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WORLD WAR II HEROICS

SAVOR THE
WHOLE ENCHILADA

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

MAY 2025

Chasing Chaos

Mother Nature's havoc
is a siren song
for storm chasers

**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16

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May 2025



12

06 Twisted Approach

Storm chasers go to great and dangerous lengths for thrills and scientific research.

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Bavaria, By Way of Texas

Yodeling takes this German back home, even after decades of running a restaurant and entertaining in tiny Walburg.

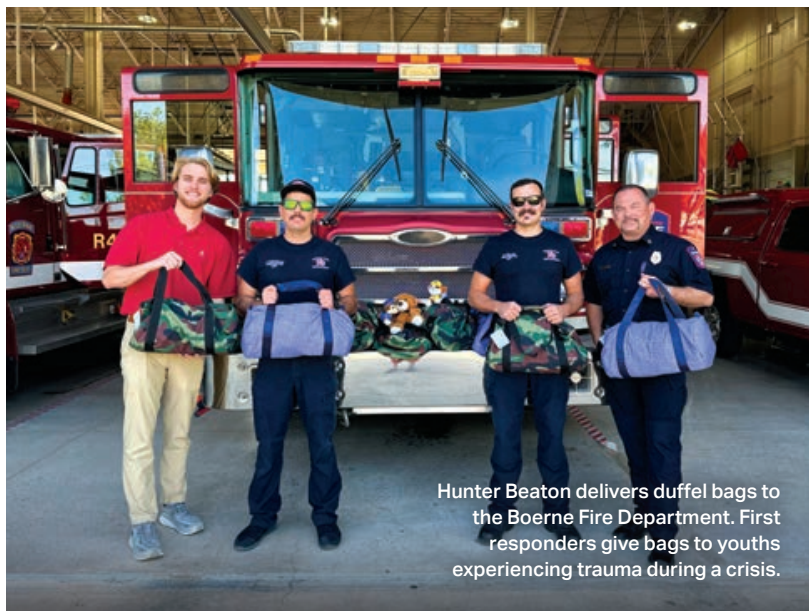
Story and photo by Erich Schlegel

ON THE COVER
Supercells like this one near Claude trigger an adrenaline rush for storm chasers.
Photo by Jenny Brown

ABOVE
Ronny Tippelt and the Walburg Boys entertain in the Bavarian style.
Photo by Erich Schlegel

04	Currents The latest buzz
05	TCP Talk Readers respond
16	Co-op News Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative
25	Footnotes in Texas History Beyond the Call <i>By Chuck Lyons</i>
26	TCP Kitchen The Whole Enchilada <i>By Vianney Rodriguez</i>
30	Hit the Road A Walk on the Wild Side <i>By Chet Garner</i>
33	Focus on Texas Photo Contest: Patterns
34	Observations Stepping Up <i>By Martha Deeringer</i>

A Case Study in Compassion



Hunter Beaton delivers duffel bags to the Boerne Fire Department. First responders give bags to youths experiencing trauma during a crisis.

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE DAY is the first Tuesday in May—May 6 this year.

For Hunter Beaton, every day is foster care day. Beaton, disturbed that foster children showed up at adoptive homes carrying all their possessions in trash bags, used his 2016 Eagle Scout project to offer some measure of dignity for them.

He raised \$10,000 and filled 100 duffel bags to give to Texas foster kids.

When requests for duffels kept pouring in, Beaton knew he found his lifelong mission. He started the nonprofit Day 1 Bags, which has since delivered 224,000 bags in 47 states and drove 2023 legislation in Texas requiring the state to maintain a supply of proper luggage for foster youths.

Beaton said in 2018, when we first wrote about the Bandera Electric Cooperative member, after his parents adopted three foster children, “They had all their possessions in a black trash bag. How awful is that? I decided to find a way to say, ‘No, no kid deserves this.’”

To help Beaton in his mission, go to day1bags.org.



Cinco Celebrations

Cinco de Mayo has become a day to commemorate Mexican culture and heritage in the U.S., where it is more celebrated than in Mexico. May 5, 1862, is when the Mexican army defeated invading French forces at the Battle of Puebla. Outside of that city, the day doesn't get much attention in Mexico.

The big celebrations south of the border come on *Diez y Seis*, when Mexicans mark their independence from Spain, on September 16, 1810.



TCP Contests and More

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RECOMMENDED READING

From our archives: In May 2005 we took readers to Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, where endangered and threatened species have found safe haven since 1984. Download the issue at TexasCoopPower.com.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I blush whenever ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our March prompt: **Making my bed every morning is ...**

What keeps me from climbing back into it.

MARSHA MOORE
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

Means I've made it through another night, saw another sunrise. Hope I get to make my bed tomorrow.

KENNY COGBURN
CECA
COMANCHE COUNTY

Totally useless since, at 76, I need a nap every day.

CAROLYN SUE HAMMONS
SOUTH PLAINS EC
LUBBOCK

A ritual that started as a requirement and is now a source of happiness.

MARK W. OWEN
BLUEBONNET EC
ELGIN

Visit our website to see more responses.

MARCH 2025 Home of the Brave

“Brig. Gen. George ‘Bud’ Day made me to want to be a pilot growing up, but I did not have the eyesight for it.”

ARTHUR RICHARD TROELL III
VIA FACEBOOK



ROBERT SEALE

Unforgettable Honor

As an Army lieutenant, I was charged with researching and commissioning a series of paintings showing the actions of the Medal of Honor recipients from South Carolina [*Home of the Brave*, March 2025]. It was my privilege to talk directly with some of the honorees or with their families. It was an honor I won't forget.

Ed Rowland
CECA
Eastland

Return of the Bluebonnets

Nanny's Blessing [March 2025] struck me, as the same miracle happened to me. Our ranch was destroyed by the Eastland Complex Fire three years ago. By a divine hand, bluebonnets returned where the house once stood the following year when there were none for at least 15 years.

Bill Dakin
CECA
Eastland County



SARAH FERONE

Sancho's Long Reach

I enjoyed the J. Frank Dobie tale of the tamale-loving longhorn [*Sancho's Long Road*, March 2025]. It took me back to my childhood when Walt Disney took the story and made it an episode of his long-running Sunday night TV show. It was about Texas, so I had to watch it.

Michael Bolton
CoServ
Little Elm

Dancing Memories

I would like to see an article about polka and waltz music/dancing/bands being handed down through the generations [*It's Hip To Be a Square*, February 2025].

These bands play at church picnics, festivals, old dance halls—you name it—almost the whole year in south Central Texas. I learned to dance to Joe Patek in Shiner.

Del Jean (Leck) Bauer
GVEC
La Vernia

TCP WRITE TO US

letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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American MainStreet Publications

Storm chasers go to great and dangerous lengths for thrills and scientific research



COURTESY CHELSEA BURNETT

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

Nearly everyone has their passion. Some people love to garden, hike or travel. Others play video games, dance or volunteer.

Chelsea Burnett chases storms. Her unusual passion surfaced at age 2 in the late 1980s, when, upon hearing thunder, she'd rush to a window and search the skies.

"As I got older, I watched the Weather Channel and local weather updates," recalls Burnett, who lives in Little Elm, north of Dallas. "I had weather calendars, and I'd cut out newspaper articles about weather in the region. I also had a weather radio alarm clock that played local forecasts."

Today, Burnett, a member of CoServ, makes a living from weather-related work. So does her husband, Adam Lucio. Their mutual passion led them to become storm chasers—a term for professional and amateur weather watchers who pursue tornadoes, hurricanes and other severe weather.

Why? Some want to see their first tornado. Many crave the adrenaline rush. Others photograph storms for spectacular images, scientific research or news coverage. And these days, social media, mobile devices and even tour groups are making it easier than ever to find and share stunning storms despite extreme risks.



COURTESY ERIK BURNS

Twisted



Approach

OPPOSITE A storm cell produces lightning beyond a church in Gainesville.

ABOVE A Tornadoic Expeditions tour in April 2021 came across a rare weather phenomenon in Lockett: a tornado alongside a rainbow.



COURTESY ERIK BURNS



COURTESY CARRIE CUNNINGHAM

ABOVE A Tornadic Expeditions tour pursued this supercell for 125 miles across West Texas, from Spur to Tuscola.

LEFT Tim Marshall and Carrie Cunningham met in 2010 chasing storms for the Vortex2 research project.

“The first people I see coming into a disaster area are the power crews. It’s amazing how many of them get ready and are there once law enforcement clears the roads.”

Modern-day chasers follow in the wake of David Hoadley, considered to be the father of storm chasing. In 1956, he photographed the aftermath of a severe thunderstorm in his hometown of Bismarck, North Dakota. His fascination led him to drive after and document storms using his own forecast maps. From 1977 to 1986, he published *Storm Track* magazine for the growing chaser community.

At 86, Hoadley, who lives in Falls Church, Virginia, still chases.

“It’s a challenge,” he says. “I enjoy intersecting storms and getting pictures. I just do what I like to do.”

Some words of warning: Chasing is dangerous, sometimes deadly. And even despite the best of safety precautions, accidents happen. In June 2013, three veteran chasers were killed by a tornado near Oklahoma City. Other chasers have died in car crashes while on the road.

In 1996, daring risk-takers came to life when *Twister* tore into theaters nationwide. The disaster film—which inspired a generation of weather scientists—stars Helen Hunt and the late Bill Paxton as storm chasers trying to release data-gathering sensors into a tornado in hopes of improving early warning systems.

The same goal returns in *Twisters*, the action-packed 2024 sequel that features scientists and chasers going up against tornadoes in the social media era using more sophisticated technology.

Tim Marshall of Flower Mound, in the Metroplex, Hoadley’s protégé, started storm chasing in 1978. In those days, he’d stop at pay phones to call the National Weather Service for radar updates. Then he and his partner would take off for a location where a storm might intensify. Or not.

“In the ’70s and ’80s, the odds of catching a tornado were 1 in 20 times when you went out,” says Marshall, who has seen hundreds of twisters. “Now it’s 1 in 8 or 10. It’s still more miss than anything, but the odds are better because of our technology.”

Marshall and Hoadley were among the six inaugural inductees to the National Storm Chaser Hall of Fame in February. Professionally, Marshall, a CoServ member, has worked since 1983 as a meteorologist and forensics engineer. As part of his job, he assesses damaged buildings after catastrophic weather events.

“Before a storm, power crews prestige their trucks,” he says. “So the first people I see coming into a disaster area are the power crews. It’s amazing how many of them get ready and are there once law enforcement clears the roads.”

Most chasers carry first-aid supplies in case they’re the

first on the scene of a disaster.

Carrie Cunningham of Boerne, near San Antonio, met Marshall in 2010 when she volunteered with Vortex2, which was the largest tornado research project of its kind. As a driver, she was among a team of more than 100 scientists and crew members, with 40 support vehicles and 10 mobile radars, who raced after supercell thunderstorms for six weeks across seven Midwestern states.

On June 10, 2010, she witnessed her first tornado with Marshall near Denver. Every season since, she and her husband, Doug, have chased with Marshall. When forecasts and weather models predict risky conditions, the couple pack up and head north.

“We call them ‘chase-cations,’” says Carrie Cunningham, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative. “It’s not always about seeing a tornado. I just love to drive, visit the small towns, eat in cafés and meet new people. For me, it’s spiritual being with the storms and nature.”

Then there’s the tradition among the community of eating a steak after a sighting.

Myths Busted

MYTH: Areas near mountains, cities and rivers are safe from tornadoes. **FACT:** Twisters can go up mountains, through cities and across rivers, like the 1925 tri-state tornado, which crossed the Mississippi and Wabash rivers and killed nearly 700.

MYTH: Open windows in your house during a tornado to equalize pressure. **FACT:** Do not do this! Your house will not explode, and opening windows will only let in powerful winds. Seek shelter in an interior room.

MYTH: If you’re on the highway with a tornado approaching, find an underpass. **FACT:** As the opening scene of *Twisters* showed, this is a dangerous myth. High-speed flying debris is channeled through underpasses, where winds move at incredible speeds. If a tornado is imminent, seek a ditch, and duck and cover.

Source: National Weather Service



COURTESY ERIK BURNS

“Some of our family think we’re crazy,” she says. “A lot of friends are fascinated, and some say they’d love to go with us.”

For more casual storm adventure seekers, chasing tours can be booked through many companies in Texas and beyond. That is, if they’re not booked up, thanks to renewed interest inspired by *Twisters*.

For example, Tornadic Expeditions completely sold out for 2025 tours by the end of 2024, and 2026 will fill soon. Erik Burns, a Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative member who lives in Whitesboro, near the Oklahoma border, launched the niche business in 2015.

“On a seven-day tour, we cover about 2,500 miles,” says Burns, who met his Australian wife, Emma, on one of his 2019 excursions. “Our tours are laid-back and personable. We only put four guests in a van, so everyone’s got a window seat.”

The U.S. experiences more tornadoes than any other country—about 1,150 per year, which is about five times what Europe will see in a year. And 2024 was the second-worst tornado season on record in the U.S., with more than 1,735 confirmed twisters, including 169 in Texas—more than any other state. On average in the U.S., 73 people die in tornadoes per year.

Burns and his chaser guides conduct five- to 10-day trips from April into July across Tornado Alley, a twister-prone area that roughly spans north from Texas up to Nebraska and South Dakota. Tours may also venture into neighboring states, depending on weather. Guests travel in vans equipped with Wi-Fi, cameras and laptops loaded with radar and satellite-tracking software.

Since 2018, Ray Myers of Plano has been on three Tornadic Expedition tours. He’s also accompanied Burns on numerous

Early Eyes on the Sky

Some of America’s Founding Fathers were avid weather watchers. Thomas Jefferson bought a thermometer while in Philadelphia for the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. He noted that the high temperature there July 4, 1776, was 76. He also owned one of the only barometers in the colonies. George Washington also made regular weather notes. The last weather entry in his diary was made the day before he died.

Source: National Weather Service

solo trips. On April 23, 2021, the two witnessed five tornadoes near Lockett, west of Wichita Falls, including twin tornadoes and one that spiraled next to a rainbow. What was his reaction to seeing his first?

“I said, ‘Oh, look at that! Oh, look at that—look at that—look at that!’ ” recalls Myers. “There are just no words. You are witnessing one of the most powerful things in nature. Some people go speechless. Some cry.”

Storm chasing has even joined the collegiate world. Since 2020, the department of atmospheric sciences at Texas A&M University has offered a spring course called convective storms field studies. Students are trained on how to storm chase, forecast tornadoes and conduct field research.

“There are just no words. You are witnessing one of the most powerful things in nature. Some people go speechless. Some cry.”



COURTESY CHRIS NOWOTARSKI



COURTESY ERIK BURNS

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE A Tornadoic Expeditions tour watched this twister in Hawley stay on the ground for 24 minutes. Texas A&M University students studying atmospheric sciences launch balloons for National Weather Service research. A Tornadoic Expeditions tour poses with a tornado in 2022 in Crowell.

“Then for two weeks in May, we go out storm chasing,” says Chris Nowotarski, an associate professor. “The students take turns forecasting and navigating where they think there will be storms in the Great Plains. They also launch weather balloons and send the data to the National Weather Service.”

After graduation, “our meteorology majors go on to become forecasters for the National Weather Service, private forecasting companies or aviation companies that need weather forecasts,” Nowotarski says. “Some go into grad school to do research related to severe weather or other weather. Some go into television.”

Schooled or not, storm chasers provide information that advances scientific understanding of weather.

“Many amateur storm chasers are more focused on collecting photography and videos of tornadoes, which may be less useful in improving our understanding and prediction,” Nowotarski says. “But these chasers report tornadoes to the National Weather Service. These reports are critical to developing an accurate record and climatology of tornadoes that can be used for future studies.”

Although she has no meteorology degree, Chelsea Burnett has years of hands-on training and experience. She’s a tour guide for Tornadoic Expeditions and a public speaker with Storm Science, which conducts educational weather programs. She’s also a member of Girls Who Chase, an online group that encourages and connects women who want to storm chase, and is a chaser and speaker with Texas Storm Chasers.

In her chasing career, Burnett has gone after 70 twisters (and three hurricanes). But—like all storm chasers—she’ll never forget her first. On the night of December 26, 2015, she was standing outside a gas station near Red Oak, south of Dallas, when power flashes and lightning illuminated the sky—and a tornado.

“I couldn’t believe I was seeing one,” she recalls. “It was the most incredible moment of my life! You’re eye to eye with one of Mother Nature’s most raw processes. To see a tornado come together truly is a spiritual moment.” ■



Bavaria, By Way of Texas

Yodeling takes this German back home, even after decades of running a restaurant and entertaining in tiny Walburg

Take Exit 268 off Interstate 35, head east on FM 972, make a pair of 90-degree jogs past mobile homes and rolling farmland, and suddenly you're in Germany. Well, the German settlement of Walburg, formerly known as Concordia.

The Williamson County community, about 40 miles north of Austin, was founded in 1881 by Henry Doering, a German immigrant. The following year, Doering opened the Hy. Doering Co. mercantile store. Doering eventually changed the name of the community from Concordia to Walburg, his German birthplace.

Today, instead of groceries, dry goods and hardware, the shelves of the former general store are now filled with more than 200 beer steins.

Iconic flags of Bavaria hang from the high ceiling, with matching blue and white tablecloths in the dining room. Of course, there's a cooler full of imported German beer. And opposite the buffet table and kitchen is a stage where Ronny Tippelt and his band, the Walburg Boys, play Friday and Saturday nights. Tippelt is also co-owner of the venue, which is now called Walburg German Restaurant & Biergarten.

Tippelt, founder of the band, was born in Munich. He learned to yodel at the age of 7 from his "vocal hero," Franzl Lang, a world-renowned *Jodlerkönig*, or Yodel King. Lang was an expert in Bavarian alpine yodeling.

Humans have yodeled for tens of thousands of years, mostly for calling livestock, but across Switzerland and Bavaria (a state in southern Germany), the calls began to be incorporated into songs, accompanied by accordion, in the 19th century.

Some Native American cultures yodeled, Liz Tracy writes in *No Depression* magazine. Then cowboys picked up on the custom. "The yodel is used as a call to herds across lonely landscapes; the pastoral, solitary life of cowboys made them a prime conduit for the yodel," Tracy writes.

Ronny Tippelt, a music-maker in Walburg, has been yodeling since he was 7.

By age 12, Tippelt was learning accordion. At 16, he won a Bavarian yodeling competition in Munich. By then, he had started a musical group called the Lerchenauer Baum with some friends and had been playing Oktoberfest in Munich—the largest and oldest such German festival in the world.

In 1982, Tippelt was 23 when his band was at Oktoberfest. "After the show, I went over to a table of cute American ladies, and I ended up marrying one of them," Tippelt says. "She was a Braniff Airlines flight attendant from Austin, Texas."

They moved to Texas that year, and though the marriage didn't last, Tippelt stayed. He opened his restaurant a few years later. "I just thought Texas was the Wild West," Tippelt says. "I figured out pretty quickly that it wasn't like the movies."

He started a duo called the Bavarian Boys. They're now a five-piece band featuring, in addition to accordion and yodeling, a keyboard, guitar, saxophone, bass, fiddle and drums.

When he performs, Tippelt wears traditional lederhosen with beautifully embroidered scrolls stitched in and a T-shirt with the Bayern—the German name for Bavaria—state coat of arms. He plays a chromatic accordion with keys like a piano.

He typically sings in German, flowing smoothly from German lyrics into yodeling and back. "When I play and yodel," Tippelt says, "I feel pride in representing my homeland. People get to hear a true German music style."

Another Texas musician who plays in the Bavarian style is Alan Walling, leader of Metroplex band AlpenMusikanten, a friend of Tippelt's and a self-taught yodeler.

"I met Ronny at a Fredericksburg German festival in 1990," Walling says. "He's a fantastic yodeler in the Bavarian style. The best yodeler in Texas and perhaps in the United States."

In 2019, Walling and Tippelt organized their own festival, Walburg Fest, which became an annual event over Labor Day weekend.

About 35 years ago, the boys were playing one of the stages at Austin's former Aqua Fest. Tippelt came up to the headliner and introduced himself. "Hello, I'm Ronny Tippelt from Germany. Who are you?" he said.

"Well, I'm George Strait from Texas," answered the famous country singer.

Ronny Tippelt from Texas now covers a handful of Strait's songs, with *Amarillo By Morning* being a favorite.

And that isn't his only foray into the country realm. He's especially proud to sing Merle Haggard's sentimental hit *Silver Wings*. Tippelt ends it with his signature yodeling. ■

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**VISIT OUR
SHOWROOM LOCATION**

DALLAS, TEXAS 75254
4999 Quorum Drive Suite 155

CALL NOW: 1-888-905-9117



Join the crowd at **Bluebonnet's BIGGEST EVENT OF THE YEAR**

For more than eight decades, Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative and its members have come together at its Annual Meeting to celebrate the cooperative's rich history and bright future.

What began in 1940 as a gathering at the Littlefield Building in Austin has evolved over the years.

On May 13, members will meet at The Silos on 77 event center in Giddings for Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting to receive information about the cooperative's continued growth and commitment to its service area.

While the fashions of the crowds have changed over the decades, the event is in many ways unchanged. It remains a cornerstone of the community, bringing together generations of members to connect with neighbors and Bluebonnet employees.

At this year's meeting, attendees will hear about the state of the cooperative, enjoy refreshments, and participate in the meeting and reelection of directors. The Annual Meeting is just one of the many benefits of being a cooperative member.

Members are welcome to attend. If you're unable to be there, you can still participate by submitting your proxy form by May 6. Proxy forms were mailed to all members in March. If you need a new form, you can get a copy and submit it at a Bluebonnet member service center in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart or Manor. After the meeting, a short video summary will be available on Bluebonnet's social media.



Photos from Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting capture moments from 1948 to today.
Bluebonnet photos

**TURN THE PAGE FOR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING**



JOIN US
May 13
for
BLUEBONNET'S
2025
ANNUAL
MEETING

The Silos on 77

1031 County Road 223
Giddings

Registration opens at 1:30 p.m.

Meeting starts at 2:30 p.m.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Dear Bluebonnet member:

Pursuant to its Bylaws, the Annual Membership Meeting of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be held on May 13, 2025, at The Silos on 77, 1031 County Road 223, Giddings, TX 78942. Registration will begin at 1:30 p.m. and end at 2:30 p.m. The meeting will start at 2:30 p.m. Business coming before the meeting will be conducted via members in attendance in person or by proxy.

Three director seats, for District 1, District 3 and District 5, are up for election. The incumbent directors — Milton Shaw, District 1, Caldwell, Hays, Guadalupe and Gonzales counties; Debbi Goertz, District 3, Bastrop County; and Ben Flencher, District 5, Burleson County — filed their nominations before the deadline, qualified and were not opposed. The incumbent directors will be elected by general consent in accordance with Article II, Section 6 of the cooperative's Bylaws. Other business that may come before the meeting will also be addressed.

Sincerely yours,



Robert Mikeska
Secretary/Treasurer
Bluebonnet Board of Directors

2025 Annual Meeting Agenda

May 13, 2025

1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.: Registration

2:30 p.m.: Welcome and introductions

Call to Order: Ben Flencher, Board Chairman

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance: Roderick Emanuel, Board Vice President/
Vice Chairman

Chairman/President's Report: Ben Flencher, Board Chairman

Secretary/Treasurer's Report: Robert Mikeska, Board Secretary/Treasurer

General Manager's Report: Matt Bentke, General Manager/CEO

Door Prize Drawings

Report on Directors Elected by General Consent: Sarah Newman-Altamirano,
General Counsel

Adjourn

A chance to win prizes including this truck!

Bluebonnet members have two ways to enter drawings for door prizes and this truck:

1) Submit a proxy form — either by mail, postmarked by May 6, 2025 — or deliver it in person to one of Bluebonnet's five member service centers before 5 p.m. May 6.

2) Register at the Annual Meeting on May 13.

This 2013 Ford F-150 extended cab four-wheel-drive truck is being retired from Bluebonnet's fleet. The truck has about 187,000 miles.

The drawing for the truck will be May 14, after the Annual Meeting, and the winner will be contacted by Bluebonnet.



2025 ANNUAL MEETING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is it important to attend the Annual Meeting?

Bluebonnet’s Annual Meeting, held each year in May, is one of the many benefits of being an electric cooperative member. Members can attend to receive cooperative updates, enjoy refreshments, ask questions and have a chance to win a door prize.

How do I register for the Annual Meeting?

Bluebonnet members can register from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Annual Meeting, held at The Silos on 77, 1031 County Road 223, Giddings. Upon arrival, Bluebonnet member service representatives will assist you with registration and enter you into a drawing for a door prize. To register, your name must appear on your Bluebonnet account. You can verify or add your name by calling a member service representative at 800-842-7708 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or you can do so when you arrive at the meeting.

What information do I need to bring with me to register at the Annual Meeting?

Your April bill contains a QR code that you can bring with you for quick and easy registration. If you can’t find your paper bill, you can log in to your MyBluebonnet account, go to the Billing & Payments tab, then ‘Billing History’ to print a copy and bring to the Annual Meeting. To locate your bill on the mobile app, log in to your account, go the ‘Bill & Pay’ tab, then ‘Billing History’ to pull up your April bill. A member service representative will ask you for your driver’s license and to verify two pieces of information listed on the account.

Which Board of Director seats are up for election?

Three seats on Bluebonnet’s Board of Directors are up for election this year and will be elected by general consent in accordance with Bluebonnet’s bylaws. The incumbent nominated for District 1, which includes Caldwell, Hays, Guadalupe and Gonzales counties, is Milton Shaw. The incumbent nominated for District 3, Bastrop County, is Debbi Goertz. The incumbent nominated for District 5, Burleson County, is Ben Flencher.



Milton Shaw



Debbi Goertz



Ben Flencher

Can I do other business at the Annual Meeting?

Member service representatives will be available to help members with their cooperative business and answer any questions members may have.

For more information, visit bluebonnet.coop/annualmeeting, email annualmeeting@bluebonnet.coop or call a member service representative 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at 800-842-7708.

BRING
YOUR
APRIL
BILL

with the QR code
to the Annual Meeting
for
QUICK
& EASY
REGISTRATION!

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE
04/26/2025
\$123.08
After Due Date
128.71

meter Readings	Days	Multiplier	kWh	Charge
1,419-54,428	30	1	1,009	\$117.56
	30		20	\$10.52
Current Charges				\$123.08

address: 123 ANY RD CEDAR CREEK TX 78612

	Current Month	Previous Month	Last Year
Days of Service	30	33	32
kWh	1,009	853	778

109.07
-109.07
\$0.00
\$123.08
\$123.08

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Students chosen to represent Bluebonnet on D.C. Youth Tour

A STUDENT PASSIONATE about civic engagement, an award-winning FFA member, and a committed leader and athlete will represent Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative this summer in Washington, D.C. Zoe Moreno, a senior at Bastrop High School; Ruby Meachen, a senior at Giddings High School; and McKenzie Tiemann, a junior at Brenham High School, were selected for the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip that will take them to historic landmarks and the U.S. Capitol.

The tour, June 15-23, will also include meetings with members of Congress and events hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. In addition to the trip, each student will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

Alternate representative Avila Colanter will join the tour if one of the winners is unable to attend. Colanter will also receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

The recipients were selected in March from applicants across the cooperative's service area.

Moreno, 18, of Bastrop, has shown a strong commitment to civic involvement. She is the president and founder of Bastrop Youth and Government, which is part of the national Youth and Government program through the YMCA. Students in this program engage in government and the legislative process through internships, shadowing experiences and leadership roles. When Moreno transferred to Bastrop High School in her junior year, she saw an opportunity to bring Youth and Government to her school and founded the club. In just a year, the group grew to over 50 members. Moreno has worked as a clerk at the Bastrop Public Library since May 2024 and has been an umpire for the Bastrop Little League for two years.

She plans to attend the University of Texas at Austin to prepare for a career in environmental law. "I like using my voice for a good thing and advocating for change in the world," she said.

Representing Bluebonnet and its members during the Youth Tour is an honor Moreno takes seriously. "I feel like I can bring back new ideas and perspectives to my community and make a positive impact," she said.

Meachen, 18, of Giddings, is president of

both the Giddings FFA chapter and Serbin 4-H, where she has excelled in everything from cake-decorating competitions to service projects. She earned one of FFA's highest honors, the Lone Star Degree, awarded to members who demonstrate leadership, complete at least two years of agricultural education and invest time and money in a supervised agricultural experience. She is also active in Student Council, Interact Club and the Leo Club at Giddings High School.

After graduation, Meachen plans to attend the University of Texas at Austin with the goal of one day becoming an anesthesiologist. Meachen experienced a heart issue as a baby, and that experience has given her a deep appreciation for the medical field. "I've had a strong drive for this field since I was young, and I know I wouldn't be where I

am today without the medical professionals who've helped me," she said.

The Government-in-Action Youth Tour offers students an immersive experience in learning how the nation is governed, an exciting prospect for Meachen. "I'm taking a government class at Blinn College, and think it would be cool to apply what I've learned in the real world," she said.

Tiemann, 17, of Brenham, holds leadership positions in Brenham FFA, Burton 4-H and Washington County 4-H. When she's not showing steers or heifers, she's playing second and third base as a three-year varsity softball player for Brenham High School. Tiemann participates in several school organizations, including the Anchor Club, Student Council and National Honor Society.

Inspired by a recent tour of the school's Department of Animal Science, Tiemann plans to attend Texas A&M University. She hasn't decided on an area of study, but is considering coursework in business and accounting.

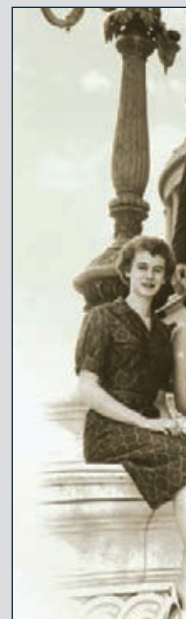
Tiemann said she's looking forward to seeing the sights in our nation's capital and the connections she'll make during the Youth Tour. "A close friend went on the tour last year and told me I'd have an amazing time meeting new people. She's still best friends with her Youth Tour roommates," she said.

Colanter, 18, of Brenham, competes in both cross-country and track. She holds leadership roles in the Washington County 4-H Horse Club and the Texas Youth 4-H Equine Ambassadors Program. She is also active in Mustangs4Life, a chapter of



Lydia Huebner of Industry, left, and Chasidy Nowicki of Brenham, Bluebonnet's student representatives, stand in front of the U.S. Capitol during the 2024 Government-in-Action Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., last June.

In 1958, six Central Texas teens joined the Government-in-Action Youth Tour and spent time in Washington, D.C., helping then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson. Right, they posed with him on the Capitol steps. Front row, from left, Marilyn Dallmeyer of Burton, Mary Price of Bertram, Sen. Johnson, Mary Francis Slett of New Waverley and Mrs. C.H. Wallace of Gatesville, group chaperone. Back row, from left, Gordon White of Cleveland, Mike Simmang of Giddings and Jimmy McBride of Leander.





Y4Life, which is a national program focused on equipping individuals to be voices for life-affirming causes. She volunteers with the Cubs2Read tutoring program through Brenham ISD and is a member of the Brenham FFA chapter and the Anchor Club of Brenham.

In the fall, Colanter plans to attend Texas A&M University to study agricultural business. She is also interested in nutrition and communications courses.

Youth Tour applicants were evaluated based

on their school accomplishments, extracurricular activities and community service. They also submitted a video answering the question, "Why do you think you would be an ideal candidate to represent your cooperative in Washington, D.C.?"

This is the 59th year for the Youth Tour program. It has more than 50,000 alumni, including participants who have gone on to become CEOs, state and national elected officials, and business and community leaders. ■

From left, Zoe Moreno, a senior at Bastrop High School; Ruby Meachen, a senior at Giddings High School; and McKenzie Tiemann, a junior at Brenham High School, will join other students representing electric cooperatives from across the country for a trip to the nation's capital. Each will also receive a \$1,000 scholarship. Avila Colanter, right, a senior at Grace Lutheran School in Brenham, will be the alternate. *Sarah Beal photo*



Want to visit Washington, D.C.? Learn more about the Youth Tour

THE GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION Youth Tour is an all-expenses-paid, weeklong adventure valued at more than \$4,500 for high school students whose families are members of electric cooperatives. Students selected for the annual summer trip travel from Texas to Washington, D.C., to explore some of the country's most famous landmarks, and learn about government, history and the role of electric cooperatives.

During the trip, participants will visit sites like the National Museum of American History, Mount Vernon and Arlington National Cemetery, where they take part in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Along the way, students explore the U.S. Capitol, the White House and several Smithsonian museums as well as the Vietnam Veterans

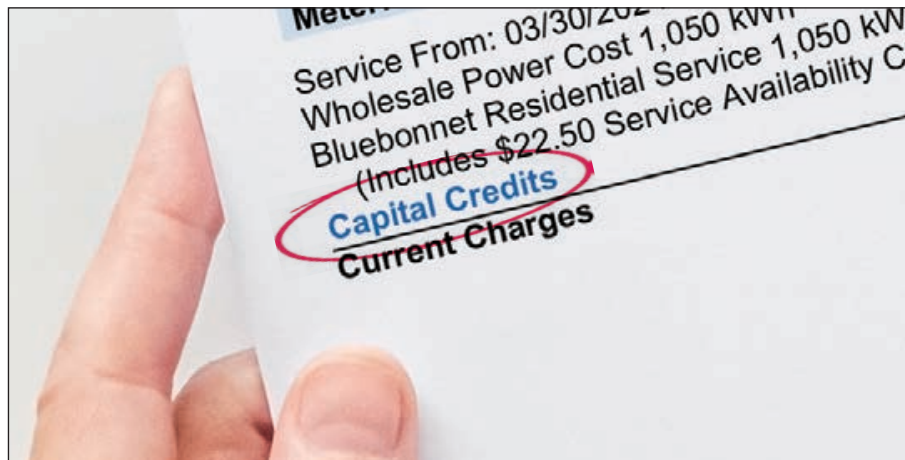
Memorial, Lincoln Memorial and the Holocaust Memorial Museum. They also enjoy unique experiences including a Potomac River boat cruise. Throughout the week, students learn about American history, leadership and civic engagement while making lasting memories with peers from across the state.

Interested in a trip to Washington, D.C.?

The tour is an unforgettable opportunity for a high-school student from the Bluebonnet service area to experience Washington, D.C. and gain leadership skills that will last a lifetime. If your student would like to attend the Youth Tour in 2026, keep an eye out in November for applications online at bluebonnet.coop/scholarships. Applications for the next tour are due in January 2026.

CAPITAL CREDITS

Look on your May bill for a benefit of being a cooperative member



Bluebonnet members will see a credit on their May bills. That ‘capital credit’ represents excess revenue above the costs of running the cooperative that is returned to members every year.

BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC

Cooperative members will see a credit on their May bills. This “capital credit” is one of the biggest benefits of being a member of a cooperative. Instead of returning our annual margins or profits to shareholders, as for-profit utilities do, Bluebonnet allocates this money back to its members.

As a member of Bluebonnet, you’re also an owner — not just a customer. The amount you receive as a credit varies each

year, based on your electricity use in previous years and how long you have been a member. In the last 20 years, Bluebonnet has returned \$104.15 million in capital credits to its members.

If you have questions about capital credits or your bill, contact a member service representative at memberservices@bluebonnet.coop or call 800-842-7708 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

OFFICE CLOSINGS



Bluebonnet offices will be closed Monday, May 26, for Memorial Day. If your power goes out, you can report it by texting OUT to 44141, online at bluebonnet.coop, on the MyBluebonnet mobile app or by calling 800-949-4414. You can pay your bills anytime online, on the mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708 (select option 2 when prompted).

Planting this spring? Know the rules about those green utility boxes

SPRING PLANTING season may inspire you to grow something pretty that also blocks the view of that green utility box on your property. But those boxes — also known as pad-mounted transformers or junction boxes — house high-voltage equipment that connects your home to electricity. They are safe when properly maintained, but blocking or tampering with them can be dangerous.

Keep people — and plants — a safe distance from Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative’s pad-mounted equipment by following these rules:

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance in front and 5-foot clearance on the sides and back of the box.
- Do not plant directly around or cover the box.
- Avoid digging near the box. Before you dig, call 811 to locate and mark underground utility lines to stay safe.



Lineworkers Matthew Jones, left, and Matt Mole open a pad-mounted transformer in The Colony subdivision in Bastrop to upgrade the equipment. For safety and to allow for access to the boxes, homeowners should plant at least 5 feet away from utility equipment.

- Keep children from playing near or climbing on the boxes.
- These boxes need air to stay cool and work safely. If you notice any damage, or if a box is open, call Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative immediately at 800-842-7708.

EIGHT TIPS TO CUT ENERGY COSTS, STAY SAFE

A short spring to-do list for a smart start to summer

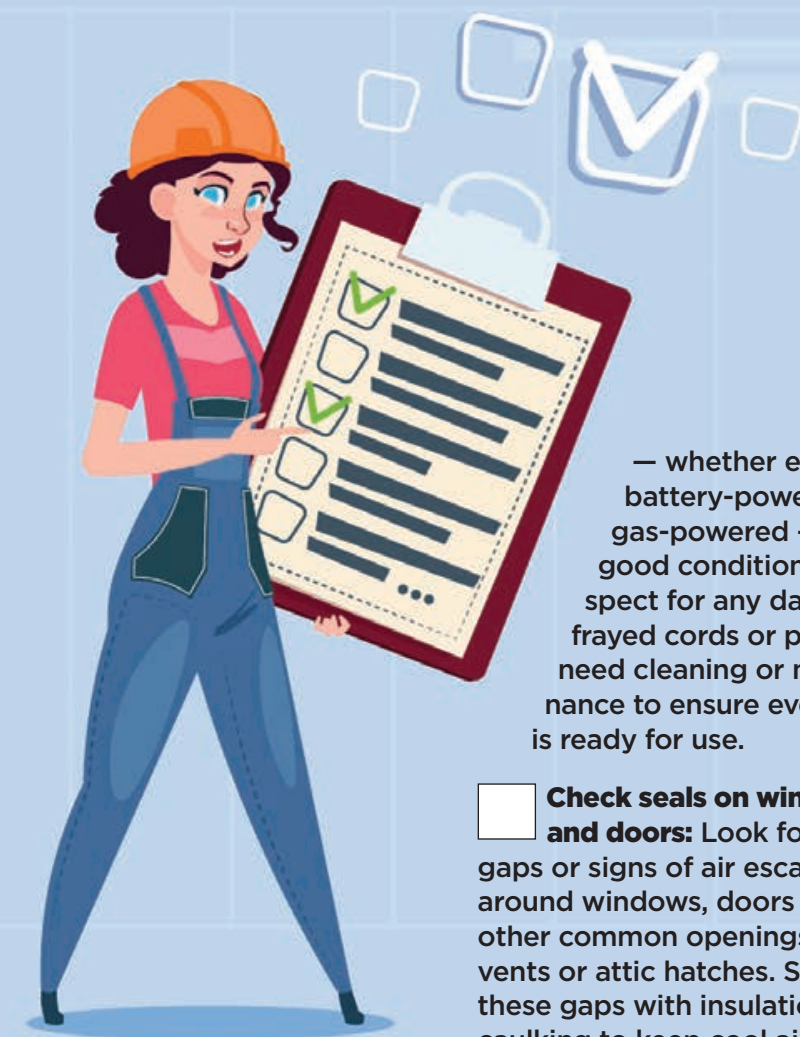
IT'S STILL SPRING, so it's hot but not sweltering. That means now is the time to finish your spring cleaning and get your home ready for the hottest months ahead.

From ensuring your HVAC system is in top shape to preparing your outdoor spaces for maximum fun in the sun, complete these eight simple tasks to stay cool, save electricity and money and keep your home running efficiently this summer.

☐ **Inspect your HVAC unit:** Check that the outdoor unit is clear of debris like leaves and twigs. Have a professional HVAC technician perform a tune-up to clean coils, check refrigerant levels, inspect ductwork, test the thermostat, examine electrical components and clean moving parts. This ensures your AC runs smoothly all summer.

☐ **Replace air filters:** Dirty air filters can make your system work harder, reducing efficiency and air quality. Replace air filters as frequently as the manufacturer of your AC unit and the filter you purchase require.

☐ **Dust vents:** Dust and debris can clog air vents. Wipe down vents or use a vacuum attachment to clean them thoroughly. Clean indoor fan blades regularly to prevent dust buildup and keep indoor air cleaner.



☐ **Clean cooling coils:** Refrigerators are one of the highest energy-consuming products in your home. Vacuum the coils every three months to remove dirt buildup, which reduces efficiency and can pose a fire hazard. To clean your refrigerator coils, unplug the fridge and locate the coils, usually found behind a grille at the bottom. Use a vacuum hose to clean the coils. After cleaning, replace the grille and plug in the fridge.

☐ **Take care of your tools:** Check that your lawnmowers, edgers and other lawn tools

— whether electric, battery-powered or gas-powered — are in good condition. Inspect for any damage, frayed cords or parts that need cleaning or maintenance to ensure everything is ready for use.

☐ **Check seals on windows and doors:** Look for any gaps or signs of air escaping around windows, doors and other common openings like vents or attic hatches. Seal these gaps with insulation or caulking to keep cool air inside and improve your home's energy efficiency.

☐ **Clear gutters and downspouts:** Prevent water buildup that can damage your roof, siding and foundation. This step can also improve your rainwater collection system. Consider installing gutter guards for year-round cleanliness.

☐ **Check sprinkler systems and outdoor faucets:** Fix leaks to prevent water waste and ensure efficient watering. Even a small leak or broken sprinkler head can waste gallons of water daily. ■



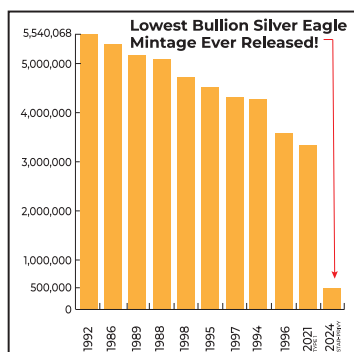
Sold elsewhere
for \$119.99

2024 Silver Eagle BU
5 Sided Star Privy Mark

A World's First Creates The Lowest Mintage Silver Eagle...Ever!

The American Silver Eagle is arguably the most popular coin on the planet. First struck in 1986 for US citizens to own physical silver bullion, the Silver Eagle is made from one ounce of 99.9% fine silver. It's no wonder why these hefty silver dollars have become THE global standard for silver bullion coins, with over 640,000,000 coins minted to date.

And now, the US Mint has released a special Silver Eagle that might just become THE greatest of all time...the *Star Privy Silver Eagle*!



with 3,603,386 coins made. The Star Privy Silver Eagle has a mintage of only 500,000 coins. That's SEVEN TIMES LOWER. Just look at the graph for perspective.

The First 50,000 Coins Released

Each coin comes certified in Gem Brilliant Uncirculated condition, coming from the first 50,000 coins issued, the "top 10%" if you will, certified by the leading independent 3rd party grading company NGC. Those are bragging rights every collector would dream of having!

What's So Special?

There are two "key" reasons why the Star Privy Silver Eagle is poised to become the most sought-after coin in the Silver Eagle series;

One, collectors LOVE "Firsts" and the Star Privy is the First-Ever bullion Silver Eagle to have a Privy Mark, cementing its permanent place in Silver Eagle history.

Two, collectors also GO CRAZY for low mintage coins, the lower the better. And the Star Privy Silver Eagle not only has a low mintage. It's the lowest mintage bullion Silver Eagle EVER!

First-Ever Privy-Marked Bullion Silver Eagle

Privy marks are small symbols added to coin, oftentimes to commemorate special occasions and/or historic events. In this case, the US Mint has added a "star" to the Silver Eagle to celebrate the release of a new mobile gaming app, 8th Era, a groundbreaking new mobile gaming app that marries gaming with coin collecting to inspire the next generation of collectors. It's an instant "must-have" for Silver Eagle collectors.

Lowest Mintage Bullion Silver Eagle EVER

Not only is the Star Privy Silver Eagle the first ever privy-marked bullion Silver Eagle, it's also the lowest mintage bullion Silver Eagle ever! How low? It's not even close! Consider this...the 1996 Silver Eagle is the lowest mintage

Buy More and Save

If you act now, you'll even have the chance to SAVE BIG when you buy more! But don't wait, our inventory won't last long! Every moment you hesitate, someone else could be claiming your piece of this historic release!

2024 1oz Star Privy American Silver Eagle - NGC Gem BU

1-2 coins - \$79 each plus s/h
3-4 coins - \$77 each + **FREE SHIPPING**
5-9 coins - \$75 each + **FREE SHIPPING**
10+ coins - CALL FOR PRICING

FREE SHIPPING on 3 or More!

Limited time only. Product total over \$149 before taxes (if any). Standard domestic shipping only. Not valid on previous purchases.

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rarcoca.com/star-privy-eagle



Staff Sgt. Lucian Adams of Port Arthur receives the Medal of Honor from Lt. Gen. Alexander Patch.

Beyond the Call

Lucian Adams dedicated his life to his comrades in arms

BY CHUCK LYONS

IN 1994, A 6-mile stretch of Interstate 37, between I-410 and I-10, was named in honor of Lucian Adams. Maybe you've seen signs for the freeway, in southeast San Antonio, and wondered who he is.

Adams was one of 12 children born into a Mexican American family in Port Arthur, near Beaumont, along the coast. Twenty-two years later, like a Gulf wind, Adams tore through a French wood and earned a Medal of Honor.

"I never had any fear," Adams said years afterward. "And you do things so automatically because of the training that you had in the States that you don't take time to think how serious, you know, the predicaments you get into are sometimes. And before you know it, you're in it to your head and you just have to fight

your way out."

During World War II, in October 1944, Staff Sgt. Adams' Army company was fighting to reconnect with the 3rd Battalion, 30th Infantry, which had become isolated in the Vosges Mountains near Saint-Dié-des-Vosges, in northeastern France. German machine-gun fire had killed three of Adams' men and wounded six others before his unit could even move 10 yards.

While the remaining men took cover, Adams grabbed a Browning automatic rifle and charged forward, dodging from tree to tree and firing from his hip as machine-gun fire and grenades hit the trees over his head.

"I didn't want to go down with any ammunition still on me," Adams told

The Dallas Morning News in 1993, "so I just kept firing."

In 10 minutes of intense fighting, Adams single-handedly killed nine Germans and silenced three machine gun nests, reconnecting with the isolated battalion and restoring an important supply line for the Allies.

On April 23, 1945, Adams was awarded a Medal of Honor—the highest military distinction awarded by the U.S.—joining 472 other Americans to earn the remarkable distinction during World War II.

Along with four other members of the 3rd Infantry Division, Adams received his award at ceremonies held in Nuremberg's Reichsparteitagsgelände (Reich Party Congress Grounds), which had been the scene of massive Nazi rallies before the war. The Allies had captured the grounds three days earlier.

A large cement swastika, symbol of the Nazi party, that was still on the stadium roof at the time of the presentation was covered with an American flag during the medal ceremony and destroyed with explosives shortly afterward.

Seven of Adams' brothers also fought in the war, but he was the only one to return with a Medal of Honor. He also received a Purple Heart, earned earlier in the war, when he was wounded neutralizing an enemy machine gun nest in Italy.

After the war, Adams dedicated himself to helping other veterans. He worked for the next 40 years as a representative for the Veterans Administration in San Antonio. Afterward, he worked as a VA consultant for U.S. Rep. Frank Tejeda (himself a veteran who also has a highway named in his honor).

Adams retired in 1986 and died in March 2003. He was buried with full military honors at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio. ■

The Whole Enchilada

So many flavors rolled into one savory dish

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

My morning enchiladas are comfort food to the max. This is my go-to recipe when hosting brunch, as I can whip up the sauce the day before and assemble them before guests arrive. Serve with a mimosa or coffee for a delicious start to your day.

Black Bean Breakfast Enchiladas

¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided use
½ cup diced onion
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 can black beans (15 ounces)
1 cup water
2 teaspoons salt, divided use
2 teaspoons ground black pepper, divided use
8 corn tortillas
6 eggs
2½ cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided use
Salsa, for serving
Cilantro, minced, for serving

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a skillet, heat 2 teaspoons oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook until light and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 additional minute.
3. Transfer onions and garlic into a blender or food processor. Add black beans, water, 1 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Blend until smooth. Return black bean sauce to skillet and keep warm.
4. Heat remaining ¼ cup oil in a second skillet over medium-high heat. Lightly fry each tortilla 5 seconds on each side and place on paper towels to drain. Reduce heat to medium and use the same skillet to prepare eggs.
5. Add eggs, remaining 1 teaspoon salt and remaining 1 teaspoon pepper. As eggs begin to set, use a spatula to gently pull the eggs across the skillet until thoroughly scrambled and cooked. Remove pan from heat.
6. To assemble the enchiladas, dip each tortilla in bean sauce, fill with egg, sprinkle with ¼ cup cheese, roll and place seam side down in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Repeat this process until all tortillas are rolled. Spoon the remaining sauce over rolled enchiladas and top with remaining ½ cup cheese. Bake 10 minutes. Serve warm with salsa and cilantro.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Chicken Enchilada Tostadas.





Butternut Squash and Black Bean Enchiladas

PENNY ATKINS
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

- 4 tablespoons olive oil**
- ½ cup diced white onion**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 butternut squash (3–4 pounds), peeled, seeds removed and diced**
- 1 can black beans (15 ounces), drained and rinsed**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 2 teaspoons seasoned salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 12 corn tortillas**
- 1 can red enchilada sauce (15 ounces), divided use**
- 2 cups shredded Mexican-style cheese**
- 1 can sliced black olives (2.25 ounces), drained**
- 2 green onions, sliced diagonally, for garnish**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Cook onion and garlic until onions are translucent and fragrant.
3. Add butternut squash, cook 5 minutes, then reduce heat to simmer and cook an additional 10 minutes or until squash is tender and lightly browned. Stir in black beans, cumin, salt and pepper.
4. Place half the tortillas on a plate, cover with a damp paper towel, and microwave 30 seconds or until pliable. Repeat with remaining tortillas.
5. Spread ¼ cup enchilada sauce evenly on bottom of baking dish. Spoon ¼ cup squash and bean mixture onto center of each tortilla and roll up. Place seam side down in baking dish.
6. Pour remaining enchilada sauce evenly

\$500 WINNER

Shrimp Enchiladas

JANICE MERCK
PEDERNALES EC



Merck has been cooking up these enchiladas for over 30 years to rave reviews, and, baby, I get it! I absolutely loved these creamy shrimp enchiladas. The simplicity of the sauce in this coastal twist on classic enchiladas was so ... wow!



- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, divided use**
- 1 cup finely chopped onion**
- 1 cup chopped green chiles, drained**
- ¾ cup finely chopped green bell pepper**
- 3 teaspoons salt, divided use**
- 2 teaspoons ground white pepper, divided use**
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, divided use**
- 4 teaspoons ground oregano, divided use**
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic**

- 3 cups heavy cream**
- 1 cup sour cream**
- 8 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided use**
- 2 pounds medium shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- ¾ cup finely chopped green onions**
- ½ cup vegetable oil**
- 20 corn tortillas**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt ½ cup butter. Add onion, chiles, bell pepper, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon white pepper, ½ teaspoon cayenne and 2 teaspoons oregano. Cook 10 minutes, stirring often. Add garlic and cook an additional minute.
3. Stir in heavy cream, bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer uncovered 10 minutes, stirring constantly.
4. Whisk in sour cream until sauce is smooth, then add 3 cups cheese, 1 cup at a time, whisking after each addition until all cheese melts. Remove from heat and set aside.
5. In a 4-quart saucepan over medium-high heat, melt the remaining ½ cup butter. Add shrimp, green onions and remaining seasonings—2 teaspoons salt, 1 teaspoon white pepper, ½ teaspoon cayenne and 2 teaspoons oregano. Cook about 5 minutes, until shrimp is fully cooked.
6. Stir in cream sauce, reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
7. In a small skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Lightly fry each tortilla 2–3 seconds on each side and place on paper towels to drain.
8. Spoon ⅓ cup of shrimp mixture into the center of each tortilla. Roll and place seam side down in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Spoon remaining sauce over rolled tortillas and sprinkle with remaining 5 cups cheese.
9. Bake 10 minutes or until cheese melts.

SERVES 10

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

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UPCOMING: TURKEY TIME DUE JUNE 10



CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

RECIPES CONTINUED

over tortillas. Spread cheese evenly over enchiladas and top with black olives.

7. Bake 15–20 minutes, until heated through and cheese is melted. Remove from oven and sprinkle with green onions.

SERVES 6

Buffalo Ranch Chicken Enchiladas

CARLA MOON
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 tablespoon Cajun seasoning
- 2 tablespoons ranch seasoning, divided use
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1½ cups Buffalo sauce, divided use
- 1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), softened



- 2 cups shredded pepper jack cheese, divided use
- 1 whole cooked chicken, deboned and shredded
- 12 corn tortillas

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Cook onion and bell pepper until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add Cajun seasoning and 1 tablespoon ranch seasoning and stir.

3. Add stock and 1 cup Buffalo sauce. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes or until sauce is slightly thickened. Remove from heat and set aside.

4. In a large bowl, stir together cream cheese, remaining 1 tablespoon ranch seasoning, remaining ½ cup Buffalo sauce and 1 cup pepper jack. Stir well, then stir in shredded chicken.

5. Spread ¼ cup enchilada sauce in the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Place about ¼ cup of the chicken and cream cheese mixture in the center of each tortilla and roll. Place each rolled tortilla in the baking dish seam side down. Spoon remaining sauce over enchiladas. Top with remaining 1 cup pepper jack.

6. Cover dish with foil and bake 15 minutes. Uncover and bake about 15 more minutes or until cheese is bubbly and slightly browned on the edges.

SERVES 6

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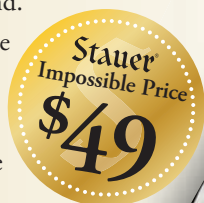
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

A Walk on the Wild Side

This ranch boasts cows and pigs—but also giraffes and kangaroos

BY CHET GARNER

HAVE YOU EVER wanted to dine with a giraffe? Swim with an otter? Hold a baby kangaroo? Of course you have! Blue Hills Ranch, a 150-acre wildlife sanctuary outside Waco, can make all your wildest dreams come true.

I was giddy as I pulled up to the farmhouse that now serves as the office for this exotic ranch. I walked in and felt like I had stepped into the office of Dr. Dolittle. Two St. Bernard dogs lay on the floor like giant rugs while a potbellied pig and kangaroo poked around the kitchen.

Owner Matt Lieberman explained how his ranch started as a wedding venue with a couple giraffes in the pasture to make for interesting photos. But he soon realized animals were much easier than brides—and much more fun. He started adding other species, including axis deer and zebras, and had soon built one of the most interesting interactive animal adventures in Texas.

My first experience was a leisurely drive through the ranch feeding the dozens of species that populate the hills. Let me say, there isn't anything much scarier (or slimier) than the tongue of a hungry Highland cow.

Next I headed for the hot tub, where I spent an hour swimming with resident otters Otto and Sweet Pea. I've never met more curious creatures and could have spent the entire afternoon feeding them bits of shrimp as they treated me like a human jungle gym.

When it was time for the grand finale, we grabbed a picnic basket and headed out for dinner with Blue, the giraffe. There are few better ways to enjoy a Texas sunset than with a 16-foot-tall giraffe sniffing your plate for grapes and crackers.

I've done a lot of amazing things in Texas, but this has to be one of the wildest of them all. ■

ABOVE Chet finds himself on friendly terms with a giraffe at Blue Hills Ranch.

TCP Watch the video on our website and see all Chet's 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.

MAY

8

Abilene [8–11] Western Heritage Classic, (325) 677-4376, westernheritageclassic.com

9

Grand Prairie [9–11] Asian Heritage Fest, (972) 975-5100, asiatimesquare.com

10

Brenham 7 Bridges: The Ultimate Eagles Experience, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Corsicana Mimosas at the Market, (903) 654-4850, visitcorsicana.com

El Campo Crawfish & Gumbo Cook-Off, (979) 275-1600, eclostlagoon.com

Palestine Wiggy Thump Festival, 1-800-659-3484, visitpalestine.com

Winnsboro Max and Heather Stalling, (903) 342-0686, winnsborocenterforthearts.com

13

Fort Worth [13–18] MJ, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

15

Luling Field Day, (830) 875-2438, lulingfoundation.org

Pasadena [15–18] Strawberry Festival, (281) 991-9500, strawberryfest.org

16

Columbus [16–17] Magnolia Days Festival, (979) 732-8385, magnoliadays.org



Pick of the Month

Texas Route 66 Festival

Amarillo, June 5-14

1-800-692-1338, visitamarillo.com

Ten fun-filled days along Texas' stretch of the iconic highway include classic car shows, live music, a cattle drive and parade, bus tours, and a rodeo dance. The grand finale June 14 features Elvis impersonators, a pinup pageant, corn dog eating contests and kids' activities.

17

El Campo Coletto Creek BBQ Association Cook-Off, (979) 275-1600, eclostlagoon.com

La Grange Bluff Schuetzen-Fest, (979) 968-5658, friendsofkbmh.org

Round Top Vanity Fur Fashion Show, (979) 966-0021, janssenanimalshelter.org

21

Winnsboro [21-July 19] Gary Bachers Memorial Art Exhibit & CJ Bachers, (903) 342-0686, winnsborocenterforthearts.com

22

Grapeland [22-24] Salmon Lake Park Gospel Bluegrass Festival, (936) 687-2594, slpbluegrass.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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



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MAY EVENTS CONTINUED

23

Fredericksburg [23-25]
Crawfish Festival,
fbgcrawfishfestival.com

Victoria [23-25] Memorial
Weekend Bash,
(361) 485-3116,
discovervictoriatexas.com

Granbury [23-26]
Memorial Day Weekend
Festival, (682) 936-4550,
granburysquare.com

24

Freeport [24-Aug. 13]
Shark Exhibit, (979) 233-
0066, [facebook.com/](http://facebook.com/freeportmuseum)
freeportmuseum

30

El Paso Downtown
Treasures, (915) 533-0048,
tomlea.com

31

Godley Christian Music
Fest, (817) 389-2287,
godleymethodist.org

JUNE
7

Corsicana The '77
Experience: Hits of 1977
Tribute, (903) 874-7792,
corsicanapalace.com

Fredericksburg Lucken-
bach School Open House,
(830) 685-3321,
historicschools.org

Waxahachie [7-8]
Gingerbread Trail Tour of
Homes, (469) 309-4040,
waxahachiecvb.com

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Patterns

We marvel with these readers at the smooth repetition of human-made structures and the chaotic arrangements found in nature. While they may seem random at first, if we just step back, we see the big picture.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 SHARON BLUNT
COSERV

"Turkey tail mushrooms on a fallen log in Caddo Lake State Park."

2 MARK HOLLY
BANDERA EC

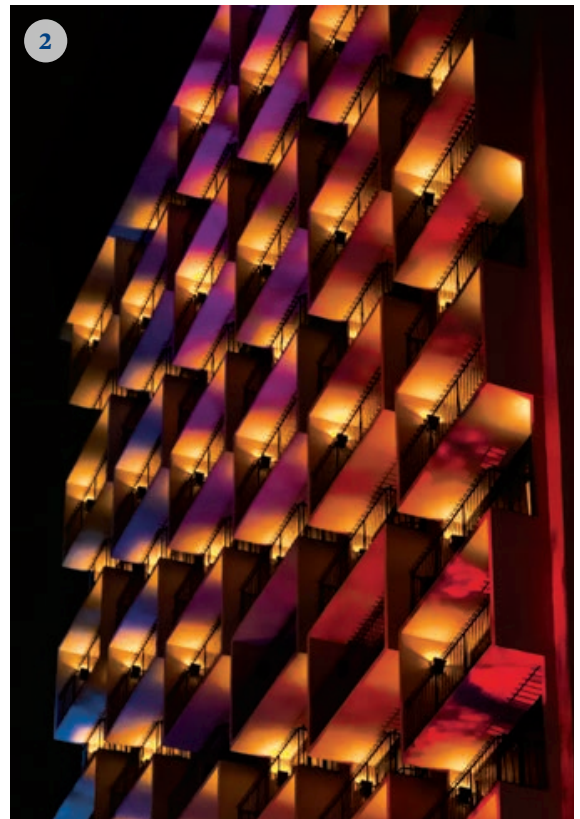
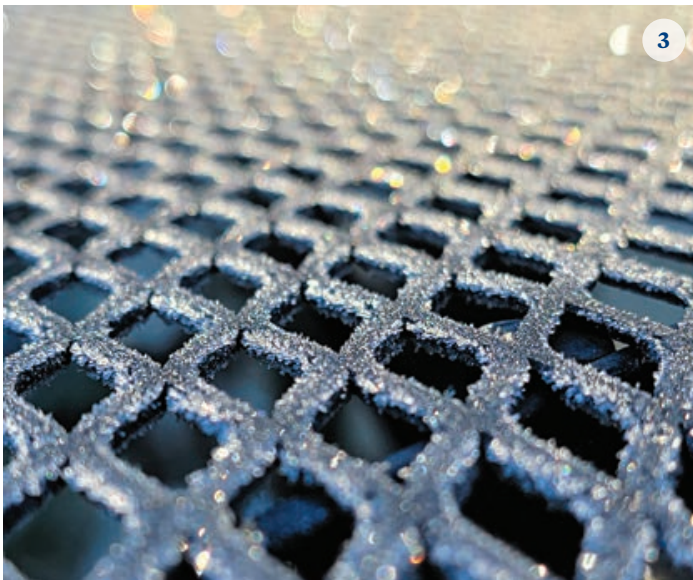
Hotel balconies along the San Antonio River Walk.

3 KATHY DUMAS
PEDERNALES EC

"I captured the morning sun sparkling off the frost on the grates of a patio table."

4 KEITH CUDDEBACK
PEDERNALES EC

Fallen leaves at Lost Maples State Natural Area.



Upcoming Contests

- DUE MAY 10** Off-Road Adventures
- DUE JUN 10** Heroes
- DUE JUL 10** Abstract



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



Stepping Up

Our family tree branched out with Bobbin, at first a stranger

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY
ANNA GODEASSI

WE CALLED OUR grandmother Bobbin. I'm not sure why. She was my mother's stepmother, acquired with some reluctance on Mother's part when her father remarried a few years after her own mother died of rheumatic heart disease.

By the time Bobbin came into her life, my mother was a tiny tyrant, used to having her father and a string of housekeepers kowtow to her every need.

To be fair, it must be hard to lose your mother at the tender age of 6, especially since Mother was not allowed to attend the funeral. No one explained to her what had happened.

Mother, a petite, lively tomboy with shining dark hair, and Bobbin could hardly have been more different. Bobbin was tall and willowy with long blond hair. As the wedding approached, she pored

over a box of family photos, trying to capture a past she had not shared.

There were problems, of course. They faced the task of consciously building the bridge of communication and love that typically develops naturally between parents and their children. My grandfather, superintendent of schools in a small Wisconsin town, could do little more than stand by and watch with love and understanding.

Bobbin's well-meaning friends offered unsolicited advice. Mother's playmates stood ready with sympathy. "Is she mean to you?" they asked. But most of the problems seemed to stem from worrying too much.

Admiration and love gradually grew. When Mother learned in her early teens that Bobbin was expecting, she rushed out to be the first to buy a present for the new arrival.

Years later, Mother shared this bit of advice with Bobbin, who was writing an article about stepmothers: "Tell them to be demonstrative about showing affection even if the child doesn't appear to want it. I used to pretend I didn't want to be hugged and kissed, but deep down I wanted it badly."

By the time Mother married and had a family of her own, none of us perceived a difference between our beloved Bobbin and other grandmothers. When she rode the train to Texas to visit us, she was entangled in so many loving arms, she couldn't move out of the way to allow other passengers to disembark.

She regularly trounced my brothers and me at Scrabble—no surprise since later in life she worked in Washington, D.C., as an editor at the national cathedral. As much as she loved us, she never let us win.

We lost her in her 80s when a young addict grabbed her purse as she walked home from church, slamming her onto the sidewalk. She only had \$20. If he had asked her, she would have gladly given it to him.

Bobbin's DNA did not match ours; she was a grandmother of the heart. ■

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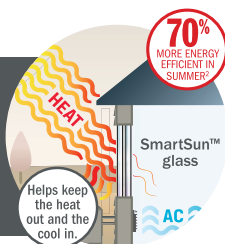
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