

HE UNEARTHED
ANCIENT TOOLS

SAM RAYBURN TURNED ON
TEXAS' LIGHTS

I'D DO ANYTHING
FOR MOM

Texas Coop Power

FOR FAYETTE EC MEMBERS

MAY 2026

Trickle Your Fancy

The arid West
is awash, if you know
where to look



community phone

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Forbes HOME

4.8 ★★★★★

Community Phone Named Best Home Phone Service Provider of 2026 by Forbes

"With high consumer sentiment ratings and a **money-back guarantee**, Community Phone is our top choice."
Forbes, January 2026



"I have my old phone number! And I'm saving almost \$100 each month over my old phone company which relies on copper wires." **Karen, 78**



"We are totally satisfied with the service. We have great reception in our rural area." **Sue, 71**

community phone

How It Works... Easy as 1-2-3

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Alford, 84, Navy Veteran



1



Home Phone Base Plug our home phone base into a power outlet.

2



Home Phone Plug a phone into the jack of our home phone base.

3



Local cell towers Automatically connects to local cell towers.

Get **2 FREE** Months of Service!

 **Call: 1-844-490-5925**
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May 2026



12

06 Wet Texas

Beyond and below the tumbleweeds and cactuses, oases beckon out west.

Photo essay by Erich Schlegel

He Kept Digging

Thanks to an archaeologist's persistence, we have 20,000-year-old evidence of Texans.

By Pam LeBlanc

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ON THE COVER

Under a relentless sun, Lake Nueces on the Nueces River nurtures an inviting ecosystem.

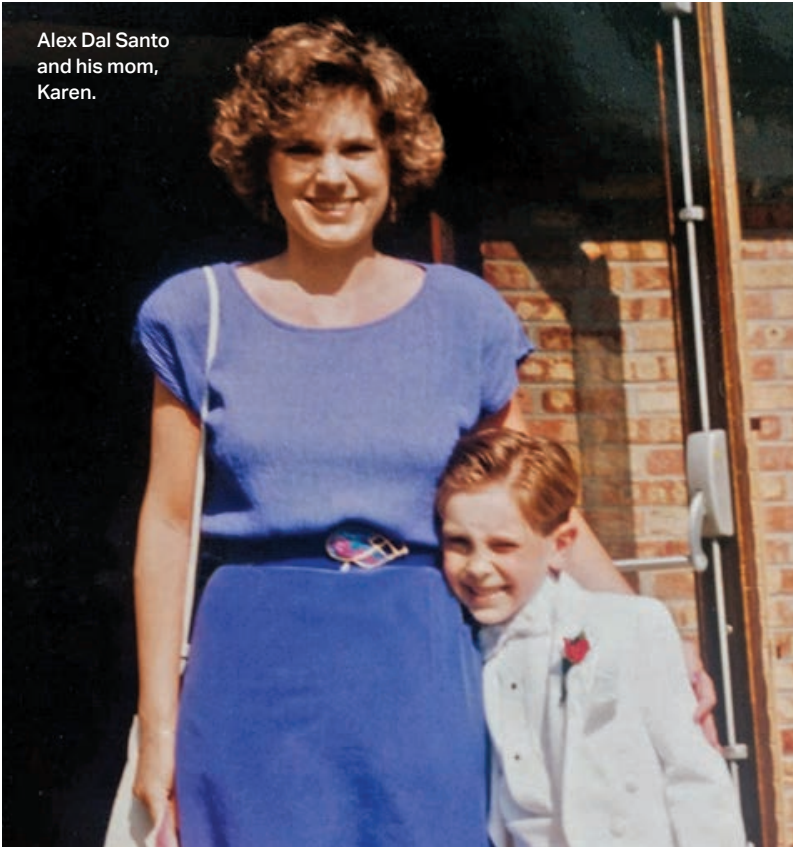
Photo by Erich Schlegel

ABOVE

Archaeologist Michael Collins examines Gault artifacts with Angela Davis, center, and Jon Lohse in 1999.

Courtesy Kenneth Garrett

Appreciating Our Moms



Alex Dal Santo and his mom, Karen.

IN CELEBRATION OF MOTHER'S DAY, May 10 this year, we ask readers to finish the sentence "Moms are ..." *TCP's* writers and editors also share their thoughts.

Lifelong learners—always reading, changing and growing.

—Samantha Bryant, communications specialist

The first person you want to call when something big happens, and you'll miss her when you can't.

—Alex Dal Santo, assistant production manager

Psychic. Mine can sense how I'm feeling even from miles away.

—Erin Sinclair, communications specialist

Frequently undervalued for their enormous contributions. They do so much.

—Claire Stevens, communications specialist

Family historians, capturing (usually unflattering) smartphone pics at family functions.

—Kelly Tran, communications specialist

Eternally selfless.

—Tom Widlowski, associate editor



TCP Contests and More

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST

Campfire Favorites

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Rodeo

RECOMMENDED READING

Why We Like Bats, our May 2006 feature story, looked closely at the creatures that still captivate Texans. Download the May 2006 issue at TexasCoopPower.com.



ENTER ONLINE

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Moms are ...

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 March prompt: **My favorite Texas saying is ...**

The sun has risen and the sun has set, but we haven't left Texas yet.

EUGENE NEESE
BOWIE-CASS EC
LINDEN

All hat and no cattle.

SISSY CARTER
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
GATESVILLE

If you don't like the weather, wait a minute.

TANYA STEELE
BLUEBONNET EC
BURTON

The bigger the hair, the closer to God.

DEBRA MILLS
NUECES EC
PORT ISABEL

Bless your heart.

KIT VAUGHN
PEDERNALES EC
LIBERTY HILL

Visit our website to see more responses.

MARCH 2026 Charted Waters

“Happy to see Pam LeBlanc is still adventurous. And Erich Schlegel’s photos artfully capture her adventure.”

STEVE HARDY
PEDERNALES EC
CEDAR PARK



ERICH SCHLEGEL

Matters of Funding

Overall, a great article, but there is a quote saying that rebuilding the Mason courthouse “didn’t cost taxpayers a dime” [*In All Their Glory*, March 2026]. At least \$9.6 million of funding from the state wasn’t from the tooth fairy.

Larry Strong
CoServ
Lewisville

Shouldering the Load

I loved the story of Tyler Schlickeisen, tow truck driver [*Currents*, March 2026]. It’s great to see stories on unsung heroes like him.

I do have to disagree with his comment, “Nobody likes to see a tow truck driver.” When I have needed them—on Interstate 35—my two tow truck drivers were heroes.

Frank Graham
Navarro County EC
Hill County

A Rash of Trash

Back in the ‘60s, Lady Bird Johnson championed a “Don’t Be a Litterbug” campaign, sending us children home with “litter bags” to hang on the handle of our roll-down car windows [*A Tidy Revolution*, March 2026]. Then in the ‘80s, the “Don’t Mess With Texas” slogan was a fun and effective refresher course.

Now we desperately need a new anti-litter crusade because Texas roadways have grown increasingly trashy.

Cheryl Irish
Bluebonnet EC
Bastrop

Ancestry and ‘TCP’

My hobby is genealogy and family history. Two articles in March gave enough information about people for me to see if I am related to them.

I discovered Tad Lucas [*Currents*] was the wife of my 10th cousin. Jennie Reynolds [*In All Their Glory*] is my 10th cousin. Our common progenitors date from the 1500s and 1600s.

Judith Tavares
Nueces EC
Corpus Christi



RYAN OLBRYSH

TCP WRITE TO US
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Austin, TX 78701

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

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Ocotillo reaches out from a bluff overlooking Devils River State Natural Area, north of Del Rio. The river, part of the Rio Grande watershed in Southwest Texas, is one of the most pristine in Texas.

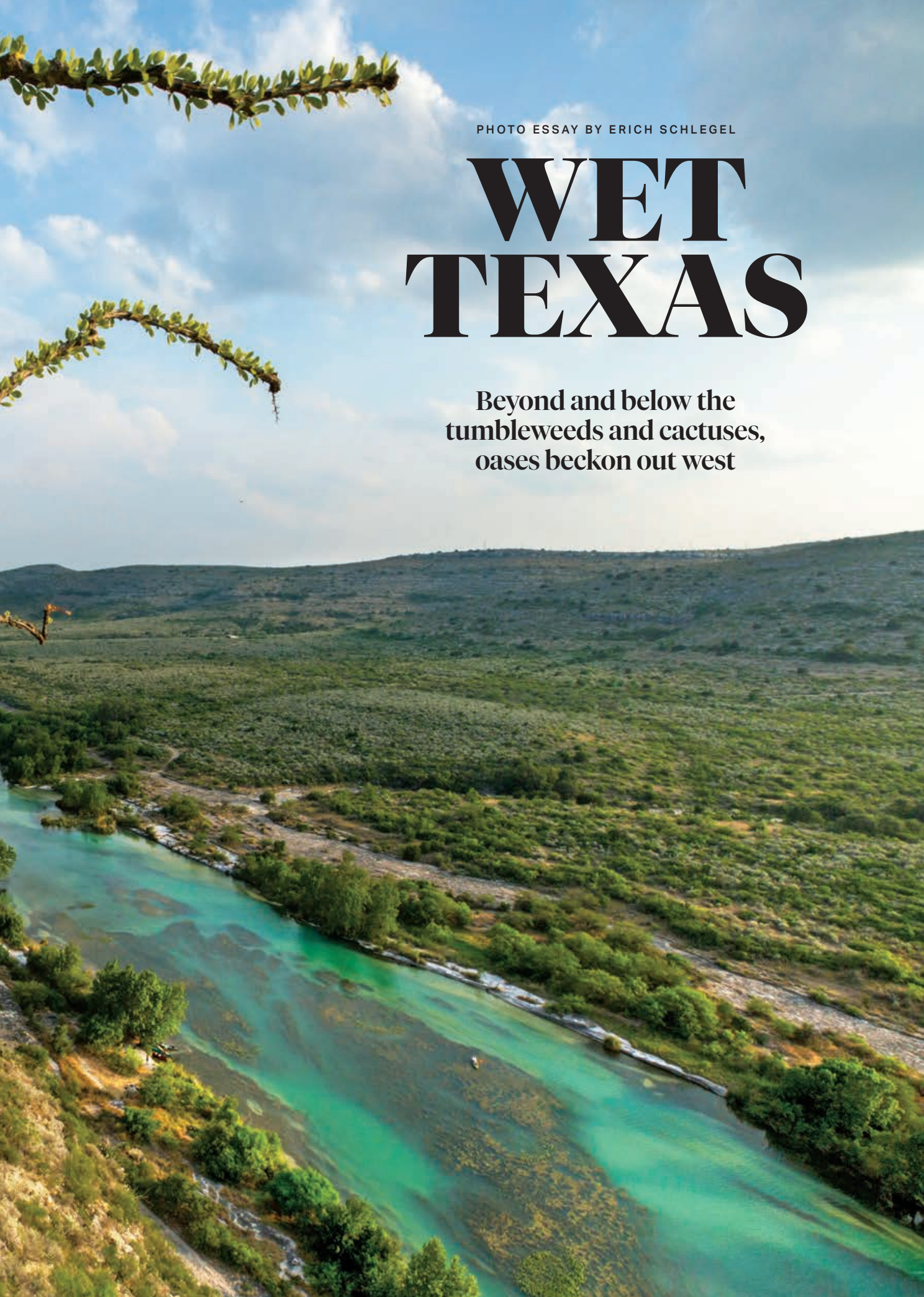
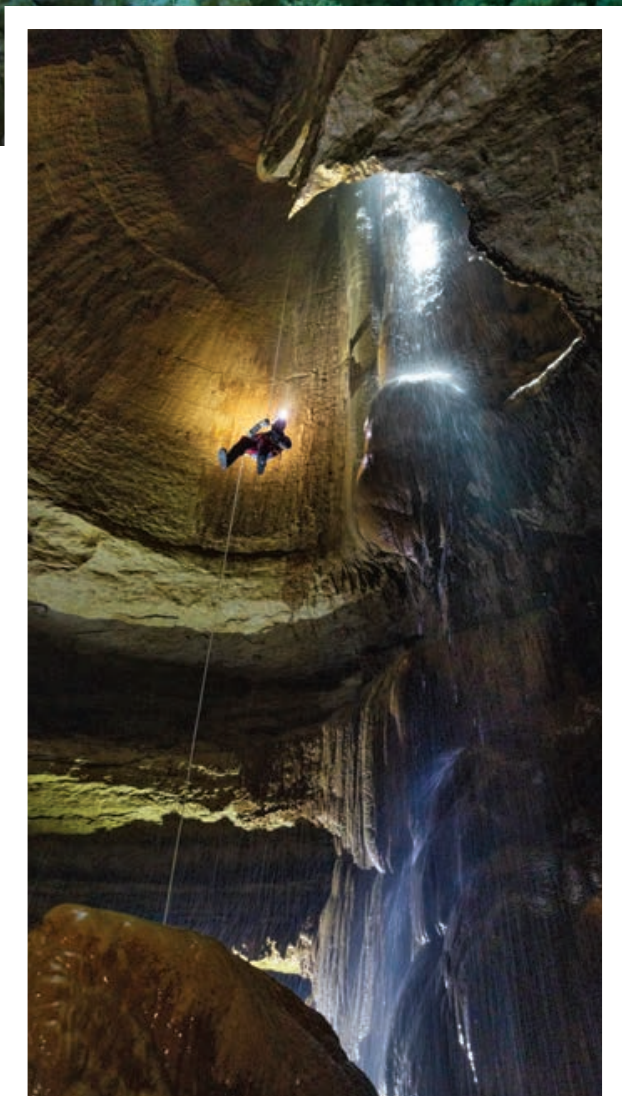
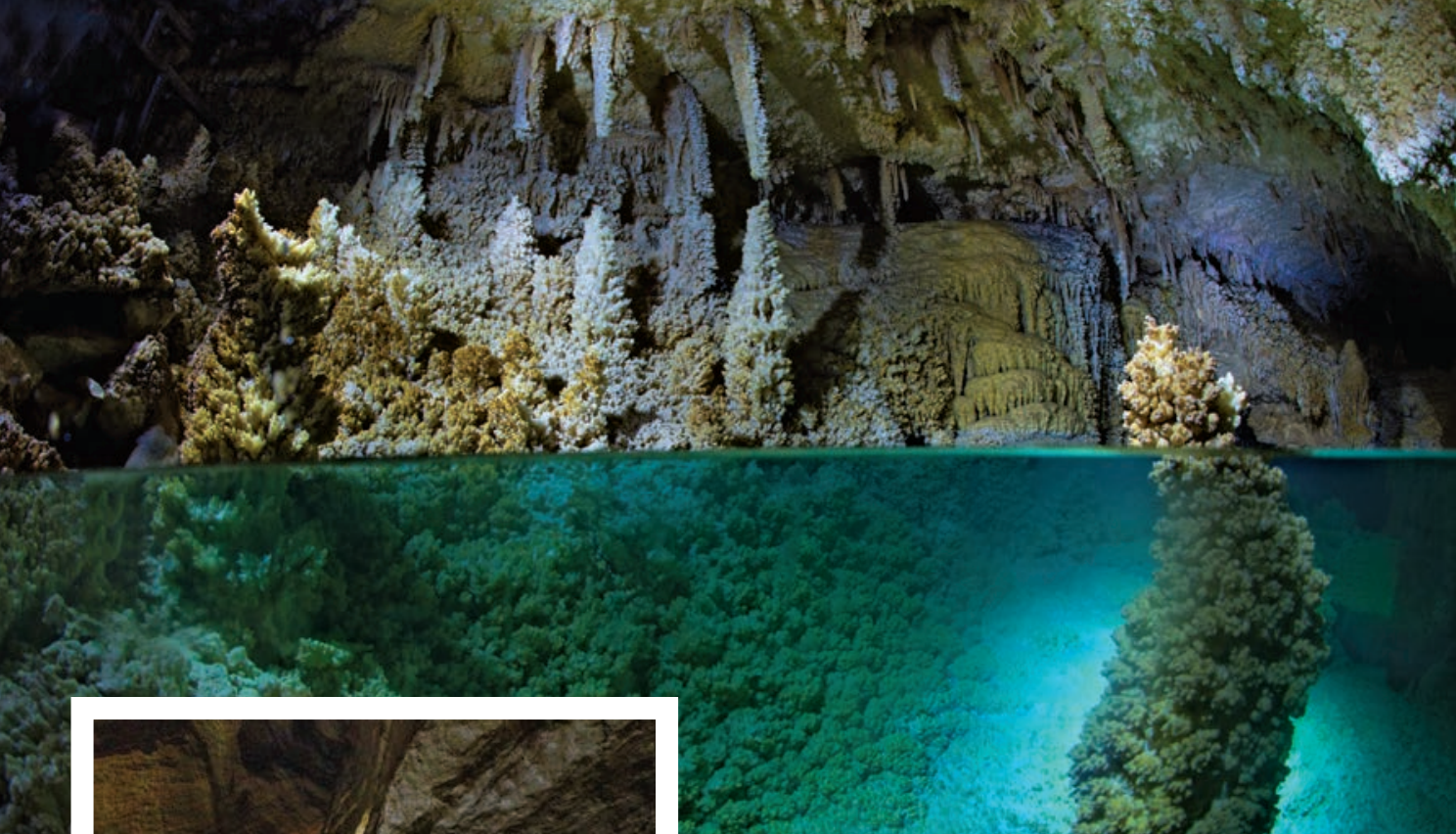
An aerial photograph of a wide river with vibrant turquoise water, winding through a lush green valley. The surrounding landscape is covered in dense vegetation, with rolling hills in the background under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. In the upper left corner, a branch with green leaves hangs into the frame.

PHOTO ESSAY BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

WET TEXAS

Beyond and below the
tumbleweeds and cactuses,
oases beckon out west



TOP The Horseshoe Lake room sits beneath the dry, barren landscape of West Texas in the Caverns of Sonora, where the humidity is always about 98%.

ABOVE Austin cave expert Ethan Perrine descends a rope alongside a 70-foot underground waterfall in a cave below a West Texas cow pasture.

Drive west on Interstate 10 from the Hill Country, through beautiful desert mesas and mountains, and there's no water in sight, right?

Not unless you know where to look. Rivers, springs and even waterfalls are hidden across West Texas.

Most folks know about the Rio Grande, which cuts through the Big Bend, and you may even know of San Solomon Springs, which fills the 1.3-acre pool in Balmorhea State Park.

But you probably don't know about the 70-foot waterfall 143 feet below a cow pasture. It's managed by the Texas Cave Management Association and accessible only by wetsuit-clad expert cavers with advanced vertical rope training.

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, also known as the Lower Canyons, flows down from Big Bend National Park toward Amistad Reservoir near Del Rio—the most remote part of the state. The 83-mile canoe trip takes a week and requires extensive river paddling knowledge and wilderness experience. Help, if needed, can be days away, but only if you carry a satellite phone.

On the other hand, anybody can paddle and swim just west of the Hill Country. Here, the crystal-clear Nueces River is nothing like the muddy flows that empty into the Gulf of Mexico. You'll find swimming pool-clear water in Lake Nueces as well as upstream, in a swimming hole in the town of Camp Wood named for its depth in feet, Quince (15).

It's easy to take water for granted. But seeing and experiencing water in West Texas brings an appreciation of one of our state's most important and sensitive resources. ■

An aerial photograph of a narrow canyon. The central feature is a river with exceptionally clear, vibrant turquoise and emerald green water. The water's color varies, with deeper blues in the center and lighter greens near the banks. The canyon walls are composed of light-colored, layered rock formations, possibly limestone or sandstone, with sparse green vegetation growing on them. The surrounding area above the canyon is densely forested with green trees. In the lower-left corner, a small black metal structure, possibly a ladder or railing, is visible on the rocky bank. A tiny human figure can be seen in the lower-middle part of the river, providing a sense of scale.

Blue Hole is a spring-fed swimming spot near the headwaters of the Frio River north of Leakey on the private property of the H. E. Butt Foundation Camp. Blue Hole reaches a maximum depth of about 30 feet.



Divers join a school of fish in San Solomon Springs at Balmorhea State Park, home of the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool. The springs have flowed out of the Chihuahuan Desert about 135 miles southwest of Midland for thousands of years.



LEFT The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River is the most remote part of the state. The heart of this stretch of the Rio Grande is an arduous 83 miles called the Lower Canyons, which offers spectacular scenery but requires extensive wilderness experience.

BELOW A campsite along the Devils River, which begins in northwest Sutton County and flows south for 94 miles, emptying into Amistad Reservoir on the Rio Grande.





Thanks to an archaeologist's persistence, we have 20,000-year-old evidence of Texans

COURTESY KENNETH GARRETT

BY PAM LEBLANC

He Kept Digging



COURTESY KENNETH GARRETT

TOP Michael Collins stands with several chert cores—often called flint—recovered from the Gault site along Buttermilk Creek.

ABOVE Artifacts found at the Gault site by a collector in 1990 include two stones with hatch marks etched onto their surface.

Last summer, Michael Collins gazed over a tree-lined valley near Florence, his eyes scanning the grassy field where he once led excavations that changed our understanding of how and when humans first populated North America.

“I describe it as coming back to an old friend,” Collins said during that visit to the Gault archaeological site, about 50 miles north of Austin.

Collins sat beneath pecan trees for a picnic that day with others who had worked at Gault and filmmaker Olive Talley, whose 2025 documentary, *The Stones Are Speaking*, explores the site’s significance—and Collins’ role in saving it.

In the 1980s and ’90s, the film explains, artifact hunters lugging buckets and shovels flocked to the 30-acre plot of land, where a creek flowed and an abundant supply of flint rippled through a rocky ledge. They paid \$25 a day to search for scrapers, projectile points and knives made by Native Americans and walk away with whatever they found. They left behind empty holes and mounds of dirt.

By taking those stone artifacts, collectors were destroying much of the history that they held. “It’s like looking at a book, tearing a picture out and throwing away the rest of the book,” said Elton Prewitt, a longtime Texas archaeologist.

The Gault story could have ended there—as a pay-to-dig site whose significance disappeared along with the ancient implements once scattered in its soil. But that’s not what happened.

In 1990, collectors digging at Gault found something unusual: two stones with hatch marks etched onto their surface. Word got back to the University of Texas, where the discovery perked the ears of Thomas Hester, then the director of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, and Collins, then the lab’s associate director.

The two drove to the site, where more etched stones turned up—along with a Clovis spearpoint, named for a Paleo-Indian archaeological site near Clovis, New Mexico, where scientists had discovered distinctive human-made tools more than 11,000 years old.

Most archaeologists long believed that humans first funneled into North America via a land bridge that formed between Russia and Alaska across what is now the Bering Strait about 13,000 years ago. The so-called Clovis culture was thought to be the oldest in the Americas.

Because Clovis tools had been found at Gault, Collins knew the site was important. But at the time, nobody knew just how significant.

Over the next few years, the land changed hands, and the pay-to-dig operation ended. When the property’s new owners, Howard and Doris Lindsey, stumbled onto some mammoth bones, Collins again got the call. He struck up a friendship with the Lindseys, and in 1998, Collins convinced them to allow a three-year lease so he could conduct an excavation.

That dig turned up more artifacts from the Clovis period, but Collins ran out of time. He filled in the pit and left when the lease ended, convinced the site held even more significance.

Collins stayed in touch with the Lindseys, and in 2007 they agreed to sell him the land. (They still live nearby and keep an eye on the property.) Collins and his wife, Karen, used their own money to buy the site, then immediately donated it to the nonprofit Archaeological Conservancy, where it would be protected in perpetuity.

Collins began a meticulous, long-term excavation project. The people who had come here thousands of years ago made tools, discarded some and lost others, leaving behind a record. The researchers uncovered thousands of artifacts, plus a human-made surface believed to be the floor of a structure at least 15,000 years old.

At first, not everyone believed what the stones were saying. Some pushed back on the idea that humans had been in Central Texas since before the Clovis people. But using a technique called optically stimulated luminescence, which



COURTESY GAULT SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Collins with volunteers at the last part of the Gault site to be excavated. Currently there are no open excavation sites on the property and no digs planned.

tells scientists when sediments were last exposed to light, Collins and his team proved that some of the most deeply buried artifacts were indeed older than Clovis.

Today, most archaeologists agree that humans began to move into North America before the land bridge at the Bering Strait opened, using boats to cross the water and spread down the coast.

Evidence discovered through Collins’ excavations show signs that humans have come to the water at this Texas site—what is now nearby Buttermilk Creek—for 20,000 years.

That arguably makes it the oldest demonstrably inhabited site in the Western Hemisphere.

“What’s important about this site is what we’ve learned about ourselves from it,” says Tim Brown, a board member at the nonprofit Gault School of Archaeological Research, which Collins founded. “This site has been so important in the rewriting of the book about the very early story of man in the Americas.”


And it may have more stories to tell.

Collins, now in his 80s, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in 2022, and the main excavation pit was covered in 2016. But just 3% of the land here has been excavated. New technologies may help future archaeologists unravel even more of its past.

“Walk across this soil,” Brown says. “If you don’t get a humble, awestruck reaction, there’s something wrong. And without Mike, we’d have no idea.” ■

Dig In

To book a guided tour, visit the GSAR website, gaultschool.org.

 Scan the QR code or visit gaultfilm.com to learn more about *The Stones Are Speaking* and for streaming options.



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37	8.77	8.15	10.52	9.81	15	13	22	20	60	33.49	24.28	60.76	41.71	109	73	206	136
38	8.77	8.16	11.19	10.18	16	14	24	21	61	36.49	25.09	66.43	47.10	122	83	236	154
39	9.13	8.31	11.62	10.55	17	15	25	22	62	39.88	27.91	73.90	51.32	136	92	262	166
40	9.55	8.48	12.04	10.98	18	16	27	24	63	43.69	34.01	81.54	57.25	153	102	287	187
41	10.05	8.72	13.10	11.58	20	17	30	26	64	47.91	38.28	90.20	62.32	170	112	323	200
42	10.48	9.01	14.21	12.30	22	19	33	29	65	52.81	40.88	100.33	68.23	191	125	361	223
43	10.98	9.36	14.72	13.18	23	20	38	31	66	58.71	44.61	114.29	75.40	211	135	392	242
44	11.58	9.73	15.67	14.10	25	22	41	34	67	64.59	49.08	125.27	83.64	234	146	436	261
45	12.17	10.15	16.86	15.16	28	24	45	38	68	72.24	59.65	143.07	105.55	254	173	485	322
46	12.84	10.64	17.85	15.83	30	25	49	40	69	79.34	64.22	158.23	129.28	288	188	547	352
47	13.43	11.16	19.03	16.68	32	27	54	44	70	86.85	68.11	177.24	147.66	318	203	595	375
48	13.48	11.88	20.27	17.37	35	29	58	47	71	102.45	82.60	203.10	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.69	12.33	21.73	18.32	37	31	63	52	72	113.68	93.16	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.36	12.98	23.00	19.82	40	33	69	57	73	127.55	106.68	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.37	13.75	25.30	20.65	45	35	78	62	74	142.08	119.36	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.36	14.87	27.63	22.13	49	38	87	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
53	17.46	15.88	30.95	24.81	54	42	98	73	76	200.03	168.51	418.29	276.67	785	530	1489	982
54	18.68	16.72	33.99	26.20	60	46	110	81	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	956	658	1797	1215
55	20.70	17.50	37.13	27.85	67	50	121	90	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1167	817	2179	1504
56	22.69	19.48	42.01	31.07	74	53	138	96	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1389	983	2578	1807
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MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER

DOUG LAMBERT

Our No. 1 Priority

SAFETY IS A serious topic, especially when it comes to electricity. For Fayette Electric Cooperative, it's the No. 1 priority—and that's not just talk. Over the years, our co-op has created a culture in which the safety of our employees and the community is above all else.

Our mission is to provide safe, affordable and reliable electricity to our member-owners. And that means ensuring our workers return home safely to their loved ones at the end of each day. That requires ongoing focus, dedication and vigilance.

Setting the Standard

Working with electricity brings risks, especially for lineworkers who work in challenging conditions. That's why Fayette EC is focused on protecting our employees and the community.

We've established protocols based on leading national safety standards for the utility industry, and our lineworkers wear specialized protective equipment whenever they're working near or with energized power lines.

We encourage our crews to speak up and hold each other accountable. By fostering a culture of openness and transparency, we promote problem-solving rather than blame.

Our safety team meets regularly to discuss upcoming projects and develop the best procedures to tackle them safely. They monitor and track near-miss incidents to understand what happened, share the lessons learned and prevent future occurrences.

We analyze data to identify patterns, and we use safety metrics to improve in areas where we have

fallen short. We also brief contractors on our safety protocols and set clear expectations before they begin work.

Keeping You Safe

Because we live and work in the community we serve, we care about our neighbors. Fayette EC conducts electrical safety demonstrations in schools and at community events, helping people of all ages understand how to stay safe around electricity.

May is National Electrical Safety Month—a good time to remember that electrical safety starts at home. According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured each year because of electrical fires, accidents and electrocutions at home.

The good news is that many of these accidents are preventable, and you can help keep yourself and your community safe around electricity.

Don't attempt electrical do-it-yourself projects beyond basic tasks, and don't overload outlets. Always report downed power lines immediately, and treat every downed line as if it's energized. Let us know if you spot unlocked substations or padmount transformers that look damaged or tampered with.

If you would like Fayette EC to provide a safety demonstration at your school or community event, please get in touch.

When it comes to safety, taking a moment to pause and think before you act can make all the difference. Let's work together to plug into safety. ■



JESSICA MONTEZ | FAYETTE EC



KEVIN BRINE | ISTOCK.COM

Always Look Up

Don't ignore the power lines around you

CONTACT WITH OVERHEAD power lines is a leading cause of electrical fatalities. Follow these tips from Electrical Safety Foundation International to keep safe from power line contact.

Be aware of lines around your home. Educating yourself about what's on the utility pole can help you avoid injury.

Most poles have primary overhead power lines at the top that carry electricity from substations over long distances at high voltage.

A little farther down is often a transformer that looks like a large box or bucket on the pole; this converts energy from the overhead power line to the safer level used in homes and buildings.

Next are the service lines that carry electricity to homes. Telecommunications lines carry services like phone, cable and internet to homes and are often the lowest lines on the pole.

Recognize the electrical service entrance to your home; this area can be dangerous if you come into contact with it.

Keep yourself and any tools at least 10 feet away from any power lines, and never touch anything in contact with a power line. If work needs to be done around a power line, call your electric cooperative first.

Carry ladders and other long tools or equipment horizontally to avoid accidental contact with electricity.

Always assume downed power lines are live. Stay at least 35 feet—or three car lengths—away from a downed line. Electricity can jump, or arc, and cause injury or death.

If you see a downed power line, call 911 and 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
Web fayette.coop

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For information and to report outages, please contact us.

24/7

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1-866-968-3181

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ABOUT FAYETTE EC

FEC serves Austin, Bastrop, Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Lee and Washington counties.

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Fayette EC provides *Texas Co-op Power* and 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

fayette.coop



Culprits of Electrical Fires

PROBLEMS WITH WIRING or electric equipment are among the most common causes of house fires. Check your home for these hazards.

Electrical outlets. Faulty electrical outlets are a leading cause of home fires. As outlets age, so do the wires behind them. Any loose, damaged or warm-to-the-touch outlets should be repaired or replaced.

Electrical wiring. Outdated wiring is another common cause of electrical fires. Frequently tripped breakers, flickering lights and burning smells are clear warning signs. If you suspect your home's wiring is outdated, leave this one to the pros and contact a qualified electrician.

Overloaded cords and outlets. Extension cords are not permanent solutions. If your TV, home theater system and other electronics are plugged into one extension cord, it's time to call a licensed electrician and install additional outlets.

Old appliances. Older appliances are more likely to have loose or damaged wiring, which means they're more likely to catch fire. Check older appliances for damage and determine if it's time to upgrade and replace. Also check to ensure you're using appliance-grade outlets. A qualified electrician can help. ■



COOKIE_CUTTER | ISTOCK.COM



MARIA_ARGUTINSKAYA | ISTOCK.COM

Little Changes Add Up

YOU DON'T ALWAYS have to make sweeping changes like upgrading appliances or replacing windows to save energy. Sometimes all it takes is the cumulation of small lifestyle changes to add up to savings.

When you use your printer—at home or at work—print on both sides of the paper.

Invest in a single power strip to tuck behind your entertainment center. Plug your TV, speakers and other electronics into it. Then, switch the power strip off every night before bedtime so none of those devices draw electricity when not in use.

Wait until your dishwasher is full before running it. Stop washing dishes by hand—it uses up to twice as much water and energy as the dishwasher.

Wash your clothes in cold water instead of hot. This could save you up to \$40 a year.

Lower your water heater's temperature by just 2 degrees. You won't notice the difference when you shower, but you will notice it on your energy bill.

Keep your freezer full. It takes more energy to cool an empty space than a full one.

Hang an outdoor clothesline. Pull nearly dry clothes out of the washer and hang them; they don't need to go into the dryer. That will cut the number of dryer cycles you use.

Slide your refrigerator a couple of inches away from the wall. Pressing it up against a wall limits air circulation behind it and makes the appliance work harder, which uses more energy.

Skip the hair dryer. You'll save energy by air-drying rather than blow-drying—and your hair will be protected from heat damage, too.

Turn things off when you're not using them: lights, ceiling fans, space heaters, the TV, your computer—anything that's electric. ■

Practical Pointers for Electrical Safety Month



ALVAREZ | ISTOCK.COM

MAY IS NATIONAL Electrical Safety Month, and Fayette Electric Cooperative is raising awareness about home electrical hazards and the importance of electrical safety.

Our modern lives depend on electricity, and if you don't properly maintain your gadgets and devices, they can turn into hazards. The good news is that staying safe doesn't have to be difficult or expensive.

Many homes and their electrical systems were built before most modern-day electronics and appliances were even invented. Today's increased demand for energy can overburden an older home's electrical system. If you notice flickering or dimming lights, it may indicate your home's wiring is inadequate for your needs. Have it checked by a licensed electrician.

Fayette EC offers the following tips to help identify and eliminate electrical hazards to protect yourself, your family and your home.

Make sure TVs, game systems and computer equipment have plenty of space around them for ventilation.

Use extension cords as temporary solutions only, and don't run extension cords in high-traffic areas or under carpets.

Use a surge protector to help protect your computer, TVs and other electronic equipment from damage caused by voltage changes.

Heavy reliance on power strips is an indication that you have too few outlets for your needs. Have additional outlets installed by a licensed electrician.

Keep liquids away from electrical items such as TVs and computers.

Make sure the light bulb wattage is right for the fixture. Light bulbs with wattages that are too high can overheat and cause a fire. Swap out incandescent bulbs with LEDs to prevent this and save energy.

Create a guide for your breaker box so that you know which breaker to turn off when needed.

Recurring tripped circuit breakers or multiple blown fuses can signify a serious and dangerous electrical problem. Contact a licensed electrician immediately. ■

May Is Wildfire Awareness Month

WILDFIRES POSE A significant and growing threat across Texas, and this spring, according to the Texas A&M Forest Service, conditions are aligning to create heightened risk throughout the state.

"Wildfire activity has increased across the state, driven by underlying drought conditions and above-normal grass production from last year's growing season," said Jared Karns, Texas A&M Forest Service fire chief.



TOA55 | ISTOCK.COM

What makes this threat even more urgent is that it's largely preventable. Nine out of 10 wildfires in Texas are human-caused, meaning our collective actions can make a real difference in protecting our communities.

Texas residents are encouraged to stay wildfire-aware year-round. During warm, dry and windy conditions, avoid outdoor activities that could spark a wildfire—such as burning debris, using equipment that creates sparks or discarding cigarettes improperly.

If you spot a wildfire, contact local authorities immediately. A quick response can save lives and property, and your vigilance could prevent a small fire from becoming a devastating blaze. ■



VALERIE LING

BY JESSICA MONTEZ

SINCE 1889, SOUTHERN hospitality, polka music, cold beer and good food have run through the floorboards of the Moravia Store. The store has been owned and operated by Henrietta Filip for the past 30 years, an anniversary Filip and her guests will celebrate May 2 at this year’s annual Moravia Fest.

Filip was born and raised in Moravia, a Catholic community in Lavaca County, and reopened the historic store May 1, 1996. “Ever since I was little, I had been coming to the store with my daddy, and it closed in 1990,” Filip said. “I had been driving past it every day, and I told my husband, Franklin, ‘We just gotta buy this place because it’s sad for it to be closed.’”

After many repairs, changes and additions to the ever-growing neon signs and memorabilia, which Filip jokingly calls her sickness, she doesn’t know where the time has gone. “It’s hard to believe it’s been 30 years,” she said. “It doesn’t seem like it, but some days it does ... when the days go wrong.”

From spring crawfish boils to countless dances, weddings and other lively events, Moravia Store has seen it all, and the annual Moravia Fest continues to bring the fun for multiple generations.

The fest, which takes place the first weekend of May, includes an antique farm equipment show hosted by the South Texas Wheel Spinners & Crank Twisters, a memorial tractor ride through the countryside, and, of course, music. The festiv-

ities would not be complete without Texas polka music from the M&M Playboys and Mark Halata & Texavia.

This year’s celebration also marks the 25th anniversary of the beloved Texas Czech waltz *Moon Over Moravia*, a piece inspired by the store and cowritten by Daniel Klapuch—whose ancestors founded the original establishment—alongside Henrietta’s husband, Franklin, and Mark Hermes.

Filip’s 30 years in business didn’t come without challenges. “COVID slowed us down,” she said. “I even had to sell my caboose to keep everything running.” The 1977 caboose had been used as an extra seating area in the bar.

Last fall, an episode of *Texas Country Reporter* featuring the store aired on TV, and things have not slowed down since. “We have had people coming from all over after seeing that episode,” said Filip’s daughter Bridget Hrachovy, who helps her mother run the store.

“I’m really proud of her for keeping it going like this,” Hrachovy said. “And as she’s getting older, you know, we’ve been helping a whole lot, too—my husband and I, my daughters, and then we have her nephew, who is helping her make the burgers, and then we have another guy who helps when we can’t. So we all work together.”

Filip’s other daughter, Valerie Ling, is proud of her mom and knows how important the store is to the community.



1



2

- 1. Bridget Hrachovy, Henrietta Filip and Erika Hatfield represent three generations helping keep the Moravia Store's history, hospitality and community spirit alive.
- 2. A faded sign welcomes visitors to "one of the oldest country stores in Texas."
- 3. Inside the historic store, decades of memories live among neon signs, well-worn floorboards and a bar that's welcomed generations of friends.
- 4. Vintage signs and handwritten memories offer a small glimpse into the history that fills the stores' walls.



3

"I am so proud of my mom for hanging in there for 30 years," Ling said. "She has brought the store to life as it continues to thrive as a beloved community hub known for its cold beer and warm atmosphere. It maintains its role as an important social venue where locals gather regularly and families and friends can celebrate their special moments together."

With its hidden-gem charm, deep-rooted history and heart of Texas hospitality, it's easy to see why the store was chosen for two consecutive years as "Best Hole-in-the-Wall" and "Best Place to Take an Out of Town Guest."

"People just like it," Filip said.

"There's no other antique bars around like ours," Hrachovy said. "There's nobody who has beer memorabilia like this. There is just so much to see."

Now Filip and her family are making sure the Moravia Store is not only ingrained in Texas history but also nationally by working on a National Historical Marker. "I don't know if we are going to get it or not, but it's a lot of work. For me, that marker would mean a lot," Filip said.

Next time you're on FM 957, which leads right to the Moravia Store, take a moment to stop in and congratulate Filip and her family on 30 years of serving the community. You'll be welcomed with friendly conversation, a cold drink and a meal that keeps folks coming back year after year. ■



4



JENNIFER MCCALLUM | ISTOCK.COM

Spruce Up Your Home With Pet-Safe Houseplants

HOUSEPLANTS CAN BE a great way to add greenery and cleaner air indoors. But certain plants can also be highly toxic to the furry friends with whom you share your space.

Common indoor plants such as monstera, aloe vera and pothos are toxic to cats and dogs. Check your bouquets, too: tulips and peonies are toxic to pets, and lilies can cause kidney failure in cats.

If Fido does take a bite out of something he shouldn't have, call the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' poison control line: 1-888-426-4435.

But don't toss all your greens. There are still plenty of pet-friendly options.

Spider plants are popular nontoxic houseplants that are easy to propagate. Prayer plants add a striking and colorful touch to a room and are also pet-safe.

Money trees can thrive indoors and are said to be symbols of good fortune. The ASPCA considers them nontoxic, though they can cause an upset stomach if consumed in large quantities, so they may not be the best choice if your pet loves to chew.

A small kitchen herb garden can bring life to a windowsill. Basil, rosemary and thyme are great options to include. However, parsley and mint can be dangerous to pets if consumed in large quantities.

Succulents are a great option if you're looking for a low-effort plant that can thrive with little water. Try a burro's tail or zebra-striped haworthia for nontoxic options.

To check whether a plant is toxic to dogs, cats and horses, visit aspc.org. ■

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Youth Tour Opens Doors for Fayette EC Students

FAYETTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE is pleased to share that Gretchen Sacks, a senior at Round Top-Carmine High School, and Laney Bludau, a junior at Hallettsville High School, were chosen as the cooperative's delegates for the 2026 Government-in-Action Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

Chosen from a competitive pool of applicants through Fayette EC's Youth Tour contest, Sacks and Bludau earned the opportunity to participate in the once-in-a-lifetime educational experience. This June, they will join more than 140 students from across Texas on an all-expenses-paid journey to the nation's capital, where they will explore historic landmarks, visit museums and get a firsthand look at how the federal government works.

"The Government-in-Action Youth Tour gives students the chance to experience history and leadership in a way that can't be taught in a classroom," said Tracy Denton, Fayette EC's Youth Tour coordinator. "We are proud to sponsor this opportunity and invest in students who show a strong interest in learning, leadership and civic involvement."

Since 1965, Texas electric cooperatives have sponsored the Youth Tour, an initiative inspired by former U.S. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson's belief that young people should experience democracy firsthand.

The delegates' Youth Tour experience will begin in Austin before they travel with the group to Washington. Their schedule will include visits to iconic monuments and memorials, meetings with congressional representatives, and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

After eight days of exploration and learning, Sacks and Bludau will return home with new perspectives and a stronger understanding of the role citizens play in shaping the future.

At Fayette EC, investing in the next generation of leaders is a priority. Programs like Youth Tour reflect the cooperative's commitment to education and leadership development. ■



FEC Board President Joseph Kruppa, left, and FEC Youth Tour coordinator Tracy Denton, right, congratulate Laney Bludau, from Hallettsville High School, and Gretchen Sacks, from Round Top-Carmine High School, winners of FEC's 2026 Government-in-Action Youth Tour contest.

FEC & COBANK TO OFFER GRANTS



Fayette EC, in partnership with CoBank, is seeking applicants for the Sharing Success Grant Program.

Eligible grant applicants must:

- Be a 501(c)(3) organization
- Plan to use grant money to serve a public purpose
- Submit a grant application by 5 p.m. on May 11
- For more rules and information and to complete an application, visit fayette.coop/sharing-success-grants.

Questions? Contact Tracy Denton at 979-968-3181 or tracya@fayette.coop.

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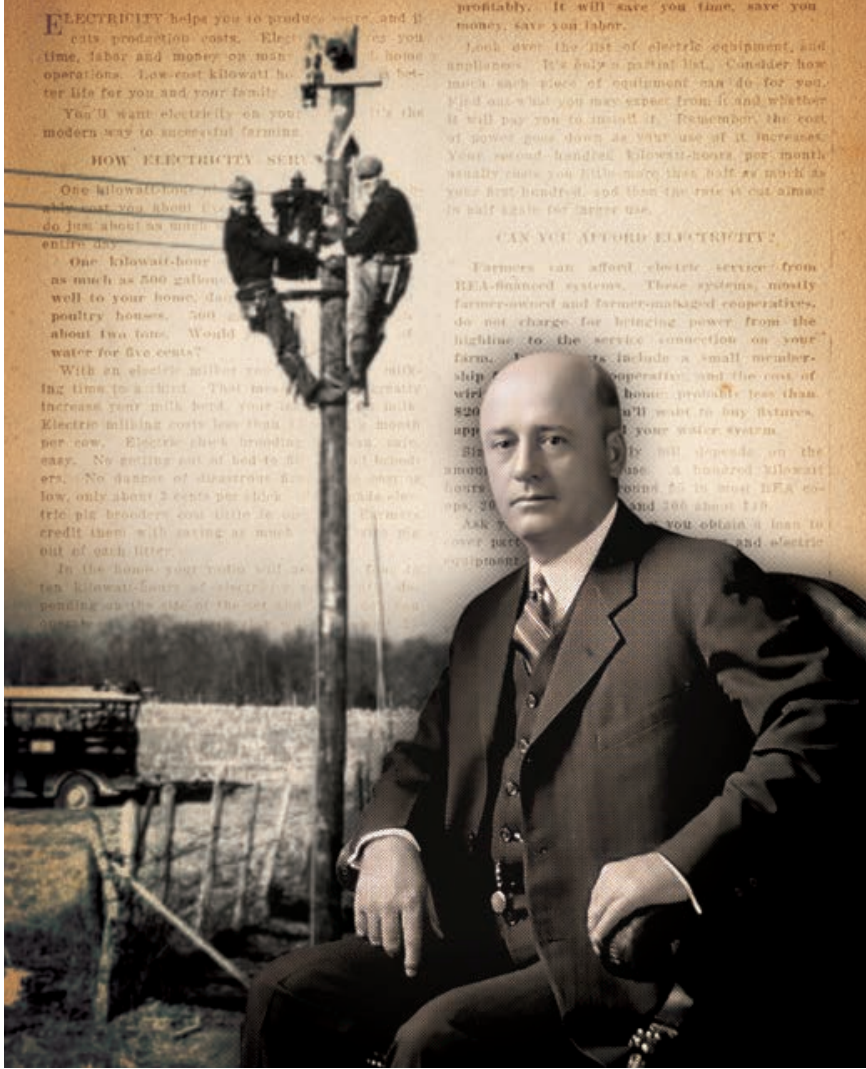
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Power and Light

Sam Rayburn helped pull rural Texans out of the dark

BY JESSICA RIDGE

BEFORE THE PASSAGE OF THE Rural Electrification Act nearly a century ago, in the depths of the Great Depression, most U.S. farmsteads made do in the dark while their neighbors in cities a few miles away experienced a higher standard of living. Investor-owned utilities didn't deem it profitable to run miles of power lines across the countryside.

Without electric lights and appliances, farm families cooked over smoky woodstoves, read and studied under kerosene lamps, and performed laborious agricultural chores by hand.

By the mid-1930s, change was afoot, thanks in large part to a dedicated and diplomatic Texan intent on the empowerment of rural communities. The REA,

enacted 90 years ago this month—May 20, 1936—made available low-cost federal loans to rural landowners who had banded together in hopes of threading the countryside with electric lines.

Electric cooperatives were born, starting with the first, Bartlett Electric Cooperative in Central Texas.

Before the REA, only around 10% of U.S. farms had electricity. By 1950, the federal financing the legislation shook loose had helped electrify nearly 80% of farms. Today, more than 900 co-ops power rural and suburban residents.

A 1960 Department of Agriculture video describes electricity as “magic from nowhere and everywhere” and details “the drab, colorless days” before

its rural availability. The video colorizes a black-and-white sequence, demonstrating the life-changing force of electricity coursing through the home of the fictional family it depicts.

Similar transformations, effected many times across prewar rural landscapes nationwide, were largely enabled by the efforts and advocacy of U.S. Rep. Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn, who cosponsored the REA legislation with Nebraska Sen. George Norris.

Rayburn, born in Tennessee, moved with his family to an unelectrified Fannin County farm, in North Texas, when he was 5, in 1887.

He attended grade school through law school in Texas and served in the Legislature before catapulting to Congress in 1913, where he set records as the longest-serving speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives—17 years over 10 sessions spanning the 1930s to 1960s, accrued piecemeal during his near-half-century tenure.

Rayburn didn't forget his former neighbors. In his papers, housed at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, a March 1938 thank-you on Fannin County Electric Cooperative letterhead notes the co-op's progress in installing its first 110 miles of line, thanks to a \$100,000 REA requisition.

In July 1940, Farmers Electric Cooperative sent its own note to Rayburn, chiefly attributing to him the REA's “birth and success.” Included was a precursor to this magazine, a monthly newsletter called the *REA Co-op Message*, which included a rundown of the co-op's recent annual meeting, a list of new members and updates about members' appliance purchases.

Readers learned that member W.C. McKay had installed an electric range at home. “Naturally,” the newsletter reads, “Mrs. McKay is very happy.”

She wasn't alone. Thanks to Rayburn, life in Co-op Country was changed forever. ■

SAM RAYBURN, TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION. LINENWORKERS: FROM THE BOOK THE NEXT GREATEST THING

Mom's Favorites

Recipes perfected and passed down through the years

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

This salad smells like home. Growing up, my mami had a beautiful garden where she harvested the juiciest cucumbers and tomatoes. Sliced, tossed with panela and drizzled with her homemade dressing, I could eat this salad every day. I'm thrilled to share a dish my mami and I still enjoy together.

Tomato Cucumber Panela Salad

2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
2 medium cucumbers, diced
1 package panela cheese (16 ounces), cubed
½ cup olive oil
2 tablespoons white vinegar
2 tablespoons lime juice
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons ground black pepper
1 bunch cilantro, finely minced

1. Place tomatoes, cucumbers and panela in a bowl.
2. In another bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, lime juice, salt and pepper until well blended. Stir in cilantro.
3. Pour dressing over salad, stir to combine and store in fridge until ready to serve.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Frida Kahlo's Ensalada de Calabacin.





Lasagna

DANI DECESARO
TRINITY VALLEY EC

DeCesaro's Norwegian mom married an Italian man and perfected this recipe alongside her sister. It has become a wonderful memory for the entire family.

- 3 quarts plus 1/3 cup water, divided use**
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon salt, divided use**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 9 lasagna noodles**
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter**
- 1 pound ground beef**
- 1/4 cup minced onion**
- 1/4 cup dried parsley flakes**
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic salt**
- 2 tablespoons flour**
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano**
- 1 can evaporated milk (12 ounces)**
- 1 can tomato paste (12 ounces)**
- 1 pound mozzarella cheese, sliced into 18 pieces**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
- 2.** Bring 3 quarts water to a boil. Add 1 tablespoon salt and oil. Cook noodles according to package directions. Drain and place noodles on paper towels.
- 3.** Heat butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add ground beef, onion, parsley and garlic salt. Cook, breaking up ground beef with spoon.
- 4.** When fully cooked, reduce heat to simmer, and stir in remaining 1 teaspoon salt, flour, pepper and oregano until well combined.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



\$500 WINNER

Mom's Fresh Apple Bars

DIANE KORUS
KARNES EC



Korus' mom enjoyed these bars in the afternoon with a cup of coffee, and I have to agree that these babies are the ultimate afternoon snack. Packed with fresh apples and a sinfully sweet streusel topping, these bars are a crowd pleaser.

STREUSEL

- 1/2 cup flour**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, softened**

BARS

- 2/3 cup shortening**
- 2 cups light brown sugar**

- 2 eggs, room temperature, lightly beaten**
- 1/4 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 cups flour**
- 1/2 tablespoon ground cinnamon**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 1/2 cups peeled and chopped Granny Smith apple (about 1 large or 2 medium apples)**
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans**

- 1. STREUSEL** In a bowl, combine flour, sugar and butter. Mix until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
- 2. BARS** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
- 3.** In a large bowl, beat shortening and brown sugar on medium speed until smooth. Add eggs, salt and vanilla and mix until combined, scraping down sides as needed.
- 4.** With a spatula, stir in flour, cinnamon and baking powder until well combined. Gently fold in apples and pecans.
- 5.** Spread batter into prepared pan and sprinkle with streusel. Bake 35-40 minutes or until the top is golden brown and a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

SERVES 12

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

CAMPFIRE FAVORITES DUE MAY 10

For our October issue, we're eager to pass around treats and meals to munch on while gathered around the flames. Fire off your best recipe for a chance at winning \$500.

UPCOMING: CRANBERRY HARVEST DUE JUN 10



RECIPES CONTINUED

- 5. Add evaporated milk and remaining 1/3 cup water. Cover and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in tomato paste until well combined.
- 6. Layer three noodles on bottom of prepared pan. Spread 1/2 meat sauce over noodles, then layer on 3 more noodles and top with 1/2 of cheese. Add remaining 3 noodles. Top with remaining meat sauce and remaining cheese.
- 7. Bake about 30 minutes, until cheese is melted and begins to brown.

SERVES 8

Yankee Cake

CHUCK BURGESS
HEART OF TEXAS EC

Burgess' mom was from Texas, his dad from New York. His dad's family shared this cake recipe with Mom. It's now a family favorite and sure to be your new



favorite too. This Yankee Cake is a cinnamonony sweet surprise sprinkled with sugar and nuts.

- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided use
- 7 tablespoons (7/8 stick) butter, softened, divided use
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup heavy cream

- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

- 1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
- 2. In a medium bowl, mix together flour, salt and baking powder.
- 3. In a large bowl, beat 1 cup sugar and 5 tablespoons butter at medium speed until light and fluffy. Reduce speed to low and add egg, heavy cream, milk and vanilla. Mix until combined, scraping down sides.
- 4. Add flour mixture and mix until combined.
- 5. Spread batter evenly into prepared pan. Sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon sugar plus cinnamon and nuts. Dot with remaining 2 tablespoons butter.
- 6. Bake 25–30 minutes, until edges are lightly golden and a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

SERVES 12

WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS BEGINS WITH YOU

Have your "Go Kit" packed and ready.

Create defensible space around your home.

Identify two evacuation routes incase one becomes compromised.

Communicate with local officials and learn how they will send emergency notifications.




tfsweb.tamu.edu/PreventWildfire

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

South Poles

Panna Maria museum shows off Polish heritage in a big way

BY CHET GARNER

LOTS OF FOLKS know Texas for its Mexican flavors, its German beer halls and its Czech kolache. But mention our Polish history, and most won't know where to start, even though Texas is home to the oldest permanent Polish settlement in America.

I'll admit, before visiting the small community of Panna Maria, I didn't grasp how deep our Polish roots run. But fortunately, I found the Polish Heritage Center ready to educate me and the rest of Texas.

Panna Maria (population about 40) sits quietly on the rolling plains of Karnes County about an hour southeast of San Antonio.

The entire community revolves around two blocks. On one sits the picturesque Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, which dates to 1855. And on the next is the stately Polish Heritage Center, which dates to 2021. I have visited more than my fair share of small-town museums, but nothing could prepare me for what I found inside this state-of-the-art facility.

After signing my name in the guest book next to visitors from the Polish capital of Warsaw and beyond, I stepped into an immersive experience that transported me to 1854, when a group of Polish immigrants held Mass under the oak trees just outside the church and decided to call Panna Maria home. The museum went on to tell the story of the culture, faith and struggles of this community, including its influence on modern life in Texas.

The history unfolds through hand-embroidered clothing, family photos, tools and letters carried across the Atlantic. It's so well done that it would impress visitors in any big city, making it all the more amazing in tiny Panna Maria.

Texas is a patchwork of cultures, accents and traditions. Thanks to the Polish Heritage Center, one of our more overlooked threads is finally getting the spotlight it deserves. ■

ABOVE Chet stops at a painting in the Polish Heritage Center in Panna Maria showing the first Catholic Mass after immigrants reached the site on Christmas Eve in 1854.

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

MAY

8

Brenham [8-9] Maifest, (979) 451-0621, brenhammaifest.com

Round Top [8-10] Fine Art Festival at the Compound, (281) 236-3821, bit.ly/fafatthecompound

9

Nacogdoches Scottish Highland Games and Festival, (936) 371-3072, nacscottishgames.com

Palestine Mother's Day Lunch Train, 1-855-632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net

Stonewall Williams Creek (Albert) School Open House, (830) 685-3321, historicschools.org

14

Giddings [14-16] Lee County Fair, info@leecountyfairtx.com, leecountyfairtx.com

15

Columbus [15-16] Magnolia Days Festival, (979) 732-8385, magnoliadays.org

Grapevine [15-17] Main Street Fest, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

16

Fredericksburg Classic Truck Show, (830) 990-4433, pecangrovestore.com

Greenville Knights of Columbus Mayfest, (903) 455-9062, donvinson75402@gmail.com

17

Fredericksburg Thomas Pandolfi, fredericksburgmusicclub.com

21

Grapeland [21-23] Salmon Lake Park Gospel Bluegrass Festival, (936) 687-2594, slpbluegrass.com

Kerrville [21-June 7] Folk Festival, (830) 257-3600, kerrvillefolkfestival.org

22

Granbury [22-24] Memorial Day Weekend Festival, (682) 936-4550, granburysquare.com

Kerrville [22-24] Texas Masters of Fine Art & Craft Show, (469) 223-4162, texasmasters.com

23

Chappell Hill Artwalk on Main Street, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

Hondo Heritage Hike, (830) 660-6908, bit.ly/hondohike

Levelland [23-25] Panhandle Cutting Horse Association Show, (325) 518-1424, panhandlecha.com

29

Corsicana Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

JUNE

5

Fort Worth [5-7] Hadestown, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

Yoakum [5-7] Tom Tom Festival, (361) 293-2309, yoakumareachamber.com

San Antonio [5-August 1] Fiesta Noche del Rio, (210) 226-4651, fiestanochesa.com

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

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Upper Antelope Canyon, fine art giclée print, 2025, 12" x 19", Bobby Greeson



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Caught Napping

If you find yourself catching a catnap, needing 40 winks on the fly or sawing logs around your siblings, you're in good company. Usually, if you snooze you lose. But these readers won't be losing sleep anytime soon.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 PAUL LAUDER
FARMERS EC

"After a hard morning competing in the livestock show at the State Fair of Texas, a young competitor and her pet take a well-earned rest."

2 REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

"A number of neighbors went to the CF Ranch in Clarksville to help with their cattle drive. Following the drive, this young lady laid claim to a few bales of hay."

3 SHAWN DEAN
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

"My granddaughter took this of her horse's new colt."

4 GABRIELLE ETHINGTON
PENTEX ENERGY

"Some friends raise kunekune pigs on a small farm outside of Nocona. I photographed this cutie napping in the front pasture area. It looks so happy."



Upcoming Contests

- RODEO** DUE MAY 10
- TAILGATING** DUE JUN 10
- RIDE THE RAILS** DUE JUL 10



ENTER ONLINE

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Caught Napping photos from readers.



Mother's Days

They give a lot to their kids, but sometimes moms need a little bit back

BY CAYT CALHOUN

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA GODEASSI

A PANG OF FEAR HIT as the gurney wheeled me away from my family. Months of testing brought me here, and within the hour, I would become my mom's kidney donor.

Until that point, it struck me as odd when people asked if I was afraid. Why? I love her. That's enough. And it was enough to bat away intrusive thoughts as the anesthesia took hold.

Those fleeting moments of anxiety paled in comparison to years of uncertainty.

I understood the crushing weight of losing a parent—my dad died before I turned 2. Between his death and the deterioration of my mom's health, I tumbled through my adolescence fearing I'd lose *both* my parents before adulthood.

My mom received the IgA nephropathy

diagnosis when I was 10. At the time, I didn't understand how to pronounce it, let alone grasp the complexities of an inflammatory kidney disease that has no cure and can be fatal.

But chronic illness doesn't give you time to understand. It creeps in and presents itself with a slew of medications, revolving appointments and the enormously draining toll of it all. Despite everything, she expended energy she didn't have on my behalf. It seemed effortless at the time. I know better now.

Back then it was easier to accept things at a blithe glance—because being anything other than willfully ignorant meant facing a hard reality. I convinced myself that her active role in my life meant all was well.

But I couldn't pretend anymore. For a decade, I watched the quality of my mother's life ebb and flow until her kidney function dwindled to a measly 19%. She had two options: dialysis or surgery. With no known viable donor, she was forced to choose the former.

It had been us against the world for as long as I could remember. What if she lost the ability to do the things she loved? What if I lost her? The scenarios I conjured in my mind felt suffocating.

Watching how nightly dialysis altered her life was heartbreaking. At that point, I didn't have a choice. The voice in my head said the least I could do was try to give back to the person who gave me everything. So when co-workers, professors, peers and doctors asked if I was comfortable with donating a kidney at 20, I said yes emphatically. I don't believe it was selfless. I selfishly wanted more time with my mom.

Luckily, we got it.

We're now approaching the 10th anniversary of the donation, and I'm beyond grateful for the opportunity to have been her donor. There may be a world out there in which I wasn't qualified. There isn't a world where I wouldn't do anything for my mom. ■



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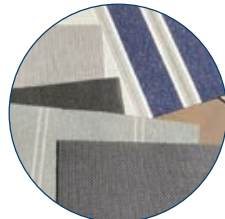
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