECTION DOG, Kan

Travis County

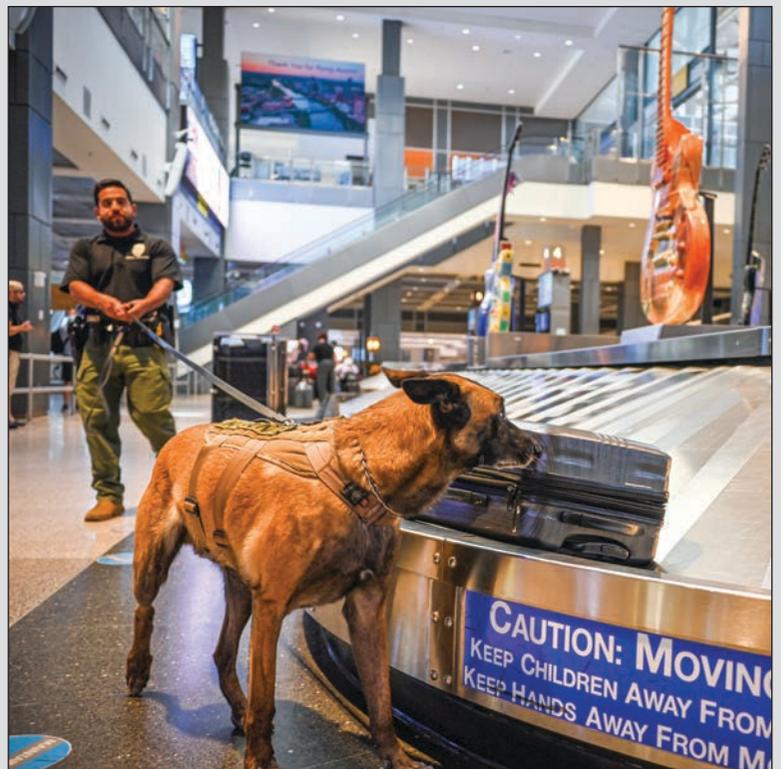
Each workday morning, when Austin police officer Estanislao Rodriguez begins putting on his uniform, his trusty partner, Kan, can't contain his excitement.

"He goes nuts and starts running circles in the backyard," Rodriguez says. "He knows we're going to have fun, because work for him is just play."

Kan, an 8-year-old Belgian Malinois, was born in Germany, then trained in explosives detection at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Kan and Rodriguez are one of four K-9 teams used by Austin's police department to screen luggage and packages at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.

The presence of the K-9 patrols at the airport, a familiar sight to many travelers from the Bluebonnet area, is a strong deterrent, Rodriguez says. So far, fortunately, Kan, at right, has not detected any explosives while on the job. The dog is retiring this spring at age 9 and will kick back as part of the Rodriguez family.

"You build such a great bond with these dogs," Rodriguez says. Kan's final assignment is an exciting one. He will be one of the dogs helping keep the crowd safe at the 2023 Super Bowl in Arizona on Feb. 12.





HUMAN-REMAINS DETECTION DOG, Dexter

Caldwell County

Texas Game Warden Kryssie Thompson knows the work she does with her partner Dexter — a 7-year-old German shepherd mix — is sensitive and extremely important.

“When I thought about whether to take this job,” Thompson recalls, “I put myself in the position of the family of a missing person. If every asset has been utilized and your loved one is still missing, surely there’s got to be a last line of defense.”

Dexter is one of two human-remains detection dogs brought on by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department five years ago. They are considered full-time “game warden K-9s.”

Thompson and Dexter were originally based out of Bastrop but recently moved to Huntsville, and they can be called upon for searches across the Bluebonnet service area. At left, they practice a training scenario along the San Marcos River.

When someone goes missing on water or in the woods, and officials suspect that person is deceased, Dexter’s finely calibrated nose can detect odors, sometimes months, or even years, after a death.

He can even indicate the location of victims in water from a boat, often in areas where divers or searchers face limited visibility.

It’s difficult work, but the relief families feel when a lost loved one is finally recovered is often palpable, Thompson says. One family was so touched by their work they sent the duo a thank-you note.

“I put myself in the position of the family of a missing person. If every asset has been utilized and your loved one is still missing, surely there’s got to be a last line of defense.”

— **KRYSSIE THOMPSON,**

Texas game warden and human-remains detection dog handler

LIVESTOCK GUARD DOG, Buddy

Fayette County

Coyotes, be forewarned: Don’t mess with Buddy’s goats. The 4-year-old Great Pyrenees — seen here at his goat-pen home not far from the main square in Round Top — comes from a long line of legendary flock protectors. Great Pyrenees take their name from their ancestral homeland in the rugged Pyrenees Mountains, which form a natural boundary between Spain and France.

There, the breed has long been known for working with shepherds to safeguard herds from predators, even at night. Buddy belongs to Michael and Jackie Sacks, who until recently owned Round Top Mercantile. Buddy guards the family’s eight Spanish Boer goats. He keeps unwelcome visitors at bay and will even take off after turkey vultures if they soar too closely overhead.

“He just kind of goes where the goats go,” says Jackie Sacks. “When they go lay under the trees, he does, too. He probably thinks he’s a goat.”



“When they go lay under the trees, he does, too. He probably thinks he’s a goat.”

— **JACKIE SACKS,**

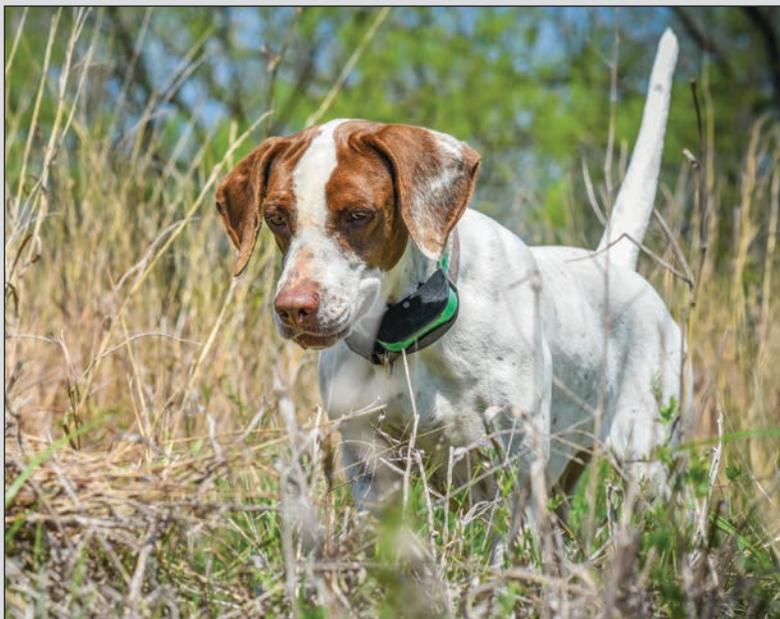
One of Buddy’s owners

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GAME BIRD POINTER, Sugar

Caldwell County

“The Cadillac of bird dogs” is what a recent American Kennel Club article dubbed the English pointer, lauded for its athleticism and elegant pointing pose. Legend has it this breed originated in 1713, when English soldiers came home from a war in Spain accompanied by Spanish pointers. When a hunting pointer — such as Sugar, at right, in action at Tenney Creek Outfitters in southeast Caldwell County — catches a whiff of a bird’s scent, it freezes with its nose out, one front leg cocked up and its tail in the air. The statue-like stance is an instinctive response refined through breeding and developed with training. Sugar’s job is to help the clients of Tenney Creek owner Jack Chamberlain find quail or pheasant in the underbrush on the company’s property, a private bird hunting area. “Sugar is by far my top dog here,” Chamberlain says. “She can go in and find birds when other dogs can’t.”



Doggone inspired to get a pet? Start with these resources



Bruno was one of many dogs waiting for a forever home at the Lockhart Animal Shelter in Caldwell County as of late November. He loves to play with other dogs and kids, according to the shelter. Hundreds of dogs and cats are up for adoption across the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative service area. To learn more about Bruno or the other animals up for adoption at the Lockhart Shelter, call them at 512-398-4401, email lockhartanimalservices@lockhart-tx.org or online at bit.ly/3Eclinf.

No matter where you live in the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative service area, there is a rescue dog waiting for you at a nearby animal shelter. Get more details on these and many other animal shelters in Bluebonnet’s region at bluebonnet.coop/animal-shelters.

AUSTIN COUNTY

PUPS Prevent Unwanted Pets
1884 Boxtik Road, Cat Spring, TX 78933
979-732-5591
bit.ly/3ENwNI8

BASTROP COUNTY

Bastrop County Animal Services
589 Cool Water Drive
Bastrop, TX 78602
512-549-5160
bit.ly/3AoKSUV

BURLESON COUNTY

City Pets
845 Presidential Corridor E
Caldwell, TX 77836
979-567-4155
bit.ly/3EhSGJ5

CALDWELL COUNTY

Lockhart Animal Shelter
547 Old McMahan Trail
Lockhart, TX 78644
512-398-4401 (press 2)
bit.ly/3Eclinf

COLORADO COUNTY

Lucie’s Project
P.O. Box 325
Sheridan, TX 77475
979-484-2990
bit.ly/3VoM1E6

FAYETTE COUNTY

Gardenia E. Janssen Animal Shelter
240 Svoboda Lane
La Grange, TX 78945
979-966-0021
bit.ly/30I30tt

GONZALES COUNTY

Gonzales Dog Adoptions
400 CR 488
Gonzales, TX 78629
830-857-4085
bit.ly/3tUBHlp

GUADALUPE COUNTY

Guadalupe County Humane Society
2484 Texas 46
Seguin, TX 78155
830-372-2055
bit.ly/3tAce6H

HAYS COUNTY

San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter
750 River Road
San Marcos, TX 78666
512-805-2650
bit.ly/3TKxj9h

LEE COUNTY

Lehman Animal Shelter
1900 S. Leon St.
Giddings, TX 78942
979-540-3919
bit.ly/3EdNF4j

MILAM COUNTY

Rockdale Dog Shelter
290 Beverly St.
Rockdale, TX 76567
512-446-3436 (ask to be transferred to animal shelter)
bit.ly/3tGSwGg

TRAVIS COUNTY

Austin Animal Center
7201 Levander Loop, Bldg. A
Austin, TX 78702
512-974-2000
bit.ly/3ApnBCq

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Brenham Pet Adoption Center
1804 Longwood Drive
Brenham, TX 77833
979-337-7351
bit.ly/3EDdwnK

WILLIAMSON COUNTY

Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter
1855 SE Inner Loop
Georgetown, TX 78626
512-943-3322
bit.ly/3UZzGqe

Stay safe when using a generator

Portables can be helpful in a power outage, but users should practice caution

Portable generators may be a godsend during a prolonged electrical outage, but they can be dangerous and owners should be extremely careful while operating one. A portable generator typically runs on gasoline, although some use diesel or propane. Portables are by far the most frequently used type of generator, and can cost from about \$400 up to \$2,500. Many are purchased at large home-improvement stores.

They can provide 3,000 to 8,500 watts of power, which is enough to power a few essential items, such as a refrigerator. They cannot power an entire house. Portable generators can produce harmful levels of carbon monoxide if operated in an enclosed area, and carbon monoxide poisoning is the cause of hundreds of deaths nationally each year.

If you are getting, or already have, a portable generator, follow these tips:

- Keep the generator dry and do not use it indoors, in a garage, near open doors or windows, or in rainy or wet conditions. A generator cover can protect it from the elements.



- Never try to power your house by plugging the generator into a wall outlet in your house or garage. This dangerous practice can reverse the electricity flow and send electricity out of your house and onto power lines. This can endanger line workers and your neighbors.

- When plugging something into the generator, use the proper type of extension cord that is in good condition. Frayed or ungrounded cords could cause a fire or elec-

tric shock. Overloading a multi-plug extension cord can be dangerous.

- Keep your generator on a flat, stable surface, with its exhaust venting away from windows and doorways to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Install battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms in your home.

- Don't overload a portable generator. Look at its power rating. Most portable generators can only power a single appliance such as a refrigerator plus a few small battery-powered devices.

Larger, permanently mounted standby generators are more powerful, but they are much more expensive (they can start around \$4,000 and rise well above \$10,000) and must be installed by a licensed, qualified electrician.

Contact a Bluebonnet member service representative at 800-842-7708 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday if you are having a standby generator installed. There can be a wait time for delivery and installation.

A Bluebonnet line worker must disconnect power to the home or business where the generator is being installed, inspect the connection from the generator to the meter to make sure it meets safety requirements, and then reconnect power when the job is done.

Don't miss out!

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS & SENIORS See history. Make history.

The **Government-in-Action Youth Tour** includes a trip to Washington, D.C., plus visits to the Texas Capitol, the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum and a \$1,000 scholarship.

Application deadline: **Jan. 20, 2023**

Tour dates: **June 11-19, 2023**

For more information, go to bluebonnet.coop/scholarships-youth-tour

Five ways to save energy and money this winter

COLD WEATHER happens, even if it was 80 degrees yesterday. Save electricity to save money. Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative has some tips to help:

■ **Seal it up.** Consider ways to seal air leaks in your home as a cost-effective strategy to reduce heating costs.

As outside temperatures cool, gaps around doors and windows allow your home's heated air to escape or cold air to creep in. Caulking and weatherstripping are two ways to reduce the amount of outside air interference with your comfort and your electric bill.

■ **Set your thermostat to save.** In cooler months, the U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting your thermostat at 68 degrees. For every one degree you bump down your thermostat you can save as much as 3% on your electricity bill.

■ **Switch ceiling fan direction.** Change the direction of your ceiling fans so that their blades turn clockwise. This pulls cool air toward the ceiling and pushes rising warm air down toward the floor.

■ **Let the sun in.** Open curtains and blinds to allow natural warmth in through the windows, especially south-facing windows, to take advantage of the sun's heat.

■ **Bundle up.** Put on a sweater and slippers or wool socks to stay comfortable after you have lowered the temperature on your thermostat. Use blankets to help you stay comfortable, too. For more tips, visit bluebonnet.coop/energy-saving-tips.

Is your heater running? And running?

How to monitor and compare your electricity use

Texas electricity demand typically peaks in the winter months, not summer. The culprit: your HVAC system. Heating your home can make up 50% or more of your electricity bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

You can see your electricity use, down to the hour, online or on the MyBluebonnet mobile app.

Log in to bluebonnet.coop, go to "My Usage," then select "Usage Explorer." Change the view, date range, time period and type to display either your electric use or costs.

On the app, go to the "Usage" tab and select a time period. Go to the settings icon at upper right to select either electric use or costs to be displayed. Online, log in to bluebonnet.coop, go to "My Usage," then select "Usage Explorer." You can change the view, date range and time period, and see either your electric use or costs.

Another way to see the difference that cold temperatures make on your electric bill is with the Usage Comparison tool on your online MyBluebonnet account. You can compare the costs of a mild-temperature month to a cold one. We compared one family's monthly energy use in October 2022 versus January 2022 and found a the family used an additional 1,632 kilowatt-hours in January and paid \$179.40 more in monthly charges.

Even without raising your thermostat, your heating system can kick in more often and stay on longer to maintain your temperature setting.

Get more tips on monitoring and comparing your electricity use on Bluebonnet's Facebook and Twitter pages this month.

OFFICE CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Jan. 2 for the New Year's Day holiday, Jan. 16 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Jan. 26 for a company-wide meeting. If you have a power outage, you can report it by texting OUT to 85700 (to register, text BBOUTAGE to that

number), online at bluebonnet.coop, via our mobile app or by calling 800-949-4414. You can pay bills any time online, on our mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708 (select option 2 when prompted).

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Application deadline March 24, 2023



Find applications at
[bluebonnet.coop/
scholarships-youth-tour](http://bluebonnet.coop/scholarships-youth-tour)

Dear Bluebonnet,

“The street light near my house was down so I called Bluebonnet to come repair it. I was expecting several weeks. The light was up in 3 days.

Having some light makes it a lot safer to walk or drive, and for the kids to ride their bikes.

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— **Lynda Kaye,**

12-year Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member, Manor

Thank you, Lynda!

Michael Guajardo, a journeyman lineman who has worked for Bluebonnet for five years, was happy to repair your light.

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Priceless Passage

The Port Mansfield Channel led to the Gulf—
and a 400-year-old Spanish treasure

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY BRAVE UNION

PADRE ISLAND is the longest barrier island in the world, measuring 113 miles from Corpus Christi to Brazos Santiago Pass. Up until the late 1950s, you could drive the length of the island with a decent four-wheel-drive vehicle. That changed in 1957, when the Port Mansfield Channel was dredged. The cut had been a decadeslong dream of the Laguna Madre-locked locals and gave them convenient access to the Gulf of Mexico.

At 4 a.m. on September 23, 1957, a giant dredger dug out the last sand dune, cutting the island in two and creating North and South Padre islands.

A Port Mansfield resident named Bill Rapp was elated. “I was there,” he wrote,

“when the dredge Miami took the final cut out of the old Padre and the waters of the Laguna Madre went rushing into the Gulf of Mexico.”

The Port Mansfield Channel is about 9 miles long, running 7 miles through the bay and through 2 miles of island mud flats and dunes to reach the sea.

During the dredging, the mud and clay being sucked from the channel and spewed onto the banks suddenly brightened with silver coins sparkling in the sunlight. The dredge had crushed an old Spanish galleon buried there for centuries.

The Santa María de Yciar was one of four ill-fated ships that had set sail

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



together from Veracruz, Mexico, in 1554 on the way back to Spain. The king had ordered the ships to bring back 100,000 coins of gold and silver from Mexico for the Spanish treasury, smartly dividing the loads among the four vessels.

A tropical storm blew the ships off course, and winds pushed them across the entire Gulf and smashed three of them against the sandbars of Padre Island. Their hulls were pried open and their treasures spilled out onto the sandy bottom. The fourth ship, the San Andrés, was battered in the storm but made it to Havana, Cuba. In the centuries ahead, Padre would be known as the “graveyard of the gulf.”

The three wrecked ships—the San Esteban, Espíritu Santo and Santa María de Yciar—sat undiscovered for four centuries. The former two were found years later a few miles north of the Mansfield cut. Treasure hunters descended on them and had collected quite a fortune before the state of Texas took action and forced them to cease operations and turn over their plunder. The state eventually paid them \$313,000 for their efforts and then placed the coins, anchors, cannons and other artifacts from the wrecks in the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, where you can see them today.

And if you're wondering if coins can still be found, the channel was dredged to its greatest depth in the past few years, said Ron Mills, executive director of Port Mansfield. “During those operations, there were no reported discoveries of new coins or other artifacts that may have pertained to the shipwrecks,” he said.

Sorry, treasure hunters. ■

Gluten-Free

Try these special treats that stick to specialized dietary needs

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Gluten-free cooking has become more accessible thanks to the spread of products filling grocery shelves. Gluten-free recipes, required by some for health reasons, are a great way to explore new ingredients. While my family craves sweet crepes, I love using nutty buckwheat flour to make savory versions. Ham and cheese are classic fillings, but feel free to experiment.



Gluten-Free Ham and Cheese Crepes

1½ cups milk
1 cup gluten-free buckwheat flour
3 eggs
2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, melted, plus more for the pan
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
10–20 pieces thinly sliced ham

COOK'S TIP Crepes cook quickly, so keep an eye on the heat level and reduce as needed if the crepe is cooking before you can spread the batter around the pan.

1. In a large bowl, whisk together milk, buckwheat flour, eggs, melted butter and salt until smooth. Cover and place in the refrigerator to chill for at least 30 minutes and as long as overnight.
2. When ready to cook, place a nonstick frying pan over medium heat. Add a small amount of butter to the pan.
3. Whisk the crepe batter again and pour a small amount of batter into the pan, just enough to thinly cover the bottom. Quickly swirl the pan to coat the pan with an even layer.
4. Cook 1–2 minutes, then loosen the edge with a thin spatula and carefully flip the crepe over. Cook 1–2 minutes more, then transfer to a plate. Repeat with remaining batter.
5. To fill, return a crepe to the pan. Sprinkle on a small amount of cheese, then place 1–2 slices of ham and sprinkle with more cheese. Cook until warmed through and cheese is melted, then fold over edges toward the middle to form a packet. Serve topped with fresh herbs or a fried egg.

SERVES 10

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Bacon-Wrapped Asparagus.



Flourless Chocolate Cake

CAROL YOUNKIN
SAM HOUSTON EC

With no flour needed, this rich cake is a cinch to prepare. To cut into neat slices, Younkin recommends chilling the cooled cake until firm, then warming in the microwave as desired.

¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces, plus more for greasing the pan

1 cup bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips

½ cup unsweetened natural cocoa powder

¾ cup sugar

4 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Whipped cream or ice cream, for serving

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Generously butter the bottom and sides of an 8-inch springform pan or press a sheet of foil into the bottom and sides of an 8-inch round cake pan, smoothing the sides and buttering the foil.

2. Add a few inches of water to a saucepan and set over medium heat, bringing to a simmer. Set a heatproof bowl over the saucepan to create a double boiler and add the chocolate chips. When the chocolate looks soft and is starting to melt, stir with a spatula until smooth and completely melted.

3. Turn off the heat and add butter to the bowl, stirring until melted. Add cocoa powder and stir again until completely incorporated and smooth. Remove bowl from the saucepan.

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Gluten-Free Baked Spinach Fritters

KATHLEEN RUST
PEDERNALES EC



Perfect for brunch or as an appetizer or side, these tasty fritters are a great way to get more vegetables to the table. Rust came up with the recipe as an alternative to frying. She recommends gluten-free panko (Japanese-style bread-crumbs) as an alternative to cornflakes.

MAKES 15 PIECES

1 package frozen spinach (10 ounces), thawed but not drained

3 eggs

½ cup cassava flour

1 teaspoon adobo seasoning

⅛ teaspoon pepper

2 cups shredded mild cheddar cheese

1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese

¾ cup chopped leeks or onions

½ cup chopped bell pepper

1 large clove garlic, minced

¼ cup avocado oil

¾ cup crushed unsweetened gluten-free cornflakes, plus extra for topping

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

2. In a large bowl, combine spinach, eggs, cassava flour, adobo seasoning and pepper. Add cheeses, onion, bell pepper and garlic and stir until ingredients are evenly mixed.

3. Pour avocado oil onto a 9-by-13-inch sheet pan and tilt to coat the entire bottom and sides. Sprinkle crushed cornflakes over the bottom.

4. Dollop spinach mixture onto sheet pan, pressing gently with a spoon or spatula to spread evenly. Sprinkle additional crushed cornflakes over the top.

5. Bake 35 minutes, until browned. Cool until just warm and cut into squares.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TEXAS SEAFOOD DISHES DUE JANUARY 10

We want a boatload of recipes for all manner of seafood. Submit your recipes on our website by January 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

4. Stir in the sugar until incorporated, then add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the vanilla, then pour batter into prepared pan.

5. Bake 40–50 minutes, until crackly and dry on top. A toothpick inserted 2 inches from the edge should come out clean. Cool cake in the pan on a wire rack, then remove springform side or lift cake out using foil overhang. Serve warm, at room temperature or chilled with whipped cream or ice cream on top.

SERVES 8–10

Pão de Queijo (Brazilian Cheese Bread)

CAROLINE TEIXEIRA
PEDERNALES EC

Tapioca flour, also called tapioca starch, is essential for making chewy Brazilian cheese bread. Note that the dough will be wetter and stickier than a traditional bread, so avoid the temptation to add too much flour.



1¼ cups whole milk
½ cup water
6 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
2 teaspoons salt
4 cups tapioca flour, plus more as needed
2 eggs
1½ cups grated Parmesan cheese
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a saucepan, combine whole milk, water, oil and salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.

3. Add the tapioca flour to the bowl of a stand mixer and pour the boiling liquid over the flour. Mix well on low speed until mixture looks soft, sticky and stringy.

4. With the mixer running, add eggs one at a time, fully incorporating after each. Add cheese a little at a time until all is added and dough is fully mixed.

5. If dough is too moist, add a small amount of tapioca flour until a soft and sticky dough is reached.

6. To shape the bread, wet your hands with cold water. Scoop a small amount of dough out with a spoon or your fingers and roll into a ball slightly smaller than a golf ball. Arrange on a baking sheet and repeat until all dough is shaped, rewetting hands as needed during the process.

7. Bake 15–20 minutes, until puffed and golden.

MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN

TCP You don't have to wait until January 20, National Cheese Lovers Day, to partake of this dairy delight. We have more than 300 recipes that include cheese on our website. Now you can't wait, can you?



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Afterlife Sentence

John Wesley Hardin remains behind bars even in an El Paso cemetery

BY CHET GARNER

LIKE MANY TEXANS, I grew up hearing legends of famous gunfighters who roamed the Wild West. They were quick with a pistol and even quicker to gun down anyone who crossed them. Among the most notorious was John Wesley Hardin, who claimed to have killed more than 40 people in his lifetime.

On a trip to El Paso, I stopped by the historic Concordia Cemetery to visit his grave and see if he could still send shivers down my spine like his stories did when I was a kid.

Concordia Cemetery looks like the set of an old Western movie. Tombstones and wooden crosses cover a landscape of dirt and cactuses. It holds more than 60,000 graves dating back to the 1850s, but it didn't take long for me to find Hardin's final resting place, which is protected by a canopy of iron and stone.

Hardin's story is a violent one. Despite numerous arrests and escapes, starting in his teens, the native of Bonham was eventually sentenced to 25 years in prison for killing a deputy sheriff in Comanche County. During his time in prison, Hardin studied law, led Sunday school and attempted to change his nefarious ways.

At the age of 41, he received a full pardon and moved to El Paso to practice law. Sadly, his old ways followed him westward, and he was shot in a saloon. The coroner famously said, "If Hardin was shot in the eye, it was excellent marksmanship. If he was shot in the back, it was excellent judgment."

Hardin's grave was covered with coins and tokens left by visitors and a pair of golden guns. It's a fitting reminder that those who live by the sword die by the sword. Or in Hardin's case—the gun. ■

ABOVE As Chet can see, there will be no more escaping for John Wesley Hardin.

TCP Chet aims to pay a personal visit to one of Texas' shadiest outlaws. Watch the video on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

JANUARY

07

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Western Swing, (830) 896-9393, caillouxperformingarts.com

Valley View Trout Kids Derby, (940) 637-2294, tpwd.texas.gov

09

Uvalde [9-14] San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo Qualifier Event, (210) 985-4748, sarodeo.com

12

Glen Rose [12-14] Somervell County Youth Fair, (817) 964-2752, somervellcountyyouthfair.com

Plano [12-14, 19-21, 26-28] Four Weddings and an Elvis, (972) 849-0358, roverdramawerks.com

13

La Grange Kelly Willis, (979) 968-9944, thebugleboy.org

Lubbock Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan and William Shatner, (806) 792-8339, buddyhollyhall.com

New Braunfels [13-15] Antique Show and Sale, (918) 619-2875, heritageeventcompany.com

14

Fredericksburg Blues Festival, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Granbury The Mammoth Ice Age Run, mammothrace.com

Monahans Sandhills Resolution Run, (432) 943-2187, monahans.org

Austin [14-15] Citywide Vintage Sale, (512) 441-2828, citywidevintagesale.com

15

Fredericksburg Take 3,
fredericksburgmusicclub.com

**San Antonio Untamed
With Filipe DeAndrade,**
(210) 223-8624,
tobincenter.org

16

**Houston MLK Grande
Parade,** (713) 560-8328,
mlkgrandeparade.org

20

Lufkin Pink Martini, (936)
633-5454, angelinaarts.org

**Galveston [20-21] Yaga's
Chili Quest and Beer
Fest,** (409) 770-0999,
yagaschiliquest.com

**South Padre Island
[20-22] Market Days,**
spimarketdays@gmail.com,
spimarketdays.com

**Port Aransas [20-29]
Restaurant Week,**
(361) 749-5919,
portaransas.org

21

**Irving Las Colinas
Symphony Orchestra,**
(972) 252-2787,
lascolinassymphony.org

**Kerrville ZuZu African
Acrobats,** (830) 896-9393,
caillouxperformingarts.com

**Lake Jackson Delfeayo
Marsalis With the
Brazosport Jazz Orchestra,**
(979) 285-2501,
brazosport.org

**Victoria Jason Scheff's
Chicago Nights,**
(361) 576-4500,
victoriasymphony.com

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Pick of the Month

Wild Game and Wine Camofest

Bay City, January 28
(979) 245-8081
baycitycamofest.net

Break out the camouflage and blend into a festival with locally caught samples of wild game, fish and fowl; wine; food inspired by Texas wines; live entertainment; shopping; and activities for the kids.

29

Port Aransas Home Tour, portagardenclub@hotmail.com, [facebook.com/portaransashometour](https://www.facebook.com/portaransashometour)

Surfside Beach Food and Art Festival, (979) 233-1531, surfsidetx.org

Temple Temple Symphony Orchestra, (254) 778-6683, templesymphony.org

Lufkin Marian Anderson Quartet, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Richardson Rhapsodies in Blue, (972) 744-4650, www.eisemanncenter.com

FEBRUARY

02

Orange The Simon and Garfunkel Story, (409) 886-5535, lutcher.org

South Padre Island [2-4] Kite Fest, (956) 761-1248, spikitefest.com

03

Burnet [3-4] Highland Lakes Quilt Festival, hlqguild@gmail.com, hlqq.org

04

Brenham Brenham Heritage Museum Dance at La Bahia, (979) 337-7580, visitbrenhamtexas.com

Corpus Christi Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra: An Interplanetary Experience, (361) 883-6683, ccsymphony.org

North Zulch Chili Cook-Off, (979) 488-9214, [facebook.com/nzvfvd](https://www.facebook.com/nzvfvd)

Rockport [4-5] Clay Expo, (361) 729-5519, rockportartcenter.com

JANUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

21

Fredericksburg [21-22] Rockhounds Gem and Mineral Show, (325) 248-1067, rockngem.com

Plano [21-22] Dallas Area Train Show, chris@railroadmodelers.com, dfwtrainshows.com

24

Tyler The Doo Wop Project, (903) 566-7424, cowancenter.org

26

Schulenburg Turtle Wing Toast, (979) 505-5090, turtlewingfoundation.org

27

San Angelo [27-29] Comic Con, sanangelocomiccon.com

28

Coppell San Jose Taiko Interactive Matinee, (972) 304-7047, coppellartscenter.org

Mathis Kid Fish, (361) 547-2635, tpwd.texas.gov

Nature's Color

"Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour."
—From *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost

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1 REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

"The majestic Frio River offers amazing fall colors in the Texas Hill Country near Concan."

2 JAZZMIN AGUAYO
PEDERNALES EC

"A Portuguese man-of-war on the shore of Port Aransas provides a vibrant display of brilliant color."

3 GARY IMM
SAM HOUSTON EC

This emission nebula, as seen from the shores of Lake Livingston through a large telescope, is called the Cat's Paw Nebula.

4 MIKE ZARELLA
PEDERNALES EC

This male painted bunting stopped for a drink at the bird blind water feature at Pedernales Falls State Park.



Upcoming Contests

DUE JAN 10 **Taking Flight**

DUE FEB 10 **Dad**

DUE MAR 10 **Waterfalls**



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Nature's Color photos from readers.



Oh! Possum!

Learning to like a late-night neighbor

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY KIRSTEN ULVE

THE FIRST TIME our resident opossum and I met in the dark on a tiny, enclosed back porch was traumatic for both of us. I may have screamed. He may have hissed.

We made hasty retreats in opposite directions—he back through the broken pet door he had rudely entered.

The next night, my husband caught him in a humane trap, took him to the farthest corner of our back pasture and shook his seemingly dead body out of the trap. He was “playing possum.” And he had already developed a taste for the cat food we keep on the back porch.

He was back the next day.

After his return from eviction, I looked up some fascinating facts about him.

In spite of their naked, ratlike tails, opossums are not rodents. They are the

only marsupial—pouched mammal—native to North America and have been around for 70 million years, once coexisting with dinosaurs. Their short life span, one to two years, is due to their many predators—dogs, coyotes and humans.

There are 65 species of opossums, and all are related to kangaroos and koalas. While the only species that populates the U.S. is the Virginia opossum, others reside in Central America, South America, Australia and New Guinea.

Opossums are not aggressive. Their open-mouthed hissing is a bluff—but with 50 teeth, more than any other North American land mammal, it worked on me. If hissing isn’t successful, they feign death, falling on their sides with tongue extended in hopes that predators will lose interest and move on. If the predator decides to call this ultimate bluff, the opossum is a sitting duck.

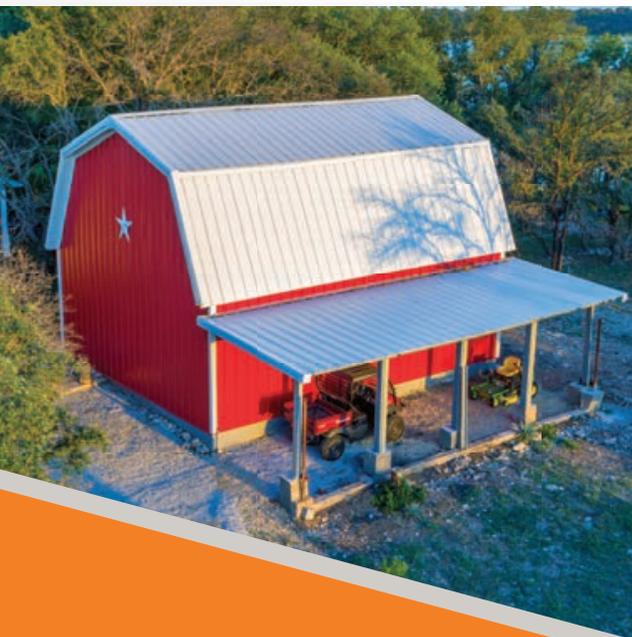
Opossums have a number of redeeming qualities. They eat cockroaches, ticks, crickets, spiders, beetles and June bugs and find snails and slugs a delightful delicacy. We once had an infestation of slugs, which left their slimy, silvery trails all over the sidewalks, storm doors, back porch and the bowl of cat food. Since our opossum began his nightly visits, the slugs have been vanquished. Eureka!

Opossums, which can hiss and foam at the mouth as defense mechanisms, get a bum rap. They almost never carry rabies because their body temperature is too low to sustain the virus. President Benjamin Harrison kept two pet opossums in the White House. President Herbert Hoover had one too.

Our little visitor doesn’t kill chickens, nor does he tip over the garbage cans. He has learned to coexist with our cats, who are too fat and lazy to stay up for his late-night visits.

So I guess we won’t be installing a new pet door any time soon. He’s welcome to his cat food appetizer. ■

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