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SEPTEMBER 2024

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EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16





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# September 2024



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Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

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Texas School for the Deaf players burst onto the field through smoke and confetti.  
*Photo by Scott Van Osdol*

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Cooperative volunteers from CoServ help build a ramp for a North Texas resident with mobility limitations.  
*Photo by CoServ*

# Boosting Rural Texas

A STATEWIDE NONPROFIT wants to make sure rural communities don't miss out on their share of the billions in federal dollars available for broadband, water and energy upgrades; transportation infrastructure; and other projects.

Texas Rural Funders works to connect communities with grant opportunities and grant writers to work through a process that is often overwhelming.

Our state is expected to receive about \$2.5 billion for water infrastructure. As the state with the largest rural population, it also will receive billions in federal dollars in broadband infrastructure grants. In more than half of Texas counties, a majority of residents lacks access to high-speed internet.

To see if TRF can help your town or organization, visit [texasruralfunders.org](http://texasruralfunders.org).



**365** The length, in feet, of an aircraft in development called the WindRunner, which is intended to deliver wind turbine blades too large for transport on public roads. Its proposed record-breaking length would be three times the distance of the Wright brothers' first powered flight, in 1903.



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

My first job was ...

**TCP** Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Here are some of the responses to our July prompt: **I'd like to be famous for ...**

Designing a health care system for all.

DORIS REDMAN  
BLUEBONNET EC  
BRENHAM

A little while.

VERA FIELDS  
VIA FACEBOOK

Being a quiet listener instead of a loud talker.

JOE BABIN  
BLUEBONNET EC  
BASTROP

Making sweet potato pie.

ELENORA RICKETTS  
VIA FACEBOOK

Visit our website to see more responses.

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Parks

**RECOMMENDED READING**  
National Kids Take Over the Kitchen Day is September 13. We have the perfect recipes. Check out *Kids Cooking* from August 2021.





JULY 2024 Vegan Panhandlers

“Here in Kerr County we enjoy calling ourselves Center Pointers, Kerrvillians, Ingramites, Hunters and Mountain Homies.”

LYNETTE WALDREP  
CENTRAL TEXAS EC  
MOUNTAIN HOME



SHAW NIELSEN

**One Town's Social Glue**

What are folks in my town called [*Vegan Panhandlers*, July 2024]? Little Elmites? Little Elmians? A quick search lends the most validity to Little Elmers. Whimsical and a bit silly. I think Mr. Strong would approve.

Carrie Binns  
CoServ  
Little Elm

I live in Fischer and my name is Peter, so I like to call myself a Fischerman.

Peter Locke  
Pedernales EC  
Fischer

You omitted one obvious city that doesn't fit your demonym paradigm: Mesquite. People from Mesquite are referred to as Skeeters.

Ed Girard  
HILCO EC  
Hillsboro

One night during dinner when I lived in Oklahoma, the local weatherman referred to the people of Moore as Morons. I'll never forget it. I choked and spit food everywhere.

We never saw that young man on TV again.

Donna Allon  
Bluebonnet EC  
"A Bastropian"

**Literary Menu**

We stumbled across the Cactus Book Shop while looking for a restaurant 20 years ago [*Texas Book Man*, July 2024]. We found books by Paul Patterson, John Erickson, Elmer Kelton and others. Forgot about lunch and bought a first edition of *Crazy Women in the Rafters*, which I loaned to a friend and never saw again.

Now I'm going to call Felton Cochran and see if I can get another copy of that lost masterpiece.

J. Phil Dering  
Pedernales EC  
San Marcos

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DAVE SHAFER

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# Calling an Audible

Texas School for the Deaf fights preconceptions and a pandemic with gridiron grit

BY MARK WANGRIN • PHOTOS BY SCOTT VAN OSDOL

**ENERGIZED AND RAUCOUS**, it was largely a pep rally like any other. Teams introduced. Cheerleaders cheering. Students screaming. The sound was deafening, even if in fact nearly all the attendees were already deaf.

The differences in the packed Austin gym on the Thursday before the Texas School for the Deaf's homecoming game were subtle but noticeable. No band. No chanting.

Sign language more than made up for that.

That's the rule at TSD, the only Deaf high school in Texas. Although there's a wide range of hearing loss among the students and staff, American Sign Language is the only allowed means of communication.

Except on the football field. There, anything goes.

Pad-popping hits are a universal language. Players who can talk, talk loudly and emphatically—the Rangers even got flagged in a recent season for “cussing.” Music blares in the weight room, the more bass the better. But communication is mostly by sign language, the intense looks on coach's faces and the use of other senses sharpened by hearing loss.

Players can't watch their opponent and coaches simultaneously, so signing from the sidelines isn't an option on the field. They can't hear opponents changing plays to better counter or attack, or teammates shouting adjustments. Paul Hubbard, a player at Gallaudet College, a Deaf school in Washington, D.C., invented the football huddle in the early 1890s to prevent opponents from stealing signs.

TSD's Kenneth Montanez, who shared head coaching duties with Archie Savannah Jr. in 2023, played multiple sports growing up but always loved football. He played five years at what is now Gallaudet University and kept feeding his passion by playing semipro football and rugby.

“It's more than physical for them,” writes Montanez, who lost his hearing as a baby in New York City. “It teaches self-discipline and how to achieve things as a community.”

The Rangers' annual 10-game schedule includes at least two games against other Deaf state schools, one home and one away. The host school puts on a dinner and dance for the visitors, with the idea of forming a nationwide network of peers who face similar obstacles.

Ursa Rewolinski's network was closer to home. Her godfather is former TSD head coach Andy Bonheyo, and she grew up in Austin as a fan of the football team. By age 3, she could identify NFL teams playing on TV by their helmets. After



OPPOSITE AND TOP: Quarterback Xiovan Tomlinson is aware of preconceptions in the hearing world. “They think that we have low IQs or we can't drive,” he says. “But really, deaf people can do anything.” ABOVE: Ball carrier Daniel Sweet looks for an opening during a scrimmage.

graduating from the Maryland School for the Deaf, she returned to teach at TSD in 2019, her football passion evident but unfulfilled.

“Everybody’s like, ‘Why are you not a coach?’ You know what, the door hadn’t really opened up for me,” she says through an ASL interpreter. “And so, long story short, I came back here, became a teacher and the door opened, and now I’m here.”

She became the team’s first female coach last season.

## Great and Small

TSD began playing sports with a baseball team in 1887. Since then its teams have won 69 national championships in 12 sports, including 16 in football. And while those titles were meaningful, they weren’t statement-making the way a 2020 championship was. All it took was a pandemic and remarkable adaptability.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in spring 2020, it hit TSD hard. Some 40% of the 500 students live on campus—they come from all over the state—and many concerned parents kept their children home. Other players fell ill.

Football is a physical sport that requires numbers—11 players per team on the field at any one time. It began looking like the Rangers might not have the numbers to field a team, much less compete, as the pandemic tore through its roster.

TSD belongs to the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools, which also sponsors six-man football, with smaller teams that play on shortened fields. To keep playing, the Rangers downsized.

“To continue to have a football program, it was the best decision that we ever made,” says athletic director Chris Hamilton, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative. “However, we had to deal with some very upset community



“It’s more than physical for them. It teaches self-discipline and how to achieve things as a community.”





OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT: Family members escort Lev Shayman, a member of the homecoming court, onto the field. Jermiah Garcia played most of his life in the hearing world but didn't feel he got the proper support, academically or socially. He transferred to TSD in 2022. ABOVE: Cheerleaders keep school spirit front and center for the fans.

members and explain to people that we just couldn't make it as a full team.

"So it took time. The community kind of went through a grieving process."

And the team went through, well, a shrinking process. An 80-yard field was marked at their on-campus stadium, even as the goalposts remained in place for a 100-yard field. Illness and injury occasionally limited the 20-person roster to seven players.

But they won. And kept winning, through a 63-32 state championship victory over crosstown power Veritas Academy, which had routed them in a preseason scrimmage.

"Winning the state title as a Deaf school is way more challenging than winning the national title," writes Kylar Sicoli, a senior wide receiver on that team, in an email. "A Deaf school will always win the [Deaf] national title. We never won a football state title, so we made history."

## Sound of Success

Winning the state title was another step in dismissing preconceptions hearing people might have.

"They think that we have low IQs or we can't drive. Things like that," says quarterback Xiovan Tomlinson, a third-generation deaf player at TSD. "But really, deaf people can

## Sign of Their Times

**American Sign Language has thousands of signs, from "aah" to "zucchini," but sometimes they just don't seem to be enough.**

For example, there are two signs for Ranger, the TSD mascot. One is for park ranger. One is for forest ranger. Phil Mauro, a former TSD athletic director, didn't think either evoked the courage, resourcefulness and independence of the name-sake legendary Texas lawmen.

"Texas A&M had Gig 'Em, Miami had the 'U,'" recalls Mauro, 79, who is still coaching football in Ohio. "The biggest thing was to make the kids feel they were on the same level as everyone else."

Mauro borrowed the Hook 'em Horns sign from that school 3 miles up Congress Avenue in Austin, the University of Texas, and customized it by wrapping the middle finger over the index finger—the ASL sign for "R."

Almost 40 years later, it still represents what it means to be a Ranger.

"I'm really glad they still use it," Mauro says. "It was and is our Rangers No. 1 sign."





ABOVE: Players come together after a pregame pep talk. RIGHT: Theo Savannah with his father, Archie, who shared head coaching duties last season.

do anything.”

Montanez points out that he’s seen studies that deaf drivers are safer because they aren’t easily distracted and “have a lifetime’s learning on using their peripheral vision. It’s the same in football.”

AD Hamilton, who joined the school in 2001, says this is nothing new.

“Historically, Deaf teams have been oppressed just as deaf people have been oppressed, but hey, we’re here,” he says. “We’re doing this. We can do it. We’re just like you, and we’re better than you in some cases.”

Jermiah Garcia played most of his life in the hearing world and was a budding standout as a freshman at Shoemaker High School in Killeen, but he didn’t feel he got the proper support, academically or socially. So, encouraged by his interpreter, a TSD alumnus, Garcia transferred to TSD for his sophomore season in 2022.

“I was really lost trying to communicate with my teammates. I couldn’t have my interpreter on the field,” Garcia says. “My interpreter would tell me, some of the students are saying that you can’t do this, you can’t do that, you can’t play.”

Teammate Niven Zhang is more succinct. “I just feel like going to a public school would be really a waste of time because there’s a lot of logistical things that we have to work





“When coaches like me are able to communicate clearly, in depth and spatially, I can see the ‘aha’ moment in their eyes and faces.”



Ursa Rewolinski grew up with strong connections to the TSD football team. She became a teacher at the school in 2019 and last season became an assistant coach, the first woman to do so in the team’s history.



out with interpreters,” he says. “Here at Texas School for the Deaf, everything works just like it should.”

Montanez knows his players are in the right place for success.

“Too often, when they’re being coached by someone who doesn’t understand them (tends to be hearing), things fly over their head,” he writes. “When coaches like me are able to communicate clearly, in depth and spatially, I can see the ‘aha’ moment in their eyes and faces.

“I love seeing that.”

## Help Ahead

One of the main challenges of a football player not being able to hear is, not surprisingly, communication.

Whistles. Audibles. Referee warnings. In-game coaching. Fans. Trash talk.

“Oh yeah, every opponent we go against has a lot of trash talk,” junior Theo Savannah says. “Then we show them we can play.”

Midway through the 2023 season, AT&T introduced a field-leveling technology, equipping helmets with 5G-augmented reality lenses that can display text.

NCAA rules, which many high school associations, including TAPPS, follow, prohibit electronic devices in hel-

metts, but Gallaudet was granted a one-game waiver to use the technology. The Bison promptly ended a four-game losing streak.

Sicoli, one of several TSD alums playing for the Bison, writes that the technology could help them avoid late hit penalties caused by not being able to hear the ref’s whistle.

“That could be a game changer for some deaf players,” Sicoli writes. “Also the helmet would help the coach and players communicate during the game. The coach always has difficulty getting the player’s attention.”

David Goodnight, a referee from Somerville who is a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, doesn’t know ASL—few who officiate TSD games do—but officiating deaf teams’ games is an ongoing education.

“I just learned two words last week,” he says. He points just above his temple for “heads” and puts the palm of his right hand over the top of left hand and wags his left index finger for “tails.”

Goodnight says deaf players do a good job avoiding late hits. “Coaches say you play to the whistle,” he says. “Deaf players understand you play till the end of the play.” ■





# THE RAMP CHAMPS

**Volunteers and wood corralled by the Texas Ramp Project lift neighbors statewide**

BY BOB MCCULLOUGH

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Patsy Beasley with her late husband, ramp recipient Oral Beasley. Cooperative volunteers from CoServ with a ramp they built in Denton, and Wood County EC volunteers with one of their finished projects. OPPOSITE: CoServ volunteers have built dozens of ramps, and the CoServ Charitable Foundation has awarded more than \$70,000 to the Texas Ramp Project.

Texans love the ability to go and do as they desire—freedom that a lot of folks can take for granted. For some, leaving home is a struggle.

But Texans also care about their neighbors, so it's not surprising that a statewide army of 3,500 volunteers works year-round to give life-changing mobility to those dependent on wheelchairs.

The nonprofit Texas Ramp Project has coordinated the construction of more than 27,500 ramps that, if placed end to end, would stretch 142 miles. Recipients of the simple but durable wooden ramps are low-income older adults and others with disabilities identified by health care providers.

“Ramps change lives,” says Keith R. Henderson, TRP president. “They bring safety, independence and improved quality of life. They also ease the burden on family and caregivers. With safe access, older adults can age in place at home in their own environment. Where else can you show up on a Saturday morning and go home four hours later having transformed a person’s life?”

Such transformations originated in 1985, when members of the Richardson Kiwanis Club built a wheelchair ramp. One build after another led to the creation of the Dallas Ramp Project, which led to the construction of 1,400 ramps and showed a clear statewide need.

In 2006, TRP was incorporated to build ramps on a much



*"Where else can you show up on a Saturday morning and go home four hours later having transformed a person's life?"*

broader scale. John Laine, who had served as volunteer director of the Dallas Ramp Project, founded TRP and became its executive director. He continued in that capacity until late last year.

"Personally, I believe God gave each of us skills, and our job is to learn what those skills are and to use them to help others," Laine says. "I was given certain skills that seem to have blended well with TRP. It has been a blessing for me to have had this work put into my path."

TRP doesn't accept direct requests from clients or families seeking ramps. Referrals must come from a third-party health care provider via the TRP website, [texasramps.org](http://texasramps.org). That's also the web address for volunteering and making donations.

After an eligible ramp request is processed, TRP directs a trained surveyor to visit the prospective ramp recipient and design a structure that meets the client's needs. A volunteer construction crew then implements the design, typically in a few hours, with the help of precut wood delivered by TRP.

"Two hours of preparation probably saves three hours at the build site," says Tom Canfield of Fredericksburg, a surveyor and construction coordinator. Canfield has had a hand in more than 100 ramps.

**Shortly after daybreak** in July 2023, he and four friends converged on the rural home of Oral Beasley, who used a motorized wheelchair because of a stroke. Thanks to Canfield's prep work and his team's carpentry skills, Beasley was cruising smoothly on his new ramp by midday.

Beasley died just three months after the build, but his wife, Patsy, says the ramp drastically improved his well-being. She praises Canfield and his crew "for doing such a beautiful thing, the first time anyone helped us like that. It took away my husband's fear about tumbling over."

Regaining freedom and no longer feeling trapped at home are common experiences relayed by ramp recipients.

To make mobility miracles happen, TRP partners with churches, civic clubs, businesses, military units, youth groups and other organizations, says Sandy Knutson, TRP executive director. Among the most active are electric cooperatives, which are guided by the co-op principle of Concern for Community.

Co-op employees live up to that principle by performing community service for members who are also their neighbors and friends.

CoServ, an electric co-op based in Denton, became actively involved in TRP in 2016, and since then CoServ employees have built more than three dozen ramps. The CoServ Charitable Foundation has awarded \$71,000 in grants to the nonprofit.

"For people facing surgery or who have other mobility issues, traversing even a few steps can be dangerous," says Conan Tearney, CoServ client services manager. "It's a great feeling knowing you helped build something with your hands that means so much to a co-op member."

Another ardent TRP supporter, Wood County Electric Cooperative, has donated \$25,000 through its member-funded charitable foundation that helps nonprofits in its nine-county service area in northeast Texas. Employee volunteers are also involved in builds.

"Our mission statement is: Providing safe and reliable electric service while improving our communities where we live and serve," says Paige Eaton, communications director. "Caring for the communities we serve is embedded in what we do every day. Our members are our neighbors, and in Co-op Country, you look out for one another. TRP is just one of the ways we can do that." ■











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30	9.06	7.88	9.79	8.66	14	11	18	16	58	29.07	21.98	50.58	36.96	91	65	172	119
36	9.21	8.31	10.35	9.51	15	13	22	18	59	31.60	23.51	55.57	39.88	101	71	190	129
37	9.21	8.58	10.54	9.93	15	14	22	20	60	34.14	24.28	61.26	42.99	113	76	209	140
38	9.21	8.71	11.69	10.25	17	14	24	21	61	37.60	25.65	66.80	47.11	126	86	238	157
39	9.46	8.86	12.35	10.66	18	15	25	22	62	41.49	27.91	74.28	51.33	141	95	267	172
40	9.63	9.10	12.94	11.08	18	16	27	24	63	44.70	34.39	85.55	59.60	157	104	288	190
41	10.05	9.22	13.66	11.83	20	17	30	27	64	48.23	38.53	93.16	64.38	173	114	327	212
42	10.48	9.26	14.21	12.67	22	19	33	29	65	53.18	41.15	101.79	70.36	191	127	361	234
43	10.98	9.50	14.74	13.52	25	20	39	31	66	59.15	44.62	115.13	75.41	213	139	398	258
44	11.58	9.84	15.80	14.36	27	22	43	34	67	65.66	49.09	130.13	83.65	235	152	443	284
45	12.25	10.17	17.07	15.20	29	24	48	38	68	74.33	59.65	145.11	112.92	262	174	491	322
46	12.84	10.65	18.09	16.18	31	25	51	40	69	82.98	65.91	161.68	129.33	293	188	548	352
47	13.43	11.16	19.18	17.07	33	27	56	44	70	93.20	73.30	181.25	148.72	330	204	615	387
48	13.48	11.88	20.44	17.76	35	29	58	48	71	102.45	82.71	204.38	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.71	12.33	21.77	18.77	38	31	63	52	72	113.68	94.13	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.46	12.99	23.41	20.00	40	34	69	57	73	127.55	108.24	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.38	13.75	25.38	21.18	45	35	78	62	74	142.08	123.01	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.37	14.87	28.02	22.76	50	38	88	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
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Everything is bigger in Texas,  
especially this 75,593-square-foot convenience store  
with the iconic beaver brand.

# THE WORLD'S BIGGEST BUC-EE'S LANDS IN LULING

By Melissa Segrest ● Photos by Laura Skelding

It is just past 5:30 a.m. on June 10, and 120 Buc-ee's employees are gathered for a pep talk in the center of the chain's newest store in Luling. The grand opening is about to begin, and Josh Smith, the company's director of operations, is pumping everyone up — “Are y'all excited, or what?” Workers answer with a chorus of whoops and cheers.

About 10 minutes later, the doors of this brightly lit store slide open to visitors for the very first time, and a crowd of smiling shoppers streams across the threshold of this dream come true for Buc-ee's fans.

This Luling store is not just the newest Buc-ee's — it is the largest convenience store on the planet, according to both Buc-ee's and the National Association of Convenience Stores.

At 75,593 square feet, about 1.7 acres, the “travel center” is bigger than a football field and could hold 25 standard-sized convenience stores. The Luling store's debut demotes the 74,000-square-foot Buc-ee's in Sevierville, Tenn., to second place on the global list. It's fitting that the title returns to Texas, since the Tennessee store had wrested it from the 66,000-square-foot Buc-ee's on Interstate 35 in New Braunfels in 2023.

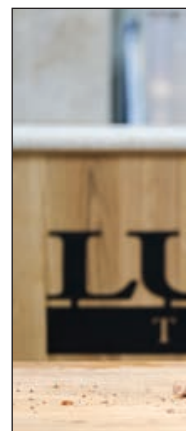
Visiting this newest mega-Buc-ee's, at 10070 I-10, is an experience.

Eventually, the location will boast 120 fuel pumps — as soon as the previous Buc-ee's next door, which was 35,000 square feet, makes way for more pumps and parking. As of late July, there were 96 fuel pumps under a tall canopy stretching east to west, with an additional 24 coming soon.

Inside the mammoth store, visitors can browse an array of thousands of fresh and prepackaged foods; dozens of drink stations; a big, colorful home goods and décor area; shelves and racks of clothing and outdoors items emblazoned with the Buc-ee's beaver logo; and an eye-popping assortment of other goodies you never knew you needed. Signs direct customers to the “cleanest restrooms in America.” An employee in a Buc-ee the Beaver mascot costume will pose for selfies with anyone who asks.

The shelves are always stocked. The aromas of fresh chopped brisket

**Story continued on Page 18**







**Above left:** At the grand opening of the new Buc-ee's on Interstate 10 in Luling, Michael and Christie Conley, in their favorite Buc-ee's the Beaver-themed outfits. The couple were among the first customers in the new store, and said they plan trips around Buc-ee's locations. **Above right:** Among the eye candy at the giant convenience store are large, uniform displays of sweets, snacks and Buc-ee's products, including a wall of jerky, dog toys and sweet Beaver Nuggets in three flavors. **Below:** The store, seen from the sky, spans about 1.7 acres, with 96 covered fuel pumps in front. When the original Buc-ee's store, at left, is removed and construction is complete, there will be a total of 120 fuel pumps and more parking space. *Aerial photo by Joe Stafford*



**From left:** Swimwear, like women's bright red suits, is a hot summer Buc-ee's best-seller. The art of preparing barbecue, like chopped brisket bathed with a ladleful of sauce, is a key part of employee training. Just before the doors opened at the new Buc-ee's, employees get fired up. 'Y'all deserve every square inch of this building!' a Buc-ee's executive said. *Joe Stafford photo*





The vast interior of the world's largest convenience store, where seeing from one end to the other can be a challenge, features departments stocked with everything from home décor to outdoor goods to clothes to thousands of food and drink items.

### Continued from Page 16

and pulled pork, roasted nuts, just-baked kolaches and fudge fill the air. There will be 200 employees at the Luling store, ensuring someone is always nearby to answer questions. Bags of sweet, crunchy Beaver Nuggets — the store's eponymous, best-selling snack — can be found around almost every corner.

This Buc-ee's is a dizzying mash-up of a modern-day mercantile, food festival, snack pantry and gas station on steroids — all with a sprinkling of Disneyland-style magic.

The restrooms are indeed impressive. Spaces are plentiful and pristine. Women can choose from 34 roomy stalls, with tall privacy doors and a light above each that glows green or red to signal its availability. Men's facilities have 19 urinals and 17 toilet stalls. Round-the-clock cleaning teams maintain a low profile. Visitors may not see these workers, but they can take note of their efforts: No specks of paper litter the floor, no puddles of water stand by the sinks, and no trash cans overflow.

This attention to detail has made the Buc-ee's chain one of the rare businesses that have crossed from simple convenience-store commerce to cultural phenomenon, a "destination" must-stop for multitudes of highway drivers.

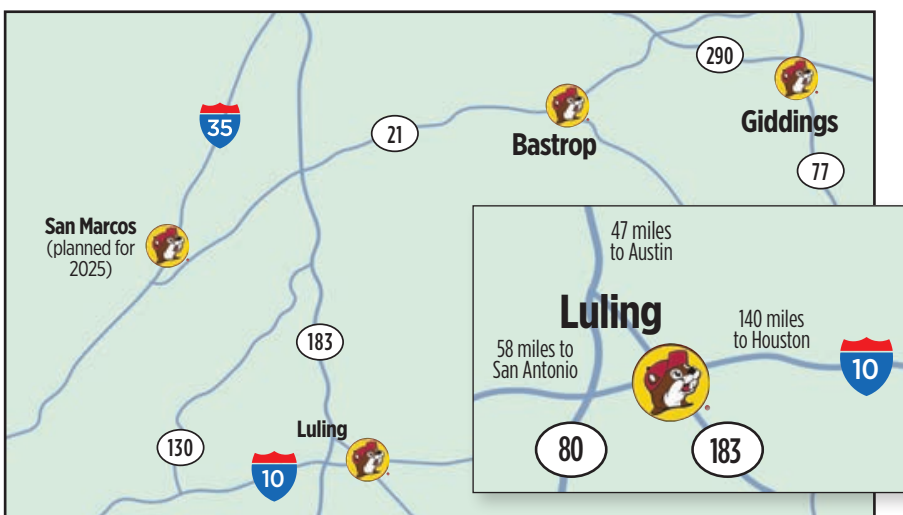
A simple formula has fueled Buc-ee's success: clean restrooms, friendly employees and inexpensive gas at lots of pumps. The company's success has grown thanks to word of mouth, fans' social media posts, enthusiastic news accounts and witty billboards that strategically dot highways leading to the stores.

Going big underpins the Buc-ee's business philosophy. And, of course, bigger is best in Texas.

## The Buc-ee's story

In 1982, Arch "Beaver" Aplin III opened the first Buc-ee's location at a crossroads

## Buc-ee's in the region



near Lake Jackson and Clute, 60 miles south of Houston and 10 miles from the Gulf Coast.

The idea for the smiling Buc-ee the Beaver mascot, it has been widely stated, sprang from an Aplin childhood nickname — "Bucky Beaver" (the cartoon mascot of a toothpaste brand), a beloved dog named Buck and the nearby Brazoswood High School Buccaneers.

The privately held company remains headquartered in Lake Jackson. The early Buc-ee's stores, many of which are still in operation, were not jumbo-sized.

That changed with the opening of the original Luling Buc-ee's in 2003, the chain's first large-format travel center. The biggest Buc-ee's are typically found off major highways, midway between large cities, to attract drivers making multihour trips.

As of late July, Buc-ee's boasted 35 locations in Texas and 15 in other states.

Groundbreaking has happened or is scheduled for five more locations, including one in Amarillo. News reports indicate more travel centers are planned for other states, plus at least two more in Texas — in Boerne and San Marcos.

The pace of Buc-ee's growth shows no signs of slowing.

The Luling Buc-ee's gets its electricity from Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. It opened 19 months after breaking ground. There are other Buc-ee's in or planned for the Bluebonnet region. Store #16 in Giddings, one of the chain's smaller stops, opened in 2000. A 56,000-square-foot travel center opened in Bastrop in 2012. Earlier this year, the San Marcos City Council approved plans for a 74,000-square-foot Buc-ee's that promises at least 175 full-time jobs, according to multiple news reports. It will be built on the southbound I-35 frontage road, just south of Yarrington Road.





**Top left:** Customers stream into the world's largest Buc-ee's in Luling at 6 a.m. on grand opening day. **Top right:** Gas pumps aplenty spread into the distance. **Above:** Pitmaster Randy Pauly, in the center wearing black and red, joins the rest of the Buc-ee's cooking team to show off a brisket freshly prepared in the store.



A few miles to the south, also on I-35, is the New Braunfels Buc-ee's, which opened in 2012 as the world's largest convenience store.

Luling was an optimal site for the massive expansion, because the store store was the original "travel center" in the chain. But it became frequently crowded and fuel pumps were often occupied, even after it underwent two expansions over the years, according to an executive at the grand opening.

"It just didn't feel right to build the biggest Buc-ee's anywhere other than Luling," Aplin said. "As I like to say, when things are going really well, we're just getting started. It'll be a

**Continued on next page**



**Above left:** An employee hands out samples of the many varieties of fudge at the sweets station in the center of the store. Nuts are roasted and flavored there, as well.

**Above:** An employee carefully places a breakfast taco into an orderly display.

**Left:** Buc-ee's touts its restrooms as the cleanest in the world. The spacious women's restroom offers numerous private stalls equipped with indicator lights signaling their availability.



## 10 fun facts about the world's largest Buc-ee's

1. Open all day, every day, 365 days a year
2. Want to call the store? You can't. The no-calls policy keeps employees' focus on in-store customers
3. 96 gas pumps (as of late July) and 16 Tesla Supercharger EV stations; a total of 120 gas pumps (and more parking) planned after construction on old Buc-ee's site
4. No 18-wheelers or extended parking lot stays allowed
5. There is no Buc-ee's online store — if you want a Buc-ee's swimsuit, you'll have to drive for it
6. 22 varieties of fudge — red velvet and peanut butter chocolate are popular, while opinions are mixed on key lime pie
7. A wall of beef jerky, with 14 flavors — Bohemian garlic is most popular
8. 20 types/flavors of roasted nuts, 16 varieties of jelly, 5 seasoning blends
9. 80 soft-drink stations
10. Buc-ee's candles come in the scents of Beaver Nuggets, cinnamon roll and house blend coffee



Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who attended the ribbon cutting on the giant store's opening day, congratulates Buc-ee's owner Arch 'Beaver' Aplin III.

### Continued from previous page

lot of fun to bring the biggest convenience store in the world back to Texas.”

## An economic boost for growing Luling

The Luling Buc-ee's is well situated on I-10, 141 miles from Houston, 58 miles from San Antonio and 50 miles down U.S. 183 from Austin. It is expected to have a significant impact on employment and economic growth in Luling, with a population of 5,754 in 2023. Caldwell County is anticipated to experience similar benefits.

With at least 200 employees, it would be Luling's largest employer as of June, according to city officials. Many of the employees from the older Luling store work at the new Buc-ee's. The chain touts full-time jobs with good pay, career-advancement opportunities, 401(k) retirement plans that match up to 6% of employees' contributions, three weeks of paid time off and health benefits. A sign above the store's front doors lists pay: Entry-level workers earn \$18 to \$21 an hour, well above minimum wage. Department managers can make up to \$33 an hour, assistant general managers \$125,000 and above annually, and general managers \$225,000 and higher.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who attended the travel center's ribbon-cutting on opening day, said the Luling store is a \$40 million investment that adds to Texas' booming business economy. “This Buc-ee's is the key to the future of Luling,” Abbott said. “Buc-ee's is just one important piece of the economy of the bigger, better Texas we are building for generations to come.”

Luling Mayor CJ Watts said the travel center gives the city a big economic boost. Between Buc-ee's and several other fast-

growing businesses there, new residential developments with hundreds of homes are planned, according to Watts and City Manager Mark Mayo.

Both the City of Luling and Caldwell County offered sales tax incentives to help secure the new Buc-ee's. City officials and staff worked closely with company leaders, including Aplin, to make the record-breaking facility a reality.

“We wanted to make sure that we did our part,” said Caldwell County Judge Hoppy Haden, who worked closely with Luling officials. “Buc-ee's is one of the biggest employers in our county, and they really take good care of their employees,” he said. “Somebody with a high school education ... can get a job there and make a living wage, grow within the company and have a chance to be a manager someday. It's a career path.”

Visitors to Buc-ee's will benefit Luling, its school district and Caldwell County — not only from sales and property taxes, but also from added spending in the community. “It's really put the name Luling on the map in a very big way,” Mayo said. “People are calling from all over the place.”



Patrick O'Donnell from Pennsylvania was the first person in line at the Luling grand opening. *Joe Stafford photos*

The 150-year-old town, originally fueled by booming oil and gas production — and still known for its annual Watermelon Thump — is gaining new momentum with more retail, manufacturing and potential warehousing businesses, said Trey Bailey, the executive director of Luling's economic development corporation.

## The Buc-ee's phenomenon

On opening day, a cheery, Randy Pauly, the talkative official “pitmaster” and director of barbecue for Buc-ee's, made the rounds with members of the media, curious customers and employees working behind the Texas Round Up barbecue station near the center of the store. He travels to each new Buc-ee's, teaching the fine art of preparing chopped brisket, and other skills, to employees. Pauly, who said he is a former professional barbecue competitor, is a polished pitcher.

Watching a first-time visitor enter a very large Buc-ee's can be interesting. It's “that moment, that ‘wow’ when they walk through that door,” said Richard Barkley, Buc-ee's regional director of operations, at the grand opening. “It's a reminder that all the work that goes into creating a store like Luling's Buc-ee's is worth it.”

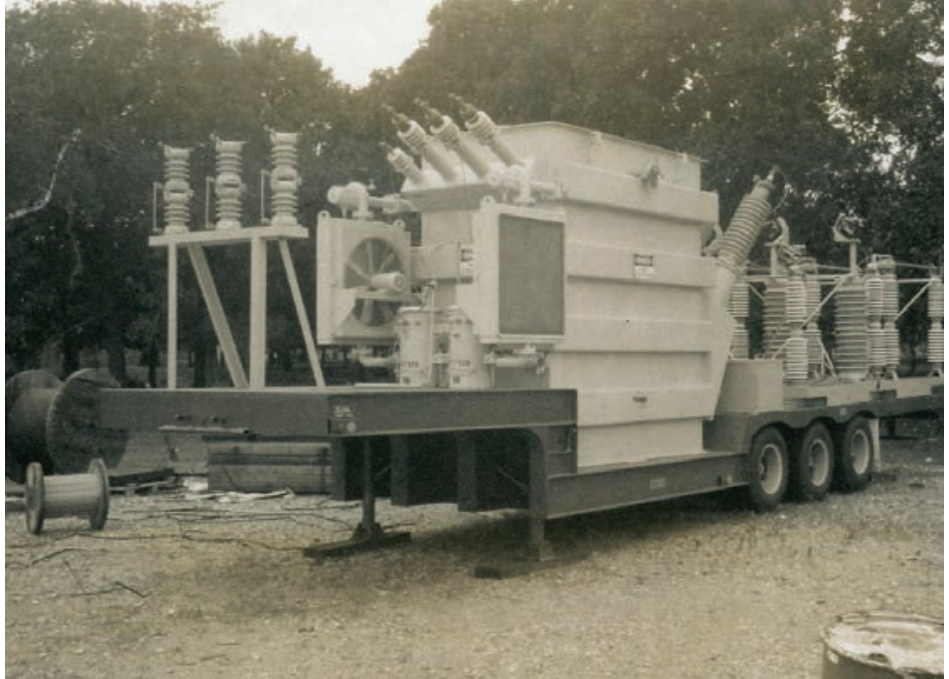
Opening day started very early for Patrick O'Donnell from Pennsylvania, who was first in line when the doors opened. He had arrived the night before, he said.

“My first visit to a Buc-ee's was in 2007 in Madisonville,” about 100 miles northwest of Houston, he said. Since then, he added proudly, he has visited every one of the company's locations. “This is my first grand opening, though,” he said. Many hours later, after the dignitaries had departed, a tired O'Donnell was still there. “I'm looking forward to the next one already,” he said. “But I'll take some time to savor this.” ■



# that was **THEN**

Bluebonnet built its first mobile substation — a portable high-voltage facility that distributes electricity to large numbers of members — in 1980. Substations convert high-voltage electricity from power plants to lower voltages for homes and businesses. This portable substation could power 2,400 homes during emergencies, planned outages or when large transformers were taken offline for maintenance. An 18-wheeler hauled it to a Bluebonnet substation, where it took four to six hours to set up.



# this is **NOW**

Today, Bluebonnet has two mobile substations in its fleet, and a third, larger one, is on order this year. Mobile substations are still hauled by 18-wheelers and take several hours to set up. Advances in technology and increased safety features make today's mobile substations easier for lineworkers and substation technicians to deploy and operate.



**Top:** Bluebonnet's first mobile substation was introduced to the fleet in 1980. It was 36 feet long and weighed 98,000 pounds.

**Above:** Bluebonnet purchased two mobile substations, in 2004 and 2015, and both are in service today.

The 2004 model is more than 80 feet long, weighs 143,800 pounds, and can serve twice as many homes and businesses as the 1980 model.

In 2024, Bluebonnet celebrates 85 years of providing safe, reliable and affordable electric service to its fast-growing membership. Throughout the year, join us in celebrating this milestone as we honor our past and plan for the future.



POWERING  
**PROGRESS**  
SINCE 1939



# Bluebonnet teams excel at Lineman's Rodeo

**AT A COMPETITION** packed with skilled lineworkers from across the state, Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative teams secured spots to compete among the most elite lineworkers across the country at the International Lineman's Rodeo in October.

Nine apprentice lineworkers, four three-man journeyman teams, four barbecue pitmasters and 10 staff judges joined hundreds of colleagues from across the state at Nolte Island Park near Seguin for the 28th Texas Lineman's Rodeo on July 20.

The rodeo began at 6:30 a.m. to help ensure most events were completed before the midday summer heat. During the competition, lineworkers raced against time to climb and competitively work on unenergized power lines. They also performed tasks including replacing equipment and wiring transformers. Apprentice lineworkers tested their knowledge with a written exam.

While the competition was underway, lineworkers were cheered on by family, friends, coworkers and employees from other city and cooperative electric utilities.

Bluebonnet ended the day victorious. Michael Guajardo, Brandon Johnson and Kenneth Roush won first place for the second year in a row in the senior journeyman team division for lineworkers 45 and older.

"The keys to our success were our teamwork and communication," Guajardo said. "Talking through ideas, problem-solving and understanding each other's roles are vital for working toward a common goal."

Colton Burch, an apprentice lineworker, received two second-place awards: as apprentice lineworker and in the written exam. "It didn't feel real until they called my name," he said.

Journeyman lineworker team Kyle Kasper, Logan Lancaster and Andrew Murphy demonstrated speed and safety skills to place fourth in the pole climb event. To sweeten the deal, Zachary Handrick, Huston Burgess and Bryan Woods won fourth place for their brisket in the barbecue cook-off.

The biggest takeaway for first-time competitor Burch was the support he received from his family, coworkers and all the others who compete, he said.

"We practice specifically for the rodeo for



Bluebonnet's rodeo team and coaches celebrate their awards. Front row, from left: Brandon Johnson, Kenneth Roush, Colton Burch, Graesyn Courtney and her father, John Courtney. Back row, from left: Daniel Fritsche, Michael Guajardo, Danny Bolding, Kyle Kasper, Andrew Murphy, Logan Lancaster, Huston Burgess, Troy Moore, Matt Hollingsworth and Chris Rivera. *Sarah Beal photos*



Bluebonnet apprentice Justin Lewis from Giddings competes in the hurtman rescue event.

a handful of days, but in reality, we practice every day when we're working on restoring power for our members," Burch said.

Troy Moore, one of Bluebonnet's rodeo team coaches and a Bluebonnet line crew supervisor in Bastrop, said he was proud of how the team performed, adding that the rodeo gives apprentices and journeymen a chance to practice their skills, test their knowledge and build camaraderie.

"It's about building confidence and fostering teamwork, qualities that are crucial in our daily work providing reliable power to our community," Moore said.

Bluebonnet's 2024 rodeo team members were Reid Hanna, Nick Steuermann, Tucker



Huston Burgess carries smoking hot brisket that won fourth place in its category in the barbecue cook-off.

Saegert, Justin Lewis, Colton Burch, J.D. Boecker, Lane Magnuson, Cooper Lucherk, Trevor Williams, Michael Guajardo, Kenneth Roush, Brandon Johnson, Kyle Kasper, Logan Lancaster, Andrew Murphy, John Courtney, Brad Young, Parker Redwine, Ty Duesterheft, John Zamora and Joe Lockhart. Coaches were Daniel Fritsche, Danny Bolding, Troy Moore and Chris Rivera.

Events at the rodeo, which was founded in 1996 and is hosted by the Texas Lineman's Rodeo Association, are designed to mirror the challenges lineworkers across the state encounter daily while working to provide reliable power to more than 30 million Texans. ■

## CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's buildings will shine in gold at night throughout September for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Trucks will display gold ribbons. Visit any of our member service centers to pick up a ribbon to show your support. Visit our website at [bluebonnet.coop/childhood-cancer](http://bluebonnet.coop/childhood-cancer) for resources and ways to get involved.

## OFFICE CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Sept. 2 for Labor Day. If you have a power outage, you can report it by texting OUT to 44141, online at [bluebonnet.coop](http://bluebonnet.coop), via our MyBluebonnet 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).



# Grants support upgrades to area community centers

**BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC** Cooperative provided two grants to community non-profit organizations and projects within the service territory. These grants were part of LCRA's Community Development Partnership Program. Bluebonnet is proud to partner with LCRA to support its members and communities.

Applications will be accepted in January 2025 for the next round of grants. For more information about this program and the application, visit [lcra.org/cdpp](http://lcra.org/cdpp).



A \$25,000 grant will help fund the construction of a new arts and cultural center in Fayetteville. This grant, along with more than \$2 million in matching funds from Fayetteville Community Center Group, will pay for the first phase of construction, which is underway. Pictured, from left, are Kate Ramzinski, LCRA regional affairs representative; Cassie Austin, Fayette County court administrator; Ben Kastleman, advisory committee member; Sherry Murphy, Bluebonnet's Giddings-area community representative; Mike Stroup, Fayetteville mayor; Byron Balke, Bluebonnet Board Assistant Secretary/Treasurer; Margaret D. "Meg" Voelter, LCRA board member; Pam Reynolds, Craig Moreau and John Reynolds, advisory committee members; Luke Sternadel, Fayette County commissioner, Precinct 2; Reid Bader, advisory committee member; Fred Roberts, community center group board treasurer; and Keely Mikolajchak, Bluebonnet intern.



A \$20,371 grant will help the St. John Colony Civic Center with facility improvements. This grant, along with about \$5,000 in matching funds and in-kind services, will allow St. John 19th Body to install a septic system and high-efficiency water heater, and add restrooms to its 3,600-square-foot multiuse building. Pictured, from left, are Jo Anna Gilland, Bluebonnet's Lockhart-area community representative; Rick Arnic, LCRA regional affairs representative; Diane Hill, organization treasurer; Rosie Lenear Darby, organization volunteer and event coordinator; Milton Shaw, Bluebonnet Board member; Marshall Hill Jr., organization assistant facility chef and member; Margaret D. "Meg" Voelter, LCRA board member; Doray Hill, organization vice president; Marshall Hill, organization president; Dyrall Thomas, Caldwell County commissioner, Precinct 4; Gracy Hill, organization secretary; and Charles Simms, organization mechanical maintenance supervisor and member. *LCRA photos*

## SAVE THE DATE



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- **Explore the solar installer fair, hosted by Texas Solar Energy Society**
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Get more details at [bluebonnet.coop/energy-expo](http://bluebonnet.coop/energy-expo) or on Bluebonnet's Facebook, Instagram and X/Twitter pages.

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The Beatles perform at Dallas Memorial Auditorium in September 1964.

# Invading Dallas

Frenzied fans saw—but barely heard—music history when the Beatles came to Texas

BY LORI GROSSMAN

IT HAS BEEN MORE than 60 years since what some people call the world's first boy band appeared on a Sunday night TV show and changed everything. And this month marks exactly 60 years since the Beatles first came to Texas.

The British pop band's first U.S. tour brought them to Dallas Memorial Auditorium on September 18, 1964. The band touched down at Love Field just after midnight that day, greeted by thousands of screaming fans. North Texas was abuzz with anticipation, including 10-year-old Pud (short for Puddin') Kearns of suburban Greenville.

In early 1964, Kearns was a fourth grader when word spread that the Beatles would be on the *Ed Sullivan Show* on February 9. That night, she was watching.

"I was just blown away," she remem-

bers. "I'd never heard anything like that before. And I immediately fell in love."

Kearns and her friends acquired the band's records and read about them in fan magazines. Later that year, North Texas Beatles fans got some thrilling news: John, Paul, George and Ringo were coming to Dallas for one of 32 shows in 25 cities over 33 days.

"There was a lot of excitement when it was announced," Kearns says. "At that time, I didn't think there was any possibility that I would get to go."

But Eliza, the 10-year-old granddaughter of a family friend, had tickets and invited Kearns.

"I couldn't believe my luck!" Kearns says. The girls had no idea that a big surprise awaited them before the concert. They showed up early to have a

picnic behind the auditorium (now part of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center).

"All of a sudden, an ambulance drives down the ramp past us towards the auditorium. This was an old-fashioned station wagon," Kearns says. "The Beatles were in it! They looked out of the window and waved, and then they were gone. I remember seeing Paul and Ringo. They were only 20 or 30 feet from us."

A sellout crowd of 10,000 fans packed the venue and waited through three opening acts—Clarence "Frogman" Henry, the Exciters and Jackie DeShannon, all backed by Bill Black's Combo. Pud and Eliza's \$5.50 tickets earned them balcony seats, where they eagerly waited for Dallas DJ Irving Harrigan (aka Ron Chapman) to introduce the main act.

"All the girls were screaming. Eliza and I did, too," Kearns says with a laugh. "George was my favorite. I remember *All My Loving* and the first chord of *A Hard Day's Night*. You could hear opening notes but not much more because of the screaming."

The Beatles' 30-minute set list included 12 songs. The band returned to Texas in August 1965 for two sold-out shows at Houston's Sam Houston Coliseum.

An editorial in *The Dallas Times Herald* that day in Dallas took a dim view of the band: "While some others may be able to recall who or what they were in ... five years, most people will not."

Kearns knew better.

"I was a rock star in fifth grade for a while before and after the concert. I knew that I had seen something very, very special," she says. "And 60 years later, it's still a big deal." ■



# Football Favorites

We've recruited proven winners for your game day lineup

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

I first made my slow cooker bean dip for a Super Bowl fiesta, and boy was it a hit. It was soon requested for every family gathering and was one of the first recipes added to my slow cooker cookbook. This elevates canned beans to a whole new tasty level.

## Slow Cooker Bean Dip

1 teaspoon olive oil  
 ½ onion, diced  
 2 cloves garlic, minced  
 2 cans pinto beans (15 ounces each), drained and rinsed  
 2 cans red beans (15 ounces each), drained and rinsed  
 2 cans black beans (15 ounces each), drained and rinsed  
 2 cans kidney beans (15 ounces each), drained and rinsed  
 2 cans Mexican-style diced tomatoes (15 ounces each), undrained  
 ½ cup chopped cilantro, plus more for garnish (optional)  
 2 teaspoons cumin  
 2 teaspoons chili powder  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 1 teaspoon ground black pepper  
 Shredded cheddar cheese, for garnish  
 Mexican crema or sour cream, for garnish

1. Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and sauté 3 minutes, or until light and translucent. Add garlic and cook, stirring often, for 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

2. Combine sautéed onion and garlic, beans, diced tomatoes, ½ cup cilantro, cumin, chili powder, salt and pepper in a slow cooker. Stir until combined. Cover and cook on low 2 hours.

3. Serve warm, topped with more cilantro, shredded cheese, and Mexican crema or sour cream.

SERVES 12

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Tex-Mex Onion Dip.







## Dry Rub Baked Chicken Wings

JACKIE MCEATHRON  
PEDERNALES EC

These tender, juicy baked chicken wings coated in a mouthwatering homemade dry rub will have football fans raving! And they're so good, you won't miss the deep fryer. Serve with your favorite dipping sauce.

- 2 pounds chicken wings**
- 2 tablespoons baking powder**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 3 teaspoons paprika**
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder**

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with foil or parchment paper. Coat a baking rack with cooking spray and place on the baking sheet.
2. Dry chicken wings with paper towels. In a medium bowl, combine baking powder, salt, paprika and garlic powder. Add chicken wings to bowl and toss to coat evenly. Shake off each wing and place on the baking rack.
3. Bake 30 minutes, then turn and bake until golden and crispy, about 10–15 minutes longer. Serve warm.

**SERVES 4**

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



\$500 WINNER

## Texas Chili

GWEN JONES  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES



This brisket chili is a surefire crowd pleaser—hearty, a little spicy and packed with flavor. Garnish with your favorite toppings to make the perfect meal-in-a-bowl. Double the recipe to ensure tasty lunch leftovers.

**SERVES 6–8**

- ¼ cup canola oil**
- 1 small red onion, diced**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 2 red bell peppers, diced**
- ½ tablespoon kosher salt**
- 2 tablespoons chili powder**
- 1 tablespoon chipotle powder**
- 2 tablespoons smoked paprika**
- 1 pound smoked lean beef brisket, diced**
- 2 cans diced fire roasted tomatoes (14.5 ounces each)**
- 4 cups beef broth**
- 1 small bunch cilantro, chopped**
- Sour cream, for garnish**
- Shredded cheddar cheese, for garnish**

1. Heat oil in an 8-quart pot over medium-high heat. Sauté onion, garlic and peppers until tender.
2. Add salt, spices, brisket, tomatoes and beef broth. Reduce heat to simmer, cover and let cook 2 hours. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro.
3. Serve topped with sour cream and shredded cheese.

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

**EASY BREADS** DUE SEPTEMBER 10

If you make bread that skips the kneading and hours of rising, we want to know. Send those recipes in for a shot at \$500. Don't loaf around; enter by September 10.





## Jalapeño Wontons

SUZANNE HAWKINS  
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

The crispy wonton cups and filling can be made pregame. When it's time to nibble, fill the wontons, pop them in the oven and bake until golden.

**12 wonton or eggroll wrappers**  
**Kosher salt**  
**8 slices fully cooked bacon, diced**

**1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), room temperature**  
**1 cup shredded cheddar cheese**  
**½ cup sour cream**  
**¼ cup mayonnaise**  
**1 jalapeño pepper, finely diced, seeds removed for less heat**  
**3 green onions, chopped**  
**¼ cup chopped cilantro, for garnish**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a muffin pan with cooking spray.
2. Slice wonton or egg roll wrappers in half and place two strips crisscross in each muffin cup. Sprinkle wontons with kosher salt. Bake wontons 5–8 minutes or until lightly golden brown.
3. In a large bowl, combine bacon, cream cheese, cheddar cheese, sour cream, mayonnaise, jalapeño and green onions. Mix well. Spoon filling into wontons.
4. Bake 10–15 minutes, until bubbly. Serve warm, garnished with cilantro.

MAKES 12

## Kick Things Off Right

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

**Team spirit:** Add a few drops of food coloring in your team colors to frosting for cupcakes or cake. Sneak team colors into popcorn by stirring in colored candy.

**Drinks:** Keep plenty of beverages on hand to balance out all the salty snacks you're serving. Include options for those who don't drink alcohol, like sparkling water or soda. Don't forget the ice!

**Stay fresh:** Keep food at the ideal temperature in a slow cooker or chafing dishes. Cover food with lids or foil if hosting outdoors, and place dips and guacamole over a bowl of ice to keep them chilled.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Creeping Back in Time

The Munster Mansion in Waxahachie brings 1960s Hollywood to life

BY CHET GARNER

**IN MOST CIRCLES**, asking someone if they prefer *The Munsters* or *The Addams Family* can make for fun dinner conversation. But in Waxahachie, there's only one right answer. Because even though *The Munsters'* beloved sitcom wrapped in 1966, the family's iconic mansion on 1313 Mockingbird Lane lives on in this growing town south of Dallas.

Pulling up to the house felt like the opening scene to a scary movie, with overgrown trees obscuring the mansion's dark facade. However when I knocked on the door, I was greeted with a kind Texas smile from owner Sandra McKee, who grew up watching the show and dreaming of someday living in the kooky mansion.

When she had a chance to make her dream a reality, she and her husband, Charles, obsessed over all 70 episodes of the show to recreate the exact layout and dimensions of the haunted abode, which, ironically, never existed in real life but was just a collection of soundstages on a Hollywood backlot. But this home feels as real as Spot, the pet dragon under the stairs. The McKees host paid private tours by appointment only.

Not only has Sandra collected a number of authentic props, such as a complete dining room set, she's also found life-size mannequins of all the characters, including a towering Herman Munster and his beautiful bride, Lily. Upstairs I found Eddie holding his famous bat and Grandpa tinkering in his lab. I couldn't believe the details and the true-to-screen secret passages.

Each cobweb-filled room tapped into the dusty vaults of my brain and brought back memories of watching the show from my grandparents' floor.

Sandra proudly shared the story of the time actor Al Lewis (aka Grandpa) visited, and his eyes filled with tears of joy and disbelief. It seems this spooky reality is better than fiction. ■

ABOVE Chet cozies up to a likeness of Grandpa from *The Munsters*.

**TCP** If you dare, join Chet as he checks in on the Munsters. Watch the video 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, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

## SEPTEMBER

7

**Fredericksburg Friends of Pioneer Memorial Library Book Sale**, (830) 997-6513, [pmlfbg.com](http://pmlfbg.com)

**Levelland Cotton and Crude Concert**, (806) 894-3157, [facebook.com/cottonandcrudefest](https://facebook.com/cottonandcrudefest)

**Palestine Dogwood Jamboree: All About Classic Country**, (903) 724-2556, [visitpalestine.com](http://visitpalestine.com)

10

**Corsicana [10, 12-15] A Wrinkle in Time**, (903) 872-5421, [thewlac.com](http://thewlac.com)

12

**Grapevine [12-15] GrapeFest**, (817) 410-3185, [grapevinetexasusa.com](http://grapevinetexasusa.com)

13

**Kerrville [13-14] Arts & Crafts Show**, (830) 895-0100, [tbck.org](http://tbck.org)

**Brenham [13-21] Washington County Fair**, (979) 836-4112, [washingtoncofair.com](http://washingtoncofair.com)

14

**Chappell Hill Airing of the Quilts**, (979) 337-9910, [chappellhilltx.com](http://chappellhilltx.com)

**Rosenburg Ride to Rosenberg Car Show**, (713) 502-3168, [rosenbergartsalliance.com](http://rosenbergartsalliance.com)

**San Marcos Treasure Sale**, (512) 392-4295, [heritagesanmarcos.org](http://heritagesanmarcos.org)





### Pick of the Month

#### **Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza**

Lake Jackson, September 14, 21  
(979) 480-0999, gcbo.org

Get a close-up look at ruby-throated hummingbirds as they make their yearly migration. Professionals will band the tiny birds, and you can symbolically adopt a hummingbird to support conservation efforts. The event includes educational booths, activities for kids, a plant sale and nature store.

21

**Azle Lord's Acre Harvest Festival & Car Show**, (817) 444-1382, facebook.com/silvercreekmc

**Blanco Classic Car Show**, (512) 632-0648, blancoclassiccarshow.com

22

**Giddings Wendish Fest**, (979) 366-2441, facebook.com/texaswendish

25

**New Braunfels [25-29] Comal County Fair & Rodeo**, (830) 625-1505, comalcountyfair.org

MORE EVENTS >

### **TCP** Submit Your Event

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

**Fredericksburg is the Polka Capital of Texas**  
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OR DELANE CAGLE

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\*\*\*\*\*



SEPTEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

27

**Giddings [27-28]**  
Texas Word Wrangler Book  
Festival, (979) 542-2716,  
giddingspubliclibrary.org

**Mason Old Yeller Day**, (325)  
347-5446, mason.ploud.net

**Harper [27-28]**  
Frontier Days, harper  
communitypark@gmail.com,  
harpercommunitypark.com

**Lewisville [27-28] Western  
Days**, (972) 219-3401,  
lewisvillewesterndays.com

**Winnsboro [27-28]**  
Cowboy Music and  
Poetry Gathering,  
(903) 342-0686,  
winnsborocenterforthearts  
.com

28

**Lakehills Medina Lake  
Cajun Festival**,  
(830) 460-0600,  
cajunfestival-medinalake.com

OCTOBER

4

**Dripping Springs [4-5]**  
Lone Star Gourd Festival,  
texasgourdsociety@hotmail  
.com, texasgourdsociety.org

5

**Huntington Catfish  
Festival**, (936) 635-3306,  
shophuntingontx.com

**New Braunfels Das Fest**,  
(830) 629-2943,  
newbraunfelsconservation  
.org

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# Parenthood

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CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1

1 CHARLES BAXTER  
COSERV

"Mother mallard and nine ducklings."

2 SANDRA DRAKE  
BLUEBONNET EC

"My daughter, the youngest of four, has waited a long time for her turn at parenting. The joy her newborn baby boy brings can be seen in every fiber of her being."

3 LINDSAY HUMPHREYS  
SOUTH PLAINS EC

"Learning to fly fish the rivers of New Mexico with Dad."

4 HELEN FOWLER  
PEDERNALES EC

A father's love on his daughter's wedding day.



2



3



4

## Upcoming Contests

DUE SEP 10 Parks

DUE OCT 10 I Love

DUE NOV 10 Small Spaces



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

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Parenthood photos from readers.



## The Farmer's Regret

A farm tractor will get you far—  
if you look after it

BY JOHN TERRY WENDE  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
DAVID MOORE

**THIS WAS SUPPOSED** to be a really good deal. Smart too.

We had bought a 15-acre farm south of Austin in 1974 and now, 10 years later, our (new to us) 1940s Farmall B tractor was the perfect choice for our small operation.

Living on an educator's salary and applying my knowledge as a high school economics teacher, I was proud of myself for taking extra-close care of my tractor. I even built a small shed to keep it protected and dry.

I remember that no matter what happened or what the problem was, I always found a way to keep that Farmall in good running condition.

Over the years, I have seen a number of tractors—and pictures of tractors—silently keeping vigil in their temporary-turned-final resting places.

An old Ford tractor, for years on end, sits under the canopy of a large live oak tree, proudly displaying a “for sale” sign. Then there's the tractor sitting near the corner of a fence row with an assortment of brush and vines winding their way through it. I had often wondered: How could a person abandon their machine and leave it out there all by itself?

I would never do that—would I?

Then I started having battery and generator issues and struggled to get the parts I needed to fix my Farmall. The longer that tractor sat outside in the very same spot, the less I thought about hauling it back to the shed, so I could at least get it out of the weather.

Suddenly I had become that farmer who let his machine down.

It's not just the weather you have to watch out for either. A friend told me about his family trying to raise cattle in Arkansas in the 1950s, and when that didn't work, they moved back to Texas and settled in Taylor County. They brought back all their farm equipment, including a Minneapolis-Moline tractor, which they parked between the house and the county road.

He said that, over the years, people would sneak onto his property and help themselves to various tractor parts. It made him really mad because, he said, all they had to do was ask.

Farm tractors are nearly indestructible—if you take care of them. For what I bought it for, my Farmall B gladly did everything I asked it to do. My responsibility was to take good care of it and keep it running.

I didn't hold up my side of the deal, and my Farmall fell victim to the mystic landscape of abandoned tractors, forever stuck in the mud a few feet from my tractor shed. ■



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At the age of 56, a back operation left me dependent on a cane, significantly impacting my daily life. Simple tasks like going to the store or meeting friends became challenging, and I even had to cancel a long-awaited anniversary trip to Italy.

My husband purchased a scooter for me, but it was cumbersome and uncomfortable for everyday use, leaving me feeling more constrained than liberated. However, everything changed when I came across the ATTO SPORT. This remarkable scooter proved to be a game changer. Not only is it robust and reliable, but it also conveniently splits into two pieces, allowing me to effortlessly lift it into my car trunk on my own. I was even able to stow it in the overhead compartment on the plane, enabling us to finally take that trip to Italy! I am now independent once more, able to go wherever I please and do so with a striking sense of style. In fact, I now find that my husband struggles to keep up with me!



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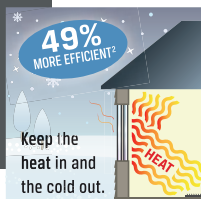
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