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10

06 Sharing the Trail

The largest one-day powwow in Texas offers a platform to revel in heritage and tradition.

*By Mark Wangrin
Photos by Tiffany Hofeldt*

Getting Around Texas

Meet the 'grandfluencer' who's inspiring folks to get out and see all they can.

*By Claire Stevens
Photos by Diann Bayes*

ON THE COVER

Jazlyn Espinoza, 7, of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, based in Livingston.

Photo by Tiffany Hofeldt

ABOVE

Diann Bayes, in the Panhandle town of Farwell, is a fifth-generation Texan eager to show off her state.

Photo courtesy Morgan Taylor

04

Currents

The latest buzz

05

TCP Talk

Readers respond

16

Co-op News

Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative

25

Footnotes in Texas History

It's About Time
By W.F. Strong

26

TCP Kitchen

After-School Snacks
By Vianney Rodriguez

30

Hit the Road

The Palace in Paris
By Chet Garner

33

Focus on Texas

Photo Contest: Underwater Life

34

Observations

Wallow Awhile
By Cynthia L. Matlock



Great Strides

JAPAN IS TURNING FOOTSTEPS into clean electricity using piezoelectric technology.

The technology is embedded in floor tiles in high-traffic areas—such as a Tokyo railway station with over 3.8 million passengers daily—where each footstep depresses the material slightly, generating a small electrical current. The electricity is used to power LED displays and ticketing systems.

“The shadows sway and seem to say, ‘Tonight we pray for water—cool water.’”

—DALE EVANS AND ROY ROGERS

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

The headline for my life, in five words, is ...

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 responses to our May prompt: **The greatest innovation in my lifetime is ...**

The internet. I can communicate with *Texas Co-op Power* with one simple click.

LORETTA BEDFORD
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC
SAN AUGUSTINE

The cellphone. The worst is also the cellphone.

DAVID WALICEK
GVEC
YOAKUM

Central heat and air.

JANE PATTERSON
BOWIE-CASS EC
TEXARKANA

Indoor toilets.

VICTORIA VAWTER
WOOD COUNTY EC
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The decoding of the human genome.

MIKE RICHARD
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
HOWE

Visit our website to see more responses.



TCP Contests and More

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FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Christmas Fails

RECOMMENDED READING

Want to celebrate Mead Day, which is the first Saturday in August? We took readers to Rohan Meadery in August 2016. Find the story on our website, where we have an archive of issues going back to 2004.



ENTER ONLINE

JUNE 2026 Giant Footsteps

“Thanks for a great article about a great lady, Opal Lee. Juneteenth freed all of us. We celebrated 250 years July 4, and she has lived through nearly 40% of American history.”

LAWRENCE RAGAN
PEDERNALES EC
DRIPPING SPRINGS



ROBERT SEALE

A True Gem

Your June issue was the best ever. Opal Lee is well named—she is a true gem [Giant Footsteps]. What a difference one person can make.

I also loved the article by John Millard on the Julian Onderdonk painting [J.O. Was Here]. What a coincidence that the author happened to see a photo of the painting the same day he had walked in that exact spot.

Diane Lyerly
Pedernales EC
Austin

I am a 79-year-old white woman. I grew up in the Jim Crow era and have memories of how Black folks were treated.

We must never forget Opal Lee.

Jean Bryant
Deep East Texas EC
San Augustine

What an amazing and inspiring life Ms. Lee has lived. Helps us realize you



CHRIS WORMELL

can never do enough to make our world a better place.

Anita Patel
South Plains EC
Lubbock

Road Well Traveled

The route described in *Go the Other Way* [June 2026] is not just scenic. Travelers on this route are on a portion of the La Bahía Road, which connected Spanish missions in Goliad and East Texas.

The route was also driven by me many times in an oil-field summer job back in the early '80s.

James Barrow
Karnes EC
Hindes

Less Mess, Please

My partner and I took road trips last year across 15 states. It was quickly apparent to us how tidy the highways and roads were elsewhere [A Tidy Revolution, March 2026].

Texas should be making a far stronger effort to endorse our Don't Mess With Texas campaign and walk our talk.

Shelley Meyer
Pedernales EC
Canyon Lake

TCP WRITE TO US
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.

 Texas Co-op Power

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The largest one-day
powwow in Texas offers
a platform to revel
in heritage and tradition



BY MARK WANGRIN
PHOTOS BY TIFFANY HOFELDT

Sharing *the* Trail

Crowded around solitary drums in the four corners of the sacred dance floor are men who are about to play a song they've never heard before.

Standing with the requisite stillness of stalking a deer, a dozen dancers await the first beat. They are in full regalia, some in earth tones and dabbed with war paint, some in neon trim or modern sports team logos, their feet clad in meticulously stitched and beaded moccasins.

They all have a story to tell. They don't yet know how they will tell it. They will cede to the beat *how* they tell it and where their spirit guides them.



Around them are three judges, armed with small clipboards and discerning eyes. They can't say what exactly they want from the dancers, just that they will know it when they see it.

Up on the stage overlooking the spectacle, master of ceremonies Marty Thurman succinctly describes what is about to unfold: "Organized chaos," he says with a smile.

This is an outsider's introduction to powwow competitions, where Native American performers who have "followed the trail"—remained true to their bloodlines—let centuries of tradition, very little of which has been written down, inspire their sense of belonging.

One Saturday every November—for the last 32 years—the Travis County Expo Center hosts the Austin Powwow, a festival of Native American crafts, culture, food and community. There's handcrafted jewelry and hula dancing, a nod to the event's focus on dance and multicultural appeal. And in the expansive food trailer court, don't skip the Navajo tacos, a culinary delight on Native American fry bread.

The main event is the powwow itself. Derived from the Algonquian *pau wau*, a word for a medicine man or shaman, modern powwows have evolved as an expression of spiritual identity as tribes were continuously driven from their ancestral lands and pressured by cultural assimilation.



OPPOSITE The Fort Peck Sioux drum group from Montana at the Austin Powwow, a festival of Native American crafts, culture, food and community at the Travis County Expo Center.

TOP Jazlyn Espinoza, 7, is the 2025–26 junior tribal princess for the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. She is flanked by two tribal dancers.

ABOVE Adrian Redbird performs his dance in the arena. He was one of more than 100 competitors at the powwow.



“It’s the largest one-day powwow in Texas,” says Nan Blassingame, arena coordinator and a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes who moved to Austin in 2003. “Everyone wants to see all the dancers come in at once at noon. Some will go out and go shopping in the market, get in the Indian taco line. Some stay inside and watch the powwow. So, it’s just so much to see. It’s really like three days of powwow rolled into one day.”

Over the course of 12 hours, beginning with the gourd dance, which honors elders, at 10:30 a.m., the floor is in almost constant motion, with dancers of all ages, from tiny tots to juniors to adults to golden age divisions. Twirling to the beat and native lyrics sung by a group of eight to 12 drummers, they compete for prestige and prize money, wearing the markings of their tribes—be it Alabama-Coushatta or Dallas Cowboys.

Head judge Sophia Thurman, Marty’s wife, selects the judges, based on knowledge, dedication, lack of conflicted interest—and the trust that they know it when they see it.

“Something about the dance catches your eye,” she explains. “Something about it makes you think it’s the best dance.”

Whether it’s a strict cultural interpretation or an iconic hodgepodge, the dancers consider their regalia a sacred representation of themselves. It’s not a costume.

“A costume is what you pretend to be,” says Marty Thurman, of Sac and Fox Nation heritage. “This is who we are.”

Steven Toya Jr., from Burleson by way of Zia Pueblo, New Mexico, has danced and sung in almost every state wearing the “Mother Earth colors,” accented by the four sacred Pecos colors: red, white, yellow and black.

Bare-chested except for a bone breastplate and wearing pigtails, a silver double-cross and buckskin leggings, the industrial tire salesman strives to resemble his great-great-grandfather—the last president of the Pecos Tribe.

“We live in a society where we’re not just Native, but we also live in the white Western world. So it’s two worlds coming together—duality,” Toya says. “We practice our traditional custom and culture. And then there’s some of us that still go to church on Sundays, still practice religion, whatever you know your calling is. It’s always still having that tie back to our traditional culture.

“For us as Native Americans, we always have a protocol, you know, a rite of passage.” In other words, he says, to dance a certain way or style, one has to experience initiation into those respective societies.

Sometimes that initiation goes unfulfilled.

Ralph Pacheco grew up thinking he was Hispanic. Or white. Or South Texas missions Indian (the product of Spanish missionaries’ attempts to assimilate Native Americans centuries ago). Or whatever society said he was at the time.

“I wasn’t Mexican, and I wasn’t white. So at that point, I walked away thinking I was nothing—nothing. I don’t have an identity,” says Pacheco, who sold jewelry at the powwow. “Then later, my elders came and said, ‘We’re the Indians that come from the mission.’ And so it was like a dirty secret. We just don’t talk about it.”

Inspired, Pacheco did more than talk about it. He traced his lineage back to the 1700s, through connections with the Alamo and the Texas Revolution. Now he serves as de facto historian for the Native American Cultural Center in Austin.

Sometimes that initiation comes early. And sometimes it must wait.

Jazlyn Espinoza, 7, is the 2025–26 junior tribal princess for the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, based in Livingston.

"I enjoy the dancing and being a princess for my tribe," she says.

Her parents travel with her and maintain her Instagram account. Mom Kristina Abbey was raised on tribal land.

"I was surrounded by my Native American heritage but never took advantage of the teachings until now," Kristina says. "I am learning alongside my daughter."

Sometimes the initiation is hidden in plain sight.

Daniel "Dio" Mireles' parents were Hispanic, so he grew up in East Austin believing he was Hispanic.

When he was 12, some cousins mentioned he was adopted. He dismissed it at the time as adolescent teasing but heard the same message about six years ago from another relative.

Neither his father, who had died, nor his mother, then in her 90s, had ever said a word about it. Intrigued and remembering how his birth certificate has his father's signature in place of the obstetrician's, he had his DNA tested. The results confirmed what his relatives said but also gave him an answer he wasn't seeking—he was overwhelmingly Native American.

"I kind of suspected I might be because I was always

enjoying going to these powwow festivities," Mireles says.

He pieced together, from records and chats with his family, that he was born in Austin and adopted from a Catholic orphanage in San Antonio and that he might be from the Kickapoo tribe.

Sharon, his wife who is of British descent, says, "He spent his whole life thinking he knew who he was and then realizing he didn't and liking who he might be.

"It's a puzzle with a lot of missing pieces."

Among them are specifics. DNA can legally set paternity or condemn a murderer, but it cannot confirm what Mireles knows unequivocally. For that reason, he is legally barred from wearing an eagle feather in his headdress. He has Native American blood—73% of it—but he can't be recognized under the auspices of the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which says only Native Americans who can document their bloodline can legally possess

plumage from the revered avians.

His birth certificate is devoid of information about his birth parents.

So he had an artist make a replica of an eagle feather from a turkey feather.

That he dances with a replica in a dance that reveres tradition is not lost on him. Yet it's that escape from individuality to community—from conformity to consciousness—that identifies the only prey he's pursuing on the trail of his true identity.

"You feel the energy, the sound of the healing, the singing," Mireles says. "It just releases what you know, makes you feel good inside of your heart, your soul, your mind—brings you all together."

What's at the end of the trail is for you to decide. ■

Get Moving

The 2026 Austin Powwow is November 21. Get tickets at austinpowwow.net.



OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT Fancy bustle dancers perform. Steven Toya Jr. of Burleson wears the "Mother Earth colors," accented by the four sacred Pecos colors: red, white, yellow and black.

LEFT Daniel "Dio" Mireles grew up in Austin believing he was Hispanic, but he later learned he's about three-quarters Native American, a culture he loves celebrating because it "makes you feel good inside of your heart, your soul, your mind."



- 1** A vintage neon Mobil Oil flying horse sign in the window of the Flying A Classic Car Club Museum in Albany.
- 2** Cadillac Ranch outside Amarillo.
- 3** The iconic Texas Star Ferris wheel at the State Fair of Texas.
- 4** The *Owl Family* mural in downtown Brenham, painted by Jeff Soto in 2017.
- 5** A 3D mural at the Pop Art Museum in San Angelo.
- 6** The Official International World Headquarters of How Big Is Texas in Bullard.
- 7** Diann Bayes at Sea Rim State Park south of Port Arthur. In 2020, she began her quest to see and share as much of Texas as she could.
- 8** The American Windmill Museum in Lubbock.





BY CLAIRE STEVENS • PHOTOS BY DIANN BAYES

GETTING AROUND TEXAS

Meet the 'grandfluencer' who's inspiring
folks to get out and see all they can



HOW BIG IS TEXAS?

Diann Bayes wanted to know. Sure, she could've Googled it and gotten an answer, but she had a better idea.

She drove the entire perimeter of the state, along with Debra Bustos and Morgan Taylor, two colleagues in the travel industry.

"I called them. I'd known them not long at all. And I said, 'Would you like to go with me?' " Bayes says. "Immediately, 'Yes, we want to go.' "

In June 2020, once pandemic travel restrictions were lifted, the three women packed into a rental car loaded with luggage. Their route, which started in the North Texas town of Gainesville, would take them 3,331 miles around the state. (For reference, the drive from New York City to Los Angeles is about 2,800 miles.) They kept to major roads while sticking as close as possible to the state's borders, which was particularly difficult in wide-open West Texas.

It wasn't a race. Bayes, a road trip enthusiast who insisted she do all the driving, made it a point to stop in as many towns and roadside attractions as possible over their nine-day expedition.

They visited Paris' cowboy hat-topped Eiffel Tower and the Kolache Shop in Brazoria, watched a sunrise from South Padre Island, grabbed a steak dinner at Terlingua's Starlight Theatre, saw the University of Texas Permian Basin's Stonehenge replica in Odessa, and checked out the world's littlest skyscraper in Wichita Falls.

"Those little gems are everywhere in this state," Bayes says.

As they journeyed, Bayes documented the trip on her newly created blog, How Big Is Texas, listing every stop along the way and all the parks and museums she would've stopped at if only there'd been more time. It was the start of a new calling—as a travel blogger. Her whole goal, she says, is to help others experience the kind of joy she gets from collecting treasures, memories and stories and head out on their own quests.

"There's cool stories just everywhere," Bayes says. "That is the appeal to me. I love being able to find those stories."

After her trip, Bayes heard from a man who was going to follow her route, though he planned to take a full 30 days to complete the loop. As he traveled, he called periodically to update her on his progress.

"He told me that he had lost his wife years earlier and he just kind of stopped traveling, stopped doing things," Bayes says. "He said because he saw what we did, it encouraged him to get out."

That was exactly what Bayes hoped her blog would accomplish—that it would inspire others to get out and see more of the world.

"People who don't go make me sad," she says. "I mean, there are a lot of people who never leave past their county or leave past, you know, two or three counties away."

Bayes, who spent more than 30 years working in the tourism industry at restaurants, hotels and visitors bureaus, just wants people to get out and explore. It doesn't have to be fancy. Most of her blog is about road trips she takes alone or with friends, often just over a weekend.



In 2021, she teamed up with Darla Dear, her high school best friend and college roommate, for a tour of Texas' "most mispronounced towns and cities." The pair traveled to Colmesneil (COLE-muh-neel), Humble (the "H" is silent), Buda (BYOO-duh), Gruene (GREEN) and Boerne (BER-nee). At each stop, they made friends with locals who affirmed the proper pronunciation.

In 2022, Bayes and Dear spent a long weekend visiting every Buc-ee's in Texas—34 at the time. The friends ate only food purchased from the mega-gas station for the duration of the trip.

"Probably my favorite had to be when we did our Beaver Nugget and wine pairing," Bayes says. "We just were laughing in our hotel room. I mean it was just so funny to us."

JUST GET GOING

To start traveling more, Bayes says, the best thing you can do is just go. There's something for everyone in Texas.

For music lovers, she recommends checking out historic dance halls, like Gruene Hall. In Lubbock, the Buddy Holly Center offers a look into music history.

History buffs already know the Alamo but may have missed the nearby San Fernando Cathedral, the final resting place for some of the Alamo defenders. Bayes recommends Mission San José for the story of pre-statehood Texas.

Foodies have a whole host of options in Texas, including some restaurants that recently received Michelin stars, but Bayes says she's found the best barbecue in small towns at family-run joints.

In the Hill Country, Fredericksburg is a designated Dark Sky community with excellent stargazing opportunities. Big Bend National Park and the surrounding communities also offer incredible night skies with views of the Milky Way.

A state parks pass is only \$70 for a whole year of access to our 88 parks. Go for the natural beauty but also for their historic sites.

But the destination isn't always the most important part of a trip. A sunset or sunrise can be enjoyed just about anywhere, and Bayes will never pass up a chance to sit and watch one (and snag a quick picture). And when she's traveling, she doesn't hesitate to pull over if she sees something that intrigues her.





OPPOSITE Darla Dear, left, and Bayes during a long weekend in 2022 when they visited every Buc-ee's in Texas—34 at the time. A signpost at Bayes' headquarters points the way to some of Texas' most uniquely named towns.

LEFT From floor to ceiling, the headquarters' walls are covered in Texas memorabilia acquired from friends and on her travels.

Dear was happy to reunite with Bayes for the trips—and to have the ultimate Texas tour guide. “Just being in the car and getting to spending time with her, she is such a positive person,” Dear says. “I think I know everything there is to know about Texas, but then whenever I get with Diann, she shames me.”

The key to Bayes' ambitious tours of the state, Dear says, is meticulous planning. “She has a schedule, and she sticks to it. She has everything mapped out.”

In 2023, Bayes did a “global tour” of Texas, visiting the towns of Athens, Bogata, Carthage, Geneva, Klondike, Naples, New London, Palestine and Trinidad.

And last year, she completed a long-term goal of visiting all of Texas' 254 counties, though not in a single trip. She's currently working on visiting every state park and all eight of the state's minor league baseball stadiums.

All of it gets documented on the blog, and Bayes keeps her followers updated on social media and started a podcast too. In late 2025, she transitioned to working full time on the blog. Aware that she's an anomaly, starting a social media career in her 60s, she calls herself a “grandfluencer.”

“I'll own that,” she says. “The whole history of my life has led to this.”

Bayes, a fifth-generation Texan, has lived in 22 Texas towns in her life, knows the state well and is eager to show it off, especially the parts off the beaten path.

“Some people say Texans are arrogant,” she says. “I'm one of those proud Texans, and I don't think of it as arrogance. I think of it just as pride, and I hope that other people have that same pride.”

Bayes and her husband, Dan, recently moved to Bullard, near Tyler, where they are members of Cherokee County Electric Cooperative. In their new backyard, Dan constructed a she-shed to serve as a headquarters for her work.

Like Bayes, the office—she calls it the Official International World Headquarters of How Big Is Texas—is full of stories. The building is modeled after a store her great-grandfather owned in Troup. She displays a quilt from her grandmother

and a set of dominoes from her great-grandparents that are almost too worn to use anymore.

From floor to ceiling, the walls are covered in Texas memorabilia acquired from friends and on her travels. She leaves the playlist she made for the original perimeter trip on repeat as she works.

“I just have fun memories of things and places I've been, stories that I remember,” she says. “I've got art from people I know and from people I don't.”

There are still plenty more trips she wants to take. “I will look at a map and just go ‘OK where have I not been?’ ” she says. (The list is quickly shrinking but includes 10 state parks, Fiesta San Antonio and Washington's Birthday Celebration in Laredo.)

“I like to go to state parks. I like to go to historic sites. I like to see what the story was. I love town squares, especially in small towns, and I love a diner. I love something that's not fancy. I want to go in because you're going to hear people talking in there.”

A few years back, she visited the London Museum, a small museum in East Texas that tells the story of a 1937 natural gas explosion at a school in New London that killed nearly 300.

At the café across the street from the museum, she met a man who had been a first responder that day. At 101 years old, he was one of the last living rescue workers. He told Bayes about the impact of the explosion on his life and how in the aftermath of that tragedy, legislation passed to add odor to natural gas. It's the stories like his of towns like New London that Bayes says she wants to bring attention to.

“We need to figure out how to tell a story to get people to go see them and maybe go into the grocery store, buy a few groceries or go buy some stamps or something,” she says. “Because otherwise you lose those stories and you lose that town.”

“I want people to go see them, so I'm going to tell that story all day long.” ■



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WHEN YOU FLIP a switch, electricity is there— instant, reliable and ready to power your day. But behind that simple act is a carefully coordinated system made up of many grid power players, all working together to keep the lights on.

At Fayette Electric Cooperative, we think it's important for our members to understand how this system works and who's involved in delivering the electricity you depend on every day.

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RYAN J. LANE | ISTOCK.COM

High-voltage transmission lines strung along massive towers move bulk electricity along highways or across open land. Because electricity can't easily be stored in large quantities, this system must constantly move power from where it's produced to where it's needed, all in real time.

Coordinating the flow of large amounts of power is a complex job, especially across multiple states or regions. Independent system operators, like the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, and regional

transmission organizations, like the Southwest Power Pool, manage wholesale electricity markets.

These organizations don't own power plants or transmission lines. Instead, they act as a traffic controller for the grid—balancing supply and demand every second of the day and directing which power plants should generate electricity at any given moment.

Then there's the part of the grid most people are familiar with—your local electric utility. That's where Fayette EC comes in. We take electricity from the high-voltage transmission system and deliver it directly to your home, farm or business through lower-voltage distribution lines. We maintain utility poles, power lines, electric substations and other essential equipment in our community to keep power flowing safely.

When storms roll through or outages occur, our crews are the ones working to restore power safely and as quickly as possible. We're proud to serve the

members across our service area, and we're committed to providing reliable, affordable electricity you can count on.

Finally, there's you—the end user. Homes, businesses and industries all play a critical role in the grid. Your energy use directly influences how much electricity needs to be generated and delivered at any given time.

During periods of high demand—like hot summer afternoons or cold winter mornings—the grid must work harder to meet increased usage. Simple steps, like adjusting your thermostat or running appliances during off-peak hours, can make a meaningful difference.

From generation to transmission to your local utility, it takes a coordinated effort to power everyday life. At Fayette EC, we're proud to be your trusted energy partner—and to play our part in keeping the grid strong for the communities we serve. ■



RIDVAN_GELUK | ISTOCK.COM

Energy-Saving Summer Tips

TEXAS SUMMERS CAN drive up temperatures and electric bills, as cooling accounts for a large portion of home energy use. An energy assessment can help identify where you're losing the most money. Here are some tips from the Department of Energy for maximizing savings.

Block Window Heat

Use energy-efficient coverings like cellular shades or window films to reduce heat gain.

Manage Your Thermostat

Keep settings as close to outdoor temperatures as comfortable. Raise the temperature when you're away and lower it when home. A programmable thermostat can automate this. Avoid setting it colder than normal—it won't cool faster and may waste energy.

Use Fans Wisely

Ceiling fans can make rooms feel up to 4 degrees cooler but should be turned off when not in use. Use bathroom and kitchen fans to remove heat and humidity, ensuring they vent outside.

Improve Cooling Efficiency

Schedule regular maintenance for your AC system. Keep vents clean and unobstructed, and avoid placing heat-producing appliances near the thermostat.

Check the Water Heater

Water heating makes up about 18% of energy use. Set your water heater to 120 degrees to save energy and prevent scalding. ■

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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ABOUT FAYETTE EC

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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





Why Vegetation Management Matters

Supporting Reliable Service Through Proactive Maintenance

Expanded clearing creates safer access and improves reliability for members.

JESSICA MONTEZ

There's something majestic about trees. They ground us, provide shade and add beauty to the communities we call home. At Fayette Electric Cooperative, we value that beauty—but we also have a critical responsibility: keeping the lights on safely and reliably for our members.

That's where vegetation management plays an essential role.

While it may not always be obvious, nearly half of all power outages can be traced to trees and vegetation interfering with power lines. Storms, high winds and falling limbs can quickly turn overgrown areas into widespread outages. Proactive trimming and clearing help prevent those issues before they start.

A New Approach

Members may notice a more comprehensive approach to vegetation management in some areas.

Historically, trimming focused primarily on branches near power lines. Today, we're taking a more complete approach—clearing designated rights-of-way from the ground to the sky.

Our standard clearances are 20 feet wide (10 feet on each side) for single-phase lines and 30 feet wide (15 feet on each side) for three-phase lines.

This wider clearing helps remove all hazards—not just the most visible ones—and creates a safer, more reliable system.

Why Clear More?

Several important factors drive this shift:

- Wildfire risk reduction: Vegetation can fuel fires.

- Regulatory requirements, including House Bill 145
- Improved reliability: fewer outages during storms

This approach may look different, but it's designed to protect your service, your property and your community.

Safety for Everyone

Vegetation management is about more than reliability—it's about safety.

When rights-of-way are properly cleared:

- Power lines are less likely to come into contact with trees.
- Crews can safely access equipment during outages.
- Restoration times are shorter—even in difficult conditions.

Clear access is especially important during storms, at night and in challenging terrain—when every minute matters.

Data-Driven Decisions

Fayette EC is also using advanced tools to guide vegetation management efforts.

By incorporating satellite imagery, outage history and system performance data, we can identify which areas need attention most. This allows us to prioritize work strategically—delivering the greatest benefit to our members.

Vegetation management today isn't just about trimming—it's about making informed, long-term decisions.

Delicate Balance

We understand that seeing trees removed can be difficult. Trees are an important part of our landscape, and we don't take these decisions lightly.

However, this work is necessary to:

- ▶ Protect homes and property.
- ▶ Reduce wildfire risk.
- ▶ Improve electric reliability.
- ▶ Meet safety and regulatory standards.

Our approach is measured, thoughtful and guided by industry best practices.

How You Can Help

You can support safe and reliable service by planting trees thoughtfully.

- ▶ Plant trees up to 40 feet tall at least 25 feet from power lines.
- ▶ Plant taller trees at least 50 feet away.
- ▶ Keep shrubs 10 feet from the front and 4 feet from the sides of padmount transformers.

A Shared Responsibility

Vegetation management may not always be the most visible part of what we do, but it's one of the most important.

At Fayette EC, we remain committed to providing safe, reliable service—while continuing to care for the communities we serve. ■

See vegetation management in action: Learn more about why this work matters and what it looks like in the field by scanning this QR code.



TRACY DENTON

Tiger Hall, right-of-way maintenance coordinator, in front of a perfect example of a cleared ROW in the West Point area.



FEC
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Fayette Electric Cooperative's Community Reinvestment Grant Program puts unclaimed capital credits back to work—supporting projects that strengthen local communities and improve quality of life.

Funded by unclaimed capital credits—not electric rates—this program keeps dollars local where they make the greatest impact.

Public entities serving FEC communities are encouraged to apply for projects that deliver meaningful, measurable benefits.

**Learn more
or apply now:**





NISERIN | ISTOCK.COM

Always Call 811 Before You Dig

WITH AUGUST 11 just around the corner, Fayette Electric Cooperative is using the 8/11 calendar date as a timely reminder to residents: Always contact 811 to have underground utilities marked before starting any digging project.

Whether you're installing a mailbox or breaking ground on a major construction project, contacting 811 helps prevent accidents, outages and costly repairs.

Every few minutes, an underground utility line is damaged because someone digs without calling 811. Hitting a buried line can lead to serious consequences—from disrupting essential services to causing severe injury.

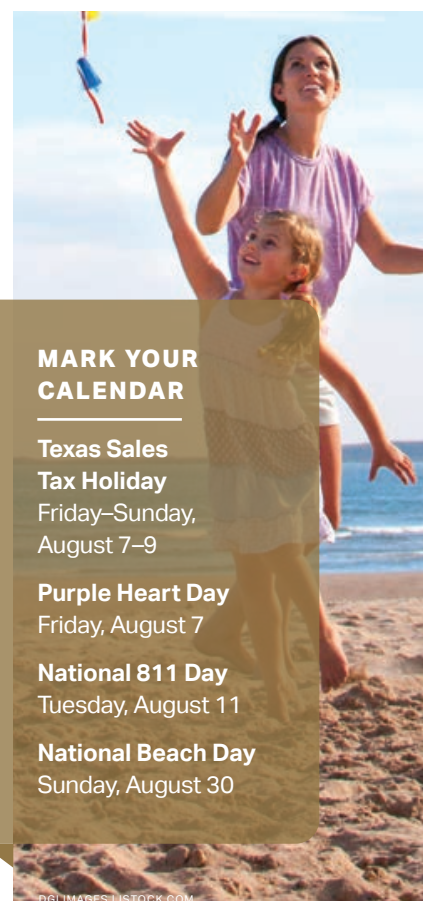
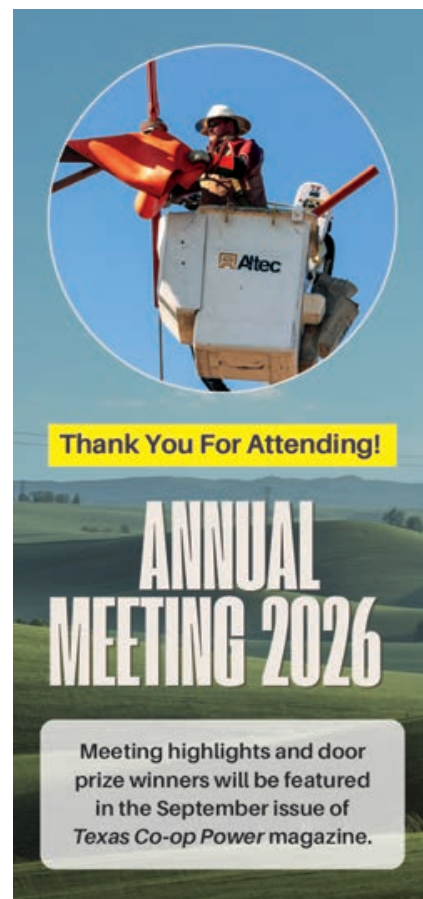
Striking a single utility line can cause repair costs, inconvenient outages, fines, severe injuries and even fatalities. From building a deck to planting a tree, every digging project requires a free 811 request by phone or online at least two business days before you plan to break ground.

On August 11—and every day—we at Fayette EC remind homeowners and contractors to use 811 before they dig. This simple step protects you, your property and your entire community. It's free, fast and can prevent a life-changing mistake.

Digging soon? Take these steps to stay safe and avoid unnecessary risks:

- ▶ Contact 811 in advance—no matter the size of your project or how well you know the property.
- ▶ Plan ahead and make your request early in the week for weekend projects.
- ▶ Wait for utility lines to be marked and confirm that utilities have responded to your request before starting any digging.
- ▶ Respect the marks and dig with care.
- ▶ Double-check that your contractor has contacted 811 if you've hired one, and never allow unmarked digging to begin.

To learn more about safe digging and to submit a request, call 811 or visit texas811.org. ■



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Texas Sales Tax Holiday
Friday–Sunday,
August 7–9

Purple Heart Day
Friday, August 7

National 811 Day
Tuesday, August 11

National Beach Day
Sunday, August 30

DELIMARES | ISTOCK.COM

Follow Outdoor Electrical Safety Best Practices

SUMMER IS A great time for outdoor projects and fun while kids are home and we have more daylight. But remember to keep yourself and your family safe around electricity when you head to the yard or garage.

Here are some tips for a safe time outdoors.

Have an electrician check outdoor electrical outlets to make sure they're protected with ground-fault circuit interrupters that automatically shut the power off in case of contact with water. Outdoor outlets on older homes might not have this critical safety feature.

Remember that extension cords are meant to provide a temporary solution and shouldn't be used long-term. If you must use an extension cord outdoors, buy a thick, weather-resistant model rated for outdoor use that has been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory. Don't string cords together, and don't leave them in the elements when you're not using them.

Choose a wooden or fiberglass ladder when you're working near electrical wiring or power lines. Metal can conduct electricity and shock anyone touching it if it comes into contact with a power source.

Be aware that power lines are underground as well. Before you dig to plant a tree or put up a fence, call 811 to have utility lines marked for free.

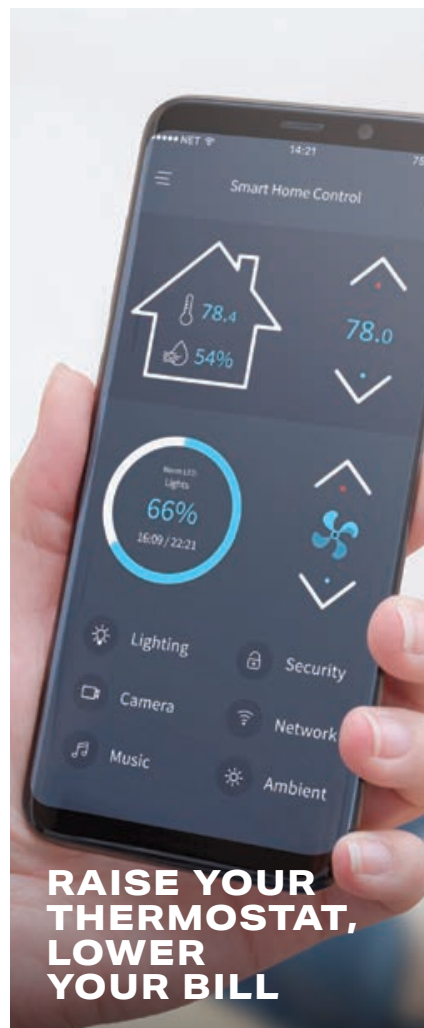
To help prevent electrical fires, keep dry leaves and other debris away from outdoor lighting, outlets and power cords.

Don't use your electric grill outdoors while it's raining—even if it's just a drizzle.

Inspect electric lawn tools for frayed wires and other damage. Don't try to repair the damage; replace the tool. Never leave tools unattended where children could access them. ■



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**RAISE YOUR
THERMOSTAT,
LOWER
YOUR BILL**

Conserve electricity and help tame summer energy bills.

Setting the thermostat to 78 degrees when home—and higher when away—saves money.

Each degree you increase can save 3%–5%. Save even more with these tips:

Turn off and unplug unused lights and appliances.

Close shades and blinds during the day to reduce heat gain.

Open windows to save energy on cool evenings.

Change air conditioning filters.

A full freezer costs less to run than an empty one.

Fayette EC encourages you to use energy efficiently.

PHOTO: ALEKSANDARNAKIC | ISTOCK.COM



TEXAS DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Hurricane Preparedness Guidelines

Hurricane Season Is June 1–November 30

Preparedness Checklist

- ▶ **Make an evacuation plan.** Find activated evacuation routes at DriveTexas.org or by dialing 1-800-452-9292. Call 211 to find out if you live in an evacuation zone.
- ▶ **Sign up for emergency alerts.** Make sure your mobile device is enabled to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs).
- ▶ **Prepare an emergency supply kit.** Learn how to build an emergency kit at ready.gov/build-a-kit.
- ▶ **Review your home insurance policy.**
- ▶ **Register with the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR)** at stear.tdem.texas.gov or by dialing 211 if you live in an evacuation zone and:
 - Have a disability or medical needs and do not have a car or other vehicle to use in an evacuation.
 - Have a disability or medical needs and do not have friends or family to help in an evacuation.

Information collected for STEAR is confidential.

Hurricane Preparedness Online Resources

Texas Division of Emergency Management: tdem.texas.gov

Texas Department of State Health Services: texasready.gov

American Red Cross: redcross.org

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: ready.gov

Office of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott: gov.texas.gov



DIVISIÓN DE ADMINISTRACIÓN DE EMERGENCIAS DE TEXAS

Preparación para huracanes

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

Lista de verificación de preparación:

- ▶ **Haga un plan de evacuación.** Encuentre rutas de evacuación activadas en DriveTexas.org o marcando 1-800-452-9292. Llame al 211 para averiguar si usted vive en una zona de evacuación.
- ▶ **Regístrese para recibir alertas de emergencia.** Asegúrese de que su dispositivo móvil esté habilitado para recibir Alertas de emergencia inalámbricas (WEAs).
- ▶ **Prepare un kit de emergencia.** Aprenda como construir un kit de emergencia en ready.gov/build-a-kit.
- ▶ **Revise su póliza de seguro de hogar.**
- ▶ **Regístrese con el Registro de Asistencia de Emergencia del Estado de Texas (STEAR)** en stear.tdem.texas.gov o marcando el 211 si vive en una zona de evacuación y:
 - Tiene una discapacidad o necesidades médicas y no tiene un auto u otro vehículo para usar en una evacuación.
 - Tiene una discapacidad o necesidades médicas y no tiene amigos o familiares para ayudar en una evacuación.

La información recolectada para STEAR es confidencial.

Recursos en línea para la preparación para huracanes

División de Administración de Emergencias de Texas: tdem.texas.gov

Departamento de Servicios de Salud del Estado: texasready.gov

Cruz Roja Americana: redcross.org

Departamento de Seguridad Nacional de los Estados Unidos: ready.gov

Oficina del Gobernador de Texas Greg Abbott: gov.texas.gov

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Teach College-Bound Kids Safe Habits

DO YOU HAVE kids or grandkids returning—or headed for the first time—to live in a college dorm?

Among the many things they learn, make sure safety is at the top of the list. There are more than 3,300 fires on college campuses every year, resulting in tens of millions of dollars in property damage. Help prevent some of them by understanding electrical safety and sharing what you know with loved ones.

College students use many electronics for school, work and play. When used improperly, these helpful gadgets can become hazards. Fayette Electric Cooperative has the following tips for college students to prevent electrical accidents in the dorm.

A dorm room might not provide enough outlets for all your gadgets at once. If you must use extension cords, make sure to unplug them when not in use. Extension cords are only for temporary use, and overloaded extension cords can start fires.

Consider purchasing power strips with a surge protector, which will shut off power automatically if too much current is drawn.

Use light bulbs with the correct wattage for lamps. If no indication appears on the fixture, a bulb that uses no more than 60 watts, or the 9-watt LED equivalent, is best.

Never tack, nail or staple an electrical cord to any surface. Don't run cords across traffic paths or under rugs or furniture.

Keep all electrical appliances and cords safely away from bedding, curtains and other flammable materials.

Discard or repair damaged electronics. It might be tempting to save money by using an appliance with a frayed cord or damaged plug, but don't do it. Damaged electronics can shock or electrocute you.

If your lights flicker, electronics shut off unexpectedly or circuits trip, notify campus housing staff immediately.

Watch out for overheated outlets. If an electrical outlet becomes so hot that you cannot leave your hand on it, there is potential for a fire. Unplug everything from the outlet and notify your dorm officials immediately.

Know what to do in case of a fire in the building, including escape and meeting plans. ■



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SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our **Sedona Turquoise Collection**. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you

could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you aren't completely happy with your purchase, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

The supply of Arizona turquoise is limited, don't miss your chance to own the Southwest's brilliant blue treasure. Call today!

Jewelry Specifications:

• Arizona turquoise • Silver-finished settings

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Complete Set**	\$747*	\$249	+s&p	Save \$498

**Complete set includes pendant, chain and earrings.

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It's About Time

How cowboys counted the hours out on the dusty trail

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY BRYAN PETERSON

COWBOY TIME ISN'T fast or slow. It isn't tied to a clock at all. It's tied to the sun, the herd and the work.

On cattle drives of long ago, the day began before first light. At dawn, men were in the saddle, driving cattle north to Abilene or Dodge City in Kansas. They worked till sundown. No whistle blew, no shift horn called them home. The only time that mattered was daylight and whether the herd was settled for the night.

Even so, cowboys had their own kind of alarm clock. It was the cook's bell.

Legendary rancher Charles Goodnight invented the chuck wagon in the 1860s, repurposing a heavy-duty government wagon as a kitchen and pantry on wheels. And with the chuck wagon came the

sound that structured cowboy life. When the cook struck his triangle of iron, it was dinnertime. Cowboys joked that the cook had the only watch that mattered.

At night, men took turns watching the cattle. Time wasn't measured in minutes but in watches—three shifts through the night. There was the first guard, the mid-night guard and the morning guard. Dying campfire embers and the movement of stars and the moon helped tell the passing of time in the dark.

A cowboy might sing his herd to sleep, humming trail songs or gospel tunes under the stars. The cattle calmed to the music, and time passed by melody more than clock.

Even distance was measured differently.

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



Cowboys spoke of horse time. They'd say: "That's a two-horse ride from here." Time was bound up with distance, and distance with the stamina of your mount.

Some cowboys did carry watches—tough old Elgin or Waltham pocket watches, often bought when railroads made timetables important. But plenty of them would tell you: "The only watch I need is the sun."

They were more on God's time than man's time.

Writers caught on to this too. Andy Adams, a cattle driver himself, described in *The Log of a Cowboy* trailmen rising with the dawn, eating when the cook said so and changing guard by the stars.

J. Frank Dobie wrote that a cowpuncher "eats when the cook's ready, he sleeps when the guard lets him." Larry McMurtry gave us cowboys singing to their cattle through the night, timing their lives by starlight and dust.

So cowboy time was different. It was steady. It ran sunup to sundown, with a few hours stolen under the stars. It was measured by horses, by bells, by songs—by the needs of the herd, not by a clock on the wall.

And maybe that's why cowboy time still has a hold on us here in Texas. Even if we don't ride herd anymore, there's something in us that remembers. We work till the sun goes down. We eat when the food's ready. We measure time by what matters, not by what buzzes on our phones—or at least we'd like to.

In a world of atomic clocks, digital seconds and meetings scheduled down to the minute, cowboy time whispers a different wisdom: Don't count every minute—just do the work until the day is done. ■

After-School Snacks

Readers share family sweet treats that answer the final school bell

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

I'm a dipper. I love to dip fries, nuggets and tortilla chips, but I especially love to dunk fresh fruit into something creamy. My honey yogurt dip takes the joy to the next level—try it with watermelon, peaches and berries. It pairs perfectly with any fruit you have on hand.

Honey Yogurt Dip

1 cup plain yogurt
2 tablespoons honey, plus more for serving
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
Sliced fruit, for serving

1. In a bowl, combine yogurt, honey, cinnamon and vanilla. Drizzle with additional honey, if desired.
2. Serve with sliced fruit.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Lemon Sheet Cake With Lemon Yogurt Glaze.





Peanut Butter, Crackers and Marshmallows

KAREN FAUBUS
SOUTH PLAINS EC

This snack originates in central Mississippi, where Faubus' grandmother and her siblings grew up enjoying it. Faubus now makes it for her own grandchildren. Sweet and satisfying, sometimes the best snacks are the simplest.

- 5–6 saltine crackers
- ¼ cup peanut butter
- 1 cup mini marshmallows

COOK'S NOTE: It's easy to burn these melty treats under the broiler, and broiler temperatures vary by model. Keep a close eye on the crackers, and don't let them stay in more than 2 minutes.

1. Preheat oven to broil.
2. Place crackers on a baking sheet. Spread peanut butter on each cracker. Top with mini marshmallows.
3. Broil 1–2 minutes or until marshmallows are lightly browned.

SERVES 1



\$500 WINNER

Grammie's Rice Krispies Squares

TINA WEBB
BLUEBONNET EC



Webb's mother-in-law made this recipe for her children and grandchildren for years. I can see how these tasty treats—popular in the Midwest and known as scotcheroos—became a family favorite. Rich with peanut butter goodness and topped with chocolate, these bars are a well-deserved delight after a day of classes.

- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 6 cups crisp rice cereal
- 1½ cups semisweet chocolate chips
- 1½ cups butterscotch morsels

1. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
2. In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, bring corn syrup and sugar to a light boil, stirring occasionally. When the mixture starts to boil, remove from heat and stir in peanut butter until smooth. Stir in rice cereal.
3. Spoon mixture into prepared pan and use the back of a spoon to gently press mixture evenly into pan.
4. In a microwave-safe bowl, heat chocolate chips and butterscotch morsels in 15-second increments, stirring each time, until fully melted. Spread evenly over cereal mixture.
5. Allow to cool at least 1 hour at room temperature, then cut into rectangles.

MAKES 20 BARS

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

SMOOTHIES DUE AUG 10
We toast the new year with the best from your blenders. We'll print our favorite smoothie recipes from readers in the January issue. The winner gets a cool \$500.

UPCOMING: LEMONY DELIGHTS DUE SEP 10



ENTER
ONLINE

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



No-Bake Oatmeal Balls

ELIZABETH COWAN
FANNIN EC

Growing up, Cowan and her siblings nicknamed these "booze balls" because of the piquant kick from the Tang powder. Don't worry, there's no actual booze, but this no-bake snack packs a punch! Coat in your choice of coconut, powdered

sugar, cocoa powder or a combo. The balls can be stored in the fridge for a week of ready-made snacks for hungry kiddos.

OATMEAL BALLS

2 cups (4 sticks) butter, softened
3 cups powdered sugar, sifted
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
½ cup cocoa powder
1 cup Tang powdered drink mix
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup chopped pecans
1 cup seedless raisins
2 cups rolled oats

COATING

1 cup flaked coconut (optional)
½ cup powdered sugar (optional)
1 tablespoon cocoa powder (optional)

- 1. OATMEAL BALLS** In a large bowl, cream butter, powdered sugar and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add cocoa, Tang powder and vanilla. Mix well.
- 2.** Stir in pecans, raisins and oats. Cover

Snacks for an Easy A

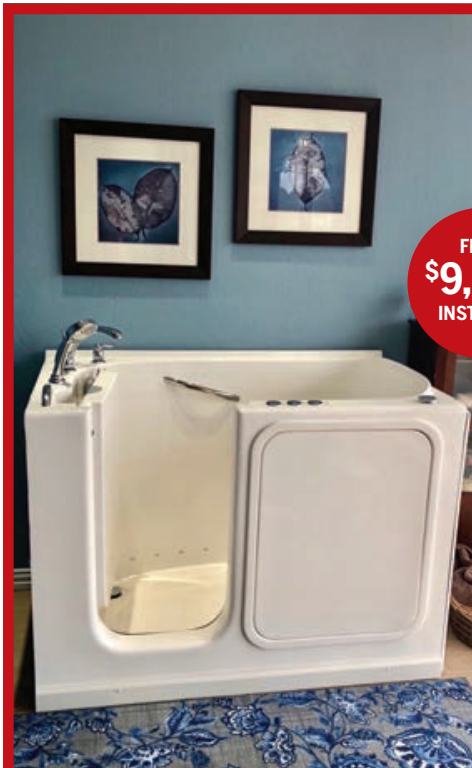
- Apple slices + string cheese
- Hummus + carrot sticks
- Mini microwave popcorn bags
- Fresh sliced melon
- Berries + yogurt
- Pepperoni + cheese
- Dried apple chips
- Trail mix
- Premade smoothies
- Cheese + crackers
- Sliced peaches + cottage cheese
- Hard-boiled eggs + sliced turkey

—Vianney Rodriguez

and chill dough at least 2 hours or overnight.

- 3.** Form mixture into 1-inch balls.
- 4. COATING** Roll each ball in coconut or powdered sugar or in a mixture of powdered sugar and cocoa. Cover and store in fridge.

MAKES 40-45



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

The Palace in Paris

Statesmanship and storytelling at the Sam Bell Maxey House

BY CHET GARNER

IF YOU'VE EVER wondered what it felt like to be a big deal in 19th-century Texas, I'd suggest a stroll through the Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site in Paris. And yes, that's Paris, Texas—where the Eiffel Tower wears a cowboy hat.

Built 1866–67, the Maxey House is a pristine example of High Victorian Italianate architecture—which is a fancy way of saying it looks like it belongs in a period drama. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and restored in 1980.

Walking through the house feels less like touring a museum and more like you've interrupted a well-appointed 1870s dinner party. The wide balcony and tall windows were designed to battle the Texas heat, though I suspect they were also perfect for watching neighbors and discussing politics.

Sam Bell Maxey wasn't just any resident in Reconstruction-era Paris. He was a veteran of the Mexican-American War and a former Confederate general. Later he served as a state and then U.S. senator.

Following the Civil War, senior officers in the Confederacy were not allowed to hold political office, but Maxey received a pardon from President Andrew Johnson after a personal vouch from Maxey's U.S. Military Academy classmate and friend, Ulysses S. Grant. During his two terms, Maxey was known as "the Beaver of the Senate" for his work improving transportation and infrastructure.

What struck me most wasn't just the grandeur of the home but the humanity. The preserved letters, clothing and everyday objects tell a fuller story—of ambition, loss, recovery and resilience during one of Texas' most turbulent eras. Outside, the gardens offer a tranquil respite, a soft contrast to the political storms once likely debated inside.

The Maxey House isn't just a monument to one man's legacy; it's a reminder that even in a small Texas town, the currents of our nation flowed right through the front door. ■

ABOVE Chet was struck by the humanity evident at the Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site in Paris.

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.

AUGUST

5

De Leon [5–8] Peach and Melon Festival, (254) 893-6600, pmdfestival.com

6

Dalhart [6–8] XIT Rodeo & Reunion, info@xitrodeoreunion.com, xitrodeoreunion.com

8

Corsicana Mimosas at the Market, (903) 654-4850, visitorscorsicana.com

Dublin [8–9] Chicken House Flea Market, (254) 223-1879, bit.ly/chfleaemarket

Henderson [8–9] East Texas Sacred Harp Convention, (903) 985-3084, easttexasfasola.weebly.com

10

Bastrop [10–Sept. 19] Soul Circuit: Juneteenth Rodeos in Texas, (512) 303-0904, bastropcountyhistoricalsociety.com

14

Levelland [14–16] Horse Sales, (575) 309-6322, levellandhorsesales.com

16

Fort Worth Summer Sizzler, bit.ly/summersizzlerdfw

San Antonio Summer Film Series: *Take It Away: The Rise and Fall of Tejano Hollywood*, (210) 299-4499, briscoemuseum.org

20

Midland [20–23] County Fair, (432) 247-1189, midlandcountyfair.com

21

Wimberley Bat Watch,
(512) 660-9111,
wimberleyparksandrec.com

22

Castroville [22-23] St. Louis Day, (830) 931-2826,
saintlouisday.com

26

Brady [26-29] Heart of Texas Honky Tonk, (325) 597-1895, hillbillyhits.com

28

Fort Worth [28-29] Chris Munch & Adam,
(512) 817-9535,
fortworth.blcomedy.com

Irving [28-30] DFW Fiber Fest, (214) 799-1347,
dfwfiberfest.org

29

Baytown Caribbean Vibes,
(281) 810-2990, acedistrict
baytown.org

McKinney [29-30] Summer ArtFest, (202) 810-2101,
millhousefoundation.org

SEPTEMBER

4

Boerne [4-6] Kendall County Fair, (830) 249-2839,
facebook.com/kendallcounty
fairassociation

Rockport [4-6] Fiesta en la Playa, (361) 314-2226,
acmtexas.com

5

Austin Bat Fest, (512) 441-9015, roadwayevents.com

Bedford Beats and Eats Fest, (817) 952-2100,
bedfordtx.gov

TCP Submit Your Event

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

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A Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity

Some coins mark time. Others make history. The 2026-W American Silver Eagle Proof

does both. For people who remember the excitement surrounding dual-dated 1976 Bicentennial coinage, the significance of 2026 needs no explanation. For those new to the scene, this represents an opportunity that won't come again in our lifetimes.

Don't Miss Out on a True Legacy

Even before the official release date of February 26, single 2026-W Proof American Silver Eagles recorded pre-sales of just over 209,000 coins, or about 42% of its stated 500,000 mintage before the coin was even available. The remaining coins from the first allotment have since been sold. While the Mint does intend to strike the remaining authorized mintage, don't run the risk of missing out on acquiring a true legacy for you and your family that will be prized for generations to come.

To add one of these first-ever dual-dated 2026-W American Silver Eagle Proofs with Liberty Bell 250 Privy Mark to your collection, call 1-800-517-6468 to secure yours now.

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Underwater Life

From our backyards to our beaches, Texas waters are teeming with life. These readers have us hooked, so pull on your boots and wade on in. The water's fine.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 LOREN ANDREW
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

"My daughter, Addison, took this inside the aquarium at the Houston Zoo."

2 CRYSTAL VALDEZ
LYNTEGAR EC

"My daughter, Natalie Valdez, took this picture at an aquarium. She is an aspiring photographer who loves animals of all kinds."

3 KORO CURRIESAN
SAN BERNARD EC

"A shell looking like butterfly wings."

4 HARRISON NASH
BLUEBONNET EC

"This is from a memorable day on the Devil's River where the target species was smallmouth bass."



Upcoming Contests

CHRISTMAS FAILS DUE AUG 10

BARNs DUE SEP 10

SWAMPs DUE OCT 10



**ENTER
ONLINE**

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Underwater Life photos from readers.



Wallow Awhile

Maybe pigs are onto something with their love of mud

BY CYNTHIA L. MATLOCK

ILLUSTRATION BY
GEORGE SWEETLAND

IF YOU'VE SPENT any time around pigs, you know one thing for sure: They like mud. I learned this firsthand growing up on a farm, where I often admired and despised the pigs we raised. Especially when they wallowed in the mud on hot summer days.

At feeding time, if the hogs were not already in the pen, my sister and I would have to go out into the woods and round them up, chasing them through the brush and trees. Sometimes, instead of heading to the trough, they'd detour down to the creek, flopping joyfully in the mud. Ugh!

I often wished I could hose them off first—clean them up before feeding them—as drying mud covered their hides, from their snouts to their hooves. One would open his mouth as if smiling and follow us along the fencerow with

his curly tail wagging.

How disgusting but freeing. It seemed incredibly liberating to get muddy, smile and not worry about what anyone thought.

As much as I wrinkled my nose, I came to understand why they did it. Rolling in mud cools pigs down quickly—by nearly 4 degrees, according to some sources—far more efficiently than sweating. Our white Yorkshires, with their sunburn-prone pink hides, often stayed coated in mud, which worked like a natural sunscreen.

And I couldn't help but envy their wild abandon. The closest I've come to that exhilarating, freeing feeling is a good jump in a swimming pool. Or a swerve in a car to splash through standing water. As the years roll on and adult responsibilities pile up, it can be harder to make time to unwind—for most of us.

While I've been dodging dirty things all my life, others have been diving right in—literally. Near my childhood home in Jacksonville, mud is always part of the scene. Crowds of off-roaders come roaring in on all-terrain vehicles, trucks and dirt bikes, churning up treacherous pits and sending mud flying as engines growl and vehicles launch into the air. Mud fights draw big crowds—slick with thick, sticky mud. It's all in good fun.

When life feels heavy with frustrating deadlines, unnerving family drama, surprise bills and unexpected detours, it makes me want to run through mud or a puddle.

Naturally, children can't resist the pull of a fresh puddle after a heavy rain. They stomp through the shallow water, sending droplets dancing in the air. Even more fun is plopping down, feeling the squishy mud ooze between their fingers and shaping it into a rounded mud pie.

Maybe that's why mud and water play still calls us. It's not just for pigs, or kids, but for all of us. Jump in, let's wallow awhile. ■



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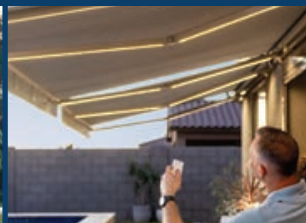
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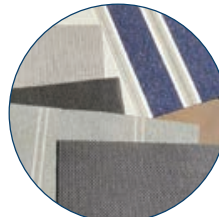
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