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# Texas Coop Power

FOR FAYETTE EC MEMBERS

JANUARY 2025

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1. 14.5¢ kWh - June 2024 Texa's Monthly Electricity Rate Average | Actual data powered by Symphony

2. ENERGY STAR rated units qualify for 30% through 2032, 26% through 2033 and 22% through 2034

# January 2025



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Decades after black bears were forced out of Texas, they're traipsing back and causing a ruckus.

*By Pam LeBlanc*

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Wherever you wander, a Texas RV-maker has the rig for your next trip.

*By Brandon Weaver*

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#### ON THE COVER

A black bear heads toward Chisos Basin in Big Bend National Park.

*Photo by Jared Markgraf*

#### ABOVE

Betty McCord Studzinski and her bulldog, Tonka, with their home away from home at Lake Georgetown.

*Photo by Eric W. Pohl*



# Looming Large



THIS MONTH, CHET takes us to the world’s largest pecan, in Seguin (see Page 30). Other attractions in Texas lay claim to being the world’s largest because, you know, everything’s bigger ... . These include the world’s largest:

- Patio chair**, in Dallas
- Roadrunner**, Fort Stockton
- Rattlesnake**, Freer
- Caterpillar**, Italy

- Watermelon**, Luling
- Muleshoe**, Muleshoe
- Jackrabbit**, Ralls

## **TCP** Contests and More

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Download our issue from January 2005 and learn about Gainesville’s quirky circus history. Find it at [TexasCoopPower.com/magazine-archives](http://TexasCoopPower.com/magazine-archives).



“Kindness and consideration of somebody besides yourself keeps you feeling young.”

—BETTY WHITE

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

The best year of my life was ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our November prompt: **Snakes are ...**

Misunderstood.

JAMES KLEIN  
FARMERS EC  
EAST TAWAKONI

Frightfully fascinating.

TAMMY TEMPLIN  
PEDERNALES EC  
AUSTIN

Nope ropes.

SUSAN ALLEN LITTLEFIELD  
VIA FACEBOOK

Better seen than felt.

LORI GUSTAVSSON  
HAMILTON COUNTY EC  
GOLDTHWAITE

Lovely to look at, tempting to hold, but if you are bitten, you might not grow old.

NOLAN GREEN  
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC  
JACKSONVILLE

Visit our website to see more responses.



NOVEMBER 2024 A Good Snake

“Hopefully a few snakes will live on because of this, and folks will start to understand better that snakes are valuable members of our wildlife community.”

MELINA BAKER  
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC  
RUSK



RUSSELL A. GRAVES

**A Smart Pet**

I had a corn snake pet I adopted [A Good Snake, November 2024]. He lived for about 16 years. Junior loved humans but did not trust my two cats. Smart dude.

Diane Cabiness  
MidSouth EC  
Montgomery

**Interpreting Maps**

I know very little Spanish. I enjoyed the article [Found in Translation, November 2024]. I knew some of the names in English. It caused me to think of two towns with Spanish names. One is Cuero, which means leather. The other is Port Lavaca. Vaca means cow.

Ron Tietz  
Medina EC  
San Antonio

**A Memory Burns Brightly**

Raised on a farm in Wilson County, Kansas, I remember well when the area received electricity in the early 1940s



NICK LU

[In the Beginning, August 2024]. That evening, the neighborhood was aglow as most had their yard lights on. The first appliance my parents purchased was a refrigerator, replacing the kerosene-powered one.

Thanks to the Rural Electrification Administration, those lights continue to burn brightly in my memory 80 years later.

Dick Stanley  
Farmers EC  
Greenville

**Kindness in Kerrville**

Folks who move to Kerrville, over time, become Kerrverts [Vegan Panhandlers, July 2024]. Nothing perverted is meant by it; it's more about conversion.

In my case, it had to do with shedding a sort of crust acquired living my first few decades of life in a major metro area (Houston). A few years after moving to Kerrville, its pervasive aura of authentic kindness and old-fashioned neighborliness softened my somewhat city-hardened exterior.

Kristin Mudry  
Bandera EC  
Kerrville

**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.

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# OUR NOSY NEW NEIGHBORS

BY PAM LEBLANC

Decades after bears were forced out of West Texas,  
they're traipsing back and causing a ruckus

In 1994, when Alida Lorio and her husband moved to the quirky Terlingua Ranch development north of Study Butte, where off-the-grid shacks sprout alongside hipster hideouts in the desert of far West Texas, they never expected they'd be living among black bears.

That changed in 2022, when several of the large, furry omnivores began ambling through their 110-acre, cactus-dotted backyard and diving for greasy pizza boxes in a dumpster.

"It's like Terlingua Ranch just got invaded by bears," Lorio says. "We have an arroyo right behind our house, and they were using that as a highway."

Lorio reported the animals to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials who connected her with researchers at the Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University, up the road in Alpine. They set up traps and collared some of the animals as part of an ongoing, multiyear project to learn more about their movements.

Bears, they've discovered, are making a comeback in Texas. And as the animals expand their territory beyond just West Texas, it's time for Texans to prepare to live alongside them.

## HOMeward BOUND

Black bears once roamed across much of Texas, from the Big Bend to the Pineywoods, the Panhandle to the

Rio Grande, but habitat loss and overhunting—along with ranchers who killed them over fears for their livestock—decimated their population. By the 1950s, they had been extirpated from the state.

A remnant population survived in the remote mountains of northern Mexico, though, and began to rebound. In the late 1980s, a few bears wandered across the Rio Grande and into Big Bend National Park. Now they've been spotted outside the park's gates, along the Rio Grande and even as far as the Hill Country.

"A lot of that is due to the protected landscape, restrictions on hunting bears in Texas and most importantly, a change in people's attitudes in the last 50 years," says Matthew Hewitt, a wildlife research assistant who works on the Borderlands Research Institute's black bear project.

The influx of the animals indicates improving habitat, but it also means an increased likelihood that humans will cross paths with bears, who are drawn to garbage, outdoor grills, deer feeders and pet food.

And that sometimes leads to conflict.

"Human-bear interactions are going to start becoming more common as bears continue to recolonize," Hewitt says. "We're working to get Texans in general to realize bears are a real thing and they do exist here."

In 2020, someone shot and killed a bear that roamed into a Del Rio neighborhood. In 2022, a bear nicknamed Oscar





A black bear, seemingly unconcerned about a nearby photographer, feasts on prickly pear tunas just off the road in Big Bend National Park.







ABOVE A mama and her three cubs meander along Chisos Basin Road on the way into the Chisos Mountains.

BELOW Matthew Hewitt of the Borderlands Research Institute collects vitals and records the condition of a creature's mighty paws.



began hanging around a dumpster outside a barbecue restaurant in Terlingua. The animals have popped up in Laredo, the Davis Mountains and Guadalupe Mountains National Park, too, and last September, TPWD officials trapped and relocated a bear on the outskirts of Uvalde, 85 miles west of San Antonio.

Three years ago, Melanie Kaihani noticed a bear on the 243 acres of land she'd just purchased near Sanderson, southeast of Fort Stockton. She set up a wildlife camera and struck gold: a bevy of bears cavorting beneath a deer feeder and climbing a salt lick to take a dip in the water tank she constructed for wildlife. (You can watch their antics on Instagram at @bigbendcountry.)

"With their size and teeth and claws, you'd expect them to be really intimidating creatures, but they're really just big, goofy raccoons," says Kaihani. She notified researchers, who advised her to quit filling the deer feeder. "If they had opposable thumbs, they'd rule the world."

For now, no one really knows how many black bears live in Texas, where they're still considered threatened and hunting them is banned. "More than a dozen, less than a thousand," Hewitt says. "Possibly a couple hundred."

Researchers want to know more about the bears—which have ears shaped like castanets; oval paws with candy corn-sized claws; eyes the size of a quarter; and a distinctive, musky odor—so they're fitting them with collars to track their movements.

Their diet includes mostly plants: prickly pear tunas, acorns, wild persimmons, berries and seeds from piñon pine cones. They also eat insects and roadkill, and researchers in Texas have documented one incident of true predation (a javelina). Full-grown males typically weigh up to 300 pounds.

## BEARS WILL BE BEARS

Twice a year, in the spring and fall, Hewitt and others from the Borderlands Research Institute load baked goods and fruit into live traps they set on land where bears have been reported.

"We have learned that bears sure do like doughnuts," Hewitt says.

When the trapdoor shuts behind a bear, the researchers get a text alert on their phones. Someone is always within a 90-minute drive.

"If a trap goes off, it's boots on ground," Hewitt says.



## BEAR NECESSITIES

- Never feed or approach bears.
- Secure food, garbage and recycling.
- Remove bird feeders when bears are active.
- Never leave pet food outdoors.
- Clean and store grills and smokers.
- Alert neighbors to bear activity.



“We jump out of bed, drop what we’re doing and drive out to the trap site.”

The researchers use a dart gun or jab stick to anesthetize the bear. Once it’s unconscious, they check its vitals; gather biometric data; attach tracking tags; and take hair, blood and tissue samples. Finally, they attach a rubber collar equipped with a transmitter and battery pack so they can follow the animal’s movements.

So far, they’ve collared about 30 bears, including five on Kaihani’s land near Sanderson and a couple on Lorio’s property in Terlingua Ranch.

“We have been extremely surprised by the sheer size of the area these animals are using,” Hewitt says. “We’ve seen some 80-mile movements from Terlingua Ranch down into Mexico.”

Another surprise? The bears are apparently thriving in the harsh, prickly environment of West Texas.

That’s why Borderlands researchers and scientists with TPWD want to educate the public on how they can safely coexist with the animals.

“Bears get into problems when there’s food involved,” Hewitt says. “Outside that, they’re good at keeping to themselves.”

By removing food that attracts bears, storing grills where bears can’t access them and installing bear-safe dumpsters, people can lessen the odds of a problem, Hewitt says.

If you do encounter a black bear, remember that it’s likely

to scamper off if threatened or scared. Stay at least 100 yards away, and if you accidentally find yourself in close proximity to one, continue facing it and back away slowly. Bear spray is a good tool if a bear acts aggressively.

Also, consider yourself lucky.

“Take a second to marvel at a cool critter in a cool place,” Hewitt says.

### OH, BOTHER

Back at Terlingua Ranch, Lorio and her husband say they’re learning to coexist with their new neighbors.

“William and I are adaptive, and we figure the bears were here first,” she says. “So we just made some adjustments on how we dealt with garbage.”

They now store trash indoors. They rinse out pet food and other food containers to eliminate odor, and they put chicken bones in the freezer until trash pickup day. Bear-proof dumpsters have been installed in the rural neighborhood too.

Although not all her neighbors appreciate the bears as much as the Lorios do, Alida says she enjoys observing them.

“A lion is kind of regal, but bears look like you’d want to go have a beer with them,” she says. “The rare times that you do see them, it’s like a gift from Mother Nature.” ■



# WHEEL

**Wherever you wander, a Texas RV-maker  
has the rig for your next trip**





# ESTATE



ERIC W. POHL

BY BRANDON WEAVER

## IN THE SUMMER

of 2023, Betty

McCord Studzinski caravanned to Alaska from her home in Georgetown, north of Austin, with 12 other RVers. The majority made the trek in large 45-foot motor homes, but her recreational vehicle was the smallest of the bunch: a 17-foot Texas-made travel trailer perfect for her and Tonka, her bulldog.

“They were breaking down here and there,” says Studzinski, 78. “We had no issues at all.” She and Tonka covered 11,000 miles on that trip. Her favorite part was the wildlife. “They were everywhere,” she says. “And the scenery was just breathtaking.”

Studzinski has seen 49 states and many national parks with her Casita trailer in tow and has no plans to slow down. This year, she’s planning a trip to Maine and the Maritime Provinces of Canada.

Texas was the top destination for shipments of new RVs in 2023, according to the RV Industry Association, but our state also produces its very own travel rigs. Casita, Capri Camper and Sportmobile are niche manufacturers compared to the corporate behemoths, and each of these companies has a waitlist for every RV that they build right here in Texas. The folks who buy these vehicles are loyal, and for them, it means buying into an ethos of community, since they don’t have to go through a dealership.

Each of the companies’ RVs take unique forms. Sportmobile’s converted vans are like turtle shells—you live and drive in your home. Casita makes small, fiberglass egg-shaped trailers that you tote behind you. And Capri makes the classic truck camper for pickups.

An RVIA study found that RV ownership has increased 62% over the past 20 years, with nearly a quarter of owners aged 18–34. These are a few of the intrepid travelers who love their Texas-built homes on wheels.

Betty McCord Studzinski loves her Casita Spirit Deluxe camper. “I hardly ever go back to a place I’ve been before,” she says.





## TOP

**LARRY PANCAKE IS** a professional saddle bronc rider and music and rodeo promoter from Amarillo.

“I started rodeoing when I was 12,” he says. “My seventh grade PE teacher taught me to rope.” The Capri camper is a mainstay for professional cowboys like him. The campers are so iconic in Western culture, several have been featured in the TV series *Yellowstone*.

And they’ve been custom-made in Texas since 1969. In 2003, the company set up manufacturing in the tiny town of Bluff Dale, southwest of Fort Worth. They offer four models to top every size of pickup, with retro styling on the outside and modern amenities inside.

Pancake has owned four Capri campers, and his current one sits atop a 1997 Freightliner chassis. He spends about 150 days a year in it, hunting elk in New Mexico, riding broncs and promoting events across the U.S. The interior is decorated with a neon flamingo and a Welcome to Las Vegas sign.

“Anytime I leave the house, I’m in my Capri. I don’t rent hotel rooms,” Pancake says. “I like having my own space.”

His favorite feature is his Capri’s blackout shades that keep the interior completely dark in the daytime and under streetlamps. At big rodeos, there are sometimes hours between rotations. “I can watch a movie or take a nap,” Pancake says. “The blackout shades are huge.”

He also had Capri build a dream rig from his childhood rodeo days. The Bronc Stomper is a 1977 Chevrolet C20 Camper Special with a Capri camper on it. It’s a show truck he uses to promote his National Finals Rodeo events in Las Vegas.

“When I was a kid growing up in the ’70s, you had made it big time if you had a Chevy Camper Special with a Capri camper on it,” Pancake says. “You either pulled horses with it or rode bulls. That’s what the elite rodeo rig was.”



COURTESY LARRY PANCAKE

Larry Pancake, a professional saddle bronc rider, calls his outfit, made by Capri Camper, the Bronc Stomper. He also outfitted a Freightliner with a Capri camper, and he uses the big rig to haul his smaller truck.

## TOTE

**STUDZINSKI, THE AVID RVer** from Georgetown, has owned just about every type of home on wheels—from a pop-up tent trailer to a massive motor home.

“I never could find the right size for me,” Studzinski says. “I thought being a single female, traveling alone, with just a dog, I needed an engine-driven vehicle.” That way if she felt unsafe camping, she could go from her bed to the driver’s seat without exiting the rig.

Studzinski likes to boondock (camp off-grid, without hookups), but when all you have is one vehicle, you’re likely to lose your spot if you leave briefly and drive to a trailhead or into town. So she started looking at trailers and settled on Casita.

The tough little fiberglass trailers have been built in



LEFT: COURTESY KATIE PERKINS; RIGHT: COURTESY BRANDON WEAVER

# TURTLE

**CHARLES BORSKEY SET** up shop in El Paso in 1961, converting Volkswagen and Ford vans. In the following decades, his company added innovations like “penthouse” tops (expandable roofs for sleeping) and four-wheel-drive conversions. In 1984, Borskey moved Sportsmobile to Austin.

I built my first van in 2005 with Sportsmobile, a four-wheel-drive Ford Econoline. The interior was sparse, with a compact cabinet, microwave, TV and a small “garage” area in the back for my mountain bike.

These days, the company offers standardized floor plans but also has an infinite selection of custom options to build your Goldilocks van. I chose the minimalist approach and christened my go-anywhere machine the Travel-All.

My first excursion was a shakedown trip to the Big Bend. The penthouse top, which raises above the van’s roof, withstood a blustery windstorm in Terlingua, and the four-wheel-drive chassis had no problem navigating the rough and rocky Black Gap Road in the backcountry of Big Bend National Park.

I deemed the Travel-All ready for a remote expedition in Colorado and drove it deep into the Rio Grande National Forest, inching down an impossibly steep Jeep trail to a

The author and his camper outfitted by Sportsmobile. It eats highway miles the way he eats breakfast tacos—with glee and fervor.

campsite along the rushing headwaters of the Rio Grande. I spent four glorious days in absolute solitude next to a Texas river born in Colorado.

I quickly outgrew the Travel-All’s sparse interior, so back to Sportsmobile I went.

In 2007, a few years after Mercedes-Benz introduced their sleek Sprinter van to the American market, I ordered one from Sportsmobile, one of the first certified outfitters in the U.S., and christened it Bruce. Unlike the Travel-All, it ate highway miles like I consume breakfast tacos—with glee and fervor.

I drove it all over the Western states, from Carmel-by-the-Sea, on the coast of central California, to the Grand Canyon, where my wife and I honeymooned in it with our trusty beagle, Pizza. In the 2000s, the Mercedes Sprinter van was uncommon, but now they’re ubiquitous. Ford and Dodge offer their own Euro-styled vans, and Sportsmobile does conversions on those as well out of their facility in North Austin.

Texas since 1983. Their current manufacturing plant is in Rice, south of Dallas, where they produce five models that are 17 feet long. The molded two-piece fiberglass design is built more like a boat than an RV. When a hailstorm damaged Studzinski’s home, her Casita, which sits uncovered outside, sustained no damage.

She purchased her Spirit Deluxe model in 2019 and had it outfitted with 325 watts of rooftop solar panels and four 100-amp-hour batteries. She bought a Subaru and promptly loaded up Tonka and went to Big Bend National Park, where she camped in the Chisos Basin campground.

The sites are small, but her little fiberglass “egg” fit perfectly, and with all her solar power, she could run her fridge with ease. Finding her perfect RV has fueled more wanderlust for Studzinski.

“I hardly ever go back to a place I’ve been before,” she says. “There are so many other places on my list that I want to see.” ■



ERIC W. POHL

Studzinski’s compact camper includes rooftop solar panels and four 100-amp-hour batteries.



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MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER DOUG LAMBERT

## We're Enhancing Service and Communications

I AM PLEASED TO inform you that Fayette Electric Cooperative has implemented several important changes behind the scenes to enhance the service we provide to you, our members. One of the key improvements is our new outage map, which is now available on our website, [fayette.coop](http://fayette.coop).

This tool allows you to view your location in relation to known outages by simply entering your address. Outages are displayed as colored circles, with each color representing a different number of affected meters. Clicking on a colored icon will display specific details about that outage.

As we gather information about each outage, we will post updates to keep you informed about the progress of our restoration efforts. By clicking the three horizontal lines at the top right of the map, you can access a summary showing the total number of active outages, members affected and the total membership within Fayette EC's service area.

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

In addition to this, we have made significant upgrades to our customer service processes. While we previously took power outage calls between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. and relied on an answering service

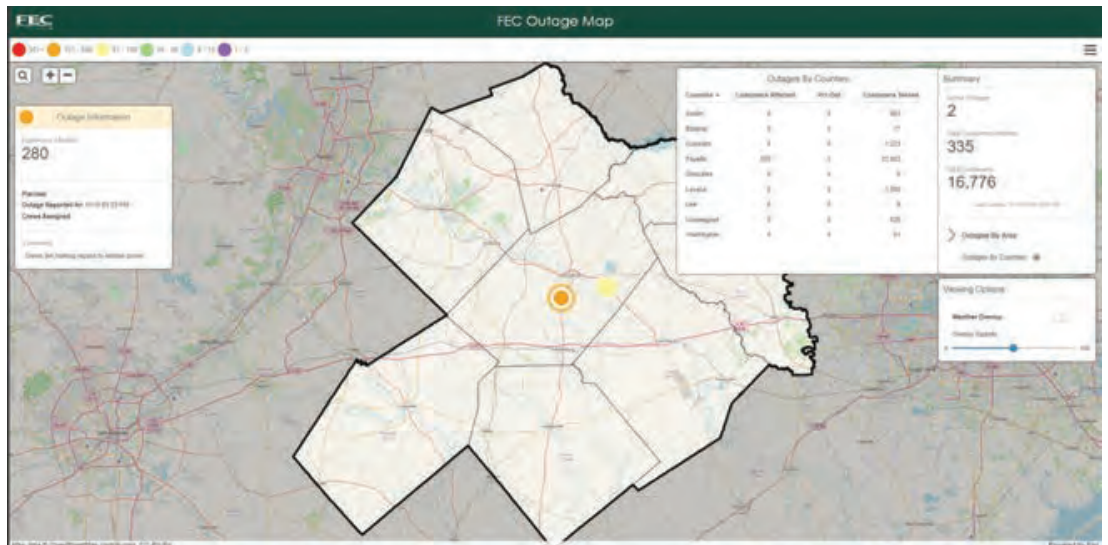
after hours, we have now hired full-time system operators who are ready to assist with service interruptions 24/7. This change allows us to respond to your needs at any time, day or night, ensuring a more seamless and efficient process.

We encourage our members to visit our website and download the SmartHub app, a convenient tool designed to enhance your experience with Fayette EC. Through SmartHub, you can sign up for outage notifications, view and pay your bill, monitor your energy usage down to the hour, and report outages electronically.

This app is just one of the many ways we're working to keep you informed and engaged as we modernize our communications and service offerings.

Our priority is to streamline operations so that we can restore power as quickly and safely as possible. While we cannot prevent every power outage, we want to assure you that we're constantly working to improve our systems and be there for you whenever an interruption occurs.

Thank you for your continued trust and support as we work to better serve you. ■







J. MICHAEL JONES | ISTOCK.COM

## Why Electric Co-ops Replace Utility Poles

**YOU PROBABLY DON'T** pay much attention to the utility poles throughout Fayette Electric Cooperative's service territory, but did you know they're the backbone of our distribution network?

Strong, sturdy poles ensure a reliable electrical system, which is why we routinely inspect the poles on our lines. Throughout the year, our crews check for decay caused by exposure to the elements. They know which poles are oldest and conduct inspections through a rotational process. Typically, a standard wooden distribution pole is expected to last more than 50 years.

Occasionally, poles need to be replaced for reasons besides decay and old age. Weather disasters, power line relocation and car crashes are potential causes for immediate replacement.

When possible, Fayette EC communicates when and where pole replacements will take place so you stay informed of where crews will be working.

Here's a quick breakdown of how crews replace a utility pole.

Crews will start the process by digging a hole, typically next to the pole being replaced. The depth of the hole must be 15% of the new pole's height.

Next, the new pole must be fitted with bolts, cross arms, insulators, ground wires and arm braces—all of the necessary hardware for delivering safe, reliable electricity. Then crews safely detach the power lines from the old pole. The new pole is then raised and guided carefully into position, and the lines are attached, leaving the new pole to do its job.

So the next time you come across a Fayette EC crew replacing a pole, use caution and know that this process ensures a more reliable electric system for you, our members. ■

## Fayette Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

### CONTACT US

2111 N. Von Minden Rd.  
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**Toll-Free** 1-866-968-3181  
**Email** [electric@fayette.coop](mailto:electric@fayette.coop)  
**Web** [fayette.coop](http://fayette.coop)

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### TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

### VISIT US ONLINE

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





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## Celebrate, Cook and Save

**DID YOU KNOW** January is National Slow Cooking Month? You can celebrate by preparing a meal in a slow cooker and save money in the process.

Ever since slow cookers were introduced in the 1950s and then popularized in the 1970s as Crock-Pots, they have been celebrated as savers of time and electricity. Plus, their meals are nutritious because they're cooked at low temperatures for long periods, allowing fresh meats and vegetables to retain their natural juices.

Here are five reasons to dust off your slow cooker this month and use it to make soups, stews and family meals.

Although it takes all day for a slow cooker to cook a meal, you don't have to do anything except toss in the ingredients and turn it on at the appropriate level of heat.

Once you prep the pot, you can walk away until the food is done.

An electric slow cooker uses less energy than a conventional oven. Use one in the winter to create hot, hearty meals. Later in the year, when it's warm outside, use it instead of the stove or oven to keep your kitchen cooler while you cook.

A slow cooker meal requires little cleanup—especially if you use a disposable liner.

When you're invited to a potluck supper, prepare your contribution in the slow cooker. Once the food is ready, leave it in the pot, let the outside cool enough to handle, and bring the whole thing to the party.

You'll eat fewer processed foods if you get used to cooking with a slow cooker. That means you'll eat less salt, fat and calories.

Here are two slow cooker recipes to get your celebration started. ■

### Pork Shoulder Roast

**2–3 pound pork shoulder roast**  
**½ cup cinnamon applesauce**  
**1 sweet onion, sliced**  
**2 generous splashes teriyaki sauce**

1. Apply cooking spray inside a slow cooker, or use a liner.
2. Place pork shoulder in slow cooker and top with cinnamon applesauce, onion slices and teriyaki sauce.
3. Cook 1 hour on high heat, then reduce heat to low and continue cooking another 4–5 hours or until pork is tender and fully cooked.

**SERVES 4**

### Green Chile Cheddar Cheese Soup

**4 large baking potatoes**  
**1 small onion, chopped**  
**4 cans chicken broth**  
**(about 7 cups total)**  
**1 tablespoon salt**  
**1 cup milk, cream or half-and-half**  
**1 can chopped green chiles (4 ounces)**  
**1 cup shredded cheddar cheese, plus more for garnish**  
**Ground black pepper**  
**Bacon, cooked and crumbled (optional)**  
**Sour cream (optional)**  
**Chopped green onion (optional)**

1. Peel potatoes and chop into medium dice. Place potato and onion in slow cooker and add chicken broth to cover, reserving remaining broth. You may substitute water and 4 chicken bouillon cubes. Add salt.
2. Cover and bring to a boil on high, then lower heat and simmer 30 minutes or until potatoes are just tender. Remove half the potatoes to a colander or bowl. Mash remaining potatoes in cooking broth. Return reserved potatoes to cooker and add milk, green chiles and cheese.
3. Let simmer 30–45 additional minutes. Add more salt and pepper to taste. If soup is too thick, add extra chicken broth.
4. Serve with extra shredded cheese, crumbled bacon, sour cream and sliced green onion on top, if desired.

**SERVES 4**





HELENAAK | ISTOCK.COM

## Cool Off Your Winter Energy Bill

**AFTER THE EXPENSES** of the holiday season—gifts, meals and travel—money might be a little tight, not leaving much for home energy efficiency upgrades. Does that mean you're powerless to lower your electric bill?

Not at all. Keep your energy bill cool this winter with these tips and tricks.

**Drape delivery.** Are you using your curtains to capture heat? Make sure drapes and shades are open to catch free solar heat during the day. Close them at night to keep the heat inside.

**Set but don't forget.** Set your thermostat to 68 degrees (or lower if you can) and always lower it a few more degrees when you're away from home.

**Got tape?** Though not as durable as foam, rubber or vinyl, you can use nonporous tape (first aid cloth tape, for example) to keep cold air from drifting into your home. Tape is good for blocking corners and irregular cracks and can be used at the top and bottom of a window sash, door frames, attic hatches and inoperable windows.

**Fan it up.** Run ceiling fans on low and in a clockwise rotation to move air up in winter. This keeps warm air circulating without cooling you.

**Free vents.** Your HVAC system will have to work twice as hard if your air registers and vents are blocked by rugs, furniture or drapes. Keep them clear to allow air to flow freely.

**Garage drain.** Leave your garage door down. A warmer garage in winter saves energy.

**Rug relief.** Have a spare rug? Use it to cover bare floors for added insulation.

**Cool food.** Don't make your fridge work too hard. Clean the coils yearly, set the temperature to 34–37 degrees and set the freezer to 0–5 degrees. Keep the freezer full; frozen food helps your freezer stay cool. When cooking, keep lids on pots, and let hot food cool off before placing it in the refrigerator.

**Hot savings.** Heating water accounts for 18% of a typical home's energy use. Set your water heater temperature no higher than 120 degrees. For households with only one or two members, 115 works.

Remember: Don't pay for what you don't use. When you're not watching TV or using lights, computers and other electronics, turn them off. Lower your room temperatures a bit and wear a sweater to stay warm, or place an extra blanket on the bed at night. ■

## Keep Warm a Cheaper Way

**BEFORE YOU CRANK UP** the thermostat on an especially chilly day this winter, first try a method that won't increase your electric bill.

**Here are four practical alternatives to avoid sending your energy bills through the roof this winter.**

**Dress in layers.** Pull a T-shirt on and layer a sweater over it. Choose fleece-lined sweatpants for lounging around the house.

**Keep your feet warm.** Did you know heat escapes your body through your feet and hands? So never walk around barefoot indoors during the winter, even if you have wall-to-wall carpeting. Wear thick socks with your slippers.

**Put an electric blanket on your bed** before you crawl into it, and the sheets and blankets will be toasty warm. Turn the electric blanket off before you fall asleep, or invest in one that will turn off automatically.

**Move around.** You'll be colder if you sit still all day than if you're active. Use chilly days to clean the house, exercise or play with the kids. The more you move, the warmer you'll feel. ■



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## 6 Tips for Winter Safety

**IT'S NO SURPRISE** that winter months bring increased fire risks and electrical safety hazards. When cold weather strikes, consumers use more devices and appliances, like space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 30,740 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 390 deaths, 1,090 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips.

**Don't overload electrical outlets.** Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliances—they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician.

**Never leave space heaters unattended.** If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Also note that space heaters take a major toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

**Inspect heating pads and electric blankets.** These items cause hundreds of fires every year. Electric blankets more than 10 years old are especially risky. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads: Look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord isn't damaged. Don't place any

items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

**Use portable generators safely.** Never connect a generator to your home's electrical system. Plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates has no odor and is deadly, so keep generators well away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

**Make sure to test your CO detectors regularly.** CO is a silent, odorless gas that can be produced by malfunctioning heating systems and generators. Carbon monoxide poisoning is more prevalent during the winter months. If you don't have a CO detector in your home, consider adding one as soon as possible. It could save lives.

**Watch for downed power lines.** High winds and heavy ice can break tree branches, which can fall on power lines. This can lead to power outages and house fires. If you see a downed line, stay at least 30 feet away. Call 911 immediately and report the situation.

If you have trees on your property, you can help avoid downed power lines by regularly trimming back the branches. You'll be protecting your roof at the same time. Look specifically for damaged, rotting limbs hanging near the house or power lines. ■



# Renting? You Can Still Lower Your Energy Bill

**REDUCING ELECTRICITY USE** as a renter may seem tough when you have little control over the biggest energy users in your place, like your heating and cooling system, refrigerator, and dishwasher.

But there's still plenty you can do to lower your energy bill without making permanent—or unapproved—changes. **Follow these tips to reduce energy use in your rented space:**

If your home has an individual water heater, call your landlord or property manager and ask to have the temperature lowered to 120 degrees. Most water heaters are set at a default temperature of 140 degrees—which can be hot enough to scald your skin. The lower setting will still be hot enough to keep your showers steamy.

Look for an Energy Star-qualified window air conditioner if you're responsible for purchasing it. An Energy Star unit uses about 10% less energy. In the winter, cover window AC units with tight-fitting sleeves to prevent the heat from escaping, or remove the units.

While blinds offer privacy, hanging heavier curtains can help reduce the chill in a room. To go one step further, tape clear plastic sheeting around window frames to help insulate older, single-pane windows.

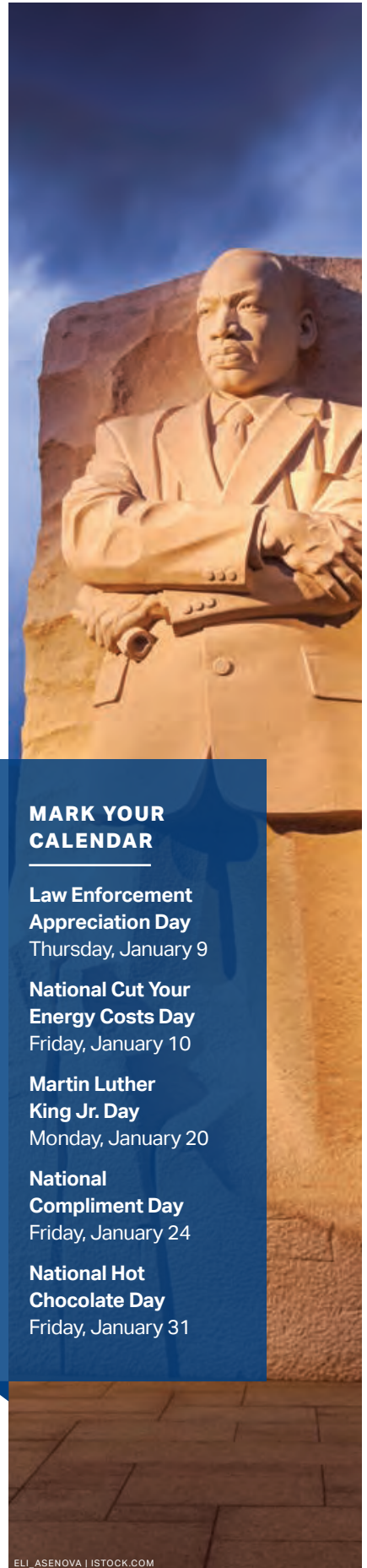
Install sink aerators on all faucets. They're inexpensive and nonpermanent but can significantly reduce your hot water use while offering the same water pressure.

Replace incandescent light bulbs with more efficient LEDs. They use far less energy than incandescents, and last up to 10 years—so you can take them with you when you move.

If the windows and doors are drafty, ask your landlord about installing weatherstripping to seal off cracks. It's an easy do-it-yourself task and inexpensive, too—so even if your landlord won't cover the cost, it's worth it to pay for it yourself to reduce your heating bills and increase the comfort of your home. ■



LIUDMILA CHERNETSKA | ISTOCK.COM



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Law Enforcement Appreciation Day**  
Thursday, January 9

**National Cut Your Energy Costs Day**  
Friday, January 10

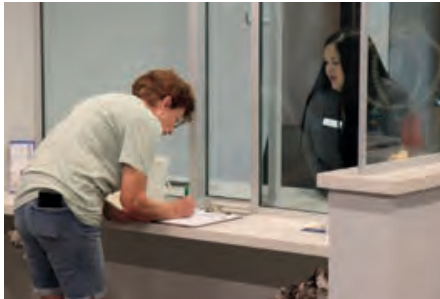
**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**  
Monday, January 20

**National Compliment Day**  
Friday, January 24

**National Hot Chocolate Day**  
Friday, January 31

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# Thank You For Attending FEC'S OPEN HOUSE



Fayette Electric Cooperative welcomed members and guests to an open house event showcasing its new headquarters November 1, 2024. Visitors were greeted by FEC directors and staff in the lobby before being taken on guided tours of the facility, offered every 30 minutes.

Doug Lambert, general manager, and Tracy Denton, marketing and training manager, provided an introductory overview, which was followed by insights from key staff in each department along the tour route.

Attendees enjoyed refreshments, including kolache, cookies and beverages, as well as FEC-branded giveaways. The event also featured two door prize drawings.



## **Texas Co-op Power Cookbook Winners**

Larry Jackson, La Grange  
Caroline Mazoch, La Grange  
Brenda C. Spence, La Grange  
Stella Villalovoz, Fayetteville

## **\$50 Energy Bill Credit Winners**

Wiley W. Boehnke, Flatonia  
Dennis J. Crum, Round Top  
Norma Ann Euton, Round Top  
George Kana Jr., La Grange  
David A. Zbranek, La Grange



The event was a memorable day for Fayette EC, allowing members and guests to experience the new headquarters firsthand and gain a deeper understanding of the co-op's operations and dedication to serving its community.



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2025

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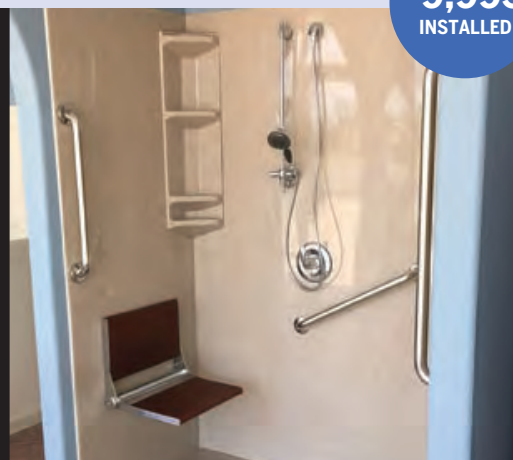
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# Striking It Big

War vet Frank Saucier left behind a big-league career to chase oil

BY ANNE R. KEENE • ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC KITTELBERGER

**IMAGINE GIVING UP** a promising baseball career to become a landman and wildcatter in the oil business. That's what Francis "Frank" Saucier did when he saw more potential in oil than baseball.

At 98, the Amarilloan and former outfielder for the St. Louis Browns (now the Baltimore Orioles) has seen almost a century of booms and busts and war and peace.

Saucier was born in 1926 on a Missouri farm, educated in a one-room schoolhouse and carried water to wheat field workers for 25 cents a day at age 6. By 10, the youngest of six children founded a fur-trapping enterprise with a Remington rifle, earning money for used books.

As a teen, Saucier heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor as he and his cousin

walked home from a movie. "A Model T pulled up with folks who shared the news. I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was," he says with a soft-spoken West Texas drawl in a recent interview at his home, where he displays baseballs signed by Hall of Famers Satchel Paige and Rogers Hornsby. "My family did not own a radio, so I raced home to tell them about the bombing."

The day after his 17th birthday, Saucier enlisted in the Navy, where he enrolled in the V-12 officer training program at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. As an apprentice seaman, Saucier says, "My rank was so low I could crawl under a rattlesnake's belly under a wagon wheel with a stovepipe hat on."

Saucier served on an amphibious

warfare commando team—a forerunner to the Navy SEALs. "President Truman dropped the first atomic bomb when we were about 1,000 miles from Japan," he says. "Though there was no alcohol on board the ship, we had a big party and thought, 'By golly, we made it.'"

Strong farm-boy wrists from swinging an axe and milking cows had helped make Saucier a star hitter in college. After the war, he signed a minor-league contract, won three batting titles and was named player of the year in 1950 by *The Sporting News*.

Still, fame never stopped Saucier from taking offseason roustabout jobs in the oil fields, where he invested his baseball earnings to drill for crude, which was then selling for about \$3 a barrel.

He signed with the Browns in 1951, realizing a childhood dream conjured on the wooden grandstand at Sportsman's Park in St. Louis. He played with or against Ted Williams, Yogi Berra, Minnie Miñoso and Paige along with Texans Dr. Bobby Brown and Eddie Robinson.

But Saucier is most remembered for a wacky public relations stunt engineered by Browns owner Bill Veeck, who brought in 3-foot-7-inch Eddie Gaedel to pinch-hit for Saucier during a game.

In 1952, Saucier was at spring training when he was called back to active duty during the Korean War. He'd already been dealing with chronic problems with his throwing arm, and after his discharge in 1954, he took a job as a district landman for Humble Oil Co. in Tyler.

Saucier never attended another major-league game. He worked in the oil and finance business until he was 85.

Regrets? No way.

"Baseball opened a lot of doors for me," he says. "I just happened to be in the right place at the right time." ■



# Hearty Soups

Enticing ingredients and easy options have you set for the coldest of days

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Pozole verde is one of my favorite soups to make when feeding a crowd. Pozole is a traditional Mexican soup that can be made with chicken or pork. (*Verde* means green.) It's the absolute perfect bowl to enjoy all winter! It comes together quickly and is even tastier the next day for lunch.

## Pozole Verde

### SOUP

- 1 pound tomatillos, husks removed, rinsed**
- 1 large onion, halved**
- 1 jalapeño pepper, halved, seeds removed for less spice**
- 2 cloves garlic**
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano**
- 10 cups water, divided use**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste**
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper, or more to taste**
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro, coarsely chopped**
- 4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts**
- 2 cans white hominy (15 ounces each), drained and rinsed**
- Lime wedges, for serving**
- Salsa, for serving**

### FRIED TORTILLA STRIPS

- 6 corn tortillas**
- ¼ cup vegetable oil**
- 1 teaspoon salt**

- 1. SOUP** Add tomatillos, onion, jalapeño, garlic, oregano, 4 cups water, salt and pepper to a large pot. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes.
- 2.** Using a large slotted spoon, remove tomatillos, onion, jalapeño and garlic from the broth and add to a blender with 1 cup of the cooking water and cilantro. Start blender on low, then work up to high until ingredients are smooth. Taste and add salt as needed.
- 3.** Add blended sauce, chicken and the remaining 6 cups water to a large pot. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 30–45 minutes or until chicken is fork-tender. Remove from pot and shred.
- 4.** Add shredded chicken and hominy to the pot. Simmer 15 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning.
- 5. FRIED TORTILLA STRIPS** Slice tortillas into ½-inch strips. Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add tortilla strips in batches, stirring often, and fry until crispy and lightly browned. Remove from oil, place on a paper towel-lined plate and sprinkle with salt.
- 6.** Serve soup hot with tortilla strips, lime wedges and salsa.

**SERVES 6**

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Creamy Cauliflower Hominy Soup.







## Nonna's Quick Pasta Soup

MARIA MEARS  
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

This is an easy dinner option that can be ready in under 30 minutes. It features orzo, a tiny, rice-shaped pasta that absorbs the flavors of the broth beautifully. It's a versatile dish that can be customized by adding your favorite vegetables, herbs and protein, like chicken or beans.

**5 tablespoons (5/8 stick) butter**  
**5 cloves garlic, minced**  
**4 cups chicken broth**  
**1 1/4 cups orzo**  
**1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, divided use**  
**2 teaspoons salt, or more to taste**  
**1 teaspoon ground black pepper, or more to taste**  
**Fresh parsley, minced (optional)**

1. Melt butter in a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté 1 minute, stirring often to avoid browning.
2. Pour in chicken broth and orzo and stir to combine. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium and simmer. Cook orzo according to package directions, stirring occasionally, until al dente.
3. Remove from heat and stir in half the Parmesan cheese. Add salt and pepper.
4. Ladle into bowls and top with remaining Parmesan cheese and parsley.

SERVES 4



\$500 WINNER

## Shrimp Chowder

AMY BARILE  
MIDSOUTH EC

Barile's chowder is a comforting and flavorful dish that combines the sweetness of corn with the rich, savory taste of shrimp. It's an easy-to-make, satisfying meal that feels indulgent yet light, making it an ideal choice for weeknight dinners or cozy gatherings.

**6 slices fully cooked bacon, diced, reserving 1 tablespoon fat**  
**1 tablespoon (1/2 stick) butter**  
**3 stalks celery, diced**  
**1 small yellow onion, diced**  
**4 cloves garlic, minced**  
**1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste**  
**1 teaspoon ground black pepper, or more to taste**  
**2 tablespoons flour**  
**2 1/2 cups milk**

**1 can whole kernel corn (15 ounces)**  
**1 can cream-style corn (14.75 ounces)**  
**1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper**  
**1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined**  
**1/3 cup half-and-half**  
**Green onions, minced, for serving**

1. Add bacon fat, butter, celery and onion to a Dutch oven or large, deep saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until tender, about 4 minutes. Add garlic, salt and pepper and cook an additional 30 seconds.
2. Sprinkle flour over the vegetable mixture. Stir to coat and allow to cook about a minute more. Slowly add milk to the mixture, stirring to eliminate any lumps.
3. Add both cans of corn and cayenne. Let cook until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes.
4. Add shrimp and cook about 3 minutes. Stir in half-and-half.
5. Remove from heat, taste and add salt and pepper if desired.
6. Serve warm, topped with bacon and green onions.

SERVES 6

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**SUMMER PASTAS** DUE JANUARY 10

It's time to put your garden's fresh vegetables and herbs to good use. Send us your best summer pasta recipe, and our favorite will win \$500. Enter by January 10.

**UPCOMING: MAKE IT SPICY** DUE FEBRUARY 10



CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

## Chicken and White Bean Soup

JENNY HARTSFIELD  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

Hartsfield's soup is another great recipe for a busy week, delivering the rich, slow-cooked flavors of an all-day soup in a fraction of the time. White beans pair with green chiles to complement perfectly poached chicken. Serve with a crusty bread or tortilla chips—so scrumptious.



- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 7 cups water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon (1/8 stick) butter
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

- 4 cans white beans (15 ounces each), undrained
- 2 cans mild chopped green chiles (4 ounces each)
- 8 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese
- Sour cream, for serving
- Tortilla chips, for serving

1. Add chicken, water, salt and bay leaf to a Dutch oven or large saucepan and cook over medium heat. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cover. Simmer until chicken is fork-tender, 15–20 minutes.
2. Remove chicken and shred, reserving broth.
3. In another Dutch oven or large saucepan, add olive oil, butter and onions and cook over medium heat 15 minutes, stirring often.
4. Stir in garlic, cumin, oregano and cayenne and cook an additional 2 minutes. Add white beans, green chiles, shredded chicken and reserved broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes.
5. When ready to serve, stir in cheese. Serve hot with sour cream and tortilla chips.

SERVES 10

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Nuts About Pecans

After Missourians built the world's biggest, Seguin rallied to reclaim the crown

BY CHET GARNER

**HERE IN TEXAS**, we like to have the biggest of everything, whether it's boots, burgers or bulls. So I wasn't surprised to learn that we even claim the original world's biggest pecan, proudly displayed on the lawn of the Guadalupe County Courthouse in Seguin, about 35 miles east of San Antonio. I decided it was a story (and a nut) I needed to crack for myself.

Seguin has a population of about 35,000 and boasts a lively downtown shaded by towering pecan trees. It's appropriate considering pecans are one of the town's most valuable resources and grow plentifully along the Guadalupe River.

So after filling my belly at Burnt Bean Co. with a platter of Tex-Mex barbecue, it was time to fill my head with nutty facts.

I crossed the street and found the original giant pecan in all its glory in front of the courthouse. While not technically a real pecan, this concrete rendition was placed here in 1962 and measures more than 5 feet long and 2½ feet wide. It was impressive for sure but not as dramatic as the battle it spawned.

Twenty years later, in 1982, farmers in Brunswick, Missouri, claimed the title with a 12-foot pecan that weighed over 12,000 pounds. In 2002, Seguin native John Pape set out to make a bigger one but didn't know about the one in Missouri's pecan capital, and so his 11-foot pecan on wheels never wore the crown. But in 2010, the city of Seguin banded together and crafted a 16-foot pecan that brought the title securely back where it belongs.

The current king of pecans is polished up and ready for photos just outside the Pecan Museum of Texas in Seguin. Everything is bigger in Texas, even if it takes a few years. ■

ABOVE A rather large nut. Oh, and that's Chet perched upon it.

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



## Know Before You Go

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

## JANUARY

10

**La Grange Dale Watson**, (979) 968-9944, [thebugleboy.org](http://thebugleboy.org)

**Elgin [10–11] Bastrop County Junior Livestock Show**, [bastrop.agrilife.org/bcjl](http://bastrop.agrilife.org/bcjl)

11

**Corsicana Mimosas at the Market**, (903) 654-4852, [facebook.com/corsicanamainstreet](http://facebook.com/corsicanamainstreet)

**Monahans Resolution Run**, (432) 943-2187, [monahans.org](http://monahans.org)

17

**Amarillo [17–18] Beautiful Blue Danube**, (806) 376-8782, [amarillosymphony.org](http://amarillosymphony.org)

**Galveston [17–18] Yaga's Chili Quest & Beer Fest**, (409) 770-0999, [yagaschiliquest.com](http://yagaschiliquest.com)

18

**Copperas Cove Polar Bear Plunge 5K**, (254) 542-2719, [copperascovetx.gov](http://copperascovetx.gov)

**Fredericksburg Book Festival**, (830) 997-6513, [fredericksburgbookfestival.org](http://fredericksburgbookfestival.org)

**Garland MLK Parade & March**, (972) 381-5044, [garlandtxnaacp.org](http://garlandtxnaacp.org)

**Granbury Goosebump Jump**, (817) 573-5548, [visitgranbury.com](http://visitgranbury.com)

**Johnson City Snow Day 2025: Frosty Fun Fest**, (844) 263-6405, [sciencemill.org](http://sciencemill.org)

**Fredericksburg [18–19] Hill Country Gem & Mineral Show**, (325) 248-1067, [visitfredericksburgtx.com](http://visitfredericksburgtx.com)

**Kerrville [18–19, 25–26, Feb. 1–2] Renaissance Festival**, (214) 632-5766, [kerrvillerenfest.com](http://kerrvillerenfest.com)



20

**Fort Worth** The Music of Sam Cooke, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

**Port Arthur** MLK Brunch, (409) 543-3727, visitportarthurtx.com

21

**Tyler** *Ain't Too Proud: The Life and Times of the Temptations*, (903) 566-7424, cowancenter.org

23

**Abilene [23-25]** Texas Shuffle Showdown, (325) 695-4713, skatinplaceabilene.com

24

**Crockett** Shenandoah, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

**Tyler [24-26]** Gem and Mineral Show, etgms.org

25

**Brenham** Simon Theatre 100th Birthday Celebration, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

**Burnet** Chuck Wagon Chow Down, hlsl.org

31

**Bastrop [31-Feb. 1]** Mardi Gras, (512) 332-8984, bastroptxmardigras.com

## FEBRUARY

1

**Horseshoe Bay** Boots and BBQ, (325) 388-3440, highlandlakescasa.com

6

**Kerrville** ARTrageous, (830) 896-9393, caillouxperformingarts.com

### TCP Submit Your Event

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

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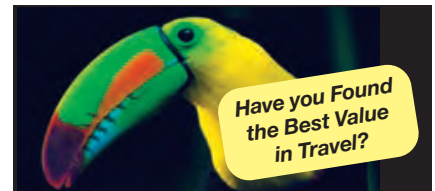
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Dominican Republic	7	1195
Mexico Riviera Maya	8	1295
Mexico Colonial Cities	8	1195
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# Blade Stunner

*Beautifully made, magnificent to look at, this knife is a work of art at only \$99*

It's not often you happen upon a bladesmith who has gem cutting skills. But finding needles in haystacks is what we do best, so when we saw this master craftsman's handiwork, we made certain to procure some of these Southwestern masterpieces to complete our collection.

The stainless steel blade, bolster and pommel are exquisitely etched and would have looked great with a less ambitious handle. But the results of overachieving are stunning here. The turquoise-blue colored handle is ablaze with assorted stones like jasper, marble, sunstone, and coral that have been hand cut and inlaid in a Southwestern motif.

**But we don't stop there.** While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99, 8x21 power compact binoculars and a genuine leather sheath FREE when you purchase the Sedona Knife.

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— WILLIAM B.

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## Knife Specifications

- 5" etched stainless steel blade; 9-1/2" overall length
- Turquoise-colored handle with accent stones including coral, marble, sandstone, tiger's eye, jasper and sunstone

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# Parks

Set down your walking stick and rest a moment. Take in the natural majesty of the park around you. Bird watching, hiking, camping and more—there’s something out here for every Texan with an itch to explore.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1

1 THERESA MCKEE  
FANNIN EC

A golden sunset with a kayaker paddling across Lake Ray Roberts.

2 PEGGY BRYANT  
PEDERNALES EC

Davis Mountains State Park.

3 CHARLES BAXTER  
COSERV

A great blue heron in Caddo Lake State Park.

4 MIKE PRESTIGIACOMO  
BARTLETT EC

“Where is the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang?”



2



3



4

## Upcoming Contests

- DUE JAN 10 **Patterns**
- DUE FEB 10 **Family Vacation**
- DUE MAR 10 **Catch of the Day**



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

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





## Miles of Memories

A North Carolina transplant was shaped by the state she longs for

BY LAUREN SENA  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

**THERE'S A LINE** in the song *Miles and Miles of Texas* popularized by Asleep at the Wheel that goes something like this: I looked into her deep blue (or brown) eyes, and this is what I saw: I saw miles and miles of Texas.

As someone who grew up listening to this song, I have always claimed that this is the greatest compliment I could get, but lately I've started to think more about that.

If that's what you see when you look into my eyes, then you're seeing all of me.

You're seeing my favorite places: the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, hiking trails in Bastrop State Park, Naegelin's Bakery in New Braunfels and the house of my adoptive grandparents, where I learned to make fried chicken and where my brother went hunting for the first time.

You're seeing where I am the happiest: my dance studio in San Marcos; our local pool, where I spent half my summers; the Cabela's by the water tower in Buda that I used to beg my parents to take me to when I was about 5.

You're seeing my home: the kitchen where we made cookies with our mom and where she danced with me before bed. You're seeing the old mulberry tree down the street where we would stuff our faces with berries every summer and the backyard where my brother and I played every day.

You're seeing what makes me me.

But I have been criticized for saying I'm from Texas because I have lived more of my life outside of Texas at this point.

That always stings a bit. Because they weren't there when my dad got off the phone with his boss and told us that we were being transferred. They don't know how it felt when I was being torn away from everything I knew and loved—my miles and miles of Texas.

And now I come back every chance I get.

The memories I made in Texas I will cherish forever. The feeling of being home is something I will miss whenever I'm not in Texas.

The second I cross back over that border, I get the silliest grin on my face and my eyes shine just a little bit more just knowing I'm home again. I will forever refuse to call anywhere else home.

So if someone were to look into my eyes and see miles and miles of Texas, they would be seeing me in a way very few people do. They would be seeing me for exactly who I am. For what makes me *me* is Texas. ■



# The future of hearing aids has arrived

**NEW! HORIZON IX HEARING AIDS**



**Alarming fact: More than 48 million Americans hear so poorly that their quality of life significantly suffers as a result.**

The problem: Most wait too long to act, hoping their hearing will improve on its own. Sadly, it never does. But now, a game-changing device is making waves across the industry, and experts say it's the biggest breakthrough they've seen in over a decade.

**It's the new Horizon IX hearing aid.**

Horizon IX is currently the best-selling device at renowned U.S. company, hear.com, developed by top audio engineers from Signia. Their goal was to combine the best possible speech clarity with a comfortable, invisible design using cutting-edge German technology.

"It's a hearing aid people actually want to wear," says hear.com co-founder Dr. Marco Vietor. "It offers amazing speech clarity and smartphone connectivity in a virtually invisible design — and all that for a reasonable price!"



**What makes them so special?**

It's one of the world's first hearing aids with dual processing. This is special because it's the first time engineers have been able to pack not one, but two state-of-the-art computer chips into a device this small. And with double the power comes double the clarity.

**What do Horizon IX hearing aids have to offer?**

- **Amazing Speech Clarity™**  
Effortlessly understand every word, thanks to dual-processing
- **Bluetooth connectivity**  
Stream music and phone calls directly to your hearing aids
- **Rechargeable lithium-ion batteries**  
28+ hours of battery life and a portable case for on-the-go charging
- **Easy, comfortable fit**  
All-day wearing comfort, easy to combine with glasses
- **Free smartphone app**  
Adjust settings for every listening situation easily via smartphone

This means that Horizon IX hearing aids offer all of the usual benefits of modern hearing aids with the added bonus of something completely new: they can process speech and background noise independently, then combine them for unparalleled, crystal clear sound.

**Where can I get Horizon IX?**

As of December 2024, hear.com has partnered with over 1,200 specialists nationwide, ensuring Horizon IX devices are available across the U.S.

Now, you can join 425,000 Americans who are already enjoying effortless hearing with Horizon IX. Simply text "HEAR" to (786) 618-2573 or visit [hear.com/tx](https://hear.com/tx) to **check if you qualify for a 45-day no-risk trial:**



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