

HE UNEARTHED
ANCIENT TOOLS

SAM RAYBURN TURNED ON
TEXAS' LIGHTS

I'D DO ANYTHING
FOR MOM

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

MAY 2026

Trickle Your Fancy

The arid West
is awash, if you know
where to look

**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16

community phone









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Forbes, January 2026



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Alford, 84, Navy Veteran



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May 2026



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06 Wet Texas

Beyond and below the tumbleweeds and cactuses, oases beckon out west.

Photo essay by Erich Schlegel

He Kept Digging

Thanks to an archaeologist's persistence, we have 20,000-year-old evidence of Texans.

By Pam LeBlanc

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Mother's Days
By Cayt Calhoun

ON THE COVER

Under a relentless sun, Lake Nueces on the Nueces River nurtures an inviting ecosystem.

Photo by Erich Schlegel

ABOVE

Archaeologist Michael Collins examines Gault artifacts with Angela Davis, center, and Jon Lohse in 1999.

Courtesy Kenneth Garrett

Appreciating Our Moms



TCP Contests and More

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST
Campfire Favorites

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS
Rodeo

RECOMMENDED READING

Why We Like Bats, our May 2006 feature story, looked closely at the creatures that still captivate Texans. Download the May 2006 issue at TexasCoopPower.com.



ENTER ONLINE



Alex Dal Santo and his mom, Karen.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Moms are ...

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: **My favorite Texas saying is ...**

The sun has risen and the sun has set, but we haven't left Texas yet.

EUGENE NEESE
BOWIE-CASS EC
LINDEN

All hat and no cattle.

SISSY CARTER
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
GATESVILLE

If you don't like the weather, wait a minute.

TANYA STEELE
BLUEBONNET EC
BURTON

The bigger the hair, the closer to God.

DEBRA MILLS
NUECES EC
PORT ISABEL

Bless your heart.

KIT VAUGHN
PEDERNALES EC
LIBERTY HILL

Visit our website to see more responses.

IN CELEBRATION OF MOTHER'S DAY, May 10 this year, we ask readers to finish the sentence "Moms are ..." TCP's writers and editors also share their thoughts.

Lifelong learners—always reading, changing and growing.

—Samantha Bryant, communications specialist

The first person you want to call when something big happens, and you'll miss her when you can't.

—Alex Dal Santo, assistant production manager

Psychic. Mine can sense how I'm feeling even from miles away.

—Erin Sinclair, communications specialist

Frequently undervalued for their enormous contributions. They do so much.

—Claire Stevens, communications specialist

Family historians, capturing (usually unflattering) smartphone pics at family functions.

—Kelly Tran, communications specialist

Eternally selfless.

—Tom Widlowski, associate editor

MARCH 2026 Charted Waters

“Happy to see Pam LeBlanc is still adventurous. And Erich Schlegel’s photos artfully capture her adventure.”

STEVE HARDY
PEDERNALES EC
CEDAR PARK



ERICH SCHLEGEL

Matters of Funding

Overall, a great article, but there is a quote saying that rebuilding the Mason courthouse “didn’t cost taxpayers a dime” [*In All Their Glory*, March 2026]. At least \$9.6 million of funding from the state wasn’t from the tooth fairy.

Larry Strong
CoServ
Lewisville

Shouldering the Load

I loved the story of Tyler Schlickeisen, tow truck driver [*Currents*, March 2026]. It’s great to see stories on unsung heroes like him.

I do have to disagree with his comment, “Nobody likes to see a tow truck driver.” When I have needed them—on Interstate 35—my two tow truck drivers were heroes.

Frank Graham
Navarro County EC
Hill County

A Rash of Trash

Back in the ‘60s, Lady Bird Johnson championed a “Don’t Be a Litterbug” campaign, sending us children home with “litter bags” to hang on the handle of our roll-down car windows [*A Tidy Revolution*, March 2026]. Then in the ‘80s, the “Don’t Mess With Texas” slogan was a fun and effective refresher course.

Now we desperately need a new anti-litter crusade because Texas roadways have grown increasingly trashy.

Cheryl Irish
Bluebonnet EC
Bastrop

Ancestry and ‘TCP’

My hobby is genealogy and family history. Two articles in March gave enough information about people for me to see if I am related to them.

I discovered Tad Lucas [*Currents*] was the wife of my 10th cousin. Jennie Reynolds [*In All Their Glory*] is my 10th cousin. Our common progenitors date from the 1500s and 1600s.

Judith Tavares
Nueces EC
Corpus Christi



RYAN OLBRYSH

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

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Ocotillo reaches out from a bluff overlooking Devils River State Natural Area, north of Del Rio. The river, part of the Rio Grande watershed in Southwest Texas, is one of the most pristine in Texas.


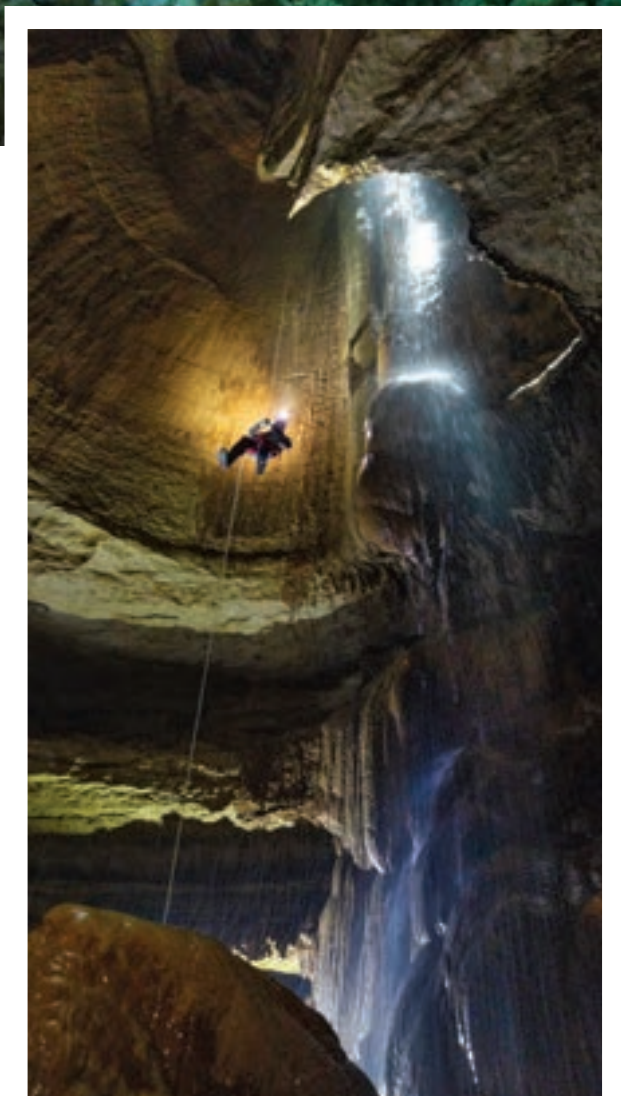
An aerial photograph of a wide river with turquoise water, winding through a lush green landscape. The river is surrounded by dense vegetation and small trees. In the background, there are rolling hills under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A branch with green leaves hangs from the top left corner of the frame.

PHOTO ESSAY BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

WET TEXAS

Beyond and below the
tumbleweeds and cactuses,
oases beckon out west



Drive west on Interstate 10 from the Hill Country, through beautiful desert mesas and mountains, and there's no water in sight, right?

Not unless you know where to look. Rivers, springs and even waterfalls are hidden across West Texas.

Most folks know about the Rio Grande, which cuts through the Big Bend, and you may even know of San Solomon Springs, which fills the 1.3-acre pool in Balmorhea State Park.

But you probably don't know about the 70-foot waterfall 143 feet below a cow pasture. It's managed by the Texas Cave Management Association and accessible only by wetsuit-clad expert cavers with advanced vertical rope training.

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, also known as the Lower Canyons, flows down from Big Bend National Park toward Amistad Reservoir near Del Rio—the most remote part of the state. The 83-mile canoe trip takes a week and requires extensive river paddling knowledge and wilderness experience. Help, if needed, can be days away, but only if you carry a satellite phone.

On the other hand, anybody can paddle and swim just west of the Hill Country. Here, the crystal-clear Nueces River is nothing like the muddy flows that empty into the Gulf of Mexico. You'll find swimming pool-clear water in Lake Nueces as well as upstream, in a swimming hole in the town of Camp Wood named for its depth in feet, Quince (15).

It's easy to take water for granted. But seeing and experiencing water in West Texas brings an appreciation of one of our state's most important and sensitive resources. ■

TOP The Horseshoe Lake room sits beneath the dry, barren landscape of West Texas in the Caverns of Sonora, where the humidity is always about 98%.

ABOVE Austin cave expert Ethan Perrine descends a rope alongside a 70-foot underground waterfall in a cave below a West Texas cow pasture.



Blue Hole is a spring-fed swimming spot near the headwaters of the Frio River north of Leakey on the private property of the H. E. Butt Foundation Camp. Blue Hole reaches a maximum depth of about 30 feet.



Divers join a school of fish in San Solomon Springs at Balmorhea State Park, home of the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool. The springs have flowed out of the Chihuahuan Desert about 135 miles southwest of Midland for thousands of years.



LEFT The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River is the most remote part of the state. The heart of this stretch of the Rio Grande is an arduous 83 miles called the Lower Canyons, which offers spectacular scenery but requires extensive wilderness experience.

BELOW A campsite along the Devils River, which begins in northwest Sutton County and flows south for 94 miles, emptying into Amistad Reservoir on the Rio Grande.





Thanks to an archaeologist's persistence, we have 20,000-year-old evidence of Texans

COURTESY KENNETH GARRETT

BY PAM LEBLANC

He Kept Digging



COURTESY KENNETH GARRETT

TOP Michael Collins stands with several chert cores—often called flint—recovered from the Gault site along Buttermilk Creek.

ABOVE Artifacts found at the Gault site by a collector in 1990 include two stones with hatch marks etched onto their surface.

Last summer, Michael Collins gazed over a tree-lined valley near Florence, his eyes scanning the grassy field where he once led excavations that changed our understanding of how and when humans first populated North America.

“I describe it as coming back to an old friend,” Collins said during that visit to the Gault archaeological site, about 50 miles north of Austin.

Collins sat beneath pecan trees for a picnic that day with others who had worked at Gault and filmmaker Olive Talley, whose 2025 documentary, *The Stones Are Speaking*, explores the site’s significance—and Collins’ role in saving it.

In the 1980s and ’90s, the film explains, artifact hunters lugging buckets and shovels flocked to the 30-acre plot of land, where a creek flowed and an abundant supply of flint rippled through a rocky ledge. They paid \$25 a day to search for scrapers, projectile points and knives made by Native Americans and walk away with whatever they found. They left behind empty holes and mounds of dirt.

By taking those stone artifacts, collectors were destroying much of the history that they held. “It’s like looking at a book, tearing a picture out and throwing away the rest of the book,” said Elton Prewitt, a longtime Texas archaeologist.

The Gault story could have ended there—as a pay-to-dig site whose significance disappeared along with the ancient implements once scattered in its soil. But that’s not what happened.

In 1990, collectors digging at Gault found something unusual: two stones with hatch marks etched onto their surface. Word got back to the University of Texas, where the discovery perked the ears of Thomas Hester, then the director of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, and Collins, then the lab’s associate director.

The two drove to the site, where more etched stones turned up—along with a Clovis spearpoint, named for a Paleo-Indian archaeological site near Clovis, New Mexico, where scientists had discovered distinctive human-made tools more than 11,000 years old.

Most archaeologists long believed that humans first funneled into North America via a land bridge that formed between Russia and Alaska across what is now the Bering Strait about 13,000 years ago. The so-called Clovis culture was thought to be the oldest in the Americas.

Because Clovis tools had been found at Gault, Collins knew the site was important. But at the time, nobody knew just how significant.

Over the next few years, the land changed hands, and the pay-to-dig operation ended. When the property’s new owners, Howard and Doris Lindsey, stumbled onto some mammoth bones, Collins again got the call. He struck up a friendship with the Lindseys, and in 1998, Collins convinced them to allow a three-year lease so he could conduct an excavation.

That dig turned up more artifacts from the Clovis period, but Collins ran out of time. He filled in the pit and left when the lease ended, convinced the site held even more significance.

Collins stayed in touch with the Lindseys, and in 2007 they agreed to sell him the land. (They still live nearby and keep an eye on the property.) Collins and his wife, Karen, used their own money to buy the site, then immediately donated it to the nonprofit Archaeological Conservancy, where it would be protected in perpetuity.

Collins began a meticulous, long-term excavation project. The people who had come here thousands of years ago made tools, discarded some and lost others, leaving behind a record. The researchers uncovered thousands of artifacts, plus a human-made surface believed to be the floor of a structure at least 15,000 years old.

At first, not everyone believed what the stones were saying. Some pushed back on the idea that humans had been in Central Texas since before the Clovis people. But using a technique called optically stimulated luminescence, which



COURTESY GAULT SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Collins with volunteers at the last part of the Gault site to be excavated. Currently there are no open excavation sites on the property and no digs planned.

tells scientists when sediments were last exposed to light, Collins and his team proved that some of the most deeply buried artifacts were indeed older than Clovis.

Today, most archaeologists agree that humans began to move into North America before the land bridge at the Bering Strait opened, using boats to cross the water and spread down the coast.

Evidence discovered through Collins’ excavations show signs that humans have come to the water at this Texas site—what is now nearby Buttermilk Creek—for 20,000 years.

That arguably makes it the oldest demonstrably inhabited site in the Western Hemisphere.

“What’s important about this site is what we’ve learned about ourselves from it,” says Tim Brown, a board member at the nonprofit Gault School of Archaeological Research, which Collins founded. “This site has been so important in the rewriting of the book about the very early story of man in the Americas.”


And it may have more stories to tell.

Collins, now in his 80s, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in 2022, and the main excavation pit was covered in 2016. But just 3% of the land here has been excavated. New technologies may help future archaeologists unravel even more of its past.

“Walk across this soil,” Brown says. “If you don’t get a humble, awestruck reaction, there’s something wrong. And without Mike, we’d have no idea.” ■

Dig In

To book a guided tour, visit the GSAR website, gaultschool.org.

 Scan the QR code or visit gaultfilm.com to learn more about *The Stones Are Speaking* and for streaming options.

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

THE

S

Rural libraries quietly anchor lively community connections. Inside them, the next chapter of small-town life is being written.

Story by Addie Broyles
Photos by Sarah Beal

A century ago, life in our rural communities was simpler. Family, church, school and community formed the foundation for small towns across the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative region.

In the heart of those towns were libraries — quiet places where generations gathered to read, learn and enjoy the quiet company of a good book.

The towns have changed, but the libraries remain, evolving to offer everything from high-speed internet and digital media to classes, meeting spaces and community programs. Books still fill the shelves, but neighbors fill the rooms.

Whether historic landmarks like the Dr. Eugene Clark Library, built in Lockhart in 1899, or relative newcomers like the 16-year-old Garfield Library in Del Valle, libraries remain the beating hearts of the communities around them.

Technology in the digital age has expanded libraries' reach, opening new avenues for patrons.

"We are service workers at heart," said Brenham librarian Tammy Murphy. "If there's a need, we'll try to fill it."

Like many librarians in the Bluebonnet region, Murphy started her career as a teacher before she landed her dream job at the library.

Other area librarians echo Murphy's comments. Small-town libraries act as bridges between schools and social services and area residents, said Jessi Akins, director of Giddings' public library.

Libraries keep people connected, Akins said, and basic digital services, like teaching someone how to pay bills online, help people operate in a tech-reliant world. Many rural residents who work remotely use community library facilities for video conference conversations or to host virtual work meetings.

Libraries serve as learning hubs but are also places where people of all ages gather to express creativity



GIDDINGS



GARFIELD MOBILE LIBRARY

ABOVE: Giddings Public Library director Jessi Akins shows one of her favorite novels, 'Klara and the Sun,' by Kazuo Ishiguro.

INSET ABOVE: Garfield Library's bookmobile makes designated stops for cardholders in its region.

RIGHT: Eileen Sisk, a patron and member of the weekly puzzle club at Luling's J.B. Nickells Memorial Library, works on a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle.



Continued on Page 20

STORIES

LIVE



BELLVILLE



BRENHAM



SMITHVILLE



LULING

TOP: Lochlan Wolfe, 6, plays a reading game at the Nancy Carol Roberts Memorial Library in Brenham.

ABOVE: Henrietta Lopez is part of a knitters group that meets each week at the Smithville Public Library. The group often knits hats for hospital patients.

CENTER: Troy Cummings, 3, and sister Sariah Cummings, 5, are among many children served by Bellville Public Library's reading programs.



LOCKHART

Dr. Eugene Clark Library

- 217 S. Main St., Lockhart
- Open 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday; 8:30 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday. Closed Sunday.
- 512-398-3223
- clark-library-lockhart.org & lockhart-tx.org/page/library_home

Founded in 1899, the Clark Library is Texas' oldest continuously operated library housed in its original building. Named for the medical doctor who bequeathed \$10,000 for its books and construction, the red, two-story brick building was designed by architect T.S. Hodges, who also designed Caldwell County's castlelike jail. Speakers, theatrical productions, recitals and concerts were hosted there for decades. In 1956, performance space gave way to books and community activities.

WHAT SETS IT APART? In addition to its history, the library was expanded in 1996 to include the Masonic Temple next door, now known as the library's annex. The annex's third floor is where Lockhart's City Council meets. The library's interior has been used as a set location for a few movies, including "The Faculty" and "Secondhand Lions."

PROGRAMS: In addition to storytime, children's reading hours, adult craft nights and teen and youth events, the library hosts summer reading and "Fun at the Library" programs. There are several computers with high-speed internet for public use and a reading machine for visually impaired patrons.

HOW TO GET A LIBRARY CARD: Provide proof of residence; free for Lockhart residents or property owners; \$10 annual fee for those living outside Lockhart.

MORE LIBRARY PROFILES
Pages 18-21

Nancy Carol Roberts Memorial Library

- 100 Martin Luther King Jr. Pkwy., Brenham
- Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday.
- 979-337-7201
- cityofbrenham.org/library

The library, which opened in 1901, was the brainchild of The Fortnightly Club, a women's book club established in the late 1800s. Originally housed in the Giddings & Giddings Bank, the library became official with a collection of 1,000 books. It moved to its current location and was renamed after a \$33,000 donation from the parents of Nancy Carol Roberts, who died in a 1971 vehicle accident. The library has been expanded several times, most recently in 2016.

WHAT SETS IT APART? The library has a professional video-recording studio, sponsored by Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, with equipment — including a green screen — where patrons can make videos and podcasts. It also hosts a monthly reading hour complete with animals from the local shelter that are up for adoption. A monthly family law clinic is open to anyone.

PROGRAMS: Brenham library patrons can choose from many classes and groups, including teen trivia nights, writing clubs, sewing classes and a monthly teen book club. The highlight might be storytime with Louise Barbour, aka Miss Lou Lou, a master storyteller and musician who has been a library staple for more than 50 years. The library lends Chromebooks and offers



At an adoption event at the library, Annabelle Ransdell, 7, meets Harley, a female dog from the City of Brenham Animal Shelter. Harley was adopted in February.

Wi-Fi hotspots to those needing internet access for school or work. Grants awarded in the past decade have allowed the library to digitize microfilm from the Brenham Banner-Press.

HOW TO GET A LIBRARY CARD: Free for Texas residents age 5+; photo ID required; parent/guardian signature required for kids under 16.

Smithville Public Library

- 507 Main St., Smithville
- Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday and Wednesday; 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday; 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday.
- 512-237-3282, Ext. 6
- smithvillepubliclibrary.org

Founded in 1931 with 500 books courtesy of the Smithville Woman's Club, the first library was on the second floor of a Main Street building. The library changed locations several times until the city assumed control, and a new building opened at Sixth and Main streets in 1971. That space has been expanded twice and today holds 62,000 materials, according to the library's website.

WHAT SETS IT APART? Even though Smithville's library provides technology tools, Wi-Fi access and computer/internet training, it stays loyal to the old-school due-date stamp for borrowed books. "Even though we have a digital record, it's more efficient for us," said head librarian Judy Bergeron. The stamp serves a second purpose: helping the library track books that are not being checked out.

NOTEWORTHY: You'll also find a thriving garden and outdoor classroom, as well as an on-staff peer support specialist who provides mental health and social work support to community members. That resource is courtesy of a grant from the St. David's Foundation Libraries for Health program.



From left, Judy Bergeron, Cheryl McNeil, Judy Grundy and Rita Brayley exercise in a weekly seated yoga class.

PROGRAMS: With book clubs, domino clubs and reading times for visitors of all ages, Smithville's library is a community cultural hub. Patrons can take language classes or enjoy a presentation on birds of prey from a local wildlife ecologist. Supporters have also helped spearhead a new coloring and activity book, "Smitty & Friends Explore Smithville."

HOW TO GET A CARD: Apply in person with a valid photo ID showing current address; children under 16 can receive cards for internet access if a parent/guardian provides an ID; membership is free to Bastrop County residents.

Giddings Public Library and Cultural Center

- 276 N. Orange St., Giddings
- Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday.
- 979-542-2716
- giddingspubliclibrary.org

The library was opened in 1920 by the Giddings Study Club, which started with donated books. It was originally housed in the post office, then in a nearby drugstore. The library was purchased by the city in 1938. Today it is in a former Brookshire Brothers grocery store building.

WHAT SETS IT APART? Jessi Akins, the Giddings Public Library director, took the helm of this 19,000-square-foot facility in 2020. Known as “the biggest little library in Texas” by many, the library produces a quarterly magazine, *Between the Lines*. It maintains cultural exhibits, including a Native American artifact collection donated by Arnold Smith, a former longtime Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative employee and utility pole digger, and the Hilton Lee Smith Collection, recognizing the Giddings-born baseball star of the 1930s and '40s who reached the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2001. The library also has board games and a genealogy room filled with local yearbooks and other research materials.

PROGRAMS: Every September the library hosts the Texas Word Wrangler Book Festival, featuring Texas authors. It also hosts



Area resident Larry Teinert says he comes to the Giddings library to do research and genealogy work.

children’s storytime, a monthly community book club with in-person discussion, and other interactive activities such as a puzzle swap.

HOW TO GET A LIBRARY CARD: Provide a valid Texas photo ID with current address (or other proof of address); free for Giddings residents, \$2 for Lee County residents, \$10 for other Texas residents; card is valid for two years; \$2.50 replacement fee.

Garfield Library

- 5121 Albert Brown Drive, Del Valle
- Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday
- 512-247-7371
- dvllibraries.org

Established in 2010, the Garfield Library is the second in the East Travis Gateway Library District, formed in 2006 to serve surrounding communities. The district’s first library in

Elroy opened in 1983. The libraries offer books to residents of Del Valle, Elroy, Creedmoor, Pilot Knob, Garfield, Cedar Creek and other nearby locations.

WHAT SETS IT APART? The building dates to 1892, starting as a school. Del Valle ISD closed the school in 1966. The building sat vacant on the north side of busy State Highway 71 until it reopened as a library in 2010. The library offers public computers and notary services, as well as a mobile library outreach program that includes a bookmobile and home delivery for cardholders who live within 10 miles of Elroy.

PROGRAMS: In addition to a monthly book club for adults, this library hosts a Spanish-language Babies and Books hour on Fridays, a chess club and seasonal arts and crafts, such as tie-dyeing. The Book-a-Librarian program can schedule a one-on-one session to help visitors learn how to use a particular tool or service.

HOW TO GET A LIBRARY CARD: Government-issued photo ID required; card valid for two years; minors ages 5-17 can have joint accounts with parent/guardian.



Raquel Reyna drives the bookmobile, delivering books, magazines, new parent information and even plant seeds to designated locations. Details are at dvllibraries.org.



Charlotte McDaniel, 3, shows off books she’s interested in at the Bellville Public Library.

SIGN UP FOR SUMMER

Summer reading programs start soon, and nearly every library hosts the community-engagement programs that are popular ways to encourage children to read when school is not in session. Participants are asked to keep a log of their summer reading and number of pages read, to help libraries track the number of program participants and end the summer with a celebration.

Bellville Public Library

- 12 W. Palm St., Bellville
- Open 1:30-5:30 p.m. Monday; 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday.
- 979-865-3731
- bpltx.org

Established in 1886 during a boom period in Austin County after the railroad reached the town. The library was built a year before the county courthouse.

WHAT SETS IT APART? With one of the largest collections of Austin County historical records, the library draws genealogical researchers. It is also one of the few community libraries that offers free membership to anyone in the state. Longtime librarian Jenell Zettel said that for many decades the library has had a memorial program allowing people to designate a book or books in someone's honor. "Some people will buy a specific book in the person's honor, or, if they give money, we go and buy a nice set of books with their names in it," Zettel said.

PROGRAMS: In addition to summer reading and children's reading programs, the library offers the popular Kanopy streaming service and in-person events, like magic shows.



Children's librarian Jill Wicklein reads to a group of children.

HOW TO GET A LIBRARY CARD: ID and proof of address required; free for any Texas resident over 18; one card per address.

J.B. Nickells Memorial Library

- 215 S. Pecan Ave., Luling
- Open 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday; 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday; 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesday-Friday; 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday.
- 830-875-2813, Ext.1
- cityofluling.net/214/Public-Library

The library was established in 1969. Now, every Tuesday evening, visitors can find engaging adult programming, from community poetry to an adult coloring club.

WHAT SETS IT APART? Teen- and kid-focused activities are on Thursdays, movie nights on Mondays and folks socialize over games on Friendly Fridays. Librarian Dayton Bailey said the consistent programming keeps people coming back. "I have a second-grader and a fifth-grader playing Life here right now," he said on a recent Friday.

PROGRAMS: Patrons can read e-books via the Libby app and explore a genealogy collection overseen by Caldwell County's Genealogical & Historical Society, which is headquartered in the



Part-time clerk Maggie Rodriguez, right, helps a library patron check out a book.

library. Around the holidays, the library hosts recipe and cookie swaps, and new craft activities are planned for this year.

HOW TO GET A LIBRARY CARD: Requires valid ID and proof of current address; free for Luling residents and those living within 20 miles.

Continued from Page 16

and find a sense of community. Lego clubs, sewing classes and writing groups are among the many ways Bluebonnet-area libraries attract residents.

Head librarian Judy Bergeron has worked at the Smithville Public Library for 18 years and has seen more than just the transition from a physical card catalog to a digital one.

"It's not uncommon to hear that we're not going to need libraries because nobody reads anymore, but we are so much more than just books," Bergeron said.

Some libraries create teen programming to attract young people interested in everything from crafts to filmmaking. In Brenham, a teen advisory board helps the library develop classes and activities for young people. Smithville's library offers teen-oriented activities like tie-dyeing and driving-test prep as well as open art studio time for elementary-aged kids after school, followed by a teen video game night.

"It's like that old Cicero quote," Bergeron said, speaking of the Roman philosopher and statesman. "If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." ■



The Round Top Family Library inside a beautiful restored church which was originally built in the 1920s.

Round Top Family Library

- 206 W. Mill St., Round Top
- Open 1:30-5:30 p.m. Monday; 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday.
- 979-249-2700
- lovetoread.org

Opened in 2000, the almost entirely privately funded library has become a pillar of this corner of Fayette County, with a robust slate of programs that includes one of the largest free after-school programs in the county, according to Katey Crowley, Executive Director. Monday through Thursday, a bus ride from the local school to the library is provided for students who participate in activities. The library also hosts classes during the day for homeschoolers in subjects including sign language, quilting and theater. A new children's wing is scheduled to open in 2026.

WHAT SETS IT APART? With five buildings sitting on around four acres, this isn't just a library — it's a community center. The library started as a modest children's library in the historic Rummel Haus, which dates to 1872. The library has grown and now the Main Library, located in the restored church, allows the library to offer activities for adults and children alike, including mahjong classes, community fitness groups and a lecture series, to name a few.

PROGRAMS: Classes for adults include mahjong, yoga, a monthly garden workday, computer instruction, senior gaming parties and social hours. There are also book clubs, lectures, author visits and — for more than 20 years — a fundraiser chili cook-off every January and an annual gala at the Windy Knoll Ranch venue in Round Top.

HOW TO GET A LIBRARY CARD: Valid ID and proof of address required; free for residents.

FIND MORE ONLINE

Find librarians' must-read recommendations, little free libraries, a photo gallery and more at bluebonnet.coop/libraries.

CAPITAL CREDITS

More than \$11.9 million returned to members as credit on May bills*



Bluebonnet members will see a credit on their May bills. That 'capital credit' represents revenue, above the costs of operating the cooperative, that is returned to members every year.

BEING A MEMBER of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative has its perks, including getting money back. In the last 10 years, Bluebonnet has returned \$78.59 million to members through capital credits.

Members will see a capital credit on their May electric bills. Capital credits represent your share of the cooperative's margins. Instead of sending profits to outside shareholders, as for-profit utilities do, Bluebonnet returns those dollars to the members who helped create them.

That's because when you receive electric service from Bluebonnet, you're more than a customer — you're an owner. Each year the cooperative allocates margins to members based on how much electricity they used and how long they have been part of the co-op. The credit you see on your bill reflects that ownership.

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

**This amount has been corrected from the printed version after the error was discovered following magazine printing.*

OFFICE CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Monday, May 25, 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 on-line, on the mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708 (select option 2 when prompted).



NEXT STOP: WASHINGTON

Bluebonnet-area students earn spots on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, a weeklong leadership trip to the nation's capital



From left, Sofia Robles of Bastrop, Emma Meachen of Giddings and Emory Burton of Lockhart were selected to represent the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative area in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour program. Burton and Meachen will travel to Washington, D.C., this summer, with Robles serving as the alternate. Sarah Beal photo

By Connie Juarez

THIS SUMMER, two Bluebonnet-area students will get a front-row seat to where history is made: Washington, D.C.

Emma Meachen and Emory Burton have been chosen to represent Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative for the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, a weeklong leadership program that introduces students to the inner workings of American government.

Meachen, a junior at Giddings High School, and Burton, a homeschooled senior from Lockhart, were selected from a competitive pool of 15 applicants. Sofia Robles, a junior at Bastrop High School, was named alternate and will join the tour if one of the others is unable to attend.

Along with a weeklong, all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital, each student will receive a \$1,000 educational scholarship from Bluebonnet.

The Youth Tour, scheduled for June 14-22, gives students a chance to experience the nation's capital while learning about civic engagement and public service. Participants visit landmarks and historic sites, tour the U.S. Capitol and attend educational sessions hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and Texas Electric Cooperatives, the program's sponsors.

Vice president of her class, Meachen, 17,

is active in Student Council, Interact Club, Beta Club, the Lee County swim team and prom committee. Her favorites, however, are FFA and Giddings High School BBQ Club. "FFA gives me a chance to give back through service projects, and BBQ Club lets me be creative in the kitchen," Meachen said.

She would like to attend Texas A&M University and apply to the Mays Business School. She hopes to one day help run her father's trucking company. "Watching my dad succeed inspired me. I want to be part of that and eventually help grow it myself," she said.

Meachen said her sister played a big role in her decision to apply for the trip. "My sister Ruby went on Youth Tour last year, and hearing about all the incredible experiences she had made me want to apply. She told me to take lots of pictures because there's so much to take in."

Burton, 18, is involved in 4-H and varsity theater at Lockhart High School. She also plays cello in her church youth band, volunteers in her church nursery and serves as president of the Caldwell County 4-H Council.

Raising and showing lambs is what Burton enjoys most. "It's incredibly rewarding. Seeing the results of months of hard work is fulfilling," she said.

She plans to attend Tarleton State Uni-

versity this fall to study sports medicine, with a long-term goal of opening a wellness practice. Her interest in the field stems from a volleyball injury in freshman year that required extensive rehabilitation. "I want to help young athletes get the care they need so they don't go through what I did," Burton said.

Robles, 17, looks forward to supporting the program as the alternate representative. She is a junior at Bastrop High School and is involved in 4-H, pastoral council, National Honor Society, cheerleading, band and softball. Her older sister, Mayra, was a Youth Tour winner in 2020, inspiring Robles to apply.

Meachen and Burton said they are most looking forward to experiencing government firsthand. "I turn 18 next year and will be able to vote. I want to understand how our government works so I can make informed decisions and be a responsible voter," Meachen said. Burton added, "I want to represent our area responsibly and take full advantage of everything the experience has to offer."

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, which has more than 50,000 alumni, including CEOs, elected officials, and countless other business and community leaders. ■

Join us
at the

ANNUAL



MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Dear Bluebonnet member:

Pursuant to its Bylaws, the Annual Membership Meeting of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be held Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at The Silos on 77, 1031 County Road 223, Giddings, Texas 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 by members in attendance in person or by proxy.

Three director seats, District 3, District 4 and District 6, are up for election. The incumbent directors — Roderick Emanuel, District 3, Bastrop County; Russell Jurk, District 4, Lee, Milam and Williamson counties; and Byron Balke, District 6, Austin, Colorado and Fayette counties — filed their nominations before the deadline, qualified and were unopposed. The incumbent directors will be elected by general consent in accordance with Article III, 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

2026 Annual Meeting Agenda

May 12, 2026

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

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

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with the QR code
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for

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& EASY
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BY MAY 5

or attend the
Annual Meeting on May 12

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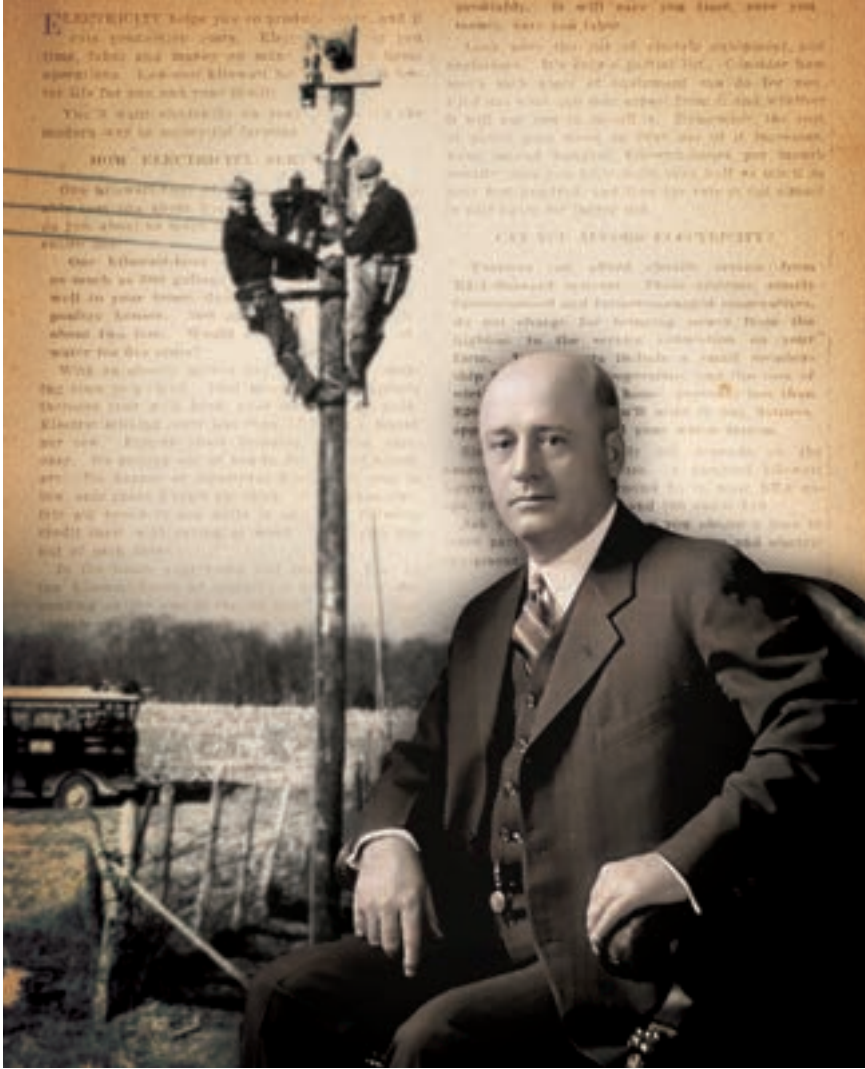
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Power and Light

Sam Rayburn helped pull rural Texans out of the dark

BY JESSICA RIDGE

BEFORE THE PASSAGE OF THE Rural Electrification Act nearly a century ago, in the depths of the Great Depression, most U.S. farmsteads made do in the dark while their neighbors in cities a few miles away experienced a higher standard of living. Investor-owned utilities didn't deem it profitable to run miles of power lines across the countryside.

Without electric lights and appliances, farm families cooked over smoky woodstoves, read and studied under kerosene lamps, and performed laborious agricultural chores by hand.

By the mid-1930s, change was afoot, thanks in large part to a dedicated and diplomatic Texan intent on the empowerment of rural communities. The REA,

enacted 90 years ago this month—May 20, 1936—made available low-cost federal loans to rural landowners who had banded together in hopes of threading the countryside with electric lines.

Electric cooperatives were born, starting with the first, Bartlett Electric Cooperative in Central Texas.

Before the REA, only around 10% of U.S. farms had electricity. By 1950, the federal financing the legislation shook loose had helped electrify nearly 80% of farms. Today, more than 900 co-ops power rural and suburban residents.

A 1960 Department of Agriculture video describes electricity as “magic from nowhere and everywhere” and details “the drab, colorless days” before

its rural availability. The video colorizes a black-and-white sequence, demonstrating the life-changing force of electricity coursing through the home of the fictional family it depicts.

Similar transformations, effected many times across prewar rural landscapes nationwide, were largely enabled by the efforts and advocacy of U.S. Rep. Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn, who cosponsored the REA legislation with Nebraska Sen. George Norris.

Rayburn, born in Tennessee, moved with his family to an unelectrified Fannin County farm, in North Texas, when he was 5, in 1887.

He attended grade school through law school in Texas and served in the Legislature before catapulting to Congress in 1913, where he set records as the longest-serving speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives—17 years over 10 sessions spanning the 1930s to 1960s, accrued piecemeal during his near-half-century tenure.

Rayburn didn't forget his former neighbors. In his papers, housed at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, a March 1938 thank-you on Fannin County Electric Cooperative letterhead notes the co-op's progress in installing its first 110 miles of line, thanks to a \$100,000 REA requisition.

In July 1940, Farmers Electric Cooperative sent its own note to Rayburn, chiefly attributing to him the REA's “birth and success.” Included was a precursor to this magazine, a monthly newsletter called the *REA Co-op Message*, which included a run-down of the co-op's recent annual meeting, a list of new members and updates about members' appliance purchases.

Readers learned that member W.C. McKay had installed an electric range at home. “Naturally,” the newsletter reads, “Mrs. McKay is very happy.”

She wasn't alone. Thanks to Rayburn, life in Co-op Country was changed forever. ■

Mom's Favorites

Recipes perfected and passed down through the years

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

This salad smells like home. Growing up, my mami had a beautiful garden where she harvested the juiciest cucumbers and tomatoes. Sliced, tossed with panela and drizzled with her homemade dressing, I could eat this salad every day. I'm thrilled to share a dish my mami and I still enjoy together.

Tomato Cucumber Panela Salad

2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
2 medium cucumbers, diced
1 package panela cheese (16 ounces), cubed
½ cup olive oil
2 tablespoons white vinegar
2 tablespoons lime juice
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons ground black pepper
1 bunch cilantro, finely minced

1. Place tomatoes, cucumbers and panela in a bowl.
2. In another bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, lime juice, salt and pepper until well blended. Stir in cilantro.
3. Pour dressing over salad, stir to combine and store in fridge until ready to serve.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Frida Kahlo's Ensalada de Calabacin.





Lasagna

DANI DECESARO
TRINITY VALLEY EC

DeCesaro's Norwegian mom married an Italian man and perfected this recipe alongside her sister. It has become a wonderful memory for the entire family.

- 3 quarts plus 1/3 cup water, divided use**
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon salt, divided use**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 9 lasagna noodles**
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter**
- 1 pound ground beef**
- 1/4 cup minced onion**
- 1/4 cup dried parsley flakes**
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic salt**
- 2 tablespoons flour**
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano**
- 1 can evaporated milk (12 ounces)**
- 1 can tomato paste (12 ounces)**
- 1 pound mozzarella cheese, sliced into 18 pieces**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
- 2.** Bring 3 quarts water to a boil. Add 1 tablespoon salt and oil. Cook noodles according to package directions. Drain and place noodles on paper towels.
- 3.** Heat butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add ground beef, onion, parsley and garlic salt. Cook, breaking up ground beef with spoon.
- 4.** When fully cooked, reduce heat to simmer, and stir in remaining 1 teaspoon salt, flour, pepper and oregano until well combined.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



\$500 WINNER

Mom's Fresh Apple Bars

DIANE KORUS
KARNES EC



Korus' mom enjoyed these bars in the afternoon with a cup of coffee, and I have to agree that these babies are the ultimate afternoon snack. Packed with fresh apples and a sinfully sweet streusel topping, these bars are a crowd pleaser.

STREUSEL

- 1/2 cup flour**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, softened**

BARS

- 2/3 cup shortening**
- 2 cups light brown sugar**

- 2 eggs, room temperature, lightly beaten**
- 1/4 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 cups flour**
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 1/2 cups peeled and chopped Granny Smith apple (about 1 large or 2 medium apples)**
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans**

- 1. STREUSEL** In a bowl, combine flour, sugar and butter. Mix until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
- 2. BARS** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
- 3.** In a large bowl, beat shortening and brown sugar on medium speed until smooth. Add eggs, salt and vanilla and mix until combined, scraping down sides as needed.
- 4.** With a spatula, stir in flour, cinnamon and baking powder until well combined. Gently fold in apples and pecans.
- 5.** Spread batter into prepared pan and sprinkle with streusel. Bake 35-40 minutes or until the top is golden brown and a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

SERVES 12

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

CAMPFIRE FAVORITES DUE MAY 10

For our October issue, we're eager to pass around treats and meals to munch on while gathered around the flames. Fire off your best recipe for a chance at winning \$500.

UPCOMING: CRANBERRY HARVEST DUE JUN 10



RECIPES CONTINUED

5. Add evaporated milk and remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water. Cover and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in tomato paste until well combined.
6. Layer three noodles on bottom of prepared pan. Spread $\frac{1}{2}$ meat sauce over noodles, then layer on 3 more noodles and top with $\frac{1}{2}$ of cheese. Add remaining 3 noodles. Top with remaining meat sauce and remaining cheese.
7. Bake about 30 minutes, until cheese is melted and begins to brown.

SERVES 8

Yankee Cake

CHUCK BURGESS
HEART OF TEXAS EC

Burgess' mom was from Texas, his dad from New York. His dad's family shared this cake recipe with Mom. It's now a family favorite and sure to be your new



favorite too. This Yankee Cake is a cinnamon sweet surprise sprinkled with sugar and nuts.

- 2 cups flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided use
- 7 tablespoons ($\frac{7}{8}$ stick) butter, softened, divided use
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped walnuts or pecans

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together flour, salt and baking powder.
3. In a large bowl, beat 1 cup sugar and 5 tablespoons butter at medium speed until light and fluffy. Reduce speed to low and add egg, heavy cream, milk and vanilla. Mix until combined, scraping down sides.
4. Add flour mixture and mix until combined.
5. Spread batter evenly into prepared pan. Sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon sugar plus cinnamon and nuts. Dot with remaining 2 tablespoons butter.
6. Bake 25–30 minutes, until edges are lightly golden and a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

SERVES 12

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Have your "Go Kit" packed and ready.

Create defensible space around your home.

Identify two evacuation routes in case one becomes compromised.

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tfsweb.tamu.edu/PreventWildfire

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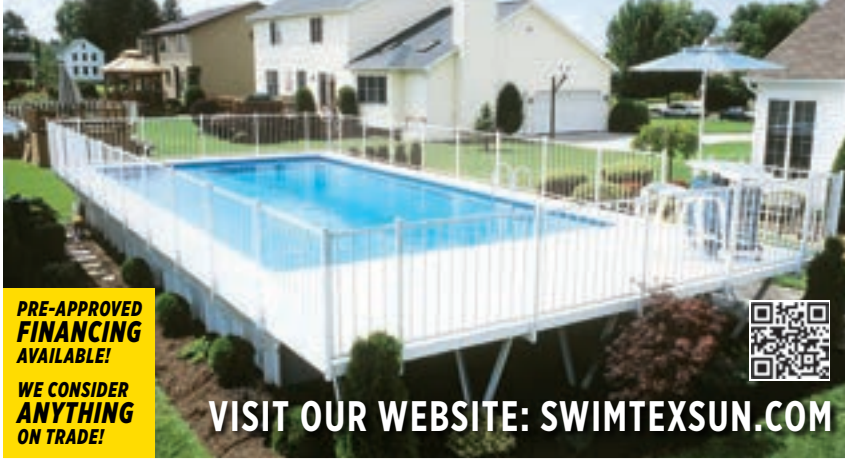
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

South Poles

Panna Maria museum shows off Polish heritage in a big way

BY CHET GARNER

LOTS OF FOLKS know Texas for its Mexican flavors, its German beer halls and its Czech kolache. But mention our Polish history, and most won't know where to start, even though Texas is home to the oldest permanent Polish settlement in America.

I'll admit, before visiting the small community of Panna Maria, I didn't grasp how deep our Polish roots run. But fortunately, I found the Polish Heritage Center ready to educate me and the rest of Texas.

Panna Maria (population about 40) sits quietly on the rolling plains of Karnes County about an hour southeast of San Antonio.

The entire community revolves around two blocks. On one sits the picturesque Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, which dates to 1855. And on the next is the stately Polish Heritage Center, which dates to 2021. I have visited more than my fair share of small-town museums, but nothing could prepare me for what I found inside this state-of-the-art facility.

After signing my name in the guest book next to visitors from the Polish capital of Warsaw and beyond, I stepped into an immersive experience that transported me to 1854, when a group of Polish immigrants held Mass under the oak trees just outside the church and decided to call Panna Maria home. The museum went on to tell the story of the culture, faith and struggles of this community, including its influence on modern life in Texas.

The history unfolds through hand-embroidered clothing, family photos, tools and letters carried across the Atlantic. It's so well done that it would impress visitors in any big city, making it all the more amazing in tiny Panna Maria.

Texas is a patchwork of cultures, accents and traditions. Thanks to the Polish Heritage Center, one of our more overlooked threads is finally getting the spotlight it deserves. ■

ABOVE Chet stops at a painting in the Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria showing the first Catholic Mass after immigrants reached the site on Christmas Eve in 1854.

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

MAY

8

Brenham [8-9] Maifest, (979) 451-0621, brenhammaifest.com

Round Top [8-10] Fine Art Festival at the Compound, (281) 236-3821, bit.ly/fafatthecompound

9

Nacogdoches Scottish Highland Games and Festival, (936) 371-3072, nacscottishgames.com

Palestine Mother's Day Lunch Train, 1-855-632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net

Stonewall Williams Creek (Albert) School Open House, (830) 685-3321, historicschools.org

14

Giddings [14-16] Lee County Fair, info@leecountyfairtx.com, leecountyfairtx.com

15

Columbus [15-16] Magnolia Days Festival, (979) 732-8385, magnoliadays.org

Grapevine [15-17] Main Street Fest, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

16

Fredericksburg Classic Truck Show, (830) 990-4433, pecangrovestore.com

Greenville Knights of Columbus Mayfest, (903) 455-9062, donvinson75402@gmail.com

17

Fredericksburg Thomas Pandolfi, fredericksburgmusicclub.com

21

Grapeland [21-23] Salmon Lake Park Gospel Bluegrass Festival, (936) 687-2594, slpbluegrass.com

Kerrville [21-June 7] Folk Festival, (830) 257-3600, kerrvillefolkfestival.org

22

Granbury [22-24] Memorial Day Weekend Festival, (682) 936-4550, granburysquare.com

Kerrville [22-24] Texas Masters of Fine Art & Craft Show, (469) 223-4162, texasmasters.com

23

Chappell Hill Artwalk on Main Street, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

Hondo Heritage Hike, (830) 660-6908, bit.ly/hondohike

Levelland [23-25] Panhandle Cutting Horse Association Show, (325) 518-1424, panhandlecha.com

29

Corsicana Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

JUNE

5

Fort Worth [5-7] Hadestown, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

Yoakum [5-7] Tom Tom Festival, (361) 293-2309, yoakumareachamber.com

San Antonio [5-August 1] Fiesta Noche del Rio, (210) 226-4651, fiestanochesa.com

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Upper Antelope Canyon, fine art giclee print, 2025, 12" x 19", Bobby Greeson



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Caught Napping

If you find yourself catching a catnap, needing 40 winks on the fly or sawing logs around your siblings, you're in good company. Usually, if you snooze you lose. But these readers won't be losing sleep anytime soon.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 PAUL LAUDER
FARMERS EC

"After a hard morning competing in the livestock show at the State Fair of Texas, a young competitor and her pet take a well-earned rest."

2 REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

"A number of neighbors went to the CF Ranch in Clarksville to help with their cattle drive. Following the drive, this young lady laid claim to a few bales of hay."

3 SHAWN DEAN
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

"My granddaughter took this of her horse's new colt."

4 GABRIELLE ETHINGTON
PENTEX ENERGY

"Some friends raise kunekune pigs on a small farm outside of Nocona. I photographed this cutie napping in the front pasture area. It looks so happy."



Upcoming Contests

- RODEO** DUE MAY 10
- TAILGATING** DUE JUN 10
- RIDE THE RAILS** DUE JUL 10



ENTER ONLINE

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



Mother's Days

They give a lot to their kids, but sometimes moms need a little bit back

BY CAYT CALHOUN

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA GODEASSI

A PANG OF FEAR HIT as the gurney wheeled me away from my family. Months of testing brought me here, and within the hour, I would become my mom's kidney donor.

Until that point, it struck me as odd when people asked if I was afraid. Why? I love her. That's enough. And it was enough to bat away intrusive thoughts as the anesthesia took hold.

Those fleeting moments of anxiety paled in comparison to years of uncertainty.

I understood the crushing weight of losing a parent—my dad died before I turned 2. Between his death and the deterioration of my mom's health, I tumbled through my adolescence fearing I'd lose *both* my parents before adulthood.

My mom received the IgA nephropathy

diagnosis when I was 10. At the time, I didn't understand how to pronounce it, let alone grasp the complexities of an inflammatory kidney disease that has no cure and can be fatal.

But chronic illness doesn't give you time to understand. It creeps in and presents itself with a slew of medications, revolving appointments and the enormously draining toll of it all. Despite everything, she expended energy she didn't have on my behalf. It seemed effortless at the time. I know better now.

Back then it was easier to accept things at a blithe glance—because being anything other than willfully ignorant meant facing a hard reality. I convinced myself that her active role in my life meant all was well.

But I couldn't pretend anymore. For a decade, I watched the quality of my mother's life ebb and flow until her kidney function dwindled to a measly 19%. She had two options: dialysis or surgery. With no known viable donor, she was forced to choose the former.

It had been us against the world for as long as I could remember. What if she lost the ability to do the things she loved? What if I lost her? The scenarios I conjured in my mind felt suffocating.

Watching how nightly dialysis altered her life was heartbreaking. At that point, I didn't have a choice. The voice in my head said the least I could do was try to give back to the person who gave me everything. So when co-workers, professors, peers and doctors asked if I was comfortable with donating a kidney at 20, I said yes emphatically. I don't believe it was selfless. I selfishly wanted more time with my mom.

Luckily, we got it.

We're now approaching the 10th anniversary of the donation, and I'm beyond grateful for the opportunity to have been her donor. There may be a world out there in which I wasn't qualified. There isn't a world where I wouldn't do anything for my mom. ■



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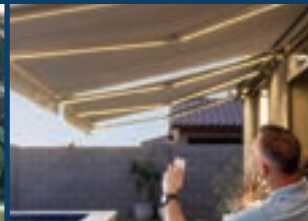
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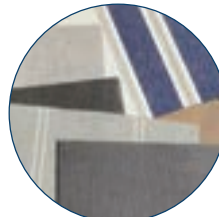
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