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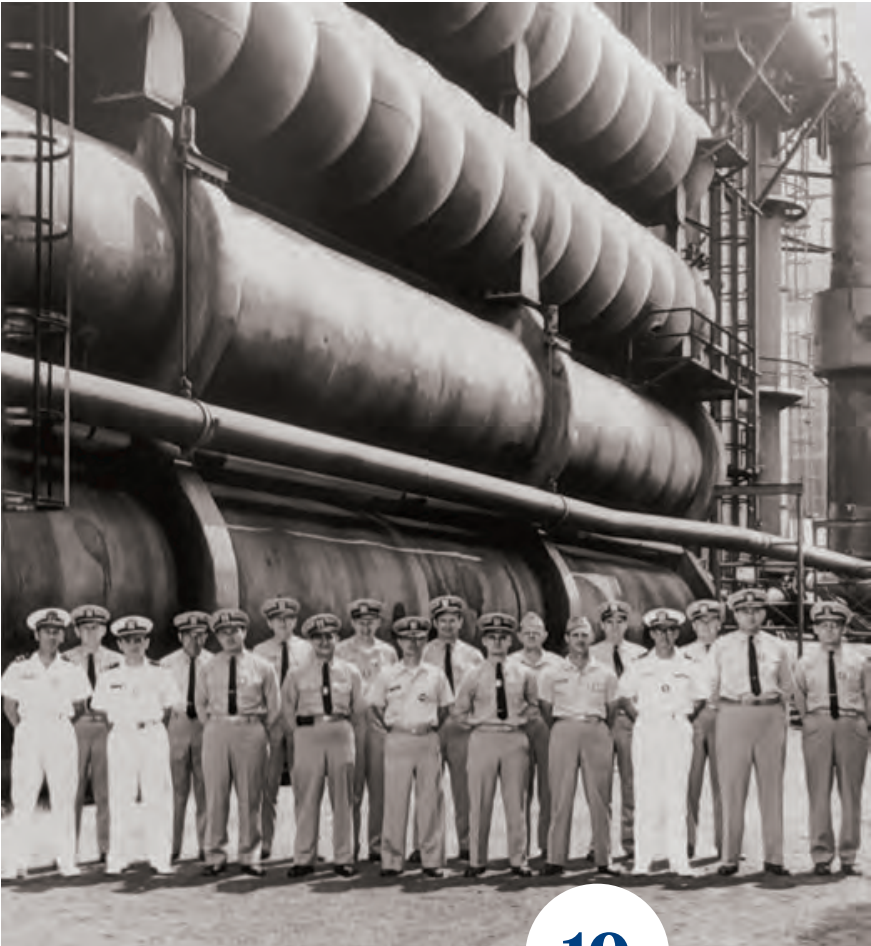


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June 2025



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ON THE COVER
Johnny takes a break from chomping through a neighborhood outside Austin.
Photo by Eric W. Pohl

ABOVE
Servicemen assigned to the Ordnance Aerophysics Laboratory at Lone Star Steel some 70 years ago.
Courtesy Ladies of Lone Star



A rendering of the planned National Juneteenth Museum in Fort Worth.

Juneteenth Has a Home

MORE THAN THREE years after plans were announced to build a National Juneteenth Museum, Fort Worth officials have made way for the planned 50,000-square-foot museum, food hall, business incubator and theater.

The \$70 million museum of Black history will be built on a plot on the city's Historic Southside, with the city kicking in \$15 million. Opal Lee, the "Grandmother of Juneteenth," gave City Council members two thumbs up.

"Wow, I tell you, I could have hugged everyone, but they've got work to do," Lee told the Fort Worth Report.



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FINISH THIS SENTENCE

It's summer, and I'm ready for ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our April prompt: **The best view in Texas is ...**

A "Welcome to Texas" sign alongside any highway.

MIKE WEBER
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

From my front porch every time my husband blows me a kiss as he passes on his tractor.

SUZY DOSS
PENTEX ENERGY
VALLEY VIEW

The Sabine River bridge in my rearview mirror and the afternoon sun shining in my face. I'm home!

JOHN STOLL
BANDERA EC
MICO

Getting home and seeing my wife and grandkids outside enjoying the spring weather.

RANDY HARDEE
WISE EC
BRIDGEPORT

Visit our website to see more responses.

APRIL 2025 Ode to a Mighty Hunter

“My daughter, Stella, and I are always excited to read through your publication and make collages. This story was especially inspiring for my future entomologist [left].”

MINDY WALKER
JASPER-NEWTON EC
KIRBYVILLE



COURTESY MINDY WALKER

Eyes and Hearts

Honestly, I'm not a bug person [*Ode to a Mighty Hunter*, April 2025]. But I do love dragonflies because they don't stick to me or bite me.

I never realized there were so many different species of them. These photos are incredible!

The close-up of the eyes is kind of scary. But my favorite part was Love on the Wing. They make a perfect heart.

Denise Sims
Bowie-Cass EC
Redwater

Inspiring Flyers, Part II

At 17 my dream was to fly [*The WASPs Who Flew Out of Sweetwater*, April 2025]. I applied twice for acceptance to the WASPs. I counted the days to hear from them.

It wasn't to be. To my disappointment they were deactivated. This led me to

serve in another form of communications, which continued the rest of my working life.

I will be 99 this year. Thanks for the memories.

Wanda Tackett
United Cooperative Services
Desdemona

Lake of Bluebonnets

Nanny's Blessing [March 2025] touched my heart. In the 1950s my grandparents turned two acres of their Walker County property into a Texas wildflower field, predominately with *Lupinus subcarnosus*, the sandyland bluebonnet.

For almost 50 years, those bluebonnets made their property look like a lake, and people often stopped to take photos. To this day the sandyland bluebonnet, with its gentle shade of blue, is my favorite, although, sadly, they seem to be migrating into obscurity.

Jan Lawrence
Sam Houston EC
San Jacinto County



COURTESY OFFICIAL NATIONAL WASP MUSEUM, SWEETWATER, TEXAS

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letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
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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GORGING A PATH

BY PAM LEBLANC

For those hard-to-remove, unwanted plants, goats may be the greatest of all time

IN a steep, overgrown ravine in the Steiner Ranch neighborhood west of Austin, dozens of goats are buzz sawing their way through a thicket of brambles.

The ruminants work through the brush like furry, four-legged locusts, pausing now and then to share a goofy grin accented with slobbery bits of greenery. Their jaws work nearly nonstop, chewing plants along a trail that winds between houses.

The goats are here to work, hired hands in an army deployed to reduce the risk of wildfire. A blaze in Steiner Ranch during the hot, dry summer of 2011 destroyed 23 homes, and officials are eager to prevent another disaster.

That's why a homeowners association there teamed with Lake Travis Fire Rescue to hire 100 goats from Rent-A-Ruminant as part of an experimental fire mitigation program. The animals spent a week clearing out brush on 7 hard-to-access acres. After they make a first pass, human volunteers finish the job, cutting down and removing downed trees and other fire fuel.

Goats, proponents say, are cheaper, greener and safer than humans with lawn mowers or herbicides that could work their way into waterways. And they're cute.

"They go where man, machine and chemicals can't go," says Carolyn Carr, co-owner of Rent-A-Ruminant.

Goatscaping, as it's sometimes called, is just one form of modern-day goat employment. Besides putting the animals to work clearing poison ivy from urban hiking trails or tidying up grass growing around solar panels, goats can inject a bit of fun into social activities such as yoga, wine tastings and parties.



Bleating and Eating

Carolyn and her husband, Kyle Carr, own a herd of about 600 goats in Brownwood. They hire their animals out to private landowners, municipalities and businesses. Goats, they say, are an eco-friendly solution to maintaining landscaping projects large and small.

The Carrs' herd is made up of nine breeds of goat. Almost all the animals have names, which are noted on brightly colored tags attached to their floppy ears.

"Goats are great," Carolyn says as they stream out of a trailer and into a cordoned-off area of land at Steiner Ranch. Curious residents have gathered to watch the proceedings.

The Carrs started their business after inheriting an overgrown piece of property in Brownwood, about 80 miles southeast of Abilene. Carolyn joked at the time that they needed a herd of "green grazers" to tidy things up.

It turned out to be a smart suggestion. Kyle's father had been a Xerox salesman, with plenty of connections at municipalities around the state. They quickly learned that many of those cities needed help controlling brushy overgrowth.

Goats can clamber up and down steep slopes and reach awkward spaces that heavy machinery can't access. They also clip vegetation growing along sensitive waterways where herbicides shouldn't be used. Best of all? They love plants that make humans itch or stab them with thorns or assault airways, including green briar, poison ivy, ragweed and blackberries.

LEFT Goats groom the terrain of Steiner Ranch outside Austin.

ABOVE Rent-A-Ruminant owners Kyle and Carolyn Carr manage a herd of about 600 goats that can landscape in hard-to-reach areas.

The Carrs travel the state with their herd, which has trimmed up Hermann Park in Houston, munched invasive species while all but ignoring the lush lawn at the Houston Arboretum, and cut back poison ivy along the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail around Lady Bird Lake in downtown Austin.

But not just any goat can make the Rent-A-Ruminant team. Only quiet goats that don't pester people for food can become part of the traveling work crew, Carolyn says.

Sometimes, onlookers set up chairs to watch the goats in action. That's fine with the Carrs, as long as the humans don't distract the animals by feeding or petting them.

"They have a job to do, and this is not a petting zoo," Carolyn says.

Sheep, she says, can do similar work, such as "mowing grass" that grows around rows of sun-collecting panels at solar farms. Both species have their niche—sheep prefer grass over leaves, making them good at keeping lawns and weeds in check. Goats prefer leaves, so they're better at tidying up unruly brush.

In Steiner Ranch, the experiment seems to be working. The HOA and fire department split the \$9,000 tab to hire the goats, and even after a few hours, the difference is obvious.

"We have a lot of area and so much poison ivy," says Debbie Tanner-Jacobs, president of the Steiner Ranch Residential Owners Association.

As a bonus, the goats leave behind a little fertilizer, in the form of their droppings. Goats, Carolyn Carr notes, sterilize seeds that pass through their bodies, so they can't repropagate those pesky plants.



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: PAM LEBLANC





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Krystal Evans of Kyle and a new friend that is not at all sheepish at a Goat Shenanigans event at the Hive coffee shop in Austin. Shirley Marek cuddles a goat at Blue Lotus Winery in Seguin. Kids get to know each other at the Hive. Katie Knox with a baby goat at Blue Lotus.

Kidding Around

San Antonio-based Goat Shenanigans puts goats to work in a different way.

On a crisp afternoon in January, 10 goat enthusiasts convene at Blue Lotus Winery in Seguin, where they sip wine and cuddle a pair of Nigerian dwarf goats, each just three or four weeks old.

Besides happy hours with goats, the company organizes yoga classes, toddler gatherings, movie nights and beer tastings, all in the company of adorable baby goats.

They'll even deliver a "goat gram"—a livelier version of the traditional candy gram—to your home to celebrate a special occasion. A single-goat visit lasts 20–30 minutes, but you can add additional ruminants to the order.

Goat Shenanigans also offers ranch visits. Visitors can pay for a 10-, 30- or 60-minute session on the goats' home turf, on the northwest side of San Antonio.

"Whenever a goat is involved, it's going to be a good time," says Laura Romer, manager of Goat Shenanigans. "The best thing about them is they have different personalities. A cow is a cow, but a goat has its own unique personality. They're very loving, very playful and emotionally intelligent. They bring out so much joy in people."

The goats seem to enjoy their work. Aside from a chorus of high-pitched bleats that sound like out-of-tune harmonicas,

they zoom around an outdoor patio at the winery and accept an overflow of snuggles from their admirers.

"They're not afraid of people," Romer says. "They're motivated by food and love to be cuddled."

Allyson Marek of San Marcos learned about Goat Shenanigans through social media and bought tickets for the wine tasting with goats for herself and her parents for Christmas.

"They're just so cute and mischievous and silly," Marek says as she holds one, a bright-eyed armful of soft hair named Thor with a tongue that sticks out with each bleat. "Oh my gosh, amazing. They're so soft, so chill, so very awesome."

One day, when she has enough land, Marek says, she hopes to own her own herd. She dreams of raising goats for their milk and to make cheese and soap.

Another afternoon, a dozen children and their parents (along with a few adults who can't resist) gather at the Hive coffee shop in South Austin to mingle on an outdoor patio with four animated, beagle-sized baby goats.

"I like how they're kind of like dogs but cuter," says Evelyn Jackson, who has come to the event with her mother, a sister and a friend.

All around Jackson, kids—the human kind—offer the hardworking goats kibble and pet their soft bodies. Two of the goats wander into the coffee shop's garden, where they sample herbs growing in a raised bed. Another hops onto a picnic table and stares down a woman sitting there.

"How can you be upset with a baby goat in your arms?" asks goat wrangler Sarah O'Brien, who is doing her best to keep her charges in line.

You can't. And that's why we need more goats in the workforce. ■

TCP Watch the video on our website and get to know these hardworking and lovable animals.



BY PATTI PFEIFFER

Steel to the Stars

While a consequential steel mill rusts, locals ensure memories shine on

The Lone Star State is known around the world. The town of Lone Star, however, isn't well known—even among Texans.

But it should be. So says a group of 13 volunteers working to bring light to the East Texas town of 1,400 people about an hour southwest of Texarkana. They want to share the rich history of its steel plant, metal from which spanned the skies over Vietnam and the subsurface of the oil industry and deeply impacted the U.S. economy, environment and space exploration.

They call themselves the Ladies of Lone Star, and their goal is plain.

"We want to gather memories and record as much of the history of Lone Star Steel as possible for future generations," Lesley Dalme says.

It all began with an idea about décor.

Randy Hodges, former Lone Star mayor who was technical services manager when his 45-year career at the plant ended with its closing in 2020, proposed adorning the walls of the Lone Star Senior Citizens Center with pictures of the plant. The framed photos caught the attention of locals, and the project was born.



The Ladies of Lone Star collect photos, documents and memorabilia to preserve and showcase the town's shuttered steel mill.

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: COURTESY LADIES OF LONE STAR



At Lakeview Robert Russell, E.D. [unclear], David Childress (inspection), [unclear] and C.A. Burris.



Russell and E.D. [unclear] on the job.



Russell and Wilbur Martin (an inspector).



Any building crew members Johnny Fetter, Jerry [unclear], B.C. Dobbie, J.M. [unclear], W.I. [unclear].



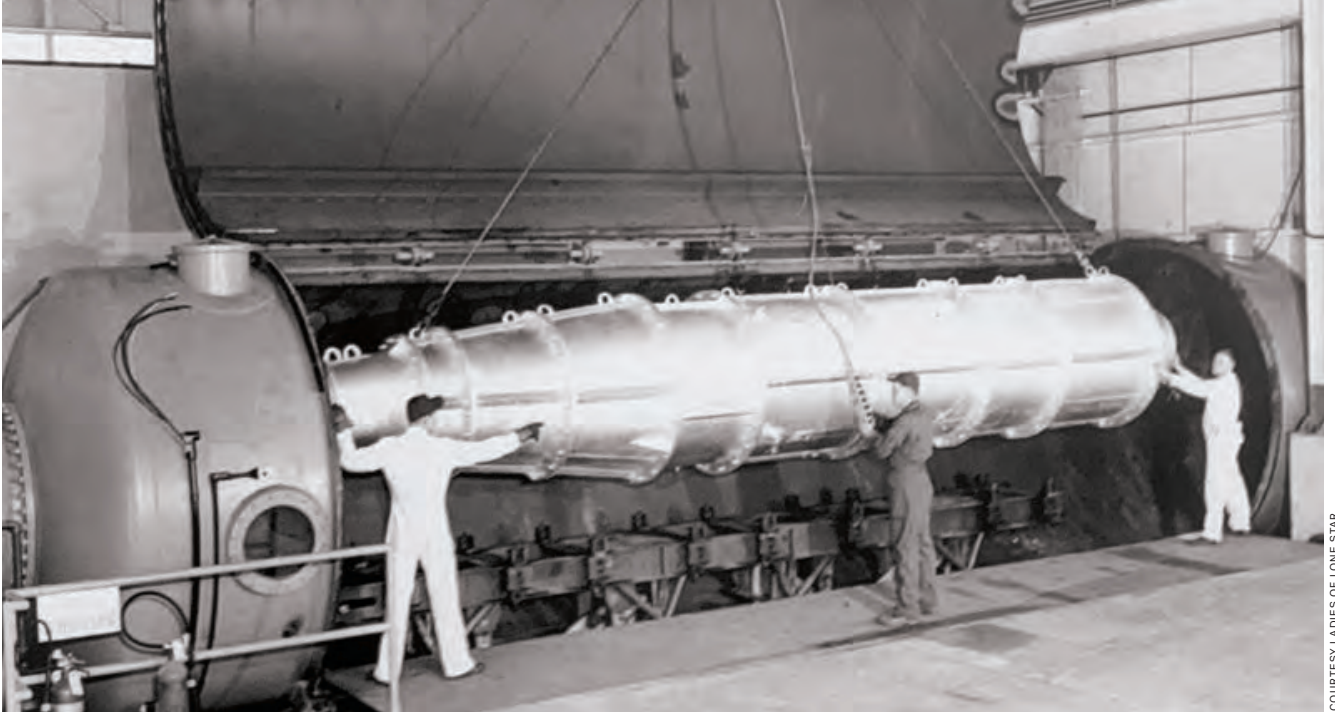
John, Missouri and [unclear] [unclear] and Mrs. [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] who are usually [unclear] [unclear] [unclear].



P.E. Moore, Urell Adams, E.R. Williams, C.G. Nighleary, Alton Harris, [unclear] [unclear] make up another staff crew.

Photos and Text by Dave Lewis

ARTIST'S NOTE: Due to mill scheduling requirements, some employees have been pictured more than once while working on different crews. There may also be some who participated in the record-setting building turn who aren't pictured. However, everyone involved is credited with the team effort required to set such records.



COURTESY LADIES OF LONE STAR



JAY PATRICK

I sat down with three members of the Ladies of Lone Star as well as Hodges and John Shivers, a former plant manager and vice president. For nearly two hours in the chapel on the grounds of the shuttered plant, I listened and learned about the steel industry, the plant's history and the impact it had on people, places and events far and wide.

The plant was built with federal funding during World War II in the small town of Lone Star, selected because of its strategic location. Nearby are ore, limestone and coal—the three essentials for steel production—and the Port of Houston is driving distance.

While the 600-acre plant came about because of the war, steel didn't start rolling out until the mid-1940s, after the war's end. In the early 1950s, the oil industry began booming and with it the market for pipe.

"An idea came about to buy surplus war project product

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Several volunteers from the Ladies of Lone Star in the mill's chapel, the site of hundreds of plant employees' weddings over the years. A wind tunnel that could simulate the vacuum of space using blast blowers. Randy Hodges, the former mayor of Lone Star who worked at the plant for 45 years, with his father's hard hat. From left, former mill worker Bruce Shimpock and Lesley Dalme and Lanita Goodrum of Ladies of Lone Star look over artifacts.

to manufacture oil pipe," Shivers says. "It took two years to adjust production and install necessary mills at a cost of \$76 million. The oil industry fluctuated, going from boom to bust. Likewise, LSS profited hugely and suffered severely."

LSS also played a role in the Vietnam War.

"We would make large-diameter tubes to be used as bomb casings, which would be cut to bomb length, shipped by rail or truck to an ammunition plant in Karnack, filled with ammo, a fin was attached, then they would be transported to the Port of Houston," Shivers says.

The steel mill had a wind tunnel that could simulate the vacuum of space using blast blowers. Known as the Ordnance Aerophysics Laboratory, the highly secure site operated from 1945 to 1968 and employed hundreds of scientists, technicians and engineers. Department of Defense contractors conducted thousands of tests for supersonic jet engines, guided missiles and spacecraft components for the military and NASA.

"The facility was well-known around the community, but because of security, it was not known around the country," Hodges says. "They researched and designed rocket engines here, including components used for the Saturn rocket. They would bring equipment in on a bread truck, and once inside the plant, securely situated behind closed metal doors, the bread truck doors would open, and parts would be unloaded."

Members of the project liked the area so much, amid the verdant Pineywoods and alongside the 1,500-acre reservoir



COURTESY LESLEY DALME

“We want to gather memories and record as much of the history of Lone Star Steel as possible for future generations.”

built for the steel plant, many of them stayed and went to work for LSS.

They brought with them a wealth of knowledge and talent that led to industry innovations. For example, a device that scrubbed smokestack emissions was developed at LSS, Shivers says.

“It cleaned better than anything on the market,” he says. “We sold it to other cities—Houston, Shreveport—a nuclear facility in Georgia, and other customers in the U.S. and abroad.”

However, economic downturns in the 1980s plagued the steel industry. In 1989, Lone Star Steel filed for bankruptcy.

“Our labor contract expired, and we worked two years without one,” Shivers says. “We just kept going, no contract and no complaints. It took a couple of years, but we came out of bankruptcy and paid off 85% of the debt, and a few years later were profitable again.”

In 2007, U.S. Steel purchased the plant for more than \$2 billion. Nine years later the mill was idled and then completely shuttered in 2020. At the height of production, the company reportedly employed more than 6,000. Now, other than security personnel, the facility is vacant. Equipment sits silent while rust and dust mount.

The Ladies of Lone Star are dedicated to preserving documents dating to the early 1940s and photographs showcasing the plant’s long and vibrant history. They also have begun meeting with former employees, recording and then transcribing their stories to be compiled into a book chronicling the mill’s story.

“The plant is being dismantled, and eventually it will be no more,” says Lanita Goodrum, one of the volunteers. “And it’s even more important that people know what made Lone Star, what those men did in that plant and the impact it had on our nation.”



JAY PATRICK

When our time together winds down, Hodges, who started at the steel plant in 1974, offers a trip to the senior center—an invite I eagerly accept. As we walk by each photo on the walls, he enthusiastically explains the images.

“I worked with World War II vets, young men with families—our plant was filled with people like that, hardworking parents who had to make a living regardless of the long hours, the hard and dangerous work,” he says. “In a world that was so divided, we were working for a common cause.”

On top of a piano is something that goes beyond mere nostalgia—Hodges’ father’s hard hat from his long career at the plant. “His first paycheck in 1953 is what paid for my mother to go and me to be born at a hospital,” Hodges says. “It was more than a job and career. We were family.”

And it was a family that survived, thrived, accomplished a lot and had an enormous impact. They are proud of LSS, still—its impact of 80 years, from Earth to the heavens, the industries it changed from oil to aerospace, and the lives it touched.

As Shivers says, “Our footprint ranges far beyond this steel plant.” ■

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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER

**DOUG
LAMBERT**

Time Away Can Be a Time To Save

THIS TIME OF YEAR, it seems like my family and I are away more than we're home. Between celebrating graduations, weddings and birthdays, weekends at home are rare. Throw in some quality time with kids while they're out of school for the summer, and our schedule is jam-packed.

If your calendar is like mine, one advantage of all that travel is that it's a good time to give your home's air conditioning system and electronics a break. That will give the electric bill a bit of a break as well to help pay for the travel and the gifts for weddings and birthdays.

Here are some tips for making the most of your time away from home.

Unplug some of your household appliances. Many devices use electricity while they're plugged in, even when turned off. Unplugging not only saves energy but also can prevent fires during your absence. Start with TVs, gaming consoles, computers, microwaves, coffee pots and other small kitchen appliances.

Make sure all ceiling fans are off—they cool people, not rooms.

A smart power strip can help turn off—and on—multiple appliances or electronics all at once. They can be purchased with various features, including remote controls, and make it easy to manage those vampire loads that draw power even when turned off.

Set the air conditioner to 80 degrees. Raising the thermostat 7–10 degrees above its normal setting for eight hours a day can save as much as 10% on your cooling bill. If you have a programmable or smart model, you can set it to bring the temperature back to a more comfortable level in time for your return.

Turn down the water heater. Much of the cost of running a water heater comes from just keeping the water at the selected temperature.

Consider using timers to turn lights on and off every night. Timers can save energy and also give an appearance that someone is home, deterring burglars. For the lights that will be on the longest—inside and outside—use LED bulbs. They use at least 75% less power than traditional bulbs and last longer. ■

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fayette.coop





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Fallacies and Facts About Home Energy Consumption

Fallacy: Using a bigger air conditioner will cool my house better.

Fact: A smaller air conditioner that runs for a slightly longer period is more efficient than a larger unit that cools the house with short run times. Having an AC professional determine the right-sized system for your home is the optimal solution.

Fallacy: Using an old refrigerator or freezer as a spare is reasonable.

Fact: Old fridges and freezers are usually significantly less efficient than newer models, and keeping the appliance going can cost extra money for minimal benefit. Consider getting rid of the old fridge and using an ice chest instead when you occasionally need additional cold storage.

Fallacy: The way I use my kitchen stove does not affect energy use.

Fact: Cooks can reduce energy use by about half when using the kitchen stove by setting low-heat temperatures, covering pots and pans, or using copper-bottomed pans, which are the best conductors of heat. On an electric stove, turning off the burners to let residual heat finish cooking—and using pans the same size as the burner—can save energy. And preparing food in pressure cookers, microwaves or air fryers uses much less energy than stoves.

Fallacy: Ductwork should be sealed with duct tape.

Fact: Despite the name, duct tape is not the best tool for the job. Poor surface preparation and dusty environments often

cause the tape to fall off. The tape also is not as durable as the preferred sealants—mastic or metal tape.

Fallacy: Ceiling fans only save energy when it's warm out.

Fact: Circulating air with ceiling fans saves money in all seasons—when on the right setting. In summer, change the rotation of the blades to counterclockwise to direct air down, making the room feel up to 4 degrees cooler. In winter, direct air upward with the blades rotating clockwise.

Fallacy: Heat always rises.

Fact: Warm air rises, but heat can travel in many directions, depending on what forces are acting on it.

Fallacy: Setting the thermostat to a cooler temperature than ultimately needed will make the air conditioner cool faster.

Fact: An air conditioner runs at the same rate until it reaches the thermostat setting. If you set it to a colder temperature, you might forget to put it back to normal and use more energy than necessary.

Fallacy: Clothes must be washed in hot water.

Fact: While warm water might be necessary to remove oil, dirt or infectious germs, doing laundry with cold water is sufficient for most washes. Heating water consumes the majority of the energy used to do laundry. ■



FATCAMERA | ISTOCK.COM

Splash Into Summer Safely

IN THE POOL, at the beach or even in your bathroom, water can be dangerous for children if you don't take the right precautions. Drowning can happen any time of year, but parents need to be particularly vigilant during warmer months, when the number of drownings skyrockets.

Children can drown silently and in a matter of seconds. **Here are some tips to help prevent such a tragedy.**

Actively supervise your children around water (including pools, hot tubs, lakes and the bathtub). Always have a phone nearby to call for help in an emergency.

Never leave a child alone in or near a body of water—even if the water is less than a few inches deep.

For pool owners, make sure your pool is fully enclosed by fencing and has a self-closing, self-latching gate.

Hot tubs should be covered and locked when not in use.

Enroll your child in swim lessons. If you don't know how to swim, enroll in a parent-child swim class.

When at the lake or other deep water—or if your child is not a strong swimmer—have them wear a properly sized life jacket.

Learn CPR. In the event of a near-drowning, the victim will need immediate medical attention—before paramedics arrive. Performing CPR early enough can prevent brain damage and be the difference between life and death. ■

SAVE THE DATE FOR FEC'S ANNUAL MEETING



WEDNESDAY
JULY 16

WATCH FOR
MORE
INFORMATION
IN THE JULY
ISSUE.

One Spark Is All It Takes

WILDFIRES CAN START unexpectedly and move quickly and unpredictably, destroying everything in their path.

If fire is reported near your community:

- ▶ Place photos, vital records and small items of value in your car. Park your car facing the direction of escape.
- ▶ Clear a firebreak around buildings.
- ▶ Shut gas off at the meter. (Only a qualified professional can safely turn the gas back on.)
- ▶ Turn off propane tanks.
- ▶ Leave the electricity on, especially if it powers a well.
- ▶ Turn on sprinklers. Wet down shrubs close to structures.
- ▶ Wet down roof and above-ground fuel tanks.
- ▶ If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Be alert to changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

Prevention:

- ▶ Take care with flammables.
- ▶ Mow grass short. Rake leaves. Clear away refuse.
- ▶ Keep hay bales and firewood away from structures, electric lines and rights-of-way.
- ▶ Allow your electric cooperative to keep power lines and rights-of-way free of trees and shrubs.
- ▶ Trim dead or dormant shrubbery away from houses and other structures.
- ▶ Make a family evacuation plan. Have an inventory of home valuables in a fireproof box. ■



JOHN ZELLMER | ISTOCK.COM

MEMBER SATISFACTION SURVEY



Fayette Electric Cooperative will be conducting a member satisfaction survey. Your feedback will help us improve our service to you and plan for the future. On **Monday, June 2**, you may receive an email with a link to the survey from the following email address: **electric@fayette.coop**.

This email will be sent by **Fayette Electric Cooperative**.

The responses to this survey are anonymous. All surveys must be completed online.

Surveys will be delivered to the email address we have on file. The deadline to complete your survey is **Friday, July 18**.

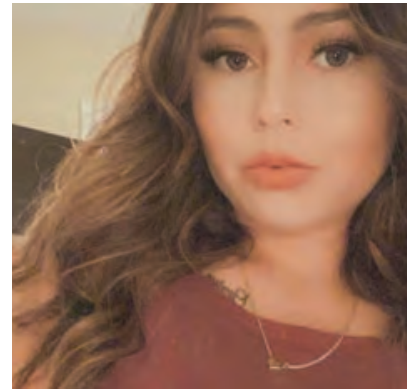
To make sure we have an updated email address on file, please check your SmartHub account or call our consumer service representatives at **(979) 968-3181 or (866) 968-3181**.

Thank you, in advance, for your participation.





DEANNA THOMAS



LEFT: Fayette EC's four-man team, from left: Charles Srubar, crew foreman; Justin Neiser, apprentice lineman; Justin Whited, journeyman lineman; and James Kielty, accounting and finance manager/chief financial officer. ABOVE: Kendall Alvarado's kindness and strength live on through the memorial golf tournament held in her honor.

Carrying Kindness Forward

Memorial golf tournament turns 'grief into purpose'

ON APRIL 12, friends, family and community members gathered at the Colo Vista Golf Club in Bastrop not just to play a round of golf but also to celebrate a legacy of strength and kindness at the fifth annual Kendall Alvarado Memorial Golf Tournament.

This event honors Kendall Alvarado, daughter of Deanna and Robert Thomas, Fayette Electric Cooperative's director of construction and maintenance. Kendall's journey and spirit continue to inspire everyone who knew her.

Kendall was born with polycystic kidney disease, a condition that brought significant health challenges throughout her life. At 16, she underwent a kidney transplant, which gave her several more years. However, by the time she was 21, she needed a second kidney transplant and a liver transplant.

Sadly, her health declined too rapidly for either procedure, and she died.

"Though we lost her on August 29, 2021, her legacy lives on through this tournament and through the support we're able to offer families facing similar lifelong medical battles, because she was a caring young woman who was on her way to be a nurse," Deanna Thomas said. "We are also deeply grateful to the American Legion Post 533 of Bastrop, a proud and generous supporter, and this year we're especially honored to support Fayette Electric Cooperative journeyman lineman Justin Whited's 4-year-old son, Conway."

Conway, son of Amanda and Justin Whited, was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at 2 weeks old and spent three months in a neonatal intensive care unit. He has undergone several surgeries for a blockage called meconium ileus and has had an ileostomy placed three times.

Cystic fibrosis is a genetic disorder that affects 1 in 3,000 newborns. It affects many organs of the body, including the

lungs, intestines, pancreas, kidneys and liver. There is no known cure, but it is continually being studied, and new medications are being developed.

"Today, Conway is thriving. He has been on a modulator medication for almost two years now, which has helped him tremendously," Amanda Whited said. "He has been ostomy-free now for a little over a year. He must visit a specialty clinic every three months for a check-up. These funds will help cover doctor visits and the numerous medications he needs for his diagnosis."

The impact of the FEC family has been gratefully felt by the Whiteds.

"The support shown by Fayette EC has been outstanding for our family—from having to take off for emergencies to doctor appointments," the Whiteds said. "Conway is asked about all the time by many of the employees, and they want to continue following his journey as well as us as a family. We deeply appreciate each and every one of them and the Kendall Alvarado Memorial Golf Tournament."

Deanna Thomas said they appreciate the opportunity to help the Whited family.

"We're so happy to help Justin and his family not only because he's a fellow lineman but also a dear family friend," she said. "As parents, we know the hardships of how it can be financially on a family. After Kendall passed away, we decided to honor her memory and help other families that have children with lifelong medical conditions.

"Together, we carry forward Kendall's heart for others, turning our grief into purpose and making a difference, one family at a time." ■

Hurricane Preparedness Guidelines

Hurricane season is June 1–November 30

If you're under a hurricane warning, find safe shelter right away.

When a hurricane is 36 hours from arriving:

- ▶ Turn on your TV or radio in order to get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- ▶ Restock your emergency preparedness kit. Include food and water sufficient for at least three days, medications, a flashlight, batteries, cash, and first-aid supplies. Learn how to build an emergency kit at ready.gov/build-a-kit.

When a hurricane is 18–36 hours from arriving:

- ▶ Bookmark your city or county website for quick access to storm updates and emergency instructions.
- ▶ Bring indoors any loose, lightweight objects that could become projectiles in high winds (e.g., patio furniture and garbage cans); anchor objects that are unsafe to bring in (e.g., propane tanks); and trim or remove trees close enough to fall on a building.

When a hurricane is six to 18 hours from arriving:

- ▶ Turn on your TV or radio or check your city or county website every 30 minutes for the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- ▶ Charge your cellphone so you will have a full battery in case you lose power.

When a hurricane is six hours from arriving:

- ▶ If you're not in an area that is recommended for evacuation, plan to stay at home or where you are, and let friends and family know where you are.
- ▶ Close storm shutters and stay away from windows. Flying glass from broken windows could injure you.
- ▶ Turn your refrigerator or freezer to the coldest setting and open only when necessary. If you lose power, food will last longer. Keep a thermometer in the refrigerator to be able to check the food temperature when power is restored.

To stay safe during a hurricane:

- ▶ If told to evacuate, do so immediately. Do not drive around barricades.
- ▶ If sheltering during high winds, go to a Federal Emergency Management Agency safe room; International Code Council 500 storm shelter; or a small, interior, windowless room or hallway on the lowest floor that is not subject to flooding.
- ▶ If trapped in a building by flooding, go to the highest level of the building. Do not climb into a closed attic; you may become trapped by rising floodwaters.

To stay safe after a hurricane:

- ▶ Listen to authorities for information and special instructions.
- ▶ Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. If it is safe to do so, turn off electricity at the main breaker or fuse box to prevent electric shock.
- ▶ Avoid wading in floodwaters, which can contain dangerous debris. Underground or downed power lines can also electrically charge the water.

Preparación para huracanes

La temporada de huracanes es del 1 de junio al 30 de noviembre

Cuando un huracán está a 36 horas de llegar:

- ▶ Prenda su televisor o radio para obtener las últimas actualizaciones meteorológicas e instrucciones de emergencia.
- ▶ Reponga su kit de emergencias. Incluya alimentos y agua suficientes para al menos tres días, medicamentos, una linterna, pilas, dinero en efectivo y suministros de primeros auxilios. Aprenda como construir un kit de emergencia en ready.gov/build-a-kit.

Cuando un huracán está a 18–36 horas de llegar:

- ▶ Marque como favorito el sitio web de su ciudad o condado para el acceso rápido de las actualizaciones de tormentas e instrucciones de emergencia.
- ▶ Traiga adentro objetos sueltos y ligeros que puedan convertirse en proyectiles con vientos fuertes (por ejemplo, muebles de patio y botes de basura); sujete objetos que no serían seguros para llevar adentro (por ejemplo, tanques de propano); y recorte o retire los árboles que están lo suficientemente cerca como para caer en un edificio.

Cuando un huracán está a 6–18 horas de llegar:

- ▶ Encienda su televisor o radio, o visite el sitio web de su ciudad o condado cada 30 minutos para obtener las últimas actualizaciones meteorológicas e instrucciones de emergencia.
- ▶ Cargue su teléfono celular para que tenga una batería llena en caso de que pierda energía.

Cuando un huracán está a seis horas de llegar:

- ▶ Si no se encuentra en un área recomendada para la evacuación, planifique quedarse en su casa o donde se encuentra y avise a sus amigos y familiares donde se encuentra.
- ▶ Cierre las contraventanas y aléjese de las ventanas. Los vidrios que vuelan de las ventanas rotas podrían dañarle.
- ▶ Ajuste la temperatura de su refrigerador o congelador a la posición más fría y ábralos solo cuando sea necesario. Si pierde la energía, la comida durará por más tiempo. Mantenga un termómetro en el refrigerador para poder verificar la temperatura de los alimentos cuando se restablezca la energía.

Para mantenerse a salvo durante un huracán:

- ▶ Si se le indica que evacue, hágalo inmediatamente. No maneje alrededor de las barricadas.
- ▶ Si se refugia durante vientos fuertes, vaya a una habitación segura de la Federal Emergency Management Agency, refugio contra tormentas del International Code Council 500 o una habitación o pasillo pequeña e interior sin ventanas en el piso más bajo que no esté sujeto a inundaciones.
- ▶ Si queda atrapado en un edificio por inundación, vaya al nivel más alto del edificio. No suba a un ático cerrado porque usted puede quedar atrapado por las crecientes inundaciones.

Para mantenerse a salvo después de un huracán:

- ▶ Escuche a las autoridades para obtener información e instrucciones especiales.
- ▶ No toque el equipo eléctrico si está mojado o si está parado en el agua. Si es seguro hacerlo, apague la electricidad en el interruptor principal o en la caja de fusibles para evitar una descarga eléctrica.
- ▶ Evite vadear en el agua de la inundación, que puede contener desechos peligrosos. Las líneas eléctricas subterráneas o caídas también pueden cargar el agua eléctricamente.



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Beware of Hurricane-Related Power Outages

THE ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON begins June 1 and ends November 30. Hurricanes are dangerous storms that create strong winds, storm surges, rip currents and flooding. They can cause major power outages that affect large areas, sometimes for extended periods of time.

Now is the time to prepare.

Take inventory of items that rely on electricity and get batteries or alternative power sources for them. Be sure to have a backup battery or a way to charge your cellphone.

Get a flashlight for every member of the family.

If you rely on critical and lifesaving medical devices powered by electricity, make a plan with your doctor for power outages. Find out how long medication can be stored at higher temperatures and seek guidance for critical medications. Contact Fayette Electric Cooperative to be added to the priority restoration list if you or your loved one is dependent on electronic medical equipment.

Install carbon monoxide detectors with battery backup in central locations on every level of your home.

Fill bathtubs and jugs with water if your water supply depends on electricity.

Keep enough nonperishable food and water to last through an extended outage. A good rule of thumb is to have enough to sustain you and your family through three days in an emergency.

A refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature down for about 48 hours.

Coolers with ice are a good backup option if longer-term storage is necessary, but monitor the temperatures with a thermometer. Throw food away if the temperature is 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more.

To get through an outage, consider the following tips.

Keep freezers and refrigerators closed to conserve the cold temperatures that keep your food fresh.

Use a properly installed generator but only outdoors and well away from windows. Keep it dry and protected from rain or flooding, and avoid touching a wet generator. Be sure to use only heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances to the generator, and don't plug the generator into the house. This can cause backfeeding, which is dangerous to lineworkers trying to restore power.

Never use a gas stove or oven to heat your home. It increases your risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Using an oven or stovetop can also increase the risk of fires and burns and could damage the appliance.

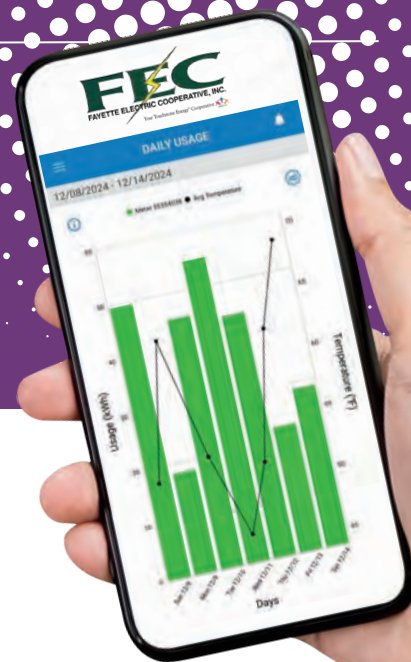
Disconnect appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges. Leave one light turned on so you'll know when the power comes back on.

Have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or using power-dependent medical devices.

Check with local officials about heating and cooling locations open near you. ■



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Amazing Grace Danforth

The trailblazing doctor was a champion of women's rights

BY CLAY COPPEDGE • ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANIE DALTON COWAN

THE DALLAS *Daily Times-Herald* tried to compliment Dr. Grace Danforth by saying she was “a woman with a man’s mind,” but the pioneering physician had a mind all her own.

Danforth was the first woman accepted as a member of the Dallas County Medical Association, the first woman to practice medicine in Williamson County and a founding member of the Texas Equal Rights Association.

Danforth was also a member of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, which made her death from a drug overdose all the more puzzling.

Born in Wisconsin in 1849, she lived

most of her life in Texas, moving with her family to northeast Texas as a young child.

For a while it appeared she would follow in her father’s footsteps as a traveling music teacher, but she found the classroom too confining. She considered bookkeeping and pharmacy before deciding on medicine, studying at the Woman’s Medical College of Chicago, where she first became involved in the campaign for women’s voting rights.

She returned to Texas as a licensed physician and dedicated suffragist.

By 1889, she was practicing medicine in the small town of Granger, north of Austin, at a time when there were only

a few thousand female doctors in the U.S. She organized local suffrage groups and promoted their activities. She advocated for inviting visionary suffragist Susan B. Anthony to Texas.

We know now that Danforth suffered from cluster headaches, which are uncommon, unpredictable and debilitating. And even though Danforth may have prescribed laudanum, a tincture of opium dissolved in alcohol, to treat pain and other ailments in her patients, she didn’t take it herself.

It’s possible she only took it once, on the night of her 46th birthday, February 21, 1895, when she died of an overdose. Stories about her death vary. Some say she overdosed on the drug antipyrine; others say laudanum.

Armies and expeditions of the day didn’t leave home without laudanum. Lewis and Clark took the drug, along with some raw opium, on their voyage of discovery. Doctors in the 19th century prescribed laudanum for nearly everything: colds, meningitis and even heart diseases.

Laudanum, it seems, never failed to make patients feel better. Unless it killed them.

Wayne Bethard, a pharmacist and historian in Texas, wrote in his book *Lotions, Potions, and Deadly Elixirs* that laudanum, like today’s opiates, lowers a patient’s pain threshold. Over time it takes more medicine to treat the same pain, but someone who doesn’t take narcotic pain medication has no tolerance to the drug. A dose large enough to calm a cluster headache could be fatal.

“Dr. Danforth was one of the most remarkable women in Texas,” the *Daily Times-Herald* wrote the day after her death. She was buried in the Granger City Cemetery.

“There was a great prejudice existing against her sex entering the learned professions, and it is not likely she got much practice,” the newspaper wrote. “But she was a woman of a vigorous and active mind, and she soon took a leading part in all reforms.” ■

Summer Pastas

We say summer, but you'll be turning to these dishes all year

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

A pan of homemade lasagna bubbling away in the oven is so dreamy, but this food editor is busy, so I'm busting out a skillet to re-create the dream in under 30 minutes on the stovetop. I finish by quickly broiling the cheese—an optional step but so worth it.

Turkey Skillet Lasagna

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 pound ground turkey
½ medium onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 jar marinara sauce (24 ounces)
1½ cups chicken broth
1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
10 uncooked lasagna noodles, broken into 2-inch pieces
1 cup ricotta cheese
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

1. Heat olive oil in a 12-inch oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add ground turkey and onion. Break up turkey with spoon and cook until turkey is fully cooked, about 8 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook an additional 2 minutes.
2. Add marinara sauce and broth. Bring to a boil.
3. Add mushrooms and lasagna noodles and stir to separate noodles. Return to a boil, then reduce heat, cover and cook 10–12 minutes or until noodles are tender, stirring occasionally. If using broiler, pre-heat it while the noodles cook.
4. In a bowl, stir together ricotta, Parmesan, Italian seasoning and salt.
5. Dollop cheese mixture by the spoonful on top of pasta. Cover and cook 5 minutes, until cheese is warmed through. Uncover skillet and top with mozzarella. If desired, broil 3 minutes or until cheese is melted and lightly browned. Serve warm.

SERVES 6

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifecycle.com, where she features a recipe for Queso Mac and Cheese.



Summer Corn Pasta Salad

NANCY GRIFFITH
BANDERA EC

Griffith's dish is a tasty combination of fresh veggies and pantry staples, making it a new addition to my list of rotating meal plans. As the pasta cooks, I can quickly chop up the veggies, and the dressing is a snap to whisk together. I served it with baked chicken, but it would also be amazing with fried chicken or baked salmon.

- 16 ounces uncooked rotini
- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ cup avocado oil
- 1 can black beans (15 ounces), rinsed and drained
- 1½ cups corn kernels
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ½ cup sliced black olives
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ cup diced green onions
- ¼ cup diced red onion

1. Cook rotini according to package directions.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together vinegar, oregano, cumin, salt and pepper. Whisk in avocado oil.
3. Add rotini to the dressing and stir to coat. Stir in beans, corn, tomatoes, bell pepper, olives, cilantro, green onions and red onion until thoroughly combined.
4. Cover and chill until ready to serve.

SERVES 8

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



\$500 WINNER

Pickle Popper Pasta Salad

PATRICIA STEHLING
CENTRAL TEXAS EC



Pickle pasta, where have you been all my life? The way I devoured this pasta—it's so, so good and even easier to whip up. I mean, c'mon—pickles, ranch and bacon ... winner, winner.

- 12 ounces uncooked large elbow macaroni
 - 1 cup mayonnaise
 - ½ cup sour cream
 - ¼ cup pickle juice
 - 2 tablespoons ranch seasoning
 - ¼ cup diced dill pickles
 - 8–10 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
 - 2 cups cherry tomatoes, quartered
 - 2 tablespoons fresh dill, minced (optional)
1. Cook macaroni according to package directions and allow to cool.
 2. In a large bowl, stir together mayonnaise, sour cream, pickle juice and ranch seasoning.
 3. Add macaroni, pickles, bacon and tomatoes and stir until well combined.
 4. Serve garnished with fresh dill, if desired.

SERVES 6–8

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TURKEY TIME DUE JUNE 10

We're already thinking about the holidays, and you could win \$500 if you do too. Tell us about your main dish or what you do with that mountain of leftover turkey. Enter by June 10.

UPCOMING: HOLIDAY BREAKFAST DUE JULY 10





Pasta With Prosciutto and Peas

KERRI RUSS
TRINITY VALLEY EC

I appreciate a pasta dish with texture. I want it to be crispy or crunchy, and this pasta gives it to me. I enjoyed this dish when I first made it but even more the next day for lunch.

12 ounces uncooked fusilli
10 ounces frozen peas
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,
divided use

3 ounces prosciutto, diced
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon lemon juice
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
cheese, divided use
½ cup chopped fresh parsley,
divided use

1. Cook fusilli according to package directions and set aside.
2. Steam peas according to package directions and drain.
3. In a skillet, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium-high heat. Add prosciutto to the skillet in a single layer and fry until crispy. Place on paper towels to drain.
4. Add remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil to skillet, along with garlic. Cook until garlic begins to brown.
5. Pour garlic mixture into a large bowl, and add prosciutto, fusilli, peas, lemon juice, salt and pepper to bowl. Stir to coat.

Water Wise

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Next time you're making spaghetti or fettuccine Alfredo, don't toss the water used for cooking pasta. Save a few cups before draining and reap the tasty benefits. It's loaded with rich starch from the pasta. Adding a cup or so of pasta water can help emulsify any sauce. It enhances flavor absorption, prevents pasta from drying out and helps sauce cling to pasta.

6. Stir in ¾ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano and ¼ cup parsley.
7. Serve garnished with remaining ¼ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano and ¼ cup parsley.

SERVES 4

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Enter the Bare Cage

Lace up for an eerie hike among former zoo pens in this boomtown

BY CHET GARNER

THE CAGES WERE all empty—at least what was left of them. But that didn't stop me from having the strange feeling that something was watching me as I hiked through the remnants of an abandoned zoo just outside Cisco.

This small town is about 100 miles west of Fort Worth and boasts a couple claims to fame. First is the Mobley Hotel—the initial hotel purchased by Conrad Hilton, in 1919—and second is an infamous 1927 bank robbery led by a man dressed as Santa Claus.

And third is the old zoo nature trails on the banks of Lake Cisco.

The zoo was built in 1923, during the height of an oil boom. It was to be the crown jewel of a tourist camp that also included a huge swimming pool just below the newly formed lake.

At its peak, the zoo had a number of cages built into the sandstone cliffs and held a strange menagerie of animals, including a bear, deer and flamingo. Sadly, its heyday was short-lived as animals died under “unusual circumstances,” and by the 1930s, everything was abandoned.

For decades, the ruins of the zoo were known to only a few, and it seems most of them were graffiti artists. It wasn't until 2021 that a local nonprofit got permission to clear the paths, haul out the garbage and turn the old zoo into a public nature trail.

Walking the paths and peering into the old cages makes for an interesting, albeit creepy, nature walk. Pieces of rusted metal mark the outlines of the former enclaves. The only sounds you'll hear are the wind and the occasional bird or squirrel scampering up a tree.

But it isn't hard to imagine the growls of bears and howls of monkeys or those beady little eyes peering back at you. ■

ABOVE The empty habitats of an abandoned zoo embolden Chet.

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

JUNE

7

Brenham Highwaymen Show: The Great American Outlaws, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Grapevine Dairy Day, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

13

Fredericksburg [13–14] Craft Beer Festival, fbgcraftbeerfestival.com

14

East Bernard Czech Kolache-Klobase Festival, (979) 533-1902, kkfest.com

El Campo Kids Fishing Tournament, (979) 275-1600, eclostagoon.com

Slaton Texas Air Museum Airshow, (806) 779-7332, thetexasairmuseum.org

Granbury [14–15] Lone Star Street Rod Association State Run, (817) 573-5548, visitgranbury.com

Terrell [14–15] North Texas Antique Tractor and Engine Club Show and Pull, (214) 497-1611, north-texas-antique-tractor-and-engine-club.net

16

Denton [16–21] Juneteenth Celebration, (940) 735-6311, dentonjuneteenth.com

21

Freeport Fort Velasco Day, (979) 233-0066, freeportmuseum.com

26

Luling [26-29] Watermelon Thump, (830) 875-3878, watermelonthump.com

28

Teague Putt Fore a Purpose, (903) 389-5792, fairfieldtexaschamber.com

Belton [28, July 2-5] 4th of July Celebration, (254) 939-3551, beltonchamber.com

Llano [28-Sept. 28] Canvas and Quilts: The Art of Ira and Kathy Kennedy, (325) 247-4839, llanofineartsguild.com

JULY

3

Waxahachie [3-4] Grape Myrtle Festival, (469) 309-4045, waxahachiecvb.com

4

Carthage Lake Murvaul Fourth of July Celebration, (903) 693-6562, panolacountytexas.com

Corsicana Freedom Festival, (903) 654-4874, visitcorsicana.com

Grapevine 4th of July Extravaganza, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

Port Arthur Fireworks on the Seawall, (409) 985-7822, visitportarthurtx.com

Tomball July 4th Celebration & Street Fest, (281) 290-1035, tomballtx.gov

Granbury [4-6] Hometown 4th of July Celebration, (817) 573-1622, granburrychamber.com

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



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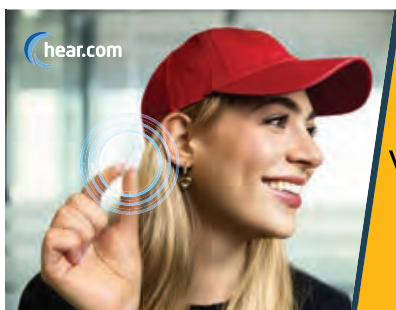
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Family Vacation

Whether going overseas or just over yonder, these readers love picnicking, beach combing, hiking, riding the rivers and cheering on their favorite teams as a family. Now pile in the family van, and let's have some fun!

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 BLAIR RINCONES, PEDERNALES EC

"The first time our kids experienced the Gulf Coast, the heart-shaped sunset made it truly a magical experience."

2 TARYN JENKINS, TRINITY VALLEY EC

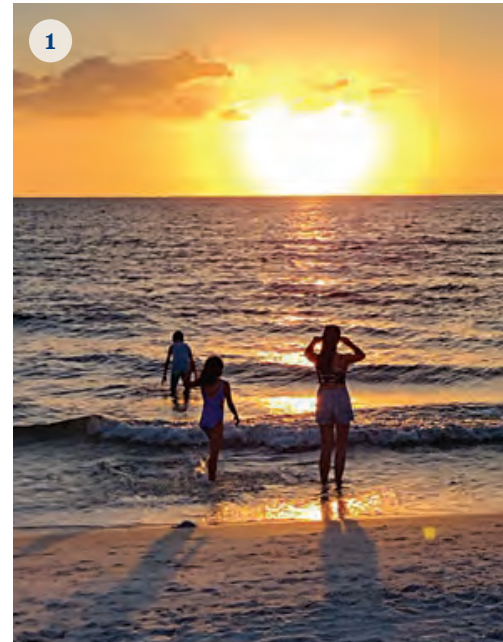
"A beach trip before a college send-off."

3 ELIZABETH WEBB, CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

"Climbing up to the summit of Enchanted Rock."

4 DANICA PETERS, PEDERNALES EC

"Summer lake days and jumping off the boat."



Upcoming Contests

DUE JUN 10 **Heroes**

DUE JUL 10 **Abstract**

DUE AUG 10 **Country Life**



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Family Vacation photos from readers.





Cutting Through

Sometimes it takes a chain saw to get through the undergrowth of life

BY PATTI JONES MORGAN
ILLUSTRATION BY
HEATHER GATLEY

ONE MORNING AS I walked along a nearby lane, a chain saw's rough growl cut through the early morning peace. Startled, I discovered its source was a trim-looking man bent almost double, systematically attacking dense undergrowth along his fence line.

"Good morning!" I called out.

Finally hearing my voice over the sound of the machine, the man straightened up. "Good morning!" he replied.

"You have a lot of work there!" I called back.

He took my greeting as a welcome excuse to take a break and struggled to disengage from a tangle of old wire fencing, clinging branches and thorny tendrils. Over time, they had wound around the trees and bushes, roots, and fence posts to create a near impenetrable barrier.

Slipping off the mask that had been protecting him from clouds of wood shavings and dust, he tipped back his broad-brimmed hat with a friendly smile. He had just bought the 10 acres, he explained, and planned to build a house on it for him and his wife.

"A lot of wires, mostly rusted, and old brush have wrapped around the fence posts," he said, waving at the stringy assortment of tethers once intended to define the acreage and warn away trespassers.

Left uncontrolled, however, nature had ravenously begun converting old and new companions into little more than an unmanageable thorny fortress. No wonder wire cutters and a chain saw were needed to hack through the knots and reveal what lay hidden.

We bid our goodbyes after the neighborly visit, and the chain saw resumed its noisy attack on the underbrush jungle.

But not before I saw my own tangle—of old literary aspirations in need of similar treatment. The cacophony inspired me to clear out yesterday's words and give light, air, time and space to new ones.

A long sweltering summer arrived, partnered with the pandemic. My neighbor's sporadic chain saw activity diminished to rock gathering and wheelbarrow work.

Curious neighbors, eager to chat, began stopping by. Robert Frost's oft-quoted line from his poem *Mending Wall* sprang to mind: "Good fences make good neighbors." A conversation hub during those communication-cramped months, the gathering place had served us all well.

Completed, his low rock wall continued to speak simply about what mattered: people, purpose and permanence.

It spoke my language too. Half-hidden beneath my writing clutter lay the lyrical sounds and familiar rhythms of my old love, poetry. Revealed anew, its purpose suddenly mattered more than ever.

The chain saw's discordant sound that first morning had, it seemed, pealed an unexpected welcome. Its clarion call was sweet music to my ears. ■



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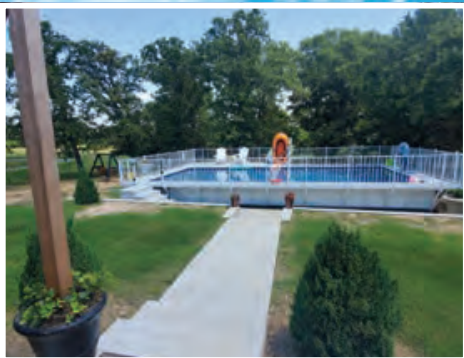


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