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IS BUSY AS EVER

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An old pecan tree's dazzling annual metamorphosis becomes a community tradition.

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## Everybody's Beeswax

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By Claire Stevens  
Photos by Eric W. Pohl

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Busy bees at Two Hives Honey in Manor.  
Photo by Eric W. Pohl



# Y2...What?



**THE WORLD SEEMINGLY** teetered on turmoil 25 years ago this month at the hands of Y2K, a supposed computer glitch that threatened to stymie systems as the calendar turned from 1999 to 2000. It was quite a big deal—though for TCP's editors and writers, not so much:

**Samantha Bryant:** *I was at my grandmother's house in Poolville, listening to the news on TV while my siblings and I did a Y2K-proof activity—a puzzle.*

**Chris Burrows:** *I was making sure our family computer kept ticking (by playing video games all night).*

**Alex Dal Santo:** *We were with neighbors, watching Space Jam. None of the adults seemed very concerned.*

**Claire Stevens:** *That was before my time, but my parents didn't even see midnight. I'm told they "went to bed hoping the world and digital appliances would live to see the next day."*

**Tom Widlowski:** *I was one of the 260,000 revelers packing Congress Avenue in Austin.*

Read *Black-Eyed Peace* on Page 25 to learn more about the experiences of Texans during Y2K.



## TCP Contests and More

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### RECOMMENDED READING

Download our issue from December 2004 and enjoy our look at holiday lights. Find it at [texascooppower.com/magazine-archives](https://www.texascooppower.com/magazine-archives).



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

**My favorite holiday lights are ...**

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

Here are some of the responses to our October prompt: **My favorite hand-me-down is ...**

Old recipes. You get to learn, by trial and error, how much a pinch and a dash actually is.

TABITHA FOUNTAIN  
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC  
SAN AUGUSTINE

My name. My dad named me after his sister. We both were Yvette Françoise "Sissy" Sherman.

YVETTE COOPER  
BANDERA EC  
BANDERA

A small screwdriver my dad gave me when I was about 6. I'm 75 and carry it on my key chain every day.

GARY ELLIOTT  
VIA FACEBOOK

Visit our website to see more responses.

## 75 Candles

Three Texans with storied careers in their chosen fields turn 75 this month.

- Hall of Fame golfer **Tom Kite** was born December 9, 1949, in McKinney.
- ZZ Top guitarist **Billy Gibbons** was born December 16 in Houston.
- Academy Award-winning actress **Sissy Spacek** was born December 25 in Quitman.



## OCTOBER 2024 There's No Party Like La Pitada

"I extend my gratitude for including such a small town like ours in your amazing magazine—and also the tradition we hold sacred, celebrating our Dallas Cowboys!"

SANTA GARCIA  
MAGIC VALLEY EC  
BROWNSVILLE



ERICH SCHLEGEL

## Hauling Grass

Hadn't seen lawn mower racing in years—since I left the hills of Kentucky [*Grassroots Movement*, October 2024].

Mark Wright  
Via Facebook

## Come Together

Thanks for the old Beatles memory [*Invading Dallas*, September 2024]. I saw them the night before in Kansas City. I was a sixth grader in Topeka, Kansas.

Larry Chabira  
Pedernales EC  
San Leanna

## The Cactus Experience

I have looked for a book—*Gunsmoke in the Redlands*, about feuds in San Augustine. Felton Cochran said he had the book in his hand, and two days later I had it in my hand [*Texas Book Man*, July 2024].

Buddy Hancock  
Deep East Texas EC  
Center



JULIA ROBINSON

I ventured into Cactus Book Shop about 22 years ago. Felton Cochran was so pleasant and welcoming, and I picked out several books totaling well over \$100. Back then, he didn't take credit cards.

I asked him to hold my books until I could come back in a few days with a check, as I was a 100-mile round trip from San Angelo. He insisted I take them with me and mail him a check later. He didn't ask for ID, phone number or anything.

Susan Wellborn  
Concho Valley EC  
Robert Lee

## Saltshaker Logic

I especially enjoyed the last two sentences: "Oh well, even the imperfect ones have purpose. I grabbed the saltshaker." We humans are imperfect and sometimes say or do something that rubs another person the wrong way [*Culling Time*, July 2024].

Instead of getting upset at someone, grab the imaginary saltshaker. Take what the other person said or did with a grain of salt.

Ted Pasche  
CoServ  
Argyle

## TCP WRITE TO US

letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

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

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American MainStreet Publications

An old pecan tree's dazzling  
annual metamorphosis becomes  
a community tradition

# Field of Beams

BY PETE ALFANO • PHOTOS BY R.J. HINKLE

A family gathering on Thanksgiving culminates in the pasture of a 10-acre ranch where a pair of old geldings, Zephyr and Max, graze during the day. In the middle of this equine playground is a pecan tree, standing like a sentry, having taken root about 30 years after Texas became a state.

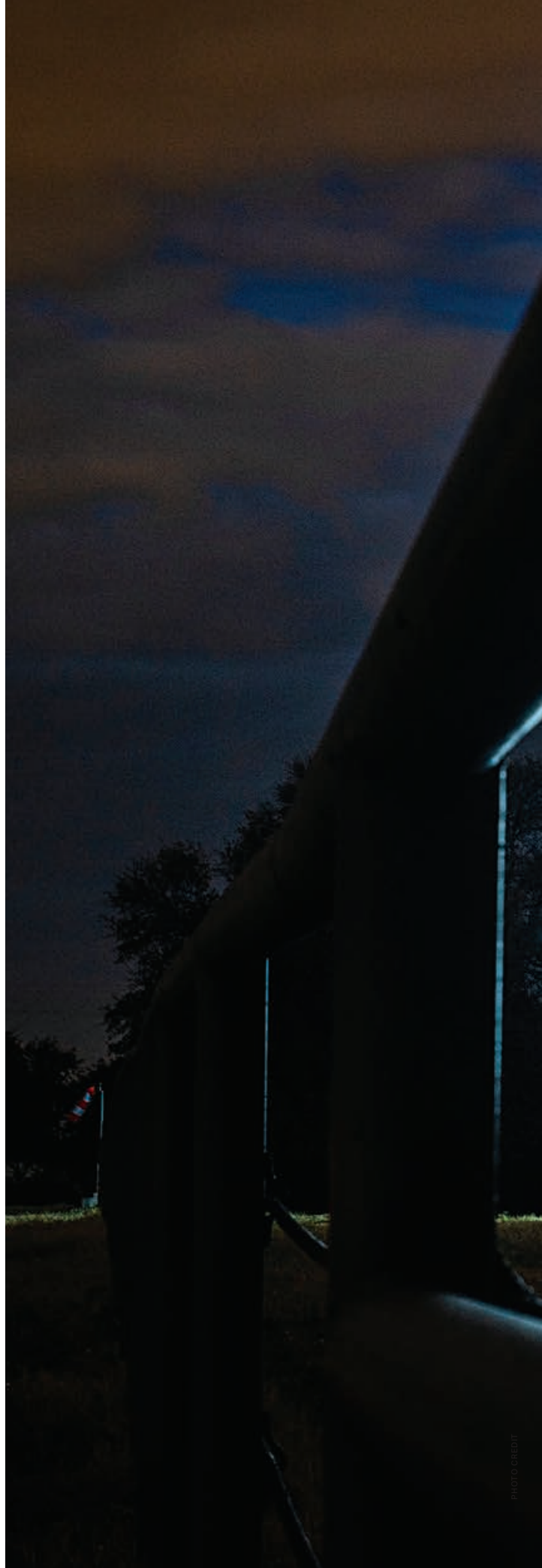
But for the past 17 years, the tree has been more than just a vestige of the past; it is the town of Bartonville's symbolic tribute to the holidays.

Without fanfare Barbara Nunneley first lit the nearly 50-foot-tall tree in 2007, when about 60,000 bright LEDs illuminated the darkness and could be seen from 3 miles away. The bright lights attract visitors who admire and photograph it or quietly take in the glow, reflecting on another year coming to an end.

"It's mesmerizing, almost a spiritual thing," says Jaclyn Carrington, mayor of Bartonville, 30 miles northwest of Fort Worth. "It is so black out because there are no streetlights, so all you see is this gigantic, beautiful bright tree. The first time I saw it, I thought, 'Wow, this is magnificent.'"

This month is the 18th renewal of a tradition Nunneley, a retired lawyer, initiated to honor her father, Earl, a larger-than-life personality, she says, who was battling prostate cancer during the early 2000s. She plays host to siblings and their families on Thanksgiving and wanted her father to be there to witness a tree-lighting ceremony that has become as anticipated in Bartonville as the annual tree-lighting event at Rockefeller Center in New York City.

"It's mesmerizing, almost a spiritual thing," Bartonville Mayor Jaclyn Carrington says of the centuries-old lighted pecan tree on Barbara Nunneley's ranch.







“  
*No one could have predicted that an old and revered pecan tree would become the centerpiece of the holiday season in Bartonville. It has had a life of its own and now, ‘a light of its own.’*  
”



Her dad, however, was too ill to make the 70-mile trip from Nocona on Thanksgiving in 2007, but with her family gathered around the tree in the pasture after dinner, Nunneley flipped the switch that brought the pecan tree to life.

“There was dead silence for a couple of minutes,” she says. “Then tears.” Her father died the next day, but Nunneley has faith that he has seen the tree from a far loftier perch.

Bill Rathburn, owner of the Christmas Light Co., first suggested lighting the 150-year-old tree in 2005. His crew was there to string lights across the roofline of Nunneley’s sprawling ranch house when he sized up the gangly mass of limbs and branches after the tree had shed its leaves and

dropped its pecans. He pondered what a different kind of Christmas tree it could be.

But Nunneley and her partner, Jan Deatherage, decided against the challenging and costly job of lighting the tree. With her father’s illness progressing, however, and his love for anything over-the-top, Nunneley gave the go-ahead two years later.

Stringing lights on the tree is labor intensive. Rathburn’s crew uses cherry pickers to reach the top, and the project takes a couple of days each year to set up and then take down in early January. Nunneley says a new circuit board had to be installed to handle the power output and that a timer now turns the lights on at dusk and off at midnight.

The tree has had various light colors over the years, but white appears to have the most dramatic impact. CoServ, an electric cooperative based in Denton, provides the electricity for the property and the tree.

Pecan trees are resilient, and this one has obviously survived numerous winters of freezing temperatures and ice storms as well as tornado seasons and Texas’ broiling summer heat. During severe drought, Nunneley runs garden hoses out to the tree from the house to ensure it stays healthy.

Carrington says the famous tree has had a modest economic impact during the holidays as people from the region make the pilgrimage to Bartonville. They eat dinner in the town of about 1,800 and then park along the side of the road fronting the pasture to admire the tree from behind the low fence.

“They make an evening out of it,” Carrington says. “It’s a huge event every year.”

One evening the week before Christmas last year, local Kim Corser stepped out of her car and walked up to the fence to just marvel at the tree. “I was out running errands and realized I hadn’t come to see the tree yet,” she says. “I usually come with my kids, but we’ll come back.”

Some visitors have tried to scale the fence to get even closer to the tree despite a sign that warns against trespassing. “Some high school boys tried to climb it,” Nunneley says. “People sneak in because they think it is on a vacant lot. Parking can be an issue because we’ve had people pulling into our driveway.”

She says a neighbor who works for the Federal Aviation Administration has informed pilots about the tree, which can be seen from planes as they come and go from nearby Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

The pecan tree is not just a tourist attraction but a source of inspiration. Deatherage displayed a coffee-table book about the tree compiled by Flower Mound photographer Meredith Butterfield. “It has entries by different photographers with stories of what the tree means to them,” she says. It’s a limited-edition book: The only copy belongs to Nunneley and Deatherage.

One holiday season early on, Nunneley heard a knock on



the front door and found a sheet of legal paper under the doormat. It was left by a young man who wanted to propose to his girlfriend under the tree because she had admired it the year before. But there was no name, phone number or other contact information.

“Several days later, I was walking in the pasture collecting the horses and saw yet another sheet of yellow legal paper,” Nunneley says. “It was the second page of the original letter. Clearly the wind had come up and separated the letter. It had the young man’s name and the way to contact him.” She followed through and gave her blessing to his request.

It happened again years later when a polite young man, about to graduate college, rang the doorbell and nervously asked whether he could propose to his college sweetheart under the tree. “He thought it was a logical place because it was a place of so much light, hope for the future and promise,” Nunneley says.

The young Romeo kept it a secret from his girlfriend when they came to view the tree. He convinced her that he knew the owners and it would be OK to trespass and take photos under the blinding canopy.

When they went over the fence and walked up to the tree, his family and hers drove from around the corner and watched as the young man dropped to one knee and proposed. “There were celebratory handshakes and hugs and lots and lots of flash camera pictures,” Nunneley says.

No one could have predicted that an old and revered pecan tree would become the centerpiece of the holiday season in Bartonville. It has had a life of its own and now, “a light of its own,” Nunneley says. ■



OPPOSITE Nunneley began the tree-lighting tradition in 2007 to honor her father.  
THIS PAGE The 60,000 LEDs have made the tree a famous attraction over the holidays.







# Everybody's

BY CLAIRE STEVENS  
PHOTOS BY ERIC W. POHL

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Michele Jaquier, a tour guide at Two Hives Honey in Manor, shows guests a beehive frame loaded with bees and honey. Jaquier captures a sample of honey. Atlas, owner Tara Chapman's son, helps with the smoker. Honey production in the U.S. was up last year even as bees face a range of threats.

For years now, all eyes have been on the bees. In the mid-2000s entire colonies of worker bees started disappearing suddenly and mysteriously, raising alarm bells around the world. Since then, there has been serious concern for the insects we depend on to pollinate our crops and native flora. Bees are up against a whole host of threats, including habitat destruction and fragmentation, invasive parasites, and extreme weather.

But things might finally be looking up for honeybees. In the U.S., honey production was up 11% in 2023 after three years of decline, according to the Department of Agriculture.

That's due, at least in part, to the many dedicated defenders of these critical pollinators. Across Texas a growing movement





# Beeswax

**Texans help each other  
help the mighty honeybee  
help the rest of us**

of beekeepers, educators and researchers are working to save the bees. One such defender—Juliana Rangel, a professor of apiculture who runs the Texas A&M University honeybee lab—says those efforts are starting to pay off.

The biggest threat facing the bees, Rangel says, is the varroa mite, a tiny parasite that feeds on bees and spreads viruses among colonies worldwide. Despite measuring just over a millimeter, the pests have devastated U.S. honeybee populations as they've spread since the late 1980s. Some insecticides are effective against varroa but can also have negative effects on bees.

Making matters worse, increasing urbanization has left wild and managed bees with less forage.

Bees also must contend with extreme weather amid a changing climate. The February 2021 winter storm in Texas impacted bee populations unequipped for the cold and delayed the spring blooms they rely on for food. In addition, increasingly hot summers and droughts have left many bees starving. Beekeepers can keep them alive, but they'll struggle in the heat, with poor nutrition leading to no honey yields.

Against these threats, it's impressive that bees can survive in the wild. While beekeepers keep honeybees almost exclusively, native wild bees often live secluded, in nests, making them much harder to study. But they face many of the same challenges as their managed counterparts.



"I love feral colonies because they are kind of like a beacon of not just diversity but also resilience against all of these issues," Rangel says. "If they're alive, it's because they've been able to survive on their own."

Luckily, not all bees have to do it on their own. Beekeepers across the state dedicate themselves to the pollinators.

Suzanne Truhlicka, a Lyntegar Electric Cooperative member who lives in Tahoka, just south of Lubbock, was hooked after a neighbor took her along for a hive removal in 2019. "I just became addicted to bees," Truhlicka says. "The bees are like therapy to me. They're a challenge, every day."

She now maintains 12 hives and sells honey and beeswax products online and at local shops through her business, Flying Fancy Bees. She's one of many Texans who have picked up the trade in recent years. In fact, the number of farms with bees in Texas more than quadrupled from 2012 to 2022, according to the USDA's Census of Agriculture. Texas had 8,939 farms with bees—more than twice as many as the next highest state, Ohio.

One leading contributor to Texas' honeybee craze is a 2012 state law that allows folks with 5–20 acres of land to get a property tax break under an agricultural exemption if they keep bees.

That tax break was what originally prompted Susan Allen to put hives on her North Texas property, deciding that tending bees was going to be a whole lot easier than maintaining



RIGHT Chapman has become focused on beekeeping education.  
BELOW A collection of hives in September at Two Hives Honey. The smoke keeps the bees calm while keepers perform hive inspections.





# Save the Bees

If you want to do your part to help bees, here are a few steps you can take:

- **Grow native plants.** While a perfectly manicured lawn might be your homeowners association's preference, having a "wild" portion of your lawn where native plants and wildflowers can grow is much preferred by bees.
- **Plant large patches of the same flower.** Bees have site fidelity, meaning they prefer to return to the same patch of flowers again and again. Having a large patch of one species, rather than just a few of each kind of flower, makes it easier for them to do so.

- **If you're ready to begin caring for your own hives,**

now is the ideal time to learn and order a nucleus colony, often just called a nuc, to get started.

Nucs are typically delivered in late spring but often must be ordered in advance.

- **Support local beekeepers.** Find a map of Texas honey retailers on the Texas Beekeepers Association's website, [texasbeekeepers.org](http://texasbeekeepers.org).



the hay the land had been used for. But what started as a smart financial move quickly grew into a passion as Allen, a Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative member, became more and more involved in beekeeping, connecting with other local beekeepers through the Grayson County Beekeepers Association.

The more Allen learned about bees, the more she was invested. "They're just so stinking smart," Allen says. "They're fascinating. That's what keeps me going. It's just learning more and more about them."

Beekeeping clubs exist all over Texas, gathering in churches, community centers, restaurants and homes to educate, discuss challenges and collaborate.

Best friends Rosie Lund and Meredith Pace started their honey and beekeeping supply business, Apis Supply, in 2023 and quickly realized they needed a bee club in their neck of West Texas, where high winds and dry weather make keeping bees particularly tricky. The duo helped organize curious beekeepers into the Permian Basin Beekeeping Association, which now meets monthly in Seminole.

"It's a family, really," says Pace, a Lyntegar EC member. "We all just kind of support each other. It's like, 'Oh, hey, I have an extra frame,' or 'I have an extra box,' until you can get stuff in the mail because everything takes a week to get here."

Much like the community inside a hive, the community of beekeepers depends on each other. And they depend especially on people like Tara Chapman, whose beekeeping venture goes well beyond honey production, aiming to get more people informed and excited about bees.

Chapman took a beekeeping class in 2013 while looking for a new career after 10 years at the CIA. She became fascinated with bees and decided to trade war zones for worker bees, starting with just two hives maintained by her and a friend. Her operation has grown to more than 300 hives at Two Hives Honey in Manor, just east of Austin.

Chapman doesn't get to spend as much time "in bees" as she used to but now focuses on beekeeping education. In addition to tours of the honey ranch, honey tastings and

beekeeping classes, Two Hives offers a six-month hands-on "beek" apprenticeship program. Last month Chapman published *For the Bees: A Handbook for Happy Beekeeping*.

"Beekeeping is the most nuanced form of ag there is," she says. "I will argue to my death that that is true, and it's not totally intuitive to everybody."

Chapman set out to teach people about the "bananas" world of bees, making sure they understand basic bee biology first. Inside each hive is an entire society, she explains, with a queen at the center. But the queen, while important, isn't really in charge. Honeybees make decisions democratically, communicating through pheromones and "waggle dances."

"It just so defies logic of how humans live and exist," she says. Understanding the foreign world of bees is one of the things that can make keeping them so challenging.

"I've made every mistake, and I think it's why my greatest asset is my ability to teach beekeeping," Chapman says. Those mistakes have included an incident in which an improperly secured box resulted in roughly 50 pounds of spilled honey in the back of Chapman's truck.

Luckily, she says, bees will quickly come to take care of any honey that's just sitting there for the taking, but "while they're taking care of it, it's going to be a terrifying sight for the layman that happens to be walking by your driveway."

Chapman's and others' efforts haven't been in vain. Rangel says the increased awareness and interest have been important and that honeybees are doing better now than when the public first learned about collapsing colonies—though it's too soon to say they're in the clear. Honeybee numbers can fluctuate year-to-year as environmental factors change, but Rangel says there's been a trend of about a 1% increase in the U.S. managed population each year.

"In the last 15 years, the number of studies on honeybees and honeybee health have grown exponentially, which increases our understanding of all the issues that they face," she says.

"Increased awareness by the public and the farming community, I think, is what's mostly helping." ■

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MESSAGE  
FROM  
GENERAL  
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**DOUG  
LAMBERT**

## May Your Holidays Be Merry and Bright

**AS THE HOLIDAY SEASON APPROACHES**, we extend our warmest wishes to you and your loved ones. This is a time for joy, gathering with family and friends, and reflecting on the year that has passed.

While the holidays bring warmth and togetherness, they can also increase energy use and present potential electrical and fire hazards. Your safety and well-being are our top priorities, and that's why we'd like to offer a few helpful tips to keep you and your home safe, while also helping you save energy during this festive time.

### Safety First

As we enjoy the tradition of decorating our homes, it's important to take a few simple precautions.

Before you hang lights or plug in decorations, check all cords and strands for any signs of damage. This small step ensures your holiday lights safely brighten your home. For outdoor decorations, be sure they are rated for outdoor use.

Candles, while festive, should never be left unattended, and testing your smoke alarms regularly is one of the best ways to safeguard your home. These simple practices can make all the difference in keeping your holiday season safe.

### Season for Savings

With more time spent indoors and extra guests visiting, energy use tends to rise during the holidays. A few small adjustments can help you manage this.

Lowering the thermostat a few degrees when you have company or when you're cooking can help keep your energy bill under control. Using energy-efficient appliances like slow cookers or air fryers also cuts down on the electricity used in your kitchen, while LED holiday lights offer an eco-friendly way to add cheer to your home.

We hope these safety and energy-saving tips will enhance your holiday experience. For more helpful advice, please visit our website, [fayette.coop](http://fayette.coop). We're here for you throughout the year, ensuring your holiday season is safe and energy-efficient.

Happy holidays from your friends at Fayette Electric Cooperative ■

## Fayette Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



### CONTACT US

2111 N. Von Minden Rd.

P.O. Box 490

La Grange, TX 78945

**Local** (979) 968-3181

**Toll-Free** 1-866-968-3181

**Email** [electric@fayette.coop](mailto:electric@fayette.coop)

**Web** [fayette.coop](http://fayette.coop)

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Fayette EC provides *Texas Co-op Power* and [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com) to give you information about events, safety, special programs and other activities of your cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the co-op office.

### VISIT US ONLINE

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## Be Prepared for Winter Storms

**WHEN WINTER TEMPERATURES** drop and storms hit, staying safe and warm can be challenging. Winter storm severity varies depending on where you live, but nearly all Texans are affected by extreme winter storms at some point.

Fayette Electric Cooperative cares about your safety, and we want you to be prepared.

Ice and snow can lead to downed power lines, leaving co-op members without power. During extremely low temperatures, this can be especially dangerous. Our crews will always work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power, but there are a few things you can do to prepare yourself.

**Stay warm.** Plan to use a safe alternate heating source, such as a fire-place or wood-burning stove during a power outage. These are great options to keep you and your loved ones warm, but exercise caution when using them, and never leave the heating source unattended.

If you're using gas- or propane-burning devices to stay warm, never use them indoors. Remember that fuel- and wood-burning sources of heat should always be properly ventilated. Always read the manufacturer's directions before using.

**Stay fed.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends having on hand several days' supply of food that doesn't need to be cooked. Crackers, cereal, canned goods and bread are good options.

Five gallons of water per person should also be available in the event of an extended power outage.

**Stay safe.** When an outage occurs, it often means power lines are down. It's best not to travel during winter storms, but if you must, bring a survival kit along, and do not travel alone. If you encounter downed lines, always assume they're live. Stay as far away from the downed lines as possible, and report the situation to our dispatchers.

Winter weather can be unpredictable and dangerous, and planning ahead can often be the difference between life and death. Fayette EC is ready for whatever Mother Nature has in store, and we want you to be ready too. ■

## Equipping Our Members To Stay Informed

**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES NATIONWIDE** use a powerful tool to assist with power restoration and keep you updated during outages: outage maps. These maps provide a visual representation of outages within your electric co-op's service area.

Fayette Electric Cooperative is excited to provide this service. Members can access the outage map by clicking the outage map link at the top right corner of our website, [fayette.coop](http://fayette.coop), to view real-time outage information.

On the map, affected areas are marked with colored icons, each representing a different category based on the number of members impacted. A color key, located at the top left of the map, explains what each color represents. Clicking on a colored icon will display details about that outage.

Additionally, by clicking the three horizontal lines at the top right of the map, you can access a summary showing the total number of active outages, members affected and the total membership within Fayette EC's service area. To view outages by county, simply click the arrow next to Outages by Area, which expands to show all counties served by the co-op.

The map offers an easy and convenient way to get outage information, eliminating the need to wait on hold for a customer service representative or dispatcher. With just a click, members can confirm whether the co-op is aware of their outage.

Having access to this information empowers you to take the necessary steps to protect your family and property. Outage maps are an excellent example of how cooperatives strive to keep members informed about their service. ■



PHYNART STUDIO | ISTOCK.COM

## Should You Use Space Heaters at Home?

The answer is usually no

**SMALL SPACE HEATERS** are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. But unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat an entire home, which can take a serious toll on energy bills.

The truth is, whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home.

If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weatherstripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy.

Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose fill insulation typically costs \$1–\$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling costs for years to come.

Perhaps your home is already energy-efficient but you run cold and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool

people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months.

Only use a space heater in small spaces that you're occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the portable heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure it's properly sized for the space. Most heaters include a general sizing table.

A word about safety: more than 1,700 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 80 deaths. If you must use one, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the UL Solutions label or that of another reputable certification lab.

Choose a heater controlled via thermostat to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children, pets and anything flammable well away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm, like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation and maintain warmth. ■





# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

from Fayette Electric Cooperative

May you have the gift of faith, the blessing of hope and the peace of His love at Christmas and always.

Our office will be closed Tuesday–Wednesday, December 24–25, and Wednesday, January 1, in observance of the holidays.




## Spicy Mixed Nuts

**1 egg white**  
**1 tablespoon water**  
**½ cup sugar**  
**2 teaspoons kosher salt**  
**1 tablespoon ground cumin**  
**1¼ teaspoons cayenne pepper**  
**1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**1 cup pecan halves**  
**1 cup salted cashews**  
**1 cup roasted almonds**

1. Preheat oven to 250 degrees.
2. Whisk together the egg white, water, sugar, salt and spices in a large bowl. Add nuts and use a rubber spatula to mix well.
3. Pour the mixture onto a rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake 40 minutes, stirring occasionally with a metal spatula. Reduce heat to 200 degrees and bake another 30 minutes.
4. Remove nuts from oven, use a fork to loosen them from baking sheet and cool completely. Store in a metal container with a tight-fitting lid; the nuts will last up to 2 months.

**MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS**

 Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://TexasCoopPower.com).

KITCHENM | ISTOCK.COM





MILAN\_JOVIC | ISTOCK.COM

## Kids Can Help With Holiday Meal Prep

**EVEN IF YOU LIKE** to prepare Christmas dinner by yourself so it's just right, consider letting your children—or grandchildren—in on the fun and the work this season.

Of course, you'll have to keep your youngsters away from the hot stove and sharp knives. **Still, there are lots of fun, safe ways to get everyone involved:**

Very young children can take the crusts off bread for the stuffing. They can also snap the ends off of green beans.

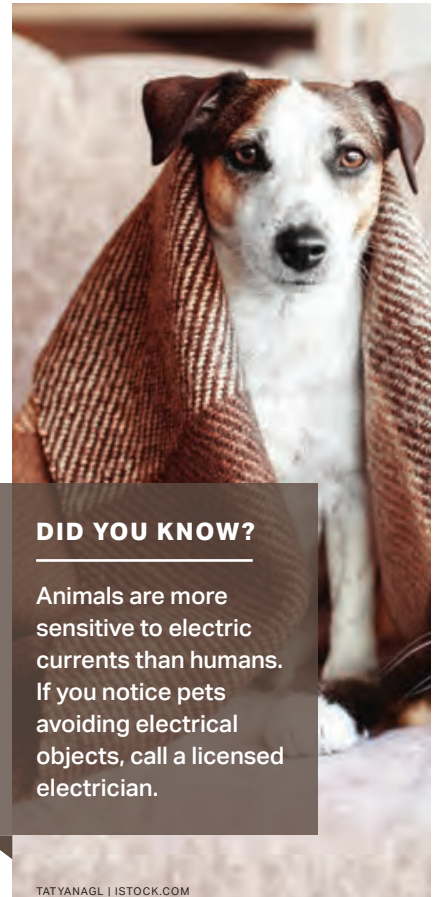
Children aged 3–5 can help pour in ingredients, and they can help stir or whisk. Have them stand at the kitchen sink to wash vegetables or let them use a hand-masher to make the mashed potatoes.

Older children can follow directions for a recipe and use cooking utensils with supervision. Let them cut, chop and peel veggies. These older kids also are strong enough to knead dough, so let them shape and divide the rolls or biscuits.

Cooking can be a great way to get kids interested in science, math and physics, as well as the history of the holiday. Talk about the food you're making, the measurements of the ingredients and the steps involved in getting food from the farm to the table.

The experience also can lead to conversations about energy conservation. Have kids turn down the heater while cooking or while company is over then explain how the extra heat of preparing a feast reduces the need to run the furnace.

The holiday might be a time to indulge, but sensible actions like using countertop kitchen appliances rather than the oven or keeping lids on pans can help ensure the feast is served without wasting electricity. ■



### DID YOU KNOW?

Animals are more sensitive to electric currents than humans. If you notice pets avoiding electrical objects, call a licensed electrician.

TATYANAGL | ISTOCK.COM



### POWER TIP

If you're heading out of town this holiday, remember to lower your home and water heater thermostats a few degrees to reduce energy consumption.

SVETIKD | ISTOCK.COM



# Prevent Common Kitchen Hazards

**DURING THE HOLIDAYS** most of us spend a bit more time in the kitchen preparing special treats and meals for friends and families. Unfortunately, cooking hazards are the No. 1 cause of home fires. **Here are tips to help you stay safe in the kitchen.**

Stay in the kitchen at all times when you're cooking.

Keep flammable items away from the stovetop and other hot surfaces.

Unplug countertop appliances when not in use.

Never use an oven for heating your home.

Never cook if you're sleepy, have been drinking alcohol or have taken medications that make you drowsy.

Use a timer to remind you to check on food that's simmering or in the oven.

Double-check that the oven and all burners and appliances are turned off when done.

Use outlets with ground-fault circuit interrupters for countertop appliances and any area where electrical products might come into contact with water.

Be prepared to put out fires with a fire extinguisher or, for small grease fires, baking soda or salt. Water and flour are not effective and are dangerous when dealing with cooking fires.

Keep things tidy and clean up spills immediately to avoid possible fires or slips and falls.

Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove to keep them safe from curious little hands and so they can't be bumped into.

When frying, use a pan lid or splash guard to minimize grease splatter—and fire risk.

Make sure there's a working smoke detector nearby. ■



## Caulking: A Simple Solution to Winter Drafts

**IT'S PRETTY EASY** to keep drafts out of the house on cold and windy days: Simply seal your windows by caulking around them.

All you need is caulk and a caulk gun, which you can easily find at any home or hardware store. To make the task go faster, share caulking duties with your children. Here's what to do:

1. To get started, clean the window, sill, trim and frame with a damp cloth. Allow everything to dry.
2. Scrape old caulk and any peeling paint off the window and the area immediately surrounding it.
3. Using the caulk gun, apply the caulk between the window frame and siding on the outdoors. Indoors, fill in the gap between the windows and the trim. Don't over-apply or the caulk can look messy.
4. Depending on the age of your window, the caulk that holds the glass panes in place may also need replacing or repair.

For extra protection, add weatherstripping around doors and windows. If cold air enters the house below the door, get a draft blocker or simply roll up a bath towel and set it in front of the door to block the breeze. ■



CLARK AND COMPANY | ISTOCK.COM

## Holiday Décor Tips for an Energy-Wise Home

**WHETHER YOU'VE ALREADY** decked your halls or you're just getting started, there's still time to incorporate energy savings into your holiday décor.

If you haven't strung your twinkle lights, be sure to use LED strands. LEDs consume far less energy than incandescent lights, and they can last 40 holiday seasons. They're also safer because they're made with epoxy lenses, not glass, making them more resistant to breaking—and they're cool to the touch, so no burnt fingers.

If you missed Santa's memo about energy-saving LEDs and your holiday lights are already up, you can still save on lighting costs. All you need is a programmable timer.

Most models cost less than \$25 and can be purchased through online and local retailers. With a timer, you can easily program when you want your holiday lights turned on and off, which will save you time, money and energy. If you're using a timer for exterior lighting, make sure it's weatherproof and intended for outdoor use.

If Clark Griswold's décor style is a bit much for your taste, consider a more natural approach. Many Christmas tree farms, and even retailers like Lowe's and Home Depot, give away greenery clippings from recently trimmed trees. With a little twine, extra ornaments and sparkly ribbon, you can create beautiful garlands and wreaths to hang over your front door or windows.

To add extra twinkle, battery-powered light strings are inexpensive and great for indoors. To brighten outdoor décor at night, you can install solar-powered spotlights to illuminate your new—and essentially free—greenery. Solar spotlights can vary in price, but you should be able to purchase a quality set of four for about \$30—and because they run on natural energy from the sun, there's no additional cost to your energy bill.

Regardless of how you decorate your home for the holidays, look for ways to save energy throughout the season. ■

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# Black-Eyed Peace

Y2K upended New Year's traditions for Texans ready for anything

BY CHRIS BURROWS • ILLUSTRATION BY TARA JACOBY

AS KATIE WILLIAMS shopped in the run-up to Christmas 1999, the holiday wasn't on her list. The Kaufman resident had loaded up her cart with flashlights and batteries, toilet paper, water, and crates of food.

"I really think something's going to happen," Williams told *The Dallas Morning News*. "We have a pond in case we run out of water for the toilet. We can boil it if we have to drink it."

Michelle Quintiliani and her family were planning to hit the road after Christmas, leaving behind their home near the Comanche Peak nuclear plant southwest of Fort Worth.

"We're going to open our presents and then we're gone," Quintiliani told the *Waco Tribune-Herald*. "It's probably

stupid, but I don't want to chance it."

By December 30, shoppers in Victoria were hitting H-E-B hard.

"Today is busier than expected," a store manager told the *Victoria Advocate*. "This is the kind of day we expected tomorrow."

Twenty-five years ago this month, in the weeks before a new millennium, hardy Texans joined the rest of the world in making anxious last-minute preparations.

Computer experts had spent months warning that the Y2K bug might take down computer systems—and a society that was increasingly reliant on them—at the stroke of midnight. Breathless coverage took stock of the preparations as global industries—banks, utilities,

airlines—assured folks that the lights would stay on if everybody did their part to gird against glitches caused by computer systems not built with the foresight to handle the "00" in "2000."

For its part, the state of Texas spent a quarter-billion dollars on upgrades; the U.S. more than \$100 billion; and across the world, \$300 billion.

Texans weren't overly concerned though. The results of a statewide poll in October 1999 found 55% weren't worried about serious problems. One in 3 expected the lights to go out.

But they didn't.

On New Year's Eve, celebrations in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth and Houston tallied more than 320,000 total revelers.

Headline writers were ready. In the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*: "Y2K? Why Worry?"

*San Angelo Standard-Times*: "Y(awn)2K-Feared bug doesn't bite."

Wichita Falls' *Times Record News*: "It wasn't the night the lights went out in Texas after all."

The bug may have been a bust, but Leon Kappelmann, a University of North Texas professor who worked on several technical committees in preparation for Y2K, says the world learned a lot.

"In terms of IT management, many of us learned what a mess we had just about everywhere and realized it was past time to professionalize and improve our practices," he said. "IT had proliferated so quickly and completely over the 40 years prior to 1995, our ability to effectively and efficiently manage it had simply not kept up."

And besides, some Texans hadn't wasted any worries on Y2K.

C.M. Dehtam told the *Tribune-Herald* that he planned to be selling fruit out of his pickup on New Year's Eve.

"If it's going to happen, it's going to happen," he said. "It's not something I have any control over. I got other things to worry about, like what I'm going to eat tonight." ■



# Cookie Exchange

Be the star of the swap with these family gems

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

One of my favorite cake flavors transforms into cookies for a delicious addition to your cookie exchange. With a vibrant Christmas red hue; soft, chewy texture; and a crunchy topping, they're decadent enough to feel indulgent and light enough to enjoy more than one on Christmas morning.

## Red Velvet Cookies

**1½ cups flour**  
**2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder**  
**¾ teaspoon baking powder**  
**½ teaspoon salt**  
**½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened**  
**1 cup sugar**  
**1 egg**  
**1 tablespoon buttermilk**  
**1 tablespoon red food color**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**½ cup white chocolate chips**  
**½ cup semisweet chocolate chunks**  
**White sanding sugar**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt.
3. In another bowl, cream butter and sugar with a hand mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy. Reduce mixer speed to low and add egg, buttermilk, food color and vanilla.
4. Add flour mixture in two batches, scraping down the sides and bottom of the bowl and mixing until well combined. Fold in the white chocolate chips and semisweet chocolate chunks. Cover and chill the dough in the refrigerator at least 1 hour.
5. Place 2-tablespoon scoops of dough 2 inches apart on baking sheets. Use the bottom of a glass to gently press cookies to about ½ inch thick. Sprinkle with sanding sugar.
6. Bake 10–12 minutes, until cookies are slightly puffy and set on the edges. Allow cookies to cool and sprinkle with additional sanding sugar if desired.

**MAKES 2 DOZEN COOKIES**

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Mexican Christmas Eve Salad.





### Grandma Melton's Sand Tarts

LAURA MCNABB  
PEDERNALES EC

These are considered the official cookies of Texas, at least according to McNabb's family. A crescent-shaped cookie that melts in your mouth, leaving a hint of sweetness and buttery goodness, they have a tender, crumbly texture that pairs perfectly with their light, nutty flavor. The delicate powdered sugar coating gives them a festive, snow-dusted appearance, making them a perfect addition to your holiday cookie platter.

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar, plus more for dusting
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add vanilla and mix well. Reduce mixer speed to low. Add flour and salt, mixing until almost combined.
3. Gently fold in pecans with hands, being careful not to overmix. Chill dough 30 minutes.
4. With floured hands, shape 1 tablespoon of dough at a time into a crescent. Place crescents 1 inch apart on baking sheets.
5. Bake 12–14 minutes or until the edges are lightly browned. Allow cookies to cool about 5 minutes on baking sheets then transfer to cooling racks. While the cookies are still warm, dust with powdered sugar.

MAKES 3 DOZEN COOKIES



\$500 WINNER

### Flonnie's Orange Slice Cookies

JENNIFER KEITH  
WOOD COUNTY EC



Keith found her grandmother Flonnie's recipe for these cookies in her mama's recipe box, and they have become a holiday staple in her house. These cookies are a delightful and nostalgic treat. The candies melt slightly during baking, creating pockets of gooey, fruity goodness throughout. A soft, chewy cookie with bursts of citrusy flavor in each bite is the merriest sweet for gifting this holiday season.

MAKES 5 DOZEN COOKIES

- 2 cups (4 sticks) butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2¼ cups brown sugar
- 3 eggs
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 3 tablespoons warm water
- 6 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 cups sweetened coconut flakes
- 2 cups chopped walnuts
- 1 package orange slices candy (10 ounces), diced

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, cream butter, sugar and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, scraping down sides of bowl after each addition.
3. In a small bowl, dissolve baking soda in warm water.
4. To the large bowl, add baking soda mixture, flour and cinnamon and mix until incorporated. Fold in coconut, walnuts and candy slices.
5. Use a medium cookie scoop to place dough onto a baking sheet, leaving 1 inch between each cookie.
6. Bake 11–14 minutes, until lightly golden brown.

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**UPCOMING: SUMMER PASTAS** DUE JANUARY 10



RECIPE PHOTOS: JASON DAVID PAGE. WINNER PHOTO: COURTESY JENNIFER KEITH

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29 >



# HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

In the magazine and on [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascooppower.com), we make it easy to shop for friends and family.



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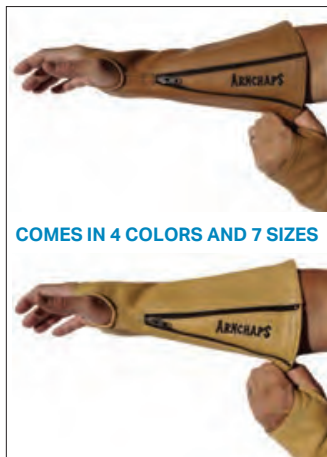
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Grandma's Italian  
Chocolate Spice Cookies

MARY BOLSINGER  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

These cookies have a firm, slightly crunchy exterior that gives way to a soft, cakelike interior. The harmonious blend of cocoa, cinnamon, cloves and vanilla creates a warm, spiced flavor that's perfect for the season. Chocolate is complemented by the subtle warmth of coffee, making each bite a cozy experience.

COOKIES

- 2 cups flour
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup olive oil



- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 4 tablespoons brewed black coffee, at room temperature
- ½ cup chopped walnuts

ICING

- 2¼ cups powdered sugar
- 3–4 tablespoons milk
- Sprinkles (optional)

- 1. **COOKIES:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
- 2. In a bowl, sift together flour, cocoa, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and cloves.
- 3. In another bowl, whisk together eggs and sugar until sugar is dissolved. Stir in olive oil, vanilla and coffee.
- 4. Add the flour mixture and stir until smooth. Stir in the walnuts.
- 5. Scoop the dough with a medium cookie scoop. Roll into balls with floured hands. Place on baking sheets about 2 inches apart.
- 6. Bake 10–12 minutes.
- 7. **ICING:** Whisk together powdered sugar and milk until smooth.
- 8. Dip the tops of cookies into the icing mixture and top with sprinkles.

MAKES 4 DOZEN COOKIES



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## A Belle Reborn

Experience Tres Palacios Bay like a French explorer—without the sinking

BY CHET GARNER

**THERE I STOOD** in the middle of Tres Palacios Bay, part of Matagorda Bay, aboard a sailing vessel named La Petite Belle. The crew and I had set out from Palacios into the same gulf waters that French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, had sailed 338 years before.

Hopefully, our seafaring adventure wouldn't meet the same fate as the French explorer's crew.

Our expedition started in the town's historic district at the City by the Sea Museum, where every era of Palacios' colorful past is brought to life through exhibits and artifacts. Most interesting (and tragic) is the story of La Salle's doomed voyage to Texas. La Belle, one of his four ships, wrecked on a sandbar and sank into the bay's muddy bottom in 1686. Luckily the Frenchman was already on land, exploring Texas.

In the 1990s, archaeologists found the ship and resurrected its hull along with 1.6 million French artifacts. The preserved remains are on display at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin.

La Petite Belle, a half-sized, 30-foot-long re-creation of the original, now sails the high seas of Texas, giving tourists a taste of maritime history and adventure. The jolly crew of museum volunteers seemed seaworthy as they called out commands across the deck and navigated our ship using 17th-century techniques.

I simply walked around, rattling ropes and trying not to expose my greenhorn lack of sailing knowledge. While this isn't a pirate ship, I jumped with excitement when the crew announced it was time to fire the cannons. We loaded them up with pyrotechnics and yelled "fire in the hole" as we shot at imaginary ships.

The ship is small, but the adventure is surely Texas-sized. ■

ABOVE Chet, aboard La Petite Belle, ponders a 17th-century existence.

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



## Know Before You Go

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

## DECEMBER

7

**Castroville** **Castroville Conservation Society Candlelight Home Tour**, (830) 708-5680, [castrovilleconservationsociety.org](http://castrovilleconservationsociety.org)

**Fredericksburg** **Pearl Harbor Commemoration**, (830) 997-8600, [pacificwarmuseum.org](http://pacificwarmuseum.org)

**Kerrville** **Christmas Concert**, (830) 321-0303, [hillcountrychorale.org](http://hillcountrychorale.org)

**La Grange** **Beat Root Revival**, (979) 968-9944, [thebugleboy.org](http://thebugleboy.org)

**Marble Falls** **Christmas Home Tour**, (830) 798-2157, [fallsmuseum.org](http://fallsmuseum.org)

**Palestine** **Christmas on Main**, (903) 723-3014, [visitpalestine.com](http://visitpalestine.com)

**Sealy** **Fantasy of Lights Parade**, (979) 885-3222, [sealychamber.com](http://sealychamber.com)

**Woodville** **Christmas Twilight Tour**, (409) 283-2272, [heritage-village.org](http://heritage-village.org)

**Richardson** **[7, 14] Hot Cocoa Crawl**, [citylinedfw.com](http://citylinedfw.com)

8

**George West** **Church to Church Christmas Story Stroll**, (361) 449-5396, [facebook.com/firstbaptistgeorgewest](https://facebook.com/firstbaptistgeorgewest)

12

**New Braunfels** **New Braunfels Conservation Society Christmas Market**, (830) 629-2943, [newbraunfelsconservation.org](http://newbraunfelsconservation.org)

13

**Seguin** **[13-14] Country Christmas**, (830) 379-0933, [texagedu.org](http://texagedu.org)



**Shiner [13-14] Christmas Village**, (361) 594-3830, shinerfumc.org

**Kyle [13-15] A Night in Bethlehem**, (512) 268-7044, f-pc.org

**Montalba [13-15] Walk Through Bethlehem**, (903) 549-2319, montalbabaptistchurch.com

**Palestine [13-15] A Seussified Christmas Carol and Variety Show**, (903) 394-2173, thetexas theater.com

**Brenham The 3 Redneck Tenors Christmas**, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

**Coldspring Christmas on the Square**, (936) 653-2184, coldspringtexas.org

**Frankston Frankston Garden Club Christmas Tour of Homes**, (817) 913-1982, frankstongardenclubtx.com

**Jasper Country Lights**, (409) 384-5231, tpwd.texas.gov

**Stonewall Tree Lighting**, (830) 644-2252, tpwd.texas.gov

**Corsicana Santa's Sip & Stroll**, (903) 654-4851, facebook.com/corsicana mainstreet

**Richardson [19-22] Christmas With C.S. Lewis**, (972) 744-4650, eisemanncenter.com

**Fredericksburg Countdown to 2025: New Year's Eve**, (830) 990-2044, fbgtx.org

## TCP Submit Your Event

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

# Share the Joy



- Peace Plaza Ice Rink
- ICE! at Gaylord Texan Resort
- Christmas concerts & movies
- Shop & Dine at Grapevine Mills & Historic Main Street
- Enormous Christmas displays & decorations



Visit **ChristmasCapitalofTexas.com** for all the details and to plan your **Christmas Getaway** in Grapevine.



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\*\*Complete set includes pendant, chain and earrings.

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# Young Photographers

Slow down a moment and take in the world through the lens of a child. These young photographers are honing their skills and having a great time doing it. One thing's clear: The future of Texas photography is in good hands.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



**1 CRYSTAL CANTU**  
VICTORIA EC

"I heard a frog and went on an adventure to find him," says Magi Jo, 15.

**2 CARLY LATHAM**  
HEART OF TEXAS EC

"The fascinated bluebonnets are so exciting to find. My sister and I always try to see who can find the most variations," says Byron Ace Latham, 10.

**3 MARK GARTON**  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

My son, 9, learns to take pictures of Texas bluebonnets at Fort Parker State Park.

**4 LAURA DAVIS**  
BANDERA EC

Blakely Barton, 2, has an impromptu photo session with her papa, Brad Davis.



## Upcoming Contests

DUE DEC 10 Characters

DUE JAN 10 Patterns

DUE FEB 10 Family Vacation



Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Young Photographers photos from readers.



## Emily's Wish

Christmas feels bleak when a family's hearts are in two places

BY FRED AFFLERBACH  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
THE BRAVE UNION

ON CHRISTMAS EVE 2022, it was my honor to tuck into bed my 6-year-old granddaughter, Emily. We said nighttime prayers, then she asked Santa for a bigger bike, stick-on earrings and an art set. I thought she was finished, but after a pause, she continued.

"I wish Mommy would be home from the hospital so that the whole family can be together for Christmas."

I closed Emily's door behind me. But I left pieces of my heart scattered on her bedroom floor.

Emily's mother, my daughter-in-law, Kim Afflerbach, delivered healthy twin boys five days before at St. David's Women's Center of Texas in Austin. Shortly after delivery, she experienced cardiac arrest. The cesarean section surgery apparently opened a Pandora's

box of stagnant blood clots that gushed throughout her body.

Her heart stopped beating after one nefarious clot lodged in her main artery. Fast-acting nurses and doctors performed CPR and rushed her to the intensive care unit, where she remained Christmas Eve.

Christmas morning, Emily held little sister Avery's hand as they walked downstairs together. Her shiny new bike awaited. Avery rushed to a Peppa Pig playhouse, dropped to her knees and squealed in delight.

The tree glowed in the early-morning light, and their nana removed golden-brown pigs in a blanket from the oven. I sipped hot coffee laced with Irish cream.

It looked like Christmas. It smelled like Christmas. It even tasted like Christmas. But it didn't feel like Christmas. There was something missing—Mommy.

Christmas Day at a hospital is a rather solemn occasion. Folks carry on the best they can. A skeleton crew in the cafeteria dishes out turkey and dressing and gravy. Doctors and nurses and families of patients smile while passing in corridors and sharing elevators.

Kim remained sedated. She had received multiple transfusions by then and would need more. Yet doctors remained optimistic. They eschewed invasive surgery. And we waited.

Finally, Kim moved out of the ICU on New Year's Eve and into a private room.

Come January 5, Emily's father, Eric, pushed Kim's wheelchair down hospital hallways toward the valet parking. Nurses, doctors and staff lined their exit route, clapping and waving, holding out flowers and balloons, and offering heartfelt goodbyes.

It's often said that a request delayed is a request denied. But that's not always so! Emily's entire family celebrated Christmas 2023 at home together. Emily and Avery, twin brothers Bryson and Jackson, Daddy—and especially Mommy.

Although a year late, Emily's Christmas wish came true. ■





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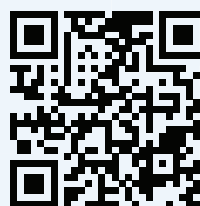
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