

GRANDMA IS A
TIKTOK STAR

HOLIDAY SIDE DISHES
FOR YOUR GATHERINGS

WHEN TEXAS REACHED
INTO WYOMING

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

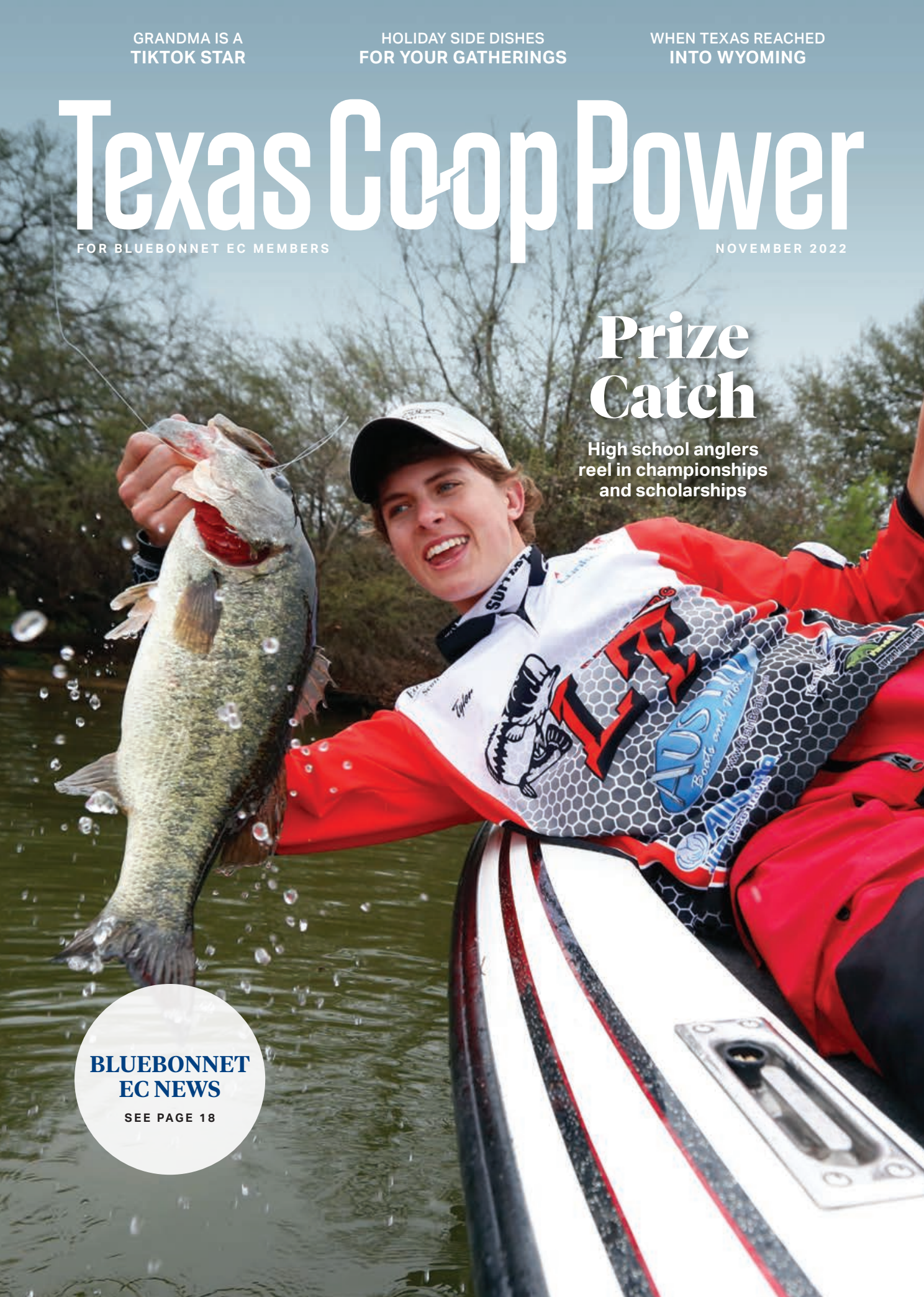
NOVEMBER 2022

Prize Catch

High school anglers
reel in championships
and scholarships

**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

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November 2022



08

Grandma Goes Viral

She's a TikTok star whose down-home videos have amassed a global following.

*By Mark Wangrin
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

12 Lakes' Allure

High school anglers get their hooks into lucrative tournament prizes and experiences.

*Story and photos
by Erich Schlegel*

ON THE COVER

Tyler Anderson of Lake Travis High School lands a bass during a tournament.

Photo by Erich Schlegel

ABOVE

Dawn Hodges has put her Bellville kitchen on the social media landscape.

Photo by Scott Van Osdol

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Over the Moon

WANT TO SEE a total lunar eclipse?

The moon will pass through the darkest part of the Earth's shadow November 8, a phenomenon that will be visible in Texas wherever skies are clear.

Check it out 2:01–7:58 a.m. It's the last chance to see a total lunar eclipse from Texas until March 14, 2025.



Edible Edifice

The Traditions Club near Texas A&M University holds the world record for the largest gingerbread house, built in November 2013 in Bryan.

The brown gingerbread bricks lacquered in frosting required 1,800 pounds of butter, 7,200 eggs, 7,200 pounds of flour and nearly 3,000 pounds of brown sugar.

All told, the house stacked up to be 60 feet long, 42 feet wide and 10 feet tall. Oh, and it contained nearly 36 million calories.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I ...

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 September prompt: **Rural life is ...**

Seeing the dust rise a mile away and knowing you better get the laundry off the line and folded before mother pulls into the driveway.

BARBARA TWEED
TRI-COUNTY EC
FORT WORTH

Seeing more tractors go by your house than cars.

JOHN AND SHERRIE MOORE
BLUEBONNET EC
PAIGE

When you see every star in the sky and you can hear every sound that nothing makes.

COREY JACOB
PEDERNALES EC
DRIPPING SPRINGS

Knowing and helping your neighbor even though he's acres away.

ROBERT LANKFORD
HOUSTON COUNTY EC
APPLE SPRINGS

Far from Walmart.

ANGEL GORKA
CECA
MAY

Visit our website to see more responses.

75 Years of Insight

Meet the Press, the longest-running program on American TV, first aired November 6, 1947.

Dig This

NOVEMBER 4 is Arbor Day in Texas.

Your electric cooperative wants to keep you safe and your power on, reminding you that regardless of where you're planting, never dig without first calling 811 to locate underground utilities.



Landmark Election

Edith Wilmans became the first woman elected to the Texas Legislature when Dallas County voters chose her 100 years ago this month—November 7, 1922.

She served one term in the House and then ran unsuccessfully for governor.

Make sure to cast your vote on Election Day, November 8.



S-U-R-R-E-A-L

That's how San Antonio teen Harini Logan, above, described winning the 2022 Scripps National Spelling Bee in June.

Surreal could also describe Texans' prowess at spelling. Three of the other 12 finalists call Texas home. And Logan joins six other Texans who have won outright or shared titles since 2014.

That includes three from the state who were among the octo-champs in 2019—the only time eight contestants were co-champs.

Contests and More

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TAYLOR CALLERY

Roll Call

“In 1959 my bus driver, Mr. Wisely, gave me a Standing Liberty quarter when he saw me crying over losing my Big Chief tablet.”

DAN KING
LAMAR ELECTRIC
PARIS

Returning Home

I loved the article showcasing young people returning to the family farm as entrepreneurs [*Connecting With the Land*, September 2022]. I am in a similar circumstance with my rancher father in a San Saba nursing home.

We have been in the area for five-plus generations, but I have lived all over and find I, too, am a “weirdo.” Glad to see I am not alone.

I was also pleased to see the article highlight how one family set up a business inviting more diverse communities, including LGBTQ and people of color, to the area to camp.

Michelle Pollock
Hamilton County EC
Lometa

This is a delicious burger [Homemade Popper-Topped Burgers, August 2022]. And the topper can also be tweaked into a topper for something hot off the grill. Yum.

MELINDA WOOD
SASARAK
VIA FACEBOOK

Costly Payoff

Kirk Tidwell’s statement, “I only get paid once a year, and this is my payday right here,” shook me [*Prized Fibers*, July 2022]. I guess I have always known that farmers only get paid when crops are sold, but seeing it in writing made it so real. Farmers and others in agriculture should be the most appreciated workforce in this country.

Roberta McLaughlin
Heart of Texas EC
Lorena

Landry’s Followers

As I traveled around the country, I tried to schedule trips to coincide with a Cowboys game [*The Most Glorious Autumn*, August 2022]. I watched Coach Landry sign autographs in every hotel lobby for almost 30 minutes before he could make it to the elevator.

Bill “Cowboy” Lamza
San Bernard EC
Hempstead



JULIA ROBINSON

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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Watch Grandma Cook

She's a TikTok star whose down-home videos have amassed a global following

THE MOST UNLIKELY TIKTOK INFLUENCER

in Texas lives in an old country house behind a scattering of oak and hickory off Highway 36 about 5 miles north of Bellville, which is about the time it takes to drink a beer, judging by the number of empties Dawn Hodges usually finds beside the roadway in front of her farm.

Quick-witted and flashing a smile beneath her piercing blue eyes, this Houston native is 76 years old, not quite 5 feet tall, uses glasses sparingly and can hear a visitor knock on the back door from her kitchen at the other end of the house.

We mention the kitchen because that's how we got here. Dawn cooks—well. And she loves to share her recipes on a social network most septuagenarians are as likely to use as a skateboard.

"I don't have the big head," says a bemused Dawn. "I'm not feeding off it—but I am enjoying it. I never thought people would be so interested in watching a grandma cook."

And yet, here she is, a TikTok star who has posted 173 videos and boasts more than 200,000 followers; her three-minute video on how to make pickles has 1.9 million views. At a follower's request, she filmed a shorter video with her 17-year-old grandson, Caden, and his friend, sampling the pickles, crunching loudly and looking happy. It got 166,800 views. Heck, a TikTok of her riding a tractor got 42,400 hits.

If there's one thing about a grandmother being a TikTok star that makes sense, it's that Dawn loves to talk. A visitor could come with 30 minutes' worth of questions and leave



OPPOSITE Dawn Hodges serves up a plate of fresh-baked oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. ABOVE Hamburger steak, as TikTok viewers see it come together.

four hours later with a notebook full of scribbling and a belly full of her delicious chocolate zucchini cake. (Yes, her recipe is on TikTok.)

A question about her cooking might lead to a yarn about Willie, the ill-fated family pig. One about how many critters she has on her farm turns into a tale of Squeaky, a sturdy, good-tempered feral cat who likes to kill gophers and drag them above an open door in her garage, much to the dismay of her two dogs—and anyone standing there when the door comes down.

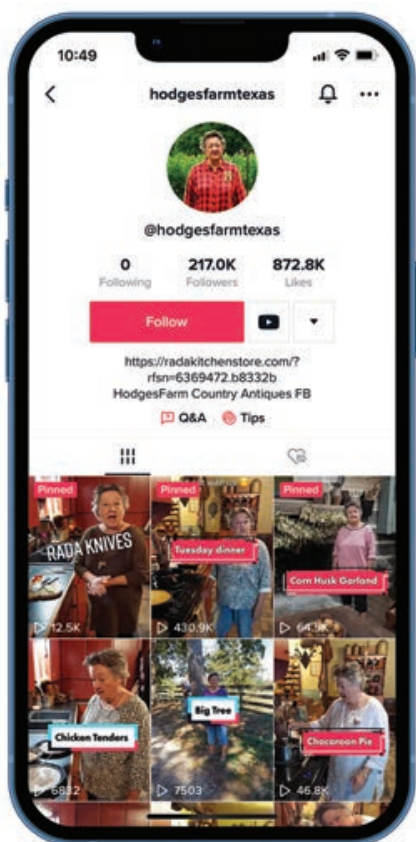
Outside the house, cobbled together from homes and parts of homes from the 1800s and filled with antiques of the same period, is the rest of the L-shaped, 95-acre

spread. There's the potting shed, a garden, a log cabin and an older structure surrounded by an overhanging porch that served as a commercial kitchen when Dawn and her late husband, Doug, gave a go at a business—a result of her fame as the Pimento Cheese Queen of Bellville, a story for another day—but now houses antiques and a refrigerator she stocks with farm eggs that neighbors can stop by and pick up on the honor system. Out back is the barn, a chicken coop, pasture, pond and the home of her daughter, Amy Owens.

Amy sparked Dawn's TikTok adventure because she wanted others to enjoy her mom's prowess in the kitchen.

"Well, I've always wanted to do that," Amy says, "because she's really good at telling people what to do. Anybody will tell you that."

And Dawn could always cook. Anybody will tell you that, too.



FROM LEFT Millions of viewers like seeing what Hodges is up to in her kitchen. Grandson Caden Owens shows the simplicity of producing a TikTok video. “I never thought people would be so interested in watching a grandma cook,” Hodges says.

In October 2020, Doug passed away. He spent 31 years as an office and then business manager at San Bernard Electric Cooperative before retiring in 2005, and he slowly succumbed to dementia. “It was the worst time of my life,” Dawn says.

Looking to lift her mother’s spirits, Amy suggested producing videos for YouTube and later Facebook. Dawn admits the videos were long and unfocused, but it was valuable experience.

One evening about a year ago, Amy, Caden and Dawn were eating supper when Caden said, “You should put them on TikTok. That’s where the videos go crazy.”

So they posted a blackberry custard pie video, and it has since gotten over 54,000 views. “And we’re like, whoa,” Amy recalls.

Her fame took off from there, with Dawn getting to share her passion with strangers all over the world.

“I don’t care whether you believe it or not, but God puts stuff on your heart,” she says. For her, that has almost always been cooking.

As a child, Dawn spent summers on her Aunt Mary’s farm. Mary was a superb cook, and Dawn was inspired. Dawn’s mom “cooked because she had to,” so Dawn became the self-

taught family chef-in-residence.

Enter TikTok, where creators can make short videos, ranging from a few seconds to up to 10 minutes, often set to music and modified by filters. It skews young—almost half its users are under 25.

After making its international debut four years ago, TikTok has captured short attention spans among Americans. The platform boasts 3.5 billion mobile app downloads worldwide. It’s a popular platform for businesses, marketing and entertainers trying to make it big and people who create memes, attempt unusual challenges and generally try to go viral.

Dale Blasingame hates the expression. “I think marketers use it too much,” says the assistant professor of practice in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Texas State University, where he specializes in social media. “They promise everything will go viral. If you’re producing consistently good content, you have a much greater chance of something finally hitting than if you’re doing nothing but trying to go viral all the time.”

Which brings us back to Dawn. Blasingame can see why she’s successful.

She looks different from many TikTok performers, he says. She’s genuine, displaying a rare comfort level with the platform, unlike many her age. Her videos have solid production value (“Just me and my fancy Samsung phone,” Amy says), aren’t overproduced and are clear, simple and easy to understand.

And she’s typecast for her role.

“When you stop to think about who you trust with cooking



tips, she kind of fits the exact bill, right?” Blasingame says. “Especially when you think about the typical TikTok user, who’s probably between 15 and 30. She’s Grandmother’s age.”

Not much is known about the algorithm TikTok uses, but one thing that’s obvious, Blasingame says, is that it’s equal opportunity.

“The greatest aspect of TikTok’s algorithm is that you don’t already need to be a celebrity, a superstar or a big name or have a big following to become a shining star on TikTok,” he says. “Unlike Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, it’s the one platform where anyone, literally anyone, can produce one piece of content that can catapult them to tens of thousands, even a million, followers.”

That’s not lost on Dawn, who ponders the ridiculousness of becoming a TikTok influencer.

“This blows my mind,” she says, shaking her head. “I thought TikTok was just a bunch of kids jumping around and acting crazy.”

She has also become aware of the flip side of TikTok fame—the trolls. Commenters will rag on her for using Velveeta instead of traditional cheese, for mentioning God a lot or any one of a dozen or more things.

“I had to almost ban a troll last night for just being tacky

“This blows my mind. I thought TikTok was just a bunch of kids jumping around and acting crazy.”

because Mom used a packet of gravy on her hamburger steak instead of making it homemade,” Amy says.

Dawn has her go-to reply for those instances: “I just respond with a heart emoji.”

The rest of her followers bring her joy. She hears from fans in Finland, Mexico, Canada, Germany and France, to name a few, and some ask for recipe substitutes when they can’t find some of the ingredients she grows in her spacious garden. And then there’s the Corpus Christi artist who created an oil painting of Dawn in 80 minutes, recorded a time-lapse video of the process and sent the TikTok to her.

She’s got a new fan, too. Blasingame, who became a vegetarian in May, still is intrigued by Dawn’s videos. There are the biscuits and sweet potato casserole, of course, but there are also memories of his own mother, who passed away in 2021.

“She kind of even looks like my mom a bit; they have a very similar hairdo,” he says sweetly. “When I watched her videos, that was the first thing that popped into my mind. My mom was a great cook.

“I wish I had videos like this preserved in time, you know, to try to remember all of her amazing recipes.”

Thanks to TikTok and Dawn Hodges, he kind of already does. ■



Lakes' Allure

High school anglers get their hooks into lucrative tournament prizes and experiences

How about a big fish tale?

Within the first few casts at the 6 a.m. start of one of the biggest Texas high school fishing tournaments this year, Hunter Boren and Joe Fleming hooked the biggest catches of the day—within seconds of each other. Captain and boat driver Mike Boren had to scramble to figure out which fish to net first.

“Mine weighed 7.95 pounds, and seconds later Joe caught his that weighed 7.6 pounds,” Hunter Boren says. “Those first few minutes were insane madness.”

With those fish, the Pearland High School seniors won the Texas High School Bass Association’s Angler of the Year tournament on Lake Conroe in June. Three weeks earlier, the team scored nearly the same quick hits to finish seventh in the THSBA State Championship on Belton Lake in Temple.

On the first day of the state championship—within minutes of the sunrise start—Fleming caught the first and biggest fish of that day. The 5.81-pound bass jumped once, then Fleming quickly wrangled it into the net, pumped his fist and high-fived Hunter Boren.

The Angler of the Year event is the final tournament in the THSBA circuit, which includes more than 50 tournaments. According to Matt Tolnay, who heads operations for the series, more than 3,100 anglers from 300 Texas schools compete for more than a half-million dollars in scholarships.

Boren and Fleming each won \$3,000 scholarships and \$1,000 gift cards from Academy Sports + Outdoors for winning Angler of the Year. Because THSBA isn’t part of the state’s University Interscholastic League, it can award prizes and scholarships.

The THSBA is the largest fishing circuit for high school anglers, but there are several smaller series, including Deep East Texas High School Fishing, based at the Sam Rayburn



OPPOSITE Early positioning—4 a.m.—helped Joe Fleming, left, and Hunter Boren land 30 pounds of bass and first-place trophies. ABOVE Boat captain Mike Boren prepares to net one of Fleming’s bass.

Reservoir; the Central Texas High School Tournament Trail; and Texas B.A.S.S. Nation, run by Bassmaster.

On THSBA tournament days, boat ramps are busy with teams backing their crafts into a lake in the dark well before dawn, their glowing red and green navigation lights reflecting on the water. The tournament organizer gathers the teams to announce the rules and time for weigh-in.

Then, as dawn’s colors creep into the sky, anglers stand on their bows as the national anthem is played over a loudspeaker. When the starting horn goes off, teams zoom off to their first fishing spots, which they had identified in their preparation for the day. Tournaments are typically won in the first hour of fishing.

The rules are similar at most tournaments: one or two anglers per boat, driven by a registered adult “captain” (usually a parent). One- and two-day tournaments will usually start at 6 a.m., with weigh-in starting mid-afternoon. Anglers keep fish in live wells in their boats, then transfer them into oxygenated water troughs using a perforated bag for weigh-in. The heaviest bag of fish wins. The fish are then released back into the lake.

Most tournaments hold a practice fishing day before the competition begins, offering crucial preparation for competitors learning a new lake. Experienced anglers will know the fish patterns for that time of year—a serious advantage. Another way to get a leg up: Rise early on tournament day.

“In the Angler of the Year tournament, we were in our spot just after 4 a.m. and waited there to hold that spot until we could start fishing at 6 a.m.,” Hunter Boren says. “Fishing tournaments is competitive, but after weigh-in, it gives you the opportunity to walk around and meet new people from around the state.”

More than 3,100 anglers from 300 Texas schools compete for more than a half-million dollars in scholarships.

Mark Hooker, coach for the high school fishing teams from Montgomery, north of Houston, calls his program the most decorated in the state. “This year we have 92 anglers and are very competitive within our own team,” he says.

That competitive spirit led one of his teams to a historic national championship.

Although most high school anglers are boys, more and more girls are getting out on lakes. Montgomery anglers Fallon Clepper and Wyatt Ford, students at Lake Creek High School and members of MidSouth Electric Cooperative, won the 2022 High School Bass Fishing National Championship—the top tournament in the U.S. for high schoolers—in June at Pickwick Lake near Florence, Alabama.

The team spent 11 days practicing at the lake, researching fish patterns and water levels. Their hard work paid off, and Clepper became the first female national champion. “We definitely had our game on,” says Clepper, who split the \$10,000 cash prize with Ford. “My parents and grandparents were jumping up and down and cheering at the weigh-in.”

There’s big money to be made in professional bass fishing. But these days, there’s another route for turning passion for the sport into a career.

Tyler Anderson founded the Lake Travis High School fishing team when he was a sophomore, finishing fourth at state his senior year, in 2015. When he got to Texas A&M University, he joined the school’s fishing team and started expanding a YouTube channel he started back in 2013. Nine years, 782 videos and a quarter-million subscribers later, Tyler’s Reel Fishing boasts more than 32 million views, and Anderson is able to make a living off his content and sponsorships.

“I’m pulling my new 2022 FXR21 Skeeter bass boat with a Yamaha 250-horsepower engine and Native Slayer 10 kayak on my truck roof rack—all sponsors of mine,” Ander-

son says over the phone as he drives to Michigan to film smallmouth bass fishing. “I get paid by them and from YouTube ads.”

Anderson, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member, helps pro anglers Alton Jones and Alton Jones Jr. of Lorena, outside Waco, with their video content.

“I enjoy being outdoors with friends and family, making memories,” Anderson says. “As soon as I realized I could make a living fishing, I compared that to my friends’ jobs and realized that I could make a career out of my passion if I worked as hard as I could.” ■

ABOVE Wyatt Ford, left, and Fallon Clepper teamed up to win the 2022 High School Bass Fishing National Championship, making Clepper the first girl to do so.



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FRESH OUTTA TEXAS



Rick Gaskamp drives from Brenham to Houston every Monday through Friday. The self-employed carpenter works on high-end homes in the city. The odometer on his 2013 Chevy Silverado, below, shows over

412,000 miles, but as of early October it topped 414,000 miles. He pulls out of his driveway at 5 a.m. for an approximately 80-mile trek, and, if all goes as planned, he is home by 5 p.m.

On the roads . again

Commuting subsided during the pandemic, but many Bluebonnet-area drivers have returned to the weekday trek. Some of them never stopped.

Story by Sharon Jayson ● Photos by Laura Skelding

RICK GASKAMP is a Brenham native who loves his hometown so much that rather than move, he's spent the past 21 years as a weekday commuter to Houston. He's got 414,000 miles on his 2013 black pickup, which is just the latest in a series of trucks and vans he's driven to and from work most weekdays.

Every Monday through Friday, the self-employed carpenter hops in his Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD and drives some 80 miles to various job sites in the city, where he works on new and remodeled multimillion-dollar properties for a homebuilder. He earns more than he did when he worked closer to home. Each one-way trip takes an hour and 15 minutes, an endurance stretch Gaskamp knows well from his thousands of hours of experience.

He leaves home at 5 a.m. and returns 12 hours later.



"I know what time to leave to get there before the traffic is bad," he said, explaining that he can be at a job site by 6:15 a.m. if he leaves at 5 a.m.

"I've learned a lot of shortcuts," said Gaskamp, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member. "When I get halfway to Houston, I listen to Houston traffic (radio reports). If there's a wreck on the way I normally go, there are multiple ways to

Continued on page 20



n

Laura Fohn commutes from The Woodlands neighborhood near Bastrop to Dell Seton Medical Center in downtown Austin. Fohn drives 26.4 miles each way.

Commuting in & around the Bluebonnet area

The U.S. Census Bureau's most recent data is a five-year estimate (2016-2020) of the number of workers commuting daily. The 2020 data skewed lower than normal because of the pandemic's impact on commuting. County totals include areas outside Bluebonnet's service area. Travel is mean time, rounded.*

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BASTROP COUNTY

Commuters: **37,595**
Travel time: **35 minutes**

BURLESON COUNTY

Commuters: **7,334**
Travel time: **28 minutes**

CALDWELL COUNTY

Commuters: **18,916**
Travel time: **34 minutes**

FAYETTE COUNTY

Commuters: **10,785**
Travel time: **24 minutes**

HAYS COUNTY

Commuters: **112,192**
Travel time: **31 minutes**

LEE COUNTY

Commuters: **7,911**
Travel time: **30 minutes**

EASTERN TRAVIS COUNTY

78653 ZIP code, includes Manor area

Commuters: **14,598**
Travel Time: **30 minutes**

78617 ZIP code, includes Del Valle area

Commuters: **13,577**
Travel time: **32 minutes**

78621 and 78747 ZIP codes, includes parts of Bluebonnet service area

Commuters: **22,402**
Travel time: **32 minutes, 34 minutes**

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Commuters: **15,617**
Travel time: **21 minutes**

* Mean travel time is obtained by dividing the total number of minutes by the number of workers 16 and older who did not work at home. Most times are rounded.



Continued from page 18

go around it.”

That is, unless he's already on the road where the collision occurred. “Sometimes you just got to wait,” he said.

The commuting culture had a major shakeup during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown and the rise of remote work. No one knows if it will return to pre-pandemic levels. Today, nearly 60% of U.S. workers have the opportunity to work from home at least one day a week, according to a 2022 report by McKinsey & Company, a global consulting firm. Of those workers, 35% can work from home five days a week, the report said.

That's all well and good for those who spend a lot of time at a desk and in virtual meetings, but many Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative members have jobs that require them to return to their workplaces. Plus, steady growth and development in the region — and employers beckoning workers to come back — means plenty of commuters are returning to Central Texas roads.

Before the pandemic, more than 80% of Texas workers drove to their jobs alone, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. During the height of the pandemic, carpooling was discouraged to contain the virus spread.

Now, along with more workers returning to the office as well as hybrid work schedules, experts say the nature of rush hour has changed, with many doing errands at various hours rather than on the way to, or from, work. The price of gasoline, and the inevitable wear and tear on vehicles, also factors into today's commuting choices.

In 2019, the average one-way travel time to work was at an all-time high of 27.6 minutes, according to the U.S. Census. But experts say the 2020 Census commuting data released this year is



Meredith Brown picks up her son, Tate Brown, 4, along her commute on the way home from work, above. Brown drops him off at his preschool on her way in to work. She commutes from Luling to her job as assistant to the executive director of housing and residential life at Texas State University in San Marcos. The 30-mile commute takes her about 45 minutes each way.

skewed by the pandemic, making a pre-COVID comparison unreliable.

“We just don’t know what (commuting) is going to look like a year or two or five from now,” said David Schrank, a senior research scientist at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute in Bryan. “If you put your 2019 hat on, we had a pretty good idea about what a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday looked like if you were one of those commuters. We spent decades getting to that point. All that got undone in a year or two (by COVID) and now it’s going to take a few years for that to settle in and figure out what that’s going to look like.”

Legions of workers are redesigning their ways of working. Their transportation decisions will depend on employment opportunities, growth in their area, road construction or improvements, the availability of mass transit and carpooling, and, of course, remote-work options. Bluebonnet members across the cooperative’s 3,800-square-mile service area are making these decisions daily.

For Meredith Brown of Luling, the 45-minute drive to her job at Texas State University in San Marcos means she’s on Texas 80 door-to-door — unless there’s a problem.

“The other day, there was a wildfire and they had 80 blocked off,” she said. But because she grew up in the area, Brown knew how to use back roads to get to work.

Brown has been assistant to the executive director of housing and residential life at Texas State since 2015, but she has commuted from Luling only for a few months. She and her family moved from family-owned property in another part of Caldwell County in mid-July. Her commute used to be just 20 minutes. Now, with just one lane in each direction on Texas 80 and three traffic lights, she can drive the majority of the 30 miles to the office with a 65 mph speed

limit until Martindale, 7 miles east of San Marcos. There, the speed limit drops to 55 mph.

“Commuting doesn’t bother me,” Brown, a Bluebonnet member, said. “It’s not bad for me — it’s not like I-10 or I-35 that have massive traffic. It’s not super congested.” She makes the drive in her sturdy 2018 silver Ram 1500 pickup.

Brown’s youngest child attends preschool in Martindale, so they leave their house about 6:15 a.m. She drops off her son about 15 minutes later, then works on campus from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. She picks up her son and they typically arrive home by 5:45 p.m.

Independent transportation research consultant Alan Pisarski, of Falls Church, Virginia, has spent 35 years analyzing commuting. Workers whose jobs involve ideas and information — a rapidly growing portion of the workforce — can more readily work remotely, he said. Also, many urban dwellers moved to the suburbs during the height of the pandemic and are “much less interested in coming back,” he said.

“It will be 2023 before I can say it’s comparable to 2019,” he said.

Today, even the definition of a commute is unclear, Schrank, the A&M research scientist, said. “The question is ‘Are you a commuter if you drive in one day a week?’ Commuters used to be five-day-a-week travelers,” he said.

Roads in parts of Bluebonnet’s service area are congested now, in part, because of the jump in population over the past two years, said William Frey, a census and demographics expert at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. In particular, he noted growth in Bastrop and Caldwell counties.

That is no surprise to Jason Giulietti. He’s president of the Greater

Continued on page 22

Buckling up for a long drive to work? Just breathe.

By Denise Gamino

The grind of a daily commute to work can leave you frazzled and a bit breathless.

Knowing how to calmly breathe through the stress can be the best fix.

Slowing your breathing by making your exhalations twice as long as your inhalations, for example, can reduce commuting stress, according to health research.

“Slow breathing practices could transform the automobile commute from a depleting, mindless activity into a calming, mindful experience,” according to a 2018 study by Stanford University researchers and others.

The study, “Just Breathe: In-Car Interventions for Guided Slow Breathing,” used voice-guided prompts and vibrating seat and back cushions to remind drivers to achieve slow, rhythmic breathing. But drivers really don’t need electronic prompts. Any driver at any time can work to slow down their breathing just by lengthening exhalations, such as inhaling to a count of 5, holding briefly, and then exhaling to a count of 10.

And, working to keep your breath slow and steady in traffic is a free exercise with big stress-management benefits.

Here are other ways to stay safe and alert during long commutes:

- Concentrate on watching the road and keeping your hands on the wheel. Never text or email while driving, even if you can use voice commands only. Use the time to stop working.
- Do isometric exercises. Contract your abdominal muscles by pulling the belly button inward toward your spine and hold for 10 to 60 seconds. Or contract and release thigh or calf muscles — don’t forget to breathe.
- Change the angle or position of the driver’s seat regularly so your spine isn’t in the same position every time you drive.
- Expect unexpected road delays and eliminate worries about being late to work by leaving 15 minutes early.
- Try the occasional different route to or from work, if an option is available, to relieve boredom. Knowing the back roads and alternate routes can also be handy in case of gridlock.
- Listen to podcasts, and try ones about topics you know little about. Change up what you listen to: Try practicing a foreign language or exploring audiobooks.
- Bring your own coffee or water, protein bars and fruit for emergencies, and have backup power supplies for your phone or flashlight.
- Use a lumbar or seat cushion that provides support and helps absorb road vibrations.

Sources: Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Healthline, National Institutes of Health, Robert Half human resources company, Self magazine



Continued from page 21

San Marcos Partnership, an economic development nonprofit that serves the City of San Marcos, as well as Hays and Caldwell counties, which he said are experiencing “exponential and record-setting growth.”

Giulietti is a transplant, having moved to Texas from Connecticut in early 2019.

“I live in New Braunfels,” he said. “When I look at my neighbors, every person on my street is from another state.”

Besides residential development, fiscal 2021 set a record for his organization, completing 14 new development project deals on the heels of six the previous year. Six of the 14 projects are within the city of San Marcos. A 1.1 million-square-foot Amazon facility opened in November 2021, adding to already existing Amazon sites and cementing Amazon as the largest employer in the San Marcos region.

“What we measure that drives the jobs and residents here is they don’t have to commute to an Austin or to a San Antonio for those jobs,” Giulietti said. “The more we bring the jobs locally, the less they have to commute.”

That’s not the case for Laura Fohn, a Bluebonnet member who lives in The Woodlands neighborhood of Bastrop near Texas 21 and Texas 71. She commutes 26.4 miles each way to Dell Seton Medical Center at the University of Texas near downtown Austin.

“If I leave before 7 a.m., I (miss) the rush at Del Valle. Once you cross over into Travis County, it gets kind of rough,” she said. For her return home, she leaves work around 6 p.m.

Trouble spots on her route are mostly on Texas 71, at intersections where traffic lights and construction are still clogging the road.

For her in-office hours as director of operations, Fohn said she leaves home as early as she can to spend more time with her family later. Although she said she works more than the 8-to-5 day, her aim is not to waste time driving. Her morning commute takes about 45 minutes, and her drive home takes about an hour.

Traveling between 7-9 a.m. or 4-6 p.m. would take her an hour each way, she said. “It depends on the day,” she said, “but I want to get in early and not leave time sitting on the road.”

Although Fohn’s commute is the same distance as when she lived in South Austin 10 years ago, Fohn said her travel time from Bastrop is quicker. During the pandemic lockdown, she still had to be at her



Laura Fohn drives a four-door Lexus SUV and says she uses the commute time to make phone calls and listens to Bréne Brown podcasts and audiobooks to help pass the time. In the photo below, she holds her phone while parked. When driving, though, she uses the car's hands-free voice prompt system.



office at the medical center every day.

“That’s when I knew what (a quicker commute) could be. I could get home in 25 minutes.”

Two years ago, Fohn traded in her Toyota Sequoia SUV for a smaller, four-door Lexus SUV. During her time in traffic, she “makes a lot of phone calls” and listens to podcasts and books by popular researcher and lecturer Brené Brown.

“I make it a positive since I know I can’t control the situation,” she said. “I don’t let it get me down, although it does sometimes.”

Margaret Gómez, the Travis County Commissioner for Precinct 4, has been in Del Valle for many years, and watched its growth and development for decades.

“There is quite bit of commuting between Travis County and Bastrop County and Caldwell County,” she said. “Most of it is families

Are you one of these kinds of long-haul commuters?

The U.S. Census Bureau tracks commuting on roads across America. It has designations for three types of long-distance commuters. With the decrease in long-distance work drives starting in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s likely the numbers of these long-haul commuters has dropped. Still, Central Texas drivers may find themselves in one of these categories of far-distance trekking to work.

EXTREME COMMUTER

This is someone who travels 90 minutes or longer to work, one way (that’s 3 hours a day of driving!)

LONG-DISTANCE COMMUTER

A worker who travels 50 miles or farther to work, one way, for a total of 100 miles driven every workday.

MEGA-COMMUTER

Let’s hope you’re not in this category. This is a commuter who drives for 90 minutes or longer and 50 miles or farther to work, each way, each workday.

who have left Austin to get away from the high taxes and high cost of living.”

She calls Del Valle “the last of the rural areas of Travis County.”

Gómez said major projects in Del Valle, including the Circuit of the Americas motor racing track and facilities — as well as Tesla’s global headquarters and Gigafactory Texas — have fueled even more development.

Manor in eastern Travis County has become a more affordable option than Austin, said Scott Dunlop, Manor’s development services director. The city “is still a better value,” he said. “A majority of respondents (to a 2016 survey by the City of Manor, conducted by GrantWorks Inc.) said they moved here because of housing costs.”

More than half of respondents had lived in Manor five years or less, and almost 70% said they commuted to Austin for work. Just 14% reported working in Manor.

An online City of Manor survey also conducted by GrantWorks in summer 2021 for city planning into 2050 asked about the length of residents’ one-way commutes. Almost 41% said it took 30 to 45 minutes to get to work; almost 28% said 15 to 30 minutes and 24% said more than 45 minutes. Just 7% said less than 15 minutes.

Such short commutes are but a dream for Gaskamp, the carpenter who drives to Houston five days a week. If he doesn’t end his workday by 3:30 p.m. and get on the road within 10 minutes, he faces a two-hour minimum commute home.

Each weekday morning, he tunes into Brenham radio for news and music until he crosses the Brazos River, where he loses that station and switches to radio news with Houston’s weather and traffic. He knows if he left his home at 6 a.m., his journey would take two hours rather than only 75 minutes when he leaves at 5 a.m.

It may sound like an extremely long commute to some folks, but Gaskamp’s system is finely tuned.

“The alarm goes off at 4 and I hit snooze once or twice and get a cup of coffee and pack my lunch,” Gaskamp said. “I’m so used to my routine.” ■

LET THERE BE

Lights!

Christmas parades, events and dazzling displays will light up Bluebonnet area nights. Help us spread the good cheer.

By Sidni Carruthers

THERE'S A LOT TO LOVE about the Christmas season in the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative service area. Start marking your calendar with can't-miss seasonal spectacles. Keep an eye on our social media in late November and throughout December for information about holiday events and activities — and impressive light displays — across the Bluebonnet region.

This list is not comprehensive. Please tell us about your community events or the best neighborhood light displays in any of our communities. See the "Christmas lights" box for contact information.

BASTROP: The city's River of Lights display runs 6-9 p.m. daily, Nov. 24-Dec. 31, at Fisherman's Park on Farm Street. The annual Lost Pines Christmas Parade will traverse Main Street from 6-8 p.m., Dec. 10.

BRENHAM: In downtown Brenham you can enjoy the Christmas Stroll starting at 6 p.m., Dec. 3, followed by The Storybook Christmas Parade.

CALDWELL: Christmas on the Square downtown is Dec. 10 and features holiday music, dancing and Santa.

ELGIN: The annual Holiday by the Tracks & Hot Cocoa Stroll will be Dec. 3. There are photos with Santa, shopping and the lighted Christmas parade, which starts on Main Street at 7 p.m. A live Nativity will be in Veterans' Memorial Park afterward.

GIDDINGS: The Christmas at Tejas lights are a feast for the eyes. Organizers at Tejas Camp and Retreat, 1038 Private Road 2191 in Giddings, promise it will be one of their biggest light displays yet. A maximum of 500 people per night can participate in three nights of activities, 5:30-10 p.m. Dec. 9-11. General admission is \$30; \$45 for VIP admission, which offers extra treats. Overnight stays are also available Dec. 16-20. Get more information at mytejas.org (search for Christmas at Tejas.)

LOCKHART: A Christmas to Remember in Lockhart is the first weekend in December. Activities start at 7 p.m., Dec. 2, with the Christmas tree lighting on the town square; 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Dec. 3, there will be activities downtown with vendor booths and entertainment; at 7 p.m., the lighted Christmas parade will travel



Bastrop's River of Lights brings holiday cheer to downtown from Thanksgiving until New Year's Eve. It is one of many displays across the Bluebonnet region. Photo courtesy of Visit Bastrop

Do you do it up big with Christmas lights?

Do people come from miles around just to see your house? Perhaps your community has a list of, or competition for, the best lights display. Tell us about it! Send pictures and information on where your Bluebonnet neighbors can find the most impressive home displays to sidni.carruthers@bluebonnet.coop. We will put a list together and spread the word on our social media.

down Market Street and loop around the Caldwell County courthouse.

LULING: Cookies and Carols will kick off holiday celebrations, 5-8 p.m., Dec. 2. The event will include a craft market, Christmas tree voting, photos with Santa, hayrides and more. This also marks the start of the Yule Trail's more than 140 lighted holiday signs downtown, which runs nightly Dec. 2-Jan. 6.

MANOR: Holidays in the Park returns to Timmermann Park, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Dec.

3, followed by a showing of "The Polar Express" movie in the park at 7 p.m. The festivities include an ice skating rink, food trucks, vendors, train rides, photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, inflatable figures and other activities.

ROUND TOP: The lighted Christmas parade and Holiday Fun event is Dec. 3. Starting at 10 a.m., events include holiday shopping, historical home tours, activities on the square and the lighted parade at 6:45 p.m.

SAN MARCOS: The Sights and Sounds of Christmas Festival will be open two weekends, Dec. 1-3 and Dec. 8-10, along the San Marcos River. Activities are 5:30-11 p.m. Along with lights and music, there will be a carnival, arts and crafts, photos with Santa and more. Admission is \$5 nightly, \$15 for a six-day pass and free for kids 12 and younger.

SMITHVILLE: The annual Festival of Lights and lighted parade on Main Street is set for Dec. 3. Events start at 10 a.m. with a holiday market at the Smithville Recreation Center, plus a fest area just for the kids, a cornhole tournament, live music and train rides. The day's events end at 9 p.m.

Information provided by city, chambers of commerce and location websites; event representatives.



Share your family holiday recipes

It's time to dust off grandmother's old box of recipes and whip up the family's favorite traditional dish for Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's.

But before you start, share that recipe with all of your Bluebonnet friends and family!

Submit your family's most beloved holiday recipe to sidni.carruthers@bluebonnet.coop or look for requests on our social media posts. We'll post them on our website at bluebonnet.coop/holiday-recipes. Want to start early? The first recipe is there, for Mimi Delk's Divine Divinity.

Thank you, veterans

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative is grateful to have 16 employees who are military veterans, and we are proud to serve all veterans and their families in our local communities. In addition to providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity, we care about the veterans in our service area and strive to show our appreciation through our actions and ongoing commitment to them and their families.

Bluebonnet employees who are military veterans are:

Eric Cobb
Thomas Ellis
Michael Guajardo
John Horton
Brandon Johnson
Keith Knobloch
Stanley Lillian
Matthew McGarr
Ray Meyer, Jr.
George Miller
Harvey Schnell
Dior Smith
Ryan Smith
Jorge Varillas
Matthew Waltzer
Jeffrey Williams

We are thankful for the brave men and women of the U.S. military and the daily sacrifices they make so that we can enjoy the freedoms their service affords us.

Keep an eye on our social media this Veterans Day as we continue to recognize and honor our nation's veterans.

OFFICE CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Nov. 11 in observance of Veterans Day and Nov. 24-25 for the Thanksgiving holiday. If you have a power outage, you can report it by texting OUT to 85700 (to register, text BBOUTAGE to that number), online at bluebonnet.coop, via our mobile app or by calling 800-949-4414. You can pay bills any time online, on our mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708 (select option 2 when prompted).

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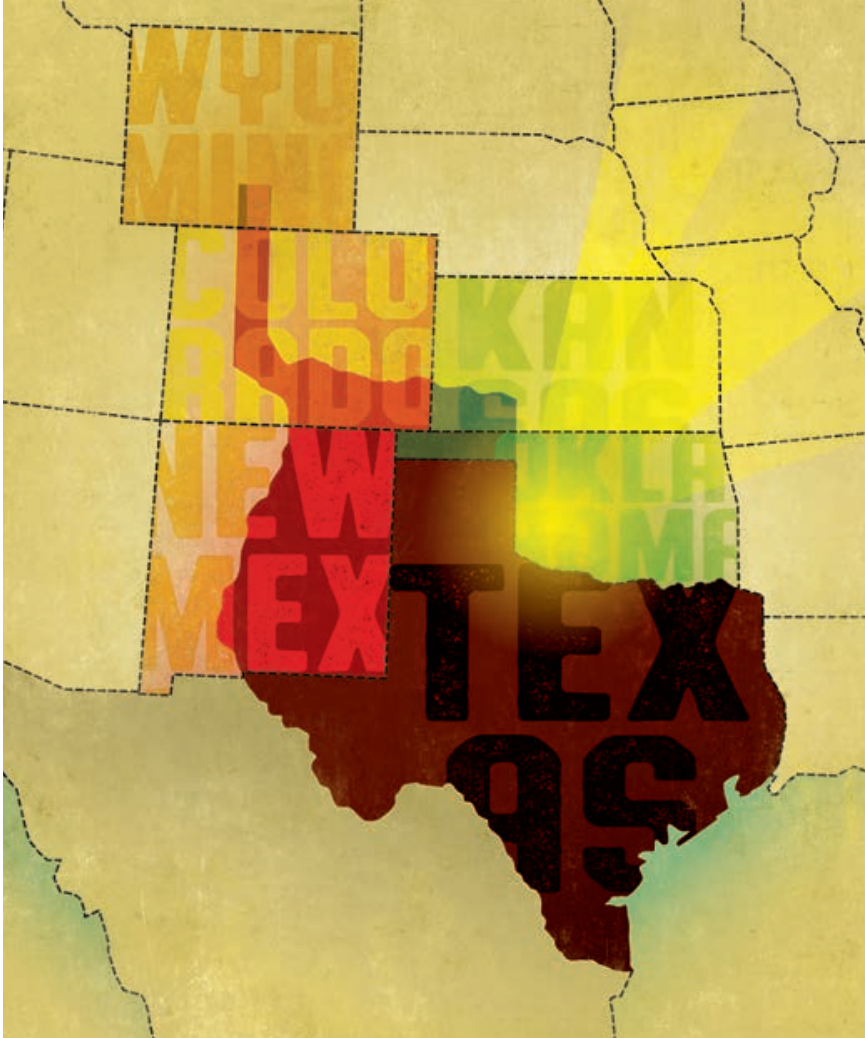
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Everything Was Bigger ...

Lucky folks in modern-day Wyoming were Texans in 1845

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY TRACI DABERKO

TEXANS HAVE A kind of proverb that goes like this: “Driving across Texas isn’t a trip; it’s a damn career.”

Texas is big, no doubt about that. But it used to be a lot bigger—by about one-quarter.

When the Republic of Texas joined the U.S. in 1845, Texas’ borders were dramatically different. The northern boundary stretched all the way up into what is today southern Wyoming. The northernmost town in Texas wasn’t Kerrick; it was Rawlins—some 1,400 miles from Brownsville. A trip like that in 1845 would have been measured in seasons, not days. “We’ll leave in early spring and get there before

winter sets in.”

That slice of land was Texas’ original panhandle, encompassing part of the Rockies. They called that area the stovepipe because that’s what it looked like: a long skinny stovepipe jutting northward. You can still find vestiges of Texas up there. For instance, there’s a stream in Wyoming named Texas Creek.

Texas used to include what is today the panhandle of Oklahoma. That territory comprises three counties, one of them still named Texas County. So some Oklahomans still live in Texas—well, Texas County, anyway. Today the northern Texas border aligns with the latitude

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



established in the Missouri Compromise that restricted slavery to states south of that line.

The southwestern corner of Kansas was also originally Texas. That’s when Dodge City was in Texas. *Gunsmoke* always did seem like a Texas series. We know that Marshal Matt Dillon was born in San Antonio, and his father was a Texas Ranger. It’s all coming together.

New Mexico used to be about half its current size because Santa Fe, Taos and all of the eastern part of the state were Texas. In fact, Texas was so big in 1845 that if you had put a hinge on the northernmost part and flipped it northward, Brownsville would have been in Northern Canada, next to Hudson Bay.

So what happened to all our land? The U.S. government bought it in 1850 for \$10 million. They bought our claims in present-day Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas and Oklahoma for what amounted to 15 cents an acre. It may seem like we sold out cheap. But that’s \$380 million in today’s money, and Texas desperately needed the money.

Texas’ leaders had a state to build, but the only true assets were land—and a hardened people with unbreakable spirits. So we sold the land, paid off debts and got a much more appealing shape—one that fits nicely on T-shirts.

Even without all that land, we’re no slouch of a state. You know if you’ve ever driven it. We still measure distance in time. We still feel like we’re crossing an enormous frontier when driving Interstate 10 through West Texas or Interstate 35 north and south. And this old Texas saying is still valid: “The sun has riz, the sun has set, and here we is in Texas yet.” ■

Holiday Sides

Tasty servings that just might take center stage

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

During the holidays, I gravitate toward the side dishes over any turkey or ham. Rolls are always a must at my house, and these Cheesy Ranch Rolls have become a family favorite. They're wonderfully soft with a zesty flavor, and any leftovers are perfect for sandwiches the next day. For a larger crowd, simply double the recipe.

Cheesy Ranch Rolls

2 cups flour, divided use, plus more as needed
2 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons (1 packet) ranch seasoning
2¼ teaspoons (1 packet) instant yeast
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup milk
2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, plus more for topping
1 cup shredded Gouda or cheddar cheese

1. In a bowl, combine 1 cup flour, sugar, ranch seasoning, yeast and salt.
2. In a microwave-safe bowl or liquid measuring cup, combine milk and butter. Microwave in 15-second increments until milk is warm to the touch but not hot. Butter does not need to completely melt; it will melt as you mix the dough.
3. Pour milk and butter into dry ingredients and mix well to combine. Add ¼ cup flour and shredded cheese and mix well. Stir in remaining flour in increments, just until dough forms into a ball. Scoop onto a lightly floured surface and knead dough 6–8 minutes, until smooth and springy, adding flour as needed to prevent sticking. Shape into a ball, cover with a towel and let rest 10 minutes.
4. Cut dough into 12 pieces and roll each piece into a ball, then place in a greased square baking dish. Cover again and let rise 30 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 375 degrees.
5. Once rolls have risen, bake 20–25 minutes, until golden brown. Let cool slightly, then brush with melted butter and serve.

SERVES 12

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Brussels Sprouts With Walnuts and Cranberries.





Praline Sweet Potatoes

LANELL MCDANIEL
SAM HOUSTON EC

This easy sweet potato dish has a wonderfully crunchy crumble topping. It's equally at home served as a side or dessert. You'll need 2–3 pounds of sweet potatoes. Excess potatoes can be used to make sweet potato waffles or pancakes.

POTATOES

3 cups cooked, mashed sweet potatoes

1 cup brown sugar

2 eggs, beaten

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup milk

½ cup (1 stick) melted butter

TOPPING

1 cup chopped pecans

½ cup brown sugar

⅓ cup flour

⅓ cup (¾ stick) melted butter

1. POTATOES Preheat oven to 350 degrees and butter a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. In a large bowl, combine sweet potatoes with brown sugar, eggs, vanilla, milk and butter. Pour into prepared dish.

2. TOPPING In small bowl, combine pecans, brown sugar and flour. Stir in melted butter with a fork until a crumble forms. Scatter evenly over the top of the sweet potatoes.

3. Bake 30–40 minutes, until topping is golden brown and crunchy.

SERVES 8

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Caramelized Onion Potato Medley Gratin

MARIAN EVONIUK
PEDERNALES EC



Potato fans, this one is for you! With three kinds of potatoes, caramelized onions and a pop of dill, Evoniuk's gratin will have you reaching for seconds and thirds.

SERVES 8–12



- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) unsalted butter**
- 2 large sweet onions, peeled and sliced**
- ⅓ teaspoon pepper**
- 1½ teaspoons salt, divided use**
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced**
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill**
- 2½ cups heavy cream, divided use**
- 1 pound Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced**
- 1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced**
- 1 pound red potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced**
- 2½ cups shredded Gruyere cheese, divided use**
- 1 green onion, chopped, or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives**

1. Set a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat and add butter, onion, pepper and 1 teaspoon salt, and cover. Cook 25–30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onions are lightly caramelized. Add garlic and dill and cook uncovered 1 minute more.

2. Pour in 2 cups heavy cream and bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer 3–4 minutes, stirring, until mixture is slightly thickened. Remove from heat and set aside.

3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with butter and set aside.

4. In a large mixing bowl, combine potatoes, remaining ½ teaspoon salt and 2 cups Gruyere. Pour in creamed onions and mix well, then pour into the prepared baking dish. Combine remaining ¼ cup cream and ½ cup Gruyere in a small bowl and spread over the top of the potatoes.

5. Cover with foil and bake 45 minutes, then uncover and bake until golden brown and bubbly, 30–45 minutes. Remove from oven and let stand 10 minutes, then garnish with chopped onion or chives and serve.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

INCREDIBLE EGGS DUE NOVEMBER 10

Perfect for breakfast, lunch and dinner, eggs make for a versatile main. What great dish do you hatch? Submit your recipes on our website by November 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Sweet Sour Red Cabbage

NANCY FILER
COSERV

Filer's family has been serving this dish during the holidays for nearly 100 years, and it's easy to see why. Tangy and lightly sweet, it goes well with any of your favorite main dishes.

1 head red cabbage, about 1½ pounds
4 slices bacon, diced
½ cup packed brown sugar

2 tablespoons flour
½ cup water
¼ cup white vinegar
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper

1. Shred cabbage and measure 5 cups. Boil a large pot of water and add cabbage; bring back to boil and boil 5 minutes. Drain, transfer to a mixing bowl and set aside.
2. In a large sauté pan, fry diced bacon over medium heat until crisp. Remove and drain on paper towels.
3. Discard all but 1 tablespoon bacon drippings. Return pan to medium heat and whisk in brown sugar and flour, taking care to break up any lumps. Whisk in water, vinegar, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until the mixture thickens, about 5 minutes.
4. Add the bacon and sauce to the cabbage, stirring gently to combine. Garnish with extra fried bacon if you like.

SERVES 6-8

Planning Makes Perfect

BY MEGAN MYERS

Wondering how much to serve at your next gathering? Use these guidelines when choosing dishes for the big meal.

Meat: 6 ounces per person (not including bones).

Appetizers: 6 pieces per person.

Potatoes: ½ cup per person.

Stuffing and casseroles: ½ cup per person.

Salad: 2 cups per person.

Vegetable sides: 1 cup per person.

Gravy and cranberry sauce: ¼ cup per person.

Rolls: 1-2 per person.

Keep in mind that as the number of side dish options grows, guests will likely eat less of each. Also, don't forget to plan for your favorite leftovers.



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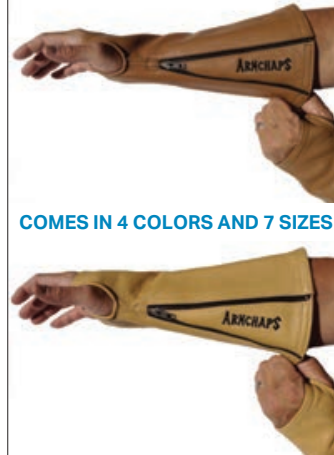
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Toe Tappin' in Turkey

Learn all about Bob Wills—the King of Western Swing—in his Panhandle hometown

BY CHET GARNER

IF YOU ASK someone to name the king of music, they'll likely mention Elvis Presley (the King of Rock 'n' Roll) or George Strait (the King of Country). However, true students of music genres will give credit to the everlasting King of Western Swing—Bob Wills. I took a trip to the Panhandle town of Turkey to pay homage to the legacy of this Texas-sized king.

Days generally pass by quietly in Turkey, unless you're here on the last Saturday in April, when thousands attend the Bob Wills Day celebration and keep string-pickin' circles going into the morning hours. I visited on a normal Thursday afternoon and found the main drag nearly empty, save for a few folks filling their bellies at Galvan's Restaurant. After polishing off a Mexican Platter No. 9, I scooted over to the old elementary school that's now the Bob Wills Community Center.

I wasn't too familiar with Wills other than a few of his hit tunes, like *San Antonio Rose* and *Bubbles in My Beer*. But inside this museum, I received a full-on education.

Wills spent much of his childhood in Turkey and began playing music right out of the crib, as his father was a champion fiddle player. Over time, Wills became enamored with musical styles that included jazz and blues. By the early 1930s, he had formed the Texas Playboys and created a new genre called Western swing, which blended all his favorite styles. It's a feat that landed Wills in both the Country Music and Rock & Roll halls of fame.

The museum is full of artifacts and stories of Wills' rise to stardom. Visitors are sure to leave with a new appreciation for the King of Western Swing—and a foot that won't stop stomping. ■

ABOVE Chet has fun fiddlin' around the tranquil town of Turkey.

TCP Chet tunes in to Turkey's pride and joy in his latest video on our website. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

NOVEMBER 09

Harlingen [9–13] Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, (209) 227-4823, rgvbf.org

11

Fort Worth Tarrant County Veterans Day Parade, tcvc@tcvc.us, fw2022parade.org

Lubbock Lubbock Symphony Orchestra: Madam Butterfly, (806) 792-8339, buddyhollyhall.com

Victoria Golden Crescent CASA Wine Pairing, (361) 573-3734, goldencrescentcasa.org

Salado [11–13] Scottish Gathering and Highland Games, (254) 947-5232, saladomuseum.org

Ingram [11–Dec. 16] ArtMart, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

12

Alvin Novemberfest, alvinrotaryclub@gmail.com, alvinrotary.org

Bastrop Red, White & Blue Veterans Appreciation Banquet, (330) 418-9164, rwbveterans.com

Burton Big Star Texas Night, (979) 251-4078, burtontexas.org

Elgin Veterans Appreciation Parade, (512) 281-5724, etx150.com

Henderson Heritage Syrup Festival, (903) 657-4303, hendersontx.us

Kerrville Veterans Day Car Show and Parade, (830) 792-2580, kerrvilletexascvb.com

13

Pearland Country Music Showcase, (281) 997-5970, visitpearland.com

14

Brazoria Henry Smith Day, (979) 345-3335, brazoriahf.org

15

New Braunfels [15-17] Festival of Trees, (830) 832-0089, facebook.com/festivaloftreesnb

17

Temple Taste of the Holidays, altrusatemple.org

Palestine [17-20, 23-27, Dec. 2-11, 16-Jan. 1] Walk of Lights, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

18

Bryan Lights On!, (979) 721-9506, destinationbryan.com

Alpine [18-19] Artwalk, (210) 218-1114, artwalkalpine.com

Henderson [18-20] The Magic of Christmas, (903) 392-0691, visithendersontx.com

New Braunfels [18-20] Weihnachtsmarkt, (830) 629-1572, newbraunfelsweihnachtsmarkt.com

Ingram [18-19, 25-27, Dec. 2-4, 9-11] A Christmas Carol, (830) 367-5121, hcac.com

19

Corpus Christi Wine Festival, info@corpuschristiwinefestival.com, corpuschristiwinefestival.com

MORE EVENTS >

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NOVEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

19

Henderson A Very Merry Market, (318) 780-0620, kvne.com

Luling Grinchmas Arts and Crafts Show, (830) 875-0123, lulingcc.org

Boerne [19-20] Fall Antique Show, (830) 329-2870, ci.boerne.tx.us

Fort Worth [19-20] Funky Finds Holiday Shopping Experience, (903) 665-7954, funkyfinds.com

Granbury [19-20] Winter Wine Walk, (817) 488-6789, crosstimberswinetrail.com

22

Wharton Christmas Holiday Parade, (979) 532-1862, whartonchamber.com

26

Jefferson Christmas Parade and Enchanted Forest Tree Lighting, (903) 665-3733, visitjeffersonstexas.com

Nacogdoches Wassail Fest, (936) 559-2500, nactx.us

San Angelo Santa's Santa Fe Christmas, (325) 486-2140, sanangelorailway.org

DECEMBER

01

Cameron Christmas Parade, (254) 697-4979, cameron-tx.com

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: The Miracle of Christmas, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

La Grange Schmecken-fest, (979) 968-3017, visitlagrangetx.com

Tyler Rotary Clubs of Tyler Christmas Parade, (903) 593-6905, visittyler.com

Paris [1-3] Texas BBQ Blowout, (903) 784-2501, cbabbq.com

02

Fredericksburg Light the Night Christmas Parade, (830) 997-5000, fredericksburg-texas.com

Brenham [2-3] Christmas Stroll & Lighted Parade, (979) 337-7580, jingle.cityofbrenham.org

03

Bowie Fantasy of Lights Christmas Festival and Lighted Parade, (940) 872-6246, cityofbowietx.com

Fredericksburg Kinderfest, (830) 990-8441, pioneermuseum.org

Round Top Houston Masterworks Chorus, (979) 249-3129, festivalhill.org

Aerials

We're flipping over the bird's-eye view these reader photos offer. Come along as they soar to capture the beauty of the Lone Star State.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 JIM BLAKE
COLEMAN COUNTY EC
Springtime over Trickham, taken with a Typhoon H drone.

2 ROY O'REAR
TRI-COUNTY EC
"Interference patterns in the waves made by a boat on Lake Arrowhead near Wichita Falls."

3 MIKE ZARELLA
PEDERNALES EC
"A hawk's-eye view of the Pedernales River in Blanco County before the current drought."

4 MIKE PRESTIGIACOMO
BARTLETT EC
Palo Duro Canyon State Park.



1



2



3



4

Upcoming Contests

DUE NOV 10 Land, Sea or Sky

DUE DEC 10 Riding the River

DUE JAN 10 Taking Flight



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



The Arable Twos

Thankfulness and hope for a toddler's trials and travails on the farm

BY MARTHA DEERINGER
ILLUSTRATION BY
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

MY GREAT-GRANDSON, Waylon, is 2 and carries all the baggage that that designation suggests. His temper tantrums are epic, but he also finds joy in everyday things and loves with his whole heart—except when his little sister wants to play with his toy tractors and trucks. “Look!” and “Wow!” are his favorite expressions, although I fear that someday soon the dreaded “No!” will find its way onto this list.

But when I watch carefully, I can already see roots sinking into the earth beneath his constantly moving (and usually grubby) feet.

Waylon is a fourth-generation Texas farm boy finding his place among the hay fields and rocky cow pastures of his Coryell County home. When he hears the rattley roar of a diesel engine starting up,

he runs toward it as if the possibility of Grandpa or Uncle Justin leaving the machine shed on a tractor without him might mark the end of the world. When the mad dash works and I see his red hoodie perched on Grandpa's lap inside the cab of that big green tractor, I know he is in 2-year-old heaven. I can still hear the echo of our son's excited voice when he was that age, yelling for a yank on the throttle: “Pull the smoker, Daddy!”

It's not just the boys. My daughter, an elementary school librarian, can still drive a hay truck with the best of them, and granddaughter Hannah, helping scoop silage into a cow trough at the age of 8, once leaned on her shovel and announced, “You know, I may run this place someday.”

Waylon has already watched a calf being born. He has learned to be quiet so the livestock won't be disturbed. He has checked cows in the pasture from Grandpa's lap on the seat of the Kawasaki all-terrain vehicle, and he's learning to count calves (although so far, he's not very reliable beyond six).

This is how farm kids learn who they are and find their places in the world. They pick tomatoes and squash in the garden and see firsthand where their food comes from, feed and water livestock, and drop fresh eggs in the dirt on the way to the kitchen. Waylon has stepped on stickers, stirred up fire ants and been knocked down by the new Lab puppy, but none of these experiences discourage him from his never-ending quest to be outdoors.

Waylon may grow up to be an electrician or a brain surgeon, but right now he is developing a respect—perhaps even a love—for the land that feeds us. I hope that will last a lifetime. ■

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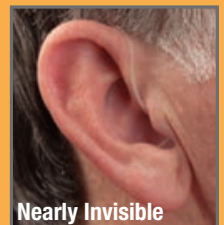
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Offer for new and qualifying former customers only. Important Terms and Conditions: Advertised price requires credit qualification, 24-month commitment, and eAutoPay. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 11/16/22. 2-Year Commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee at \$69.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 programming package, local channels, HD service fees, and Hopper Duo Smart DVR for 1 TV. Included in 2-year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$79.99 for AT120+, \$89.99 for AT200, \$99.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15). Regional Sports: RSN Surcharge up to \$3/mo. applies to AT120+ and higher packages and varies based on location. NOT included in 2-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. Premium Channels: 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$30/mo. for Showtime, Starz, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. Remote: The DISH Voice Remote with the Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey, or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. The Google Assistant Smart Home features require Google account and compatible devices. Google is a trademark of Google LLC. Other: Netflix streaming membership required. All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price lock are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$10.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 2 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Indiana C.P.D Reg. No. - 19-08615. ©2021 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$40 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability of 25 Mbps plan is subject to change without notice. The application of "Unlimited Data with no Hard Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly means that your access to the internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.