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CHEESES PLEASE

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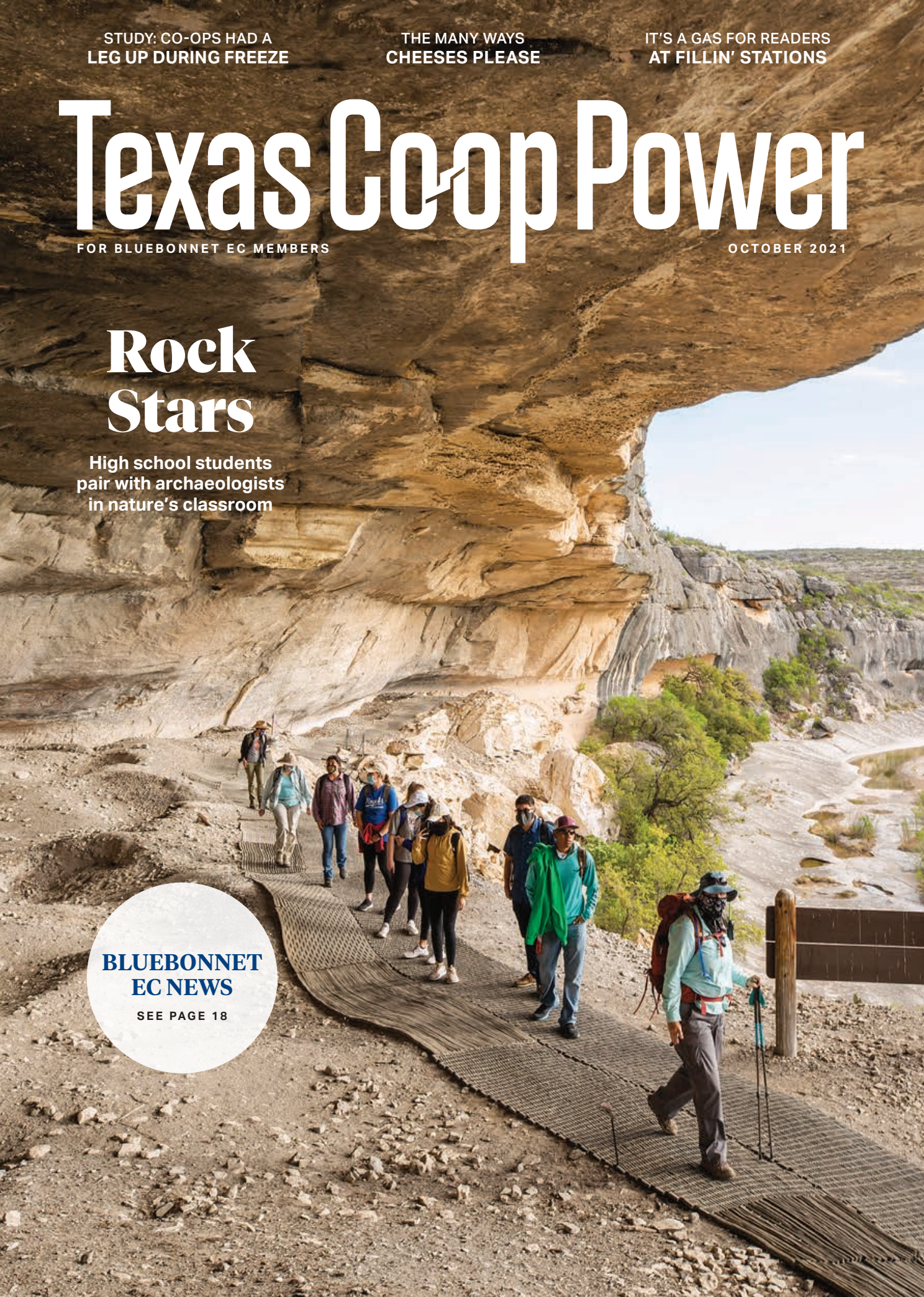
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Rock Stars

High school students
pair with archaeologists
in nature's classroom

**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

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October 2021



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08 Learning Rocks

Comstock high school coursework includes rock art research with Shumla archaeologists.

*By Pam LeBlanc
Photos by Erich Schlegel*

Co-ops Shine

When 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power in February, consumers found the co-op response better than that of other power providers.

By Joe Holley

ON THE COVER

Karen Steelman of the Shumla archaeological research center leads students through the Fate Bell Shelter.
Photo by Erich Schlegel

ABOVE

A drone's view of Pedernales Electric Cooperative infrastructure.
Photo courtesy Pedernales EC

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A Stacked Deck

BRYAN BERG HOLDS THE WORLD RECORD for tallest free-standing house of cards—25 feet, 9⁷/₁₆ inches—which he built October 16, 2007, at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas. A year earlier at the fair, he built the Dallas skyline as fairgoers waited in line for hours to watch.

Berg, who has an architecture degree, used more than 1,000 decks of cards, which weigh about 140 pounds, just for the tallest spire in his world-record tower.



America's Lifelines

Electric cooperatives, which celebrate National Co-op Month in October, own and maintain 42% of the electric distribution lines that serve American communities. That equates to 2.7 million miles of line, including 340,774 miles in Texas.



October 1

National Homemade Cookie Day

Find the best recipes by searching "cookies" at [TexasCoopPower.com/food](https://www.texascooppower.com/food).

NBA LAUNCHES IN TEXAS

The NBA came to Texas 50 years ago, when the San Diego Rockets migrated to Houston. A vibrant San Diego aerospace industry inspired the team name, and it fit perfectly in Houston, home of the Johnson Space Center.

The Houston Rockets lost their first game, 105-94, to the Philadelphia 76ers on October 14, 1971, at Hofheinz Pavilion.

“If sad, eat cookie. If still sad, talk to doctor. Sounds serious.”

—COOKIE MONSTER



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I WISH I WAS THERE WHEN ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town. Below are some of the responses to our August prompt:

It's so hot ...

I saw the squirrels picking up nuts with a potholder.

PATSY CHEEK
VIA FACEBOOK

Lizards are crawling in the fire to get under the shade of the skillet.

GENE OSBORNE
WOOD COUNTY EC
HAINESVILLE

I had to get in my hot tub to cool off.

CHARLES BAUCH
VIA FACEBOOK

Popcorn's poppin' in the field.

LINDA HIGGS
VIA FACEBOOK

My chickens lay boiled eggs.

KAREN ALLISON
NUECES EC
ROBSTOWN

You catch precooked fish.

TERRI HARVEY
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents online.

Eggs-pert Students

LEAVE IT TO FIRST GRADERS to hatch solutions to a fun challenge: Can you drop eggs without breaking them?

Students at Dillman Elementary School in Muleshoe, with help from employees and a bucket truck from Bailey County Electric Cooperative, proved it's possible.

The kids protected raw eggs with methods that included exoskeletons of straws, boxes with packing, parachutes and even jars of peanut butter—ideas they concocted with their parents, teachers and fellow students. Then technician Matthew Edwards of Bailey County EC went up about 25 feet in the bucket and dropped dozens of them, one at a time. About half of the eggs landed intact.

“Their creativity was amazing,” says Letti Tovar, Dillman principal. “Some of those things I would have never thought of.”



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ERIC W. POHL

Easing Life's Baggage

“Day 1 Bags needs to be in every state. Such an incredible project that has helped so many. I love the idea of supporting high school foster kids.”

MICHELE JAQUISS
VIA FACEBOOK

Goin' to the Chapel

I want to thank Chet Garner for his Hit the Road articles. One especially intrigued me: *Where Artistry Congregates* [March 2021].

My husband, Humberto, and I decided to visit the painted churches for our 50th wedding anniversary. Following Chet's lead, we grabbed kolache and started our tour in Dubina.

The shrines were glorious. We were so reminded of our visits to Rome in all that splendor.

Nelda Martinez
Medina EC
Hebbronville



Hunter is a world changer [*Easing Life's Baggage*, August 2021].

TANYA RENEE
PANIAGUA
VIA FACEBOOK



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Sparkling Review

I enjoyed learning about John S. Chase in *An Unlikely Blueprint* [July 2021]. Gems like this make me appreciate *Texas Co-op Power* and keep me looking forward to the next issue.

Les Meads
Guadalupe Valley EC
Saint Hedwig

No Stopping McVea

Opposing teams had no solution for Warren McVea's speed and agility [*Ground-breaking Cougar*, Currents, July 2021]. It was a couple of years later that the old Southwest Conference started recruiting Black athletes. Neither McVea nor the University of Houston got their just due for opening the door for Black athletes in Texas.

Phil Dolezal
Trinity Valley EC
Sugar Land

Limitless Appreciation

Parent Imperfect [June 2021] spoke to me on a personal level. It reaffirmed the feeling of embarrassment most of us have as adolescents that lovingly grows into a limitless appreciation for that “imperfect parent” as we go through adulthood and realize we also are the imperfect parent.

Nadalynn Jenkins
HILCO EC
Glenn Heights

TCP WRITE TO US
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Austin, TX 78701

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

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LEARNING ROCKS

Comstock high school coursework includes rock art research with Shumla archaeologists

BY PAM LEBLANC • PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

The Maker of Peace sculpture stands outside the Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site visitors center.



LEFT Comstock student Sammy Isaac reaches into a hole where grains or paint dust were stored some 2,000 years ago inside the Fate Bell Shelter. ABOVE Students found a projectile point while working with Shumla archaeologists at Seminole Canyon.

ON A BREEZY APRIL MORNING, five Comstock high school seniors clamber around boulders and hop across a stream in Seminole Canyon on their way to inspect some of the finest examples of rock art in the world.

After a 20-minute hike, they reach the foot of Fate Bell Shelter, a curved hollow midway up a cliff wall that's big enough for a game of baseball. The students, along with science teacher Kayme Tims and chemist Karen Steelman, scramble up to the rocky amphitheater, where they can see faded red, yellow and black images painted there more than 2,000 years ago.

"This place is so special, and it's not just because of the rock art," says Steelman, science director of the plasma oxidation lab at Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center in Comstock, explaining that ancient fiber mats, sandals and rabbit furs have been found in the rock shelters

that line this canyon in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands. "This is one of the best places to study hunter-gatherers. We can see more than stone tools. We can see how they lived."

The rock shelters—more than 300 have been identified in Val Verde County—also serve as valuable classrooms for students in their final year of high school in Comstock, a tiny, one-school town of fewer than 300 people about 30 miles northwest of Del Rio. Every senior in the Comstock Independent School District—there are seven for the 2020–2021 school year—works alongside archaeologists and chemists as they study the region's renowned rock art.

In the past few years, students from the school have helped build a plasma oxidation instrument that scientists will use to extract organic material from paint flakes so they can date the rock art. Previous classes have labeled rock art murals, measured painted images, entered data into computers and learned how to use imaging software. In short, the program, introduced in 2013 and structured as an interdisciplinary internship, allows the students from a small school in South Texas to learn sophisticated archaeological analysis and physical sciences from the pros.

The class not only helps Shumla, a nonprofit organization founded more than 20 years ago to study and document rock art in the region, but also gives the students hands-on experience in a working laboratory.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, class looks a little different this year. Steelman and Tims meet with the students two or three times a week via Zoom. Besides studying various styles of rock art and learning how ancient people used animal fat and crushed minerals to make paint, the students study plants that were used for food, clothing and shelter. They learned, for example, that cochineal, a type of scale insect that lives on prickly pear cactus, was used to make red and orange dyes.

Science teacher Kayme Tims leaps across a stream in Seminole Canyon.

“I have two goals: first, teach some chemistry using the archaeology of the Lower Pecos as a framework. Second, teach students an appreciation for the amazing cultural archaeology that’s right in our backyard,” Steelman says.

That plan is working. At Fate Bell Shelter, the students use a smartphone app called DStretch to photograph the artwork and then enhance its color so the images are more clearly visible.

“I think it’s pretty cool that it’s right here in our backyard,” says Sammy Isaac, 18, of Comstock as the images jump into focus.

“Can you imagine painting something and it lasting that long?” Steelman says as the students point out features of the Lower Pecos River style artwork—anthropomorphic figures with outstretched arms, holding bundles of what look like darts. “These were master artists; they were good.”

SCIENTISTS AT SHUMLA recently helped secure National Historic Landmark status for the rock art in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands, one of the most important archaeological regions in the world, according to French prehistorian Jean Clottes.

And last year they completed comprehensive documentation of 233 rock art sites for the Alexandria Project, their effort to preserve these oldest “books” of painted texts in North America.

Together Steelman and Tims have taught successive groups of Comstock seniors about concepts from pigment analysis to radiocarbon dating. The educators say they hope the basic chemistry knowledge will give students an edge in college and an appreciation of the cultural importance of where they live.

“I hope they realize what we have here, that it’s unique; they grew up somewhere with significance,” Tims says.

Back in the Fate Bell Shelter, the students gather in front of the faint outline of a figure, one hand holding what looks like a bundle of sticks. They note that some of the figures’ hair looks like it’s standing on end—a characteristic known as piloerection that has various interpretations.

At one point, the five students line up in front of one section of the mural, laughing a little as they re-create a scene on the wall depicting five figures, one with its arms reaching



skyward. Experts don’t know for sure, but some believe paintings like this represent spiritual or religious beliefs.

“The rock art tells stories about family, religion and past events,” says Courtney White, 18, of Del Rio. “When I found out about it, I learned more respect for the people who made it. What they painted was heartfelt. What was important to them should be important to me.”

After 45 minutes of exploring the Fate Bell Shelter, the group climbs down and hikes another mile along the rugged creek bed, scrambling through underbrush, hopping over streams and climbing up smooth rock to another shelter, known to scientists as 41VV75. This site, Steelman tells the students, has been used for more than 8,000 years, although the images painted on its walls are half that age, according to radiocarbon testing. The students explore the site, noticing fibers from ancient mats made of plants. A few look down the canyon, talking about what it must have been like to live here.

Only a fraction of the rock art in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands has been radiocarbon-dated. “That’s one thing students are helping me with—developing a labora-



'The rock art tells stories about family, religion and past events. When I found out about it, I learned more respect for the people who made it. What they painted was heartfelt. What was important to them should be important to me.'



TOP A student uses the DStretch app to photograph and enhance rock art. ABOVE Students in the Shumla research lab.

story at Shumla so we can do more research and study the ages of different styles of art and how [the style] may have changed through time," Steelman says.

After breaking for lunch next to huge boulders in the canyon, the students load up and head back to Shumla headquarters, housed in what was once a U.S. Border Patrol building in Comstock. There, they file into the lab to check out a plasma oxidation instrument built by the previous year's students. The instrument spans nearly an entire wall, its row of orangey-red lights reminiscent of the heating lamps used to keep fried chicken or pies warm at a fast-food restaurant.

But this \$83,000 piece of equipment, funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation, won't be used to warm lunch; Steelman and Lori Barkwill-Love, a college intern, will use it to extract organic material from dime-sized flakes of paint carefully obtained from rock art murals. That material will be sent to another lab for radio-carbon dating.

"The instrument is custom-built with all these parts, basically like Lego blocks," Steelman says. "It was the perfect opportunity for students to come into the lab and help."

This year's class will build on the work of last year's seniors. Before the school year ends, they will assemble a new electrode array for the plasma oxidation instrument in this world-class lab. The project requires scientific design as well as practical skills such as drilling through PVC pipe, threading copper wire through the piping and measuring twice so you only have to cut once.

And those are lessons that most students never get in high school. ■

TCP WEB EXTRA Find more photos with this story online and learn more about cochineal in *The Bugs That Make You See Red* from February 2019.



Co-ops Shine

When more than 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power in February, consumers found the co-op response better than that of other power providers

Pedernales Electric Cooperative workers endured 165 consecutive hours of subfreezing temperatures.

BY JOE HOLLEY

Members counted on Texas electric co-ops during the deep freeze

WE TEXANS CAN TELL TALES about weather extremes, usually a devastating tornado or a hurricane, a flash flood or a lingering drought. Occasionally we'll recall a bone-chilling West Texas norther or a Panhandle blizzard, but we have less experience with the vicissitudes of winter cold.

Until February 13, 2021. That's when a polar vortex smashed its way into the record books, disrupting lives and livelihoods and laying claim to being one of the worst natural disasters in Texas history. We'll be telling stories about this winter for years to come.

More than 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power during the storm, which was likely the most expensive natural disaster in Texas history, causing more than \$295 billion in damages. The official death toll stands at 210.

So how do Texans feel about their electricity providers' response to the unprecedented crisis? That's the question the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston asked 1,500 Texans served by the electric grid managed by the Electrical Reliability Council of Texas.

The answer? Consumers rated their electric cooperative's response better than did consumers of other power providers.

Survey results were clear. "Overall, electric cooperatives significantly outperformed their rivals in the eyes of their customers during the winter storm of 2021," the Hobby School concluded.

Some 52% of co-op members who lost power agreed that the power cuts in their area were carried out in an equitable manner. That's more than twice the positive response received by customers of investor-owned utilities operating in the state.

"Co-ops tend to be closer to their customers," said Kirk Watson, dean of the Hobby School when the study took place and a former state senator. "Those relationships matter when it comes to trust and even just giving the benefit of the doubt when times get rough. Also, my experience tells me that co-ops tend to communicate more routinely with folks, and of course that makes a world of difference in a crisis."

That valuable communication was noticed by co-op members.

"As a recent transplant to Fannin County, I just wanted to say how impressed I have been with your updates and communication this week," Joyce Buchanan wrote on Facebook. She's a Fannin County Electric Cooperative member who recently moved to McKinney from Ontario, Canada.

"They have been timely, informative and so helpful in letting us know what to expect from day to day, sometimes hour to hour."

The survey found that co-ops performed their

core functions better than the commercial utilities and consumers believed that co-ops were better able to respond to crises like the February storm than were other electric utilities.

Kathi Calvert is pretty sure she knows why. Calvert, general manager of Crockett-based Houston County EC for the past eight years, points out that the co-op's East Texas members were aware that co-op employees were right there with them, experiencing the same misery and hardships they were. They would not have known that about large, anonymous utilities headquartered who-knows-where.

They saw co-op employees leaving their own dark and powerless homes and making their way to work with several inches of snow and ice covering the ground, temperatures near zero. They saw bucket trucks in the community and linemen clambering up ice-encrusted poles.

She also made sure that when customers called in, they got their questions answered by a person—a member of their own community—even if the answer about such things as rotating outages may not have been what they wanted to hear. She had human resources and accounts payable employees—whoever was available—answering phones and keeping customers informed. She also made sure social media was providing the latest information.

"It was a team effort, a community-based effort," Calvert said. "That's why co-ops are trusted."

EVEN DURING THE STORM, co-op members expressed agreement with that sentiment. Brittany Brewer, a Fannin County EC member, posted this on the co-op's Facebook page February 18: "We are lucky to have such a transparent power provider."

Cameron Smallwood, CEO of United Cooperative Services, a Burleson-based co-op serving parts of North Texas, told Texas lawmakers a similar story during testimony before legislative committees in February. United not only prepared members in advance for the likelihood of debilitating winter weather, Smallwood explained, but the co-op used every means of communication available to keep its members informed.



They saw co-op employees leaving their own dark and powerless homes and making their way to work with several inches of snow and ice covering the ground, temperatures near zero. They saw bucket trucks in the community and linemen clambering up ice-encrusted poles.

Communications is “part of our DNA,” he said. “Our understanding is that customers from other utilities were watching our social media and information because they were lacking information [from their providers].”

State Rep. Shelby Slawson of Stephenville told Smallwood that she is a UCS member. “We’ve heard a lot about the importance of communication with the public. I want to openly commend you and United Co-op for the way you handled that,” she said.

Julie Parsley, CEO of Pedernales EC, reported to her board of directors a few weeks after life had pretty much returned to normal. She recalled that co-op linemen and other workers “were doing dangerous jobs in difficult conditions” during 165 consecutive hours of subfreezing temperatures. They were working 16-hour shifts in temperatures colder than Anchorage, Alaska. Information technology employees who had lost power at home worked out of their cars; member relations agents stayed in hotels close to PEC offices; and the co-op’s urgent team was on the job 24/7, dealing with snow, ice and mud even after the storm subsided.

Systems and equipment occasionally failed, “but the spirit and the resiliency of our employees surpassed that,” Parsley reported. “Our next step is to bring our systems up to the level of our employees, frankly.”

Less than one-fourth of co-op members rated poor or very poor how their co-op handled the rolling outages ERCOT required to reduce power demand. Well more than half of all other power providers’ customers rated their utility’s performance as poor or very poor.

So why did Texas’ 66 electric distribution cooperatives perform better than the municipal and investor-owned utilities? Those who conducted the survey—Watson, senior director and researcher Renée Cross, and Rice University political scientist Mark Jones—suggest that co-ops have built up a reservoir of trust among their members over decades of community-focused service.

“The customers of electric cooperatives are more likely



LEFT The iced lines of Rio Grande EC.
ABOVE A San Bernard EC crew works to restore power.

to believe their electric utility has their best interests at heart than do the customers of commercial electric utilities,” the report said, “and therefore ... are more likely to rate their electricity utility in a positive manner.” ■

TCP WEB EXTRA Find the complete Hobby School report with this story online.

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The Nissan Ariya will arrive in early 2022, starting at about \$40,000. The electric SUV, more upscale than its predecessor, the Nissan Leaf, will have a range of 223 to 310 miles. A virtual tour is at nissanusa.com/ariya-virtual-car



CHARGE *of the* EV BRIGADE

Major manufacturers are ready to roll out **the next generation of electric vehicles** as the ranks of Central Texas buyers grow

By Alyssa Dussetschleger

IF YOU THINK YOU'RE seeing more electric vehicles on the roads of Central Texas, your eyes aren't lying.

By mid-June this year, more than 52,000 electric vehicles — or EVs — were registered in Texas, and 63% of them are model years 2020 or newer, according to data from the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

Of the 14 counties where Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative provides power, 10,329 electric vehicles were registered as of August, according to data from the Texas DMV. That's a fraction of the cars and trucks registered in the area's counties, but the electric vehicle numbers are going to grow.

Teslas are the most popular electric vehicles in counties served by Bluebonnet: 5,179 are registered. Of those, slightly fewer than half are the popular Model 3 sedan, the most affordable Tesla at \$39,000. There are another 1,848 Tesla Model Y mid-sized

sport utility vehicles, which start at \$53,990, on area roads. The least common Tesla (750 are registered) in the region is the high performing S model, a luxury sedan starting at \$89,990.

Most popular after the Tesla models is Nissan's Leaf, a compact car that starts at \$27,400. There are 574 of them registered in the region. Next are Chevrolet Bolts, which start at \$31,000, with 474 registered in our area.

Plenty of drivers nationwide — 71 percent — say they would consider buying an electric

vehicle in the future, according to a national survey by Consumer Reports in 2020. Of course, the massive new Tesla manufacturing facility in eastern Travis County should have new vehicles rolling off the factory floor in a few months, which is certain to raise Central Texans' Tesla-buying fever.

Two owners talk Tesla

Jeff Nelson was 55 when he bought his first vehicle, an electric Tesla Model 3, in 2018. He got his driver's license just two



A Tesla charges at one of a dozen Tesla Supercharger stations at the San Marcos Premium Outlet mall along Interstate 35. The area also has EVgo and ChargePoint stations, which are both DC fast chargers for other types of electric vehicles. *Laura Skelding photo*

CURIOUS ABOUT ELECTRIC VEHICLES?

- Electric vehicle chargers in the Bluebonnet area, **page 20**
- All about charging, at home or on the road, **page 21**
- Battling 'range anxiety' — one EV driver's story, **page 22**
- Apps, websites to track down public chargers, **page 24**
- How to buy a Tesla in Texas, **page 24**



The Ford F-150 Lightning, left, is scheduled to arrive at Ford dealerships in spring 2022 and will start at \$39,974. It's the first all-electric, full-size pickup made by a major American manufacturer. Ford is taking pre-orders online or through dealerships now. The truck will have an estimated 230- to 300-mile range and Ford says it will have a generator that can provide back-up power for the home.

SEE MORE UPCOMING ELECTRIC VEHICLES, PAGES 22-23

years earlier.

The delay was tied to Nelson's lifelong vision impairment, but that changed in 2015 when he got bioptic lenses, specialized vision-enhancing telescopic lenses that attach to eyeglass lenses. The bioptics can magnify what is seen up to six times, according to the private practice Bioptic Driving USA.

Even though he had his license, before

2018, Nelson didn't need a car. He lived near his office in Austin and relied on public transportation or his wife to get around.

But three years ago Nelson and his wife, Taffy, moved into a new 2,500-square-foot home in the Whisper Valley subdivision in the Bluebonnet service area.

The development, on FM 973 just east of the Texas 130 toll road, has more than 200 single-family homes and 40 more are

under construction. The houses all come with solar panels and other energy-saving options such as geothermal infrastructure, energy-smart appliances and prewiring for garage-mounted electric vehicle chargers.

Nelson did his homework and decided the Model 3 best fit his lifestyle and driving needs. He bought a Tesla wall connector

Story continued on next page

WHERE TO CHARGE? AREA EV STATIONS

Looking for a place to plug in? PlugShare, a website and app that locates charging stations, shows more than 30 electric vehicle charging stations in Bluebonnet's service area. They include:

Bastrop: Bring your own Level 2 charging cord and connector to Basin RV Resort, 98 Texas 71, 2 miles east of intersection with Texas 21; \$10 per charging session

Brenham: One Level 2 charging station with two charging cords at City Hall, 200 W. Vulcan St.; Level 2 charging stations at Coach Light Inn, 2242 S. Market St., free and open to public; chargers at Holiday Inn Express, 2685 Schulte Blvd. and at Best Western Inn, 1503 U.S. 290 E. for hotel guests' use

Caldwell: One Level 2 charging station at Bud Cross Ford, 150 Texas 36 at U.S. 21 intersection, free and open to public 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday; 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday

Cedar Creek: Four Level 2 chargers for resort guests at Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort and Spa, 575 Hyatt Lost Pines Road (off Texas 71 W.); chargers installed through partnership with Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative

Elgin: Two Level 2 chargers at Austin Community College campus, 1501 U.S. 290, 2 miles west of intersection with U.S. 95; \$4-\$12 per charging session, based on time

Giddings: 8 Tesla Superchargers at CEFCO Travel Center, 3025 W. Austin St. (which is also U.S. 290) 2 miles east of intersection with U.S. 77; payment required based on usage, charging time up to 30 minutes

Manor: Two Level 2 Tesla chargers and 1 standard EV Level 2 charger (J-1772 connection) at Whisper Valley subdivision, 9400 Petrichor Blvd, at the Amenity and Discovery Center, free to the public; one Level 2 charger, free for residents of The Flats at Shadowglen apartment complex, 12500 Shadowglen Trace

New Ulm: Two Level 2 chargers for visitors and the public at The Vine wedding and event venue, 25642 Bernard Road, 8 miles south of Industry

San Marcos: 12 Tesla Superchargers at San Marcos Premium Outlets, 3939 S. I-35, payment required based on usage

Continued from page 19

to charge the car in his garage via a 220-volt plug (a standard household outlet is 120 volts) and a 45-inch tall lithium-ion battery to store electricity generated by his solar panels. The slim, rectangular 251-pound Powerwall, also made by Tesla, stores 13.5 kilowatt hours of power for use after the sun goes down or if backup power is needed. Nelson's wall connector cost \$500 and the Powerwall cost \$7,500 in 2018.

With his car's range of 300 miles on a full charge, and Nelson working mostly from home, he only charges his car once a week. His electric bill averages about \$40 a month, he estimated.

Deanna Bodine is another Bluebonnet member who drives a 2018 Tesla Model 3.

She lives in Bastrop with her husband and five children, and has been a Bastrop County resident and Bluebonnet member since 2001. She teaches music at Emile Elementary School in Bastrop. Before buying the Tesla, she drove a 2011 Kia Sorento. She bought her Model 3 online, she said, and had it delivered to the Tesla service center on Research Boulevard in Austin.

When Bodine moved into her current home in 2019, she equipped her garage with a 240-volt outlet — the type commonly used for electric ovens, dryers or RV plugs — to charge her EV. She usually charges her car at home, daily. Her mobile charger, which came with her car, can charge 21 miles of range in an hour.

Charging her Tesla hasn't made much of a noticeable impact on Bodine's electric bill. "Maybe \$20 to \$30, but I couldn't tell if it increased due to the heat or charging," she said.

Bodine has been satisfied with her Tesla and would gladly purchase another electric vehicle. She's not sure about the make and model, though. "The biggest factor will be nationwide charging ability," she said.

Get ready for a wave of new electric vehicles

Electric vehicles are rolling past niche status and into the mainstream, and almost every major car manufacturer will offer an electric model in the next few years.

Among those on the list are Toyota, Ford, BMW, Audi, Volkswagen, Hyundai, Honda, Porsche, Kia, Stellantis (which includes Fiat, Chrysler, Jeep and Maserati vehicles), Volvo, Mazda, Mitsubishi, Jaguar, Subaru, Land Rover, Mercedes and General Motors.

As more EVs are made and battery technology gets better, their prices will likely

Continued on page 22



Deanna Bodine plugs a charger into the back of her Model 3 Tesla in the garage of her Bastrop home using a 240-volt outlet, the type typically used for clothes dryers. Bodine says charging the car has little noticeable effect on her monthly power bill. *Laura Skelding photo*



Jeff Nelson uses a smartphone app to engage the automatic driving feature of his 2018 Model 3 Tesla to pull it out of his garage. When he moved into his home in the Whisper Valley subdivision

south of Manor, he had solar panels, a Tesla wall charger and a Tesla Powerwall installed. The Powerwall stores excess electricity generated by the solar panels. *Sarah Beal photo*

CHARGING 101: POWERING AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE

Chargers vary in type, voltage, connector type, speed at which they charge and what vehicles they can charge.

There are three levels of chargers: AC Level 1, AC Level 2 and DC Level 3 fast chargers (or Superchargers for Teslas).

Level 1 is the simplest and slowest. A specialized adapter plugs the car into a standard 120-volt outlet. (Standard household outlets are 120 volts.) That will give the car about 3-5 miles of driving range per hour of charging — very slow.

Most EV owners use Level 2 AC chargers at home or on the road. The Level 2 runs off a 240-volt outlet, the same type used to power most clothes dryers. It can power an electric vehicle three to seven times faster than the Level 1 charger — about 10-30 miles of range every hour. A Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member would pay \$3.44 to give a 2021 Nissan Leaf enough power to drive 149 miles.

A new 240-volt outlet and wall charger should be installed by a certified electrician or installer.



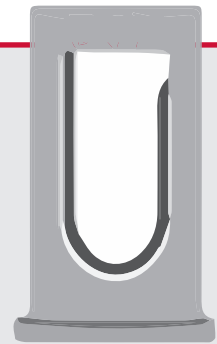
LEVEL 1

- 120-volt regular home wall outlet
- 40 miles from 8-hour charge



LEVEL 2

- 240-volt outlet commonly used for electric dryers and stoves
- 10-30 miles from 1-hour charge



LEVEL 3

- Tesla Supercharger or DC fast charger
- Tesla = 200 miles in 15 mins. Others = 180-240 miles from 1-hour charge

If you're looking for more juice, public charging stations are often equipped with powerful Level 3 chargers. A Tesla Supercharger, only for Teslas, can charge a Model 3 with 200 miles of range in 15 minutes. For most other electric vehicles, a Level 3 DC fast charger can provide 180 to 240 miles of range per hour of charging. Not every electric vehicle model can charge at Level 3, so check vehicle specifications.

Unless you drive a Tesla, there are two types of connectors for DC fast chargers,

and they are not interchangeable between vehicle models. Make sure you know which type you have or need.

Public charging, especially Level 3, often isn't free. Drivers may pay by the minute or by how much electricity they use. Prices can vary based on electricity cost and charging level.

Sources: epa.gov, energy.gov, [Alternative Fuels Data Center \(afdc.energy.gov\)](http://AlternativeFuelsDataCenter.afdc.energy.gov), fueleconomy.gov, consumerreports.org, [Kelley Blue Book \(kbb.com\)](http://KelleyBlueBook.kbb.com), tesla.com, myev.com

Continued from page 20

compete with gasoline-fueled vehicles, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Next year's electric models range from the \$29,990 MINI two-door, to the moderately priced \$39,990 Kia Niro EV, all the way up to the \$150,900 Porsche Taycan Turbo. Volvo has stated that by 2030, it would produce only electric vehicles. General Motors aims to offer 30 different EV models by 2025.

The first full-sized electric pickup from a major manufacturer, the Ford F-150 Lightning, is expected to hit showroom floors in mid-2022. The Lightning, which will start at \$39,974 according to Ford's website, looks similar to Ford's other F-150 trucks. There are no Ford Lightnings in area showrooms as of this publication's deadline, but you can reserve one online from your local dealership.

At its Bluebonnet service-area factory, Tesla and its CEO Elon Musk have said the company will make the newest Model 3 sedans, Model Y crossover SUVs and two new vehicles: the futuristic looking Cybertrucks, starting at \$39,900, and the big Semi trucks for long-haul commercial drivers, starting at \$180,000.

Manufacturers are touting many of the new EVs' increased ranges (the distance an electric vehicle can drive on a single charge) and affordability. Nissan's 2022 Ariya, an electric sport-utility vehicle, will retail for about \$40,000, according to an estimate from Consumer Reports. The Ariya will have a range of 300 miles on a single charge if the buyer chooses the "long-range battery" option.

U.S. electric vehicle sales could account for 25% to 30% of the new-car market in 2030, and as much as 50% by 2035, according to projections by IHS Markit,

Continued on page 24

And miles to go before I charge

One electric vehicle driver's cautionary tale about proper planning to avoid 'range anxiety'

By Dana Frank

NOT SO LONG AGO, I drove regular gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles. When I needed to fuel up, I could feel it in my bones and, of course, see it on the fuel gauge. I filled the tank when, and not before, the gauge neared E.

Half my life, I've lived 30 miles from a metro area, and the ability to drive wherever, whenever, has always been essential. I'm not alone in my drive for independence. The automobile is celebrated in America, which has nearly 50 million more cars than licensed drivers, according to the federal government. I'm in Texas, after all, where driving near and far most every day represents my autonomy and freedom.

But I've paid the price for that independence. On my round trips to town every day I cruised into gas stations, and I bought a lot of fuel. I had a 1998 VW diesel Bug that cost \$11 to fill and pounded out nearly 50 miles to the gallon. But I also drove several thirsty pickups and one muscle car (don't ask) over the years and came to resent the pricey twice-weekly gas station stops.

A few years ago, though, aside from annoyance at paying upward of \$300 a month for gas, I had begun to feel guilty about the carbon footprint of my long-distance com-

mute. The quiet electric vehicle beckoned from the shadows of my awareness, and I bought one.

Now the energy source I need in order to travel from here to there doesn't flow freely from easy-to-reach pumps dotting Texas roadways. Some EV owners, including me, have to hunt for vehicle juice, at least for now. I'm a believer that someday the electric vehicle-charging infrastructure will ramp up to meet demand.

Until that time, if you see me or other EV drivers rolling along, nervously alert for our elusive quarry — a charging station — understand that our condition has a name: range anxiety.

At first, my transition to the world of EVs was easy. I "researched" them on the coattails of someone else, then traded my gas-fueled car for a brand-new zippy, compact four-door 2019 Chevy Bolt. I could plug my car's charge adapter into the 120-volt outlet in my garage and get an overnight charge. I gleefully drove past gas stations and gradually got used to my car's power needs. I was coming and going just like my petroleum-powered days, traveling at least 60 miles a day.

The bright dashboard display showed me precisely what time my electric charge would be complete. If I plugged in at home at 6 p.m., say, I'd have a full charge by the wee

NEW MAKES, MODELS OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN 2022 AND BEYOND

Automotive News, a weekly newspaper for the automotive industry, estimates that there will be nearly 100 models of electric vehicles available nationwide by the end of 2022. Buyers will see more crossover sport utility vehicles and pickups, from full to mid-size. Many new models will arrive in 2022, with preorders available now. Several automakers have also released plans for vehicles through 2024.



Chevrolet Bolt EUV

Starts at \$33,000; Electric SUV, 2022 models in transit to dealers, available for purchase now; 247-mile estimated range; dual-level charge cord with attachment plugs for 120- or 240-volt outlets; hands-free and semi-autonomous driving assistance features; Level 2 charging outlet installed by Chevrolet at home of eligible buyers



Kia EV6

Starts at \$58,500; First edition of new Kia line of crossover EVs, limited number (1,500) being produced, coming January 2022; seats 5, futuristic design with dual curved screens and display, estimated 300-mile range; wait list available



Dana Frank charges her 2019 Chevy Bolt electric vehicle at a charging station in San Marcos. Now that she can't charge her vehicle at home overnight, she tries to find places where she can go about her daily routine while charging her car. Sometimes that takes planning. *Laura Skelding photo*

hours of the next morning. I wasn't worried. A full charge on my Bolt could carry me 250 miles, give or take. That was plenty.

But a year and a half later I moved. At my new dwelling, I no longer have a place to plug in at night. There's no retail charging station nearby, either. I don't always start the day with confidence and a feeling of freedom. My mornings often begin with a question: Can I get where I need to go? Can I make it to Independence in Washington County to meander among the blossoms at the Antique Rose Emporium? This is when my range anxiety kicks in.

So I map my meanderings in relation to retail charging stations, like the one at the city park where I swim, and the one near the coffee shop where I write. If all goes to plan, I easily get my charge, take a deep breath and sometimes even feel a bit prideful.

Sometimes, however, things don't go according to plan. I approach a parking spot that has a charger, and it's occupied and in use. My heart sinks and tightens in my chest. Don't even get me started

about charging spaces that are occupied by a vehicle that's not electric. I may have only 57 miles of range on my gauge and miles to go before I sleep. I must conserve enough range to reach a charging station in the morning. One day I was down to my last 5 miles before I found a place to charge. My anxiety rises in inverse proportion to my range gauge, and I'm no longer smug.

The happy news is that range anxiety is a treatable ailment. Planning ahead and using common sense are the easiest cures. But for those considering an electric vehicle, I have some advice.

- Charge your EV at home. Whether you plug your vehicle's adapter into a 120-volt outlet or use a dedicated wall-mounted charger, the ability to consistently and easily charge up while you sleep is the number one cure for range anxiety. When I move again, that will be a priority.

- Get hip to the apps that display EV charging stations' locations and their availability, so you have good back-up options.

I'm behind the curve on that, I admit. You can get there with ChargePoint, PlugShare, ChargeHub EV Map or Chargemap. Even Google Maps shows the location of EV charging stations now.

- If you're getting worried about making your destination, ease up on the go pedal and, if you can, turn off amenities such as the AC and radio. Their use drains your range. For example, when I turn off my AC, I watch the range level rise in real time by about 25 percent. Yes, turning off the AC is a lot to ask in sweaty Central Texas, but that range-expanding peace of mind may be worth it.

- If you drive a lot, and can do it, go ahead and splurge for one of the newest electric vehicles. Many 2022 EV models tout ranges of up to 300 miles per charge. The newest technology may be the best way to battle range anxiety.

My particular case of range anxiety probably falls under the category of "user error." Don't let my story of hitting the occasional speed bump deter you from charging into the electric vehicle revolution.



Hyundai IONIQ 5

No pricing available; crossover, coming in 2022; estimated 300-mile range (168 kilowatt motor); equipped for "ultra-fast charging" of 60 miles range in 5 minutes; two years unlimited 30-minute free charging on some DC fast chargers in partnership with Electrify America



Also coming

- 2022 Tesla Cybertruck (manufactured in Travis County)
- 2022 Toyota bZ4X, Toyota's first electric crossover SUV
- 2023 Subaru Solterra, Subaru's first electric SUV
- 2023 Jeep Wrangler Magneto (above)



- 2024 Ram 1500 EV, a full-size pickup
- 2024 GMC Hummer (above)
- 2024 Honda Prologue SUV
- 2022 BMW and Mercedes Benz, releasing multiple EVs including small cars such as EQS from Mercedes Benz and SUVs such as the 2022 iX from BMW

Continued from page 22

a leading global data provider for major industries and markets,

However, EVs' cost, range and battery longevity (which is typically 100,000 miles in standard electric vehicles today, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory) still make plenty of Central Texas drivers pause at the idea of going electric — especially those in rural areas who regularly travel long distances.

It will probably cost less to power an electric vehicle than a gasoline-powered car or truck. The U.S. Department of Energy says that fueling your car with gasoline costs nearly three times as much as fueling a vehicle with electricity. Additionally, the Alternative Fuels Data Center reports electric vehicles have fewer parts and usually do not need as much maintenance as gasoline-powered vehicles. The only maintenance required on Bodine's Tesla has been "replacing the tires every three years or 40,000 miles, and windshield washer fluid as needed."

A Chevrolet Bolt's maintenance schedule includes tire rotation, air filter replacement and draining vehicle coolant circuits at 150,000 miles. Additional maintenance and care may include brakes, heat and radiator hose inspection, lights, windshields and wiper blades.

The most costly repair usually associated with owning an EV is the battery, according to Consumer Reports. The lifespan of an EV battery depends on the model. Chevrolet, for example, provides an eight-year or 100,000-mile battery warranty. Tesla high-voltage batteries are under warranty for four years or 50,000 miles. Manufacturers typically do not publish pricing for replacement batteries, but if the battery does need to be replaced outside the warranty, it is expected to be a significant expense according to the Alternative Fuels Data Center.

A major factor in the rush to make electric vehicles in the U.S. is due, in part, to pressure and regulations from the federal and some state governments, according to Daniel Yergin, vice chairman of IHS Markit.

The drive for more electric vehicles faces significant challenges: Electric vehicle manufacturers will have to create entire new supply chains and the vehicles will require new charging infrastructure on a massive scale, he wrote recently.

The biggest challenge, however, will be changing car buyers' habits: Moving from the familiar to the unknown on such a major investment won't be easy. But as Texans see more EVs on the road and in the neighbor's driveway, minds may change. Electric vehicles won't rule the roads of Central Texas any time soon, but be prepared to make room. ■

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT (FINDING A CHARGING STATION, THAT IS)

Most new electric vehicle models, including the Ford F-150 Lightning, Chevrolet Bolt EUV and Hyundai Kona, will have charging maps built into their navigation systems. But many electric vehicle owners opt for smartphone apps to help plan their routes, especially for longer trips.

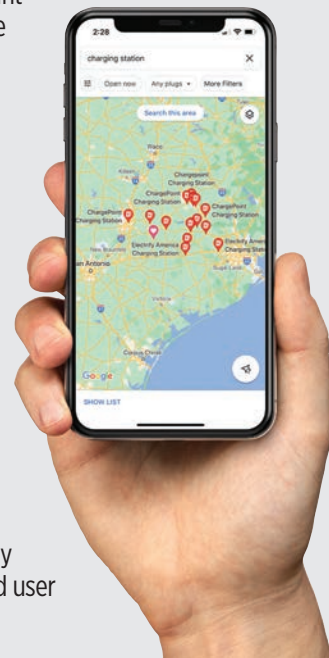
PlugShare — Filter for your plug and charging level type, and exclude chargers currently in use; on its website, find amenities at charging stations such as restrooms

ChargePoint — Find stations, check charger availability, get updates about your vehicle's charge status and range; at ChargePoint charging stations, app unlocks chargers for real-time charging updates; app also synchs with Apple and Google maps to find nearest available charger

ChargeHub EV Map — Trip planner will find charging locations on your route; create a user profile, check in to a station, leave comments and pictures to help other users select a station

Google Maps — (Pictured, right) Added EV charging stations to map features in 2011; search "charging stations" to find one nearby; see how many chargers are available, their type and power capabilities

Chargemap — Search a city or ZIP code using app or website to get charging station details, addresses and hours, amenities, charger types; apply filters to find correct power level and necessary connector; app also includes route-planning tool and user reviews of charging stations.



How do you buy a Tesla in Texas?

You cannot go to a dealer in Texas to buy a Tesla because Tesla doesn't have dealerships in Texas — or anywhere else.

Texas law requires automotive manufacturers to sell their vehicles to independently owned third-party businesses such as dealerships, which then sell to individuals. One exception: used Teslas obtained through trade-ins can be sold by dealers.

Texans who want to buy a Tesla must either buy it online from tesla.com or in another state; then it must be delivered by Tesla to a regional Tesla service center for pick up. The vehicle will have out-of-state registration, and new owners have 30 days to register their Tesla in Texas, according to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

Texas has 12 Tesla service centers. Those nearest the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative region are in Austin (12845 Research Blvd. in North Austin), two in Houston (9633 Westheimer Road and 14820 North Freeway in North Houston) and in San

Antonio (23011 I-10 W).

At tesla.com, you can buy new or used vehicles for an order fee ranging from \$100 to \$500. Buyers create a Tesla account and go through a step-by-step process of "delivery tasks," which include submitting the final payment, financing and/or trade-in documentation. You'll also receive the vehicle's VIN and schedule delivery to a Tesla service center.

The waiting time for your Tesla varies with financing and model availability. The estimated delivery of new cars, at our time of publication, is January 2022 for a Model Y or Model 3, February 2022 for a Model S and April 2022 for a Model X. In early September 2021, there were many used car options on Tesla's website.

Once your Tesla arrives at the service center, a technician will show you how to operate and navigate it. More information is at tesla.com/support/ordering.

Sources: statesman.com, capitol.texas.gov, businessinsider.com, tesla.com/support/ordering



In support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, linemen like Troy Moore are wearing pink hard hats in the field. *Sarah Beal photo*

We're turning pink in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month

BLUEBONNET IS passionate about community and supports worthy causes, such as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Since 2012, during October, our member service centers glow with pink light at night, field crews wear pink hard hats and service trucks display pink ribbon decals.

Members can use a member service center drive-through lane — in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart or Manor — this month to pick up a pink ribbon pin and support the cause. Business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Bluebonnet members beware

Phone-payment scam calls on the rise

BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC Cooperative members have reported a recent increase in attempted phone scams by people claiming to represent Bluebonnet. The fraudulent callers appear to be primarily targeting Spanish-speaking members, threatening to disconnect their power unless they make a payment using retail store gift cards.

Bluebonnet members who receive a fraudulent call demanding immediate payment should not pay. Bluebonnet recommends members get as much information as possible

about the caller and report it by contacting the co-op's member service representatives at 800-842-7708, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and local law enforcement.

Bluebonnet members can check their account status 24 hours a day, every day, from a computer, smartphone or tablet through the co-op's website, bluebonnet.coop, via the cooperative's mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708.



Saturday, Oct. 16  **A VIRTUAL LOOK AT**

10-11:30 a.m.

Solar

SIXTH ANNUAL BLUEBONNET SOLAR DAY

Join us online for a live webinar about solar, storage and electric vehicles

10-10:20 a.m. — Welcome and Solar 101 — Learn how solar energy works

10:20-10:30 a.m. — How to connect to Bluebonnet's grid

10:30-10:50 a.m. — Meet three Bluebonnet members and hear from them about solar arrays, battery storage and information about electric vehicles

10:50-11:30 a.m. — Moderated Q&A

The event will take place through a live online format.

Bluebonnet members can pre-register and submit questions in advance. Learn more on Facebook at bit.ly/3DH9mZM. We will answer as many questions as possible during the webinar. The presentation and Q&A will be recorded and posted to bluebonnet.coop after the event.

NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH

Membership in a co-op offers benefits

DO YOU KNOW how being a member of an electric cooperative is different from being a customer of a utility company? We'll share more cooperative stories on our Facebook and Twitter pages this month and you can read more about the cooperative difference on our website at bluebonnet.coop/About/Co-op-Benefits.

Among the advantages to being a Bluebonnet member are:

- You are a member, which makes you a partial owner of the cooperative.
- You elect the men and women who lead the cooperative — the board of directors — at Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting on the second Tuesday of every May.
- Most Bluebonnet members get capital credits every year, which are much like a return on dividends.
- We support the communities we serve, because we live here, too.
- Every year we provide scholarships to students in Bluebonnet's service area and sponsor numerous nonprofit groups and events.

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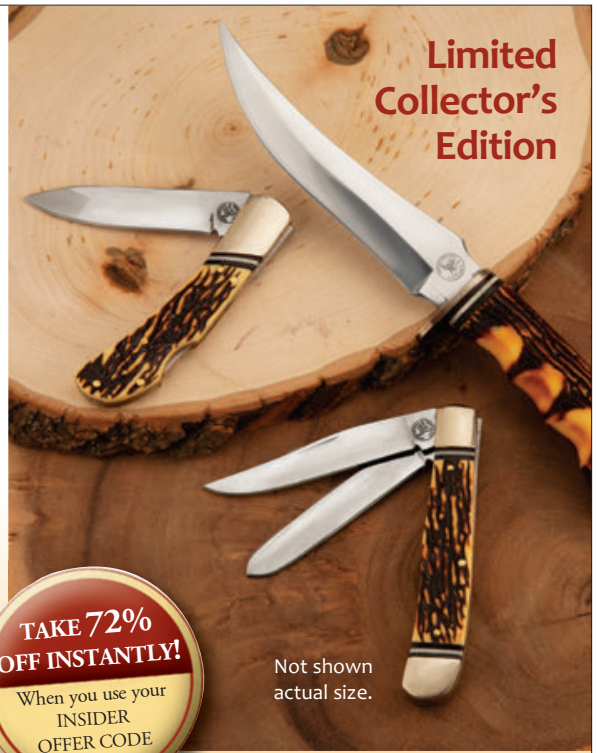
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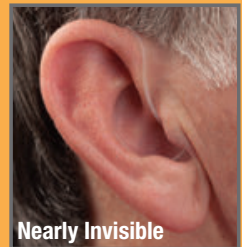
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Proving Ground

Future presidents crossed the Wild Horse Desert together on a military mission

BY W.F. STRONG

HE WAS 23 YEARS OLD, riding his horse south of Corpus Christi in the region that would later be called the King Ranch. But that now-legendary, sprawling ranch would not be founded for another eight years.

This vast stretch of sandy prairie was then known as the Wild Horse Desert. In some ways it was a spooky place—ghostly. Visitors could see horse tracks everywhere—but no people. There were plenty of well-worn trails, but the population was only four-legged in August 1845.

Folks reckoned that these horses were the descendants of those that arrived with Hernán Cortés more than three centuries earlier, when he came to conquer the Aztecs. Some of his horses escaped,

migrated north and bred like rabbits (if you can say that about horses).

Our young man—a graduate of West Point and a newly minted second lieutenant—rode with a regiment of soldiers under the command of Gen. Zachary Taylor. They were under orders to establish Fort Texas on the Rio Grande and enforce that river as the southern border of the United States. Fort Texas would shortly become Fort Brown, the fort from which Brownsville would take its name.

The young lieutenant, who had excelled as a horseman at West Point, was so impressed with the seemingly infinite herds of wild horses in South Texas that he made a note in his journal. He wrote:

“A few days out from Corpus Christi, the

TCP WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story.

immense herd of wild horses that ranged at that time between the Nueces and the Rio Grande was directly in front of us. I rode out a ways to see the extent of the herd. The country was a rolling prairie, and from the higher ground, the vision was obstructed only by the curvature of the Earth. As far as the eye could reach to the right, the herd extended. To the left, it extended equally. There was no estimating the number of animals in it; I doubt that they could all have been corralled in the state of Rhode Island or Delaware at one time. If they had been, they would have been so thick that the pasture would have given out the first day.”

Both Taylor and his second lieutenant would distinguish themselves on that journey through South Texas.

Taylor had no idea that his visit to the Wild Horse Desert would lead him on to victories in the Mexican-American War that started the next year with an attack on his troops near the Rio Grande—and to political victory back home. He would become the 12th president of the United States.

Taylor’s dashing second lieutenant would also ascend to the presidency, 20 years after him. The young man on high ground, surveying the astounding scene of wild mustangs grazing by the thousands, would become the hero of many battles.

He would ultimately lead Union forces to victory in the Civil War and become the youngest president of the U.S. His presidential memoirs would become a runaway bestseller published by Mark Twain, who would describe the book as “the most remarkable work of its kind since *Caesar’s Commentaries*.”

It was written by Hiram U. Grant. Well, that was his birth name. But when he entered West Point, a clerical error deleted the name Hiram and his middle name became his first name, and that is the name you know him by: Ulysses. He was Ulysses S. Grant. ■



Cheese

Four dishes, four ways to present the charm of cheese

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Savory recipes are always a go-to with cheeses, but around here we love sweet too. In her new cookbook, *Southern Sugar*, Belinda Smith-Sullivan features a variety of delectable cheesecakes, including this recipe using sweet cushaw squash. If you can't find this crookneck squash, then butternut squash, pumpkin or white sweet potatoes are suitable substitutes.



BELINDA
SMITH-SULLIVAN

Sweet Cushaw and Pecan Cheesecake

CRUST

- 1¾ cups gingersnap crumbs
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted
- ¼ cup finely chopped pecans

FILLING

- 3 packages cream cheese (8 ounces each), room temperature
- 2 cups cooked and puréed cushaw squash
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 3 eggs, room temperature
- ¼ cup sour cream, room temperature
- ¼ cup heavy cream, room temperature

- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger or allspice
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ cup chopped pecans

TOPPING

- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, room temperature
- ¼ cup heavy cream, room temperature
- 1 cup coarsely chopped pecans

1. **CRUST** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a medium bowl, blend crumbs, sugar, butter and pecans and press into the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan. Wrap the bottom and outside of the pan with foil.
2. **FILLING** Using a stand mixer, beat cream cheese and squash until fluffy. Gradually add brown sugar, then add eggs one at a time. Add sour cream and heavy cream and continue to beat. Add cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and vanilla and beat until smooth. Fold in pecans and pour filling into prepared pan.
3. Place cheesecake pan in another larger

pan and place in preheated oven. Fill the larger pan halfway with hot water. Bake 60–70 minutes or until slightly firm in the center. Turn off oven, leaving door ajar about 8 inches, and allow cheesecake to cool in oven 1 hour. Remove pans from oven, remove cheesecake pan from water bath and cool completely in pan.

4. **TOPPING** In a small, heavy saucepan, combine brown sugar and butter over low heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and stir in cream and pecans. Let cool slightly. Pour warm topping over cooled cheesecake in pan and refrigerate. When ready to serve, remove the sides of springform pan and place cheesecake on a serving dish.

SERVES 12

Reprinted with permission from *Southern Sugar* by Belinda Smith-Sullivan (Gibbs Smith, 2021).

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Goat Cheese Crackers With Herbs.



Cheese Grits

ANNA LOUISE EVANS
PEDERNALES EC

Evans has been making this dish since 1970, when as a teenager she won a blue ribbon with the recipe at a county fair. It's easy to see why, as these grits are fluffy, creamy and cheesy all at once.

- ¾ cup hominy grits**
- 3 cups water**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 6 tablespoons (¾ stick) butter**
- 8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated**
- ½ teaspoon hot sauce**
- Dash of seasoned salt**
- 2 eggs, beaten**
- Dash of paprika**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease a 2-quart baking dish.
2. Cook grits in water and salt as directed on package. Add butter, cheese, hot sauce and seasoned salt, stirring to melt. Slowly pour in eggs, stirring the entire time to prevent scrambling.
3. Pour into prepared baking dish and sprinkle paprika over the top. Bake 1 hour, until puffed and golden brown.

SERVES 6

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

Grilled Ham and Cheese Panini With Collard Greens and Tomato

RICKY PATTERSON
COSERV



Garlicky greens turn this grilled cheese sandwich into a filling, crave-worthy meal. Don't neglect pressing the sandwich, which helps meld the flavors together. If you happen to have an electric panini press at home, the process is a cinch.

SERVES 1-2



- 3 leaves collard greens or kale**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 3 tablespoons water**
- ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter, softened**
- 2 large slices sourdough bread**
- 4 slices provolone cheese**
- 2 slices ham**
- 2 slices (¼ inch each) ripe tomato**
- Salt and pepper**

1. Wash greens and pat dry. Remove stems, then stack leaves and slice into thin ribbons. Set aside.
2. In a large skillet, heat olive oil on medium. Add garlic and sauté until sizzling. Add greens and stir to wilt. Add water, then cover skillet and cook about 5 minutes, until water evaporates. Remove greens from pan, press out excess liquid and set aside. Wipe pan.
3. Butter one side of each bread slice. Place one slice, buttered side down, in skillet. Top with 2 slices provolone, 2 slices ham, cooked greens and tomato slices. Season with salt and pepper. Top with remaining 2 slices provolone and bread, buttered side up.
4. Lay a piece of foil over the sandwich and place a cast iron or other heavy skillet on top of foil to press sandwich down. Cook on medium heat 5-7 minutes, until bottom is golden brown. Remove and reserve foil and flip sandwich. Place foil, buttery side down, over flipped sandwich. Weigh down and continue cooking 5-7 minutes, until other side is golden brown and cheese is melty. Let sit 2-5 minutes before cutting in half.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TEXAS' BEST DUE OCTOBER 10

What stands out in your kitchen as classic Texan cuisine? Enter at TexasCoopPower.com/contests by October 10 for a chance to win \$500.



Pumpkin, Pepper Jack and Poblano Enchilada Casserole

LINDA STEINHARDT
PEDERNALES EC

Perfect for a large family, this enchilada casserole features a pumpkin-based sauce and plenty of vegetables for a comforting, hearty dish. You can use flour or corn tortillas, and keep in mind you might need extra tortillas to fit across the casserole dish.

CASSEROLE

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 red bell peppers, diced
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 2 chicken breasts, cooked, cooled and shredded
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 poblano peppers, roasted, peeled and diced
- 6 tortillas, plus more as needed
- 8 ounces shredded pepper jack cheese

SAUCE

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pumpkin purée
- 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
- 2–3 chipotle peppers in adobo, plus a spoonful of the adobo sauce
- 2–3 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin

1. CASSEROLE Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. In a large skillet, heat olive oil on medium-high. Sauté onion, bell peppers

and mushrooms until softened and slightly browned. Add chicken, black beans and poblanos and stir to combine. Remove filling from heat and set aside.

3. SAUCE In a food processor or large blender, purée sauce ingredients until smooth.

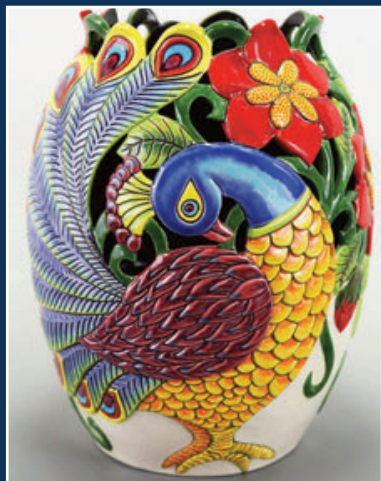
4. In a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, add a thin layer of sauce to coat the bottom. Layer dish with enough tortillas to cover the sauce (breaking if needed), half of the filling, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sauce and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the cheese, then repeat. Finish with another layer of tortillas, remaining sauce and remaining cheese.

5. Bake 30–35 minutes, broiling for the last 2–3 minutes if you like the cheese a bit browned and crispy.

SERVES 8

TCP WEB EXTRA Cheese has long been a staple in Co-op Country kitchens. Visit the Food page at TexasCoopPower.com and search "cheese" to find hundreds of recipes featuring the yummy stuff.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

The Grove's Groove

Normal is a matter of perspective at a haunted Jefferson home

BY CHET GARNER

THE STORY ABOUT the lady in white was spooky. The tale of a barber who visits regularly was strange. Anecdotes of disembodied noises and unexpected presences left me unsettled. But the scariest part of my visit to the Grove—Jefferson's most haunted home—was my guide: Mitchel Whittington seemed totally normal.

He wasn't wearing a dark robe or making alarming pronouncements. He simply recounted his ghostly encounters as if describing his morning coffee routine. His matter-of-fact presentation left me with the unnerving conclusion that he was telling the truth. I was terrified and intrigued.

Jefferson sits in the northeast corner of Texas and was once a bustling port city from which barges laden with cotton steamed to New Orleans. The downtown retains its historical architecture and charm. Even so, every building seems haunted and underscores Jefferson's reputation as our state's most haunted town.

When I arrived for my tour of the Grove, I expected an ominous Victorian structure covered in spiderwebs. Instead, I found a well-kept, one-story home with Whittington on the front porch to welcome me with a smile. He led me room by room, describing mysterious events he has witnessed.

I asked if it's scary to live in a haunted house. Whittington laughed and said, "No, it isn't. It's a peek into the other side. And when I'm gone, I'm gonna come back and check on it."

I enjoyed the tour but was happy to leave safely on this side of reality. ■

ABOVE Chet found Mitchel Whittington, owner of the Grove, to be totally normal. Chet, not so much.

TCP WEB EXTRA See if Chet's video includes anybody from the other side greeting him. Watch all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

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

OCTOBER

07

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: River of Stars, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

08

New Braunfels [8-9] Willie Nelson & Family With Special Guest Pat Green, (830) 964-3800, whitewaterrocks.com

Fredericksburg [8-10] Texas Mesquite Arts Festival, (830) 997-8515, texasmesquiteartfestivals.com

Ingram [8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30] The Bad Seed, (830) 367-5121, ctxlivetheatre.com

09

Brenham Johnny Cash Tribute by Bennie Wheels, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Fort McKavett Fall Star Party, (325) 396-2358, facebook.com/visitfortmckavett

Ingram Kerr County Celtic Festival, (830) 367-5121, kerrcountyceltic.com

Kyle Founders' Parade, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com

Lago Vista St. Mary, Our Lady of the Lake Oktoberfest, (512) 267-2644, stmaryoktoberfest.org

Stonewall VFD Fall Fish Fry Drive-Thru, (830) 644-5571, visitfredericksburgtx.com

Chappell Hill [9-10] Scarecrow Festival, (979) 836-6033, chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com

14

Edom [9-10] Art Festival,
(903) 258-5192,
visitedom.com

15

**South Padre Island [14-16]
Hispanic Genealogical
Conference,** (956) 497-6680,
rgvhgs.org

**Victoria Project Tickled
Pink,** (361) 649-6190,
crossroadsguardiansofhope.com

**Canton [15-16] Texas Star
Quilters Guild Show,**
(214) 289-3936, texasstar
quilters.wixsite.com/tsqg

**La Grange [15-16] Heritage
Fest & Muziky,** (979) 968-9399,
czechtexas.org

16

**Canton Van Zandt County
Veterans Memorial Military
Show,** (972) 896-0776,
vzcm.org

Creedmoor Oktoberfest,
(512) 243-6700,
cityofcreedmoortx.gov

**George West Michael Twitty:
Memories of Conway Show,**
(361) 436-1098,
dobie-westtheatre.com

**Lakehills Medina Lake
Fire Department BBQ,**
(830) 751-2525,
facebook.com/medinalakevfd

**McKinney Halloween at
the Heard,** (972) 562-5566,
heardmuseum.org

**Palestine Dogwood Double
5K/10K,** (903) 723-5100,
visitpalestine.com

**Ponder Denton County
Cowboy Church Family Fall
Festival,** (940) 479-2043,
dentoncountycowboychurch.org

MORE EVENTS >

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Pick of the Month

Texas Fleece & Fiber Festival

Kerrville, October 28–31
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A small group of hand spinners and weavers organized this festival in 1989. It continues to promote natural Texas fibers by educating the public and marketing products of the animals the organizers raise. Read *Serendipity Spinners* from May 2021 on our website to learn more about the craft of spinning wool.

OCTOBER EVENTS CONTINUED

16

Waco Oakwood Cemetery's Walking Tales, (254) 717-1763, facebook.com/heartoftexasstorytellingguild

Waxahachie St. Joseph Oktoberfest, (972) 938-1953, stjosephwaxahachie.com

17

Palacios First Baptist Church of Palacios Homecoming Sunday, (361) 972-5486, fbcpalacios.org

20

Lufkin Steep Canyon Rangers, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

21

Fredericksburg [21–23] Food & Wine Fest, (830) 997-8515, fbgfoodandwinefest.com

Warrenton [21–30] Renck Hall Antique Show, (979) 966-7083, renckhallandfield.com

22

Burton [22–30] La Bahia Antique Show, (979) 289-2684, labahiaantiques.com

23

Brenham Quebe Sisters, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Hearne Sesquicentennial Celebration, (979) 595-8150, cityofhearne.org

Point Venture Holiday Bazaar, (281) 799-0114, facebook.com/pvholidaybazaar

25

Jacksonville Trunk or Treat, (903) 586-2217, jacksonvilletexas.com

30

Sanger Sellabration, (940) 458-7702, sangertexas.com/sellabration

Seguin Pecan Fest, (830) 379-0933, seguingonuts.com

NOVEMBER

04

Sulphur Springs [4–7] The Wall That Heals, (903) 243-2206, thewallthatheals-sstx.org

06

George West A Day of Stories, (361) 436-1098, dobie-westtheatre.com

McKinney St. Gabriel Holiday Boutique, (972) 542-7170, stgabriel.org

Granbury [6–7] Sesquicentennial Celebration, (817) 573-5548, visitgranbury.com

Huntsville [6–7] Holiday Market, (936) 661-2545, huntsvilleantiqueshow.com

Fillin' Stations

Some are tourist attractions. Others are a bit more off the beaten path. Fillin' stations can transport us to another time and serve as a place to fill up our vehicles and our bellies. Load up the station wagon and drive down for some full-service fun and adventure.

BY GRACE FULTZ

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

KIMBERLY FURNISH
KARNES EC

"An old pump in historic downtown Llano."

JANICE REAVES
JACKSON EC

"Thomas Reaves waiting to serve the next customer at an Humble station in Livingston, circa 1930s."

BILLY LAUDERDALE
PEDERNALES EC

Vintage Gulf full-service fillin' station in Waco, at North 15th Street and Washington Avenue.

THERESA LAGUNA
PEDERNALES EC

"Old-time gas station in Schulenburg."



Upcoming Contests

- DUE OCT 10 Public Art
- DUE NOV 10 The Texas Experience
- DUE DEC 10 All Wet

Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more Fillin' Stations photos.



Not About To Fixate

We love our old home, even without the wonders a makeover could bring

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS
ILLUSTRATION BY
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

MY HUSBAND can watch fixer-upper programs for hours. Not me. I disappear while show hosts transform one outdated house after another into spectacular showcases. Thank you, but I'll keep our home's mostly original look and layout.

Still, sometimes a fixer-upper segment reels me in. I sneak glances at the TV while hosts work their magic on a house that will soon have a fresh design and sophisticated decor. As the reveal unfolds and the homeowners react with unbridled joy, I can't help but wonder ...

What if?

What if we remodeled our 1950s kitchen? What if we replaced the laminate countertops with glossy granite? Put in snazzy backsplashes and dramatic lighting? Maybe knock out some pine cabinets and add an island? Take down a dining

room wall for a more open feel? Pull up the vinyl tiles and put in plank flooring?

Years ago we splurged on upgrades to our bathrooms. We bought new sinks and light fixtures. A contractor did some tile work, but the same old vinyl floor tiles stayed. So did a white porcelain gas wall heater.

Guests love that heater. Our built-in ironing board, too. "My grandparents had those in their house," they recall fondly.

They also love our oak flooring in the bedrooms and living room. They don't see the water splotches, ugly scratches and other stains. I rarely do either. Likewise, I neglect to see claw marks on a pocket door. A back doorbell that's never worked. A walk-in closet without a door (so I hung a long curtain).

Oh, but if the kitchen's wooden drawers had rollers. Our utensil drawer sticks the worst. And the cabinets could really use fresh paint. As needed, I touch up worn spots. A few nicks reveal mustard yellow and fire engine red, bygone colors chosen by the couple who built the house in 1956.

She taught first grade in our town and hosted Easter egg hunts for her students in the backyard. He was the ag teacher at the high school. Together they raised their three children and later, both in their 70s, drew their last breaths in the house we've now called home for nearly two decades.

What if?

Yes, I wonder. I confess that sometimes fixer-upper shows sway me to think our house isn't good enough. That a remodel and updates would make me happier.

But would they?

Deep down I know the truth. We may not live in a showcase. But, scars and all, this house is where we feel the most content, comfortable and safe. We have everything we need. And, after all, isn't that what makes any house a true home? ■



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