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PREPARE NOW
FOR WILDFIRES

SOLID GROUND
20 YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

AUGUST 2025

Give It a Whirl

Why so many people
are flipping out
over disc golf

BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS

SEE PAGE 16



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August 2025



10

06 Disc Jockeys

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

By Margaret Buranen
Photos by Kenny Braun

'Every Part of Texas Is at Risk'

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

By Chris Burrows

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

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

Kaufman: The Next Frontier



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

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

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

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

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

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

—ANONYMOUS



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FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Another day, another ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our June prompt: **It's summer, and I'm ready for ...**

Homemade peach ice cream.

HARRY POWER
FARMERS EC
FORNEY

Sleeping in—I'm a teacher.

STU BERKOWITZ
PEDERNALES EC
MANCHACA

Garden-fresh tomatoes.

JAMES SELF
DEAF SMITH EC
HEREFORD

Watermelon, corn on the cob and potato salad.

STACEY MCINTOSH
TRINITY VALLEY EC
FORNEY

Cheves (beer), trips and vacation.

SYLVIA ARMENDARIZ
MAGIC VALLEY EC
EDINBURG

Visit our website to see more responses.

JUNE 2025 Gorging a Path

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

PAT HOFFMAN
CENTRAL TEXAS EC
LLANO



Goats Galore

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

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

Peggy Rhea
Pedernales EC
Austin

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

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

Jane Sykes
CoServ
Denton

Memories From the Mill

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

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

Stephanie Lowe
Pedernales EC
Liberty Hill

Slivers of Ice

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

Sterling Hartman
Pedernales EC
Cedar Park

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
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Austin, TX 78701

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

 Texas Co-op Power

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COURTESY LADIES OF LONE STAR



DISC

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



JOCKEYS

BY MARGARET BURANEN • PHOTOS BY KENNY BRAUN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



GIVE IT A SPIN

Among the most popular and picturesque Texas courses are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



‘Every Part of

Prepare now for wildfires that can strike anywhere and almost anytime

BY CHRIS BURROWS

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

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

Keyboard cranks came for her in the comments.

“Quick everyone panic!”

“Talk about causing unnecessary panic.”

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

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

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

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

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

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



ANDREW MCGUIRE | COURTESY TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE



Texas Is at Risk'



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 Tips To Stay Ready

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

Source: Texas A&M Forest Service



SMOKEY BEAR: COURTESY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That part is easier than ever.

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

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

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

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

Prepare Your Farm or Ranch

Help wildfire first responders by staying ready.

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

Source: Texas A&M Forest Service



COURTESY TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

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

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

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

Start planning now. ■




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

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

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REWARDING



Bluebonnet awards \$400,000 in scholarships to 160 area graduating high school seniors

Story by Connie Juarez

Consider it an investment in the future. Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative has awarded 160 scholarships to graduating high school seniors from across the cooperative's 14-county service area this year. The \$2,500 Scholarships of Excellence, totaling \$400,000, will help the students achieve their goals of earning college degrees or trade-and-technical school certificates.

"Congratulations to the students who earned a Bluebonnet scholarship this year, and thanks to all the outstanding, hardworking students who participated in the application process," General Manager Matt Bentke said. "One of Bluebonnet's values is supporting and investing in the communities in which we live and serve. Awarding these scholarships supports these students who will continue to give back to their communities."

The scholarships are funded by proceeds from Bluebonnet's Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament as well as former members' unclaimed capital credit payments that were returned by the state of Texas. Funds for the scholar-



Scholarship recipient Skarleth Lagos accepts her diploma from IDEA Bluff Springs College Preparatory High School. She will attend Austin College in North Texas this fall, where she plans to major in neuroscience.

Photo from Skarleth Lagos

ships do not come from Bluebonnet members' bill payments and do not affect electric rates.

Sherry Murphy, a Bluebonnet community and development representative, has been organizing the scholarship program for three years.

"It's one of the highlights of our year," Murphy said. "We have an opportunity to meet these students and celebrate their hard work. It's an honor to be part of that."

After the scholarship presentation at Smithville High School, Lindsey Saunders, the Smithville ISD communications officer, said, "We're so proud of our students who received this scholarship. It really shows

all the hard work they've put in."

Koy Macik, a graduate of Caldwell High School who plans to study animal science at Texas A&M University, is one of this year's recipients. "We started a cattle operation when my family moved to Caldwell, and I've been around animals my whole life," Macik said. "I feel like it's something I want to pursue. I want to become a veterinarian. I'm not sure where yet, but I'll see where the

Continued on Page 18



Brenham High School students hold their Scholarship of Excellence certificates at a reception on May 14. Students from 29 schools across the service area were recognized. See a full list of recipients and photos from other events on **Pages 20-21**. *Kirsten Tyler photo*



EXCELLENCE



\$400,000

IN SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED THIS SPRING

32 TRADE AND
TECHNICAL
SCHOLARSHIPS
AWARDED

128 ACADEMIC
SCHOLARSHIPS
AWARDED

29 HIGH SCHOOLS
REPRESENTED
BY RECIPIENTS

27

YEARS BLUEBONNET HAS
AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarship recipient Adalinda Ricardez displays her graduation mortarboard. She is the first in her immediate family to attend college.
Sara Abrego photo

Continued from Page 16

path takes me.”

Others, like Karina Maldonado, are pursuing careers in the medical field. Maldonado, a Brenham High School graduate, will attend Tyler Junior College to study prediagnostic medical sonography. “Visiting with my teachers and taking Certified Medical Assistant courses through Blinn College inspired me to pursue a career in sonography,” Maldonado said. “Eventually, I’d like to focus on oncologic imaging and maybe even do travel sonography, going where I’m needed — especially since there’s a shortage of sonographers in some areas.”

FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS PURSUE HIGH ASPIRATIONS

Among this year’s recipients, several dozen students said they were first-generation college students — the first in their families to pursue higher education.

Adalinda Ricardez, a 2025 graduate of McDade High School, is one of 32 recipients who received a trade-and-technical scholarship and will be the first in her family to attend college.

When Adalinda starts classes at Austin Community College’s Highland Campus this fall, she’ll already have some credits under her belt. “I took dual credit courses in high school, and I think taking those helped me prepare for college,” she said.

At ACC, she plans to complete prerequisite courses, then move into the dental hygiene program and earn an associate degree. From there, she wants to earn a degree from Texas A&M University or The University of Texas at San Antonio, then go to dental school.

Adalinda’s high school years were filled with achievement, both inside and outside the classroom. The clarinetist played in the marching and concert bands all four years and earned MVP honors in concert band. She served as secretary of the student council during her junior and senior years and participated in Pathfinders and Master Guides, programs focused on leadership, service and personal growth. She also volunteered with the Teen Leadership Training program in her junior and senior years.

On top of her academic commitments, Adalinda worked on her school campus as part of McDade ISD’s summer staff, assisted at a local food bank and volunteered time with nursing home residents.

“My family has taught me to persevere and always do my best,” she said. “And now, my younger siblings are watching. Being the first to go to college sets the bar higher for all of us.”

BUILDING STRONG FUTURES

For Bastrop High School graduate Payton Moore, the future looks a lot like the past with new purpose. Payton grew up around construction projects, and she plans to



Payton Moore

“The business was passed down through the men in my family — first my great-grandfather, Robert Moore, then my grandfather, David Moore,” Payton said. “My father, David Moore II, wasn’t able to take over the business, and I’d like to make that happen for him.”

Payton’s father died in 2022 at 48 after a two-year illness. “I loved helping out alongside my dad with construction jobs for family members for as long as I can remember,” she said. “I got my first tool set when I was 6.”

Payton’s high school extracurricular work shows her dedication to service, leadership and learning. She was a two-year member of Peer Assistance and Leadership, mentoring younger students and volunteering in the community. She helped organize one of Bastrop’s largest events as part of the Bastrop Homecoming and Rodeo Committee and was a varsity student trainer for the school’s sports medicine team.

She hopes to honor her father and family by learning the ins and outs of the construction business.

“I want to combine my passion for building with interior design and eventually provide people with homes that truly reflect who they are,” Payton said.

Like Payton, Kevin Nava is laying the foundation for a future in construction. Kevin will attend Sam Houston State University this fall



Kevin Nava

He was a member of the National Honor Society and a standout athlete. He served as a cross country team captain, earning four-time MVP Runner of the Year honors. Kevin also competed in football and was active in Future Farmers of America.

In recognition of his achievements in academics and sports, Kevin received the Mirabeau B. Lamar Award, presented through local Masonic lodges to honor students who demon-

keep it that way.

This fall, she will attend Tarleton State University to study construction management, with a goal of continuing the legacy of Moore Construction, a homebuilding business founded in 1900 by her great-great-grandfather.

TOP 10 SCHOOLS RECIPIENTS PLAN TO ATTEND

- Texas A&M University
- Blinn College
- The University of Texas at Austin
- Texas State University
- Austin Community College
- Texas State Technical College
- Tarleton State University
- Sam Houston State University
- Angelo State University
- Universal Technical Institute

142 RECIPIENTS WITH WORK EXPERIENCE

TOP 5 ACADEMIC AREAS OF STUDY RECIPIENTS PLAN TO PURSUE

1. Health sciences/pre-med
2. Agriculture and agribusiness
3. Engineering
4. Business, finance and accounting
5. Animal and veterinary sciences

160

SCHOLARSHIP
RECIPIENTS IN 2025

304

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS HELD
IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

742

AWARDS AND
RECOGNITIONS
RECEIVED

1,934

ORGANIZATIONS APPLICANTS
WERE INVOLVED IN THROUGH
VOLUNTEERISM AND SCHOOL
ACTIVITIES

TOP 5 TRADES RECIPIENTS PLAN TO PURSUE

1. Nursing
2. Welding
3. HVAC and electrical
4. Diagnostics and imaging
5. Real estate

strate outstanding achievement in academics, citizenship, community service and athletics.

Outside the classroom, Kevin volunteered at church events and gained job experience installing window frames for a local glass and mirror company.

"I want to do what I love while leading teams and managing projects," Kevin said.

COMMITTED TO CARE

Adriana Parra Jaramillo, a graduate of Luling High School, has always had an interest in health care. She plans to attend Texas State University this fall to pursue a nursing degree.

"I was always interested in the medical field and all aspects of it," Adriana said. "I love what it means to be a nurse and help people."

In high school, Adriana was co-captain of the dance team, where she earned the Crowd Pleasers Highest GPA Award two years in a row. She participated in the Health Science Yearlong Academy through Dell Medical School and holds certifications in first aid, CPR and bleed-ing control.

Adriana was also active in Health Oc-cupations Students of America, photography club, book club, and various safety and leadership programs.

In addition to schoolwork, Adriana gained work experience as: junior manager at Mc-Donald's, sales associate at Best Buy and Boot Barn, and crew member at Whataburger, often working 30 to 40 hours a week.

Adriana is fluent in English and Spanish and hopes to use those skills as a traveling nurse, providing care in locations with limited resources. "I want to learn from different environments and give back wherever I can," she said.

Skarleth Lagos, a graduate of IDEA Bluff Springs College Preparatory in Austin, is also planning a career in health care, but her focus is on the brain. This fall, she will at-tend Austin College in Sherman, where she plans to major in neuroscience.

Her interest was sparked during a ninth-grade experi-ence through the Dell Medical Health Sciences program at The University of Texas at Austin. "They let us hold real human brains," Skarleth said. "It made me realize how powerful the brain is. One organ



Adriana Parra Jaramillo



Skarleth Lagos

controls everything. That amazed me."

Skarleth challenged herself academically with multiple advanced placement courses, includ-ing chemistry, biology and statistics.

While in high school, Skarleth was a mem-ber of UT's Yearlong Health Sciences Acad-emy, earning certificates in CPR and bleeding control.

Skarleth hopes to eventually attend Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin. Her goal is to become a doctor and return to the Dale area, where she grew up, bringing specialty medical care to regions that lack it.

Her parents are her biggest inspirations, she said. "They've always supported me in the best way they could," Skarleth said.

FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER

The impact of Bluebonnet's investment in students may be best illustrated by those who have gone before this year's recipients over the scholarship's 27-year history.

Philip Meuth, a 2009 graduate of Bastrop High School, was a first-generation college student who received a Bluebonnet scholarship to attend Texas State Technical College in Waco. He studied plumbing and pipe fitting, building a foundation for a lasting career.

"I knew I wanted to go into a trade," Philip said. "Plumbing stood out because it's a solid, good-paying career."

Today, he lives in Cedar Creek and works for Brewster Services, a commercial plumbing contractor in San Antonio. "The Bluebonnet scholarship was money I didn't have to pay back," Philip said. "It gave me a leg up. I was humbled to get it."

"These scholarships are about more than just financial support," said Bluebonnet's Sherry Murphy. "They're about believing in our local students, and seeing many of them come back to work, live and lead in the communities where they started. That's something we're deeply proud of."

Applications for Scholarships of Excellence for 2026 high school graduates will be available in November at bluebonnet.coop/scholarships. ■

— Sara Abrego and Kirsten Tyler
contributed to this story

See more photos and a complete
list of scholarship recipients on
Pages 20-21.



CEDAR CREEK HIGH SCHOOL



CALDWELL HIGH SCHOOL



MANOR EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL



BELLVILLE HIGH SCHOOL



GIDDINGS HIGH SCHOOL



LULING HIGH SCHOOL



COLORADO RIVER COLLEGIATE ACADEMY



HOMESCHOOL



SMITHVILLE HIGH SCHOOL



LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Bluebonnet staff photos

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2025 SCHOLARSHIP OF EXCELLENCE RECIPIENTS

BASTROP
HIGH SCHOOL

Claire Adams
Joseline Albiter
Ella Davis
Kayla Frank
Anthony Gonzalez
Emma Griesenbeck
Yesliann Matos Cirino
Mark McCarus
Lindsey McFarland
Payton Moore
Zoe Moreno
Adrian Paniagua
Sarah Salazar Hernandez
Jaxon Williams

BELLVILLE
HIGH SCHOOL

Fallon Chovanec
Lydia Huebner
Tegan Peschel
Chase Richardson
Jaylen Tesch

BRENHAM
HIGH SCHOOL

Zora Austin
Blaine Bartlett
Leyton Blankenburg
Brett Campbell
Denise Carrillo
Samuel Clepper
Garrison Covin
Landon Flisowski
Cullen Halfmann
Brody Hemann
Corbin Janner
Barrett Kohring
Alex Lawhorn
Samantha Mahlmann
Karina Maldonado
Logan Mason
Austin Maurer
Avery Maurer
Hayden Mika
Kord Mikolajchak
Haylie Niemeyer
Luis Ramos
Brandon Schultz
Addison Smith
Bailey Stegint

BURTON
HIGH SCHOOL

Bailey Glaesmann
Isabelle Means
Reagan Roemer
Peyton Sigsbee

CALDWELL
HIGH SCHOOL

Landon Barnes
Hays Beavers
Dylan Chapman
Cooper Ellis
Brook Fry
Alison Krueger
Brenden Lee
Koy Macik
Dulce Carolina Medina
Kyler Roskey
Madilyn Schneider
Kate Smith
Brycen Suehs
Mia Witherwax

CEDAR CREEK
HIGH SCHOOL

Mia Benavides
Margaux Bonneau
Anabel Bordelon
Caleb Farr
Kaylee Fitzhugh
Faith Frank
Jazlene Gomez
Daeylin Gonzalez
Devon James
Nicole Kadura
Brooklyn McCool
Shayla Mendez-Ramirez
Tyler Morgan
Serenity Rivera
Peyton Smith

COLORADO RIVER
COLLEGIATE
ACADEMY

Jayton Nelson

DEL VALLE
HIGH SCHOOL

Ginny Benitez-Perez
Nazariah Cedillo
Azucena Esqueda
Rodriguez

DIME BOX
HIGH SCHOOL

Leslie Guajardo
Adley Markert

ELGIN HIGH SCHOOL

Montserrat Espinoza-Guzman
Isadora Estrada
Jocelyn Howard
Cayli Johns
Alexander Rico Cuellar
Garrison Vragel

FAYETTEVILLE
HIGH SCHOOL

Lawson Fritsch
Rylee Fritsch

GIDDINGS
HIGH SCHOOL

Carlos Amaro
Kelby Cowen
Kyler Giles
Samantha Matthijetz
Ruby Meachen
Bayley Pitts
Daylin Pitts
Paige Schreckengost
Shay Siegmund
Abigail Snyder
Reese Weiser
Jazmin Zachary

GRACE LUTHERAN
SCHOOL

Avila Colanter

HOMESCHOOL

Ellen Carroll
Paloma Dineen
Ryan Holmes
Mateo Martinez
Brady Masur
Emma Roth
Trey Schumpert

IDEA BLUFF
SPRINGS COLLEGE
PREPARATORY

Skarleth Lagos

IDEA RUNDBURG
COLLEGE
PREPARATORY

Melanie Ramirez
Mendoza

KIPP AUSTIN
COLLEGIATE

Samantha Hoyos
Nancy Perez

LEXINGTON
HIGH SCHOOL

Ellie Brockenbush
Kaylin Cotton
Kinley Cotton
Owen Harris
Montserrat Hernandez
Pena
Caleb Huddleston
Addyson Koester
Sydney Kubicek
Preslie Milburn
Kevin Nava
Braden Rodgers

LOCKHART
HIGH SCHOOL

Roman Moreno
Ricardo Rios

LULING HIGH SCHOOL

Kase Conley
Jaelynn Moses
Adriana Parra
Joselyn Reyna
Joshua Samuelson

MANOR EARLY
COLLEGE HIGH
SCHOOL

Jordan Brown-Johnson
Makenzie Clark
Isabella Crawford
Mia Esqueda

MANOR NEW TECH
HIGH SCHOOL

Kayla Frederick
Chidinma Nwankwo

MANOR SENIOR
HIGH SCHOOL

Jordan Clark

McCALLUM
HIGH SCHOOL

Nahomy Rivera

McDADE
HIGH SCHOOL

Joshua Dube
Kelsey Dube
Sheila Lugo Lopez
Lisethe
Adalinda Ricardez
Areli Velazquez

PRAIRIE LEA
HIGH SCHOOL

Gabriel Garcia

ROUND ROCK
CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Peyton Turner

SMITHVILLE
HIGH SCHOOL

Carina Berryann
Daucie Davis
Kaydence Kimball
Jacob Moore
Darcy Mullen
Kaycee Nutt
Samuel Praditbatuga
Addison Waneck
Ashlyn Wilhelm
Devin Young

SNOOK HIGH SCHOOL

Savannah Davidson

SOMERVILLE
HIGH SCHOOL

Savannah Eschete

Applications for Scholarships of Excellence for 2026 graduates will be available in November at bluebonnet.coop/scholarships.

Lesson No. 1:

STAY SAFE GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

As classrooms reopen and routines return, it's time for a back-to-school refresher on safety — at the bus stop and on the road



Prepare for the first bus ride

Riding the bus is a big step, especially for young students. To help your child feel prepared, walk or drive the school route together. Go over the family's morning routines. Review these important reminders with your child:

- Plan to arrive at the bus stop at least 10 minutes before the scheduled pickup time.
- Wait in a safe spot, at least 10 feet away from the road.
- If your child can't board the bus directly at its stop, they should enter and exit the bus by walking in front of it — never behind.
- Wait for the driver's signal and always look both ways before crossing the road.



Drivers, slow down!

It's easy to get distracted behind the wheel, but during the school year, it's especially important to stay alert and aware. Here are some tips on driving smart:

- Slow down in school zones and neighborhoods; look for speed limit signs as you approach the school.
- Watch for school buses. If a bus has red lights flashing and the stop-sign arm is out, you must stop.
- Avoid distractions, cell phone use, and obey crossing guards and traffic signs.
- Don't speed during your commute. Those few seconds you save aren't worth the risk.



SUPER summer tip!

Use a garden hose to remove debris from the outdoor unit of your HVAC system.

Looking for more energy-saving tips and cool giveaways?

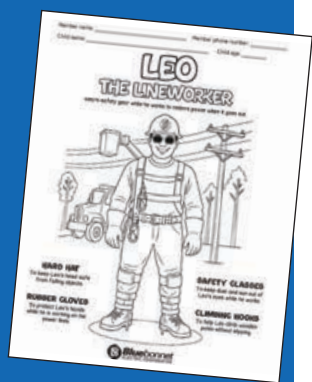
Visit
bluebonnet.coop/summer-saving-tips

Hey, kids! You can color to win!

We're celebrating the hardworking heroes who keep our lights on. Enter Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's lineworker coloring contest for a chance to win a back-to-school bundle packed with supplies and surprises.

HERE'S HOW TO ENTER:

Download the coloring sheet at
bluebonnet.coop/lineworkercoloringcontest.
Color your best version of a lineworker on the job.
Submit your entry by Friday, Aug. 22.



Bluebonnet, LCRA provide grants to help improve area nonprofits

BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC Cooperative and the Lower Colorado River Authority recently provided three grants to community nonprofit organizations and projects within the cooperative's service area as part of LCRA's Community Development Partnership Program. Bluebonnet is one of LCRA's wholesale electric customers and partners with LCRA to support its members and communities. The next round of applications will be accepted in January 2026. For more information about this program and the application, visit lcra.org/cdpp.

TOP PHOTO: A \$25,000 grant will help the Texas Public Safety Training Academy expand its training facilities at a new, larger site in Bastrop County. This grant, along with \$63,020 in matching funds from the academy, will allow the department to move its training facility and add a burn site for live-fire training. Pictured, back row from left, are Jayme Myrick, academy training specialist; Mary Teague, EMS program director, holding her daughter, Pearl Teague; Nicholas Teague, fire chief; Philip Marquette, assistant fire chief and deputy director; Margaret D. 'Meg' Voelter, LCRA board member; Roderick Emanuel, Bluebonnet Board Vice President/Vice Chairman; Sherry Murphy, Bluebonnet's Giddings-area community representative; and Elizabeth Ehlers, LCRA regional affairs representative. Front row, from left, are Robbie Myrick, Ella Teague and Noah Teague.



MIDDLE PHOTO: A \$17,478 grant will help the Round Top Library Association build an ADA-accessible deck and outdoor classroom. This grant, along with \$6,000 in matching funds from the Round Top Library Association, will create a welcoming outdoor environment for educational programs, wellness activities and community events. Pictured, back row from left, are Shirley Hernandez-Ross, association board member; Ashlee Lyons, Round Top Family Library programs coordinator; Kyle Merten, Bluebonnet's Brenham-area community representative; Amy Bone, association vice president; Chasidy Nowicki, Bluebonnet intern; Pam Langford, association board member; Craig Moreau, library executive director; Margaret D. 'Meg' Voelter, LCRA board member; Byron Balke, Bluebonnet Board Assistant Secretary/Treasurer; Matthew L. 'Matt' Arthur, LCRA board member; Keelia Ritch, library manager; Suzanne Ellis, association board member; Sherry Murphy, Bluebonnet's Giddings-area community representative; Stacie Brown, library executive coordinator; and Kate Ramzinski, LCRA regional affairs representative. Front row, from left: summer campers Adalynn Lyons and Evie McCullough.



ABOVE: A \$24,500 grant will help the South Lee County Volunteer Fire Department purchase a 6x6 semi-tractor truck. The grant, along with \$10,500 in matching funds from the department, will allow the VFD to replace its 32-year-old former military truck with a newer, more reliable and efficient vehicle. Pictured, from left, are Dustin Schneider, VFD secretary; Mark Fears and Ethan Miertschin, VFD firefighters; Sherry Murphy, Bluebonnet's Giddings-area community representative; Delvin Boriack, VFD firefighter; Russell Jurk, Bluebonnet Director; Kaleb Oltmann, VFD firefighter; Margaret D. 'Meg' Voelter, LCRA board member; Cole Mertink, VFD firefighter; Kyle Jenke, VFD fire chief; Curtis Oltmann, VFD firefighter; Michael Krause, VFD treasurer; Matthew L. 'Matt' Arthur, LCRA board member; and Kate Ramzinski, LCRA regional affairs representative.

The future of hearing aids has arrived

NEW! HORIZON IX HEARING AIDS

FOX NEWS

NEWSMAX

BUSINESS INSIDER

Forbes

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

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

It's the new Horizon IX hearing aid.

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

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



What makes them so special?

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

What do Horizon IX hearing aids have to offer?

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

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

Where can I get Horizon IX?

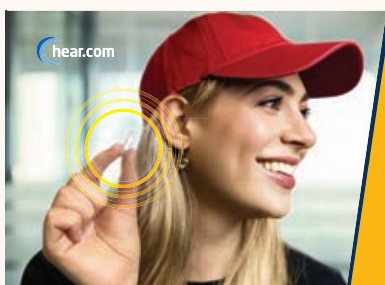
So far, hear.com has helped more than 540,000 Americans enjoy life with better hearing, thanks to Horizon IX. **Now, it's your turn!**

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

START HERE!



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





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



History in a Box

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

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

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

Of course there were skeptics.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beefy Burgers

Flavorful ingredients and fun twists are sure to add sizzle

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

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

Green Chile Burger

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

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

MAKES 4 BURGERS

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



Italian Stallion Burgers

BEVERLY NUBER
COSERV

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

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

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

MAKES 2 BURGERS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

\$500 WINNER

Juicy Stuffed Grilled Beef Burgers

MONICA ANDREWS
PEDERNALES EC



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



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

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

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

MAKES 4 BURGERS

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

OODLES OF NOODLES DUE AUGUST 10

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

UPCOMING: CHEESECAKE DUE SEPTEMBER 10





Mediterranean Mushroom Burger

GAIL NUBER
COSERV

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

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

Pro Burger Moves

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

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

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



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

—Vianney Rodriguez

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

MAKES 4 BURGERS

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SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



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

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

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

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

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Ale as Old as Time

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

BY CHET GARNER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Know Before You Go

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

AUGUST

8

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

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

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

9

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

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

14

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

15

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

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

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

16

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

21

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

22

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

23

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

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

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

29

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

30

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

SEPTEMBER

5

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

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

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

6

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

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

TCP Submit Your Event

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

TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

Discover the Rich History of the Old Indianola Trail



Yorktown Historical Museum
144 W. Main, Yorktown, Texas

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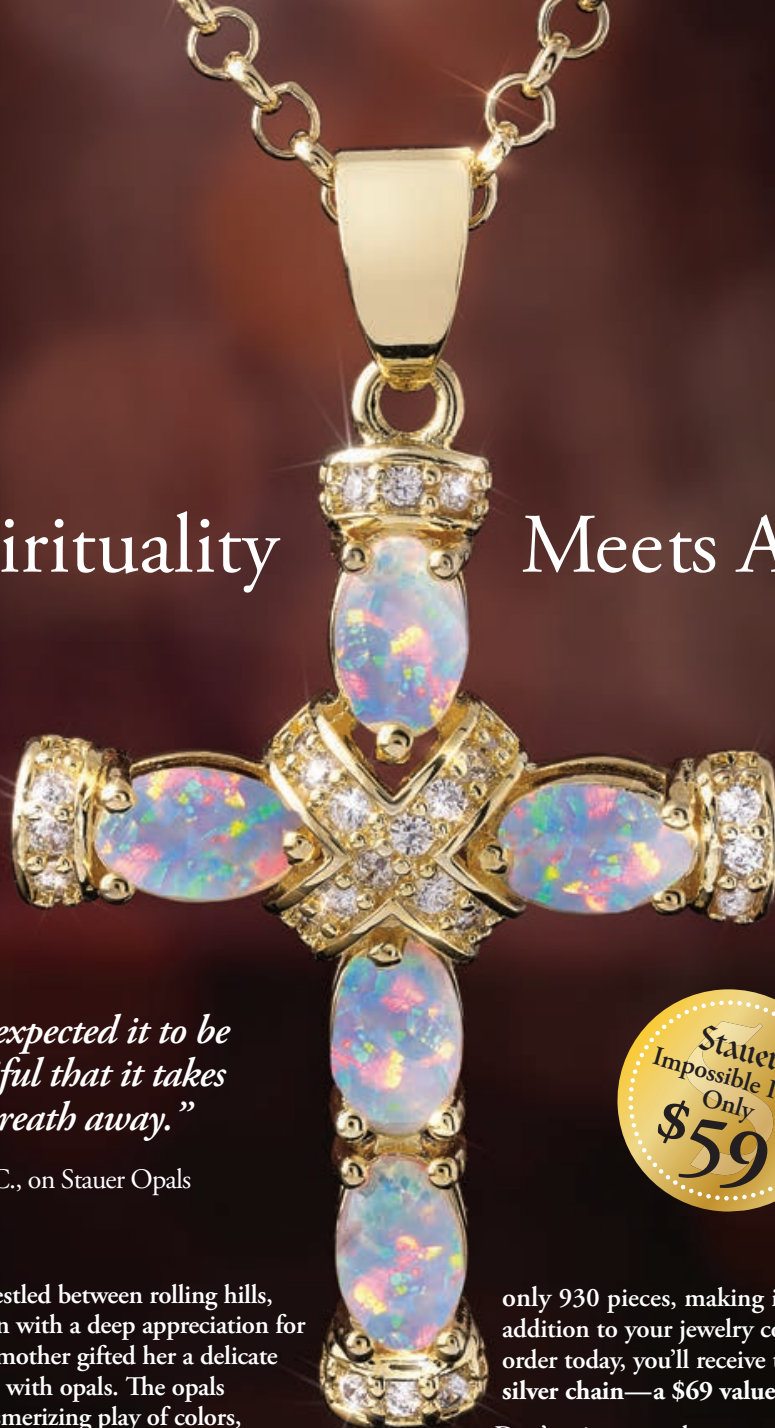
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Spirituality Meets Artistry



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

— Kaya C., on Stauer Opals



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

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

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College Life

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

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 CASSIE RAPPOLEE
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

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

2 MARY BORDEN
VICTORIA EC

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

3 NANCY JANE MCMILLAN
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

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

4 KATY JAMESON
LAMAR EC

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



Upcoming Contests

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



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



A Muddy Path to Texas

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

BY PAIGE EATON
ILLUSTRATION BY TARA JACOBY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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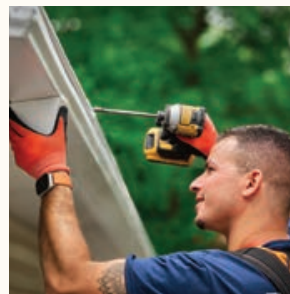
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No Clog Guarantee	✓	✗	✗	✗



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