

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

CO-OPS CARE

Cooperatives
and their
members
partner in
community
service



BLUEBONNET NEWS
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Co-ops empower local schools through charitable programs and grants.

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ON THE COVER *Mary Aceves of Magic Valley EC, left, with student Marely Quintanilla at a McAllen Target store. Photo by John Faulk*

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
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Is That Right?

I read that August 13 is International Left-Handers Day [*Don't Be Left Out*, Currents, August 2018]. I also read elsewhere that a left-handed person is smarter than the average right-handed person because left-handers have more copper and zinc in their bodies.

CHARLES CHANDLER | KEMP TRINITY VALLEY EC

Growing and Mowing

The highway between lakes Toledo Bend and Sam Rayburn once had a wide variety of beautiful wildflowers and was called a scenic drive but was repeatedly mowed at the height of the bloom, a full month before it should have been mowed [*Habitat Destruction*, Letters, July 2018]. Now all the beautiful flowers are gone and so are the butterflies that accompanied them.

JOE ANNE DAIGRE | BURKEVILLE



Cadillac Ranch Rubbish

As it had been a number of years since I last visited the Cadillac Ranch, *Rendezvous on*

A Leading Lady

We really enjoyed *All the State's a Stage* [August 2018]. We have been tuned in to all things Shakespeare since our daughter, Sarah Enloe, left for Staunton, Virginia, to work with the American Shakespeare Center. She has been head of education for ASC for a few years now and is in contact with several of the groups mentioned in the story.

SAM AND CAROL ENLOE | BRYAN | BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES



Route 66 [July 2018] inspired me to make another visit. Sadly, I was appalled at the poor condition of the area, with excessive amounts of litter scattered around the cars and all the way back out to the service road. Discarded spray cans, and even more plastic caps, were left everywhere.

The place definitely does not leave one with a good impression of old Route 66 nor of our state.

CRAIG SCHELLBACH | BURLESON UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Editor's note: Eric W. Miller, director of communications for the Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council, offers this response: "We are aware of this issue and we hope to work with the landowner to find a solution to the trash. The landowner provides a couple of dumpsters, at his expense, along the access road that

are for the public to use. I have seen the disposal service go by and empty the dumpsters."

FDR and the Hump

According to the U.S. State Department, President Franklin D. Roosevelt never traveled to Burma or China or anywhere in the Pacific theater of World War II [*Flying Roosevelt Over the Hump*, Letters, July 2018]. The farthest east that he traveled was Tehran, Iran, in November and December 1943.

PAUL R. SHAW | MINEOLA WOOD COUNTY EC

Kudos

Your writing selections are stellar. Thank you for your creativity and soulful devotion.

ROBIN RATHER | VIA FACEBOOK

Poles Aren't Billboards

I've seen signs posted on utility poles in Gillespie, Kerr, Blanco and Hays counties, among

others. Battling trash on the highways is difficult enough, and now people are using utility poles to trash our beautiful Hill Country.

CHERYL BISSON | HARPER CENTRAL TEXAS EC

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



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Monarchs Rule the Day

JASPER has hosted a fall festival for more than 40 years, but recently the event has morphed into a celebration of the annual monarch butterfly migration through East Texas. The alliance between butterflies and the community was cemented in 2015 when Gov. Greg Abbott signed a resolution designating Jasper the Butterfly Capital of Texas.

Though millions of monarchs will fly through East Texas en route to their winter grounds in Central Mexico, their numbers have dropped from a billion in their heyday to about 33 million in 2014—or more than 80 percent since the mid-1990s, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. All the more reason to pay attention to these beautiful insects.

So on **OCTOBER 20**, people and butterflies are welcomed on the Jasper County Courthouse square for the **FALL BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL**. In addition to arts and crafts, food vendors and live entertainment, monarch education will be the order of the day.

INFO ▶ (409) 384-2762, jaspercoc.org

WEB EXTRAS

▶ Find more happenings online.



ANTICIPATING POWER LINE PROBLEMS

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's control center recently dispatched a crew to replace a faulty clamp on a section of electric line along a remote road. No one reported a power outage, but the co-op knew about the clamp thanks to a new monitoring technology called distribution fault anticipation.

Falling limbs and switch arcing cause measurable changes in line current and voltage. DFA detects and reports such changes, allowing co-ops to find and fix these situations before they cause problems, including wildfires. Power line events caused more than 4,000 wildfires in Texas in one three-year period alone, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service.

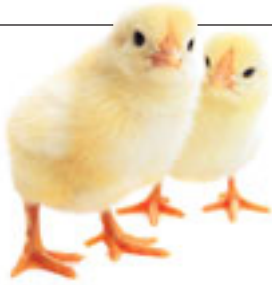
Texas A&M engineers developed DFA, and Bluebonnet and Pedernales ECs and Mid-South Synergy participated in a multiyear demonstration of the technology. Bluebonnet now has DFA devices on 24 feeder lines.

"This technology helps us increase safety and reliability," says Will Holford, Bluebonnet EC manager of public affairs. "If we had not known about that clamp that needed to be replaced, the consequences could have been significant. We're always looking for ways to improve the health of our feeders and mitigate the threat of wildfires."



HONORS

Don't Mess With Texas Chicks



Two chicks from Texas were among 10 finalists earlier this year in Purina Animal Nutrition's national contest to name the Strongest Chick in America. Jennifer Lampkin from Big Sandy and Laura Vaile Gariner from Hockley entered photos of their chicks, and voting on Facebook earned them a spot among the finalists. A chick from Michigan named Rosaleen won the contest.



HISTORY LESSON

Plow Know-How

THIS MONTH marks the 175th anniversary of the birth of Ole Ringness in Norway. Ringness, a mail carrier after his family settled in Bosque County, invented the disc plow and disc harrow after noticing how a warped wheel on his wagon moved large amounts of mud.

HE MADE MODELS of a disc plow in his father's blacksmith shop but never had his invention patented. In July 1872, as he journeyed to Washington, D.C., to present his case for a patent, he died under mysterious circumstances. Ringness apparently had reached the patent office because it later contacted his family to say his patent had been approved and would be granted upon payment of a fee. The family declined the offer, so Ringness never received credit for the invention. Similar farm equipment was later patented by a plow company.

Did you know?



AS COTTON HARVEST continues in Texas, it's a good time to note that Eli Whitney applied for a patent on the cotton gin 225 years ago—October 28, 1793. He was granted the patent in March 1794. Texas, which leads the nation in cotton farming, produced \$1.62 billion in cotton and cottonseed in 2017.

WORTH REPEATING

“The people love their co-ops, and they stay close to it just like a community.”

—**STATE SEN. ROBERT NICHOLS** of Jacksonville, during a Senate Committee on Business and Commerce hearing in May about the electric utility industry; October is National Cooperative Month.

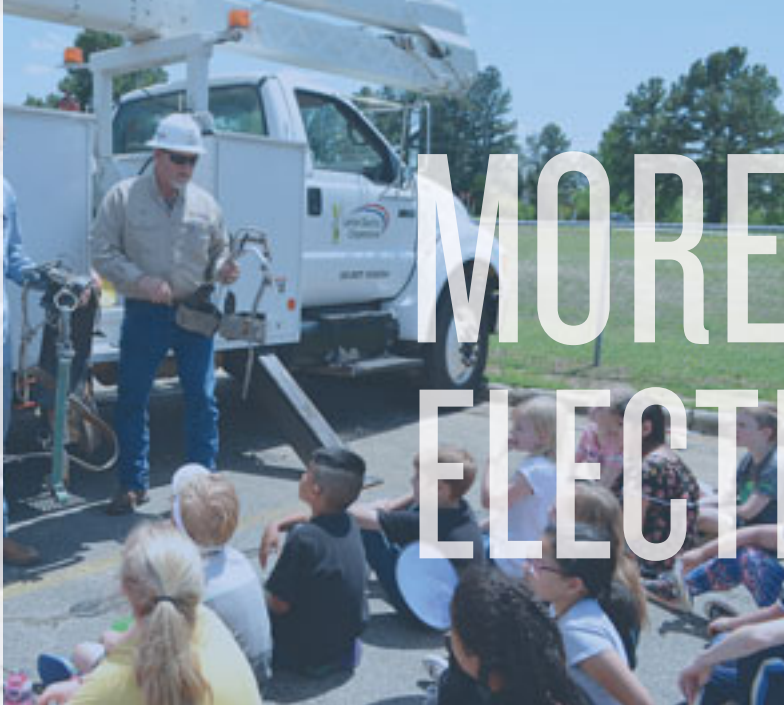
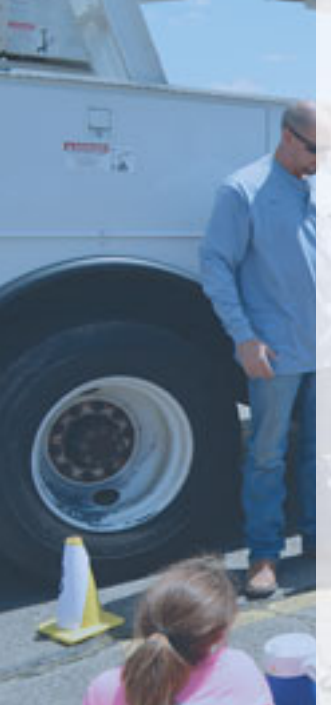
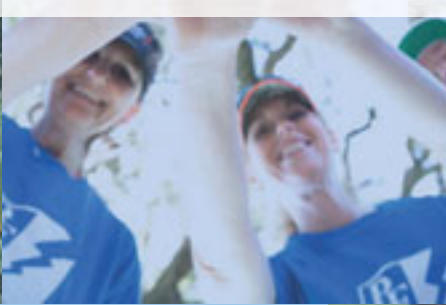
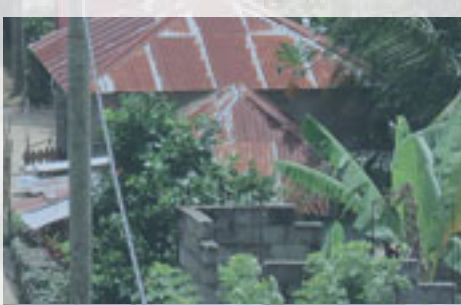


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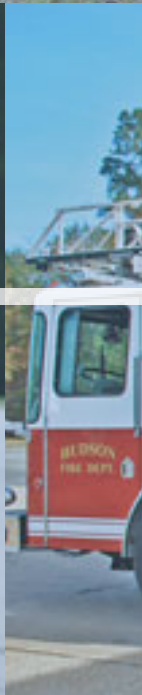
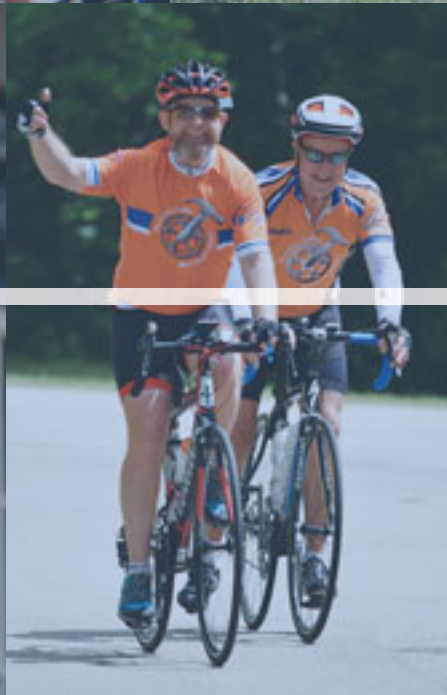
UP FOR DISCUSSION

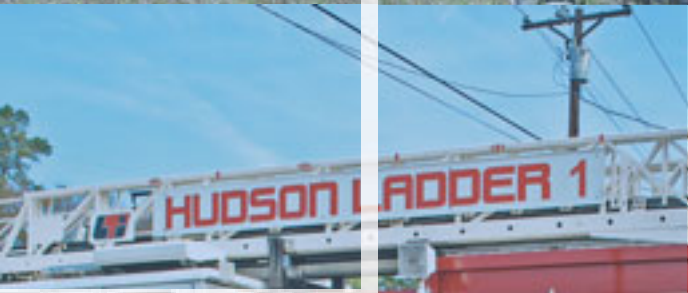
Raise your hand if you know the significance of the Astros' last game of the season 41 years ago. Hopefully somebody will come along and high-five you.

The celebratory gesture is said to have started in Los Angeles at that game, October 2, 1977, when Dusty Baker of the Dodgers homered off Houston pitcher J.R. Richard. Teammate Glenn Burke raised his hand to greet Baker as he touched home plate, and Baker reached up and slapped Burke's hand. That is believed to be the first high-five.



MORE THAN ELECTRICITY





COOPERATIVE PHOTOS

THROUGH PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS, CO-OPS PROVE

‘THEY ARE THE FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY’

BY CHARLES LOHRMANN

John Wied, a member of Fayette Electric Cooperative in La Grange since 1981, serves on the board of Hospice Brazos Valley, and he looks to the co-op to support the specialty health care provider. “We have our fundraiser in Round Top in August,” he says, “and I can always count on Fayette EC for a donation.”

But the true significance of the co-op’s role in the community goes much deeper than any of its individual contributions to service organizations, Wied says. “They are the fabric of the community,” he explains. “If you tried to pull it up and go away, a lot of people would go with it. They don’t just support the community—they are the community.”

Community involvement—along with local management—is what makes today’s electric cooperatives special in the eyes of their members. Recent research conducted on behalf of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association reports that one of the essential reasons members value co-ops is that they are local. “Community is the core co-op advantage that connects with consumers,” NRECA reports.

Since their creation in the 1930s, Texas’ 67 electric distribution co-ops have served rural and suburban areas. In those early years, investor-owned utilities were not willing to extend electric service beyond cities and towns because it was not profitable. Then came the Rural Electrification Administration, a federal program that helped cooperatives finance their own electric systems.

As Wied said of Fayette EC, they don’t just serve the community—they are the community. Kevin Houchin, a member of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative in McGregor, echoes the sentiment, “Co-op employees are the little league coaches; they are the Sunday school teachers.”

In local communities and in foreign countries, improving lives is the co-op way.



Magic Valley Electric Cooperative supports United Way of South Texas' back-to-school program. Volunteer Evelyn López helps Marelly Quintanilla of Edinburg shop at a McAllen Target store.

In the Rio Grande Valley, Magic Valley Electric Cooperative in Mercedes assists a range of nonprofit organizations. Thelma Garza, president of United Way of South Texas, which serves Hidalgo and Starr counties, explains that Magic Valley EC “is a very strong supporter of our United Way, not just in payroll deductions for employee contributions but also in volunteer work.”

“They help with training other volunteers,” she says, “and they support the calendar we mail out to 45,000 people. People see the Magic Valley logo, and they know the co-op is engaged with people.

“We need as many as 200 volunteers for our back-to-school program, when we give 120 eighth-graders and freshmen a \$150 Target gift card to buy school supplies,” Garza explains. “Even though the school gives them a shopping list, the volunteers help the students make better choices. Some of those students have never had the opportunity to shop for themselves.

“We also have a program called Loaned Executive, in which someone in mid management becomes an extension of the United Way staff for 12 weeks during our campaign,” Garza says. “These people meet with major employers and make what we call the



“THEY DON’T JUST
SUPPORT THE
COMMUNITY—
THEY ARE THE
COMMUNITY.”

midnight presentations at hospital shift changes—or even at 3 a.m., when UPS has a shift change.”

Abraham Quiroga, business and employee development division manager at Magic Valley EC, has taken part in the Loaned Executive program twice. “The biggest benefit of the program,” Quiroga says, “is learning about the organizations that United Way supports. Many people rely on those social services, and they meet real human needs.”

In Central Texas, Houchin retired from the McGregor Independent School District after 31 years, including 17 as superintendent. “Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative provided the energy for most of our schools,” he says, “and they were a great community partner.

“They were always available to help,” Houchin says, “even with something as simple as coming to dig the hole when someone donated a tree to honor a loved one. Or they would put up the decorations downtown.”

Heart of Texas EC is one of the many co-ops around the state that participate in Operation Round Up, a program in which members can round up their monthly bills to the next whole dollar to support their co-op’s charitable work. “Through their Round Up

program,” Houchin explains, “Heart of Texas is able to provide grants to all kinds of nonprofits. Money is tight, and a \$2,500 grant for a volunteer fire department makes a big difference.”

Houchin also lauds the co-op in its basic role as energy provider. “They were always competitive pricewise,” he says, “and they kept us up to date with what was happening. If something needed to be fixed, they fixed it. They were a great community partner.”

In Denton County, Janet Shelton has been impressed by the community involvement of CoServ, an electric co-op based in Corinth, and the CoServ Foundation. “I’ve been involved with the Denton Public School Foundation,” she says, “and CoServ has been very generous with their grants to support innovative classroom activity.” Shelton’s praise does not stop there.

“I was on the board of an organization called Hearts for Homes that provided home repairs for elderly residents who could not afford to make the repairs themselves. CoServ not only gave us money but sent volunteer crews to help complete the repairs.”

One more thing: “I was involved with the Denton Community Theater,” she adds, “and CoServ gave us a grant to purchase headphones for the hearing-impaired. So, you could say that CoServ supports schools, social services and the arts.”



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“CO-OP EMPLOYEES ARE THE LITTLE LEAGUE COACHES; THEY ARE THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS.”

Even though electric co-ops are known for community involvement, their primary business always will be fulfilling the basic need for reliable electricity. Every co-op is part of the complex infrastructure of the state’s electric grid. In some cases, even the co-op’s power generation component has a community function. As renewable energy technologies are incorporated into community generation projects, co-ops are making renewable resources accessible to members—to help the planet. In March, United Cooperative Services in Cleburne activated an installation of 44,340 solar panels in Bosque County that can generate up to 9.9 megawatts. The co-op’s members can subscribe to the power with no upfront costs and no contract.

Concern for Community, one of the Seven Cooperative Principles, extends to management, too. As one member put it, “When our power goes out, their power goes out, too.” As Wied says, “They’re not in New York, looking out from the 75th floor.”

Often, the most visible co-op personnel are lineworkers, who are on the job at all hours of the day and night, working to keep the lights on. In the aftermath of ice storms, thunderstorms, tornadoes, wildfires, floods and other disasters, lineworkers are among the first responders and sometimes don’t get to go home for days at a time.

The framework by which co-ops support one another is called a mutual-aid agreement. After Hurricane Harvey’s 130 mph winds tore out electric service for more than 175,000 meters in 15 co-op service territories, co-ops from across the state, including as far away as the Panhandle, sent line crews to restore power. Jimmie Scott, a lineworker for Jackson Electric Cooperative, did not miss a day of work restoring power to Jackson EC members, even though the roof caved in on the house he inherited from his father.

Inspired by the stories of service and sacrifice, members of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative, based in Chase City, Virginia,

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story online to see more examples of how co-ops support their communities.

figuratively joined hands to support Texas co-ops. Employees, along with local schools and community groups, filled a semi-trailer with cleaning and restoration supplies, water, and handwritten messages of support. The truck and driver, provided by a co-op member, made the 1,300-mile trip to Victoria Electric Cooperative, which distributed supplies along the coast.

People along the coast still are recovering from the damage of Harvey, even a year after it blasted Texas. This spring, the Sinton Little League asked San Patricio Electric Cooperative for help in replacing seven light poles that were damaged during the storm. Even though the ballpark does not receive electric service from San Patricio EC, the co-op covered the cost of the new poles. A group of 21 co-op employees, led by Alex Torres and Joe Cruz, repainted the ballpark’s concession stand, replaced an unsafe staircase, fixed up its roof and added more power outlets.

Lineworkers take seriously the responsibility of serving their communities, even when they are not on the job. Four lineworkers from Tri-County Electric Cooperative encountered a fiery, multivehicle collision on Interstate 35 on their way to lunch one day in May 2017. They took action immediately, removing victims from their vehicles and providing first aid, including spinal immobilization, until medics arrived. Their lifesaving efforts took on even more immediacy as a fire caused by the initial collision spread to a cargo trailer filled with paint cans, causing explosions that accelerated the blaze.

Every community in Co-op Country tells similar stories of generosity and support. Many who collaborate with the co-ops share the sentiment of CoServ member Shelton, who says, “I’m just impressed.”

Charles Lohrmann is the *Texas Co-op Power* editor.

Members know they can count on co-ops to serve young people, stay on top of trends in the industry and help get them through disasters.

THE SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Cooperative business entities around the world adhere to the Seven Cooperative Principles originally formulated in the 1840s in England. The principles have endured to this day and are a testament to the sustainability of the cooperative business model.

1

VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2

DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote), and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

3

MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4

AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

5

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

6

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

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“There are so many people in the co-ops of Texas who do extraordinary things for other people.”

—NANCY JOHNSON, whose Little Hats, Big Hearts program builds awareness of congenital heart defects.
Texas Co-op Power, February 2017

POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

Let us know about your local hero! Nominate a co-op member in your area who improves the community's quality of life.

Email your nomination to people@texascoopower.com.

Include name, co-op affiliation and a short description of their work in the community.

We'll highlight select nominees in a future issue of *Texas Co-op Power*.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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Can a Hearing Aid Delay or Prevent Alzheimer's and Dementia?

A study by the National Institute on Aging suggests older individuals with hearing loss are significantly more likely to develop Alzheimer's and dementia over time than those who retain their hearing. They suggest that an intervention — such as a hearing aid — could delay or prevent this by improving hearing!

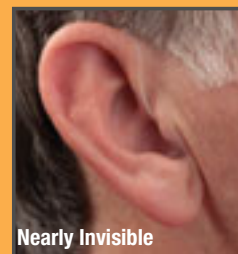
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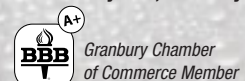
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**the
evolution
of**

GREEN



Building

Energy-efficient home building, booming in Central Texas, has become both art and science.

By Sharon Jayson

Having emerged from another sweltering Central Texas summer of multiple triple-digit temperatures, energy efficiency and high utility bills are still on homeowners' minds.

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative is adding an average of more than 300 meters a month. Many members are buying new homes, some of which are custom designed.

For those thinking about building a home, being "green" has evolved far beyond simple energy efficiency into a holistic approach called "building science."

It starts before plans are drawn, taking the

home's design beyond the physical structure.

How will the residents interact with the space indoors and the surrounding outdoors? Is the house placed on the site in a way that is the wisest use of the land? Is it too big? Is it built to be both energy and water efficient? Which materials are appropriate for our climate and region?

New techniques and technologies, coupled with this desire to build green, mean vast changes are under way in construction basics — materials for walls and roofs; attic insulation; heating ventilation and air-conditioning systems; natural and electrical lighting; the placement of windows and more.

The growing movement toward higher efficiency and sustainability got its start in Central Texas. In 1990, the Austin Energy Green Building program was the nation's first to focus on efficient energy and water use. A statewide energy code and national standards followed, and today,

Continued on page 20

The green elements of this house include a northern orientation to protect it from summer heat and provide passive solar heat in winter, a metal roof that won't transfer heat inside and native live oaks to provide shade.
Home design by Oliver Custom Homes





Whisper Valley, a master-planned community in the Manor area, offers a unique package of green features, including solar panels, a geothermal heating and cooling system, and community gardens.

Whisper Valley showcases sustainable living, tapping the latest energy-saving solutions

By Will Holford

Unfolding in the rolling hills south of Manor in Travis County is a community offering a unique combination of renewable energy generation, energy-efficient homes and sustainable living.

Whisper Valley, a 2,060-acre, master-planned development on FM 973 just east of the Texas 130 toll road, began constructing homes in July 2017. The developers' goal is that every home will be capable of producing as much energy as the home uses.

Each house has rooftop solar panels. An elaborate system of deep pipes use the Earth's temperature to control the climate in each home. Plots of land are reserved for community gardens to grow produce and pastures to raise cattle, all for residents to consume.

Whisper Valley plans to have 7,500 homes when the community is built out in as early as 10 years. The vision is a development of seven "villages," which would include 2 million square feet of retail and commercial space, as well as a public elementary school and middle school in the Del Valle school district.

The development's first phase will include

Continued on page 21



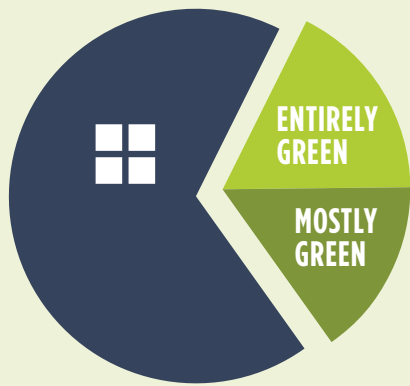
“One of the keys was working with Bluebonnet, to understand the utility's policies and business to create a better infrastructure.”

— **Axel Lerche,**
CEO of EcoSmart Solution



A large gray water-cooling tower connects to the geothermal system that heats and cools multiple homes in Whisper Valley. The cool water in the tower is used on extremely hot days. Water flows through the grid of pipes deep underground that are connected to a geothermal heat pump in each home's attic. The constant temperature below ground provides cool air in summer and warm air in winter.

Photos by Sarah Beal



OF ALL U.S. HOMEBUILDERS

HOW MANY ARE BUILDING GREEN?

Single-family homebuilders currently building most of their homes to be green:

33%

Of those, 58% build green homes exclusively

Source: Dodge Data & Analytics



The basic premise of green building really starts with a good design.

— Ray Tonjes

President of Ray Tonjes Builder Inc.

Continued from page 18

green building materials are the talk of the trade.

Consumers may be lured by flashy, innovative products — ductless, mini-split air conditioners, tankless water heaters and anything solar — but experts caution homebuyers not to get caught up in appliances or systems.

“It’s not about materials. It’s about enlightened choice or informed choices,” said Ray Tonjes, a Texas and national leader in energy-efficient home construction. “The basic premise of green building really starts with a good design.”

Tonjes has been a proponent of energy-efficient construction for decades. The president and founder of Austin-based Ray Tonjes Builder Inc., he also chairs the sustainable and green building committee of the National Association of Home Builders, a position he has held several times.

Last year, the national organization, along with Dodge Data & Analytics, surveyed 342 American homebuilders about green building, which they defined as having a focus on environmentally sensitive site planning, resource efficiency, energy and water efficiency, improved indoor environmental quality and the education of homeowners about those things.

The survey found that 33 percent of single-family homebuilders currently build most of their homes to be green. Of those builders, 58 percent build green homes exclusively.

Though not all that flashy, a so-called game changer in energy-efficient building circles is spray polyurethane foam (SPF) insulation. Its chemical reaction forms a continuous barrier that seals cracks, seams and joints from heat, which reduces unwanted humidity, mold, pollen and air infiltration.

It’s not all about energy and water efficiency. “Green building is about using local materials and (a) focus on buying things that are sustainable. Don’t think about buying things from Italy or getting wood floors from China. That is not

green,” said Matt Oliver, co-founder of Oliver Custom Homes of Austin. “Bamboo flooring is a sustainable product, but if it’s coming from China and burning hundreds of thousands of gallons of fuel to get here, that can disqualify products from being green.”

Oliver often works on new home construction with the firm Barley|Pfeiffer Architecture and its co-founder Peter Pfeiffer, an architect and interior designer who was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects for his lifelong commitment to “mainstreaming green building in North America.”

“Before you spend money on gizmos and gadgets,” Pfeiffer said, “first and foremost make sure you’re doing these three things: Program the project critically (in other words, plan with energy efficiency in mind). Design the home to respond to the climate. Build it well.”

As an example, a two-story home may be more energy efficient than a one-story because there’s less roof area that collects heat, the Austin-based architect said.

“Don’t build a bigger house than you really need,” he said. “As an architect, I spend a lot of time visiting with people about what they want and why they want it. If the goal is to be

energy efficient, it’s important not to build an excessively large structure.”

Builders and architects say solar panels may be more in demand as prices have dropped, but they suggest you first build the envelope of the house (roof, floor, exterior doors, windows and exterior walls) to be as energy efficient as possible before adding solar panels.

“People put on solar panels or things that show a lot — and they may be energy efficient — but they make that investment before they’ve done everything in the house,” said Hugh Stearns, owner and founder of Stearns Design-Build in College Station. “When people add solar panels so their neighbors can see they’re cool, that’s what we call ‘eco-bling.’”

It’s often difficult to convince homebuyers of the best bang for their buck, Oliver said. “Did I, as builder, talk my clients into spending a bit more money on something sustainable that will last longer, such as synthetic decking that uses recycled plastic from



The high-efficiency water heater, at left, automatically drains for maintenance. The light gray bottom of the AC unit, far left, holds a filter that is changed just once a year. The silver pipe between the two units pulls air from the foam-insulated attic into the home. Even on a hot summer day, that air is only slightly warmer than the home’s interior.



**Don't build a bigger house than you really need
... I spend a lot of time visiting with people
about what they want and why they want it.**

— Peter Pfeiffer
Co-founder, Barley|Pfeiffer Architecture

containers? Or did I talk to them about cedar that's going to rot? It's really a frame of mind more than a single product," Oliver said.

Last year's survey of homebuilders found that single-family builders agree that building in a green way costs more than traditional home construction, with most estimating an increase of 5 to 10 percent.

"You'll spend more at the outset but save in the long run," Oliver said. "If we can get Americans to think about 20 to 30 years versus 5 to 7 years, all of a sudden, your frame of mind of what you're going to build changes.

"Three big components in a house that account for up to 60 percent of energy waste in a home in America are windows, insulation and AC systems. For those three, we try to talk people into spending more money. It will pay for itself."

Some simple rules that don't cost money include siting and orienting the home to minimize the size and number of windows facing east and west. When windows face south or north, they receive passive solar heat in winter and avoid direct sunlight in summer.

"Windows are the weak link in the project," said Darren Heine, president of BBA Architects in Brenham, whose clients have included Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. "If a

home is sited wrong, where there's a tremendous amount of solar heat coming into the house, you're just working against the curve."

Energy efficiency isn't only about construction. "You have to do preventive maintenance of all the energy systems in your home," said Ross Britton, a managing partner at U.S. Ecologic, which provides energy-efficient and green-building consulting to builders and homebuyers in Central Texas.

"Whether it's a tankless water heater, HVAC system, a solar system — anything mechanical needs maintenance and upkeep in order to perform at its optimal level and keep your energy efficiency as high as possible," he said.

"Landscaping is amazingly important," added Stearns, the College Station builder. "A western tree fairly close to the house will save a tremendous amount of energy by providing good shading."

In the past 15 years, building science and the research associated with it have provided new insight into energy efficiency and home construction, Stearns said.

"People are beginning to snap to the idea that a home is a living, breathing thing," he said, "and its health depends on how it's put together and the parts used in it." ■

Continued from page 19

237 homes ranging from about 1,100 square feet to 2,700 square feet, priced from about \$200,000 to around \$400,000. As of early July, 66 homes had been sold and another 43 were under construction. The development will include 700 acres of green space, anchored by a 600-acre park with hike-and-bike trails, greenbelts, an orchard and organic gardens. Residents in the first phase have access to an amenity center with a gym and resort-style pool heated by a geothermal system.

Boston-based Taurus Investment Holdings is developing Whisper Valley with EcoSmart Solution, an Austin subsidiary of Taurus, and working with homebuilders Avi Homes and Pacesetter Homes.

"Every home in Whisper Valley is designed and built to allow homeowners to control their energy destiny to achieve net zero consumption, or to even generate enough power to put it onto the electric grid," said Axel Lerche, CEO of EcoSmart Solution. Lerche, a tall, lively native of Germany, started the company in order to provide Whisper Valley's smart-home technology, geothermal systems, solar arrays and energy-efficient appliances.

Net zero consumption means a home's renewable energy system generates roughly the same amount of power that the home consumes on an annual basis. That's not always feasible, so the homes are connected to a utility's electric system to ensure a continuous power supply. When a home generates more power than it can use at any given time, that power can go to a utility's electric grid and the homeowner is paid for that

A wall at the Whisper Valley amenity center, below, illustrates how the community's geothermal system works to heat and cool homes.

Continued on page 23



MAKE YOUR HOME MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT

After doing more than 1,300 in-home consultations over 35 years, Peter Pfeiffer of Barley|Pfeiffer Architecture knows about “building green.” Pfeiffer has earned much national recognition as a pioneer in environmentally sensitive architecture and in bringing green building to the mainstream. Pfeiffer, who often speaks about such trends, offers Bluebonnet members these suggestions:

Stop air leaks indoors

Close the chimney flue when the fireplace isn't used because it lets hot, humid air seep down into the home. Check the weather-stripping around exterior doors, including the one leading to the garage. Kitchen and bath exhaust flaps should close when exhaust fans are not running. That will prevent a back-flow of outdoor air into the home.

Get an expert to test your air-conditioning system ducts for leaks. Leaking ducts in the attic, crawl space or floor cavities waste cool air and draw hot, humid air in from outside, down the chimney or from the garage.

Block the sun's radiation from windows and glass doors

Windows facing the morning sun (east) and afternoon sun (west and south) should be shaded. Extended roof overhangs or permanent awnings will also reduce glare and eye strain and keep rain off windows (keeping them cleaner and extending their life). Solar screens are the next best way to reduce solar heat in your home. Half-screens on the lower half of the window also help. If nothing else, the insect screens that came with your windows help reduce the sun's heat. Solar film is not as effective because the glass still radiates the sun's heat into the home. Closing indoor shades, curtains and shutters help, but that's the least effective method because heat has already entered the house through windows.

Reduce the sun's effect on your home's exterior

Don't use dark colors on the exterior. Light-colored exteriors keep the house cooler and don't fade as much or as quickly as dark colors. Choose light-colored limestone over darker-colored or red brick. Avoid dark-colored roofing shingles. Instead, consider light-colored metal roofing,



Attics in Whisper Valley are insulated with spray polyurethane foam, which seals the space and reduces unwanted humidity, mold, pollen and air infiltration. The box in the center houses the home's geothermal pump, which transfers the warmth or coolness of the water into air that will warm or cool living spaces.

THE LATEST WAYS TO GO GREEN

Experts suggest a focus on these key areas to improve efficiency:

- Variable speed HVAC systems, good ductwork and placing the air conditioner in the attic, centering it above the interior space it's going to cool.
- Moving insulation from above the ceiling up to the roofline, using spray foam insulation rather than loose-fill. That allows the AC system to be placed in a cooler location underneath the insulation, rather than in a space that's hotter in summer.
- Metal or tile roofs are preferred over traditional shingles, which will transfer heat to the house.



There are multiple ways to reduce the sun's heat through windows. These are double-paned. Extended roof overhangs and solar screens can keep the house cooler.

along with a radiant barrier on the underside of the roof in the attic.

Indoor lighting — it's not just about LED bulbs

Promote the beneficial use of indirect sunlight coming into your home. Daylight is free lighting. Open your blinds and window coverings when those windows do not have direct sunlight. Choose light-colored countertops in your kitchen and bathrooms: They reflect light and reduce the need for artificial light. Light-colored flooring also better re-

flects light and reduces energy use.

Avoid recessed light fixtures in a high ceiling because they require more energy to project light down where you need it. Strategically place task lighting: Hanging lights above your kitchen island or work counter that are close to your head are better than light fixtures in the ceiling. Table and floor lamps are more efficient for reading than recessed lights in the ceiling. High-performance fluorescents and LED lamps are energy efficient and emit less heat.

Have a pool? It may use as much energy as the entire house!

Run water through pool filters no more than 12 hours a day in the summer. Keep the filter clean because clogged filters increase the energy draw of the pool pump. Pool cleaning devices only need to run as needed, rather than on a schedule. Try just three hours once a week. Replace old, inefficient pool pumps, and make sure all pool equipment is working.

— Sharon Jayson



Jayme Howard, with dog Zoe, said she fell in love with her home and the neighborhood of Whisper Valley.

Continued from page 21

excess power.

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative is providing underground electric lines that will serve about 70 percent of the development, with Austin Energy providing power to the remaining 30 percent.

“Whisper Valley was an amazing opportunity to start from scratch,” Lerche said. “We were committed to smart land planning. One of the keys was working with Bluebonnet to understand the utility’s policies and business to create a better infrastructure. But all that has to be done from the beginning; otherwise, it’s not feasible.”

One of the unique features of Whisper Valley is a community-wide, interconnected system of pipes that provide geothermal heating and cooling for residents. The “geogrid” consists of vertical pipes in boreholes 300 to 360 feet deep at each home. These long pipes are connected by horizontal pipes buried 6 feet below ground. Each home has a 2- or 3-ton Bosch geothermal heat pump in the attic. The pump transfers the warmth or coolness of the water into air that is further warmed or cooled to the desired temperature and circulated through ductwork into the home.

The geogrid was installed at the same time as the development’s other infrastructure, long before any homes were built. The cost of the geogrid is part of a home’s purchase price. Each resident pays \$60 per month to EcoSmart, which covers the geogrid’s opera-

I’ve got an 1,100-square-foot home with a dog door and I keep the thermostat at 75 degrees. I haven’t had an electric bill above \$60.

— Jayme Howard
Whisper Valley resident

tion, maintenance, repair and warranty costs.

“The geogrid and geothermal heat pumps in the homes result in a 60 to 70 percent reduction in energy demand,” Lerche said. That equates to significantly lower electric bills for Whisper Valley residents compared to homes with traditional heating and cooling systems.

Each home’s roof-mounted solar array is capable of generating 4 to 6 kilowatts of power. The homes are insulated with high-density spray foam in the walls and enclosed attic spaces. They include a technology package that has Google Fiber high-speed internet service, Nest smart home thermostats and alarm systems, energy-efficient appliances and wiring for electric vehicle chargers.

Jayme Howard and her two dogs, Cato and Zoe, moved to Whisper Valley from San Marcos in April. She loves the community’s “vibe” and its sustainable living features, especially the solar arrays, energy-efficient homes and community gardens.

“I’m originally from Las Vegas,” Howard said, “so I can’t grow anything. But I buy the

produce grown at the community gardens during the farmer’s markets we have.”

Howard works from home, so she really appreciates the geothermal air conditioning. “I’ve got an 1,100-square-foot home with a dog door, and I keep the thermostat at 75 degrees,” she said. “I haven’t had an electric bill above \$60.”

Howard knew she was in the right place the first time she saw her home.

“I didn’t want a big house,” she said. “I looked at townhomes, but I have a 12-year-old lab who doesn’t do stairs. I just fell in love with this house.”

Lerche said the key to Whisper Valley’s success is the willingness of everyone involved to take a step in an energy-efficient and sustainable direction.

“We all knew there was a better way to develop land and design and build homes,” he said. “We just had to find the right time and the right place.”

For more information on Whisper Valley, go to whispervalleyaustin.com. ■

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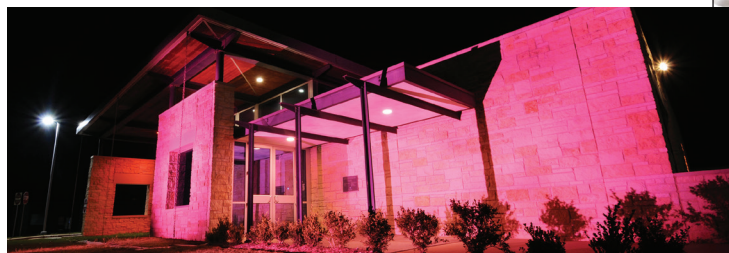
The power of pink

Bluebonnet is passionate about community and supports worthy causes, such as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Since 2012, during the month of October, we have been illuminating our member service centers in pink, field crews have donned pink hard hats, service trucks have sported pink ribbon decals, and employees have been wearing pink shirts on select days. Members may stop by a member service center – in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart or Manor – to pick up a self-exam reminder card and a fabric pink ribbon pin to support the cause.



Bluebonnet lineman Doug Schlemmer, left, wears a pink hard hat in support of the cause.

Are you or someone you know a breast cancer survivor? Share your story of strength and hope for possible use on our social media pages. Please send your story (100 words or less) and a photo to Jen Schattle at jennifer.schattle@bluebonnet.coop. (Sarah Beal photos)



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OFFICE CLOSING

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Nov. 12 in observance of Veterans Day.

BOARD MEETING

Bluebonnet's Board of Directors will meet at 9 a.m. Oct. 16 at Bluebonnet's Headquarters, 155 Electric Ave. (formerly 650 Texas Hwy. 21 East), Bastrop.

MAGAZINE QUESTIONS?

Contact Lisa Ogle at 512-332-7968 or email lisa.ogle@bluebonnet.coop.

A GUIDE TO PLANTING BLUEBONNETS



Dreaming of a blue spring?

Now is the time to plant your seeds

When the hills and plains of Texas turn blue, you know that spring has sprung. But fall is the kickoff season if you want bountiful bluebonnets in spring. You don't need a green thumb to plant and care for bluebonnets. The state flower's ability to survive winter freezes and then bloom and thrive in bone-dry soil makes it the perfect Texas wildflower. Here are planting and growing tips from the Texas Department of Transportation and Texas A&M University System's Aggie Horticulture.



FREE SEEDS!

Stop by one of our member service centers – in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart and Manor – to pick up a free packet of bluebonnet seeds while supplies last.



WHEN TO PLANT

Bluebonnet seeds can be planted between Sept. 1 and Dec. 15, but for best results plant by mid-November. The flowers start blooming in some parts of the state as early as January and as late as May. Blooms last about a month.

DIRECTIONS

- 1** Select an area with at least 8-10 hours of direct sunlight a day. Bluebonnets grow best in alkaline soils that are well drained and at least moderately rich in nutrients. In clay soil, build a raised planting bed at least 6 inches high and add 3-4 inches of organic material to the soil, such as compost, tree leaves or old hay.
- 2** You'll need 8-10 seeds per square foot, so an ounce will cover about 135 square feet.
- 3** For small areas, seeds can be sown by hand or with a hand-held seed spreader. Cover seeds with no more than a quarter-inch of soil.
- 4** Gently water the seeds every three days (if it doesn't rain) for about three weeks to help them establish. Avoid fertilizer. The drought-tolerant flower is one of the toughest natives in Texas.

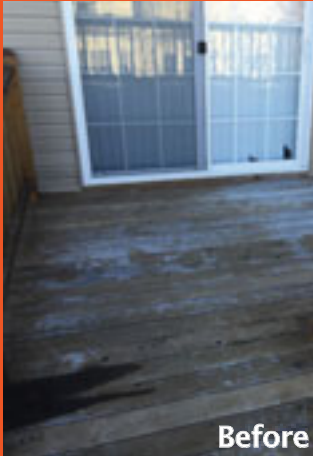
POST-SEASON STRATEGIES

Harvest bluebonnet seeds by gathering the browned pods before they explode and scatter seeds. Air-dry seeds on newspaper or paper towels and store in a water-resistant container with a packet of silica gel if you have one.

TEXT BY SIENNA RODRIGUEZ ✨ PHOTOS BY SARAH BEAL

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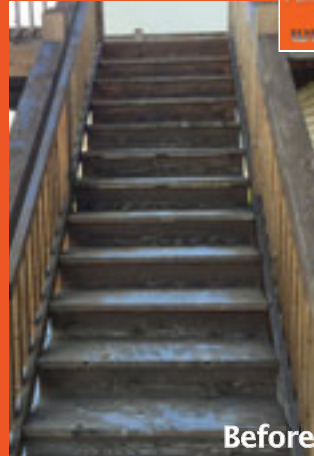
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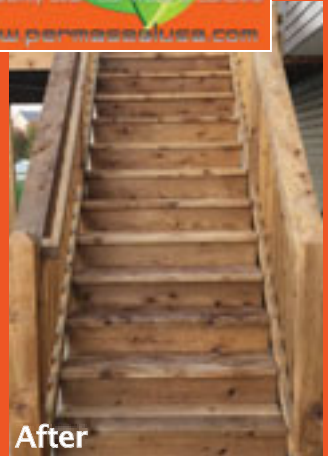
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Bass Reeves, Lawman Extraordinaire

Could the West's first African-American deputy marshal have inspired the Lone Ranger?

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

BASS REEVES CAME TO TEXAS FROM Arkansas as an enslaved 8-year-old with the William Reeves family in 1846. He would go on to become the first African-American U.S. deputy marshal west of the Mississippi and among the most relentless lawmen of his or any day.

When William's son, George, went to fight for the Confederacy during the Civil War, Bass was sent along with him. At some point, Bass lit out for Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) and never encountered the Reeves family again.

Bass Reeves found refuge in Indian Territory with the Seminole, Creek and other tribes and later bought land near Van Buren, Arkansas. He married Nellie Jennings, a Texas girl, in 1864 and grew crops, raised livestock and reared five boys and five girls.

In 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant ordered Judge Isaac C. Parker to bring law and order to Indian Territory. Parker authorized the hiring of 200 deputy marshals, and Reeves, an occasional scout and guide for deputy marshals, was one of them. Reeves was big (6 feet, 2 inches) and already a legendary marksman, and he knew the country.

Reeves also turned out to be dedicated and fearless. He worked for 32 years as a U.S. deputy marshal and reportedly brought to justice 3,000 felons, all but 14 of them alive.

Art T. Burton, author of the 2006 biography *Black Gun, Silver Star: The Life and Legend of Frontier Marshal Bass Reeves*, isn't sure about that 3,000 number, even though it came from Reeves himself in a 1902 interview. Even so, Burton found



many newspaper accounts of Reeves bringing in a dozen or more desperados at a time.

Burton's lifelong fascination with Reeves began when he was 11. He saw a movie about Wyatt Earp and asked his grandfather if there were any black marshals in the Old West. "There was one," his grandfather told him. "His name was Bass Reeves." Burton sought out family members and others who were around during the marshal's heyday and listened to often-fantastic and nearly always unverifiable stories about Reeves. But once retired as a history professor, he got to wondering if some of the stories might be true, which led him to write the biography.

"He was the baddest of the bad," Burton says. "He was an expert with a rifle and a pistol. And if you were hiding, he would find you."

Reeves operated, Burton says, without fear or favor, arresting the minister who baptized him for selling illegal liquor and even his own son, Bennie, for killing his wife. It's hard to compare him to anybody, except maybe the Lone Ranger. And Burton does make that comparison.

Burton notes that U.S. marshals work-

ing in the region at that time, including Reeves, routinely hired Native Americans to work with them, and he found instances of Reeves repaying strangers for their kindness and hospitality with silver dollars. Perhaps that compares to how the Lone Ranger handed out silver bullets to verify his identity.

The original Lone Ranger wore a black mask, and Burton found several accounts of Reeves using disguises to capture bad guys. Many of the desperados Reeves arrested were sentenced to prison in Detroit, where *The Lone Ranger* radio show originated.

While Burton readily admits there is no conclusive evidence to support the notion that Reeves was the prototype for the Lone Ranger, he believes that Reeves "is the closest real person to resemble the fictional Lone Ranger that we have."

Of course, there's also the possibility that the creators of the radio show just made up the character. But Reeves was the real deal. He died in 1910, but, oddly, no one knows where he's buried.

Burton believes he's still in disguise.

Writer Clay Coppedge is the author of *Forgotten Tales of Texas* (The History Press, 2011).



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The Great Pumpkin

'TIS THE SEASON WHEN ALL THINGS pumpkin flavor our lattes, cookies, quick breads and more. No complaints here—the subtly sweet richness of pumpkin gives everything from soups to muffins a luscious texture and comforting, even nostalgic appeal. When I heard Ruth Reichl, the former editor of *Gourmet* magazine, describe the following recipe, I knew I had to give it a try. A small whole pumpkin (sometimes called a sugar or pie pumpkin) is layered with toasted bread and cheese; filled with cream, chicken stock and a few aromatics; and baked until the filling melds with the tender pumpkin flesh. Delight friends and family by serving the whole baked pumpkin at the table, then carve it into quarters.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

Stuffed Pumpkin

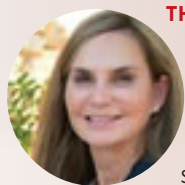
- 1 small pumpkin (about 4 pounds)
- 1 loaf French bread (such as baguette), cubed (about 6 cups)
- 12 ounces grated cheese (such as Gruyère, Swiss, Emmenthal or sharp white cheddar)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme or sage
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch grated nutmeg
- Pinch cayenne
- Vegetable oil, for brushing

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Slice off the top of the pumpkin (as though you were making a jack-o'-lantern) and use a metal spoon to scrape out the seeds and strings. (Spread the seeds out to dry and eat later.)
3. Place the bread cubes on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until lightly toasted, about 9 minutes.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Recipes

The Great Pumpkin



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

MARI HALEY | CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Haley's swoonworthy riff on flan has a subtle, appealing pumpkin flavor that melds perfectly with its caramelized syrup. With a silky texture that's slightly more substantial than traditional versions, the flan makes for a pie stand-in on Thanksgiving. Haley says it's also a "great dessert for a Mexican-themed dinner" and "really complements a Cajun-spiced turkey."

Family Style Pumpkin Flan

CARAMEL

1 cup sugar

CUSTARD

5 eggs, at room temperature
1 cup sweetened condensed milk
1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin purée (not pumpkin pie filling)
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¾ cup whole milk

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees with the rack in the middle of the oven.
2. **CARAMEL:** Pour the sugar into a small, heavy-bottomed saucepan and place over low heat, stirring constantly until the sugar melts into a golden liquid. Carefully pour the hot, caramelized sugar into an 8-inch metal (not glass) cake pan and allow to cool completely.
3. **CUSTARD:** Beat the eggs with an electric mixer at low speed until combined (do not whip the eggs into foam). Add the sweetened condensed milk, pumpkin, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and vanilla and mix at low speed just until evenly combined. Add the milk and beat at low speed

- until well-blended (do not overbeat).
4. Place the cake pan in a larger pan (like a lasagna pan), then pour the egg mixture into the cake pan over the cooled caramelized sugar. Carefully pour hot water into the lasagna pan until it reaches about ⅔ up the side of the cake pan to create a water bath, then place combined pans in oven.
 5. Bake 50 minutes or until the flan is firm to the touch but not solid. (To double-check for doneness, insert a knife into the center and about halfway down into the flan—the knife should come out clean.) Remove the pans from the oven and carefully remove the cake pan from the water bath. Allow the cake pan to cool on counter, then cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least one day or up to two days.
 6. When you're ready to serve, run a table knife around the side of the cake pan to release the flan. Place a deep serving plate on top of the cake pan and, while holding the plate and pan tightly together, invert. The caramel will run down the sides of the flan. Serve in wedges or large spoonfuls, topped with a sprinkle of cinnamon if desired. ▶ Serves 6–8.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

- Remove from oven and cool slightly.
4. Layer the bread and cheese inside the pumpkin, leaving about ½ inch at the top (the filling will expand a bit during baking).
 5. In a medium bowl, whisk together the fresh herbs, chicken stock, cream, salt, black pepper, nutmeg and cayenne. Pour the mixture into the pumpkin, using as much as you need to cover the top layer of filling. Place the top back on the pumpkin, brush the outside with oil, then bake on a rimmed baking sheet 2 hours, until the pumpkin is very tender.
 6. Allow the pumpkin to cool 10–15 minutes, then slice it into quarters. Make sure you scoop up the pumpkin flesh with the bread and cheese mixture. ▶ Serves 4.

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Muffins

KELLY LASTER | PEDERNALES EC

You can use regular or mini chocolate chips in these easy-to-love muffins (they're perfect for school parties or potlucks). "Our children used to ask to bring these to school on their birthdays to share with their classmates instead of cupcakes," Laster says. "It's been a family favorite recipe for the last 20 years."

4 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin purée
1½ cups vegetable oil
3 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees and apply nonstick spray to 2 muffin pans (or line them with paper cups).
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs, sugar, pumpkin and oil until smooth. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Stir the dry ingredients into the pumpkin mixture until just combined, then fold in chocolate chips.
3. Fill the muffin indents about ¾ full, then bake 16–20 minutes or until golden and a toothpick inserted in the center of a muffin comes out clean. Remove from

\$100 Recipe Contest

March's theme is **Winner, Winner, Chicken Dinner**. Roasted? Stewed? Fried until crisp? What's the word on your best bird? The deadline to submit a recipe is **October 10**.

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heat and cool the muffins in pans 10 minutes before transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely. ▶ Makes 24 muffins.

Curried Pumpkin Soup With Cilantro Chutney

JANET ROSE | SAN BERNARD EC

We love the creative, exotic spin on this silky soup. Curry, bright orange juice and a cilantro chutney pair beautifully with the sweetness of pumpkin. “This soup can be served hot or cold,” Rose writes, “and can be made with any winter squash in place of the pumpkin. You can also use canned pumpkin purée.”

SOUP

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped shallots
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 6 cups cubed fresh pumpkin (about a 4-pound pumpkin)
- 1 tart apple (preferably Granny Smith), peeled, cored and chopped
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup orange juice (preferably fresh)

- 2 tablespoons curry powder
 - 1 teaspoon minced fresh dill
 - 1 teaspoon grated orange zest
 - 1 cup heavy cream
- Salt and pepper to taste

CILANTRO CHUTNEY

- 2 cups fresh cilantro (leaves and tender stems)
- ½ yellow pepper, diced
- 1 hot chile (preferably red), seeded and chopped
- ¼ cup roasted sunflower seeds
- ½ teaspoon roasted cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon orange juice

1. SOUP: Melt the butter in a large saucepan (or Dutch oven) over medium heat. When the butter has melted, add the onion, shallots and garlic and cook, stirring, until the vegetables are softened (but not brown), about 5–7 minutes. Add the pumpkin, apple, chicken broth, orange juice, curry powder, dill and orange zest. Bring the mixture to a boil, then lower heat and simmer about 40

minutes, until the pumpkin is very soft.
2. Remove the soup from heat and allow to cool briefly, then purée the mixture in a blender or food processor (in batches if necessary). Return the purée to the pot, stir in the heavy cream, season to taste with salt and pepper and rewarm, if necessary, but do not allow the soup to boil.
3. CHUTNEY: Combine all the ingredients in a food processor or blender and process into a coarse purée. Add additional sunflower seeds if the chutney is too thin. Serve immediately, or cover with plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator up to one day in advance.
4. To serve the soup, ladle it into bowls and garnish with a spoonful of the cilantro chutney. ▶ Serves 6–8.

COOK'S TIP For a thicker texture, drain the pumpkin before puréeing, reserving the liquid, then add enough broth to create the consistency desired. This soup has a bright citrus flavor—to tone it down, use ½ cup orange juice and an additional ½ cup chicken broth.

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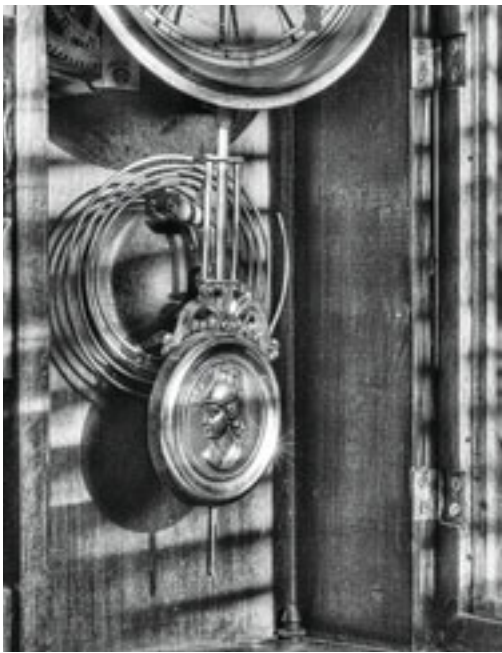
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Clocks

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WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



▲ **REAGAN FERGUSON**, Central Texas EC: "The clock was given to my great-grandparents as a wedding gift in November 1885 in Medina."



▲ **PAUL GARCIA**, Medina EC: Old windup clock that still works.



▲ **BETH WEST**, Wood County EC: "This is the face of the grandfather clock that my father-in-law purchased in Italy many years ago."



◀ **CHERI HANSON**, Tri-County EC: The Wise County Courthouse in Decatur.

▼ **SHARON BLACK-GREENE**, Pedernales EC: The University of Texas Tower clock.



UPCOMING CONTESTS

FEBRUARY	TWO OF A KIND	DUE	OCTOBER 10
MARCH	TREES	DUE	NOVEMBER 10
APRIL	MILES AND MILES OF TEXAS	DUE	DECEMBER 10

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

ONLINE: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests. We do not accept entries via email. **MAIL:** Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that *Texas Co-op Power* cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.

Pick of the Month Inaugural Celina Oktoberfest

Celina October 13
(972) 382-3300, celinaoktoberfest.com

Oktoberfest promises live music from festive bands, a tempting assortment of traditional German foods and a bountiful beer garden. Wear traditional German lederhosen or a dirndl to the festival and get in free. Don't worry about missing college football: Games will be shown on a massive LED screen.



October

7

Arlington Cirque Zuma Zuma, (817) 543-4308, levittpavilionarlington.org

Burnet Our Mother of Sorrows Catholic Church Fall Festival, (512) 756-4410, omoscc.com

Caldwell Holy Rosary Annual Homecoming Bazaar & Picnic, (979) 567-3667, holyrosaryfrenstat.com

11

Tyler [11-14] Fall Fun Horse Show, (903) 882-8696, southboundshows.com/fall-fun

12

Lake Worth [12-13] Bullfrog Westfest Rodeo, (817) 237-9755, nwtlions.org/rodeo

13

Beaumont Dogtober Fest, (409) 838-2202, dogtoberfestbeaumont.com

Bluff Dale Fall Into Bluff Dale, (817) 575-9487

October 11
Tyler
Fall Fun Horse Show



Emory Oktoberfest, (903) 473-2465, emorytx.com

Stonewall VFD Fall Fish Fry, (830) 644-5571, visitfredericksburgtx.com/events

14

College Station Aggieland Humane Society's Wiener Fest, (979) 775-5755, aggielandhumane.org/wienerfest

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Corpus Christi Padre Island Art Walk, (361) 949-7114

19

Jefferson Cruise Night, (903) 665-3733, visitjeffersonstexas.com

Woodville [19-20] Harvest Festival, (409) 283-2272, heritage-village.org

20

Liberty Hill Harvest Festival, (512) 965-3260, crosstrackschurchumc.org

Mineral Wells Crazy Kicker 100 Bike Ride, (940) 745-0807, crazykicker100.com

Richmond Texian Market Days, (281) 343-0218, georgeranch.org

Roxton Saturday Night Festival, (903) 346-2939

21

Georgetown Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas Buddy Walk, (512) 323-0808, dsact.org

26

Wimberley HerbFest, (832) 287-9366, hillcountryherbs.org

Kerrville [26-28] Kerr County Fair & Midway, (830) 257-6833, kerrcountyfair.com

27

Frisco Gary Burns Fun Run and 5K, (469) 633-6860, friscoisd.org

Marble Falls Autumn Flight Disc Golf Tournament, (512) 267-6310, flatcreekestate.com



**October 26
Wimberley
HerbFest**

Milam Gaines-Oliphint House's 200th Birthday, (409) 383-3880

San Marcos Farmer Fred's Harvest Fall Carnival, (512) 393-8400

28

Schertz Bexar County Czech-Slovak Festival, (210) 492-7128, bexarcountyczechheritagesociety.com

Zuehl Redeemer United Church of Christ Harvest Festival, (830) 914-2168

November

3

Mineola Pedal for Paws Bike Ride, (903) 638-6902, mineolapedalforpaws.com

Stephenville Woofstock, (254) 413-4664, pawsofstephenville.net

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Go With the Flow

A visit to the Laredo Water Museum is an immersion in the wonders of the Rio Grande

BY EILEEN MATTEI

BATHED IN BLUE LIGHT, A TOILET ON A pedestal offers the first clue that the Laredo Water Museum takes a humorous approach to a serious topic.

“The Water Museum is about appreciating the importance of water and keeping the water supply safe,” says Wes Barbarena, plant operations supervisor of Laredo’s Jefferson Water Treatment Plant.

Why does the museum display a toilet on a pedestal? Because one-third of water used in homes goes down the toilet. With exhibits such as that one, the city of Laredo’s Water Treatment Division hopes visitors will grasp the connection between water demand and the environment.

Visitors like me soak up information in arcadelike interactive exhibits, complete with blinking lights and joysticks. A hands-on immersion in water, so to speak, makes a difference, says Maria Romo, museum project specialist. “Teachers tell me they like that the kids learn while looking and playing. It helps them remember and make connections to lessons in class. Kids tell me they will come back with their brothers and sisters to have fun here and learn about water.”

At the museum entrance, a wall of bubbles shows water use facts such as the number of gallons of water needed to produce a vehicle, a pair of jeans or a cup of coffee. A terrazzo map invites me to walk along a scale model of the 1,900-mile-long Rio Grande, allowing me a bird’s-eye view to explore its watersheds and tributaries.

Inside the 30-foot-long Water Treatment Tunnel (a simulated 72-inch diameter water pipe where dim blue lights create the illusion of a watery atmosphere), I travel with water on its journey from the muddy Rio Grande to clear potability. Motion-activated, action-packed



One of the interactive displays at the Laredo Water Museum.

videos on each side of me explain the six-stage process (disinfecting, clumping, agitating, purifying, filtering and underground storage). This process treats as many as 48 million gallons daily.

In the main exhibit hall, the Water World pool illustrates how currents move plastics and trash around the ocean. At Water and You, I step on a scale, and flashing lights show how many gallons of water I tote around daily. Humans are, after all, 60–75 percent water. One station challenges you to guess how much water you use at home for bathing and washing clothes and dishes. Other kiosks focus on agriculture, drought and wastewater.

And that blue toilet? The display recommends using low-flow or dual-use toilets along with a blue dye test kit to find if your toilet leaks. Conservation suggestions include low-controlled aerosol faucets that reduce water use up to 50 percent along with xeriscaping and rainwater harvesting.

At a station labeled What You Can’t See in Water, a giant, simulated petri dish

reveals squiggles, clumps and bubbles moving in water. I navigate the microscope-joystick through magnified parasites, bacteria and water contaminants.

Romo says students like to pump water by hand into a 5-gallon container, feeling the energy it takes. They can learn more about the almost 800 million people worldwide who do not have access to clean water and sometimes risk waterborne illnesses like cholera, typhoid and amoebic dysentery. “Kids see the impact of polluting on the river, the environment, and want to stop it,” she adds.

Outside, a nature trail edged with Turk’s cap, cenizo, yucca, skeleton-leaf goldeneye and tropical sage slopes down to the Rio Grande. The lush and colorful native plants require minimal water and attract green jays, scissortail flycatchers and countless butterflies.

The multisensory message is easy to absorb: Take good care of our water.

Eileen Mattei, a Nueces EC member, is a Texas master naturalist in Harlingen.

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